



HAL
open science

Ar Seachrán sa Lios: Reterritorialising Narratives of Fairy Abductions in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's Bean an Leasa Poems

Audrey Robitaillié

► **To cite this version:**

Audrey Robitaillié. Ar Seachrán sa Lios: Reterritorialising Narratives of Fairy Abductions in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's Bean an Leasa Poems. *Nordic Irish Studies*, 2017, 16, pp.75-96. hal-03641513

HAL Id: hal-03641513

<https://hal.science/hal-03641513>

Submitted on 1 Jul 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Ar Seachrán sa LiosAuthor(s): Audrey Robitaille

Source: *Nordic Irish Studies*, Vol. 16 (2017), pp. 75-96

Published by: Dalarna University Centre for Irish Studies

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26486978>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26486978?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Dalarna University Centre for Irish Studies is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Nordic Irish Studies*

JSTOR

*Ar Seachrán sa Lios: Reterritorialising Narratives of Fairy Abductions in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's Bean an Leasa Poems*¹

Audrey Robitaille^{2*}

University of Edinburgh, Scotland

* Email: arobitaille01@qub.ac.uk

Abstract: This article analyses the motif of fairy abduction in the works of contemporary Irish-language poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. It draws particular attention to Ní Dhomhnaill's series of *Bean an Leasa* poems, from her collections *Féar Suaithinseach* (1984) and *Feis* (1991). The fairy woman who gives her name to the two series of poems abducts humans and takes the narrator hostage, depriving them of their free will. Ní Dhomhnaill depicts characters crossing the threshold of worlds, in-between the real and the Other- worlds, in-between fiction and reality, in-between the Irish and English languages. This study examines the significance of liminality in the *Bean an Leasa* poems. Whether it be the characters, straddling the border between two worlds, the language, or the poems themselves, partaking of the folk tradition while being a contemporary piece of literature, the *Bean an Leasa* poems are inherently liminal. This articulates the liminality of moving between languages, places and cultures, which is inherent to her whole oeuvre. Ní Dhomhnaill's reuse of Irish folk tradition is studied under the light of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of de/reterritorialisation, and thus the main contention is that her rewritings of *Bean an Leasa* are a reterritorialisation of Irish folklore as well as a means of articulating the poet's own experience of linguistic liminality and of reterritorialisation.

Keywords: Irish-language poetry, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, fairy abduction, liminality, deterritorialisation.

Introduction

'The ancient shamanistic gift of shape-shifting is enshrined in the best of modern Gaelic poetry'.² Gabriel Rosenstock's statement is exemplified by the Irish-language poetry of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, which is rooted in Irish folklore. The latter abounds with stories of fairy abductions: the fairies of Irish folk tales are prone to taking away children and young women, but also young men from time to time. They sometimes would leave behind a fairy creature called a 'changeling' in place of the stolen person. This fairy substitute takes the appearance of the abductee and their place in the home.

Ní Dhomhnaill recalls this folk figure of metamorphosis when she discusses her linguistic shift as a child, when she moved to live with her aunt in Kerry. Her words regarding her move to the Gaeltacht are quite telling: she recounts that, after she eventually decided to speak Irish, at the age of five, when her father came to visit and spoke English to her, she rebuked him for doing so: ‘Six weeks later my father came to visit me, and I asked him in Irish, “Why are you speaking English to me? Isn’t this Ireland?” The metamorphosis was complete’.³ The use of the word ‘metamorphosis’ is revealing because it foreshadows the changeling stories that later feature in her poetry.

Ní Dhomhnaill draws on this folkloric material in her early work. Her second collection, entitled *Féar Suaithinseach* (1984), includes a section of poems called ‘Bean an Leasa’, meaning ‘the woman from the fort’: ‘Fuadach’, ‘An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch’, ‘A Bhean a Ghaibh Isteach’, ‘Thar mo Chionn’ and ‘An Crann’.⁴ In the first poem (‘Abduction’), Bean an Leasa irrupts in the narrator’s life and starts doing chores around the house, while the female narrator steps aside. ‘An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch’ (‘The Girl Who Was a Mouse’) depicts Bean an Leasa trespassing into the family field, for which the narrator’s father curses her. In retaliation, the fairy woman curses the daughter and narrator to be turned into a mouse. ‘A Bhean a Ghaibh Isteach’ (‘O Woman Who Came in’) also portrays Bean an Leasa as a threatening figure, against whom the narrator is trying to resist. ‘Thar mo Chionn’ (‘Mea Culpa’) was inspired by the tragic story of Ann Lovett, a teenage girl who gave birth unassisted by the grotto in Granard, Co. Longford, and died shortly afterwards in 1984. In this poem, the female narrator is asked by Bean an Leasa to enter the fairy fort to breastfeed a child, but she refuses to stay there, which leads the fairies to find someone else, a young girl, to do the job. Finally, ‘An Crann’ (‘The Tree’) features the same Bean an Leasa, who cuts down the dumbfounded narrator’s tree, to the great displeasure of her husband.

A later book, published in 1991, *Feis*, also contains a ‘Bean an Leasa’ section, composed of three poems this time: ‘An Slad’, ‘Bean an Leasa mar Shiobshiúlóir’ and ‘Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa’.⁵ The first poem of this section (‘Slaughter’) presents Bean an Leasa as the leader of a band of thugs who raid the humans’ lands. In the second piece (‘The Fairy Hitch-hiker’), she climbs into the narrator’s husband’s car and elopes with him. In the last poem (‘The Heist’), the narrator takes part in a fairy cavalcade as they travel to France to indulge in the good wines right under the custom officers’ noses. Not all the poems mentioned in the two collections feature an abduction by Bean an Leasa, but in all of them the fairy woman

somehow takes the narrator hostage, depriving them of their free will, even though they are not necessarily taken away.

Cary Shay notes that 'In addition to the language issue, feminism and psychoanalytical theory are recognized as perhaps the most fundamental keys to conceptualizing the poet's vision'.⁶ Unlike Shay's, the present work focuses not on the English-language translations of the poems, but on Ní Dhomhnaill's original poems in Irish to discuss these rewritings of the fairy woman. In 1997, Padraig de Paor's *Tionscnamh Filíochta Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill* was the first to use psychoanalytical theory to frame her work and her reuse of mythological figures.⁷ In the second monograph on the poet in 2005, *Téacs Baineann, Téacs Mná*, Briona Nic Dhiarmada takes up de Paor's analysis and adds her own feminist perspective onto the Jungian reading of Ní Dhomhnaill's rewriting of the tradition, pointing out how central the *lios* is to Ní Dhomhnaill's imagination.⁸ Michaela Schrage-Früh's monograph corroborates these interpretations, analysing how the concepts of myth, nation and femininity intertwine.⁹ Laura O'Connor equally dwells on the imagery of the *lios* in Ní Dhomhnaill's poetry, discussing representations of the maternal figure and folklore in the poems.¹⁰ This is an aspect of the poems that Angela Bourke has examined as well, detailing the relations between women and storytelling, fairy folklore and abductions (foreshadowing her study of Bridget Cleary's death), evoking such ideas as fairy abductions being metaphors for depression or death, and liminality in the folktales.¹¹ Frank Sewell sees transgression as Ní Dhomhnaill's strategy throughout her poetry, particularly the *Bean an Leasa* poems.¹² While drawing on the previous interpretations of the poet's work, Ríona Ní Fhrighil adds another important aspect to the analysis of her poetry: she looks at it through the prism of translation studies.¹³ The doubleness entailed by the translation of the poems echoes the duality at the heart of the *Bean an Leasa* poems, as Eric Falci also points out.¹⁴

