
Claire Keegan's Use of Satire¹

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Abstract. This essay focuses on Claire Keegan's markedly satirical understanding of the inadequacy of quotidian reality in rural Ireland and its tragic effects on people, especially on women, as well as in Keegan's use of the short story genre to concentrate on the quality of seeing rather than on moralizing issues – a technique which has led her way of writing to be considered cold, externalist and non-emotional. To this end, I shall explore which of the rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus are present in three stories from her 2007 collection *Walk the Blue Fields*: “Walk the Blue Fields”, “The Forester's Daughter” and “Night of the Quicken Trees”.

Key Words. Claire Keegan, short story, rhetoric of Satire, contingency, rural Ireland, “Walk the Blue Fields”, “The Forester's Daughter”, “Night of the Quicken Trees”.

Resumen. Este artículo se centra en la visión marcadamente satírica que Claire Keegan ofrece de las deficiencias de la realidad cotidiana en la Irlanda rural, y las trágicas consecuencias que acarrearán a la gente, en particular a las mujeres, así como en la utilización por parte de la autora del relato breve para centrarse en la forma de ver las cosas más que como vehículo para moralizar. Este rasgo definitorio de la técnica de Keegan explica por qué su manera de escribir es considerada fría, externa y aséptica. Para ello examinaré las técnicas satíricas empleadas por Keegan en tres historias de su colección *Walk the Blue Fields* (2007): “Walk the Blue Fields”, “The Forester's Daughter” y “Night of the Quicken Trees”.

Palabras clave: Claire Keegan, relato breve, retórica de la sátira, contingencia, Irlanda rural, “Walk the Blue Fields”, “The Forester's Daughter”, “Night of the Quicken Trees”.

Introduction

Irish writers have demonstrated their commitment to the short story genre through experimentation with varied stylistic techniques. In an insightful essay, Ingman (2009: 227) underlines this assumption of experimentation and focuses on Irish women

writers, noting, for example, that their short stories present “a vignette to contemplate” and that the genre ignores “causality in favour of conveying a moment of insight”. In this same essay, Ingman (259-260) argues that in every period the Irish short story seems to have perceived the shortcomings of everyday reality and that in the latter part of the twentieth century many anthologies highlighted Irish women's contribution to the quality and range of the genre. This essay explores this urge in Irish women writers to experiment with the short story form by focusing on Claire Keegan's distinctive

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satirical understanding of the inadequacy of quotidian reality in rural Ireland in three stories from her second collection, *Walk the Blue Fields* (2007): “Walk the Blue Fields”, “The Forester’s Daughter” and “Night of the Quicken Trees”.

My discussion is prompted by three related questions: why is it that Keegan feels attracted to the short story form? Why is it that her perceptions about the failings of daily life in rural Ireland are best expressed in the satirical mode? And is the overall impact of her stories only rational and satirical, or emotional and tragic as well? In an interview with Declan Meade (2008), Keegan answers the first question by saying that “there is a strictness about it which I really admire [...] the short story is like a poem in that there is nothing lost. Everything is savoured.” Keegan describes the genre as synonymous with suddenness, intensity, visual impact, contemplation and imagination. In other words, the short story allows the writer to show glimpses of changing Irish social mores, and to achieve a rapid and incisive insight into these changes, particularly when compared to the more leisurely procedures of the novel. Bearing in mind these aspects, as Ingman (2009: 255) explains, it is striking that “in contrast to many of her female predecessors of the 1970s and 1980s, Keegan eschews the short story as a vehicle for socio-cultural messages, concentrating instead, like McGahern, on the quality of seeing.” This defining feature of Keegan’s technique explains why her way of writing is cold, externalist and non-emotional. Keegan usually selects one case of typical behaviour or misbehaviour in order to bring out the full-blooded responses of which her characters are typically capable. In “Night of the Quicken Trees”, for example, a goat called Josephine usually sleeps with its owner, Stack, who rubs “Palmolive on her teats and always remember[s] to bring her fig rolls from the town” (134). Keegan’s introduction of these scatological elements into the story contributes to highlighting the sense of detachment that satire conveys. The writer uses satire in order to depict Stack as a very unattractive and grotesque character. Furthermore, Stack is depicted as a tragic character, because his eccentric behaviour is rooted in unfulfilled passions in the past (“He wished he hadn’t wasted all those years on the

farmer’s daughter” [...] [he had] “never been in love” (155)). Nor are their long-term psychic effects overcome in the present, even though Stack is emotionally fulfilled by his partner Margaret, and they have a child called Michael at the end of the story. Keegan favours an amoral² type of satire. As she herself acknowledges, “In a way I am amoral with regard to what I write about. I just write. If there are repercussions on a personal level with my writing, then I will deal with them on a personal level. I will not be bound by some kind of self-imposed censorship” (Meade 2000/2001). Keegan’s stories imply that Irish men and women must change and that it is a moral matter. In the discussion that follows, I shall explore Keegan’s satirical procedures in the three stories specified, in relation to her peculiar representation of Irish rural life.

Keegan’s rhetoric of satire

According to Knight (2004: 4), satire is “pre-generic”, that is, it “is not a genre in itself but an exploiter of other genres”:

Satire is modal, [...] a mental position that needs to adopt a genre in order to express its ideas as representation. [...] Its characteristic element of attack is often formal. [...] The satirist’s manipulation of forms may enhance his perception of the object thus framed, but clearly that frame allows the reader to arrive at a parallel perception. Because this parallelism of perception lies at the heart of satiric exchange, a rhetorical approach is inescapable in studies of satire. (4)

Within this line of argument, other well-known satire theorists like Worcester have claimed that “Satire is the most openly rhetorical of all the literary genres. We are always aware in reading it that the writer is manipulating words to produce a particular effect and to control our attitudes” (quoted in Kernan, 1962: 179-180). Moreover, as other critics have pointed out, the content of satire is

2. Since the concept of morality in the twenty-first century has in many respects lost its force, some contemporary literary critics argue that the purpose of satire is perception rather than attempting to change behaviour (Knight 2004: 5); consequently, inquiry and provocation are preferred to moral instruction and punishment (Griffin 1994: 35-70; Knight 2004: 5).

