



## *The Field Day Anthology* and Irish Women's Literary Studies

MARGARET KELLEHER

The recent publication of volumes 4 and 5 of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* presents a timely occasion for a review of women's literary studies and an assessment of their influence in Irish studies. Indeed the contested status of these volumes from their very inception – objected to by some as wrongly separate in their focus on female representations, and by others as not separate enough, given their placement under the Field Day 'umbrella' – should, at the very least, have brought increased attention to the issue of women's studies more generally. Yet, with the exception of some individual critics, Irish studies as a discipline remains singularly ill-informed of (and by) the debates and concerns that have occupied Irish feminist criticism in the past decade. Meanwhile feminist critics, and those working in the field of women's writings more generally, have themselves moved slowly to a more public airing of these preoccupations and to their articulation in a more self-questioning mode.

### 'Woman-As-Sign': Irish Feminist Criticism I

When did Irish feminist criticism begin? Its later practitioners cite the early example of B. G. MacCarthy's two-volume *The Female Pen: Women Writers, Their Contribution to the Novel* first published in 1944–7, and reissued by Cork University Press in 1994; a longer chain of influence might extend to Elizabeth Owens Blackburne's 1877 *Illustrious Irishwomen* or to Sydney Owenson's 1840 *Woman and Her Master*. *The Field Day Anthology* volumes 4 and 5 provide further answers and a useful genealogy: thus in the contemporary (post-1960) section, Clair Wills' selection of 'Feminism, Culture and Critique in English' opens with extracts from Edna O'Brien's

'Mother Ireland' (1976) and from Máirín de Burca's feminist analysis of *The Midnight Court* (1980). Máire Ní Annracháin's section on 'Feminism, Culture and Critique in the Irish Language', in which parallels between the position of women and the position of the Irish language are distinctly drawn, begins with Helen Ó Murchú's 'An Ghaeilge agus an Eoraip' (1983) and also features Bríona Nic Dhiarmada's influential 'Ceist na Teanga: Dioscúrsa na Gaeilge, An Fhilíocht, agus Dioscúrsa na mBan'<sup>1</sup> (1992).

Retrospectively, a key moment for feminist literary criticism may be identified in the cluster of writings published between 1989 and 1991: the LIP pamphlets of Eavan Boland, Edna Longley and Gerardine Meaney; Ailbhe Smyth's 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi' published in the *Irish Review* of 1989, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford's 1990 article, 'Thinking of Her . . . as . . . Ireland' (in *Textual Practice*), and the publication of Toni Johnson and David Cairns' collection *Gender in Irish Writing* (1991). The mode of these writers was primarily one of critique, an inspection of 'the putting into discourse of woman', of 'the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-as-sign in semiotic systems' – activities defined by Elaine Showalter as the first mode of feminine criticism.<sup>2</sup> The most famous such critique in the Irish context, Boland's indictment of the Irish poetic tradition would suffer from repetition in her later writings, but the clarity of its first formulation is worth remembering: 'Long after it was necessary, Irish poetry had continued to trade in the exhausted fictions of the nation; had allowed these fictions to edit ideas of womanhood and modes of remembrance.'<sup>3</sup> Boland's articulation of her own poetic project as a 're-working' of such images was swiftly criticized by Edna Longley as a 'recycling' of clichés, in which a destabilization of 'Mise' but not of 'Éire' had been staged. In response, Boland's strategy of a literary and female 'repossession' of the nation was more positively greeted by Gerardine Meaney as the countering of 'the myth of Mother Ireland' by 'an insistent feminine subjectivity'.<sup>4</sup>

The controversy generated by Boland's writings over the past decade is representative of a number of conflicts within Irish feminist criticism: most obviously, the relations of feminism and nationalism; more subtly, issues of class and of generational difference; and more productively, questions of aesthetic form. Even now, the reception of her work is a useful map whereon competing critical perspectives may be traced, and not simply in relation to women's writings. As Catriona Clutterbuck has observed, the boundaries marked by Boland around her work have been 'long taken by her critics and by turns pummeled and massaged into over-rigid shape',<sup>5</sup> though Boland's own critical project has also played a part in this process. On the other hand, Anne Fogarty's reading of Boland's *Object Lessons*

persuasively argues for a consideration of this work in its own terms, and highlights the absence of this sort of attention to date.<sup>6</sup> The poet's 'insistent feminine subjectivity', or what Clutterbuck has also termed a 'particular concentration on self-image',<sup>7</sup> continues to be the mark of her poetry, and one line of demarcation between positive and negative readings.

