# Active Speech

## Critical Perspectives on Teresa Deevy

Edited by
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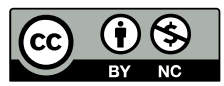





Úna Kealy and Kate McCarthy (eds), *Active Speech: Critical Perspectives on Teresa Deevy*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2025, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0432



ISBN Paperback 978-1-80511-430-7
ISBN Hardback 978-1-80511-431-4
ISBN PDF 978-1-80511-432-1
ISBN HTML 978-1-80511-434-5
ISBN EPUB 978-1-80511-433-8
DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0432

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

 Suzanne Savage and Lianne Quigley performing in Teresa Deevy's *Possession* which was created and directed by Amanda Coogan in collaboration with Lianne Quigley, Alvean Jones, Linda Buckley, Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, and Cork Deaf Community Choir. Creative producer Lynette Moran produced *Possession* at the Project Arts Centre 21–24 February 2024, while Susan Holland produced the production at the Granary Theatre for the Cork Midsummer Festival performances, 21–23 June 2024. *Possession* was funded as part of ART:2023: A Decade of Centenaries Collaboration (the Arts Council and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media).

# 9. Becoming a Domesticated Irish Woman: Teresa Deevy's Critique of Idealised Representations of Womanhood in *Katie Roche*

*Dayna Killen and Úna Kealy*[1]

This chapter reads *Katie Roche* as Teresa Deevy's critique of idealised representations of Irish womanhood, in particular, the hegemonic, ideologically inflected, representation that we define as the 'domesticated Irish woman'. We conceive of the domesticated Irish woman as a representation, or conceptual mould, which formed, and into which Irish women were pressed, during the first half of the twentieth century. The domesticated Irish woman is an idealised representation of womanhood expressed as a heteronormative, married mother who is located primarily inside a domestic space. We argue that the trope of the domesticated Irish woman formed as a result of abstract, ideological codifications of women popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that combined to shape, reshape, and restrict Irish women playwrights and their contemporaries physically, socially, and creatively. Drawing on literature theorising the creation

1 South East Technological University, formerly Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), funded, through the WIT/SETU PhD Scholarship Fund, the Performing the Region: Performing Women project undertaken by Dayna Killen and led by Úna Kealy. Co-supervisors on the project were Richard Hayes and Jacinta Byrne-Doran. The project was also supported by the Higher Education Authority and D/FHERIS Covid-19 costed extension. The authors also acknowledge Shonagh Hill and the anonymous reviewers of the *Active Speech* manuscript whose editorial advice supported revisions.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0432.09

and perpetuation of idealised archetypes of women and synthesising these with historiographic analyses of socio-cultural aspects of Irish society, the chapter opens by discussing the influences and ideologies that underpinned and shaped representations of Irish women, as well as characteristics associated with these representations.

Simone de Beauvoir posits that 'Woman is not a fixed reality but a becoming' and we employ the word 'domesticated' to suggest that female bodies in Ireland during the early decades of the twentieth century were subject to, and at times enacted, a domestication process through which they *became* domesticated Irish women.[2] Referring to Judith Bulter's theories on gender as performative, Elin Diamond asserts that 'Performance [...] is the site in which performativity materializes in concentrated form'.[3] In this chapter, we synthesise the work of gender constructivist theorists, such as de Beauvoir and Butler, with Michel Foucault's discussion of how individuals are shaped into 'docile bodies', to argue that Deevy's dramaturgy, within *Katie Roche*, deploys space, characters' physicality, and language (within dialogue and stage directions) to create a protagonist who, over three acts, is shaped into a representation of womanhood that aligns closely with representations of the domesticated Irish woman.[4] In so doing, this chapter reveals how Deevy found creative possibilities in deconstructing and interrogating a developmental process whereby young women and girls in Ireland during the early decades of twentieth century were shaped into idealised representations of Irish womanhood.

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2 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier with an introduction by Sheila Robotham (London: Vintage Classics Kindle edition, 2015), loc. 1187.

3 Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), p. 47.

4 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519–531; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Random House Kindle edition, 2020).

## The Domesticated Irish Woman

Although the early decades of the twentieth century were characterised, in the West, by social, political, and ideological fracture, Catherine Jagoe attests that idealised representations of women crossed international borders, shaped, defined, and supported by shared bourgeois ideologies that agreed upon an 'essence of natural womanhood'.[5] In Victorian Britain, women were frequently idealised to the point of divinity in representations that were, typically, inextricably linked to qualities of docility and domesticity. Women were, as Coventry Patmore conceived of them, celestially domesticated—a collective angelic host located within their husband's houses. Patmore's poetry popularised the phrase 'the angel in the house'—a conceptualisation that 'came to represent nothing less than the ideal of womanhood in the age of Queen Victoria'.[6] In Ireland, however, during the early decades of the twentieth century, a period of tremendous social, political, and cultural change, Revivalists sought to remember, discover, and imagine an Irish cultural identity that differentiated Ireland from England—an aspect of which involved creating representations of women and womanhood.[7] Eleanor Hull, Sidney Gifford, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Dora Mellone, and members of Inghinidhe na hÉireann, amongst others, looked to historical and legendary women—Maeve, Macha, and Brigit—to locate 'a female genealogy outside the traditional realm of hearth and home' to serve 'as inspirational role models'.[8] Hull emphasised 'the high estimate that was placed in Ireland upon woman's influence', describing Irish mythological heroines as 'very human' and comparable neither to 'the Titanic women of the Northern Saga', nor 'the morbid, luxurious ladies of Southern romance'.[9] Describing legendary Irish women as sprightly,

5 Catherine Jagoe, *Ambiguous Angels: Gender in the Novels of Galdós* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994), p. 14.

