The Lost Land

By Eavan Boland

I have two daughters.

They are all I ever wanted from the earth.

Or almost all.

I also wanted one piece of ground:

One city trapped by hills. One urban river. An island in its element.

So I could say mine. My own. And mean it.

Now they are grown up and far away

and memory itself has become an emigrant, wandering in a place where love dissembles itself as landscape:

Where the hills are the colours of a child’s eyes, where my children are distances, horizons:

At night, on the edge of sleep,

I can see the shore of Dublin Bay. Its rocky sweep and its granite pier.

Is this, I say how they must have seen it, backing out on the mailboat at twilight, shadows falling on everything they had to leave? And would love forever? And then

I imagine myself at the landward rail of that boat searching for the last sight of a hand.

I see myself on the underworld side of that water, the darkness coming in fast, saying all the names I know for a lost land:
