



**The Rebirth of Woman in Ireland: Eavan Boland's Quest for Her
Female Identity**

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المستخلص:

إيفان بولاند شاعرة إيرلندية يسلط شعرها الضوء على دور المرأة ومكانتها في إيرلندا. لقد بذلت الكثير من الجهد لتسجيل الحياة اليومية للنساء العاديات في شعرها. فهي ترى أن "معاناة المرأة الأيرلندية عبر التاريخ، وحقائقها الإنسانية في البقاء والإذلال، وصوتها ورؤيتها الحقيقية قد تم استبعادها بشكل روتيني من التقاليد الأيرلندية" (غونزاليس، كتابات إيرلندية حديثة ٢٣). وبالتالي، فهي ترفض إهانة المرأة الأيرلندية لأنها تدرك أن المرأة في إيرلندا كانت تتمتع بحقوق أقل من نظيراتها في الدول الأوروبية. إلى جانب ذلك، يتم ترمز المرأة الأيرلندية في الأدب الأيرلندي من أجل أعراض ذكورية للشعراء الرجال. في ذلك الوقت، تم إبعاد الشعراء الأيرلنديين عن الساحة الأدبية. فقد صور الشعراء الرجال الأيرلنديون النساء في شعرهن فقط كملهمات. "هذه الملهمات لا تتحدث أبداً ولكن يتحدث عنها الشعراء الرجال فقط" (تروغر ٢٤). تُعتبر هؤلاء الملهمات أدوات للرجال للتعبير عن مشاعرهم ومعتقداتهم السياسية والشخصية والجنسية. لذلك تكشف بولاند صوراً جديدة للنساء نادراً ما تم تصويرها من قبل في الشعر الأيرلندي. وقد نجحت بولاند في تسجيل تصوير طبيعي وعادي لحياة وتجارب الحياة اليومية للمرأة. نتيجة لذلك، فقد أكدت بولاند هويتها كامرأة لها صوت قوي بين الرجال. كما أنها تحاول أن تعطي صوتاً للنساء المهمشات في التاريخ الأيرلندي، خاصة بعد ظهور حركة تحرير المرأة النسوية في أيرلندا.

الكلمات الافتتاحية: إيفان بولاند، الهوية، القمع، النسوية، الإلهام.

Abstract

Eavan Boland (1944-2020) is an Irish poet whose poetry highlights the role of women and their position in Ireland. She exerts a lot of efforts to record the daily life of ordinary women in her poetry. She sees that the "suffering of Irish women throughout history, their human truths of survival and humiliation, and their true voice and vision were routinely excluded from Irish tradition" (Gonzalez, *Modern Irish Writers* 23). Hence, she refuses the devaluation of Irish women since she admits that women in Ireland had fewer rights than those in European countries. Besides, the Irish women in Irish literature are symbolized for the sake of men poets' patriarchal purposes. At that time, the



Irish women poets were alienated from the literary canon. The Irish male poets represented women in their poetry just only as muses. “These muses never speak but they are spoken by an active male poet” (Troeger ٢٤). These muses are regarded as tools for men to express their political, personal and sexual emotions and beliefs. Boland, therefore, explores new images of women that rarely had been examined before in the Irish poetry. She succeeds in producing normal and natural depiction of women’s daily life and experience. As a result, she asserts her identity as a woman who has a strong voice among men. She also tries to give a voice for women who are marginalized and displaced of Irish history, especially after the appearance of feminism movements in Ireland.

Keywords: Eavan Boland; identity; oppression; feminism; muse.

Eavan Boland was born in Dublin in Ireland in ١٩٤٤. Her father, Fredrick Boland, was a diplomat. Her mother, Frances Kelley, was a painter. She graduated from Trinity College in ١٩٦٦ with first class honors in English literature and language. In ١٩٦٧, she was appointed as a lecturer at Trinity College. Consequently, she was nominated as a professor at Trinity College and University College in Dublin. She also taught at Bowdoin College in USA and taught at the School of Irish Studies in Dublin in the years between the ١٩٧٠s and ١٩٨٠s. Moreover, in ١٩٧٦, Boland was bestowed a Jacob’s award for her participation in The Arts Program broadcast on RTE Radio. She was also an active member poet in the international Writing Program at the University of Iowa. She was also an author at the National Maternity Hospital. In ١٩٩٦, she was nominated as a professor of English at Standford University. In addition, she is a member in the board of the Irish Arts Council and in the



Irish Academy of Letters .She was also a member in the advisory board of the International Writers Center in Washington University.

In addition, she won the American Ireland Fund Literary Award. Furthermore, in ١٩٩٧ University College in Dublin granted her the honor degree, in addition, the Strathclyde University in UK and Colby College in the USA granted her the same degree in ١٩٩٧. In ٢٠٠٠, she won the Bucknell Medal of Distinction from Bucknell University. In ٢٠٠٢, she was also awarded the Corrington Medal for Literary Excellence Centenary College and the Smart Family Prize from the Yale Review. In ٢٠٠٧ her outstanding poetic collection *Domestic Violence* was on the shortlist for the Forward Prize in the UK. In addition, she received the James Boatwright Prize of poetry for her poem “Violence Against Women” because it was regarded as the best poem published in ٢٠٠٧ in Shenandoh Magazine. In ٢٠١٢, she received a ٢٠١٢ PEN award for her prominent collection of essays *A Journey With Two Maps: Becoming a Woman Poet* (٢٠١١).

Her collections of poetry include *New Territory* (١٩٦٧), *The War Horse* (١٩٧٥), *In Her Own Image* (١٩٨٠), *Night Feed* (١٩٨٢), *The Journey and Other Poems* (١٩٨٧), *Outside History* (١٩٩٠), *In a Time of Violence* (١٩٩٤), *Against Love Poetry* (٢٠٠١), *Domestic Violence* (٢٠٠٧) and *A Woman Without a Country* (٢٠١٤). Her works of prose include *Autumn Essay* (١٩٦٣), *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (١٩٩٥), *The Making of a Sonnet: A Norton Anthology* (٢٠٠٠), *After Every War: Twentieth-Century Women Poets* (٢٠٠٤) and *A Journey With Two Maps: Becoming a Woman Poet* (٢٠١١).

Boland supported women’s rights since the beginning of the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement in ١٩٧٠. Therefore, her belief in feminism



affected deeply the development of her career in which she maintains that she is a poet and a long time feminist. Feminism aims at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights for women. Thus, Boland benefited from this women's movement.

As a poet, what Boland wanted to achieve is not merely the issue of contrasting between women and men or women's voice versus men's voice, but to create new traditional Irish form of poetry throughout the contribution of women's perception. Therefore, she wrote to examine the possibilities of overcoming the traditions of men's patriarchy through rejecting the old patriarchal tradition which defines women as possessions.

Hence, most of the themes that Boland expresses in her poetry are the themes of feminism such as women's stereotyping, men's oppression and domination over women, gender equality, motherhood, marginalizing and ignoring women's experiences and pains, self-identity, women's exclusion from literary tradition and the importance of women's language. These themes are uncovered in her volumes of poetry like *New Territory* (١٩٦٧), *The War Horse* (١٩٧٥), *In Her Own Image* (١٩٨٠), *Night Feed* (١٩٨٢), *The Journey and Other Poems* (١٩٨٧), *Outside History* (١٩٩٠), *In a Time of Violence* (١٩٩٤), *Against Love Poetry* (٢٠٠١), *Domestic Violence* (٢٠٠٧) and *A Woman Without a Country* (٢٠١٤).