Irish feminist criticism, in its early textual practice, also focused on poetry; in the mid-1990s it moved to the novel and, only recently, influenced by European models, has turned to theatrical and spatial forms. An early and controversial example was Pat Coughlan's essay "'Bog Queens": The Representation of Women in the Poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney', a study of the function of female images in the work of the two Northern poets. Her conclusion was unambiguous: '[A]n intense urge to self-definition in contradistinction to a feminine principle, cloaked as admiring celebration of women, is a main motivating force in these poets' work. . . . On this evidence it remains very difficult for men, when they imagine self-formation as a struggle, to escape conceiving that struggle, however metaphorically or virtually, as *against* the feminine.'<sup>8</sup>

Coughlan's critique of Heaney would trouble a number of later essays on his work but invariably the discussion occupied the footnotes rather than main text. The placing of this engagement might be seen as further 'evidence' of Coughlan's argument; certainly one of its effects was to suggest that a distinction could be maintained between political and formalist readings, a distinction which has been countered in Heaney criticism elsewhere, and which elided the careful detail of Coughlan's readings.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to her negative evaluation, and underlining the varieties of feminist practice, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford would later 'recuperate' Seamus Heaney – along with Sinead O'Connor – for 'feminist politics' in a delicate close reading both of the poem 'Limbo' and its use by film-maker Margo Harkin as 'an objective correlative' for 'the national trauma caused by the Lovett and Hayes cases'.<sup>10</sup>

The historicist dimensions of Cullingford's article are a crucial aspect of their effect. All too often, the critical inspection of 'woman and nation' or 'myth and motherland' in Irish criticism has lacked an historical specificity, with different images and tropes, from the *Cailleach Béara* to the *aisling* figure, made one and the same, and with little if any attention to the process of their transmission and changing role. Máirín Nic Eoin's study of 'female personages in eighteenth-century Irish political poetry' is an exemplary model of the type of historicized analysis that is needed. Her work underlines the importance of attention not just to 'what these names signified' but also to 'the whole process of signification of which they were a part', the questions of 'authorship, audience and transmission within what is

sometimes a complex textual tradition'.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, other significant feminist literary 'criticism in practice' has combined close readings or formalist analysis with nuanced historical interpretations. Yeatsian criticism has been especially well served by the work of Cullingford and by Marjorie Howes's *Yeats' Nations*; and Joycean studies by Emer Nolan's 'Joyce, Women and Nationalism'.<sup>12</sup> Cullingford's introduction provides a useful *modus operandi* for later critics: 'A critic', she writes, 'who would do justice to the insights of feminism while engaging fully with Yeats's poetry must entertain the recuperative as well as the suspicious critical impulses, and accept contradiction as inevitable'.<sup>13</sup> In Nolan's reading of Joyce, 'female figures bear a function of protest and resistance, both in relation to patriarchy and to colonialism – they do not merely signify a passive "affirmation"'.<sup>14</sup>

As contrasted with other European feminisms, the influence of post-structuralist criticism in the Irish field has been relatively limited; one reason, perhaps, is that Irish feminism is by and large unwilling to let go of its female subject. One important poststructuralist intervention is the work of Ailbhe Smyth, influenced by the work of Irigaray, Kristeva and others: 'Which brings me in passing to the question of Irish women's place within but without culture and identity. Transparent floating capacious signifier, from what place can I speak?' as Smyth wrote in 1989.<sup>15</sup> This *Irish Review* essay is approvingly cited by Colin Graham as 'an extraordinary and multifarious examination of the meeting points of "Irishness" and femininity', in his 1996 article 'Subalternity and Gender: Problems of Post-Colonial Irishness'.<sup>16</sup> Yet in his later 2001 expansion of this article, Smyth's credentials emerge as less than 'radical' because of her continuing attachment to 'subjecthood', or what Graham terms in a more general reference to Irish critics as 'the desperate tenacity of subjecthood in critical discourse'.

