Woman in Kitchen

Breakfast over, islanded by noise,

she watches the machines go fast and slow.

She stands among them as they shake the house. They move. Their destination is specific.

She has nowhere definite to go.

She might be a pedestrian in traffic.

White surfaces retract. White sideboards light the white of walls. Cups wink white in their saucers. The light of day bleaches as it falls

on cups and sideboards. She could use the room to tap with if she lost her sight.

Machines jigsaw everything she knows. And she is everywhere among their furor: the tropic of the dryer tumbling clothes. The round lunar window of the washer. The kettle in the toaster is a kingfisher diving for trout above the river’s mirror.

The wash done, the kettle boiled, the sheets spun and clean, the dryer stops dead.

The silence is a death. It starts to bury

the room in white spaces. She turns to spread a cloth on the board and irons sheets

in a room white and quiet as a mortuary.

*Eavan Boland*

*Eavan Boland (born 1944) explores how a mundane daily ritual become suffused with energy and meaning.*

Questions:

1. What connotations and denotations does the title have?
2. Considering the language, Does the tone seem formal, informal, affectionate, violent, pleased, or ???? Support your answer with language from the poem.
3. What seems to be the attitude of the speaker toward housework or domesticity more generally?
4. Define as precisely as possible the tone of the poem as precisely as possible.