In the nineteenth century, many Irish women were suppressed by Irish men. They were in need to be heard in their societies and to be equal to men, in addition to ending men's patriarchy over them. In the past, Irish women could not have their rights completely. In the Irish constitution, contraception was illegal and divorce was banned. In addition, abortion was a criminal act.



Irish women were also oppressed in education, employment and taxes. The state of Ireland obscured the role that Irish women played in the Irish society and identified certain false ideological images of women. The State saw that the life of Irish woman must be inside her home and not outside it in order to take care of her husband and her children. Irish women were excluded from the public spheres. Therefore, the Irish religious, political and economic institutions and firms were dominated by men.

Thus, the Irish women found out that feminism was the solution. Feminism is defined as a group of movements that aim to end women's oppression and to achieve their equality in all fields of life. The Irish women were affected greatly by the movements of feminism. There were two periods in Ireland when the Irish women demanded their equal rights to men in the country. The first period was before the beginning of the Irish feminist movement in the 1960s. Irish feminists urged Irish women for their rights in the fields of politics, economy and education, in addition to their call for eliminating all aspects of domestic violence that they suffered from under Irish men's authority. At that time, they gained some of their rights, but they were oppressed again under the authority of Irish Republic Free State and the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, the Irish feminist movement began and achieved its goals when women revolted against their marginalization and against the domestic violence that was committed by men. Hence, this was the second period.

Therefore, feminist literary criticism plays an important role in showing how women were represented in the past in men's writings; it highlights the Irish women writers' attention to subverting the emblematic images that were depicted for them and which were considered one of the reasons behind their



exclusion from the Irish literary canon. It also examines the kind of language in women and men's writing. It indicates the difference between subordination of women's language and men's dominating language. In the past, the Irish literary canon was full of iconic examples of Irish women and of Ireland. Unfortunately, Ireland was recognized by its powerful national tradition that likened Ireland to a pretty woman or to an old lady calling for her children to regain her youthfulness and the Irish woman was likened to Mother Ireland. Thus, the Irish literary canon was empty of real models of Irish women. Instead, it is plenteous of silenced and hidden images for Irish women (Madsen ١٦).

One can say that writing literary texts was a privilege that was granted to men only, so it could not be granted to women writers. The authority of writing was a talent that only men could have at that time whereas women were regarded as only emblems that men writers could move in the text in order to satisfy their masculinity and authority. In addition, women's writing was considered inappropriate activity to them, especially writing poetry was prohibited. Writing poetry was considered in Ireland a masculine ability not a feminine. Thus, Irish men writers believed that writing poetry needs a special kind of talent that was not found in women. Gonzalez clarifies that "ironically, because women were devalued, so their work, and to write about domestic chores, childbearing, and child rearing, the woman's body, was too often deemed trivial, not the stuff of literature" (*Irish Women Writers* ٢).

On the other hand, women's poetry, in general, not only in Ireland, was ignored and under-estimated and this was for many causes: firstly, the publication of books was controlled by men writers. Secondly, the word "poet" referred to men because it is a masculine word. There is no feminine



synonym for this word. Even more, the word "poetess" is absurd synonym to the word "poet" (Argaiz, *New Territory for the Irish Woman* ٩٩). Thirdly, what is regarded as a female or woman is just the "muse". Haberstroh indicates what is meant by "muse" and how it was used in the Irish literature:

The muse . . . has played the role of intermediary for male poets, a source of

inspiration, a helpmate in translating experience into art. In confronting this

problem of stereotyped figure, women poets must imagine themselves as

both image and image-maker, subject and object and rejected gendered

figures like the conventional muse. (*My Self, My Muse* ٦)

Consequently, by the ١٩٧٠'s, there were great changes that happened in Ireland that led to removing the difficulties that Irish women poets had confronted before. Their poems were read and published in the country. In addition, Irish women poets subverted the stereotypical and objectified images and write real and clear experiences of themselves and of any woman in the society. Moreover, Keetley and Pettegrew explicate that:

The intellectual history of feminism includes increasing attention to the artificiality of traditional roles and identities for women and analyzing how ideals of femininity are ideologically constructed as natural and unchanging. A leading facet of this analysis has been delineation of

the ways that male-authored fiction and poetry manipulate femininity into something serves masculine interests. (٤)

Subsequently, Irish women poets were not mentioned in any anthologies, until *The Field Day Anthology* IV and V were published. They included some names of the Irish women poets. Additionally, the country witnessed the emergence of Irish women editors and publishers of their writings. Moreover, because of the Irish feminist movement in ١٩٦٠, the workshops of Irish women poets spread greatly: "The workshops made deep impression on Boland . . . they helped to clarify her perceptions of poetic identity . . . [thus, Eavan Boland said that] the poets of these workshops often had an intransitive sense of the terrain that was not in the Irish poem" (Allen Randolph, *Eavan Boland* ٧٨). Therefore, the Irish women poets successfully achieved their goals, and worked hard to be heard and known in the country. They wanted to be heard as well as their contemporary men poets.

Hence, women poets' publication of poetry started in Ireland firstly in periodicals, then in presses like: "Attic, Arlen House, Beaver Raw, or Salmon" (Haberstroh, *Women Creating Women* ١). Eavan Boland is one of the first Irish women poets, who started to publish her collections of poetry. In addition, she is one of the founders and participants of publishing houses such as: Arlen House and Attic Publication House.

On the other hand, Irish women poets tried to emphasize their identities of womanhood and nationalism. Thus, they wrote poetry that combined their domestic life and their Irishness. Their poetry was "full of orphans, dying mothers or dead heroes longed mourned for" (Terente ١٣٤). They tried to draw the attention of their nation to their important existence in Ireland as



women and as Irish citizens. Thus, they sought a distinct identity for themselves as women and as Irish citizens.

On the other hand, the feminist literary theory plays an effective role in structuring Boland's poetry. The theory has different dimensions, and so there are two different schools of feminist literary criticism. The transformation of women writers' life, especially Boland, was affected by the appearance of Anglo-American criticism and French feminist theory. Through these two schools, many feminist writers and critics express the need for change in the directions of women writers' thoughts. Women writers must affirm their identities in their writings. Hence, Boland is one of these writers who was influenced by the feminist views of both French and Anglo-American feminist schools. In the following lines, I will shed light on the feminist views of these two schools and how Boland's poetry manifests their feminist concerns.

Hence, there are three dimensions of feminist literary criticism that are considered the basic roots on which it gets its importance. These dimensions are the thematic, ideological and deconstructive. The first dimension is the thematic which supports the role of feminist critic in criticizing the patriarchal discourses in which men writer's domination is evident. Throughout criticizing men writers' work, women writers condemn men's portrayal of women. Women writers see that women are excluded, marginalized, stereotyped, silenced and oppressed. They were represented as iconic objects and as second class not as subjects. Hence, the themes of the feminist literary criticism become apparent to them. Thus, Boland's poetry includes main feminist themes such as: self- identity, marginalization, discrimination, objectifying and stereotyping. These themes expose men's patriarchy and



domination over women. Throughout these themes, she asserts her identity as a woman poet.

According to the ideological dimension, women reject their symbolization and subjection to men which are represented in the literary texts. Thus, they seek to emphasize their identity and to express their voice throughout writing discourses that show their authority as well as men writers. This is what Elaine Showalter (١٩٤١) calls "gynocriticism". Through "gynocriticism", she urges women to be the producers of their own texts. She "argued that feminist literacy criticism has always been more coherent as an ideology than as methodology" (Finke ٢٨٧).

