

Abject Imagery of Female Body in Eavan Boland's Selected Poems

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Abstract

Eavan Boland is considered one of the most important poets in the history of Irish literature. In particular, she is praised and celebrated for her exploration of women's identities, home life, and the complicated relationship between women and the mythology of the Irish nation. Eavan Boland has been dedicated, throughout the course of her work, to giving voice to the previously unspoken, the unrepresented, and the unsaid in the Irish literary canon. In *Her Own Image* is one of the most important books written by her. The poems in this collection, especially "Anorexic" and "In Her Own Image" can be read and analyzed in light of in the abjection theory, as described by Julia Kristeva. A Kristevan reading of the two poems selected for this study is particularly compelling, as he vividly depicts the processes of abjection as describe by Kristeva the violence of the rejection of the maternal-feminine, the visceral rejection of the body's appetites, and the haunting presence of the rejected other which threatens the solidity of the self. The study attempts to demonstrate Boland's speakers enact the violence of abjection, only to discover themselves perpetually displaced figured as restless wanderers without a stable sense of belonging.

Keywords: Abject Imagery, Eavan Boland, Anorexic, In Her Own Image

صور النبذ في الجسد الانثوي في قصائد مختارة لايفان بولند

م.م. اخلاص راهي مشكور

تعتبر ايفان بولند واحدة من اهم الشعراء في تاريخ الادب البولندي. على وجه الخصوص نشيد ونحتفي بها لاستكشافها لهويات النساء، والحياة المنزلية والعلاقة المعقدة بين النساء واساطير الامة الايرلندية. كرست ايفان بولند طوال مسيرتها الادبية لاعطاء صوت لما لم ينطق به من قبل وما لم يمثل ، وما لم يقال في الادب البولندي. تعد " على صورتها" واحدة من اهم الكتب التي كتبتها. يمكن قراءة وتحليل القصائد في هذه المجموعة وخاصة "مصابة بفقدان الشهية العصبي" و "على صورتها" في ضوء نظرية النبذ، كما وصفتها جوليا كريستيفيا. ان قراءة كريستيفيا للقصيدتين المختارتين لهذه الدراسة مقنعة بشكل خاص حيث يصور بوضوح عمليات النبذ كما وصفتها كريستيفيا عنف رفض الامومة والرفض القهري لشهوات الجسد، والحضور المؤرق للشخص المنبوذ والذي يهدد صلابة الذات. تحاول الدراسة اثبات ان متحدثي بولاند يمارسون عنف النبذ ليكتشفوا انهم يعيشون شخصيات مغتربة بشكل دائم، مصورون على انهم شخصيات منزاحة كجوالين مضطربين دون شعور مستقر بالانتماء.

كلمات مفتاحية: صور النبذ، ايفان بولاند، فقدان الشهية العصبي، على صورتها

Introduction

Eavan Boland was an Irish poet who broke new ground in the world of poetry by focusing on the experiences of women and the marginalization of women in her own society. Born in 1944 in Dublin, Ireland, Boland was the daughter of a diplomat, her father, and an artist, her mother. She lived in various



countries while growing up, but returned to Ireland for her education. Her identity as a woman has been of noticeable importance in her poems. Her books of poetry, which include *In Her Own Image* (1980), *Outside History* (1990), and *In a Time of Violence* (1994), deal with women's experiences. In addition, and on a larger scale, Boland attempted to bridge the gap between the two seemingly contradictory terms: "woman" and "poet." In her books of poetry, Boland rather than accepting the traditional images of women in Irish culture attempts to break away from them. She aimed at creating room in Irish poetry for women's experiences, whether they are on the topics of motherhood, history, or difficult issues such as domestic violence and anorexia.

Boland's more recent works, such as *Against Love Poetry* (2001) and *Domestic Violence* (2007), continue to interweave personal, national, and mythological histories. These books times complicate the very nature of the Irish lyric tradition that Boland herself had been a part of. Her *New Collected Poems* (2008) was praised for showing Boland's contribution to the Irish literary tradition. Apart from poetry, Boland was also an accomplished anthologist, memoirist (*Object Lessons*, 1995), and teacher at Trinity College Dublin and Stanford University, where she had been for more than two decades. Boland's literary awards include the Lannan Foundation Award. Her legacy lies in the unyielding dedication to the cause of lyric beauty and feminism, so that the stories of women are told and remembered in the poetry of her own country. In a remarkable quotation, she notes: "I couldn't accept the possibility that the life of the woman would not, or could not, be named in the poetry of my own nation" (Smartish Pace, 2015). Boland died in 2020 and left behind a world that had been forever transformed by her presence.

Theoretical Framework Abjection Theory

In the realm of critical theory, the process of abjection is the human process of casting aside and becoming separate from that which disrupts the established norms and orders, both on the level of society as a whole and on the level of the individual self. In the tradition of Freud and Lacan, the subject of abjection was given its most important and influential theoretical foundation with Julia Kristeva's 1982 work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. In it, she describes abjection as the profound feeling of horror that occurs as the individual comes into contact with the repressed aspects of their "own corporeal reality." In other words, it is the intrusion of the raw Real into the Symbolic Order that disrupts the boundaries of the self and other, the living and the dead. Although this concept is currently being applied to the study of popular culture, discriminatory practices, and marginality. It is the particular theorization of the abject as the rejected part of the self that is associated with the maternal figure that needs to be abjected to form the self that I would like to discuss further.



Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* delineates the features of the abject. According to her, the abject is, by definition, "neither subject nor object" (Kristeva, 1982,p.1). It is not a thing that can be defined as a specific object in front of a specific subject, but rather a "violent, dark revolt of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" .It is a presence as Kristeva, (1982) mentions that "lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated" . This presence, which is neither a fully formed "I" nor a fully formed "other," creates a powerful, ambivalent reaction of "summons and repulsion" that causes the person who is reacting to it to be "literally beside himself" (p.1). Kristeva, (1982) describes the abject as "the jettisoned object, [that which] is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses"(p.2) It is a "something" that is not recognizable as a thing, a "weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me" (p.2).

One of the most basic aspects of abjection is its relation to the "improper/unclean" , especially as it is mediated through the body and its waste products. The reaction to abjection is a visceral, physical one: the "food loathing" (Kristeva, 1982,p.2). For example: "I watched a film on the surface of the milk: 'a gagging sensation,' spasms in the stomach." . The concern is not with the unhealthiness or rottenness of the food, but with the border it represents. In rejecting the food, which is a representation of the parent's desire, the subject is engaging in a self-rejection: "I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself." (Kristeva, 1982,p.3). The ultimate form of waste is the corpse. The corpse is "the utmost of abjection" as it is "death infecting life." (Kristeva, 1982,p.4). The corpse is a representation of the border that the living constantly push away: "These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death." (Kristeva, 1982,p.3). The corpse is the border that has invaded all: it shows that the "I" is not the expeller, but the expelled.

Besides the physical, abjection is also characterized by what Kristeva (1982) describes as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (p.4). In the ethical and social dimension of abjection, we find "the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience" (p.4). The abject act of these individuals lies in the fact that they expose "the fragility of the law" (p.4). Abjection, in the ethical and social dimension, is "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles" (p.4). Kristeva illustrates the concept of abjection with the Nazi crimes, and it "reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things" (p.4). The abject,

therefore, is not just the physical; it is the fundamental disruption of the symbolic order and the categories of life.

Kristeva (1982) argues that the ultimate form of this experience is "the abjection of self" (p.5). This happens when the subject, tired of seeking approval and acceptance from others, "finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject" (p.5). In abjection, the subject discovers that all objects are based upon "a fundamental loss, a 'want' at the core of being" (p.5). The subject who shares existence with the abject is the "deject" (p.8), a wandering subject who constantly demarcates his territory but never finds a place of belonging. The deject's question is not "Who am I?" but "Where am I?" (p.8), as he moves in a space "essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic" (p.8). Lastly, the time of abjection is "double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth" (p.9), a forgotten trauma that suddenly and violently irrupts into the present.

Therefore and as discussed in this section, the abject is marked by ambiguity, an ambiguity which subverts the stability of identity and order and appears as a presence which is at the same time neither subject nor object. This way, the abject has an ambivalent force of attraction and repulsion. The characteristics of the abject are grounded in a visceral physical response to what perceived as "improper/unclean," such as bodily waste and. Above all, the abject is represented through corpse, which according to Kristeva symbolizes the ultimate transgression of the boundary between life and death by "infecting life." Beyond the physical, the abject is also concerned with the social and symbolic order, as in the traitor, the liar, and the criminal, who reveal the instability of the law, as well as the "in-between, ambiguous, [or] composite" in terms of categorization. This process ultimately results in the "abjection of self," where the self realizes a basic lack at the very core of their being, and they become a perpetual wanderer or "deject" moving through a fragmented space and time, pursued by a forgotten trauma that forcefully irrupts into the present. Based on this theoretical framework, next section analyzes two important poems written by Eavan Boland, namely "Anorexic" and "In Her Own Image."