6 Joan Hoffman, '"She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire": The Image of the Angel in the House across Cultures and across Time', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 42.2 (2007), 264–271 (p. 264).

7 Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage Books, 1996).

8 Shonagh Hill, *Women and Embodied Mythmaking in Irish Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 29.

9 Eleanor Hull, *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* (London: David Knutt, 1898), p. xlvii.

spirited, self-respecting, piquant, malicious, capricious, provoking, dignified, and heroic, Hull conceived of them as imperfect, powerful women who acted independently and demanded equality from men.[10] In such assertions and descriptions of legendary Irish women, Louise Ryan recognises:

> a strategy to position feminism back into a pre-colonial past of gender equality, where strong women like Queen Maeve exerted authority in Irish society [... and] constructed a Janus-quality for feminism by simultaneously looking back to a 'glorious' Gaelic past and forward to a bright future of women's rights and equality.[11]

Sadly, it was a strategy doomed to fail. Even while arguing for the independence and important influence of legendary women, Hull recognised a reshaping of women characters by successive scribes and scholars which had infantilised them and 'softened' their 'savagery [...] into the coy shyness' of romantic girls.[12] The characters of Irish mythology were, as Joseph Valente argues 'unmistakably filtered and softened through the defining literary and social institutions of Great Britain' in a process of reinterpretation that controverted 'invidious gender stereotypes' into representations that were deemed authentically Irish.[13] Thus, despite early twentieth-century ideological fracture and attempts by Irish Revivalists to reject British cultural mores and social values, representations of women in Irish culture were ideologically inflected by British idealised representations of women. Furthermore, despite the efforts of contemporaneous Irish feminists, these idealised representations were integrated into Irish culture and further inflected with Irish particularities.

In Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the importance of woman's domestic and familial orientation was powerfully propagated and idealised by nationalist rhetoric, nationalist

10 Ibid.

11 Louise Ryan, 'Nationalism and Feminism: The Complex Relationship between the Suffragist and Independence Movements in Ireland', in *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence*, ed. by Linda Connolly (Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2020), pp. 36–55 (p. 54).

12 Hull, *The Cuchullin Saga*, p. xlvii.

13 Joseph Valente, 'Lost (and Found) in Translation: The Masculinity of O'Grady's Cuculain', in *Standish O'Grady's Cuculain: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Gregory Castle and Patrick Bixby (New York: Syracuse University, 2016), pp. 210–225 (p. 213 and p. 214).

political parties, and Catholic teaching.[14] In the late 1800s the Catholic Church, in Britain and Ireland, in a bid to fortify Catholic influence and combat increasing secularisation within life and culture, sought to sanctify women through the character of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The glorification of the Virgin Mary constituted a 'supreme masculine victory' that de Beauvoir contends was but a ploy to further subjugate women. She argues that:

> [Woman] will be glorified only by accepting the subservient role assigned to her. 'I am the handmaiden of the Lord.' For the first time in the history of humanity, the mother kneels before her son; she freely recognises her inferiority. The supreme masculine victory is consummated in the worship of Mary: it is the rehabilitation of woman by the achievement of her defeat.[15]

Ireland embraced the 'Marian century' enthusiastically: many religious observances, sodalities, and devotions sanctifying the Blessed Virgin were introduced to Catholic worship including the popularisation of novenas and the centralisation of the rosary as a daily family observance.[16] As Cara Delay argues, the early twentieth century saw women and girls 'bombarded with messages on Catholic womanhood from an early age' by a Catholic hierarchy determined to 'define the ideal woman'.[17] Through this plethora of structured devotional activities, and the 'steady democratization of devotional material culture', the Catholic Church created in the Blessed Virgin an idealised version of

14 Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 'Rerum Novarum: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor' (1891); Mary Butler, 'Irishwomen and the Home Language (Continued)', *All Ireland Review*, 1.51 (1900), 4–5; Susan Cannon-Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama* (Indiana, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002); Paul Murphy, '"That a Black Twisty Divil Could Be Hiding under Such Comeliness": *Woman* versus *woman* in Early Twentieth-Century Irish Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, 60.2 (2008), 201–216; Tanya Dean, 'Staging Hibernia: Female Allegories of Ireland in *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* and *Dawn*', *Theatre History Studies*, 33.1 (2014), 71–82.

15 Susan O'Brien, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary', in *The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Volume IV: Building Identity, 1830–1913*, ed. by Carmen M. Mangion and Susan O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp. 154–172; de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, loc. 3965.

16 O'Brien dates the Marian Century as 1850–1950. The first Irish pilgrimage to the Marian shrine in Lourdes involving 2,000 pilgrims occurred in 1913 and was filmed and shown to 'packed audiences' at the Rotunda in Dublin that year. Ibid., p. 168.

17 Cara Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850–1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 7.

womanhood centred within a domestic space that was identified as her 'natural sphere'.[18]

In 1936, the year that *Katie Roche* premiered, Bunreacht na hÉireann was drafted. Although opposition vociferously articulated the draft Constitution as unfair to women, and as lacking in respect for the Catholic Church's teachings on 'the position, the sphere, the duties of women'.[19] During the drafting process, legislation fused with Catholic teaching to form a mould which would shape Irish women.[20] In 1937, the Constitution was published using language explicitly locating women within domestic spaces and identifying them as mothers.[21] Article 41, sections 2.1 and 2.2, of the 1937 Constitution stated (and continues to state) that:

> 41.2.1 In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.
>
> 41.2.2 The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.[22]

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18 O'Brien, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary', p. 170; see also Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 'Rerum Novarum: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor'.

19 *Irish Press*, 17 December 1937, in Siobhán Mulally, 'Presentation by Prof. Siobhan Mullally, UCC', in *Second Report of the Convention on the Constitution*, May 2013, pp. 14–18, https://citizensassembly.ie/wp-content/uploads/Role-of-Women-Woemn-in-Politics.pdf; Dorothy Macardle articulated her opposition to the text of the draft 1937 Constitution in a private letter to Éamon de Valera, see Dublin, National Archives of Ireland (NAI), 'Letter to Éamon de Valera', 21 May 1937, DTS 9880; see also, Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870–1970* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2014); Jennifer Molidor, 'Dying for Ireland: Violence, Silence, and Sacrifice in Dorothy Macardle's *Earth-Bound: Nine Stories of Ireland* (1924)', *New Hibernia Review,* 12.4 (2008) 43–61; Maria Luddy, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1995); Maria Luddy, 'A "Sinister and Retrogressive" Proposal: Irish Women's Opposition to the 1937 Draft Constitution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 15 (2005), 175–195; Gerard Hogan, *The Origins of the Irish Constitution: 1928–1941* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2012).

20 John Cooney's *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: Paperview in association with the *Irish Independent*, 2006) evidences the extent and impact of the influence of the Catholic Church hierarchy upon the creation of Bunreacht na hÉireann 1937.

21 Melissa Sihra, 'Introduction: Figures at the Window', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 1–22; Hill, *Women and Embodied Mythmaking*.

22 Government of Ireland, *Constitution of Ireland*, January 2020; John Cooney in *John Charles McQuaid* argues cogently for this conspiratorial relationship.

Conceptualising the role and place of women as support workers within domestic spaces and as mothers was contemporaneously politically practical. The context of the Western economic depression of the 1930s, the rejection of international capitalism and isolationist ideology of the Cumann na nGaedheal government created a decline in living standards.[23] In order to pursue a policy of fiscal retrenchment, and to mitigate against the inevitable slowing or decline in what were, for many, already poor living standards, a cohort of people devoted to working within Irish domestic spaces—i.e. women—was essential.[24] It was necessary, as Katie Roche reiterates, for women to be given responsibility to make the bread, churn the butter, and 'fill the jug'.[25]

Within a social and political context ostensibly intent on differentiating itself from British ideology and cultural references, idealised representations of womanhood took on particular Irish and Catholic attributes. Irish women's duty was to sustain the family—a social unit, which, as Maryann Valiulis contends, was 'privileged in Irish political thought as the source of order and stability'.[26] Valiulis argues that the 1937 Constitution describes the family as 'the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State'.[27] The Constitution closed gaps in existing legislation, further

23 Mary E. Daly 'The Irish Free State and the Great Depression of the 1930s: The Interaction of the Global and the Local', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 38 (2011), 19–36 (p. 32).

24 Although living standards in Ireland generally increased from the mid-nineteenth century, improvements varied according to geography and class. Living standards for many rural Irish people remained low well into the twentieth century. For an overview of consumption, living conditions, frugality, food crises, health, and welfare in Ireland during the early decades of the twentieth century, see 'Consumption and Living Conditions, 1750–2016' by Andy Bielenberg and John O'Hagan, 'Food in Ireland Since 1740' by Juliana Adelman, and 'Health and Welfare, 1750–2000' by Catherine Cox in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. by Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 195–211, 233–243, and 261–281, respectively.

25 Teresa Deevy, 'Katie Roche', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, 2 vols, ed. by Jonathan Bank, John P. Harrington, and Christopher Morash (New York: Mint Theater, 2011 and 2017), I, 57–102 (p. 59).

26 Maryann G. Valiulis, 'Virtuous Mothers and Dutiful Wives: The Politics of Sexuality in the Irish Free State', in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. by Maryann G. Valiulis (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), pp. 100–114 (p. 102). A referendum to change the wording of the Irish Constitution on 8 March 2024 was rejected and the family remains privileged as a social grouping within Irish constitutional law.

27 Ibid., p. 102.

inhibiting and restricting women's involvement in decisions relating to family planning, their bodies, and their futures, and, as is illustrated in the sections of Article 41 quoted above, unambiguously directed Irish women towards marriage, motherhood, and domestic service.[28] The infantilisation, filtering, and softening of representations of mythic Irish women, the transnational icon of the Angel in the House, the devotional revolution within the Catholic Church, the fiscal strategy of the Free State government, and the language and implicit ideology relating to women's role and place within the Free State as articulated within Bunreacht na hÉireann, constituted mutually reinforcing practices and ideologies during the Irish Revival. Conceptions of Irish women and womanhood were shaped into an idealised representation that Paul Murphy describes as a 'fantasy object of patriarchal nationalist desire'—a representation of womanhood that was 'self-sacrificing, bound by the confines of the home and [accepting of] her place in society in the service of the male élite'.[29] As Marian devotee, impecunious housewife, and mother, the Angel in the House recited the Rosary, blessed herself, and set the table for dinner—in so doing, consciously or otherwise, she reshaped as the domesticated Irish woman.

## *Katie Roche*: A Critique of Representations of Irish Womanhood

Deevy's *Katie Roche* can be read as the tale of one young woman's resistance to the mould of the domesticated Irish woman and her eventual capitulation to it. Constructed in three acts and set in the living-room of a 'time-worn' cottage, *Katie Roche* foregrounds a collective fear of, and a determined attempt to control, a young woman's unregulated sexuality. The play dramatises the process, but also the consequences, of shaping women to fit behavioural and ideological representations in ways that

28 This legislation included the Juries Acts (1924) and (1927), the Civil Service Regulation Act (1924), and the Censorship of Publications Act (1929). Caitriona Beaumont, 'Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922–1948', *Women's History Review*, 6.4 (1997), 563–585; Maria Luddy, 'Sex and the Single Girl in 1920s and 1930s Ireland', *The Irish Review,* 35 (2007), 79–91; Valiulis, 'Virtuous Mothers and Dutiful Wives'.

29 Paul Murphy, '*Woman* versus *woman*', p. 202; Paul Murphy, *Hegemony and Fantasy in Irish Drama, 1899–1949* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 152.

maintain an existing power and socio-economic hierarchy; one wherein unmarried mothers and their children occupy a place at the bottom.[30] It appears, in Act One, that Katie and a young man, Michael Maguire, are attracted to one another and that Katie might marry him. However, despite the fact that Michael promises to marry Katie, his mother's 'bitter tongue' dissuades him from proposing to her.[31] That bitterness was the prevailing practice of shaming and ostracising children born to unmarried women during the twentieth century and it paralyses him. He admits to Stanislaus that because of Katie's 'want of a name', i.e., her birth to an unmarried woman, his 'mother would die if [he] were to bring her in the door'.[32] Emasculated by the threat of social censure, Michael offers no escape to Katie. Unlike Michael, however, Katie, at the play's opening and before her marriage to Stanislaus, is not cowed by her awareness of contemporaneous conceptions of how she should behave. Her 'inward glow' continuously 'breaks out' 'either in delight or desperation' and she dances and interacts with men, unashamed of her sexual appeal and charisma.[33]

Unabashed and unregulated sexual appeal and activity is, Deevy suggests, problematic within Irish society. Woven into the opening act of *Katie Roche* are details of Katie's life and that of her parents, notably her mother, Mary Halnan. It transpires that Mary, like Katie, had lived with Amelia Gregg but had become pregnant outside marriage, given birth and, subsequently, died. As an unmarried mother, had she lived, Mary's status in Ballycar would, as Lindsey Earner-Byrne contends was true for unmarried mothers in the Irish Free State, have been 'regarded [...] as morally untenable and socially undesirable'.[34] However, as time in Ballycar has passed, Mary Halnan is conceptually reconstructed by Stanislaus as an ideal representation of womanhood, inextricably linked to beauty and sacrifice. The result is that the memory of Mary, like her namesake the Blessed Virgin Mary, becomes an ideologically

30 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 57; *Katie Roche* premiered at the Abbey theatre on the 16 March 1936. Abbey Theatre, 'Katie Roche 1936', *Abbey Theatre*, 2022.
31 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 93.
32 Ibid., p. 69, p. 70.
33 Ibid., p. 57.
34 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'The Boat to England: An Analysis of the Offical Reactions to the Emigration of Single Expectant Irishwomen to Britain, 1922–1972', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 30 (2003), 52–70 (p. 53).

loaded reconstructed representation of womanhood that is employed by Stanislaus, the stand-in for the patriarchal elite, to shape Katie and young women like her. Stanislaus advocates that Katie must reshape her speech and her behaviour, so as to more closely fit with the idealised Mary who is more beautiful and 'wonderful' than Katie.[35] Stanislaus has intensified Mary in his memory making her taller, more beautiful, refined, polite, and articulate than Katie. In Stanislaus's memory, Mary exists, as de Beauvoir might describe her, as eternally feminine—'unique and changeless' while Katie is 'dispersed, contingent, and multiple'—or, as Jo describes her, 'vegarious'.[36] Stanislaus's comparison of the perfect, but deceased, Mary with the imperfect living Katie exposes how women who fail to perform idealised behaviours during their lifetime can be reconstructed as self-contradictory, pseudo-divine abstractions after their death. The comparison suggests that women, such as Katie, whose attitudes and behaviours threaten the stability of the family and the home, are vulnerable to being shaped and/or reshaped through comparisons with falsified representations of dead women that are impossible for living women to emulate.

Cathy Leeney contends that Stanislaus substitutes Katie for her mother, thereby attempting to put 'Katie in her place'.[37] That place is both physically constructed through the Gregg cottage and imaginatively constructed in Stanislaus's mind. Leeney argues that Stanislaus is 'disappointed' in Katie, perceiving her as an inferior copy of her mother Mary.[38] Having idealised Mary, Stanislaus employs that ideal in an attempt to shape and remake Katie. He utilises shame as a tool to do this telling Katie, 'It's a great shame for you not to better yourself, it's a shame—the way you speak'.[39] Shame induced by proximity to idealised representations of womanhood and criticisms of her language reads as Stanislaus's attempt to keep Katie 'in line, in her place' and an attempt to fit Katie into the place in his mind where an idealised representation of womanhood resides.[40] Stanislaus does not specify

35 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 60.
36 Ibid., p. 87.
37 Cathy Leeney, 'Themes of Ritual and Myth in Three Plays by Teresa Deevy', *Irish University Review*, 25 (1995), 88–166 (p. 104).
38 Ibid., p. 104.
39 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 60.
40 Robin Lakoff, 'Language and Woman's Place', *Language in Society*, 2 (1973), 45–80

what 'shame' exists in Katie's language, but his correction of her occurs when she adopts syntactical or idiomatic patterns of Hiberno-English drawing attention to her social class, her status as his social inferior, and her Irishness. Stanislaus's reprimands and grammatical corrections of Katie's language and idiom subtly infer that the idealised constructions of Irish women in the Free State were inflected by class and behavioural ideology imported from Britain. *Katie Roche* thus highlights the irony of political and religious power brokers in the fledgling Irish Free State who sought to direct or reshape the speech, behaviours, and desires of Irish women in ways that aligned with anglicised gendered norms and idealised representations.