Showalter, who is an American feminist critic, is one of the prominent leaders in articulating the feminist literary criticism, especially the Anglo-American feminism. She proposes important roots in the feminist literary criticism. Throughout these roots, women read literary texts differently from men; in addition, women writers have the ability to express themselves in literary tradition. Showalter's literary feminist roots are based on two kinds. The first type is the feminist criticism which shows woman as a reader. The second type is gynocriticism that shows a woman as a writer. It is "derived from a French word called "la gyno critique" (Rao ١٢٤).



Throughout the first type, women readers seek to examine the stereotyping images that are represented in men's literary texts. Thus, women readers are regarded here as consumers of men's produced written literary texts. She indicates that “this kind of analysis the *feminist critique* . . . Its subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history. It is also concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience” (٢٥).

Moreover, Showalter draws women readers' attention to the importance of exploring women's experiences and voices that were silenced by men writers. Feminist literary criticism changes the awareness of those who read the literary texts and their relation to these texts that they read. In other words, it is the passageway to explore women's social status in literary tradition through the opinions and thoughts of women. The term “gynocriticism” concerns with regarding woman as creator and author of her literary texts. It is contrary to the term “phallogocentric” discourses.

Hence, feminist literary criticism is concerned with how women are represented in the phallogocentric literary discourses. The term “phallogocentric” refers to men's distinction in constructing the meaning of the words. It also points out to men's uniqueness in recognizing and apprehending social relations or meanings. It focuses on the concept that men are the basic concern and the root of power and reign. Carden clarifies that it is “the privileging of male paternal over female maternal power . . . [It] is the central structuring mechanism of male sexuality. Under this phallogocentric mechanism, normative maleness, masculinity, is defined by penetrating others not by whom one penetrates” (٣٠).



On the contrary, throughout the second type “gynocriticism”, women are the producers of the literary texts. They are the writers of the literary texts. Women writers are not different from men writers. They have the skill of writing as well as men writers. According to Showalter’s view:

The second type of feminist criticism is concerned with *woman as writer_* with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women. Its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course studies of particular writers and works. (٢٥)

Gynocriticism sheds light on women writers and their independence from men writers to examine their own needs throughout their writing. Women writers express in their literary texts their own feminist themes and their criteria of writing to express their own identities and to get rid of men writers' patriarchy in representing women. Hence, Eagleton emphasizes that:

The gynocritic discovers in her author and characters an understanding of female identity_ not that she expects . . . the essential struggle will be towards a coherent identity, a realization of selfhood and autonomy, [in addition] there is an objective reality which the author apprehends and describes truthfully in her text; the reader appreciates the validity of the text and relates it to her understanding of her own life. (٩)

Subsequently, Showalter seeks to present a track of literary history for women writers’ literary works. Therefore, she presents stages that enable the critics and the readers to trace and apprehend the portrayal of women in the

past or in the present. Hence, she divides the feminist literary criticism into three stages or “phases” as she calls them: feminine phase, feminist phase and female phase. The reason behind Showalter’s division of feminist literary criticism into phases lies in providing the readers of the theory a pattern that they can follow.

The division is important to prove that there is a sequence and developing in women's style of writing. She says that “three phases . . . are common to all literary sub-culture, imitation of the prevailing modes, internalization of the standards of art protest against acquired norms, values, concern for minority rights and demand for autonomy, and finally self-discovery, turning inward, and approaching closer to self-identity” (Shukla ٣).

In the feminine phase (١٨٤٠-١٨٨٠), there were women writers who continued the past forms of men writers in writing literary texts like George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. They wrote as men writers. In addition, they tried to write literary texts that were similar to men writers' ideological track. Moreover, they could not identify themselves as women. They also accepted men writers' restrictions that they imposed on their writing. As a result, they were deprived of their expression to their identity and experience. “The first, ‘feminine’ phase, (١٨٤٠-٨٠) includes Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot, and is one where women writers imitated and internalized the dominant male aesthetic standards which required female authors remain gentlewomen” (Selden and et al. ١٢٥).

The feminist phase (١٨٨٠-١٩٢٠) witnessed the appearance of women writers such as Francis Trallope and Elizabethan Robins who refused the iconic representation of men writers to women in literature. This phase was



distinguished by women's writing that was object to men's ideology and criteria in writing literary texts. The phase also supported women's standards and assessments. Even more, it advocated women's right in their independence. Tandon clarifies that:

This phase is characterized as a protest phase, where women authors rebelled against prevalent patriarchal attitudes. The authors rebelled against the Victorian sexual stereotypes and tried their best to explore the women's position in terms of work, class and the family. Women demanded autonomy with full force and vigour in this phase. (٨٥)

In the female phase (١٩٢٠-present), Rebecca West and Dorothy Richardson prevent following the women writers of the feminine and feminist phases. They try to assert themselves in literature. They seek to distinguish their writing from men's writing. They write to reflect their own voices and daily experiences in literature. Thus, Showalter confirms that “women reject both imitation and protest—two forms of dependency—and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature” (Barad). Showalter supports women writers' independence from men writers' control and neglect. Moreover, she draws the attention of readers to books that are written by women writers which termed as “gynotexts”, and to stop reading books by men writers which termed as “andro-texts” (Barry ١٢٢). This phase “inherited characteristics of the former periods and developed the idea of specifically female writing and female experience in a phrase of self-discovery” (Selden and et al ١٢٥). Hence, women writers assert their female identity as women and as writers in the same time.



On the other hand, the school of the Anglo-American literary feminist criticism is also well-known with its influential feminist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, Susan Gubar, Sandra Gilbert and Ellen Moers. They as well as Showalter look forward to placing the women writers on the right track that enables them expressing their needs and reaching the aesthetic aspects in their literary writing.

We must not deny Woolf's influence on guiding women writers towards revolting against men's patriarchy in portraying women in their literary texts. Furthermore, she follows Wollstonecraft's belief that women's relegation in all fields of life will lead to injustice in community: "Following the lead of Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ١٧٩٢) . . . Woolf argues that the exclusion of women from social, political, and creative spheres has detrimental effects on society as whole" (Snaith xi). Woolf is a prominent feminist of modern feminist literary criticism.

As she belongs to the Anglo-American school as well as Showalter, she is known for her prominent feminist influential essay *A Room of One's Own* (١٩٢٩), which is a series of lectures that were presented to her students in college in ١٩٢٨, in addition to her effective essay *The Guineas* (١٩٣٨). Both of these two essays became important books in feminist literary critical theory. In *A Room of One's Own*, she "covers a myriad of issues concerning women and creativity" (Snaith xi); she denounces men's patriarchy and discrimination against women. She sees that both genders must have similar opportunities in their life; there is no superiority of one gender over the other. In addition, she asserts that women are not decorated creatures that existed to please men all the time. They have strong identity as well as men.



Subsequently, Woolf proves her need for her own private room and money to enable herself to write: “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write a fiction; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem and the true nature of fiction unsolved” (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own (Annotated)* ٤). She wonders about women's social status in writing. Moreover, she asks about the reason behind existing few women writers in the past and about the ability of increasing the number of women writers in the present and in the future.

Woolf focuses on women's need to be equal to men in their writings. She opines that women writers need to have their private life; they are in need for a private room to write to identify their female voice among men writers. According to Woolf, if women writers want to be known as men writers, they must not depend on men financially. Women writers lack power since they are in need for money. Their lack of money is an obstacle that avoids them from owning their room to write in order to express themselves. She emphasizes that “women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. Women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry. That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own (*A Room of One's Own*).