An Analysis of Boland's "Anorexic" and "In Her Own Image."

In *In Her Own Image*, including a collection of poems published in 1980, Boland is concerned with female body. She attempts to break out of the traditional imagery in Irish poetry and extend its possibilities by writing about the forgotten aspects of women's bodies, such as domestic violence, mastectomy, menstruation, and anorexia. Doing so, Boland demonstrates the vast space between the disembodied, spiritual images of traditional perception of womanhood and the complex, lived bodies of women, especially in Irish culture.



In "Anorexic," from the same collection of *In Her Own Image*, the subject is one that is—and has been—disquieting: the self-starvation of the anorexic as a means to spiritual purity. Several critics have provided other readings for the poem. O'Leary (2017) acknowledges that "self-starvation and Famine are seemingly separate from each other in that the former may be viewed as voluntary, and the latter tragically unavoidable" (p.13). In the Irish context, she argues, "the image of a starving Irish woman, regardless of whether that starvation is self-imposed, evokes a very particular cultural vocabulary of memory, addresses a shared cultural trauma in individually traumatic terms" (p.9). This is in line with what Ellmann (1993) states that, when she points out that the Irish have had a long tradition of starvation as a means of rebellion, from Medieval legal procedures of "fasting to distraint" – known as troscud – to modern Irish hunger strikers after the Easter Rising of 1916 (p.11). However, perhaps one of the most obvious themes of the poem is the body itself, in its materiality and as it is depicted as a female body.

In addition, the poem has an obvious allusion to the biblical figure of Eve and the fall into sin, with the speaker here imagining herself as "thin as a rib" and dreaming of "slip[ping] / back into him again" to possess again the sinless state she had as part of Adam's side. The allusion allows Boland to examine the alienation of body from self that is part of the anorexic experience as the speaker describes her body as "she," "the bitch," and "a witch." These terms that suggest the body is an alien entity to be transcended and overcome. But the anorexic is also a figure of great strength as she starves herself as a means of transcending "sweat and fat and greed" that she equates with female embodiment.

Based on Kristeva's theory, "Anorexic" can be read and analyzed as a dramatic representation of a speaker's attempt to form a sense of self through violent means. The speaker's body is equated with a feminine force of impurity, which must be purged through starvation in order for a state of "sinless" purity to be attained. The poem begins with a declaration of war against the body. In these lines, the speaker presents the flesh as a primary threat to identity and order:

Flesh is heretic.
My body is a witch.
I am burning it.(Boland, 1980)

All poetic quotations are from Boland (1980).

This first stanza of the poem is a perfect example of Kristeva's definition of the abject, which must be "radically excluded." The speaker creates a line of differentiation between herself and her own body, emphasizing the fact of this differentiation by using the phrase "My body" instead of "I am my body." She

has made her own body into something foreign and threatening. By referring to her own body as "heretic" and "witch," she has relegated it to the realm of the abject, or the realm of the "outside" of the self, a presence "quite close, but it cannot be assimilated." By "burning" her own body, she is engaging in the act of exclusion, or trying to rid herself of this element of chaos, to create a sense of stability in her "I."

The speaker continues to explain this act of self-destruction in relation to the specifics of her female body.

Yes I am torching
her curves and paps and wiles.
They scorch in my self-denials.
How she meshed my head
in the half-truths
of her fevers!
till I renounced
milk and honey
and the taste of lunch.

In this case, the poem explicitly links the flesh to the maternal and feminine, "her curves and paps," "milk," which are exactly the aspects of the self that need to be abjected in order to create a self, according to Kristeva's theory. The fact that "she" and "her" are used to refer to the speaker's own body creates a huge dissociation, to the point where the speaker's own body is seen as a separate entity, a "witch" who has "meshed" my head in half-truths." This is in line with Kristeva's theory of abjection, where there is a confrontation with one's own "own corporeal reality." The rejection of food, "milk and honey," "lunch," is, as Kristeva points out, not really about the food but about the border it represents. "Food loathing" is a "self-rejection," a "physical acting-out" of the desire to "spit myself out."