Moynagh Sullivan's recent observation regarding the absence of 'purposeful dialogue between feminist theory and contemporary debates about Irish studies' continues to convince. In spite of their 'shared agenda', Sullivan writes, feminist, postmodern and postcolonial theories have been 'pursued along parallel and distinct trajectories'.<sup>17</sup> Why is this difficult to decipher Sullivan herself provides one important general explanation in her identification of an understanding (or misunderstanding) of 'the feminine and woman as coterminous' among both postmodern theorists and Irish studies practitioners. Thus a tendency to allegorize political processes using female figures continues, producing icons not dissimilar to those critiqued by Boland and others over a decade ago. As Sullivan argues, this type of valorization of the feminine, present in strands of Irish studies, 'circumvents any real dialogue with actual feminism' and instead, 'woman functions as an object through which Irish studies can mediate its relationship to itself'.<sup>18</sup>

Significantly, Sullivan poses an alternative framework in which historical specificity once again plays a central role:

If, however, questions of the positioning of the subject of Irish studies are placed side by side with historicized expressions of variable womanhood, then woman is no longer available as an object to serve the function of grounding Irishness, but rather serves the purpose of unsettling any articulation of Irishness specifically predicated on the object's silence and ahistoricity.<sup>19</sup>

This description could also serve to summarize the ambition inherent in volumes 4 and 5 of *FDA* (to be discussed below), whose origins in 'unsettling' debates regarding 'the object's silence' are well known.

### 'What Foremothers?': Irish Feminist Criticism II

Back in 1981 the second mode of feminist criticism identified by Showalter was 'the study of women *as writers*: its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition'.<sup>20</sup> In 1997 Gerardine Meaney summarized the Irish situation as follows:

Any commentator on women's writing in Ireland today confronts two incongruous situations. The first is the quality, quantity and diversity of contemporary women's writing. The second is the apparent scarcity of precedent for this writing in Irish literary history. This lack is merely apparent, in the sense that a great mass of material written by Irish women exists. Irish women have written more novels, poetry and plays than the most dedicated literary archaeologist can trace, let alone read. However, this work is only available to specialists, in academic libraries, and to those with the time and skills to seek it out . . . The effect of this has been an unproblematic assumption that women have been the objects not the authors of Irish writing, which has impoverished critical debate and specifically feminist critique of Irish literature and culture.<sup>21</sup>

The publication of Anne Colman's *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Irish Women Poets* the previous year was one of the most significant acts of retrieval of the period, and listed in excess of 400 women poets, born in Ireland between 1800 and 1900, and who published poetry in English. The literary output of these women extended from a single published poem to the 184 volumes of prose and poetry published by Katharine Tynan, and Colman identified thirteen other poets whose work exceeded twenty

published volumes. Echoing the work of Dale Spender and others, she countered three of the prevailing myths concerning women's writing: that 'women only began writing in Ireland in the last fifty years', that 'there was little interest prior to the mid-twentieth century in literature by women, or in work about female writers' and that 'women writers who were active in the nineteenth century were literary oddities, isolated and isolationist in their endeavours'.<sup>22</sup> Other retrieval work, published in journal essays, Masters dissertations and the occasional Ph.D. thesis, focused on women's travel writing, Irish women scientists, 'female Gothic', early women's fiction, women's Revival writing, to name just some examples.

Even before the publication of the landmark *FDA* volumes 4 and 5, this recovery of women's writings has prompted questions and reflections, aided by similar discussions in the context of English and American studies. To the deceptively simple observation by Dale Spender that there is no way of recovering these writings without wondering why they were lost, one may add Richard Brodhead's remark that one needs to ask 'not only why some writing came to be forgotten, but why only some writing exists to be remembered'.<sup>23</sup> The return to view of literary predecessors or 'foremothers' has clearly challenged the assumption criticized by Meaney 'that women have been the objects not the authors of Irish writing'; both Eavan Boland and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, who had written in the early 1990s of the absence of predecessors have more recently recognized this more populated literary landscape.<sup>24</sup> In a curious sense, and one which critics are usually less willing to acknowledge, this perceived absence had been an enabling force, through what Boland has called 'the influence of absences'; as Anne Fogarty has observed, this became for Boland the basis or motivation for a female counter-offensive, both 'bogey' and 'powerful impetus'.<sup>25</sup>