According to Woolf, women writers did not have their real opportunity of asserting their identities and experiences in the past throughout their texts. They were outside history, and unfortunately they were represented as a mere queer who “dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts



in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband” (Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*).

Then, at the end of the book she gives a hope of survival to the women poets that their writings will come to light. She encourages them to express their voice and to display their silent experience through their poetry, so she opines that “when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry . . . But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worthwhile” (*A Room of One’s Own*).

Woolf’s influence on women writers does not stop until this limit, but she also continues her feminist effect on them through her second book *Three Guineas* (١٩٣٨). Through this book, she works on changing the patriarchal order in the society. Moreover, she condemns genders’ inequality on which the community is founded. As a result, this leads to women’s exclusion from all fields of life. The book is appreciated for involving basic themes of feminism (Black ◦).

In this book, she examines that women will no longer accept to be objectified and they will do their best to get rid of their silent suffering from ridiculing their life in men’s writings: “[women] will prefer to refuse money and fame, and to be the objects of scorn and ridicule rather than suffer themselves, or allow others to suffer” (“Three Guineas”).

As Woolf’s essays *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas* are the most influential essays that have their echo in feminist literary criticism, Adrienne Rich’s essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" has its significant effect on feminist literary criticism. Rich, who is an American



poet, has a great role in her rebellion against exclusion the real portrayals of women from men's literary texts. In her essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", Rich draws women's attention to break the subsidiary positions that they are compelled to by men in the society. Women were represented decoratively in men's literary texts in the past to amuse men. Rich wants to subvert the traditional female roles in the society and to respond to her imaginative and creative ability of writing poetry.

She demonstrates that she and the other women writers must assert themselves as women who have creative and imaginative roles in the society. Thus, she encourages herself as well as the other women writers to express themselves in poetry particularly and in literature generally. She believes that her voice as a woman must appear among the men writers who gave women unreal portrayal in the past. Women were portrayed as symbols and muses in men's poetry in order to convey to their subjective purposes and to be appreciated by other readers. Thus, she urges women writers to "revise" such conventional images that were depicted to them in the past since "this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (Rich, "When We Dead Awaken" ١٨).

Subsequently, Moers's book *Literary Women* (١٩٧٦) has its valuable roots in literary feminist criticism. Moers is an American author and scholar. Her book *Literary Women* was "among the first scholarly feminist texts in the mid-١٩٧٠s to urge the existence of a female literary tradition, describing the history of women's literature as an "undercurrent, rapid and powerful" (Abate-Çelebi ٤٨). In the book, Moers explores literary female writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in United States, France and United

Kingdom, such as: “George Sand, Charlotte and Emily Bronte to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Martineu, Mme de Stael and Mrs Gaskell” (Abate-Çelebi ٤٨).

Throughout Moers’ exploration to these women writers, she draws the readers’ attention to how women writers have a great influence on each other. They read the literary texts of each other, so they affect each other’s literary texts. She believes that there is no archetypal female model of writing. If women writers exchange reading their own literary texts, they will see that there is resonance of “their own voice. “Each of these gifted writers had her distinctive style; none imitated the other. But their sense of encountering in another woman’s voice what they believed was the sound of their own is . . . something special to literary women” (Abate-Çelebi ٤٩).

Afterwards, Gubar and Gilbert’s book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and The Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (١٩٧٩) are worthy books in the Anglo-American feminist school. Gubar and Gilbert are American authors and critics. Their book is “ambitious book proclaimed a new feminist poetics that would expose and defy the phallic myths of literary history” (Felski ٦٥). Their aim of this book is to shed light on women writers’ exclusion from literature and how they were trapped in the past. Regrettably, men writers in the nineteenth century restricted their representation to women in their literary texts to crazy, impolite, insurgent women.

Women writers were forced to include such representation of women in their literary texts as Charlotte Bronte’s mad character Bertha Mason, in her novel *Jane Eyre* (١٨٤٧), whose stay is confined by her husband in an attic. Charlotte Bronte, who is an English novelist and poet, depicts Bertha Mason as a mad character whose husband Edward Rochester locks her in an



isolated attic. Therefore, Gubar and Gilbert's book defends women writers' independence on depicting their real experience and life in their writings. They urge them to dispose of these old portrayals for them to emphasize their female identity. Their independent voice must be apparent in their literary texts and must not be silenced any longer.

Furthermore, Gubar and Gilbert create the term "anxiety of authorship" which is taken from Harold Bloom's term "anxiety of influence". Bloom, who is an American literary writer and critic, creates this term which means that "[the artist's] fear that he is not his own creator and that the works of his predecessors, existing before and beyond him, assume essential priority over his own writings" (qtd in David).

Gubar and Gilbert's term "anxiety of authorship" means that woman writer is afraid of her inability of becoming a pioneer in writing that will separate and ruin her. The term is "radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a 'precursor' the act of writing [which] will isolate or destroy her" (Hawthorne ٤٥). Consequently, women writers have no female ancestors of writers or if they are, they will be few. Therefore, women writers do not want to ruin their female writer ancestor because they have no one. Similarly, they do not want to ruin their male ancestors of writers because they have no relationship to them that the men writers have. They are "free from the anxiety of influence [which] helps them to begin new and unique women writing tradition with freshness, novelty . . . making distinct from male writing. They create their own poetics because of the anxiety of authorship" ("Anxiety of Authorship by Gilbert and Gubar").

It is apparent from my discussion above that the Anglo-American school's critics do not approve the patriarchy of men in all fields of life,



especially in the field of literature, so they work on exploring the literary texts of women writers in order to depict their real life and silent experiences. They believe that this exploration is the base of their feminist criticism. This enables them to subvert the iconic pictures that were captured to women in the past and to reach to the real “characterization” in women’s literary texts; in addition, this facilitates for them exposing the feminist critical “themes” and the “motifs” of their texts. Barry points out that:

The 'Anglo-Americans' . . . maintain a major interest in traditional critical concepts like theme, motif, and characterization. They seem to accept the conventions of literary realism, and treat literature as a series of representations of women's lives and experience which can be measured and evaluated against reality. They see the close reading and explication of individual literary texts as the major business of feminist criticism. (١٢٤)

According to the deconstructive dimension, the goal of the French feminist critics is evident. Their aim is to deconstruct men's patriarchy's structures and their phallogocentric suppositions to build new structure to women. They are more interested in the language of texts than Anglo-American literary feminists who are interested in women's practical experiences and the themes of the literary texts. There is a connection between deconstruction and feminism; “French feminism informed by deconstruction, focuses on language precisely because language is the mechanism by which women have been ‘de-authorized’. In turn, French feminists aim is to question how male/ female oppositions are produced by language and now ‘woman’ is always the negative or supplementary term” (Humm ١٤٧-١٤٨).



Hence, Anglo-American feminism and French literary feminism are two different schools. Anglo-American literary feminist criticism is concerned with accepting "the conventions of literary realism, and treat literature as a series of representations of women's lives and experience which can be measured and evaluated against reality" (Barry ١١٩). On the contrary, in the same book, Barry demonstrates that " French theorists often deal with concerns other than literature: they write about language, representation, and psychology as such and often travel through detailed treatments of major philosophical issues of this kind before coming to the literary text itself" (١٢٠).