criticism, and criticism may be uttered as direct rebuke or using a variety of rhetorical devices. This assumption is corroborated by Elices (2005: 58), who concludes that if the satirical work depends on its capacity to be indirect, “satirists achieve this indirectness³ [...] through which the satirist circumvents the pressure of the authorities” (79). Here, I claim that Keegan is a dexterous manipulator of language with a copious vocabulary and supply of rhetorical devices. In this way, she makes her dissenting voice heard, but she is not guided by self-imposed censorship. Here is an example:

The boy, who has all this time been lying inside his hayshed, looks out. ‘Is it money, Daddy?’
 ‘What?’
 ‘Mammy says you think of nothing else.’
 ‘Does she now?’
 ‘Aye. And she says you can sew your *own* arse into your trousers. Why would you sew your arse into your trousers?’
 ‘You watch your tongue,’ Deegan says but he laughs all the same. The boy, like much else in life, has been a disappointment. (“The Forester’s Daughter”, 2007: 71-72)

In this passage, Keegan uses irony as a deliberate and obvious way of showing disparity or incongruity between the statement made by the child and its intent. What is interesting here is the child showing that he doesn’t understand the implications of money. Moreover, Keegan’s wit is worth highlighting, too, because it points out the child’s misunderstanding of the adult world of discourse and simultaneously ridicules Deegan and his obsession with money. The presence of these stylistic features from satire does not mean that the entire tone of the story is satirical. As we shall observe, Deegan also contributes to the emotional and tragic impact of the story, because his greed makes his wife Martha and his family extremely unhappy. This is the reason why Martha informs him of the alternative behaviour that she would have preferred Deegan to have displayed towards her and their children in the past (“‘Are you happy now?’ he says. ‘After twenty years of marriage,

you’re finally asking’” (87)), and also why she is determined to abandon him at the end of the story. In any case, it is Keegan’s satirical stance and talent for finding the right word that makes this social observation so sharp and her critique so thought-provoking, as it slowly emerges to the reader.

Keegan contrives some striking techniques for contrasting certain social, religious and cultural beliefs with the inescapable facts of existence. Further, her use of the satirical mode depicts, albeit indirectly, how diverse social, religious and cultural tendencies have brought about various changes in rural Ireland in recent decades, replacing old traditions and values concerning traditional links of family life (husbands and wives, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, childhood and the family) and of Irish culture. In doing so, Keegan’s satirical stance puts on display the complex ways in which the multiple identities of modern Ireland are being experienced at present.

After briefly summarising the three stories, I shall concentrate on Keegan’s satirical view of reality in rural Ireland. To discuss her rhetorical experimentation I shall refer to a number of satirical strategies conceptualised by Elices in his theoretical monograph *Historical and Theoretical Approaches to English Satire* (2005: 77-108). Keegan’s stories, are tremendously subtle and rich in their depiction of individual problems, and are worth exploring because of the ethical dimension of her characters’ actions and decisions.

“Walk the Blue Fields”

This title story centres on a priest from Avondale, Co. Wexford, who officiates at the wedding of a woman he once loved. During the ceremony, the priest has an overwhelming moment of regret, and the bride has mixed feelings in marrying the bridegroom. Unable to remain at the wedding dinner, the priest walks across the fields and finds redemption and healing in the most unlikely of places, the caravan of a Chinese healer, whom many people visit hoping to find cures for their illnesses.

This is Keegan’s treatment of the wedding reception that takes place at the beginning of “Walk the Blue Fields” whose realism is heightened for effect:

3. As Worcester (quoted in Paulson 1971: 116) argues, “the presence or absence of such devices determines what is satire and what is not.”

Lawlor, at the head table, taps a glass and the crowd turns silent. A member of staff comes over with a microphone and hands it to the priest. Mechanically, he begins. ‘Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts ...’ Heads bow, a crying child is taken from the room. As soon as he reaches the Amen, platters of avocado pears and bowls of soup appear. Bread rolls are buttered. Heads dip. Girls with a bottle at each hand pour red and white wine. Dishes of roast potatoes are brought out, vegetables, boats of gravy. Comfort is taken in the food and silence presides until the first wave of hunger is satiated. Then the talk begins (24-25).

Keegan’s thrust of wit, a rhetorical strategy of the satirical apparatus (Elices, 2005: 92) that consists of an ingenious use of language, reveals how extremely observant the writer is. The real tension is that the priest speaks mechanically, as though there were no problem. Keegan’s dexterity with language lies in her placing of great significance in common details others dismiss simply because they happen every day.⁴ Keegan’s wit is capable of turning this description of a regular Irish wedding reception into a source of comedy. One should notice, though, that this wedding description does not have a satiric intention, but a playful or jocular one (“‘Please take your seats! Ladies and gentlemen! Dinner will be served!’ There is a ripple of surprise. Women reach for their handbags. Drinkers panic and order another round. A trickle flows towards the ballroom where the tables have been set” (22)). When the reader reaches the end of the passage the feeling is of apprehension, as he or she anticipates that something is going to happen later in the story, as it does. In fact, this is the moment in which the element of attack, which is so characteristic of the satirical mode, makes its appearance. I refer to another old theme of Irish literature, priestly celibacy. Keegan uses wit here in order to disguise the aggressiveness that underlies her satiric attacks against the past authority exerted by the Catholic Church in Ireland and priests’ lack of sincerity in their celibacy. Accordingly, the following passage shows how everyone at the wedding, even the bride’s relatives and husband, is aware that the

4. As Reeser (2008) rightly points out, the first story of Keegan’s collection “rewards multiple readings for the finely wrought depictions of Irish life it offers up”.

priest broke his vow of celibacy in the past, but they keep silent now, except for muttered asides: “ ‘Aisy!’ says Brennan with a frown. ‘There’s a man of the cloth here.’ ‘Aye,’ says Sinnott with a grunt.’ ‘And we all know the white cloth is stained.’ The laughter tumbles quickly into a fragile silence. Breen coughs. The aunt straightens her knife and fork once more” (26). Here, Keegan uses the satirical mode in a veiled manner, so that misbehaviour in the Catholic Church emerges wittily in the conversation of informed observers.

Apart from wit, Keegan uses contingency in this short story in order to inquire how her characters deal with “how things have happened” (261) and disclose dislocations of marriage and religious beliefs and practices. This explains, for example, why there is a constant tension between what could have happened to the priest and the bride had the former kept his promise to leave the priesthood and marry her. In this regard, that the priest feels remorse during the wedding celebration, because he was unable to live the life of a sinner in the past, and the bride⁵ has mixed feelings when she is about to get married, may be taken as signs of Keegan’s questioning of priesthood and marriage⁶ as answers to loneliness.

Keegan uses other rhetorical strategies in order to address some of her targets and carry out her attacks. Thus Brennan, Sinnott and Jackson are the fools of this story as they represent the instinctive and base side of humanity. In the following passage, their drunkenness confers a special function upon them, since they can express truths that others cannot, without being taken seriously. In other words, they are carnivalesque truth-tellers:

In the Gents, he [the priest] stands before the mirror and washes his hands [...] Donald Jackson, the best man, comes in, leans against the wall, and urinates. The stream is long and noisy

5. As Giangrande (2012) claims, Keegan describes such feelings with great detail because the bride’s hand is said to be shaking as she lifts the pen to sign the marriage certificate and the bouquet also trembles in her hand when she is doing so.

6. See Keegan’s view on marriage in an interview she gave to Fertxu: <http://fertxu.wordpress.com/2008/11/16/claire-keegan>

on the tile. He turns before his cock is put away. It is a huge cock and he has difficulty getting it back into the rented trousers.

‘A fucken ornament, Father,’ he says. ‘Much like your own.’

‘Aisy!’ shouts Kennedy, who has flushed and come out of the stall. ‘There is no need for that. Would you ever put that thing away!’ He is half amused. ‘Don’t mind this blackguard, Father. Pay no heed.’

Going out the door, the priest hears laughter. There was a time, not too long ago, when they would have waited until he could not have heard. He must go to the bar and compose himself once more. Weddings are hard. The drink flows and the words come out and he has to be there (22-23).

Keegan’s use of scatology, the use of excremental and obscene details, within the grotesque⁷ overtones of this episode, aims to ridicule the priest’s celibacy once more. The introduction of scatological elements (“urinates”, “the stream is long and noisy” or “huge cock”) makes these three guests’ behaviour seem ridiculous, but the narrator’s description of the priest’s alternative behaviour and thoughts is not preferable either. Keegan seems to highlight that young Irish people no longer respect this shadowy priest’s religious codes, beliefs and practices, like Catholic decorum or repressed sexuality.

Later in the story, the local priest flees the wedding reception to go to the caravan of a Chinese healer, who recently arrived in the area. This scene reveals how new spiritual trends are replacing the old in Ireland today. Contrary to the clownish Sinnott, who makes a sardonic comment on the healer by introducing scatological references (“‘Sure he’s a Chink: ates dog and shitestay” (26)), the narrator shows much more authorial affection towards him. Keegan’s use of scatology seems to aim at scorning current Irish social discriminating practices. In doing so, Keegan shows the lack of consonance between Irish tradition and modernity, which is thrown into prominence by means of the satirical mode.⁸

7. As Clark (1991: 18-19) argues “the grotesque was always understood to be excessive” [...] “the violation of harmony, symmetry, and proportion characterizes the grotesque.” For further discussion on scatology, see also Clark (1991: 116-130).

As the *dénouement* of the story is reached, Keegan recreates a beautiful moment of epiphany (“His [the priest’s] faith has not faltered – that’s what’s strange – but he wishes God would show himself. All he wants is a sign” (29)). Here the Chinese healer causes the priest to experience human contact as something “new” (36) and pleasant; something that may be taken as Keegan’s undermining of the enforcement of sexual chastity and continence. Thus the priest confesses envy of the healer because he “believes in what he does and takes pleasure in the work” (37)). The priest’s mother “had encouraged without pushing him towards the priesthood” (21), since having an unmarried son was an uncomfortable nuisance. Despite this moment of epiphany, the priest shows an eventual lack of initiative and a powerful need to escape into the blue fields. As the following passage shows, Keegan discloses not only the priest’s past and present dreams and emotions, but also the factual circumstances that drove him towards the priesthood without his full consent in the past and those that surround his tragic situation now:

He remembers lying naked with Lawlor’s daughter in a bed outside of Newry town. He remembers all those dandelions gone to seed and how he said he would always love her. He remembers these things, in full, and feels no shame. How strange it is to be alive. Soon, it will be Easter. There is work to be done, a sermon to be written for Palm Sunday. He climbs the fields back towards the road, thinking about his life tomorrow, as a priest, deciphering, as best he can, the Roman language of the trees (38).

Keegan’s writing technique and liking for contingency uncover silenced accounts of the bride’s and the priest’s human predicament derived from a “sexually duplicitous Catholic Ireland” (Walshe 2007: 122). Keegan’s story describes a rural Ireland, where “time stands still and passions run deep” (Johri, 2013), yet her deployment of several rhetorical devices,

8. Further examples in which this lack of consonance between Irish tradition and modernity is thrown into prominence by means of the satirical mode appear later in the story as, for example, when some guests complain about not being able to smoke (“‘And isn’t it a terrible thing, after all that, to have to go outside for a fag?’” (27)).

such as wit and scatology, questions in an indirect manner some inadequate ideas and practices of the Church, of society and of the institution of marriage. Keegan seems to inquire about why marriage should be a necessary practice among Irish women; why the Catholic Church and its practitioners exerted and still exert such strict authority over Irish people; why many men ended up becoming priests if they were unmarried; why priests' sexual and amorous feelings should be repressed in celibacy; why there is always so much to be said, but it is silenced by everyone for practical reasons, etc. Despite the fact that Keegan's final emphasis is on the local, and on the small rituals of a community where lives are lived in harmony with their natural environment, Keegan's satirical perception of the shortcomings of quotidian reality in rural Ireland unveils in an indirect manner that many of them should be reconsidered perhaps, in order to break down a long-term situation of stasis in the culture, and to reconcile Irish society and religion with new developments in contemporary Ireland.

“The Forester's Daughter”

This skilful story narrates the tale of Martha, a woman who marries Victor Deegan, an egotistic, emotionally sterile man she does not love, in the hope that she will come to love him. However, Martha, the eponymous “forester's daughter”, realizes the negative consequences of her bad decision one day when her husband punishes her for wasting his money on roses she buys from a traveller with whom she has pleasurable sex without Deegan knowing it. As a result of this encounter, Martha becomes pregnant with her daughter Victoria, who is a genuine tinker girl because Martha is a story-teller of tinker⁹ blood and her father a traveller who sells roses door to door. As the story comes to an end, Martha has her revenge on Deegan because she makes public the fact that Victoria is not his daughter, and

even though the reader feels it coming and realises its inevitability, s/he is still a little surprised when it happens. Finally a fire destroys Deegan's house, called Aghowle, and the reader sees its varied effects upon everyone. From the beginning of the story, Deegan is presented as a very practical man who goes “to Courtown Harbour to find a wife” (51) and does not give up until he woos Martha. Keegan recreates Deegan's courtship of Martha with such resourcefulness of language that she converts their flirting into a tragicomic monotony (“Months passed and through nothing stronger than habit, they kept meeting”(52)), and Deegan into an unreflective simpleton (““Would you think of marrying me?” “I don't think so.” ‘*I see,*’ Deegan said. But Deegan *didn't see* and for this simple reason, he persisted” (52; my emphasis)). Keegan's quick pen is at its best too, when Deegan asks Martha to marry him.

While the question was in mid-air, Martha hesitated. Deegan was standing with his back to the amusement arcade. With all the lights behind him she could hardly make him out; all she could see were slot machines and shelves of coins [...] Martha's instinct told her to refuse but she was thirty years of age and if she said no this question might never be asked of her again. She wasn't sure of Deegan but none of the others had ever mentioned marriage, so Martha, with her own logic, concluded that Victor Deegan must love her and accepted. In all the years that followed, Deegan never thought but he showed his love. (52-53)

Deegan asks Martha to marry him at a moment when he is scarcely visible to her. The phrase “with her own logic” is Keegan's observation upon Martha's confused thinking, and introduces a tragicomic element that will characterize the bad marriage that is the outcome. Deegan and Martha's union gives way to a distorted recreation of the daily routine of a patriarchal family in rural Ireland.

Deegan is represented as an eccentric man, whose main concern is the land, milking the cows, and the mortgage: “Secretly, he knew that the place gave him more satisfaction than his wife and children ever would. His retirement will be his reward” (57). Deegan is also very much concerned about his neighbours' opinions of him and his family (“He knows the power of a neighbour's opinion

9. For further reference on the implications of the word “tinker”, see Lanfers (2008) and Burke (2009). A more detailed description of the relevance of Victoria's “tinkeriness” for Keegan's purposes regarding formal experimentation and cultural ideas is provided later in this section of the discussion.

and will not have it said that he's ever missed a Sunday" (58-59)). He is much obsessed with keeping up appearances. The outcome, unsurprisingly, is three unhappy and uncomprehending children, and a wife sunk in ennui. The family lives on the land in a suffocating monotony that leaves no room for spontaneity or intimacy.

Eventually Martha is unfaithful to her now-impotent husband with the traveller, and has a child by him named Victoria. Suspicious of Victoria's paternity, Deegan soon has mixed feelings about the girl, who is highly intelligent. One day he gives her a dog as a present in order to calm his own conscience as a father and to stop her constant accusations of stinginess. At this point, Keegan introduces a striking rhetorical strategy: she gives consciousness to the dog – named, significantly, Judge – and makes it a commentator upon its surroundings. This is a procedure recognized by Elices, who describes “the ‘humanisation of animals’” as an historical procedure that has been “an habitual source of humour, scorn and degradation [...] in order to demythologise the insofar unquestioned superiority of the human race and to present a grotesque image of our most accepted values and codes”(2005: 96). Whilst Keegan does not go so far as to offer grotesqueness, the dog's consciousness is shown to grasp, and effectively dismantle, the structures of this dysfunctional family:

The woman he understands: she is just the protective bitch minding her pup. The eldest fellow keeps to himself. The middle boy's scent is unlike any he has ever encountered [...] Judge is glad he cannot speak. [...] Why can't they stop talking and embrace each other? The woman is crying now. He licks her hand (61-65).

Through the consciousness attributed to Judge, Keegan establishes the loneliness and confusion of the family members: they are unable to communicate and reciprocate love. This satirical device is extravagant, but allows the reader to perceive that there are other, alternative patterns of conduct that may result in happiness for all the members of this family. In this way, Keegan's criterion of social acceptability is normative, but – because it is mediated by an animal – does not appear to be insistently moralizing.

Within this story, the mythical element plays a crucial role too. Keegan utilizes the world of fantasy, dreams and the surreal to enable her characters to escape from real life into a world of wonder and happiness. According to Elices (2005: 95), “fantasy appears as an element that allows the satirist to enlarge, belittle or downgrade our vision of reality. “Deegan dreams of becoming rich and envied by his neighbours. In fact, dreaming becomes for him “the closest thing to having someone to talk to” (67). As the story proceeds, “He looks at Martha [...] He would like to wake her and tell her now of his dream. He would like sometimes to carry her away from this place and tell her what is on his mind and start all over again” (67). Keegan uses this rhetorical strategy based on fantasy in order to create idyllic situations and settings that compensate for Deegan's personal frustrations which have originated in the real world.

Martha is different from Deegan; she does not dream. Just like the village priest of the title story, Martha always finds in the fields “the solitude that will let her mind calm down and her memory surface” (63). The figure of Martha contributes to the emotional and tragic impact of the story because she struggles “with questions of identity, fate and self-determination” (Lanters, 2008: 149).¹⁰ In other words, Martha would have liked Deegan to ask her and her family how they felt. She wished Deegan would treat her as a woman, as the seller of roses did (“She remembers [...] how strange and soft the salesman's hands felt, compared to Deegan's. He had taken his time, lain back in the straw and told her her eyes were the colour of wet sand” (59)). She also would have liked to find a job and a place of her own. However, as usual among women living in the rural Ireland of the past, pregnancy prevented her from liberating herself from domestic constraints. As a result, she soon became “disillusioned with her thoughts of leaving” (72). Just like the so-called “city-girl” novels of Patricia Scanlan and Sheila O'Flanagan, which “frequently feature

10. In fact, Martha very much resembles Marina Carr's female characters Portia Coughlan and Hester Swane in *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats*, respectively.

independent young Irish women detaching themselves from traditional family structures in order to access and enjoy the social and consumerist cityscape of ‘Celtic Tiger’ Dublin” (Patten, 2006: 267), Keegan creates in Martha the figure of someone who is determined to escape with the money she has “not put on the table”, and leave her world behind. Behaving like this, she refuses to impersonate *the Mother Ireland* image of compassion and suffering, but the reality of modern Irish women.¹¹ As *Ní Dhuibhne* (2008) rightly argues, Martha “is not really much of a martyr. On the contrary, she is subversive, rebellious, even something of a feminist.” This is why Martha develops effective strategies to either bring about full equality between Deegan and herself or at least ameliorate the effects of the on-going inequality in their daily life together. Keegan’s use of contingency, irony, wit and fantasy contribute much to showing how Martha’s life has “revolved around things that never happened” (76). In doing so, however, the writer not only throws into prominence the dissenting position of many women in rural Ireland,¹² but also denounces their tragic entrenched subordination, financial dependence and relegation to the private sphere. As Ingman (2009: 168) argues, this short story shows “marriages of necessity made more often for materialistic reasons than for love” in the Irish countryside.

It is not until Deegan sells his daughter’s dog Judge, which causes Victoria to blame him for her unhappiness and brings on in Martha a desire for revenge,¹³ that he experiences a moment of epiphany. From this moment on, Deegan appears to question his own selfish actions and to reflect upon their negative consequences for all his family members. In my

view, Keegan’s story “neither ignores nor necessarily denigrates men” like Deegan, “but decentres them and the power bases they have held for so long” (Pelán, 2005: 51). In a despairing attempt to confront Deegan over his lack of commitment to his offspring and to her, Martha invites the whole valley to their home. She is aware of Deegan’s concern for his neighbours’ opinions and is determined to tell the truth about her past unfaithfulness:¹⁴

Martha swallows what’s left in her glass. Tonight she needs a drink. Her mother always said that her father’s people had tinker’s blood [...] Before she can begin she must find the scent; every story has its own, particular scent [...] She waits again until the room turns quiet. She has no idea what she will say but the story is there; all she has to do is rake up and find the words. (78-80)

The narrator’s reflections upon the act of telling a tale draw attention to the self-reflexive dimension of parody.¹⁵ According to Elices (2005: 91), “self-parody is a most appropriate vehicle not only to question predetermined literary standards but also to problematize the very process of writing.” The following excerpt describes how Martha tells the story of Mona, the protagonist of Martha’s fictionalised biography. It also informs readers of Martha’s tinker ancestors:

‘There was this woman one time who got a live-in job in a guest house by the sea,’ Martha says [...] [S]he hadn’t a drop of *tinker’s blood* [...] one of the things she could do well was *dance* [...] She wasn’t really looking for a man but this night the same farmer kept asking her out to dance. [...] *He led her across the floorboards same as a cat’s tongue moves along a saucer of cream*. They talked but the farmer could talk

11. For a very accurate analysis on this idea of “Mother Ireland”, see González Arias (2000).

12. For further reading on Keegan’s anchoring of her short stories to the rural sphere and, more specifically, to the field as a defining trope and a means to draw attention to socio-economic issues and human conflicts, see Markey (2010).

13. In my view, what Keegan seems to be attempting to do in “The Forester’s Daughter” is to reveal the submerged world of Martha and to assert the force of the mother-daughter link

14. In doing so, Martha upsets “both the power relations in the family and the iron Irish law of keeping everything within the family unit and not letting “the neighbours” know (*Walk* 82)” (D’Hoker, 2012: 7).

15. In an interview with Meade (2000/2001), Keegan describes how she begins a story using similar terms: “It begins with a mood. The mood nabs you and you know it’s good and you know it won’t go away [...] When I begin a story I have no idea how it will end [...] It’s just a nagging feeling and a mood that takes over. You have to find the language to express it. It’s an act of discovery.”

about nothing only the place he owned [...] In her heart Mona didn't really take to him [...] But like every woman, she wanted something of her own [...] She made every attempt to clean the place but when she found two pairs of dentures in the spoons, she gave up. On her wedding night she felt springs coming up like mortal sins through the mattress. And wasn't it all she could do some days not to cry (80-81; my emphasis).

The narrator's second comment on Martha's tinker predecessors, a reference to Mona's dancing ability, and the technique of narrating a story within another story, draw the reader's attention to, first, Keegan's recovery of the story-telling tradition of Irish rural culture and of mythic narratives and, second, to her distrust with regard to the efficacy of the realistic short story form in portraying female intimate conflicts and dilemmas. Further, this witty description of Mona's early experiences with her husband reveals that they are only too similar to Martha's with Deegan when they were just married. Finally, the passage reveals also that Mona made a bad marriage and was as unhappy and unfulfilled as Martha was and still is. In this way, the impact of the story is not only rational and satiric, but also emotional and tragic.

Regarding the aforementioned "tinkerishness", I have already explained that Victoria is a genuine tinker girl. Lanters (2008: 6) on tinkers, claims that: "It is unsurprising that many settled Irish people are still more familiar with the stereotypes surrounding that literary construct than with the real circumstances of the lives of their fellow citizens in the Traveller community." Then, quoting Ricoeur, Lanters (2008: 161) complains that most Irish "mythic narratives portraying Travellers or 'tinkers' do not perceive them as genuine human beings" (161). My point is that Keegan is very well acquainted with the tinkers' predicament, and she uses her knowledge gained from Irish folklore, the storytelling tradition and the surreal to give form and narrative structure to the "The Forester's Daughter". The remainder of Mona's story is also very telling for reasons other than formal:

A few years passed in that place and still there was no sign of a child. [...] The neighbours began to wonder. They began to talk. [...] Naturally, he blamed his wife [...]

'Where was I?' [...] 'Oh, aye,' says Martha, who knows exactly where she is. 'They were married. [...] one day [...] a stranger [...] was selling roses. [...] She bought every last one of his rosebushes [...] When she went near him, her hand touched his throat and then his thumb came up and stroke her lips. His hands were soft compared to Nowlan's [...] Deegan cannot stand it any more. [...] As soon as he stands, the neighbours turn to look at him. [...] In his heart he has always known the girl [Victoria] was not his own. She was too strange and lovely to be his (83-86).

In recounting Mona's unfaithfulness to Nowlan in a self-reflexive manner, Keegan not only reaffirms Martha's sense of herself, sexuality, female body and identity, but also expresses her desire for total freedom from patriarchal descriptions of women and their bodies in literary terms.

At the end of the story, a fire destroys Deegan's most precious possession, his house, his young son's legacy and Victoria's sustenance. Here is the description of the burning of Aghowle caused by Victoria's brother, the simpleton, and its effects upon the rest of the family members and some neighbours:

Martha holds on to her daughter's hand. She thinks of her money, the salesman and all those obsolete red roses. The girl has never known such happiness; Judge is back, that's all she cares, for now. It hasn't yet occurred to her that she's the one who taught her brother how to light a fire. The guilt will surface later. Deegan is numb and yet he feels lighter than before. The drudgery of the past is gone [...] Deegan grasps at thoughts: of having work, that it's just a house, that they are alive.