Building on all this scholarly work, the present article looks at liminality in the *Bean an Leasa* poems through the lens of Deleuzian theory. Whether it be through their characters, straddling the border between two worlds, their language, or the poems themselves, partaking of the folk tradition while being a contemporary piece of literature, the *Bean an Leasa* series are inherently liminal. This reflects the concerns of the writer herself, moving between languages, places and cultures, that pervade her whole oeuvre. Ní Dhomhnaill's reuse of the Irish folk tradition is an act of reterritorialisation, to take up the term coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: her rewritings of *Bean an Leasa* are a reterritorialisation of Irish folklore as well as a means of articulating the poet's own experience of linguistic liminality and of reterritorialisation. This essay analyses the

motif of *Bean an Leasa* in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poetry and the significance of liminality in these poems. It will focus on how the poet is reusing the figure to explore themes of liminality, otherness and belonging through a triple reterritorialisation at character, formal and personal level.

Do shiúl Bean an Leasa isteach sa dán, The Deterritorialised Fairy Woman

Bean an leasa is an anonymous character of Irish folklore, a fairy woman, a woman from the fairy fort (*lios*). In an account from Co. Leitrim, she is depicted as a 'young lovely lady'.¹⁵ Despite her comely appearance, the fairy woman lures humans away from their families and takes children to the Otherworld. In a Kerry folk narrative, she is a 'strange woman' who tries to trick a little girl into staying with her in the fort, for instance.¹⁶ In another Kerry tale, she tries to entice a young girl who is on her way to school with fairy bread.¹⁷ Her outward aspect usually betrays her origins, since it contrasts with the rural folk she encounters in the narratives. In a folk account from Co. Galway, she is indeed described as a 'well-dressed' woman who appears on the road one morning.¹⁸ In Ní Dhomhnaill's 1991 poems, *Bean an Leasa*'s name is capitalised to indicate her singular identity. Like the folk figure, she crosses over from the Otherworld into the humans' lives, lastingly as in 'Fuadach' and 'Bean an Leasa mar Shiobshiúlóir' or for a short period of time such as the raids in 'An Slad' or her trimming spree in 'An Crann'. She leaves her fairy territory to settle, for a time or for all time, in the human realm of the narrator's life. This process can be likened to what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have termed 'deterritorialisation'.

Deleuze and Guattari developed the concept of deterritorialisation to express the idea of something/someone being uprooted from their original context and, through reterritorialisation, becoming grounded again. The two philosophers first used the term to describe Franz Kafka's relation to the German language and its literature. As a Czech writer of Jewish background, he writes in German, but the language he uses is quite different from the one spoken in Germany. Kafka however makes it his own by deterritorialising it outside of Germany and its literature and by reterritorialising it in his own writing, where, as a consequence, what is familiar becomes strange and where language has a different use. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this puts into relief the notion of exile.¹⁹ In a manner quite appropriate for this study, they compare the deterritorialisation of the German language spoken in Prague to 'gypsies who have stolen the German child in the cradle'.²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari see the process of de/re-territorialisation as stemming from the fact that

Kafka's work belongs to a minor literature, a term they use to refer to the literature of a minority in the language of a majority. They quote in particular James Joyce and Samuel Beckett as Irish examples of a minor literature, who are therefore using de/re-territorialisation. They once again call upon the imagery of the child stolen in the cradle to explain deterritorialisation as a way to reinvent one's own language, be it minor or major, since ultimately the process does not have to be linked to an actual exilic experience but can be a creative means. What Deleuze and Guattari want to highlight is the ability to become a stranger to one's own language to be able to reinvent it.²¹ In their view, movements of deterritorialisation are linked to territories, physical or metaphorical, opening up to an elsewhere, whereas the process of reterritorialisation is grounded to the land which restores territory.²²

Bean an Leasa's change of territory, from the fairy Otherworld to the narrator's garden or her husband's car, for instance, can be read as a deterritorialisation of the folk figure: she is deterritorialised from the fairy world and reterritorialised into the human realm when she settles permanently in the narrator's home in 'Fuadach' or elopes with her husband in 'Bean an Leasa mar Shiobshiúlóir'. This change of territory is particularly indicated by the unexpectedness and the violence that characterises her in Ní Dhomhnaill's poetry. She comes in unannounced in 'Fuadach': 'Do shiúl bean an leasa / isteach im dhán' ('The woman from the fort walked / into my poem/destiny'²³). Bean an Leasa makes a sudden appearance in 'An Crann' as well ('Do tháinig bean an leasa' – 'the woman from the fort came'), and in 'Thar mo Chionn', Bean an Leasa suddenly appears on the road. In 'Fuadach', this unexpectedness is highlighted by the fact that she has no manners, since she comes in unannounced, without asking permission to enter ('Níor iarr sí cead').

These crude manners are matched by her violence, in actions or words. Bean an Leasa, who marches into the narrator's garden and cuts down her tree, is the subject of violent verbs of action in 'An Crann' ('Do ghearr', 'bhearraigh' – 'cut'), and she curses the narrator in 'An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch' for a whole stanza. The poem entitled 'An Slad' from *Feis* is imbued with the lexical field of violence. There is at least one word evoking the evil of Bean an Leasa in each stanza: 'bradaíochta' ('thievery'), 'Do ropadar' ('stabbed'), 'cosair easair' ('trample down'), for example. She is clearly up to no good, trying to incite her accomplices to join her in her evil undertakings, and her malignancy is set in contrast to the innocence of the narrator compared to a sheep. Medbh McGuckian, who translated the poem in *The Water Horse* in 2000, forces her reading of the piece onto the English-speaking reader through her translation in which

Bean an Leasa becomes the ‘iron lady’ whose men ‘bulldoze the estate’ with their jeeps and knee-cap the innocent, in a clear reference to Margaret Thatcher and the Troubles.²⁴ In almost all of the poems, Bean an Leasa indeed inspires fear to the narrator, who says for instance ‘Tá scéite orm’ (‘I am terrified’) in ‘A Bhean a Ghaibh Isteach’ and ‘Do tháinig cith allais amach trím le heagla’ (‘a shower of sweat ran through me because of fear’) in ‘Thar mo Chionn’, echoed later on in the poem by ‘Do tháinig fuarallas orm’ (‘I broke out in a cold sweat’). These aspects of abruptness and brutality emphasise the fact that Bean an Leasa’s actions and words clash with the human world, where she does not belong. They are tell-tale signs of her otherness and mark her as a deterritorialised being, a creature that has been uprooted from her original context – the fairy Otherworld – into a foreign place, the humans’ territories.