Unlike Katie, Stanislaus performs his gender role in accordance with idealised, anglicised representations: the ideal he attempts to embody is one of chivalrous masculinity. Like a mythic knight, he left Ballycar in Katie's youth to resolve the conundrum of how to fit her into his conceptualisation of an acceptable wife. He returns to claim her, having triumphed in his task by deconstructing her and selecting from that deconstruction the parts of her that he imagines he can shape into the contours of an ideal woman. He proposes marriage to Katie, explaining to Amelia that 'I went away....But afterwards I came again and I found she was what I wanted. Her heart and her mind were what I wanted'.[41] After saying this, he '*Bows to* KATIE', an action that recalls an idealised chivalric physicality and which invites her to respond in kind, that is, with a similarly idealised performance of femininity. Such a performance, it seems, will signal Katie's acquiescence to adopting the shape and values of the domesticated Irish woman.[42] However, Katie is not so easily snared: in a retort of stunning, elliptical brevity that rejects performances of masculinity as chivalrous, exposing instead the violence of deconstructing and remaking women as ideals of femininity, Katie replies, 'My heart and my mind! A queer way to love! ... taking a body to pieces!'.[43]

Alongside his linguistic and gestural direction, Stanislaus directly attempts to shape Katie according to his ideal woman, regulating her

(p. 47).

41 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 71.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

physically by putting his hand on her shoulder, while simultaneously infantilising her, calling her a 'dear little girl'.[44] Katie's reaction to this is one of physical and intellectual disgust and she 'Flings from him', crying: 'If you're asking to marry me, show me respect. I won't marry you now, not if you'd go on your knees. I flout you—the same as she did'.[45] During Stanislaus's marriage proposal and Katie's eventual acceptance, Deevy's stage directions detail Katie's physicality—she fumes, 'flings', laughs 'wildly', and lashes out with 'sudden spite'.[46] Presciently, she fears that the marriage will be a mistake: colliding with Stanislaus as she rushes from the room after his proposal, she expresses that fear physically and verbally:

> Katie: Oh—(*In turmoil.*)—who knows what they wish! (*Clasps her hands—then, seeking strength.*) "One false step and you're over the precipice, one bad link and the chain goes snap, one wrong act and a life is ruined, one small...one small...one... one" (*Trying to concentrate.*)—ach!—(*Turns to run from the room, meets* Stanislaus *coming in. He opens his arms, takes her.*) Oh-h...Oh-h... (*In ecstasy.*).
>
> Stanislaus: I couldn't wait. (*Kisses her.*)
>
> Katie: Oh! (*Overcome. Then frees herself; stands back from him.*) Yes, I'll give you my hand.
>
> Stanislaus: That's right. That's a good girl. Now don't be nervy. Don't be upset. It's only the strain. (*Pats her shoulder reassuringly.* Katie *stiffens.*) Why—even I felt it. We'll be sensible. We'll get married very soon. My sister will live with us—if you don't mind. She'll go away sometimes. (Katie *looks at him now with the anger of a child at a clumsy companion.*)[47]

Quoting from something that she cannot quite remember, but ominous in tone, Katie's emotions and physicality flash from dread to ecstasy to anger. The collision, the kiss, and the exchange between Katie and

44 Ibid., p. 61.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., p. 72.

Stanislaus immediately thereafter exemplifies how Deevy's dramaturgy exquisitely combines space, physicality, and language. As Katie runs from the room that symbolises the drudgery of domesticity, she collides with Stanislaus who, taking advantage of her 'false step', physically 'takes' her and kisses her. Significantly, Stanislaus's embrace is not consented to by Katie—he imposes it upon her and contains her within it. The changing nature of the subtext within this moment is complex and open to multiple interpretations but the embrace ends with Katie accepting Stanislaus's proposal. Subsequently, and in a phrase that jars with her Hiberno-Irish dialect thus far in the play, Katie says, 'I'll give you my hand'.[48] In her acceptance, it seems that Katie interprets the embrace as indicative of a hitherto hidden but deep well of passionate impetuosity within Stanislaus, which suggests that marriage to him will provide her with a passion-filled life. Stanislaus's interpretation of her acceptance is, however, quite different. There is a brief moment of mutual misunderstanding before Katie realises her mistake. Immediately after Katie has accepted his proposal, Stanislaus begins the process of reshaping her into a domesticated Irish woman. He calls her a 'good girl', cautions her against being 'nervy', and pats her shoulder. It is a moment that encapsulates, through dialogue and physicality, how idealised romantic language and physicality, infantilising terminology, and restraining gestures combine to entrap and then reshape young women to accord with idealised and gendered behavioural norms.