It is hardest for the boy whose farm is gone. All his work, through his own fault, is wasted [...] At the foot of the Lane the neighbours are gathering, coming on slowly towards them. Now they are closer, offering beds for the night.

'Who cares?' he keeps whispering as he goes along 'Who cares?' (90).

As the excerpt shows, Martha and Victoria constitute two strong females of tinker blood who endure a lot, but cope and survive, though not always admirably.¹⁶ Just

16. Victoria is a girl of "brains" "who", as a tinker girl, *travels* "through youth same as youth" [is] "a ·/·

as Marina Carr's Hester burns down the house built for her by her lover ("That's what the tinkers do, [...] burn everythin' after them" (63)), so does Victoria here, though, she causes her brother to start it. Like her mother, Victoria has discovered strategies of survival, yet, unlike her mother, she is fulfilled now. The text shows that she has played a crucial role in the lighting of the fire, but has also caused a revelation regarding the emotional links of family and community life for all the characters in the story, except her mother, since they become more genuine and tolerant and less concerned about the house and the land. Victoria stands for Keegan's recreation of a stereotype surrounding the tinker literary construct and the epitome of her liking for dream-like fantasy. Furthermore, Victoria, who does not repudiate her mother, nevertheless refuses to repeat her mother's thwarted life, and learns to speak in her own voice. It seems as though Victoria took what inspiration she could find in her mother's life and used it in "her quest to become the subject of her own life" (Ingman, 2007: 91). In this sense, Victoria appears as a young female voice of dissent with a more secure identity.¹⁷ In creating Victoria, who is empowered with a strong sense of confidence, Keegan seems to promote a sense of self in women that is enduring and positive, rather than fragile, tragic or victimized, as is the case of the mother, Martha, and of many mother-daughter stories in earlier Irish women's writing.

However, the narrator's irony is aimed towards one main character at the end of the story. Here Martha is depicted as remaining tied to a life of disappointment and frustration, while the rest of her family members move on.¹⁸ There are several reasons why the narrator scorns her, among them her lack of determination to remain single when Deegan made his marriage

16. ./· warm stretch of water she" [can]"easily walk" (56; my emphasis).

17. Following Fogarty (2002: 113), Victoria would impersonate "the desperate struggle of the daughter to avoid the trap of female subjugation and the calamity of duplicating the mother's experience."

18. Note that Deegan is called Victor Deegan. Thus the word "victoria" is implicit in his name, just as it is explicit in the tinker girl Victoria.

proposal and her acceptance of it for fear of staying unmarried. Then, her insecurity and lack of courage to abandon him when she "realised she had made a mistake" (55). Further, her lack of initiative to carry out her liberating plan and to continue being subjugated and, finally, and most dramatically, her lack of good sense in playing her role of the hard-working mother, particularly considering the dramatic consequences of such an attitude for her children.

In my view, Keegan speculates about social questions to criticize, on occasion, the conduct of public affairs. In fact, the different voices on marriage, parenthood and traditional links of family life that enter into unresolved dialogue in Keegan's "The Forester's Daughter", and in Mona's story within the story, seem to be aimed at dazzling her audience. Keegan seems to suggest the ascendancy of a feminine sensibility which bears in mind the young, and does not conform to constructions of femininity, and in the face of which the masculine principles of patriarchy yield to a culture of liberalism and welfare. In this regard, Irish folklore, the storytelling tradition and the surreal plays a relevant role in conveying this new sensibility. Thus the argument of this original story is rational and satirical, yet its overall impact is emotional and tragic.

"Night of the Quicken Trees"

This well-crafted story, which is based on an old fairy tale ("Feet Water")¹⁹ revolving

19. Keegan's short story opens with an excerpt from "Feet Water", an Irish fairy tale. I have decided to reproduce this extract in full because it is very relevant for the purposes of understanding my critical interpretation of "Night of the Quicken Trees":

In every house in the country long ago the people of the house would wash their feet, the same as they do now, and when you had your feet washed you should always throw out the water, because dirty water should never be kept inside the house during the night. The old people always said that a bad thing might come into the house if the feet water was kept inside and not thrown out, and they always said, too, that when you were throwing the water out you should say "Seachain!" for fear that any poor soul or spirit might be in the way. But that is neither here nor there, and I must be getting on with my story [...] (129).

around a superstitious tradition, concerns Margaret. She is a lovelorn woman from County Wicklow²⁰ who settles down in Dunagore, Co. Clare, shortly after the death of her first cousin, who became a priest. Marked by their first and unique sexual encounter under a quicken tree following the priest's misunderstanding of a gesture on the part of Margaret, and the cot death of their illegitimate child, she wishes to become a mother again. Once in the dead priest's house, she burns all his furniture and initiates a strange adventure with her neighbor, Stack, a bachelor who sleeps with his goat Josephine. Margaret ends up seeing him as potentially useful for her mothering plan. She is also very superstitious and her past with the priest haunts her. Margaret and Stack have a child called Michael, but they eventually go their separate ways.

From the beginning, Margaret is described as an eccentric and wounded woman who suffers from an excessive fear of human contact: "she decided she would stay in that house for as long as she could without harming anybody or letting anybody harm her [...] But until then, she would do her best to keep people at arm's length for people were nothing but a nuisance" (133). Margaret has mixed feelings about opening herself to the neighbour Stack, and to the external world in general. Stack, for his part, is a sod farmer glued to his father's old land of bogs and turf, closely linked to his goat Josephine and unwilling to become like the new generation, which Margaret, he believes, represents. Despite the eccentricity of his situation, he views Margaret as a stranger because she is not adapted to society's view of females as pure, passive and delicate, and locked into a world of domesticity. Margaret's patterns of behaviour, for example, urinating outside or "walking the roads with her hair all tangled same as she didn't own a comb" (135) are taken by Stack as examples of the bizarre:²¹

Young people couldn't catch a fish or skim cream off milk. They went around in cars they couldn't afford with small children who'd never tasted their mother's milk, committing adultery at the drop of a hat [...] They drank beer straight from the bottle, came back from America and Prague looking for pizzas, and couldn't tell a common potato from a Victoria plum. And now a woman was living next door (134-135).

