

Elena Ogliari*

Breaking the Silence: The Irish Civil War in the Short Stories by Dorothy Macardle

Abstract: The article focuses on Dorothy Macardle's collection of short stories *Earth-Bound* to complicate the traditional understanding of the Civil War (1922-1923) as a catastrophe subject to enforced silence or the aporia of representation. This despite the fact that Macardle's stories are not event-centric nor realistic accounts of the conflict: they are set before 1922, during difficult periods for the Irish such as in times of famine or the Anglo-Irish War, and, throughout the collection, realism combines with the supernatural, multiple temporalities mingle, and there is a peculiar co-dependency of politics and aesthetics. However, I contend that it is precisely by displacing the Civil War from her stories and by replacing it with narratives of other, 'minor' tragedies that Macardle thematically foregrounds the defining characteristics of internecine conflict: the collapse of the bonds of solidarity and the consequences of that for the most vulnerable. Story after story, through narratives of 'slow violence' dispersed across time and space, readers get a sense of a slow erosion of the Irish community, predating the war and then exploding in the destruction of the conflict, but also a sense that violence – its continuous perpetration now and in the future – is not inevitable. Some of the tales in *Earth-Bound* have the potential, through estrangement and shifts in setting, to move their readers to think critically about the status quo and possibly act on and change it. Hence, my article first explores the supposed unrepresentability of the Civil War; second, by comparing the stories in *Earth-Bound* to the more celebrated ones by Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain, it intends to highlight the peculiarity and originality of Macardle's writing.

Keywords. *Dorothy Macardle; Earth-Bound; Irish Civil War; anti-narrative tension; women prisoners; Gothic tropes.*

The years 1914-1923 were a period of almost continuous warfare for many Irish people. The 1916 Easter Rising brought fighting to Ireland just a few months

* University of Eastern Piedmont; Italy.

before the slaughter at the Somme, where the British army, also composed of Irish battalions, suffered probably the worst ever day in its military history. The Great War was followed at short intervals by the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, a fratricidal conflict that broke out in 1922 prompted by the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which had ended open hostilities between the IRA and British Crown forces and granted a degree of independence to Ireland, but was not accepted by all Irish nationalists. These split into the supporters of the creation of the Free State under the Treaty and the 'Irregulars' led by Éamon de Valera, who continued to fight for the establishment of an Irish Republic (Palko 2). By the time the Civil War was over in 1923, the violence and trauma had been of such a vast scale that the writers and intellectuals involved variously in the conflicts struggled to find adequate words to describe it.

The Civil War in particular has been deemed impervious to articulation and fictional representation, with many commentators of the subsequent decades coming to understand the artists' difficulty in representing this catastrophic event as evidence of its unrepresentability. As Síobhra Aiken observes (6-7; 21), it was commonly held among historians and literary scholars that most Irish and Free State authorities preferred to withdraw into a state of muteness when confronted about the conflict to the point of claiming that the literary history of the Civil War is marked largely by silence until its resurgence in artistic and literary discourses of the second half of the century. Writers were driven into muteness by unresolved individual trauma or silence was enforced among the literary community by the state: historian Anne Dolan highlights the controversial legacy of the cataclysmic conflict when she observes that "civil war, by its very nature, demand[s] silence" (4) and "it was the nature of the Irish Free State to suppress, to remember selectively, to try to forget" (124).

The present article seeks to complicate such understanding of the Civil War as a catastrophe subject to enforced silence or "the aporia of representation" (Luckhurst 13), by analysing the short fiction of Dorothy Macardle, specifically her 1924 collection *Earth-Bound*. For sure, the nine stories composing the volume bear the traces of trauma of such magnitude that it "colour[s] all attempts to come to grips with it" (Vees-Gulani 7), for, in *Earth-Bound*, Macardle does not tackle, in a direct and realistic way, the horrors of her detention in several prisons during the Civil War, where she was abused physically and psychologically. Nor does she provide a 'proper' account of the conflict and war-related events: her stories are set before 1922, during difficult periods for the Irish such as in times of

famine or the Anglo-Irish War and, throughout the collection, realism combines with the supernatural, multiple temporalities mingle, and there is a peculiar co-dependency of politics and aesthetics.