The effect of Stanislaus's actions and language on Katie is that she 'stiffens' and 'does not move' for some minutes.[49] It is only when prompted by Amelia to sit down that Katie moves 'slowly to the table, and sits down'—the pace and action suggesting submission and defeat. Michel Foucault argues that, by the eighteenth century, a soldier had 'become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body'.[50] The stiffness within Katie's body suggests that her 'inapt' body is slowly forming to fit or align with the representational mould of a domesticated Irish woman. Later in the play, Reuben, a holy man whom it transpires is Katie's father, more forcefully pressures Katie's rebellious body into the physical and behavioural

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, loc. 2498.

contours of the domesticated Irish woman when he beats her with a stick. Stanislaus and Reuben attempt to humiliate and reduce Katie physically and intellectually in order to recreate her as a domesticated Irish woman who is demure, humble, and obedient to male suitors, fathers, and husbands. In an epiphanic flash, Katie realises that 'Oh, we must be humble, but 'tis hard!... The bread and the butter and to fill the jug…'.[51] Butler claims that 'the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity'—Katie's epiphany is her perception that by endlessly and repetitively performing domestic tasks, 'enclosed' in repetitive 'daily life rituals', she will regulate and reshape her body, mind, and ambition and become a domesticated Irish woman: a woman disciplined by 'the cycles of repetition' within a set of domestic chores that begin anew every day.[52] Humility, in this context, is simply another word for docility—to become a domesticated Irish woman Katie must allow her body to be 'used, transformed and improved' by the disciplined and endless routine of domestic service.[53]

In Act Two, Deevy reveals what Iris Marion Young argues as 'the deeply ambivalent' nature of women's relationship to domestic spaces.[54] Leeney argues that 'It is not the physical setting in which she lives that confines her [...]. It is the social environment that entraps Katie' and that social environment—that oppressive darkness on the other side of the drawn curtains—is impossible to shut out because it exists in Stanislaus's mind.[55] As Leeney argues, 'Deevy is aware of the playing space as an external image of the internal life of the characters', and the changes in the Gregg cottage in Act Two manifest Katie's ambition to retain some autonomy and individuality within her marriage.[56] Katie's glow—her sexual, creative, and intellectual energy—illuminates the cottage manifesting in vibrant furnishings, light, and warmth. The cottage:

51 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 61.
52 Butler, 'Performative Acts', p. 520; de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, loc. 2799; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, loc. 2745.
53 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, loc. 2515.
54 Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: 'Throwing Like a Girl' and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 123.
55 See Chapter 11 in this volume.
56 Cathy Leeney, *Irish Women Playwrights 1900–1939: Gender and Violence on Stage* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 170.

> *now has an air of life and warmth. There are gaily coloured prints on the wall. Two or three cushions have vivid covers. The lamp on the table is lighted, the curtains are drawn and the fire is bright*.[57]

However, the additions of colour, light, and warmth are surface dressing only. The stage directions read:

> Stanislaus *and* Katie *sit in front of the fire, side by side. They bend eagerly over some papers which* Stanislaus *holds*. Katie's *arm is thrown about his shoulder. In her eagerness, bending forward, reading, she comes in the way of his view. He moves a little from her; she moves closer to him, drawing him down toward the papers.* Stanislaus *quickly frees himself, sits back*.[58]

In sitting 'side by side' with Stanislaus, Katie physicalises her desire for equality with him. She is as eager as he to look over the documents, but it is Stanislaus who holds the power (represented by the documents) and, consequentially, the ability to control Katie's behaviour. She can only engage with the documents under his supervision and is allowed look at, but not hold, them. As Katie becomes more intellectually involved in the plans she obscures Stanislaus's view of them, putting her body in the place where his was. When she attempts to direct his body and attitude to align with hers he resists, creating more space for himself and removing the documents from her sight. Looking at the plans, Katie asks, 'Was it I made you do this? […] Wasn't it because of our love?' […] Were you thinking of me, and you working at it?'[59] Upon hearing that Stanislaus merely thinks of her 'very often', she replies: 'What good is "often" that should be "always"?'[60] Attempting to convince herself that the marriage to Stanislaus is indeed access, albeit vicariously, to passion and creativity, she 'looks at the plans again' saying, 'No matter—a prince' before showing them to Amelia and proclaiming her husband 'a genius'.[61] However, Katie is unable to sustain herself in her delusion as she then admits that Stanislaus's work is 'not so perfect' and that marriage to him offers neither intellectual nor physical passion, but a

57 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', pp. 72–73.
58 Ibid., p. 73.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., p. 73 and p. 74.

continuation of her former chaste and intellectually sterile seclusion.[62] In this moment, the concertina music that has faintly sounded offstage previously during Act Two 'is heard again' and, as Michael passes the house, Katie invites him in, moving closer to the fire, attempting to spark the fire of Stanislaus's jealousy.[63]

Katie succeeds in her attempt, but she does not anticipate Stanislaus's decision, to adopt Foucault's term, to discipline her for failing to embody his ideal, asexual, and 'docile' woman.[64] He leaves her in Ballycar while he returns to Dublin alone. During his absence—the passage of time between Acts Two and Three—Katie transforms the cottage into a prison house of religious pictures and texts in which the iconography of Catholic Ireland's devotional revolution is pressed into service. Deevy opens Act Three with the following stage directions:

> *The door at the right opens. Katie comes in with a book in her hand. She has an air of exasperation; crosses the room swiftly, shuts the door, draws the curtains across the window, sits down at the table, and, elbows on table, fingers in ears, studies her books. A cheer from outside. Katie jerks her chair closer to the table, bends over her book.*[65]