As we learn more about 'the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career', the nature of an Irish female literary tradition, its 'laws and evolution', remains difficult to conceptualize. Gerardine Meaney has cautioned that the type of feminist literary history predicated in the US and Britain on 'celebratory identification, claiming role-models from literary predecessors and nurture from a women's tradition' is 'simply impossible in Ireland'; some of the reasons being that 'the cult of the great literary man was grotesquely overdeveloped on the one hand and . . . questions of national identity in literature were (are?) regarded as the only serious question on the other'.<sup>26</sup> 'Celebratory identification' was the idiom in which much of the early retrieval work of Irish women writers was presented, and understandably so; however, that these writings fell from view, in spite of earlier conscious attempts at 'preservation' by some female

critics and anthologists, is far from reassuring. In more recent retrievals, the vocabulary has moved to an emphasis on women's writings as 'a distinct oppositional practice' in which 'subversions', 'ruptures' and 'transgressions' have looked like becoming a new orthodoxy in critical writings.<sup>27</sup> This research has in itself important political implications, but too often these are made synonymous with the politics of the writer 'under recovery' in what may become a selective or distorted 'recall'. Rita Felski's comments are salutary in this regard: 'The feminist desire to reclaim women's writing', she argues, 'can surely only ground itself in a political commitment to recover the lost voices of women rather than in an epistemological claim for the necessary truth that is spoken by such voices.'<sup>28</sup>

Irish feminist retrieval work gathers force at a time when feminist literary critics elsewhere have questioned some of the assumptions governing this critical project. Writing in a recent issue of *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins have discussed 'the disappearing acts performed by Victorian poetesses' – and by literary critics. 'A spate of new anthologies, annotated editions, and critical collections (as well as texts now available online)', they note, 'has reintroduced supposedly lost women poets into the canon of Victorian poetry. Indeed this recovery is often predicated on a rhetoric of loss, as if only by losing women poets we can rediscover and read them anew.'<sup>29</sup> Pointing to the repetition by current collections of numerous nineteenth-century anthologies (*British Female Poets*, 1848; *The Female Poets of America*, 1848, etc.), they recall Tricia Lootens's unsettling argument, from her work *Lost Saints: Silence, Gender and Victorian Literary Canonization*, that 'much of the nineteenth century is devoted to canonizing poetesses who are, as they were, ironically forgotten in the very process of being remembered'.<sup>30</sup> In the Irish context, this nineteenth-century 'canonization' operated in a more piecemeal fashion, yet earlier anthologizing impulses have lessons to impart, while more generally the rhetoric of loss, used to reinforce the importance of our activities, risks significant overstatement and elision of the extent to which women's writings existed to be remembered. Conversely, not every gap in the literary record may be filled. In their landmark two volume anthology, *Women Writing in India*, Susie Tharu and K. Lolita have warned that 'notions of loss and exclusion are always underwritten by a dream of wholeness or completeness' whereby 'a lost or excluded object can be recognized when it is found, and restored to the place from which it was missed'.<sup>31</sup> And as Richard Brodhead has observed, such dreams of completeness may lead us perilously close to the assumption that 'for every gap in the literary record there is a body of literary experience in the state of being denied'.<sup>32</sup> Instead what remains necessary is a much broader analysis of the making and

breaking of literary reputations, a complex process within which anthologies have played, and continue to play, a central role.

### *Field Day* volumes 4 and 5, and the future: Irish Feminist Criticism III

The opening preface of *The Field Day Anthology* volumes 4 and 5, while foregrounding similar issues, is strikingly, and refreshingly, free of the anxious tones of some current feminist criticism. Inevitably, perhaps, readers of the preface, aware of the origins of these volumes, will scrutinize their self-positioning in relation to volumes 1 to 3. It will be a regrettable limitation, already in evidence in early reviews and correspondence,<sup>33</sup> if the volumes are examined only in these terms. While directly acknowledging the origins of the project – ‘what had originally been intended as a single volume of women’s writings, supplementing and interrogating the 1991 *Field Day Anthology*, and operating within similar parameters’ – the general editors (Angela Bourke, Siobhán Kilfeather, Maria Luddy, Margaret MacCurtain, Gerardine Meaney, Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, Mary O’Dowd and Clair Wills) underline its development ‘into a much larger, multidisciplinary project involving contributions from people with many kinds of qualification’, ‘both encyclopaedic and kaleidoscopic, combining many hundreds of texts with dozens of ways of reading them’.<sup>34</sup> The expansion of title that this required, ‘Irish Women’s Writings and Traditions’, is telling. ‘Historicized expressions of variable womanhood’ are present in abundance, in an unprecedented combination of subjects (literature in Irish, literature in English, criticism, theology, sexuality, politics, history and oral tradition).