However, I do not interpret Macardle's elusiveness around the subject of the Civil War as evidence of the impossibility to deal with it. Rather, I believe that, in *Earth-Bound*, Macardle exploits "the potential" of literary narration "for the configuration and refiguration" of traumatic and catastrophic events, by rewriting the Civil War narrative into other historical contexts and by moving towards the imaginative (Luckhurst 89). The shifts in setting and the insertion of supernatural elements, I contend, are coping strategies she designed to embark on a path of healing and point to the potential of fiction to enable "one to get close to one's own trauma, a step necessary in healing, without causing the same level of distress as a non-imaginary recreation" (Vees-Gulani 91). Writing about past catastrophes and the liminal world of the Sidhe was Macardle's way to come to terms with her wartime traumatic experiences and discuss "the general viciousness that infected a nation" in the years 1922-23 (Grant 51) with the goal of turning her stories also into a call to action to her listeners and readers.

In these respects, my analysis contributes to the current scholarship on the topic of Civil War memory and representation, which has recently been given a high profile in Irish Studies and has challenged the belief of a supposed 'absence' of the conflict in the print culture of the post-war years. Remarkably, Aiken argues against what she considers an inflated use of the notion of the fictional unrepresentability of the Civil War, by showing, in fact, that there is no dearth of written materials on the topic from the late 1920s. In her monograph *Spiritual Wounds*, she brings to light a multitude of veterans' memoirs from both war factions and Republican accounts of the revolutionary years that have received little attention so far, thus proving that, despite the Free State's notoriously brutal treatment of the 'Irregulars', the new government did not suffocate all dissenting discourse about the conflict (Aiken; Flanagan 13).

Frances Flanagan, John Grant, and Jennifer Malia, among others, have likewise documented how personal memories of the conflict are relived in the works by celebrated writers Sean O'Casey, Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain, and Frank O'Connor, who, having experienced warfare first-hand, were able to describe vividly war-like situations and the pain associated with a conflict also known as the *Cogadh na gCarad* or 'War of the Friends' (Boyce 106). In particular, Cork writers and IRA soldiers O'Connor and O'Faolain authored short stories

inspired by their wartime experiences that not only have been praised in several literary reviews and dedicated studies, but, I believe, corroborate Jacques Rancière's argument that the problem of representability of traumatic events lies in finding suitable forms of representation rather than in the essential unrepresentability of the event (Laanes 124-5).

It is also worth noting that, like Macardle, the two Corkmen were confronted by "both inner psychological forces stemming from their experiences" and "cultural and historical pressures [coming] from their surroundings" when attempting to write about the Civil War (Vees-Gulani 7). As a result, they tended to resort to the same representational strategies to address the topic, such as reframing the Civil War as a narrative of the War of Independence. O'Faolain fictionalised his experiences as a rank-and-filer of the IRA in the collection *Midsummer Night Madness* (1932), but transposed them to the different context of the Tan War (Grant 51-2). One has to read between the lines to understand that the descriptions of stances of indifference or open hostility among Irish compatriots, in stories such as "Fugue", denote subtly that O'Faolain uses the fight against the British as a fictional surrogate to reflect on the Civil War (Grant 53).

Likewise, it took O'Connor almost seven years to write his celebrated "Guests of the Nation", the short story set during the War of Independence that nonetheless captures the tragedy and brutality of internecine conflict, as it is a tale of reprisals and counter-reprisals, of commitment to duty and the tragic consequences of friendship between sworn enemies (Creedon 277). That O'Connor revised "Guests of the Nation" multiple times after its first publication in 1930, later omitting the clearest allusions to the Civil War, attests to the writer's struggle to come to terms with his involvement in the conflict but also, I believe, that his very involvement "actively provoke[d] the production of narrative" (Luckhurst 83).

Hence, none of these writers was disengaged from the war or silent about it, but what sets Macardle apart is the fact that she wrote most of the stories collected in *Earth-Bound* as a political prisoner *during* the conflict. Her stories are not a continual working and reworking of the event *ex post*, in which truth and fiction mix up in various forms of autofiction, but the medium through which she intended to voice the female experience of political imprisonment while it was unfolding, shed light on consequences of the war for the most vulnerable, and put forward a "grammar of solidarity". Macardle deserves to be

rediscovered after years of critical oblivion, and considered alongside the more widely-studied O'Faolain and O'Connor, for her attempt to create bonds between audiences at home and in prison, and, even more significantly, between reading communities that were bound by related, though not identical, traumatic experiences (cf. Corporaal 58).