The prominent feminists of French literary school are Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. They are French literary critics and writers; they seek to uncover the sexist variation in women's writings. They understand that women's writings reflect this sexist variation. They were influenced in this theory by the theoreticians of poststructuralism as Jacques Derrida and Roland Gérard Barthes and by the psychoanalyst theoretician Jacques Lacan. Thus, their views are founded on "psychoanalytical" core (Tyson ٩١). Such theoreticians are interested in the linguistic difference in women's writings:

What links these three writers is a shared belief that our structures of our understanding are coded in and by our language. All three critics are deconstructionists in the sense that they believe that systems of language are systems of power built on internal contradictions which can be sought out and deconstructed or taken apart. By focusing on the process of language, particularly on the acquisition of the language by the infant, French feminists aim to deconstruct patriarchal discourses. (Humm ٩٣-٤)



Consequently, the French feminist literary theory is based on the poststructuralist theory since poststructuralism seeks to deconstruct the variation of gender language. Thus, Cixous invents the term “écriture feminine” which is known as “feminine writing”. The term is apparent in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (١٩٧٥). In this essay, Cixous rejects suppressing women’s voice throughout retelling the mythology of “Medusa”. Medusa is “described as a winged human female with living venomous snakes in place of hair” (“Medusa.”). Then, her head was decollated by “Perseus” (Chakraborty ٢٨٩٧). Cixous uses Medusa’s murdering to illuminate how men work on suppressing women’s voice and beheading their tongues in order to mute their voices.

She contrives the term “écriture feminine” because she urges women writers to get rid of men's bonds and their language that was characterized by phallogentrism. She condemns the phallogentrism and repression of language's structures in the western communities, so she works on subverting this structure throughout embodying the capacity of women’s writing. “Establishing the rightful authority of women in a male dominated society, Cixous’ ecriture feminine is a reaction against female repression by phallogentric structures of the Western society” (Chakraborty ٢٨٩٥).

Moreover, what she means by this term is the portrayal of female body as a tool directed to the thought. This thought will ask about the root of men's basic thinking which mutes the voice of women. As a result, this term will lead women to show their unconsciousness that is invisible in men's patriarchal language (Chakraborty ٢٨٩٧). Throughout “feminine writing”, Cixous comprehends that women will portray the silenced images that were forgotten in the Victorian period. Thus, in her essay she condemns Lacan's theory of



symbolic order which states that women are subjected to men because they are attached to men's phallus: "Cixous considers this marginal position of women within the symbolic order a boon in disguise because she . . . believes that women, being far from the vicinity of the symbolic, are unlike their male counterparts closer to the imaginary and fantasies and removed from fixed meanings and reason" (Chakraborty ٢٨٩٩).

Lacan's view of men's patriarchy is based on his concepts of symbolic language. To understand his concept, we must go back to the period that he calls "Real" which will be called later as semiotic stage by Kristeva. In Lacan's point of view, this period is the step before the child learns how to speak. This period is marked by its lack of any patriarchy or control. He sees that women must return to this period to explore their own language. In this period is "there is no law, no patriarchy, no domination . . . it is the stage that women should go back to in order to find their own language . . . the Real stems from the fact that in it there is no language. There is only union, wholeness. All demands are met. There is no lack, no absence" (Seda ١).

Then, women will be in need to fill this absence with words. When the child tries to speak, he or she will encounter with the absence which is regarded as the supremacy of the language. Thus, they must fill the absence with symbols which are considered the words of the language. The words are the place of the symbols where they are not found. The penis of his mother is the first thing that the child realizes its "lack" (Sengupta ٧٢).

The child will be detached from his mother. In addition, she/he will grasp the importance of her/his father. The father will be the domain behind his separation from his mother. The time that he starts to speak, he will explore his father. Hence, the child will enter the realm of symbolic language.



His father's domination and the symbolic order are considered gender's discrimination.

Lacan's philosophy leads to the phallus' concept that emphasizes the patriarchal of language. It is the reason behind gender's variation. Hence, all variations can be recognized in relation to this phallus. As a result, women's issues can be identified in relation to it too. Hence, the child believes that the domain of the language is the patriarchy of his father and his symbolic order. Thus, the patriarchal language relegates women and represents them in oppressed images throughout men's writings.

Afterwards, the child acknowledges that his mother is powerless. He also sees that his father and all men are stronger than women. Thus, he explores that all women are others and powerless. "It all starts with defining the self with the mother's lack, and from then on woman is regarded as the one who lacks, who needs to be fulfilled, who needs to be completed. She is the one that is weak and incomplete" (Seda ٢). Unfortunately, women's status is set like that because of the language, and henceforth women's position is lower than men. Thus, Cixous is against women's inferiority and weakness, in addition to her belief that women must change this patriarchal language. She disapproves of representing them as other.

In addition, Cixous urges women to place themselves newly in literary texts and also in the whole world: "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodes_ for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must herself into the text_ as into the world and into history_ by her own movement" (Cixous ٨٧٥). Cixous also demonstrates that poetry is the only literary genre in which women's writing



can be asserted contrary to the normal language which exists in prose. Throughout poetry, women writers can emphasize what they mean, in addition to its closeness to their unconsciousness which is suppressed by men's patriarchy (Chakraborty ٢٩٠٠).

Cixous encourages women to write their body in texts. She sees that women become odd because of their feminine nature. Even more, they hate their bodies because of repressed representation that men used to portray to them. She examines that women's bodies must be their own power. Additionally, in order to prove their feminine nature's power, they must have their own language that enables them to assert their own identities. They also must depict their female daily life in literature. In addition, "Cixous points at the possible deconstructive and revolutionary effects of feminine writing. She predicts how this female language will destroy the present system and cause an upheaval which will consequently lead to the jouissance of women" (Seda ^). She also reveals that mother's voice is the dominance of women's talk and writing. Women's writing and speech are joint to the "womb" of the mother. Hence, women are connected to their mothers and they never quell them: "Cixous philosophizes that a woman's speech and writing is united with the womb world of the mother, a world that is not bound by time that is nameless and with no syntax . . . she never represses the mother, instead she is always closer to the mother" (Chakraborty ٢٩٠١). Hence, women have the ability to destroy the symbolic language and enable the semiotic language to appear. They are in need for a language that eliminates the differences that exist in it such as female/masculine.

Similarly, Irigaray approves Cixous' view of feminine writing. She sees that women writers must resist against men's patriarchal restrictions in order



to express their own language. She believes that women's feminine writing is the path that leads them to their unconsciousness. In addition, both of them reveal the importance of "women's bodily experience in writing and [involve] women to have a specificity that distinguishes them from men" (Peake). Hence, their womanhood and self-identity will be manifested.

Subsequently, Irigaray seeks the link between the process of writing and women's identity, especially their "sexuality" during writing. She sees that the words that we speak daily are formed by males. "Irigaray's main project is to investigate the relation between writing and subjectivity, specifically feminine sexuality. Irigaray argues that the language we use routinely shaped by masculinity; for example, the way we concentrate on finding the 'right' word or precise meaning" (Humm ١٠٤). Hence, she challenges men's patriarchal language since it effaces women's language existence. She works on transforming the construction of the language encouraging women to have their own language to represent themselves truly.

Moreover, she sees that men writers used their fantasy in depicting women as mere objects in the past, besides muting their voices. Therefore, she urges women writers to include their "subjectivity" and fantasy to be apparent in their contexts as well as men writers. In other words, she wants women's identity not to be alienated any longer from their texts: "She attempts to go back through the masculine imaginary to interpret the way in which it has reduced women to silence. Irigaray's endeavor is to find or (re)discover a possible space for the feminine imaginary" (Sengupta ٧٥).

