



Haunting Silences: Gothic Temporalities and Institutional Trauma in Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These*

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Abstract:

Everyday horror insidiously seeps into the pores of modern people's lives. It is not a monster behind you, but rather a monster within. It is not the shrieking of an axe murderer, but the shrieking of a covered-up trauma. It erupts in the midst of banal routines, leaving behind psychological horror. This horror merges fear with pity and triggers Aristotle's catharsis. Sympathy removes emotional blockages and cultivates social responsibility towards ignored lives. While trauma studies address abuses in the Magdalene laundries, few examine Keegan's gothic temporality. However, only a few studies examine how time can carry ethical force. Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These* (2022) brings this ethical tension to life Bill Furlong's 1985 Christmas routine. This novella is set in a small town in Ireland. It provides an inside picture of an institution where a girl feels broken by being locked in a Magdalen laundry. Roman Catholic orders largely ran the Magdalen laundries.. It reflects muffled cries amid holiday normalcy, which reveals church-state abuse of “fallen women”. Keegan powerfully shows the everyday involvement in epistemic silencing and social death. This paper will analyse how silence can be complicit and how heroism is not always grand and flashy but exists in our small decision to stand against wrong.

Keywords: complicity, silence, uncanny, gothic temporality, institutional trauma, feminist empathy, Irish fiction.

Ireland's Magdalen laundries were the institutions that operated from the eighteenth century until 1996, under the management of Catholic religious orders in concert with the Irish state (Dinh). These asylums were actually designed to reform the so-called fallen women. These women were very young and innocent. However, slowly they were abused by the institution. For instance girls were forced into unpaid labour, and stripped of their civil rights, against their will. Claire Keegan's novella *Small Things Like These* is set against this backdrop. Keegan's protagonist Bill Furlong works for one such institution during the 1980s. He delivers coal Good Shepherd Convent which was located in New Ross. Here the gulf between professed Christian values and practised exploitation grew "cavernously wide" (O' Doherty). The historical narrative and its compressed, morally focused form bridge temporal distance and transform Furlong's awakening into a prompt for the readers' ethical awareness. It compels reflection and action in the present (Tillotson 50). *Small Things Like These* highlights the ethical significance of personal action through Furlong, whose quiet yet deliberate response to institutional abuse underscores the potential influence of individual conscience (Tillotson 51).

Keegan's novella does not centre its gaze on the victims or the nuns who imprisoned them; instead, it focuses on Bill Furlong (Dinh; McAlpin). He is an ordinary coal merchant whose moral awakening transforms him from a complicit bystander into an ethical agent (Dinh). The narrative structure of *Small Things Like These* utilizes repetition in order to undermine the logical perception of time. The circularity of time within Keegan's novella will be examined further, as the significance of the repetition and duplication is the point on which several other arguments must rest (Harrison-Nirawan). This is best depicted in chapter three of the novella, where Furlong visits the convent to deliver coal, carries sacks, comes home to his family. This "always the same" rhythm makes days blur into one another. It suggests that life is stuck in a loop rather than moving forward. Furlong reflects that they "carried mechanically on without pause, to the next job at hand", and wonders "what life would be if people had time

to think and reflect” (Keegan 13). This repetition collapses the difference between days, making time feel repetitive rather than progressive. The novella reveals through Furlong’s reflection that mechanical routine masks institutional violence:

Always it was the same, Furlong thought; always they carried mechanically on without pause, to the next job at hand. What would life be like, he wondered, if they were given time to think and reflect over things? Might their lives be different or much the same—or would they just lose the run of themselves? (Keegan 13).

Keegan placed Furlong within the complicit community, not outside it. This community often acknowledges everyday involvement in institutional violence. People often hesitate to act against the injustices of society. Magdalene system reduced morality and immorality into sexist categories. The women were seen as victims, yet they also became sacrifices for societal purification. Women from the laundry were frequently turned out of society for breaching social norms. These women were manipulated by capitalist forces that often prioritise profit over human dignity (Hakkioğlu and Güneş). What makes Furlong separate from this complicit community is his small act of kindness towards the girl whom he saw in the convent. The rupture of mundane life is typical to gothic literature. One of the defining features of mundane life is that of linear time, and its assurance of continuity (Harrison-Nirawan). Time appears to stagnate within the convent, , creating a sense of temporal suspension.. Keegan has tried to evoke a sense of unease by using gothic tropes, only to comment upon wider themes such as institutional violence, hidden truth and dark atmosphere. Gothic is later on unstable because its elements come to contaminate every genre (Rata).

The gothic temporality of Keegan’s novella works through the rupture of linear time. The graves of the 1990s in Ireland echo backwards into the fictional story of 1985 New Ross. This fictional story breaks the distance between past and present abuses. The walls of the

convent serve as more than mere physical confinement. They act as a temporal imprisonment, trapping victims in repeated cycles of trauma. This trauma is very horrific. It not only denies them physical freedom but also forces them to remain behind in the forward progression of time itself (Dinh). Furlong's moral awakening occurs when he recognises that the past has not passed. The same institutional violence that forced her mother to die continues within the convent. Here he discovers a locked girl. When Furlong encounters the locked girl, he recognises shared vulnerability across generations:

Furlong never had found out who his father was. His mother had died suddenly, keeled over on the cobblestones one day, wheeling a barrow of crab-apples up to the house, to make jelly. A bleeding to the brain was what the doctor called it afterwards. Furlong was twelve at the time. Years later, when he'd gone into the registry office for a copy of his birth certificate, unknown were all that was written (Keegan 8).

The gothic temporality can also be seen in the consistent presence of institutional violence across generations. The convent's practices remain unchanged; it goes even further. The past haunts the present in various forms. What Furlong's mother had faced continues in different forms and practices of the convent (Dinh). Furlong believes in linear time, but the narrative shows cycles of trauma. It is a cycle because trauma and horror are repeated. The temporal imprisonment is evident in the convent walls, which do not merely confine physical space but trap the time itself. The girls spend much time on unpaid labour. They are even denied normal life progression. They cannot even think of a happy future. The novella's dedication acknowledges this temporal dimension: "to the women and children who suffered time in Ireland's Magdalen laundries" (Keegan 2). This dedication acknowledges that suffering occupies time itself, and one can notice that this incarceration is not merely spatial confinement

but temporal imprisonment. The slow, composed writing characterizes this gothic temporality without being too flashy. It shows heroism that is not grand. Things are messy and uncertain, which creates a unique kind of tension. There is a kind of stillness.

This stillness represents temporal suspension. The absence of peace represents the continuous suffering that time conceals. One can notice that the Gothic literature often employs supernatural elements and grotesque figures. It also shows architectural terror to evoke fear and revulsion. In *Small Things Like These*, Keegan practices what might be termed “quiet gothic”. This mode features horror emerging not from monsters or ghosts, but from silences (Crain). The story is set during Christmas 1985, heightening this quiet gothic effect. In this novella, Keegan juxtaposes holiday normalcy with disturbing cries that emerge from the walls of the convent. This juxtaposition creates “unheimlich”, a term given by Freud. It means the strangely familiar, where domestic comfort becomes menacing because it conceals horror rather than revealing it openly (Freud 123).

Furlong discovers the locked girl in a coal house. At the surface level, it seems a mundane workspace, yet at the same time it transforms into an “eerie void”, where time seems suspended. Human suffering becomes invisible to the town’s collective gaze (Keegan 15, 32). Although it is completely uncertain how Bill’s act of courage will impact his own daughters, he takes the step to protect her even while holding onto a feeling of horror. The gaps between Bill’s fictional 1985 act of resistance, the closing of the Magdalen laundries in 1996, and the Irish government’s belated apology to the victims in 2013, reveals that institutional trauma does not end when abuse stops. It lingers until truth and accountability arrive (Dinh).

Keegan’s prose style reflects this quiet gothic through its precision, which is restrained and crystalline. As one reviewer notes, Keegan revised the book forty times, achieving a showy perfection that never appears showy. Keegan’s writing is carefully controlled that each word

feels weighted, and even her silences seem to carry meaning (Hage). This style reflects the novella's thematic concern. It says that small things can hold the power of seismic significance. It can be noticed throughout the novel; For instance: a locked door, muffled cries, a girl's desperate plea to see her baby, the weight of coal sacks on Furlong's shoulders. These "small things" strongly show the gothic elements of institutional violence. Apart from this, the people of the town also wanted to remain silent. They ignored the horrible happenings at the laundry, not only because they were mundane but also due to social pressure, religious authorities, and self-interest (Dinh).

Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny provides a crucial theoretical framework for understanding this novella. It shows that Keegan generates horror through very familiar spaces. She turned these familiar spaces into very strange ones. In his essay *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud argues that the uncanny arises not from foreign or exotic threats but from the very familiar and homely spaces. He called it "Heimlich". These spaces become "Unheimlich" when they reveal what they have concealed. It is a kind of the repressed returning to disturb the present (Freud 123). For instance, the coal house where Furlong discovers the locked girl should represent the most domestic of spaces. Because when we imagine the picture of domestic space, it should be warm, functional and connected to Christmas preparations. However, upon entering, Furlong is met with coldness instead of warmth, imprisonment instead of utility, and concealment of suffering rather than the joy of celebration. This transformation of the familiar into the strange precisely exposes what the town has chosen to bury namely: the existence of "fallen women" and their children, within the convent walls (Keegan 15-18). Freud also highlights that the uncanny often involves a sense of repetition. The feeling that something has occurred before and will inevitably happen again disrupts the linear flow of time, creating a cycle of trauma (Freud 123). We can see this repetition reflected in Furlong's own background as an illegitimate child born to a sixteen-year-old mother (Millet). When Furlong first encounters the locked girl,

he does not just see a stranger. He sees a reflection of his mother's potential. He also notices his own possible suffering and the different life he might have led. The uncanny thrives on this recognition of shared vulnerability (Millet).

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry* and Longinus's ancient work *On the Sublime* offer valuable insight into how Keegan transforms horror into a moment of ethical awakening through sublime aesthetics. Burke makes a clear distinction between the beautiful and sublime. Beautiful things are pleasant, harmonious and comforting, whereas the sublime is terrifying, overwhelming, and awe-inspiring. He suggests that the sublime evokes a kind of "delightful horror", a paradoxical joy that arises when we confront terror, ultimately refining and elevating our souls (Burke 57). Similarly, Longinus portrays the sublime as something that lifts the reader beyond the ordinary, creating ecstasy and moral elevation through encounters with greatness or terror (Longinus 1). In *Small Things Like These*, the sublime manifests through non-human agents and the forces of nature. Consider frostbitten winds, endless winter nights, a pale moon casting its glow over frozen rivers, and ghostly animals. These elements resonate with Longinus's idea of the sublime as vast, overwhelming forces that surpass human understanding and control (Longinus 1). The winter backdrop is not just a setting; it has a deeper ontological significance. The cold takes on a character of its own, the frost acts as an agent, and the seemingly endless nights become a form of temporal imprisonment, reflecting the girls' spatial confinement. This is powerfully illustrated in Keegan's words: "*And then the nights came on ,and the frosts took hold again, and blades of cold slid under doors and cut the knees off those who still knelt to say the rosary...*" (5).

Winter is not just a change in the weather; it is a deep, existential experience. The cold takes on a life of its own, the frost acts like a force, and the long, nights feel like imprisonment. This sense of confinement reflects the girls' own struggles. Furlong navigates this harsh

landscape, hauling coal sacks that cling to his frozen body. His breath is visible in the chilly air, and the fresh snowfall quickly hides each step he takes. The sublime emerges from this stark encounter with nature's indifference, highlighting how our human worries seem so insignificant against the backdrop of winter's enormity. Burke's idea of "terrific beauty" sharpens this sense of sublime horror. The joy of witnessing pale moons casting their glow over frozen rivers mixes feelings of wonder and dread. It sparks a moral awakening through the lens of aesthetic experience (Burke 57). Keegan captures winter landscapes with striking beauty, even as they evoke terror. She gives a vivid picture of the moon's pale glow over ice, the silence of snow-covered streets and the watchful presence of dogs whose eyes reflect moonlight like ghosts. This aesthetic beauty does not console or comfort; instead, it intensifies horror by contrasting with human suffering. It shows how beauty and terror coexist in the same moment:

For a time he stood listening and looking down at the town, at the smoke starting up from the chimneys and the small, diminishing stars in the sky. One of the brightest fell while he was standing there, leaving a streak like a chalk mark on a board for just a second before it vanished (Keegan 31).

Non-human agents also challenge anthropocentrism by exposing the vulnerability in Ireland's trauma afterlives (Knowles). Watchful dogs follow Furlong through the town. They are protective as well as menacing. Their loyalty is uncertain, and their gaze judges human behaviour. Their watchful eyes reflect moonlight like ghosts, blurring boundaries between human and non-human. When dogs bark at the convent, they reveal what humans conceal. When they follow Furlong, they witness his moral crisis. Dogs become non-human witnesses to institutional violence and agents of truth-telling (Crain). Freezing coal-sacks weigh on Furlong's shoulders. Their physical burden mirrors the moral weight of complicity. Coal itself represents contradiction, i.e. warmth and cold, comfort and burden, domestic utility and

industrial exploitation. The coal which Furlong delivers to the convent should provide warmth yet enables imprisonment. It shows how material objects can participate in institutional violence. Coal-sacks become non-human agents of epistemic silencing. It carries silence within their physical weight (Li). The sublime becomes ethically powerful when it encourages empathy for lives that Judith Butler terms “ungrievable”. It shows the lives of those whose suffering remains unrecognised and unmourned by dominant social orders (Butler 2). The girl who was inside the coal house represents such an ungrievable life. Her suffering seems invisible to the town. Also, her humanity was denied by religious and state institutions.

In Keegan’s critique of institutional trauma, complicity plays a crucial role. It goes beyond just active participation in wrongdoing. It also includes passive acceptance. The residents of New Ross opt for complicity instead of confrontation. They choose silence over testimony and comfort over justice (Knowles). This everyday complicity becomes the true gothic horror of the novella. The terror does not stem from the violence of the convent but rather from the town’s quiet acceptance of that violence. Here, epistemic silencing shows how institutional power dictates what can be known, expressed or acknowledged (Dinh). Social death is a condition where social identity and civil rights of the people are completely stripped away. Magdalene inmates experienced social death. They were forced into unpaid labour and treated as less than human (Millet). Their confinement was not merely spatial, but it was ontological. They were rendered invisible, irrelevant and ungrievable. The locked girl in Keegan’s novella embodies social death. However, her presence disrupts this social death, forcing acknowledgement of her existence (Millet). Her voice was muffled, and her body was confined, yet both testified to a life the institution tried to erase. The locked girl’s desperate plea reveals the depth of her social death:

'Just take me as far as the river. That's all you need to do.' She was dead in earnest and the accent was Dublin. *'To the river?'* *'Or you could just let me out at the gate.'* *'It's not up to me, girl. I can't take you anywhere,'* Furlong said, showing her his open, empty hands. *'Take me home with you, then. I'll work til I drop for ya, sir.'* *'Haven't I five girls and a wife at home.'* *'Well, I've nobody—and all I want to do is drown meself. Can you not even do that fukken much for us'* (Keegan 24).

The girl's desperation, her offer of labour and her demand for even this small act embody social death. She has nobody, wants to drown herself, and asks for the minimum assistance. Furlong's moral crisis emerges from his recognition of complicity in this epistemic silencing and social death. He was aware of the fact that he receives benefit from the existence of the convent. His economic participation sustains the system. Beyond that, his silence enables its continuation (Millet). He recognises that he is not fundamentally different from the locked girl (Millet). Furlong walks away from the convent. This shows that his choice was slightly obscured, but in the end, he decided to help the girl. So earlier, when he was walking away silently from the convent, he decided to resist (Crain). This small act of resistance reflects a deeper meaning. It shows grand gestures are not always necessary to perform heroic deeds (Crain). This moment of realisation marks a shift from complicity to resistance.

Aristotle gave the concept of Katharsis. It is given in chapter 6 of *Poetics*, where he defined tragedy "as an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" that, by arousing "pity" and "fear", accomplishes the "purgation" (Katharsis) of these emotions (Koopman). Aristotle's concept is relevant to Keegan's representation of gothic horror. She used it discerningly to create moral upliftment in society. Readers feel anguish about the trapped girl's pain and systematic abuse that she faces. Going through Katharsis, also

known as catharsis, brings a sense of social responsibility. Keegan's approach to catharsis stands apart from traditional tragedy. Classical tragedy typically revolves around a noble hero. This hero faces downfall because of his own tragic flaw. However, Keegan's novella focuses on everyday individuals. Their pain arises from systemic violence rather than personal error (Perez Vides). Rather than reinforcing social order by punishing wrongdoing, she challenges it by exposing institutional violence. This distinction aligns with contemporary trauma studies, which acknowledge that real-life suffering often deviates from the conventions of tragedy. The victims are usually just ordinary people, not heroic figures. Keegan breaks institutional complicity by cultivating of an active conscience. Both Furlong and the readers realise that societal ignorance can directly sustain the exploitation occurring within the convent (Ahmed 10-26). This realisation helps to cultivate empathy that goes far beyond mere consolation. It calls for action that nurtures political agency (Ahmed 12-24). Furlong's profound joy that comes after his moral awakening is beautifully presented in the following lines:

How light and tall he almost felt walking along with this girl at his side and some fresh, new, unrecognisable joy in his heart. Was it possible that the best bit of him was shining forth, and surfacing? Some part of him... was going wild, he knew. The fact was that he would pay for it but once in his whole and unremarkable life had he known happiness akin to this... (Keegan 54-55).

Ethical action produces joy rather than mere consolation. Sarah Ahmed's notion of "affective relationality" extends Aristotle's catharsis into contemporary feminist theory (Perez Vides 10-26). Ahmed argues that empathy involves not merely feeling for others but also the willingness to be affected by others' pain. He further says that this requires letting that pain change one's own position and recognising interconnected vulnerability (Perez Vides 10-24). Furlong's willingness to be affected by the locked girl's suffering exemplifies this affective

relationality. He recognises that her pain is not separate from his own. This recognition produces ethical transformation, i.e. from complicity to resistance, from silence to testimony and from blindness to vision (PerezVides 12-25). Contemporary feminist theory showcases the political side of empathy. Empathy is not just a private feeling but a public practice. It is also not an individual response but a collective action. Perez Vides's analysis shows that Keegan contributes to demanding an imperative culture of feminist empathy towards the former lives of the Magdalene Laundry system. This feminist empathy highlights interconnected vulnerability. It also challenges institutional power.

Feminist empathy differs from conventional empathy in various ways. Conventional empathy often produces consolation without action. It seeks private comfort without public responsibility. It usually demands acknowledgement of institutional violence and action despite personal cost. Here, Furlong's willingness to be affected by the locked girl's suffering exemplifies feminist empathy. He recognises that her pain is not completely separate from his own daughters. The politics of recognition describes how social orders determine which lives are recognisable as human. Judith Butler argues that dominant social orders systematically render certain lives "ungrievable", i.e. invisible and unworthy of recognition or mourning. The lives of the confined girls in Magdalen Laundries were rendered ungrievable. Their suffering was denied, and their voices were silenced. Feminist empathy produces political recognition by refusing ungrievability. It insists on visibility and demands acknowledgement of suffering. The novella's feminist dimension emerges through its critique of sexist categories that reduce morality and immorality into gendered judgments. "Fallen women" are those women who transgress sexual norms. They bear children out of wedlock and refuse patriarchal control. The Magdalene system functions as a mechanism for punishing female transgression. This system tries to enforce patriarchal morality. This is to protect male privilege by sacrificing females. As scholarship reveals: "Making of Scapegoats... reduces morality and immorality to sexist

categories, marginalising fallen women as both victims and necessary sacrifices for societal purification” (Hakkıoğlu and Güneş).

Feminist empathy also recognises intersectionality. Magdalene inmates suffered not merely as women but as working-class women, as unmarried mothers and as economically vulnerable individuals who lacked resources for resistance. Furlong’s recognition of his own family’s vulnerability, whether it is his mother’s teenage pregnancy or his daughters’ potential suffering, produces intersectional empathy. It recognises that class, gender, and economic vulnerability are all connected to produce institutional oppression. This intersectional empathy cultivates political agency that extends beyond individual cases to systemic change. Contemporary discourse increasingly recognises “post-truth” as characteristic of political and social orders. In this discourse, objective facts become less influential than emotional appeals and personal beliefs. Post-truth silences describe how institutional power deliberately conceals uncomfortable truths (Lincoln; *Gerrard*). It replaces lived reality with convenient narratives. The Magdalen system exemplified post-truth silences, such as decades of abuse concealed behind religious rhetoric, where institutional narratives replaced victims’ testimonies and state complicity was denied until the 2013 apology. Keegan’s novella ruptures these post-truth silences through its refusal to accept institutional narratives, and it insists on witnessing uncomfortable truths. Keegan demands accountability for it. The central moral question Furlong poses holds this idea:

As they carried on along and met more people Furlong did not know, he found himself asking was there any point in being alive without helping one another? Was it possible to carry on along through all the years, the decades, through an entire life, without once being brave enough to go against what was there and yet call yourself a Christian, and face yourself in the mirror? (Keegan 54).