This leads to a dichotomy between the narrator and Bean an Leasa, as it is expressed in ‘Fuadach’: one is disruptive and has no manners while the other makes an effort to behave politely. The tension between the two is expressed also in the grammar of the poem: in the first stanza, Bean an Leasa (*sí*) is mentioned four times, and in three instances she is the subject of the actions, while the first person of the narrator is present four times too but only once as subject. The tension is balanced in the second stanza by the chiasmus in the lines ‘ach dá mbeinnse id thi’-se / mar taoi-se im thi’-se’ (‘but if I myself were to be in your own house / as you yourself are in my own house’). In the next stanza, while Bean an Leasa is the subject of the actions, her presence is fading since the grammatical subject *sí* is only mentioned once and the last line juxtaposes the first-person emphatic subject *mise* with Bean an Leasa as object (*i*). She is absent from the second-to-last stanza, leaving room for the narrator to express herself. Although she returns in the final stanza, she is fading away, as seen in the almost identical end lines:

is faid a bheidh sí siúd ag imeacht
 beadsa ag teacht,
 faid a bheidh sí ag imeacht
 beadsa ag teacht.²⁵

What is dropped in the echoing last two lines is precisely the emphatic *siúd* referring to Bean an Leasa. Even though Bean an Leasa disappears at the end of the poem and it is the voice of the narrator that is heard – Bean an Leasa does not speak –, their conflicting presence is expressed also in the fact that the poem was originally going to be titled ‘Bean an Leasa’. This

was changed for publication, probably to avoid confusion between the poem itself and the section in which it appears.

Bean an Leasa also carries with her a sense of irrevocability, of doom, because she sentences the narrator to never have a drop of buttermilk in her churn ever again in ‘A Bhean a Ghaibh Isteach’ or curses the daughter to be transformed into a mouse in ‘An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch’ for example. Bean an Leasa can furthermore be seen as death, taking the narrator ‘i ndoircheacht bhuan’ (‘in perpetual darkness’) in ‘Fuadach’. She is the one who takes the child ‘don éag’ (‘to death’) in ‘Thar Mo Chionn’. This fateful connotation further puts into relief the dichotomy between the fairy woman and the humans, therefore highlighting her deterritorialised state since she does not belong with them.

As Deleuze and Guattari note, a deterritorialisation is most often followed by a reterritorialisation. The latter is effective for Bean an Leasa when she elopes with the narrator’s husband in ‘Bean an Leasa mar Shiobshiúlóir’ or establishes herself in the house in place of the narrator in ‘Fuadach’. She intrudes briefly, however violently, in her life in the rest of the poems and does not settle in the human world, where she therefore does not achieve a reterritorialisation since she keeps going to and fro between the two worlds. Bean an Leasa’s liminality is the stamp of her de-/re-territorialised character.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill has more than once drawn on the image of driftwood or bodies floating near the surface to describe a liminal situation. She uses this metaphor for instance when speaking of her grandfather’s brother Maidhc who had emigrated to America and come back: ‘He was one of the casualties of emigration, neither fish nor fowl, lost between two worlds, like the bodies of drowned fishermen “ar snámh idir dhá uisce” (“floating between the waters”), nearly drowned and nearly saved’.²⁶ What is ‘liminal’ is what is on the threshold: it is the character of something which is situated, to take up Turner’s phrase, ‘betwixt and between’²⁷ two spaces or states, physical or metaphorical. Maidhc is in-between two cultures, American and Irish, in the same way that the flotsam is in-between the surface and the deeper sea. The word ‘liminal’ comes from the Latin *limen*, meaning threshold. The fluctuating threshold-territory model sees the *limen* as a space in-between two others, but which cannot be permanently delimited because it is a space of movement, shifting between two other entities and therefore pertaining to both and none at the same time. Manuel Aguirre writes that ‘[...] dynamics – crossing, transference, change and interaction – is the whole *raison d’être* of the *limen*’.²⁸ Liminality is thus the character of that which belongs to these thresholds, be they a dividing line or a border space, and of that which therefore holds

characteristics of both worlds on either side of it.²⁹ De-/Re-territorialisations can be read as liminal processes, since they imply that borders are crossed and territories are (re)created out of the old and new. Yet the deterritorialising process is what creates the liminal state, since the deterritorialised element is taken out of its home territory and awaits at the threshold to be reterritorialised.

This deterritorialised and deterritorialising liminality is expressed in ‘An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch’ with Bean an Leasa trespassing (‘bean an leasa / ag déanamh treaspas’ [sic]) and the girl changed into a mouse when ‘ag dul thar tairsing’ (‘crossing the threshold’), both of them crossing borders. The legal word *treaspás* in itself is significant since it is an Irish word borrowed from English: it has crossed linguistic borders. Bean an Leasa herself also trespasses in that she exchanges her place with the narrator in ‘Fuadach’. She crossed over to the human world, without even asking for permission. She physically crosses the border between the human and fairy realms, without closing the door in ‘Fuadach’. She also goes beyond the limits of what is acceptable within social norms, climbing in the narrator’s husband’s car in ‘Bean an Leasa mar Shiobshíulóir’ and cutting down the narrator’s tree in ‘An Crann’. Ní Dhomhnaill says that this poem started with her mother’s intrusion into her garden.³⁰ Trespassing thus initiated the creation of the poetical Bean an Leasa figure, hence liminality being so fundamental to her character. Spatial liminality seems to be a recurrent characteristic of Bean an Leasa in the poems, since in all of them but two she is seen trespassing onto human properties. Only in ‘Thar mo Chionn’ and ‘Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa’ is the trespassing reversed: it is the humans who stray into fairy territory.

Yet it is not simply spatial liminality which features in the poems. Transitional times are also important, as in ‘Thar mo Chionn’, when the narrator meets Bean an Leasa at nightfall (‘le titim na hoíche’). Moreover, Bean an Leasa is liminal in terms of language itself. ‘Bean an leasa’ means the woman from the *lios*, the fort, the fairy woman. But the poet could also be using it to mean ‘the woman of advantage/good advice’. *Fear leasa* is a (male) guardian, for instance. There is thus an ambiguity as to the character of Bean an Leasa: she has the potential to be benevolent. Bean an Leasa is referred to as ‘an bhean mheallaidh’ in ‘Fuadach’, a two-faceted character, since it means both ‘the attractive’ and ‘deceptive woman’. In folklore, fairies were thought to be helpful towards those who were good to them (motif ATU F330 Grateful fairies). This assumption is however ruined by the intrusion of the unknown *bean a ghaibh isteach* (‘the woman who came in’) in the eponymous poem for example. The last published poem about Bean an Leasa, in *Feis*, precisely evokes her ability to give advice but, in

‘Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa’, it is implied that this is not good advice. This negative connotation and her intrinsic liminality thus brand her as a deterritorialised character, trespassing onto human lands, in contrast with the narrator in the poems, and rarely achieving a reterritorialisation there.