However, Keegan does not create the figure of Margaret as a personification of the new Irish generation described above by Stack. Margaret is a modern Irish single woman who has endured a lot, but has survived and likes to feel independent now. She views the past as treacherous, and refuses to feel remorse and grief for its own sake. Thus, as she lacks a child in the house and needs a man for it, she initiates a love affair with Stack, even though she views him as eccentric.

I would contend here that Keegan's satirical stance towards these "fiercely individual and strange characters" (Clarkson, 2012) enables her to inquire about aspects of locality and globalism in rural Ireland. As Clarkson (2012) argues, these characters "are peculiar people, stubborn in their own ways, affected by the past, and have been brought to where they are by circumstance." Accordingly, Keegan intervenes in public debate on various topics in a veiled way by exploiting several satirical rhetorical strategies. In what follows, we shall examine some of her most relevant instances of satirical practice such as the use of animal imagery, detachment and scatology, beginning with the animalisation of Margaret as well as the humanisation of Stack's goat, Josephine.

Margaret's "child-bearing" ability is compared to that of hens laying eggs: "She went to the toilet and made sure she was still bleeding. It was strange to produce eggs again. Wouldn't it be lovely to hatch out eggs like a hen" (144). Stack, for his part, is described as living and sleeping with a sleek brown goat that has "the run of the house" (134). He is portrayed having a fluent conversation about Margaret with the goat on their way back home: "'Wouldn't it be terrible,' he said, 'if

20. Like Margaret, Keegan was born in County Wicklow and lives in rural Ireland. Throughout the story, there are constant references to this region she knows so well.

21. Clarkson (2012) is right when she claims they love "the solitary confines of their lives in two adjoining cottages [...] They are peculiar people, -/-

21. -/-. stubborn in their own ways, affected by the past, and have been brought to where they are by circumstance."

that woman took a liking to me? She'd have nothing to do only break down the wall between the two houses and destroy our peace for ever more" (137). In my view, Keegan recreates some striking behaviour of Irish country people derived from the absence of communication and the solitary confines of their lives in two adjoining cottages. Margaret and Stack's distorted patterns of behaviour and relationships arouse "a queer sort of laugh, closer to sadness than amusement" (146). Thus Keegan's satirical devices, which suffuse the story with tragicomic overtones, are used to establish, in an exaggerated and yet veiled manner, these country characters' grotesque quirks. In doing so, Keegan manages to soften the impact of her peculiar perception of such attitudes.

Here there is a fortune-teller called Madame Nowlan, who is alienated from the social arena and enlightens Margaret. One day the latter goes into town because she is in despair over herself. She is still alone at that point in her life and feels scrutinized, criticized and hated by her neighbours. As a result, she feels lonely and depressed, and so she ends up visiting the fortune-teller. As the text reads,

[The fortune-teller says] 'I see a dead child by a local man. I see property, a house up on a hill, and terrible shame. There's no need for this shame. It wasn't your fault the child died. I see the number seven²² and a man with an S in his name. You already know this man. There's trees in your memory. You're mule stubborn. Don't stay in the place where you're in. There is a shadow on the back of that house. You must rear your next child in the Irish tongue. Who is this goat? There's a jealousy here I can't understand.'

'My neighbour has a goat.'

'It's unhealthy, this goat. Well, you've lost and gained your fertility. That much is clear. Why are your people so hard? They turned their backs on you over this religious man. Have another child,' she said. 'The time is now. The next child will make your life worth living. After him,

22. Later in the story, a dark-haired man goes to visit Margaret because the fortune-teller tells him that she is "a seventh child" (157) and that she has the cure of his toothache. Consequently, Margaret becomes not only very superstitious, but also seems to have supernatural powers to cure other people's illnesses.

you'll stop looking down over the cliffs. But give the next sea man his caul. The last man you refused drowned. (154)

Here Keegan is showing the emotional and tragic scars of a romantic relationship which was left unfulfilled due to priestly celibacy and isolation through choice. This fortune teller draws Margaret's attention to the urge for a renewed sense of self and will, that is, one that is self-assertive and looks forward, rather than pessimistic and likely to commit suicide. This special character attempts to instil in Margaret the strength to be a single mother that bears in mind Irish cultural roots and signs of identity, rather than foreign traits and trends. Finally, the fortune-teller inquires about the tragic effects of some of her eccentric behaviour, of Stack's and her oppressive community. The realization Margaret experiences as a result of her visit to the fortune-teller accounts for her subsequent opening up to Stack and the external world, and starting a relationship with Stack. In this sense, Keegan, as McGahern does in *Amongst Women* and Colm Toibín in *Heather Blazing*, allows a female character, Margaret, to bring up this new "impulse towards revisionism and ideological realignment" (Patten, 2006: 262).

Later, Margaret, endowed with magical powers, becomes the curer of Dunagore. This could be interpreted as a sign of the transition from an inward, repressive society to a more open one where the well-being of the community is favoured over individual interests. However, this does not last long, since Margaret starts to suffer from paranoia and fears, grows frightened of all the strange people that come to her house and feels that they mean to do her harm. As a result, she turns from an open to an inward stance once again and Stack suddenly knows that "she'd move away" and that he "couldn't bear the thought of her being gone" (158). From then on, she decides to avoid all the negative circumstances that could affect her child ("the strangers were always coming with their illnesses, bitterness and hatreds" (159)). In doing so, Keegan seems to point out the long-term consequences of behaviour that are carried out for emotional, perhaps passionate, reasons.

Time passes and Margaret and Stack conceive a child under a quicken tree. In mythology, this child, whom they will name Michael, is said to have the same magical and

protective powers as the quicken tree, that is, the power of enchantment and life-giving powers. The fact that the narrator associates the name Michael with the world of folklore, mythology and the esoteric endows the child with some kind of power of renewal too, something that could be interpreted as hope for the younger generation to effect some kind of ideological renovation and as the writer's way of showing how to move beyond the short story of her predecessors in both formal and thematic terms. Needless to say, this is by preserving traditional Irish literary folklore and fantasy, and culture. Margaret gives up on superstition, abandons her curing duty and takes special care to educate Michael at home. From this moment on, Margaret brings up her child by listening to *RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltacht* and teaching him Gaelic. Margaret's serious interest in Michael's insular education and his learning one of the most important traits of the Irish identity, the Gaelic language, could be taken as imaginative examples of concern for the future of Ireland, its culture, language and identity, and their preservation.