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault discusses Jeremy Bentham's architectural design of the panopticon to exemplify how confinement, isolation, and the threat of surveillance can cause a person to curtail and shape their own behaviour.[66] Behind closed curtains and doors, with the gay furnishings gone and the architectural plans of Act Two substituted for religious tracts, Katie now studies saints' lives under the panoptic gaze of religious iconography. In a space materially and symbolically altered by her own hand, Katie now willingly undertakes the work that she once accused Stanislaus of attempting—taking herself to pieces so as to remake her heart, mind, and body into an assembly of parts that will be acceptable to her husband. Attempting to physically and mentally reject the outside world, Katie tells Amelia, 'I must be steady […] I must

62 Stanislaus's sexual rejection of Katie is suggested in Katie's line 'Three months since we stood at the altar, and three times you drew from me', ibid., p. 75.
63 Ibid., p. 75.
64 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, loc. 2544.
65 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', pp. 87–88.
66 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

read sensible books'.[67] This performance of behaving in a 'steady' way, holding firm in her performance of 'a good wife', is Katie's attempt to embody an idealised abstraction of womanhood and perform the role of domesticated Irish woman by secluding herself within the confines of the home where she will personify and embody ideals of piety, self-abnegation, and self-regulation.

Her performance falters when the confines of her world are penetrated. During what Eoin O'Sullivan and Ian O'Donnell might describe as Katie's non-institutional 'coercive confinement', Katie has attempted to reshape her mind, appearance, and behaviour.[68] However, music, dancing, and sexual expression intrude despite her attempts to physically barricade the house and her mind. The silences, repetitions, and bursts of laughter in Katie's dialogue, and the stage directions describing her body, reveal her attempts to reconstruct and discipline herself as strained and fragile. Realising that Stanislaus's return to the cottage will coincide with Michael and Jo coming to the house to borrow a bench for the post-regatta dance, Katie howls:

> Katie: (*Gives a sudden laugh.*) What possessed him? Today of all days!... And the regatta on...and the boys...the boys will be coming up for the bench... Oh, Amelia...and he might—(*Cannot finish—with laughter.*)
>
> Amelia: My dear! What's wrong?
>
> Katie: Wrong? Is it? (*Controlled, defensive. Stands up.*) I must have his room ready—like a good wife. (*Goes to the door—laughs again, this time more happily.*) They'll be coming like...like last year. (*Goes.*) [69]

Early in Act One, Katie wanted to attend Riley's dance hall but was refused permission. In Act Three, Michael asks Katie, 'Will you come to the dance with me tonight?'[70] and this time Katie makes her own refusal. However, sensing a lapse in her resolve, Michael '*whirls her off the ladder*

67 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 88.
68 Eoin O'Sullivan and Ian O'Donnell (eds), *Coercive Confinement in Ireland: Patients, Prisoners, and Penitents* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. xi.
69 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', pp. 88–89.
70 Ibid., p. 92.

*and puts her down near the door. They laugh*'.[71] The couple's brief dance anticipates the dance of the five Mundy sisters in Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, a dance that Kiberd argues 'expresses a longing for a world that passed [the sisters] by'.[72] In *Katie Roche*, the dance between Katie and Michael represents a world which has not yet passed but, as represented by the winning regatta team's journey by the Gregg cottage, is in the process of passing Katie and other Irish women by. The outside world—in the form of Michael, Jo, the regatta, dancing, and music—intrudes into the Gregg cottage, and Katie's performance of the domesticated Irish woman shatters, exploded by laughter that reveals the strain of that performance and her genuine joy in the memory of previous years' dancing. Murphy suggests that Katie 'vacillates between active rejection of, and active affiliation to, the prescribed role of wife in concordance with hegemonic gender ideology'.[73] In Act Three, this vacillation occurs with mercurial speed and, as a result, Katie's apparent transformation is highlighted for what it is—a performance. The momentary transformation of the Gregg living-room into a dance hall provokes more laughter, representing yet another slip in Katie's performance of the domesticated Irish woman. The impact of Katie's thoughts of, sights of, and proximity to the world outside the Gregg cottage impacts on her performance of the 'good wife'—the domesticated Irish woman—causing it to falter. The implication is that Katie's place within the home, and her confinement within it, is integral to the construction and performance of the domesticated Irish woman.[74] It also suggests that something more than physical constraints contains Katie tightly and inescapably within the idealised construct of the domesticated Irish woman.

As in Act Two, the curtains cannot hide the intrusions of the outside world. In Act Three, Katie attempts to conceal Michael behind them but Stanislaus, seeing him 'slipping' away, makes as though to return to Dublin as Katie cries defensively: 'The world doesn't stop still around any one man!'[75] He leaves without another word and '*terrified* [...] *Katie*

71 Ibid., p. 94.
72 Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990); Declan Kiberd, 'Dancing at Lughnasa', *The Irish Review* 27 (2001), 18–39 (p. 24).
73 Murphy, *Hegemony and Fantasy*, p. 185.
74 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 88.
75 Ibid., p. 95.