Idir dhá uisce: Reterritorialising Irish Folklore into Contemporary Poetry

Bean an Leasa is however not the only one to undergo a deterritorialisation in Ní Dhomhnaill’s poetry. The author is also deterritorialising Irish folklore itself out of its traditional context, in order to reterritorialise it into her contemporary work. Ní Dhomhnaill is giving a modern twist to the Irish tradition she is interacting with: Bean an Leasa is doing household chores in ‘Fuadach’ using a washing machine, or is wielding a Black & Decker in ‘An Crann’. The plough turns into a Landrover instead of the expected horse, as in the folk accounts featuring a fairy cavalcade (ATU F241.1.0.1 Fairy Cavalcade), in ‘Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa’. The poet clearly said that she wanted ‘to use the poems themselves to turn the tradition on its head’.³¹ When she writes of a fairy woman coming to fell a tree in the humans’ garden, she is depicting the opposite of what is usually narrated in folk stories, namely humans cutting down fairy trees and therefore exposing themselves to the revenge of the fairies (ATU F361 Fairy’s Revenge), and hence she is turning the tradition upside down. The familiar folk motifs turn strange or funny in her poems through the reterritorialisation she puts in place. This play on the folk motifs is a reversal of folk characters and functions in the narratives that highlights the borders of acceptability and social norms being crossed in the poems.

The place of the poems and of the sections within the volumes further conveys the liminality which is at their core. Mirroring the character of Bean an Leasa herself, the poems are an in-between space where the liminal process of reterritorialisation takes place. In *Féar Suaithinseach*, most of the poems are not part of a defined section. The collection contains only two sections with a few poems in each, towards the middle of the volume. The other section in the collection is entitled ‘Atáin’ and features Ulster Cycle protagonists like Queen Medbh and Cú Chulainn. The ‘Bean an Leasa’ section contains poems thirty-eighth to forty-second, out of the sixty-nine included in the whole volume. The Bean an Leasa poems are thus almost exactly at the centre of the collection. However, in *Feis* all the poems are much more carefully ordered in titled sections. The ‘Bean an Leasa’ series is a pivotal subsection to ‘Cailleach’ and provides a transition into ‘An Leannán Sí’. These two sections are followed by the eponymous ‘Feis’ and ‘Spéirbhean’ in an ascending motif. Karen Marguerite Moloney

remarks that the sequences ‘suggest a progression, even a transformation: the darkness of repressed psychic matter, symbolized by the hag [*cailleach*], is mitigated through recognition and acceptance, represented by sacred marriage [*feis*], and finally returned to health, emblemized by the *spéirbhean*’.³² All these sections are titled after a mythological or folk female figure. The ‘Bean an Leasa’ series works as the turning point between the hag, *Cailleach*, and the fairy lover, *an leannán sí*. The violence and evil of Bean an Leasa pervades the first poem of the series, ‘An Slad’, as a natural follow-up from the ‘Cailleach’ section, named after the dark, hag-like Irish goddess of the land, which Bríona Nic Dhiarmada reads as the Jungian ‘shadow’ in this collection, reflecting Ní Dhomhnaill’s dealings with the psyche.³³ The ‘Cailleach’ section also contains such poems as ‘An Bhatráil’, about a mother who rescues her abducted and abused child from the fairy fort, and ‘Peirseifiné’, which features the Greek goddess Artemis’s daughter who has been taken by Hades to his Underworld and recounts her experiences to her mother. There is thus a growing theme of trespassing strangers abducting humans in the first section, which develops fully in the subsection titled after the trespasser-in-chief in Ní Dhomhnaill’s works. ‘An Slad’ is followed by ‘Bean an Leasa mar Shíobshiúlóir’ in which she runs off with the narrator’s husband, thus continuing the trespassing motif while introducing the idea of the fairy love interest which ‘An Leannán Sí’ puts forward. The section ends with ‘Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa’, in which it is the narrator who crosses over to the Otherworld in the company of the fairies. An unhealthy friendship with the fairies is depicted, in which they advise the narrator on alcohol or make him/her take drugs.

Bean an Leasa has been understood as a metaphor for depression in ‘Fuadach’: the spirit of the narrator is abducted to the misty fields while her body is still doing the chores in the house. For Michaela Schrage-Früh, ‘Fuadach’ expresses the difficulties for a woman to grapple with her new domestic role and the difficulties of reconciling it with personal and poetic aspirations. She finds it telling that there is no husband-wife communication in the poem and that he does not notice that she is gone, as long as the house chores are done. She sees it as a poem about the absence of communication in marriage, about a couple’s estrangement.³⁴ Pádraig de Paor reads this poem as a representation of the tension between females and the patriarchal social norms, and its resulting estrangement.³⁵ In ‘Thar mo Chionn’, the female narrator is overwhelmed by remorse and a sense of guilt because of Bean an Leasa’s actions, which she discovers in the newspapers the day after their encounter: ‘Do tháinig fuarallas orm, / do phléasc na deora tríom / is mo ghraidhin í an créatúirín’ (‘I broke into a

cold sweat, / I burst into tears / and I sympathise with the little creature'). To take up Laura O'Connor's words, 'to combat this depression' that threatens to overcome her, 'the speaker must exorcise the reproductive vigilante-and-trafficker that preys on her' at nightfall and tries to lure her to the Otherworld forever.³⁶ In 'Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa', the fairy woman is referred to as 'bean dhorcha an slua' ('the dark woman of the host') and is quite strongly linked with alcohol (vineyards of Burgundy, *vendanges*, Pinot Noir). For Bríona Nic Dhiarmada, Bean an Leasa represents the dark side of the female narrator. She is a harmful figure who nonetheless has strong links with the narrator. She says for instance in 'A Bhean a Ghaibh Isteach' that she is godmother to a fairy: 'Táimse i gcairdeas Críost / le bean an leasa'.³⁷ Materialising this menacing figure in the texts is a way of distancing it from the persona of the narrator. Ríona Ní Fhrighil notes that Bean an Leasa takes the blame for the young girl's death in 'Thar mo Chionn', therefore becoming the scapegoat for the social structure that caused this tragedy.³⁸ In all these poems, the blame is put on Bean an Leasa for alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, depression or a marital crisis, in the same way that it is thought the blame was put on the fairies for inexplicable diseases or for socially unacceptable acts decades ago, as Angela Bourke remarks in her monograph on the death of Bridget Cleary.³⁹ By developing the meaning of the folk figure in her poetry, Ní Dhomhnaill is reterritorialising this aspect of Irish folklore, grounding it into her Bean an Leasa poems, where the fairy woman embodies depression as well as personal and social hardships. She is giving a new depth to the character, rooting it into her poetical territory.