On the other hand, the French feminist critics explore that the language, which symbolizes them, sounds to be as an obstacle to them from giving them the chance to express themselves clearly as well as men. Kristeva is



one of the famous feminist critics, who is against symbolizing women's language. She sees that women's language is semiotic. In her view, women's language menaces men's domination of language. Women's language can be as a method that they can use to show their creativity. However, women, who reject to write as men or to be portrayed as men's representation in literary texts, are neglected by men. Kristeva, as well as Cioux, supports women to write themselves in literature because they believe that there is link between women's writing and their bodies. If they write, their bodies will be heard.

Moreover, she identifies Lacan's period "Real" as semiotic. She demonstrates that women are concerned with the stage where there is no father's superiority and patriarchy. For her, the language is formed from men's phallus and women's deficiency. In other words, it is composed of men's authority and women's incompetence. For this reason, women cannot use such language, so they must create their own language. They must return to their semiotic language. However, this kind of language is oppressed by men. "The maternal semiotic . . . precedes the formation of the subject through an entry into language. As such, the pre-linguistic, rhythmic, gestural "semiotic" emerges as a textual force in the work of certain avant-garde writers to disrupt traditional linear writing" (Huffer ٢٤٦).

In other words, semiotics and symbolic are two different kinds of language. Semiotics is before symbolic. The role of women is to destroy the symbolic order. For Kristeva, "because individual subjectivity is constructed in a mothering relationship, women's identification with mothers and mothering creates in us a more ambivalent relation to the symbolic or metalanguage" (Qtd.in Humm ١٠٠). Women must deconstruct symbolic language of men.



Therefore, literary texts are the mean by which women re-establish their own language, especially poetry that subverts men's traditional language and shows women's revolting transformation.

Simon de Beauvoir is also a pioneer French feminist critic woman in French feminist literary theory. Her feminist views are regarded as "materialist" (Tyson ٩١). She is against men's concept of regarding woman as a myth. She refuses this myth because she sees that the myth maintains keeping a woman silent at her home. She seeks to deconstruct these old myths that represented women falsely. Moreover, she rejects regarding women as followers or inferiors to men. So she explicates that in her significant book *The Second sex* (١٩٤٩) which tackles her feminist notions clearly, so she asserts that "women have neither religion nor poetry that belongs to them alone: they still dream through men's dreams. They worship the gods made by males. And males have shaped the great virile figures for their own exaltation: Hercules, Prometheus, Parsifal; in the destiny of these heroes, woman has merely a secondary role" (١٦٢).

She examines how men treat women as "Other" creatures. Regrettably, men regard women as "Other" to prove their superiority, they are also in need for women to emphasize their domination and humanity. She sees that women are regarded as second class in the society because of their womanhood. If she wants to assert her subjectivity in life, she must efface men's concept of "Other" that they posit women in. However, if she rejects regarding her as "Other", this "would mean renouncing all the advantages an alliance with the superior cast confers on them" (Thurman ١٠).

Beauvoir provides us some examples of men's representation for women in literature. Therefore, she explores men's representation of Eve in



their writings, who was created from Adam's rib, since they consider her the basic reason for Adam's descent into the earth. She denounces how men, in the past, depicted Eve as mere creation for men's pleasure in their life and for their own purposes only. Men also see that women are born differently from them. Therefore, Beauvoir indicates that "[God] destined her for man; he gave her to Adam to save him from loneliness, her spouse is her origin and her finality; she is his complement in the inessential mode. Thus, she appears a privileged prey. She is nature raised to the transparency of consciousness; she is naturally submissive consciousness" (١٦٠-١٦١).

In her book, she also condemns Plato's gratitude to his God because he is created as a man not as a woman. Even more, she questions how woman's needs are neglected as it is apparent through the character of Eliza Doolittle, who is a character in George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (١٩١٣). Beauvoir is disturbed by representing Doolittle as submissive character to man's desires regardless of her desires and needs. She disapproves of relegating women, so she says that: "she is an idol, a servant, source of life, power of darkness; she is the elementary silence, of truth, she is artifice, gossip, and lies; she is the medicine woman and witch; she is man's prey; she is his downfall, she is everything he is not and wants to have, his negation, and his *raison d'etre*" (١٦٢).

Therefore, the difference between Anglo-American feminist literary criticism and French feminist criticism is manifested. The French feminist critics see that the language learned has dual logic (dialects) that has opposite terms such as mother/father, masculine/feminine, and sun/moon. As a result, this logical duality in the language leads French feminist critics to examine the superiority of men's language. In addition, they see that the



language is characterized by features that give men the domination in the life over women. They see that the structure of the language gives men more distinctiveness than women. The language compels women whether to write or to portray themselves as men or to stay silenced and excluded from literary canon.

That's to say the Anglo-American school is directed towards the practical concern more than the French feminist school which is directed towards "theoretical" concern. In addition, the feminists of the Anglo-American school are interested in examining the position and the function of the gender (male/female) within the scope of men's patriarchal communities whereas the French feminists examine the position and the function of the gender (male/ female) within the scope of the language. As we had said before, the French feminists believe that the language is dominated by men (Allwood ١١٣).

In spite of the two schools' distinctiveness, both of them denounce men's domination in literary texts. They, at the end, do not accept women's inferiority and the false representation of women in men's literary canon. Both urge women writers to express their female identity and their needs in their daily life. In addition, both of them agree that there was no female language that was appropriate for women writers to use in the past.

Hence, Boland was affected by feminism in writing her poetry. Through her volumes of poetry, she is concerned with asserting her equity to men writers. She subverts the traditional poetic images that were depicted to Irish women to confirm her female subjectivity. Feminism motivates her to get rid of the silence that trapped her and confined the role of the other Irish contemporary women poets. She admits that:



I've always been feminist, since I was a very young woman in Ireland, and at a time when women were very hampered by inequalities there. And I've always believed that advantages, freedoms gained for women, are not sectional: they are necessary and balancing for a whole society. In that sense, feminism is a compelling ethic . . . I've always been certain of its central value . . . Feminism has helped me see society differently, and define myself as a writer differently. ("Caffeine Destiny" ١٣٠)

According to Showalter's view of urging women to read men writers' literary texts in order to explore their stereotyping and men's patriarchal language, Boland reveals that men writers, unfortunately, represented women as mere icons and objects in the past. In addition, men poets used to depict woman as a national emblematic figure in their poems. They used to liken woman to the image of Mother Ireland and vice versa. Thus, they ignored their voice and their female identity. Regrettably, Irish men writers dominated the Irish literary canon; there was no space for the Irish women writers to appear.

She achieves Showalter's concept of gynocriticism which is concerned with regarding woman as creator and author of her literary texts. According to Showalter, the term is "concerned with *woman as writer* _ with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women" (Showalter ٢٥).

Boland demonstrates that women writers' hopes and thoughts must be considered in order to have their rights, equity and independence as well as men writers. Thence, she seeks to change the map of the past Irish literary tradition. Therefore, she points out that "when the history of poetry in our time



is written_ I have no doubt this_ women poets will be seen to have rewritten not just the poem, not just the image. They won't just have rebalanced elements within the poem. They will have altered the category of the poem. The map will look different" ("An Interview with Eavan Boland (١٩٩٣)" ١١٢). As a result, her poetry uncovers themes, such as asserting her female self-identity, rejecting stereotyping, and excluding her, as well as Irish women writers, from the Irish literary canon and history. What she exposes are explicit feminist themes in her poetry.