The language of the speaker becomes increasingly violent and repulsed, referring to her own body as an active, malevolent entity that needs to be ejected in the most repulsive way.

I vomited
her hungers.
Now the bitch is burning.

The act of vomiting itself is the very essence of Kristevan thought: the physical reaction to the abject, the violent convulsion of the body as it expels the abject presence. Kristeva describes the "gagging sensation" and "spasms in the stomach" that occur as the abject is confronted. Her description of her own body as "the bitch" reinforces the idea of otherness and exclusion. The end goal



of the fiery expulsions of the abject is a state of being that is no longer fluid and embodied, but one that is fixed and defined:

I am starved and curveless.

I am skin and bone.

She has learned her lesson.

The speaker has sought to go from the ambiguous, in-between, to the clear, hard, and definite. The body, having been "burned" and expelled, is now "skin and bone," a definite, autonomous form that has successfully abjected the messy, living flesh. The speaker proudly asserts, "She has learned her lesson," implying that the maternal-female body has been successfully subjugated through this violent abjection. But there is a significant turn in this poem that shows the paradox inherent in abjection. The expulsion of flesh does not result in a clear, autonomous self, but rather a desire for a state before the need for a separate identity:

Thin as a rib

I turn in sleep.

My dreams probe

a claustrophobia,

a sensuous enclosure.

How warm it was and wide

once by a warm drum,

once by the song of his breath

and in his sleeping side.

This dream sequence shows the "fundamental loss" or "want at the core of being," as Kristeva describes it. The speaker's "claustrophobia" is contradictory, as it is the fear of being closed in, but it also represents the desire for the "sensuous enclosure" of the pre-Oedipal, symbiotic relationship. The "warm drum" of the dream recalls the maternal heartbeat, the first sound heard by the fetus in the womb. However, the speaker has made the space masculine, as evidenced by "his breath" and "his sleeping side," suggesting the speaker wants the enclosure of the other, the male, as a replacement for the maternal body she has rejected.

This is the role of the "deject"—a wandering subject who constantly marks out territory, but never finds a place of belonging, who does not ask "Who am I?" but, as Kristeva puts it, "Where am I?"

The final stanza brings to completion the ghastly logic of the speaker's project. Failing to go back to the maternal body, she wants to re-enter the symbolic world, but not as a subject of desire, rather as an object, cleansed of her abject femininity.



Only a little more,
 only a few more days
 sinless, foodless,
 I will slip
 back into him again
 as if I had never been away.

The imagery of sin and redemption gives to the eating disorder a flavor of a religious purification rite. "To be foodless is to be sinless." The desire is to "slip back into him"—to become so diminished, so invisible, that she might re-enter the other, the male. "As if I had never been away" reveals the ultimate desire—to erase the self altogether, to cancel out the whole painful process of self-formation.

Caged so
 I will grow
 angular and holy
 past pain,
 keeping his heart
 such company
 as will make me forget
 in a small space
 the fall
 into forked dark,
 into python needs
 heaving to hips and breasts
 and lips and heat
 and sweat and fat and greed.

This is the final act of self-abjection. The speaker, in rejecting the flesh of the "heretic," has not found a self but has placed herself in the position of being abject and ready to be incorporated into the male other. She will be made "angular and holy," the opposite of the curved and soft flesh she has burned. She will exist in a "caged" space, confined to a "small space," but it is a confinement she wants because it will allow her to escape the "fall" of the flesh.

The final two lines are a litany of all that she has attempted to rid herself of, a litany that grows in visceral detail, each word a bodily part associated with the feminine, maternal, desiring body. "Python needs" is a striking part of this litany, suggesting a primal, suffocating, animalistic hunger. In her "small space" of "sinless, foodless" being, she aspires to a state beyond abjection, but as this poem shows, this is a deathly, impossible fantasy.

Belanger (2000) suggests that Boland finally "reinstated a reading of woman's bodily experience which ultimately denies the actual painful reality of



its existence" (p.250). This criticism echoes my own Kristevan interpretation, in which the speaker's wish to "slip back into him again" is precisely such a negation of embodied subjectivity, a "deathly, impossible fantasy" which paradoxically reenacts the very lack of embodiment that Boland had sought to overcome.