Another feature of Ní Dhomhnaill's poetry is the feminist stance she takes. The poet has commented on her motives: 'One of the things that causes me to get up in the morning is the desire to take Irish back from that grey-faced Irish-revivalist male preserve. I'll be damned if I'll let them monopolise the language'.⁴⁰ Bean an Leasa, who strides fearlessly into the patriarchal land in 'An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch', can indeed be read as a feminist protagonist who is breaking the boundaries of society's rules, trespassing and becoming a role model. She thus turns into a woman of good advice, outside of the borders of the text itself. Frank Sewell remarks that 'the personae/narrators or speakers chosen by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill from *béaloides* are almost always female or "foremothers" whom she animates and empowers with speech, and whose speech, in turn, seems and is aimed to have the effect of raising past and present women up from powerlessness and silence',⁴¹ an idea corroborated by Patricia Boyle Haberstroh, who notes that 'Irish literature and legend, then, supply Ní Dhomhnaill with images of strong women, with goddesses and queens who

wield authority equal to or greater than that of their male counterparts'.⁴² This is exemplified in *Feis* by the various sections, all titled after feminine figures of Irish mythology or folklore, as highlighted earlier. Even though the female narrator may seem silenced by Bean an Leasa at first glance, she is the narrator of a story brought about by the fairy woman. The latter thus becomes the agent of female empowerment in the poems. It is because of Bean an Leasa's actions in 'Thar mo Chionn' that the female narrator is led to speak up about teenage pregnancies. In fact, it is the male voice of the narrator's husband that is hardly heard at all in the poems. In *Féar Suaithinseach*, the only male voices, that of the narrator's husband in 'An Crann' and of the girl's father in 'An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch', are heard repeating angry questions or mouthing curses, instead of contributing to a meaningful discussion. In *Feis*, the female voice is further asserted and, as a result, the male characters are silenced, or reduced to asking questions in 'Bean an Leasa mar Shiobshiúlóir'. As Angela Bourke points out, Ní Dhomhnaill achieves something revolutionary in the poems in that she lets the women speak for themselves, unlike folk tradition which has had a tendency to downplay their role and importance, creating tensions between male and female.⁴³ By making of the fairy woman a feminist figure, Ní Dhomhnaill is further ingraining the folk character into her works. The deterritorialised *bean an leasa* of Irish folklore is being uprooted from its original, traditional context by the Irish-language poet, who proceeds to reterritorialise this aspect of Irish folklore into the fertile terrain of her contemporary poetry, thereby reinventing Irish folklore through these associations with feminism and psychoanalysis.

Cé leis tú? Ní Dhomhnaill's Reterritorialising Process

Bean an Leasa's liminality echoes throughout the poems into Ní Dhomhnaill's rewritings of Irish folklore. But the folk figure also parallels the poet's experience of floating between languages. The liminal aspect of Bean an Leasa is in fact also embodied in the language issue, *ceist na teangan*, a title Ní Dhomhnaill's chose for another poem.⁴⁴ The fairy woman speaks English in 'An Crann': the invading and intrusive Bean an Leasa has been interpreted as a metaphor for the English language, leaving the narrator numb and unable to speak, embodying the Irish language.⁴⁵ The pronouns representing the otherworldly woman are omnipresent, whereas *mise*, the narrator in the first person, is almost completely silenced in grammatical terms, though she is telling the story. Bean an Leasa is taking over the land, and can be read as representing the English language taking over Ireland, with the image of the fairy coming to cut down the tree, which remains rooted throughout the poem, present in almost each

stanza, safe in the end ‘holding its ground’ according to Muldoon’s translation. Linguistic borders are being crossed in this poem in Irish in which the main character speaks English. If ‘An Crann’ is paralleled with ‘An Slad’, then, in the latter, Bean an Leasa can be seen as the English language intruding and causing havoc onto *an dúiche*, the hereditary, ancestral land, that is the Irish-speaking territory. Indeed, the lexical field of destruction is quite strong in the poem. Liminality is further embodied in the text of ‘An Slad’ by the impossibility to know whether the narrator is male or female, emphasising the anonymity and therefore the universality of this status of victim. The casualty of this raid could be anyone, or, *a fortiori*, anything living, such as the language.

Ní Dhomhnaill declared that she ‘would be the first to admit that there is a strong element of [her] own personal pathology behind the stories that the landscape tells to [her], or rather the stories that [she has] been prepared to hear from it.’⁴⁶ If this statement is anything to go by, it can be inferred that there are autobiographical elements in this liminal linguistic situation. Ní Dhomhnaill was born in 1952 in Lancashire, England. When she was five years old, she was sent to the Kerry Gaeltacht to her aunt’s before her parents moved back to Ireland and settled in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, where she went to boarding school (where Irish was one of the subjects without being the language of education in the school). She married a Turkish geologist when she was 21, and moved to Amsterdam and then Turkey for seven years before coming back to the Gaeltacht in 1980 for a few years. She now lives in Dublin. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill is thus used to switching languages a lot, having been wandering, *ar seachrán*, abroad for some years as Frank Sewell notes.⁴⁷ She is fluent in Irish and English, but also speaks Turkish and knows French, German and Dutch. Her ability to express herself in more than one language could be reflected in ‘An Crann’, in which each protagonist has their own language, English for Bean an Leasa, Irish for the narrator. The poet said:

Ultimately, the complications of my relationship with Ireland have to do with language. Unable to live permanently in Turkey, I was equally unable to remain permanently in the Gaeltacht, and there are times when I feel as much in linguistic exile in Dublin as I ever did among the wide whistling wastes of the Anatolian plateau.⁴⁸

The liminality of being an exile, of belonging to two places at once, is experienced by Ní Dhomhnaill on a linguistic level. Like Bean an Leasa crossing the boundary into the human realm for a raid, a curse, or looking for help with a newborn, Ní Dhomhnaill has crossed borders, moving because of her parents’ or her husband’s or her own work, or of the social

and political context. Both were constantly deterritorialised for a time, before being able to reterritorialise themselves into a particular place. But the poet also talks about the downfall of bilingualism, about how she is torn between the two languages:

Does a bilingual existence really, as many claim, lead to a genuinely stereoscopic and enriched view of life, or is it the cause of mental astigmatism and blurred vision, a sense of displacement, a deep anxiety? I have found at times that the inner contradictions bilingualism entails cause psychic pain: sometimes it is as if a civil war were going on inside me, and the sheer effort of maintaining a standoff of the warring parties is deeply exhausting [. . .] There is no Ithaca to return to.⁴⁹

In words that recall Medbh McGuckian's translation of 'An Slad', she feels the double edge to this bilingualism, both an advantage and a drawback in her view, since it is also resulting in a 'sense of displacement', a feeling caused by her *de-territorialisation* since she has been *dis-placed*, taken out of her original space.