In its scale, ambition and structure, FDA volumes 4 and 5 is a new kind of anthology. A crucial aspect of this ‘newness’ and of its future shaping significance is the editors’ self-conscious questioning of ‘received versions’ of literary history, of cultural influence, and of the Irish writing tradition(s). In the context of literary studies, the material invites a radical rethinking of issues of authorship, production, genre and canon-formation and – to state the blatantly obvious – not just for women’s writing.

It is still an early stage in the volumes’ reception and the daunting size of the volumes themselves precludes a swift analysis. In the light of the issues raised in the preceding discussion, an outline of some of their significant aspects and potential influence is possible. To name briefly some examples: the opening section ‘Medieval to Modern, 600–1900’ edited by Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, and with Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Máire Herbert, Máirín



Nic Eoin and Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha as contributing editors, has important implications for both of the existing modes of Irish feminist criticism. It makes available a great richness of source material concerning women, including medical literature, medieval law-texts, canon law, extracts from the *Dindshenchas* (lore of places), etc. Many of these texts are published for the first time, and more than half of the material was not translated into English previously. Anticipating the reader's question, Ní Dhonnchadha acknowledges from the outset that 'For all the diversity of the material gathered, disappointingly little of it was actually written by women'. While the sections gather important references to 'historical female poets', the first complete text that 'can be attributed with absolute certainty to a historical woman' is from the early seventeenth century, although Ní Dhonnchadha cites strong presumptive evidence in the case of the Old Irish poem attributed to Digde (c.900) 'that it was actually composed by a woman of this name'. Much more significant, however, is Nic Dhonnchadha's reformulation and expansion of the question of authorship to that of women's 'participation in literary culture', to include women as 'readers and auditors, recipients and patrons', an adjustment which is richly productive and suggestive for future work.<sup>35</sup>

Angela Bourke's general introduction to 'Oral Traditions' begins with a fundamental act of reshaping: 'Not all important ideas are found in books.' Bourke continues with an acknowledgement that it is 'perhaps at first sight anomalous to include oral traditions in an anthology consisting primarily of Irish *writing*'; her rationale, persuasively argued, includes the recognition that 'women's relationship to the written word has never been simple, while women's access to literacy has often been different to men's', and, until relatively recently, 'oral culture continued as a medium through which the majority expressed themselves'.<sup>36</sup> The section brings with it a radical re-envisioning of authorship which, as Bourke observes, 'was anything but anonymous' but far from 'straightforward'. The most basic organizational tenets of anthologies – attribution of date of publication and of authorship – are, as a consequence, confounded: here the names attached to texts are those of the 'storytellers and singers from whom they were collected', and starting and finishing dates are 'not appropriate to the presentation of material whose appearance in print may come many years after its performance'.<sup>37</sup> Throughout this section, new models of the relationship of the collective and individual emerge, which may be usefully deployed elsewhere in Irish literary history. Bourke firmly reclaims oral culture from its position as 'poor relation' and its identification as synonymous with 'the prescriptions of authoritarian patriarchal nationalism'; in addition, in an argument which has important implications for 'the image-of-woman

school', she rejects a one-dimensional view of the oral tradition as 'a reservoir of demeaning anti-feminist stereotype', arguing instead that such are the art forms frequently used to challenge and subvert such types.<sup>38</sup>

Margaret MacCurtain's statement, in the general introduction to her section 'Religion, Science, Theology and Ethics, 1500–2000', that 'For women of all classes, and this generalization holds up for succeeding generations, religion provided the most powerful incentive for experiencing autonomy and for independent action', may startle some of her readers.<sup>39</sup> MacCurtain and her contributing editors (Phil Kilroy, Rosemary Raughter, Janice Holmes, Caitriona Clear, Sarah MacDonald, Maire Rodgers and Mary Condren) also recover an astonishing array of material including personal diaries, memoirs and testimonies, hymns and poetry, writing on science, ethics and the nature of doubt; 'diverse themes of a multi-cultured religious experience over the past five hundred years' expressed with moving and sometimes plaintive eloquence. This section stages a reclaiming of spiritual writing and religious experience from the narrow confines of clericalism – an equation made all too simplistically by critics of *FDA* volumes 1 to 3 – with immense personal and social significance. A similar interweaving of personal and social experience, of considerable immediacy and even urgency, emerges from Siobhán Kilfeather's section on sexuality and its treatment of, in Kilfeather's words, 'the issue of the materiality of bodies and how they can be understood to signify' which 'has particular resonance in an Irish context'.<sup>40</sup> The sources gathered by Kilfeather and her co-editors (including Jo Murphy Lawless, Dympna McLoughlin, Marjorie Howes, Éibhear Walsh and Emma Donoghue) are fascinating in their range and detail: both 'evidence generated by subjects about their sexuality' such as letters, diaries, folktales, songs and autobiographical narratives, and 'evidence extracted from subjects by institutions', such as medical treatises, newspaper interviews, census data and courtroom evidence.<sup>41</sup>