In Kristeva's work, "the abjection of self" happens to a subject who "finds the impossible within; finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject." The speaker of Boland's poem has become this kind of subject, one who has sought to purge the abject feminine, only to realize that she, in turn, has become a deject, a hollowed-out subject seeking reabsorption into an other. The horror of the poem's power is that it shows us that this attempt at purity, this violence of expulsion, has not created a whole subject, but a ghost, haunted by what it sought to destroy.

Boland's "In Her Own Image" also can be read and analyzed in light of the Kristevan notion of the abject, with respect to a troubled relationship with a female other, who is also, by extension, the self. "In Her Own Image," the title piece of the collection, deals with a taboo subject: the mother's abuse of the daughter. "In Her Own Image" is the direct sequel to the opening manifesto "Tirade for the Mimic Muse" and works to develop Boland's mission of laying bare what lies behind the passive, decorative female images so prevalent in Irish poetry up until then.

The title itself is significant, as it references the biblical concept of the creation of man, "made in God's own image" (The Bible, 1998, Genesis 1:27). In the same vein, the title suggests that the poem will reveal the woman as she really is, as opposed to how she has been perceived by men. What Boland actually shows, however, is not the image of the perfect woman, but the horror of the mother murdering her child in a dissociated state. As the critic Jody Allen-Randolph (1991) describes the poem "explores the horrifying interiority, dangerous confusion, and retarded psychological development of a female speaker who has just strangled her own child" (p.50). What the speaker wears suggests "a sinister strangling of identity and loss of innocence through physical abuse, both in the speaker's actions and in her previous experiences of family" (p.51). It is important to note that critics like Alexander Gonzalez read the poem as the husband's response to his wife's impending departure—"the male equivalent of the female speaker in 'In His Own Image'" (p.208).

In the tradition of Irish literature, where women were considered to be passive, decorative symbols of the nation, Boland's decision to write about the condition of anorexia was a brave act. It was brave because in it, Boland put emphasis on the right of female bodily experience, in all its extreme and self-destructive forms. The poem presents the reader with an ambiguity: the speaker hopes for freedom and rebirth through the disappearance of the body, but we, as

readers, understand, in a way the speaker perhaps does not, that the soul cannot be "unleashed" through the destruction of the body, and her attempt to possess righteousness through starvation is a dead end.

The poem begins with the speaker's attempt to confront and describe this other woman, immediately establishing her as both familiar and inaccessible:

It is her eyes:
 the irises are gold
 and round they go
 like the ring on my wedding finger,
 round and round
 and I can't touch
 their histories or tears.

The eyes, the traditional gateway to the soul, become barriers in this poem. The comparison of the other woman's eyes to "the ring on my wedding finger" draws an important connection between the two women, for they are joined by the symbol of union and commitment. The circular motion of the ring, however, "round and round," implies inaccessibility and unavailability, rather than connection. The speaker, however, "can't touch / their histories or tears," implying that the other woman's essence, her pain and history, remains completely closed off from the speaker. This, too, relates to Kristeva's definition of abjectness as something that "lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated." The other woman is close, in plain sight, yet the essence of who she is cannot be accessed or understood by the speaker.

The second stanza further develops the idea of separation and alienation, as the speaker explains what was lost, a unity that has been violently disrupted

To think they were once my satellites!
 They shut me out now.
 Such light years!

The imagery is important. "Satellites" suggests a prior relation of orbital dependence—the other woman once revolved around the speaker, was within her gravitational field, part of her system. This suggests a Kristevan notion of abject, something that must be expelled in order to define the self, suggesting that this other woman was once part of the speaker's identity. But now, "They shut me out now." The reversal is complete. The speaker is now the one shut out, denied entry. The exclamation "Such light years!" suggests the vast, cosmic distance now separating them—not a distance in space, but a distance in relation to self and other, subject and abject. The speaker now identifies the ontological crisis that this separation has caused



She is not myself
 anymore she is not
 even in my sky
 anymore and |
 am not myself.

This is a poetic manifestation of Kristeva's description of abject as something that "disturbs identity, system, order." The speaker's language is fragmented and repetitive, and the line breaks are meant to resemble the fragmentation of the speaker's identity. The key moment of recognition occurs at the end, as it becomes clear that "she is not myself / anymore" therefore "I / am not myself." The speaker's sense of identity was apparently dependent on the satellite status of this other woman. She has been expelled, and in her place there is only a lack, a sense of incompleteness.