Her liminal situation as a bilingual speaker is perhaps best expressed in a line, which she seems to have used a few times, from her poem 'Admhail Shuaithinseach' in *Cead Aighnis*: 'D'fhág sé ar snámh idir dhá uisce mé' ('and left me stranded / like a body floating between two layers of water').⁵⁰ She has recognised that this has sometimes led her to depression,⁵¹ thus corroborating the reading of *Bean an Leasa* in 'Fuadach' as an allegory for a state of psychological distress. Cary Shay notes that '*bean an leasa* [. . .] express[es] and embod[ies] the psychological consequences of the interaction of two contexts, two languages, and the resulting imbalances of power within Irish society'.⁵²

In the case of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, not only does she belong to an Irish minority within the English-speaking world, but she is also doubly othered in that the language she writes in is Irish, the official language and yet a minority language in its own country. The poetry she writes thus belongs to a doubly minor literature. She remarks: 'Just because Irish is almost invisible in suburban Dublin doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. Like yeast in the bread, it is invisible, but it is what makes the culture rise'.⁵³ She finds herself in a situation in which she has to defend her choice to write in this language which many consider dead. In words reminiscent of the woman lost in the misty darkness of the fairy fort in 'Fuadach', she questions: 'So what does that make me, and the many other writers of the

large body of modern literature in Irish? A walking ghost? A linguistic spectre?⁵⁴

The liminality that Bean an Leasa and her creator share could lead readers to think that one is the negative reflection of the other. It should not be inferred that the narrator of the poems and Ní Dhomhnaill herself are one and the same for the sole reason that the verses are written in the first person or from an internal point of view. The narrating character and her fairy alter ego nonetheless embody the poet's concerns about liminal experiences, especially at a linguistic and cultural level. Deleuze and Guattari pointed out that the process of deterritorialisation entails notions of doubleness, since the deterritorialised and reterritorialised beings are two sides of the same thing/person.⁵⁵ In 'Fuadach' for instance, there is an emphasis on the self: the emphatic personal suffix *-se/-sa* is used eight times in the poem. Bean an Leasa could in fact be the narrator's, and possibly Ní Dhomhnaill's, alter ego. She is named as 'an bhean eile' ('the other woman') in 'Thar mo Chionn', highlighting this idea of a counterpart. As noted earlier, she represents the darker side of one's personality. Cary Shay notes that '*bean an leasa* and the woman [in 'An Crann'] may be seen as parts of the same person, with the [sic] *bean an leasa* representing an embodiment of the portion of the speaker's psyche that is contextualized through the English language'.⁵⁶ Ní Dhomhnaill observed that the figure of Bean an Leasa evolved throughout her poems as 'a sort of alter ego' for her, even though it started with her mother. She has admitted: '[I have] an alter ego that hates my creativity. [. . .] I think maybe I was trying to interact with this alter ego. I think [. . .] that is the depressive personality. [. . .] By entering into a creative dialogue with this personality, it is actually a way of distancing yourself, it has a curative effect'.⁵⁷ Her poetry would thus be the territory where she is able to reterritorialise this aspect of her personality that Bean an Leasa represents, alongside its narrating counterpart, since, as Deleuze and Guattari imagined it, the concept of territory can be physical or metaphorical. She grounds this negative alter ego into her poetry in order for her own self to be freed from it. Bean an Leasa thus functions as the fairy negative imprint of the human, who is let loose in her verses.

Coming back to the language issue, Bean an Leasa could be seen as the deterritorialised Anglophone double of the Irish-speaking narrator in Ní Dhomhnaill's 'Fuadach', reflecting her own situation, which she depicts in binary terms: 'Of the Gaeltacht, I am not from the Gaeltacht [. . .]. Inexorably drawn to the Irish-speaking communities of the western seaboard, and knowing them intimately, I am still always an outsider, the little *cailín Sasanach* or English girl that I was then'.⁵⁸ For Shay, Ní

Dhomhnaill ‘stag[es] encounters with otherworldly creatures that serve as psychic projections or alter egos, embodying what cannot be otherwise expressed’.⁵⁹ The elsewhere required for the process of deterritorialisation is the Irish Otherworld for Ní Dhomhnaill, where her human characters are exiled. Irish and the hidden Otherworld which it contains are thus the place of reterritorialisation for the poet. For her, the Otherworld is within, it is a reflection of the unconscious, such as the Otherworld that the young girl is dreaming of in ‘An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch’, situated on an island at sea (‘amuigh/ ar oileán sa bhfarraige’), recalling Irish folktales once again. Poetry is the link between the two worlds, says Michaela Schrage-Früh: ‘Thus, being a poet means constantly crossing the threshold between the realms of the conscious and the subconscious, the real and the imaginary, the mundane and the spiritual’.⁶⁰ Seen from this perspective, poetry itself is liminal. The poet in general is therefore also a liminal being crossing borders, in a parallel with both Bean an Leasa and the narrator of these poems. Despite Gabriel Rosenstock’s assertion that the changeling-like Irish language ‘exists around us and yet it does not exist; it is an echo, a shadow, a type of doppelgänger or ghostly twin, half hidden from the world’,⁶¹ Ní Dhomhnaill talks of the Otherworld in similar terms, but as a place that spurs her creativity:

But the Otherworld, in a Celtic sense, is really what the Celts had to offer literature. And it is still what we have to offer literature, because to us the door between the two worlds is never closed. All right, the Otherworld is where we came from and where we’re going back to after we die, but it’s always there, even now, existing as an alternative reality [. . .].⁶²

In her view, the Irish poet is thus on the threshold between these two worlds and partakes of each, depending on where inspiration takes them. By making forays into the Otherworld through her poetical rewritings of the *bean an leasa* folk figure that give it a feminist and psychoanalytical dimension, Ní Dhomhnaill creates a space for the reterritorialisation of the embodiments of her troubled experiences that Bean an Leasa and the narrator are.