The sections on 'Women's Writing, 1700–1960' edited by Gerardine Meaney and on 'Contemporary Writing' edited by Clair Wills are, on first sight, closest to more traditional anthologies in subject-matter and organization, but it is also in these sections that some of the most significant differences emerge. This is also where the definition of the overall project is most explicitly theorized in relation to feminist history. 'Feminist literary history' Meaney defines as 'a perspective brought to bear on this diverse material' and she continues with a stimulating interrogation of the anthology's own relation to canon-formation. Is its function 'simply a case of filling in the gaps . . . until an inclusive canon comes into existence' (this Meaney terms 'an extension of the franchise' which is 'not fundamentally radical') or 'to put into question the whole notion of literary canons

constituted by reference to a universal standard of literary greatness'? And yet as she acknowledges, 'the grouping together of this material in this way necessarily produces some form of narrative of women's writing in Ireland. It postulates a history, while consisting of the different histories that are contained within it.'<sup>42</sup> In Wills's section, the inclusion of a concluding section of ethnicities, and the different histories therein, is one of the volume's most powerful structural statements, with themes of identity and displacement resonant of the anthology's earliest sections. The detailed inclusion of Irish-language writing in this contemporary section also plays a vital role in affirming the existence of what Wills calls a 'writing in a reinvigorated Irish which has been brought into dialogue with other modern literatures' whereby 'contemporary women authors have found new ways of confronting the dilemma of local allegiance and universalist impulse, of particularism and cosmopolitanism' and some of the disabling distinctions drawn on language lines between 'ancient custom and a dynamic modernity' are broken down.<sup>43</sup>

As Meaney notes, the selections in this anthology do 'not complete any map of Irish writing'; 'rather they seek to put existing maps into question'.<sup>44</sup> The volumes present many and varied invitations to re-imagine what we understand by Irish writing – I've aimed to identify briefly here just some of those of interest to literary studies – and they provide invaluable resources towards this. A danger exists that their publication will be seen merely as the closing chapter in a decade-long debate that was often bitter and also immensely productive. For its many editors and contributing editors, it *is* the culmination of many years of work and waiting, but the volumes are also the beginning of many new questions. Now that they exist, in a separateness that is both generative and disquieting, it's time to look at their contents again in the wider tradition from whence they came and to study how the tradition changes with their return to view. A crucial factor in this 'next stage' (post-*FDA*) is institutional support and recognition: republication in full of many of these extracted texts; electronic and lower-cost dissemination; support of graduate theses and dissertations, where so much research waits to be done; and continuing institutional co-operation in research programmes. The ongoing work of the Centre for Editorial and Intertextual Research at Cardiff University, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber and Rolf Loeber's forthcoming bibliography of nineteenth-century Irish fiction, and the HEA-funded Munster Women Writers Project at University College Cork, point the way in this regard. A historical perspective shows how swiftly women's writings may disappear from view; what happens next with *FDA* volumes 4 and 5 will be crucial to the volumes' endurance.<sup>45</sup>