The poem then takes a disturbing turn as the speaker contemplates her response to this exiled other

I will not disfigure
 her pretty face.

But the protestation "I will not" immediately raises the question of what it is that is being denied. Why disfigurement at all? The implication here seems to be that violence is a latent possibility, an impulse that must be consciously rejected. This is reminiscent of Kristeva's definition of the abject, that which prompts the response of "summons and repulsion," as the speaker is drawn to the other (as evidenced by the entirety of the poem's contemplation on the subject), and yet repulsed, tempted to destroy the face that she recognizes as "pretty."

Instead, the speaker chooses another form of containment and control.

Let her wear amethyst thumbprints,
 a family heirloom,
 a sort of burial necklace
 and | know just the place:
 Where the wall glooms,
 where the lettuce seeds,
 where the jasmine springs
 no surprises
 I will bed her.

The "amethyst thumbprints" and the "burial necklace" are ambiguous objects. The amethyst is a precious stone, but "thumbprints" are an impression or a mark left by the maker. Perhaps the speaker is leaving an impression or mark of herself upon this other person even in death. The "family heirloom" connects the other woman to family lineage, to the maternal line, to the very



structure of family and kinship that the abject threatens. But it is also a "burial necklace," an object to adorn the deceased as part of the burial ritual. The speaker knows "just the place" where this burial will take place: it is a space that is bordered or bounded ("the wall"), that has the possibility of growth ("lettuce seeds," "jasmine springs"), but that has "no surprises." Here the speaker is attempting to contain the abject, to place it in a particular space where it will not move or disrupt. To "bed her" means both to lay her to rest and to position her as a sexual object, with the connotations of death and sex that the word "bed" has. The speaker is attempting to fulfill the task that Kristeva describes as impossible: to define the territory of the self through the expulsion and containment of the abject other.

The final stanza shows the contradictory effect of the attempt to bury the other.

She will bloom there,
second nature to me,
the one perfection
among compromises.

The implication of "She will bloom" is that the expelled other is not destroyed, but transformed, will flourish, even in her grave. This accords with Kristeva's understanding of the abject as something that can never be fully expelled, as it always returns, haunts. "Second nature" is a phrase with many layers of meaning. It can refer to instinctive, natural, automatic, as if the other, buried within, will become part of the speaker's natural self, part of their very being. It can also refer to a second nature, as if the other, buried within, replaces the original nature, lost. Most disturbingly, the speaker describes the other, buried within, as "the one perfection / among compromises." In the life of compromises, the adult identity, the compromise of the wedding ring, the compromise of socialization, the violently expelled and contained other becomes the one perfect, pure thing. Here we see the ambivalence of abjection, the other as the perfect, the pure, the one thing that contains the authenticity of the compromised self.

The speaker in Boland's poem has jettisoned this female other, made arrangements for her burial, and chosen a grave for her. And yet, in so doing, she has not found any sort of meaning or identity, but rather admitted that she is "not myself" without this other. The "perfection" she sees in this buried other is the perfection of the lost object, a completeness never possible after the violent severing of self and other. She is still a deject, wandering through this territory she has marked out, haunted by the other she has buried, who will "bloom" in the darkness of "the wall glooms."

Conclusion



This analysis has demonstrated that the poems "Anorexic" and "In Her Own Image" by Eavan Boland are powerful exemplifications of the concept of abjection as defined by Julia Kristeva. The analysis of the speaker in the poems has demonstrated the ways in which the speaker in the poems is engaging in violent expulsions of the other, the feminine other who is at the same time the self, the maternal body being burned and vomited upon in the poem "Anorexic," and the satellite self buried alive in the poem "In Her Own Image." The analysis has also demonstrated the ways in which the speaker of the poems, in attempting to define and solidify the self, ultimately realizes, as Kristeva has explained, that the abjected other always returns, and the poems end with the speaker of the poems as a deject, a wanderer who does not ask the question "Who am I?" but rather asks the question "Where am I?" because they have defined the territory through violence and are therefore expelled from it.

This particular study, however, may be considered limited by its concentration only on two of the numerous works of Boland, as well as its exclusive use of Kristeva without considering possible other theorists who may have offered different views. Further studies may be fruitful if they would expand the analysis of Kristevan abjection in the works of Boland, especially in other works of hers in *In Her Own Image*, as well as in her other works such as *Night Feed* and *Outside History*, and how it develops throughout her writing.

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