Ní Dhomhnaill’s Bean an Leasa poems thus become an act of reterritorialisation. The liminal, deterritorialised figures of Bean an Leasa and of the narrator, both reflections of the author’s concerns as developed in this paper, find a home in these poetical series. But Deleuze and Guattari also remark that, for a reterritorialisation to be carried out, the process

needs to be tied to a particular territory. Ní Dhomhnaill has always claimed a special attachment to the landscape of her Kerry Gaeltacht. She says:

[. . .] wherever else I live, I am always hankering after it. I am spoiled for everywhere else because of being so deeply bonded with this one particular place. What I experienced in Corca Dhuibhne can only be described as an atavistic reaction: I felt a great sense of relief, of belonging, of being a link in a family chain which had been missing in my existence on a Lancashire coalmine.⁶³

Her Kerry heritage and this sense of belonging enable the reterritorialisation of her chosen motif, Bean an Leasa, because it grounds it, along with herself, to a particular place. The process enables her to put into verse the stories that the landscape is telling her. In so doing, she also inscribes herself into the poetical landscape of Co. Kerry. This sense of place is not seen so much in the settings of the poems, but rather in the language used and the folk tradition it is inscribed in, that of Munster Irish, starting ‘Fuadach’ for instance with a dialectical ‘do shiúl bean an leasa’ instead of a more standardised ‘Shiúil bean an leasa’. This sense of belonging is also expressed in an anecdote she recounts about the local way of asking ‘who are you?’ – *cé leis tú?* –, which literally means ‘who do you belong to?’. Through this story, the poet implicitly states her belonging to the local Kerry community and its land.⁶⁴ The Otherworld and the Kerry Gaeltacht so dear to the poet could thus be read as places of reterritorialisation for the narrator and for Bean an Leasa respectively, both merging in Ní Dhomhnaill’s verses. In the same way that Bean an Leasa is the negative reflection of the narrator and that both are versions of the author’s alter ego, the Otherworld is a negative imprint of the poetical Kerry Ní Dhomhnaill depicts in her verse.

Conclusion

Poetry becomes the third place in which the reinvention of the folk motif takes place. Ní Dhomhnaill’s linguistic and imaginative changeling alter ego materialises her experiences of displacement which have led to this rootedness and reterritorialisation. For that matter, she talks about how medieval Ireland was not yet a nation, divided in *tuatha*, and how poets were the only ones welcomed everywhere, ‘since theirs was an art that surpassed all petty boundaries and cemented the society in a symbolic way [. . .]’.⁶⁵ Poetry, because of its liminal ability to cross boundaries, be they political or linguistic for instance, is the agent and the place of Ní Dhomhnaill’s triple reterritorialisation. The process operates at three distinct levels: the character of Bean an Leasa is reterritorialised in the

human realm in the poems, while Irish folklore, and particularly the folk figure of *bean an leasa*, is reterritorialised into contemporary literature, thus illustrating Ní Dhomhnaill's concerns about these issues in her poetry. Like the fairy woman in 'Fuadach', asking no permission, Ní Dhomhnaill has made her feminist home in contemporary Irish-language poetry. She roots herself in her verse, from where she is able to soar, further illustrating, in her later collection *Cead Aighnis* (1998), partly translated by Paul Muldoon in *The Fifty-Minute Mermaid* (2007), these issues of displacement and linguistic shifts dealt with in the *Bean an Leasa* series.⁶⁶

The motif of *Bean an Leasa* in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poetry is thus a rather dark and violent one, which she uses as a metaphor for the hardships of this world, such as depression or alcoholism, or as an allegory for death. Her *Bean an Leasa* character is deeply liminal, on the narrative, intertextual, linguistic and personal levels.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill thus reterritorialises in her poems the motif of *Bean an Leasa*, which had been deterritorialized from its own country by the omnipresence of English. The poet operates a reterritorialisation of the motif through her poetry, re-appropriating the motif of fairy abduction, giving it a modern twist and meaning, while still inscribing herself in the Irish tradition and rooting it in the language of her Munster dialect, but making it relevant to her and her times.

Notes and References

- 1 I would like to thank the Moore Institute, NUI Galway for their financial support for the research and the writing of this article, as well as to gratefully acknowledge the help of Ríona Ní Fhrighil, Greg Toner, Daniel McAuley and Colm McGuigan.
- 2 Gabriel Rosenstock, 'Aspects of Irish-Language Poetry And Its Miraculous Survival', *The Poetry Ireland Review* 105 (December 2011): 24.
- 3 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Patterns', *Selected Essays*, ed. Oona Frawley (Dublin: New Island, 2005) 61.
- 4 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, *Féar Suaithinseach* (Maigh Nuad: An Sagart, 1988 [1984]) 63-76. 'Fuadach' has been translated as 'Abduction' by Michael Hartnett in *Selected Poems: Rogha Dánta* (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1988) 60-63; 'Thar mo Chionn' has been partly translated by Laura O'Connor as 'Mea Culpa' in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, vol. 4-5: 'Irish Women's Writing and Traditions', ed. Angela Bourke (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002) 1640; and 'An Crann' has been translated both by Hartnett as 'The Tree' (*Rogha Dánta*, 92-95) and by Paul Muldoon as 'As for the Quince' in *Pharaoh's Daughter* (Old Castle, Co. Meath: Gallery Press, 1990) 36-39. The other poems have not been translated into English. 'A Bhean a Ghaibh Isteach' means 'O woman who came

- in’, while ‘An Cailín a Bhí ina Luch’ can be translated as ‘the girl who was a mouse’.
- 5 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, *Feis* (Maigh Nuad: An Sagart, 1991) 45-51. ‘An Slad’ has been translated by Medbh McGuckian as ‘Slaughter’ in *The Water Horse* (Old Castle: The Gallery Press, 1999) 102-105; ‘Bean an Leasa mar Shíobshíulóir’ has been translated by Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin as ‘The Fairy Hitch-Hiker’ in the same collection (10-13), and Paul Muldoon translated ‘Comhairle ó Bhean an Leasa’ as ‘The Heist’ in *Pharaoh’s Daughter* (144-147). The latter poem is slightly changed to ‘Comhairle ón mBean an Leasa’ in the bilingual editions.
 - 6 Cary A. Shay, *Of Mermaids and Others, An Introduction to the Poetry of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014) xix.
 - 7 Pádraig de Paor, *Tionscnamh Filíochta Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta, 1997).
 - 8 Briona Nic Dhiarmada, *Téacs Baineann, Téacs Mná, Gnéithe de Fhilíocht Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta, 2005).
 - 9 Michaela Schrage-Früh, *Emerging Identities: Myth, Nation and Gender in the Poetry of Eavan Boland, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Medbh McGuckian* (Trier: WVT, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004).
 - 10 Laura O’Connor, “‘The War of the Womb’”: Folklore and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’ in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, volume 5: *Irish Women Writing and Tradition*, ed. Angela Bourke et al (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002) 1639-1645.
 - 11 Angela Bourke, ‘Bean an Leasa: Ón bPiseogaíocht go dtí Filíocht Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’, *Leath na Spéire*, ed. Eoghan Ó hAnluain (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta, 1992) 74-90.
 - 12 Frank Sewell, *Modern Irish Poetry: A New Alhambra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
 - 13 Ríona Ní Fhrighil, *Briathra, Béithe agus Banfhilí, Filíocht Eavan Boland agus Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta, 2008).
 - 14 Eric Falci, ‘Ní Dhomhnaill Along the Spine’, *Continuity and Change in Irish Poetry 1966-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 152-185.
 - 15 National Folklore Collection, Schools’ Collection [hereafter noted NFCS] volume 200: pages 259-261, ‘Fairy Woman’. J. J. Johnston (50), farmer, Dromahair, Co. Leitrim. Collector: Mary Johnston, Drumlease School, teacher: Thomas Dillon.
 - 16 NFCS 417: 87-88, ‘The Widow’s Daughter and the Fairy Woman’. Mrs Dineen (75), Cleanderry, Co. Kerry. Collector: Gerald Neill (12), Ballynoe, Rathmorrell School, teacher: Anraoí Ó Conchobhair.
 - 17 NFCS 420: 474-476, ‘Scéal’. Muiris Ó Cathalláin (25), Ballynagall or Ballydavid, Co. Kerry. Collector: Pádraig Ó Cathalláin, Smerwick School, Baile na nGall, An Daingean, teacher: D. Ó Loinsigh.
 - 18 NFCS 6: 46-47, ‘The Story of the Fairy Woman’. Cloonloohaun, Co. Galway. Teacher: Brid Ní Chadhain, Nead an Iolraigh School.
 - 19 Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration, Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (2000; Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) 117.
 - 20 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka, Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: éditions de Minuit, 1975) 29-30.
 - 21 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 35 and 48.