## Notes and References

- 1 Translated as 'The Language Question: Gaelic Discourse, Poetry, and Women's Discourse'.
- 2 Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (1981), pp. 179-205, p. 184.
- 3 Eavan Boland, *A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition*, LIP pamphlet (Dublin: Attic Press, 1989).
- 4 Edna Longley, *From Cathleen to Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands*, LIP pamphlet (Dublin: Attic Press, 1990), reproduced in Longley, *The Living Stream* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1994). Gerardine Meaney, *Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics*, LIP pamphlet (Dublin: Attic Press, 1991).
- 5 Catriona Clutterbuck, 'The Trustworthiness of Treachery', review of Boland's *The Lost Land*, published in *Irish University Review* 29.2, 1999, pp. 406-10.
- 6 Anne Fogarty, "'The Influence of Absences": Eavan Boland and the Silenced History of Irish Women's Poetry', *Colby Library Quarterly* 35. 4, Dec. 1999, pp. 256-74.
- 7 Clutterbuck, 'Gender and Self-Representation in Irish Poetry: the Critical Debate', *Bulán* 4.1, 1998, pp. 43-58 (52).
- 8 Patricia Coughlan, "'Bog Queens": The Representation of Women in the Poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney', in Toni Johnson and David Cairns (eds.), *Gender in Irish Writing* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1991), reproduced in Claire Connolly (ed.), *Theorising Ireland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 45, 59.
- 9 See for example Neil Corcoran's *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986; revised ed. 1998), which engages with Coughlan's article in three separate footnotes.
- 10 Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, 'Seamus and Sinéad: From "Limbo" to *Saturday Night Live* by way of *Hush-a-Bye Baby*', *Colby Quarterly* 30.1, Mar. 1994, republished in Cullingford, *Ireland's Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture*, Field Day Monographs Critical Conditions series (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), pp. 234-57.
- 11 Máirín Nic Eoin, 'Secrets and Disguises?: Caitlín Ní Uallacháin and Other Female Personages in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Poetry', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Iris an dá chultúr* 11, 1996, pp. 7-45 (7).
- 12 Marjorie Howes, *Nations: Gender, Class and Irishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), ch. 6.
- 13 Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 10.
- 14 Nolan, op. cit., pp. 170-7.
- 15 Ailbhe Smyth, 'The Floozie in the Jacuzzi', *The Irish Review* 6, 1989, p. 7.
- 16 Colin Graham, 'Subalternity and Gender: Problems of Post-Colonial Irishness', *Journal of Gender Studies* 5.3 (1996), pp. 363-73, expanded in Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2001).
- 17 Moynagh Sullivan, 'Feminism, Postmodernism and the Subjects of Irish and Women's Studies', in P. J. Mathews (ed.), *New Voices in Irish Criticism* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 243. Defining this potentially 'shared agenda', Sullivan notes that 'preoccupations with ontological and epistemological aspects of identity are common to feminist, postmodern and postcolonial theories, as is an intent to find critical paradigms which accommodate expressions of multiple identities'.

- 18 *ibid.*, pp. 243, 246–7, 250.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 250.
- 20 Showalter, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–5.
- 21 Gerardine Meaney, ‘Territory and Transgression: History, Nationality and Sexuality in Kate O’Brien’s Fiction’, *Irish Journal of Feminist Studies* 2.2, Dec. 1997, pp. 77–8.
- 22 Anne Colman, *A Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Irish Women Poets* (Galway: Kennys, 1996), pp. 15–16.
- 23 Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Novelists Before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986); Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 109.
- 24 Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, ‘What Foremothers?’, *Poetry Ireland Review* 36, 1992, pp. 18–27.
- 25 Fogarty, *op. cit.*, pp. 258–9.
- 26 Meaney, ‘Territory and Transgression’, *op. cit.*, p. 80, p. 78.
- 27 For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Kelleher, ‘Writing Irish Women’s Literary History’, *Irish Studies Review* 9.1, 2001, pp. 5–14.
- 28 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 33.
- 29 Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, ‘Lyrical Studies’, *Victorian Literature and Culture* 1999, pp. 521–30, (521).
- 30 Tricia Lootens, *Lost Saints: Silence, Gender and Victorian Literary Canonization* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), pp. 1–14; cited in Jackson and Prins, p. 521.
- 31 Susie Tharu and K. Lolita (eds.), *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*, 2 vols. (London: Pandora, 1993), vol. 1, p. 23.
- 32 Brodhead, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–8.
- 33 See Eileen Battersby’s review, *Irish Times*, 5 October 2002; also Breandán Ó Buachalla’s letter to the editor, *Irish Times*, 21 November 2002, written in response to Bernard O’Donoghue’s ‘Viewpoint’ article of 2 November.
- 34 *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing Volumes 4 and 5: Irish Women’s Writing and Traditions* (Cork and New York; Cork University Press and New York University Press, in association with Field Day, 2002), vol. 4, pp. xxxiii, xxxii.
- 35 *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 4.
- 36 *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1191.
- 37 *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 1196–7.
- 38 *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 1193–5.
- 39 *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 459.
- 40 *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 755.
- 41 *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 757–8.
- 42 *ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 765–6.
- 43 *ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 1128.
- 44 *ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 771.
- 45 Many thanks to my colleagues Claire Connolly, Marjorie Howes and Vera Kreilkamp, and to the staff of the Burns Library, Boston College.