In spite of emphasizing her female identity as a woman writer in her poetry, at the beginning of her writing she followed the conventional literary forms of her ancestors like W.B Yeats. During writing her first collection *New Territory* (١٩٦٧), she was not aware of the necessity of her womanhood to be revealed in her poetry and the effect of feminism on her poetic literary texts. Thence, the poems of this collection are formal and traditional similar to the style of the male poets at that time. For instance, poems such as "New Territory", "The Poets" and "Migration" are examples of Boland's conventional style of writing. In such poems, she was concerned with depicting the strength of men poets, in addition to pointing out to the dangers that men face during their trips in the sea. Through these poems, Boland attempted only to "locate" herself among the Irish poets; she, herself, proves that "I turned to the work of Irish male poets. After all, I thought of myself as an Irish poet. I wanted to locate myself within the Irish poetic tradition. The dangers and the stresses in my own themes gave me an added incentive to discover a context for them. But what I found dismayed me" (*Object Lessons* ١٣٤). Hence, Showalter's first feminine phase is applicable for Boland's collection *New Territory*. This volume "is instance of Showalter's 'Feminine phase' . . . [It



shows] Boland at her most uncritical stance, as she seems to internalize, both formally and ideologically, the poetic conventions of the (Irish) past” (Argaiz, *New Territory for the Irish Woman* ١٦٧- ٦٨).

When she was twenty-two years old, she wrote *New Territory*. She followed the traditional literary forms like her ancestors and she wrote topics that were conventional and "lyric poetry such as her coming into being a poet, her relationship to the landscape, and the way myth and memory shape personal experience" (Odden ٣). At that time, Boland wrote in a style that gave her the opportunity to be read by the contemporary men poets of her generation and to be accepted by her readers. Throughout this collection, she tried to have a place among the Irish men poets. She tried to occupy similar position to them. As a poet, she was worried about her position in the Irish literary scene, so “the tradition she learned from and lived by continually and openly structures her early work” (Riley ١٧٣).

Moreover, *New Territory* includes only three poems that are regarded as a start point in Boland’s poetry towards her concerning with women’s issues. They are “Athen’s Song”, “From the Painting Back from Market by Chardin” and “The Winning of Etain”. In these poems, the theme of women’s passivity and stereotyping is apparent. These poems give a glimpse of what Boland will emphasize in her later works. Through them, she depicts images of woman’s passivity and stereotyping that the Irish men poets used to represent in their poetry in the past. “We hear no identifiable women’s voice in this volume” (Haberstroh, *Women Creating Women* ٦٠). Hence, she tries to challenge these past representations that were created to women and defined them as mere objects. Later, she will deny such representations to



indicate her subjectivity as well as the subjectivity of Irish women in the Irish literary tradition.

Through the myth of Athen, it is evident Boland's interest in immortalizing the passivity of Irish women in Irish literature. She continued the path of the former Irish poets. In doing so, Boland tried to write for the men readership in order to be accepted by them and consequently to be accepted in the Irish literary tradition. She admits that "I would have to be male. The male, after all, was an active principle, inviting admiration. And I was teenage girl, looking not just to admire but to belong" (*Object Lessons* ٦٥). However, this image Boland will reduce and destroy in her next volumes.

Consequently, Boland's poetry evolves from Showalter's first feminine phase to her second feminist phase. Her volume *In Her Own Image* (١٩٨٠) is considered appropriate for Showalter's second feminist phase. Throughout the collection, Boland is object to men writers' ideology and their iconic images that were captured to women in the past. Although her collection *The War Horse* (١٩٧٥) preceded *In Her Own Image*, *The War Horse* is applicable for Showalter's third female phase (Argaiz, *New Territory for the Irish Woman* ٢٤٤).

One can say that Boland would feel worry, at that time, if she continued writing poetry that ignored her feminine voice. Boland seeks for something that is different from the conventions of the past Irish literary canon. Therefore, she hears her inside sound "and in my other ear, feminist ideology_ to which I have never been immune_ argued that the life I lived was fit subject for anger and anger itself the proper subject for poetry" (*Object Lessons* ٢٥٢). Boland tries to move into feminist concerns, so she refuses such mythical and passive images that were depicted for Irish women in the



past in Irish men's poetry to be the authors of the Irish poetry. Therefore, the theme of refusing women's stereotyping and objectifying them, in addition to men's domination over women is apparent in her collections *In Her Own* and *The Journey* (١٩٨٧).

In Her Own Image is considered basic collection among her works since in this volume, Boland does not only try to depict her own life, but she also depicts all women's life that was oppressed under men's discrimination in order to represent their life as it is. Boland is "careful to separate herself from the oppressed women she depicts, consistently denying any identification with the subjects of these poems" (M. O'Connor). Therefore, she succeeds in having considerable position to herself through subverting the false images that were depicted to Irish women in the past and through freeing herself from men's restrictions.

Subsequently, Boland was affected by Rich's essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" in writing *In Her Own Image*. Rich's essay had its impact on Boland's transforming from Showalter's first feminine phase to the second feminist phase. Similar to Rich, Boland started to write in a formal style, then she, as Rich, recognized that her conventional writing was not suitable for emphasizing her feminist voice and needs. Rich illustrates that "I was already dissatisfied with those poems, which seemed to me mere exercises for poems I hadn't written" (٢٣). Hence, Boland depicts men's domination over women in her collection *In Her Own Image* in poems such as "Mastectomy" and "Anorexia". She reveals that "I felt I had to challenge the idea of Irish poetry as some kind of ordained male succession. I wanted to make a case for poetry happening in an ethical climate. I wanted to argue



that it needed to register the energies in its present community as well as its past tradition” (“A Backward Look” ٩).

On the other hand, some of Boland’s poems, particularly those of *In Her own Image*, are convenient for Gubar and Gilbert’s term “anxiety of authorship” which means that woman writer is afraid of her inability of becoming a pioneer in writing that will separate and ruin her: “the female poet experiences an “anxiety of authorship,” which is “an anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex” (Robertson ٢٦٦). Then, this fear will lead her to break down herself as it is evident in some poems of *In Her Own Image*.

In the past, the Irish field of literature did not witness any appearance of women poets who were the pioneers or leaders in writing poetry, so Boland, as well as her contemporary women poets, has the feeling of “anxiety of authorship”. They found out that Irish men poets wrote without any fear of authorship because they had men precursors for them like W.B Yeats who was an Irish forefather poet for many men poets, so these men poets experienced the feeling of “anxiety of influence”. Therefore, Boland was confronted by the sense of worry that she was not able to write very well poetry in the foremost position because she is a woman. She reveals that “I know now that I began writing in a country where the word woman and the word poet were almost magnetically opposed . . . Both states were necessary_ that much the culture conceded_ but they were oil and water and could not be mixed” (*Object Lessons* xi).

From here, Boland was anxious of becoming the creator of her literary texts and there were no foremothers of poets or if they were, they were not



apparent in the literary canon. One can see that when she murders her daughter in “In Her Own image” because she is afraid of her daughter’s connection with the traditional bases that will separate her from recognizing her own identity. She believes that if she does not kill her daughter, her daughter cannot rebel against such conventional images, and then she will be isolated or destroyed. This is what Gubar and Gilbert mean by “self-destruction” (Argaiz, *New Territory for the Irish Woman* ٢٥٥). In “Mastectomy”, Boland’s worry of “authorship” is evident when she depicts men as surgeons who distort the sexual organ of woman’s body. Because of her anxiety, this leads her to undergo her body under men surgeons’ amputation.

