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Poetry: Two Poems

Eavan Boland

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Two Poems

BY EAVAN BOLAND

THE PHOTOGRAPH ON MY FATHER'S DESK

It could be
any summer afternoon.
The sun is warm on
the fruitwood garden seat.

Fuchsia droops.
Thrushes move to get
windfalls
underneath the crab apple tree.

The woman
holds her throat like a wound;
she wears
mutton-coloured

gaberdine with
a scum of lace
just above her boot
which is pointed at

this man
coming down
the path with
his arms held wide open. Laughing.

The talk has stopped.
The spoon which just now
jingled at the rim
of the lemonade jug

is still,
and the shrubbed lavender
will find
neither fragrance nor muslin.

THE EMIGRANT IRISH

Like oil lamps we put them out the back,
of our houses, of our minds. We had lights
better than, newer than and then

a time came, this time and now
we need them. Their dread, makeshift example.

They would have thrived on our necessities.
What they survived we could not even live.
By their lights now it is time to
imagine how they stood there, what they stood with,
that their possessions may become our power.

Cardboard. Iron. Their hardships parcelled in them.
Patience. Fortitude. Long-suffering
in the bruise-coloured dusk of the New World.

And all the old songs. And nothing to lose.



*Born in Dublin, Eavan Boland is one of Ireland's leading younger writers. She has published several collections of poetry including translations from Irish, Russian, and German, and her most recent book is **The Journey and Other Poems**, available from Carcanet Press, 198 Sixth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10013. Ms. Boland gave a reading at Bridgewater in November 1987.*