This question breaks the post-truth silence and demands acknowledgement of complicity. Rupturing post-truth silences requires courage because it produces a personal cost, such as social ostracism, economic ruin and family endangerment (Crain). Furlong recognises this cost and weighs it against moral imperative. He chooses accountability despite consequences. This choice sets an example of ethical courage (Crain). This courage is accessible to ordinary people, and it does not require flashy heroism but a consistent refusal of complicity (Crain). Accountability for ungrievable lives requires a culture of feminist empathy which extends beyond individual cases to systemic change (Knowles). This culture recognises interconnected vulnerability, challenges institutional power, demands recognition for those rendered invisible, and cultivates political agency through small acts of resistance (Perez Vides 10-16). Furlong's small act of refusing to accept the bitter truth exemplifies this culture. Though it is small, it is significant. It is very personal but political at the same time (Knowles).

The contemporary relevance of the novella emerges through its relevance to ongoing institutional abuses beyond Magdalen laundries. Whether it is residential schools, immigration detention centers, nursing homes or workplaces, it forces us to rethink any institutional abuse (Crain). These contemporary abuses share the Magdalen system's characteristics. Institutional power can conceal abuse, rendering victims invisible (Crain). Keegan's rupturing of post-truth silences produces contemporary relevance. Here readers recognise patterns. They draw connections and cultivate accountability for current ungrievable lives. The novella becomes a parable for our own times. It urges ethical response to contemporary institutional violence. One reviewer notes: "This is not a happy story, per se, but a good one. A story that reminds me that those quiet murmurings of our hearts, what some might call nudges of the Holy Spirit and others might call a conscience, are worth listening to" (VanderLugt). Claire Keegan's *Small Things Like These* shows how quiet gothic aesthetics, Freudian uncanny, gothic temporality, sublime terror, feminist empathy, and posthumanist ethics are all combined to rupture post-

truth silences surrounding institutional trauma (Crain). Through Bill Furlong's moral crisis, Keegan reveals how everyday complicity enables institutional violence and how familiar spaces conceal horror. It also shows how time carries ethical force. Vulnerability is universal, and accountability is possible (Crain). The novella's title encapsulates its central argument, i.e. small things accumulate into seismic change. The gothic power of Keegan's novella lies not in monsters or ghosts but in the familiar one, which is twisted into something eerie. This power can lie in silence rather than screams (Crain). Without depicting overt violence, it shows how failing to act when needed is itself a horror. This quiet gothic produces cathartic empathy that transforms horror into ethical awakening. It cultivates social responsibility for ignored lives that demands accountability (Ahmed 10-26). The sublime's terrifying beauty refines horror into moral clarity. Non-human agents challenge anthropocentrism, feminist empathy cultivates political agency, and rupture of post-truth silences produces contemporary relevance (Perez Vides 10-26).

This novella demonstrates that transformative change begins with small acts of human decency. Moral courage often begins with simple recognition: seeing what others choose to ignore and remembering what others choose to forget. In an era when institutional abuse continues and makes headlines, Keegan's novella reminds us that every moral choice, no matter how small, has a kind of potential to challenge the systems of oppression and illuminate paths toward justice (Crain). The novella stands as a historical testimony. It is a surprisingly hopeful celebration of compassion (O' Doherty; Knowles). Through Furlong's journey, Keegan exposes the traumatic institutional atmosphere. Here, the past haunts the present, and repeated abuse continues across decades. It generates a gothic effect that is very different from the ones produced by ghosts and monsters. It originates from a laundry, which was managed by a convent. The haunted silences of the Magdalene system demand acknowledgement. Here, change is seismic not because it is grand, but because small things accumulate. It is also because

consistent refusal of complicity can produce transformation. Novella suggests that small acts of human decency can shift complicity into political agency. The haunted silences of institutional trauma demand acknowledgement across temporal boundaries, and Keegan's quiet gothic produces the ethical awakening necessary to answer that demand.

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