On the other hand, according to the deconstructive dimension, *In Her Own Image* is applicable for “écriture feminine” or what it calls “feminine writing” of the French feminist Cixous. Cixous’ feminist view is similar to Rich’s feminist view of urging women writers to include their unconsciousness in their texts. As I had tackled before, Cixous means by this term the portrayal of the female body as a way directed to the thought. This thought would ask about the root of men's basic thinking which mutes the voice of women. As a result, this would lead women to show their unconsciousness which is invisible in men's patriarchal language. Allen-Randolph asserts that “*In Her Own Image* marks a period of experimental writing for Boland, a concentrated and focused experiment with what is now popularly referred to as écriture feminine, writing located in and authorized by fundamental female experience: “writing the body” (“Ecriture Feminine” ٤٨).

In her poems “Anorexia” and “Mastectomy”, Boland connects her feminine writing with her body in order to identify herself as a woman. She

incorporates her feminist voice, through her body, into her literary texts to remove the domination of men writers' language and to have a noteworthy position as a woman writer among the men writers. Hence, Allen-Randolph explains that:

These opening poems make clear the connection between the female body and the body politic by staging an encounter between a generic Muse, erected by patriarchal culture as a kind of symbolic and ideal womanhood, and the suffering bodies of "real" women who are victimized by their acceptance of these patriarchal representations. ("Ecriture Feminine" ٤٩)

Subsequently, Boland's poetry is appropriate for Showalter's third female phase. As I had pointed out before that in the female phase women writers try to emphasize themselves through their own literary texts. In addition, they seek to distinguish their writing from men's writing. They write to include their own voices and daily experiences in literature. Thus, Boland's poetic works *The War Horse, Night Feed* (١٩٨٢), *The Journey and Other Poems, Outside History* (١٩٩٠), *In a Time of Violence* (١٩٩٤), *Against Love Poetry* (٢٠٠١), *Domestic Violence* (٢٠٠٧) and *A Woman Without a Country* (٢٠١٤) uncover her female identity as a woman poet. The reasons that push us to explore that these collections are characterized by the female phase is that through these works she departs from her imitating tradition of her ancestors of men poets and from writing the same old images that were represented to women in the past by men:

Not to be confused with the timid feminine stage of mimicry, the female stage is a heightened state of feminist awareness in which today's feminist critics calmly reflect on where women have been in literature



and where they are going . . . [T]he female phase . . . [is] the most advanced feminist stage. Poets who have entered the female phase have shown that it is possible to project strong viewpoints which are loyal to the feminist spirit without entering into antagonistic debates. (McMullen ٦٨)

Because Showalter's phases are not constant and they are interfered, *The War Horse* is more applicable for the third female phase more than the second feminist phase which is applicable for her third collection *In Her Own Image*. Thence, one can see that both the feminist and the female phases are the same to each other in their visions. However, each phase of them fulfills its aimed visions differently; "the feminist phase and the female phase both share the same ideological goals of gender equality, but their methods of achieving those goals differ" (McMullen ٦٧). Hence, it is not odd that *The War Horse* is applicable for the female phase whereas the poems of *In Her Own Image* are more convenient for the feminist phase than the female phase. *The War Horse* is the base of Boland's awakening to transform from the feminine phase to the female phase immediately. Through this collection, she is keen to expose woman's daily life inside her house; a topic that had not been tackled before in the Irish men poets' poetry. This is apparent in poems such as: "The Botanic Gardens" and "Suburban Woman". Afterwards, her female identity as a woman poet is strengthened, and she widens her female topics in *Night Feed*, *The Journey* and her other collections which draw the attention and the interest of her readers.

Consequently, *Outside History* is a striking collection since in the volume she articulates frankly that she, as well as the other Irish women poets are excluded from the Irish literary history and they are invisible.



Throughout this collection, Boland's influence of the Anglo-American feminist Woolf is apparent in her poem "The Room of the Other Poets". Its title is coined from Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* which has its great echo in the Anglo-American feminist school, as we had discussed before. In the poem, Boland believes, like Woolf who is regarded as her foremother, that what women poets need is just a room to be opened to them to reflect their female experience in their poetry.

Again, Rich's effect on Boland is evident through the title poem of the collection "Outside History" in which she denounces her exclusion from the literary history as a woman poet, and this will be clarified in chapter two. She was influenced by Rich's title poem of her collection *Driving into the Wreck*. In Rich's poem "Driving into the wreck", she also denounces that she and the other women writers are excluded from the books of literature: "book of myths / in which / our names do not appear" (Rich, "Diving into the Wreck"). Therefore, Rich is regarded as "a defining point for Boland's development" (Gelpi ٢١٠).

Again, the effect of the Anglo-American feminist school is apparent on developing Boland's poetic career. This is evident in her collection *A Woman Without a Country* through quoting Woolf's statement "The outsider will say, 'in fact, as a woman, I have no country'" from her book *The Guineas* as an epigraph in the volume. Although the title of the collection seems that it deals just with the woman who leaves her country for political reasons such as war, in fact the collection deals mostly with the woman who is excluded as a woman poet from the literary history:

The collection begins with a Virginia Woolf epigraph: "...as a woman, I have no country." Boland uses this as a starting point in her quest to



honor and memorialize women such as her own mother and grandmother who, either partly or entirely because of their gender, were marginalized and erased, disinherited and disenfranchised by their societies. (Le)

According to the feminist literary critical theory, Boland's poetry achieves great success in the thematic, ideological and deconstructive levels. On the thematic level, her poetic volumes deal with clear feminist literary themes such as: refusing women's symbolization, stereotyping, discrimination, exclusion, ignorance and asserting her female self-identity, subjectivity and authorship of her poetry. On the ideological level, it is apparent Boland's influence of the Anglo-American critics' views, such as Woolf, Rich, Susan and Gubar, in addition to her influence by the French feminist school's critics as Cixous whose views are deconstructive. Thus, she successfully portrays women's needs and their experience in the life along her collections. She creates new structure of language that is new in Ireland among her contemporary Irish poets. Hence, her poetry successfully fulfills great impact on her contemporary women writers and poets. Her poetic works push women poets to manifest their female needs and voices taking Boland their model on the literary map.

To conclude, the Irish women were marginalized and excluded from the Irish literary canon; they were represented as a motherland or Mother of Ireland. Thus, their portrayal in literature was mere objectified icons. Irish men poets used to depict Irish women such representations. Therefore, Boland was affected by feminist movements in Ireland. In her poetry she attempts to renew the past Irish literary canon.



Hence, the feminist literary critical theory is based on two different schools with two different aims: the Anglo-American criticism and the French feminist theory. Both of them have its different feminist visions that affected women writers and poets. Despite their difference, its feminist writers aim to end men's phallogocentric language in the literary texts.

Thus, Boland's poetry was affected by the different feminist views of these two schools. Her poetic works are applicable for the visions of the two schools. According to the ideological dimension, she was affected by the feminists of Anglo-American school. Additionally, according to the deconstructive dimension, the influence of the French feminists is apparent in her poetic work. As a result, she asserts her female identity as a woman poet and her volumes examine the feminist themes successfully. Boland, therefore, has pivotal role as a woman poet in developing the Irish literary tradition.

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