*stands motionless*', riveted by fear, telling Amelia 'Something terrible is going to happen'.[76] The terrible thing is that Stanislaus decides to take Katie away from Ballycar. At first, he refuses to tell her where, stating baldly, 'You're leaving here!'[77] Only after she asks for the second time does Stanislaus reveal: 'You're coming to Dublin…with me'.[78] After failed appeals against his decision, during which Katie mourns the loss of the trees, changing seasons, and the river of Ballycar and, in a brief interlude of silence, the stage directions read that '*In the house something falls*.'[79] In this Chekhovian moment, when a sound effect reverberates through the world of the play like a death knell, Deevy materialises the isolation and emptiness of Katie's future. Like the silent 'knell' in *The King of Spain's Daughter*, signalling Annie's profound realisation that all avenues of life but marriage to Jim Harris are closed to her—so, too, does Katie realise in this moment that she must leave a life of small, but precious freedoms, and submit herself entirely to a life in which Stanislaus will control her.[80] Sara Ahmed argues that 'power operates through directionality and orientation', and Stanislaus's power over Katie manifests in his ability to send, direct, and orient her towards a place of his choosing.[81] When Katie realises her leaving is forever, she pleads to stay, pleas which Anthony Roche recognises as contributing to an ending that 'resists the romantic allure of "away"'.[82] Stanislaus's ability to take Katie away from Ballycar illustrates that patriarchal control in 1930s Ireland extended beyond the physical space of the home and that freedom, for women living in the Free State, could not be achieved simply by walking out a doorway. As the play closes there are no less than five references to the permanency of Katie's leaving—each amplifying a sense of loss. Devastated by the knowledge of her fate Katie, guided by Amelia, experiences another epiphany:

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., p. 96.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. 100.
80 Teresa Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, II, 16–26 (p. 24).
81 Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Kindle edition, 2017), loc. 442.
82 Anthony Roche, 'Woman on the Threshold: J. M. Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*, Teresa Deevy's *Katie Roche* and Marina Carr's *The Mai', Irish University Review*, 25.1 (1995), 143–162 (p. 157).

Katie: Brave is it? (*Bitter.*) There's no grandeur in this! Taken away...my own fault. (*Covers her face with her hands.*)

Amelia: ...If you're brave, you can make it grand. My dear, you must!

Katie: (*Gazes at her face for a moment, then:*) I think you're right!... (*Pause.*) I'm a great beauty...after all my talk—crying now... (*Grows exultant.*) I *will* be brave!

(*They catch hands.*)

Amelia: We both will!

Katie: (*Gentle now and suddenly perceptive.*) I think *you* were, always... 'Tis a promise between us—whatever'll come, good or bad.

Amelia: A promise, my dear.

Katie: I was always looking for something great to do—sure now I have it.[83]

'If you're brave, you can make it grand', Amelia says. Gazing at her, Katie realises that women, like Amelia, have been brave all along, silently and stoically accepting their fate as women in a world of compromise and self-sacrifice. Katie realises that her great deed, the 'something terrible' that she knew was coming, is a living death—a life with Stanislaus in which she must not simply *perform* the role of 'good wife', but a life in which she must actually relinquish her autonomy—her inward glow—and accept her transformation into a domesticated Irish woman.[84] Realising that she can only accept the subservient role assigned to her, Katie concedes to leave Ballycar.[85] That this is a metaphorical death is revealed in Katie's anguished cry: 'And I'll never be here in my life again! (*Covers her face with her hands and sobs*)'.[86] This anguish is not a moment of hysteria, or overstatement, but Katie's recognition that the

83 Deevy, 'Katie Roche', p. 102.
84 Ibid., p. 95, p. 88.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., p. 101.

very limited freedoms and possibilities open to her, as a young and unmarried woman, have now ended. Adding to the complexity of this moment, Deevy then asks the performer playing Katie to convey to the audience Katie's ability to imaginatively transform her surrender from one that suggests abjection and docility into 'something great'.[87] In the moment of her resolution that she '*will* be brave' she '*Grows exultant*'—a stage direction that recalls the disturbing joy Annie Kinsella expresses when she agrees to marry Jim Harris in *The King of Spain's Daughter*.[88]

## Conclusion

In *Katie Roche*, Deevy exposes the domesticated Irish woman as a construct and highlights the disparity between that construct and the lives, experiences, behaviours, and appearances of her women characters and—by extension—of real Irish women. Deevy exposes how the physical and ideological containment of women in Ireland shaped women's behaviours, speech, bodies, and attitudes to fit with an impossible ideal of womanhood—the construct herein defined as the domesticated Irish woman. Employing space, physicality, and language, Deevy, in *Katie Roche*, dramatises the process whereby a young woman, full of life, vitality, and passion, is shaped as, and reduced to, a domesticated Irish woman. Throughout *Katie Roche*, Deevy shows that this shaping process is one that women sometimes resisted, sometimes performed, and to which many eventually submitted because of a lack of alternative options. Leeney asserts that in theatre, 'Woman has been the icon, and not the icon-maker. When she becomes the creator of representations, then the woman playwright must negotiate the representational inheritance in relation to which she inevitably works'.[89] We argue that, in *Katie Roche*, Deevy engages with such a negotiation of her representational inheritance creating a dramatic text that exposes and critiques that inheritance, as well as the ideologies and movements underpinning and propagating it. Through her curation of language, space and moments of self-conscious performances of gender roles, silence, physicality, and laughter, Deevy

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., p. 102, emphasis in the original; for a reading of Annie Kinsella's decision to marry Jim Harris in *The King of Spain's Daughter* as self-sacrificial, see Úna Kealy, 'Resisting Power and Direction: *The King of Spain's Daughter* by Teresa Deevy as a Feminist Call to Action', *Estudios Irlandeses*, 15 (2020), 178–192.

89 Leeney, *Irish Women Playwrights*, p. 193.

subtly disrupts the realistic style of theatre that was also her inheritance as an Abbey playwright and exposes the deadening consequences of imposing idealised constructions of gender onto Irish women.

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