The ending of this story is as open and ambiguous as that of the previous two, that is, asking questions rather than offering answers. Margaret's fears hover round her child and she leaves for the Aran Islands, taking Michael with her. Stack is then given a chance to abandon his past and move on: "Nothing stopped him from getting on board, nothing at all" (165). However, like the priest of the title story, and Martha in "The Forester's Daughter", Stack is unable to take such a step and says farewell to Margaret and his child:

For a moment the men waited and it seemed that all he had to do to make his future happy was to climb into that boat and be carried away on a tide cut by the strength of other men. Instead Stack stood on the strand and watched the only woman he had ever loved vanish from sight [...] Stack watched them until his eyes grew sore [...] (165-166).

In my view Keegan uses a tragic tone in order to point out that Stack is unable to dispel the long-term psychic effects of prejudices rooted in rural Ireland and human solitude. Stack remains stuck in his own ways and this is why, after waving goodbye to his wife and son, "He was glad of Josephine. He could at least

fulfil her needs" (166). Unlike him, Margaret succeeds "in disentangling herself from the social constraints of her environment, particularly the pressure to conform to notions of self-sacrificing femininity" (Ingman, 2007: 81), and, in doing so, she constitutes another woman character in Keegan's fiction that represents "liberal progressivism over outright renunciation" (Patten, 2006: 262).

At the beginning of this section I pointed out that this absorbing story is based on the old Irish fairy tale "Feet Water". According to this tale, dirty water from washing one's feet "should never be kept inside one's house during the night" in case "a bad thing might come into the house" (129). Like Margaret, who was the victim of her cousin's actions long ago due to a misunderstood gesture²³ and was rejected by him, Stack becomes the dirty water to throw out "for fear that any poor soul or spirit", for example, Michael, "might be in the way" (129). In other words, Stack becomes a guinea pig for Margaret's decisions and predicament. Margaret, a woman from Wicklow,²⁴ has taken away Stack's life, his love. In establishing this, Keegan has used an imposing array of rhetorical strategies to present some of the inadequacies of country life in Ireland such as cultural isolation and loneliness: to question some dysfunctional patterns of human relations; to show concern for the future of Irish culture, language and identity,²⁵ to make readers perceive contemporary

23. In fact the story is about "where one step can lead" (Harte, 2007) and shows the very negative implications for all of such a step.

24. The story makes reference to the stereotypes that are usually associated with the people of Wicklow. For example, Stack calls Margaret "goat sucker" (147) and their son Michael is also said to suck the goat Josephine dry. All these references to "goat suckers" and the fact that the goat Josephine is as close to Stack as a romantic partner are rather significant because Margaret and Michael play an important part in dragging Stack from the goat, sucking all her milk and separating him from his land in Dunagore. In fact, they manage to almost take away his old habits and customs. However, the land wins over the people, and Stack remains attached to it at the end of the story.

25. As in the old fairy tale "Feet Water" on which this short story is based, Margaret has shouted -/.

single mothers' voices in Ireland; to emphasize "the slippery unreliability of love" (McAlpin, 2008). By using the satirical mode and another strong female character, Margaret, whose emotional development makes her realise the consequences of her attitude, not through rational or intellectual consideration, as happens with satire, but because of the terrible consequences of behaviour carried out for passionate reasons, Keegan recreates the rural Ireland of the past and present, allowing the readers to come to simultaneous understanding of her points.

Conclusions

This perusal of Keegan's three stories from a satirical perspective has attempted to show that the short story genre suits the writer perfectly for expressing her insightful view of recent Irish history, culture and society. Keegan's use of a large repertoire of rhetorical strategies of the satirical apparatus, namely, irony, wit, self-parody, detachment, fantasy, animal imagery and scatology in these three stories allows her not only to transform her poetic language into a polished satire, but also to achieve her unique tone. The analysis of such rhetorical devices has attempted to illuminate the writer's sharp social observation, and the technique with which she carries out a profound indirect interrogation of and reflection upon themes as varied as bad marriages, priestly celibacy, old and new religious beliefs and practices, patriarchal views of femininity, traditional links of family life, childhood, community life, women's dissent, the dislocation of social relations, country life isolation and mono-parental family units.

This discussion has tried to establish that Keegan's narrative virtuosity, detached stance and exploitation of a multi-faceted type of satire enable her to mount a veiled criticism of dysfunctional patterns of behaviour and relationships not only in private contexts, such as the family and the marriage institutions, but also in public ones like community and religious settings in rural Ireland. Keegan's talent for choosing the right word contributes not only to conveying her characters' dreams,

but also to recreating the paralysis and lack of fulfilment they suffer. This is why the overall impact of the three stories is not only rational and satirical, but also emotional and tragic.

Although Keegan tackles many topics and variations of such topics in these three beautifully plotted stories, each of them has a "crucial moment of realisation". In Walshe's words (2007: 115), "this realisation always concerns the bewildering gap between Irish societal rules, codes of behaviour, and individual dilemmas of love, death, sex, money or religion." Here, this gap is bridged by certain characters, drawn from Keegan's knowledge of the world of mythology and folklore, who are estranged from society, whether the Chinese curer in the title story, the figure of the tinker of mythical narratives personified in Victoria and her dog Judge in the second story or the goat Josephine, the Fortune Teller and Margaret's son Michael in the third. All lead the main characters to some realization that opens up for them a world of possibility and change. These revelatory messages, which come from discriminated minorities and the marginalized make the reader contemplate the shortcomings of the rural Ireland of the past and how this has changed socially, demographically, economically, politically, and culturally in recent times.

Keegan also shows a strong concern to make the reader respond to existing strictures, social, religious and literary, that exist in Irish society, and perceive the importance of preserving Irish local roots regarding national identity, language and culture. In these three stories, Keegan shows the need of a profound change in the behaviour of Irish men, but more so in Irish women in their search for a strong and secure female identity, their quest for liberation, their physical and sexual assertiveness, their accurate perception of gender roles and their situation in contemporary Ireland. Thus Keegan addresses the question of the female figure and identity in Ireland in her short stories in order to transform the old idea of what Ireland was, is or will be, to which end her experimentation with the short story genre and her imaginative urge to preserve traditional Irish literary folklore fantasy and culture have proved to be crucial.

25. ./- 'Seachain!' (129).

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