- 22 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson, *What Is Philosophy?* (1991; London: Verso, 1994) 85-86.
- 23 *Dán* is the Irish for ‘poem’, but another acception of the term is ‘destiny’. Ní Dhomhnaill here plays on the double meaning of the word: the first meaning of *dán* as ‘poem’ relates to the author’s voice, while its second sense of ‘destiny’ is linked to the narrating character whose life is turned upside down by Bean an Leasa.
- 24 Ríona Ní Fhrighil has discussed the various translations of the character of Bean an Leasa by Medbh McGuckian and Paul Muldoon in *Briathra, Béithe agus Banfhilí*, 239.
- 25 Michael Hartnett translates this extract as “and as she fades before your eyes / I’ll materialise / and as she fades before your eyes / I’ll materialise.” This translation erases the emphasis on the fading *siúd* (‘herself’). The contrast between *ag imeacht* (‘going’) and *ag teacht* (‘coming’) is retained, though altered, with the opposition between fading and materialising.
- 26 Ní Dhomhnaill, ‘Cé Leis Tú?’, *Selected Essays* 113.
- 27 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969; New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997) 95.
- 28 Manuel Aguirre, ‘Austin’s Cat, and Other Observations Towards a Theory of Thresholds’, *Mapping the Threshold*, ed. Nancy Bredendick (Madrid: Gateway Press, 2004) 9.
- 29 Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton, *Margins and Thresholds: An Enquiry into the Concept of Liminality in Text Studies* (Madrid: The Gateway Press, 2000) 9.
- 30 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, interview with Audrey Robitaille, Dublin, 19/04/2014 in ‘Away with the Fairies, The Motif of the Changeling and of Fairy Abduction, from Irish Mythology to the Irish Diaspora’ (Queen’s University Belfast & University of Caen: PhD thesis, 2015) 792.
- 31 Ní Dhomhnaill, ‘An Bhanfhile sa Traidisiún: The Woman Poet in the Irish Tradition’, *Selected Essays* 57.
- 32 Karen Marguerite Moloney, *Seamus Heaney and the Emblems of Hope* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007) 63-64.
- 33 Briona Nic Dhiarmada, ‘Immram sa tSíce: Filíocht Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill agus Próiseas an Indibhidithe’, *Oghma* 5 (1993): 83.
- 34 Michaela Schrage-Früh, “‘So Much Psychic Land [...] to Reclaim’”: Otherworldly Encounters in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s Poetry’, *Liminal Borderlands in Irish Literature and Culture*, eds. Irene Gilsenan Nordin and Elin Holmsten (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009) 163, 165-166.
- 35 Padraig de Paor 144-146.
- 36 O’Connor 1642.
- 37 Briona Nic Dhiarmada 109. Ríona Ní Fhrighil also suggests that this figure symbolises the dark side of one’s personality in her article on Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill in *Filíocht Chomhaimseartha na Gaeilge* (Baile Átha Cliath: Cois Life, 2010) 145.
- 38 Ní Fhrighil, *Briathra, Béithe agus Banfhilí* 153.
- 39 Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (London: Pimlico, 1999) 183.

- 40 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Medbh McGuckian agus Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill – Comhrá with a Foreword and Afterword by Laura O'Connor', *The Southern Review* 31.3 (1995), accessed online.
- 41 Frank Sewell, 'Irish Mythology in the Early Poetry of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 8.1 (2002): 43.
- 42 Patricia Boyle Haberstroh, 'Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill', *Women Creating Women, Contemporary Irish Women Poets* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) 164-165.
- 43 Angela Bourke, 'Bean an Leasa: Ón Piseogaíocht go dtí Filíocht Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill' 87 and 'Fairies and Anorexia: Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's "Amazing Grass"', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 13 (1993) 27.
- 44 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Ceist na Teangan', *Feis* 128.
- 45 Shay 39-40.
- 46 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Dinnsheanchas: Holy Wells and Psychic Depths', *Selected Essays* 166.
- 47 Frank Sewell, *Modern Irish Poetry* 5.
- 48 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cé Leis Tú?' 148.
- 49 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cé Leis Tú?' 102.
- 50 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Admhail Shuaitheanach', *Cead Aighnis* (An Daignean: An Sagart, 1998) 124-125. This is the poet's own translation in Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Dinnsheanchas', *Selected Essays* 38-40.
- 51 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cé Leis Tú?' 149: 'There have been times of deep depression – when, as Máire Mhac an tSaoi, another exponent of multilingualism, has expressed it: "Bím balbh i dhá theanga" ("I am speechless in two languages") – but Irish has, again and again, saved from madness'.
- 52 Shay 42.
- 53 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cé Leis Tú?' 109.
- 54 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Why I Choose to Write in Irish, the Corpse that Sits Up and Talks Back', *Selected Essays* 14.
- 55 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 110.
- 56 Shay 40.
- 57 Ní Dhomhnaill, interview with Audrey Robitaillié, 792 and 799.
- 58 Ní Dhomhnaill, "Cé Leis Tú?" 101.
- 59 Ní Dhomhnaill, "Dinnsheanchas: Holy Wells and Psychic Depths" 169.
- 60 Schrage-Früh 151.
- 61 Rosenstock 33.
- 62 Liam Ó Caiside, 'An Interview with Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill', *Gaelcast*, 2 September 2006, http://www.gaelcast.com/?page_id=58, originally published in *Keltoi: A Pan-Celtic Journal* (1987).
- 63 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Dinnsheanchas: The Naming of High or Holy Places', *Selected Essays* 28.
- 64 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cé Leis Tú?' 97.
- 65 Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cé Leis Tú?' 40.
- 66 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, *The Fifty-Minute Mermaid*, trans. Paul Muldoon (Oldcastle: The Gallery Press, 2007).