In his introduction to *Earth-Bound*, Peter Berresford Ellis argues that the stories in this collection would never have been written had Macardle not languished in the prisons of the Free State (ix). Born in a wealthy Home-Ruler family, Macardle became a committed Sinn Féiner after the Easter Rising and sided with the Republicans during the 1922-23 conflict. She was arrested for her seditious activity as a propagandist and imprisoned, together with other women Republicans, in first Mountjoy, then Kilmainham, and finally the North Dublin Union. Between February and September 1923, over 500 women and girls aged between twelve and seventy were incarcerated in Kilmainham Gaol; many more in Mountjoy. Both prisons were overcrowded and the forms of abuse suffered by inmates were innumerable, from the imposition of food to abominably unhygienic conditions and psychological degradation. Macardle recorded some of her experiences in her private jail journal, which was re-discovered in 2017, and, while in Kilmainham Gaol, she participated in one of the frequent hunger strikes held by the prisoners in an attempt to draw attention to the injustices of the Free State government.

Her prison experience and commitment to the Republican cause both helped and hindered her literary career: while serving time, she began writing the stories of *Earth-Bound* which she read to her fellow inmates. After the release, she went on to write plays, radio programmes, Gothic novels such as *The Uninvited*, the non-fictional *The Irish Republic* (1937) featuring a foreword by de Valera, and *Children of Europe* (1949), a series of interviews with the young refugees of WWII. Yet her fame rapidly declined after her death in 1958, perhaps due to her acquaintance with de Valera, and she had been largely forgotten until the 2010s when a group of scholars set out to rediscover Macardle the woman and the writer.

Among her recently re-discovered works is indeed *Earth-Bound*, whose stories reflect the centrality of the prison experience and Civil War to her life and development as a writer without, however, being "event-centric" (Andharia 32). The nine tales forming the collection deal with conflict "viscerally painted" (Berresford Ellis xvi), but do not describe realistically nor directly what happened

in those fateful years. Post-Treaty Ireland features only in “A Story without an End”, in which, however, the Civil War is transfigured into a “nightmare” that is unlikely to become real (cf. Caruth 4-6).

Incidentally, it is “A Story without an End” that best attests to the narrative and anti-narrative tensions at play in each attempt at fictional representing the Civil War thanks to its oneiric imaginary and narrative framing and interruptions. The tale recounts an evening meeting devoted to recalling “old prophecies, forebodings and tales of bad omens and dreams”; one of the attendees, Nesta McAllister, decides to tell a “troubling story”, a nightmare that causes her disquiet (77), because she would like to be reassured that what she has dreamt will never come true. Nesta has dreamt of an execution taking place in a prison yard – one guesses it is the Stonebreakers’ Yard in Kilmainham Gaol – and the one being executed is her husband Roger, an IRA propagandist in the War of Independence. The firing squad is made up of soldiers in green uniforms, led by “a splendid fellow with a fine reputation since nineteen sixteen – one of Mick Collins’s right-hand men” (82). The adjective ‘green’ is in italics and precedes an exclamation mark to emphasise Nesta’s incredulity as well as the improbability of the scenario. It is also repeatedly remarked by all attendees that it is a dream, explicitly defined as “so absurd” (80).

But towards the conclusion is the following “You see – the war will break out again of course, we all know that – but the green uniforms – it couldn’t come true” (82), so full of dashes and abrupt transitions between different verbal tenses that one gets the idea of something inconceivable and therefore difficult to articulate but which, eventually, became true: the last words of the story and entire collection are “Mountjoy, December, 1922” (82) – the Civil War had already been going on for months. The reader can perceive both Macardle’s shock and bitterness here. Of course, her bitterness is partly due to the failure of the Republican dream, which is alluded to in the dedication of the story to Nora Connolly, daughter and militant companion of that James Connolly, socialist and martyr (in Kilmainham Gaol) of 1916, to whom we owe the more ‘egalitarian’ sections of the *Forógra na Poblachta*. The 1916 leaders had dreamed that a free and independent Ireland would also be a caring one, guaranteeing “equal rights and equal opportunities to all its Citizens” (Coogan xii, 168). But 1922 Ireland resembled nothing of the Ireland envisioned by the 1916 rebels, as it was born in bloodshed and fratricidal hatred: “what was intended to be a massive and joyous party”, i.e. the achievement of national self-determination, “ended in violence

and destruction” (Coogan 141-2; see also Hall 5).

However, Macardle’s short fiction does not only voice her and, presumably, her readers’ bitterness. Some of the tales in *Earth-Bound* have the potential, through estrangement and shifts in setting, to move their readers to think critically about the status quo and possibly act on and change it. This has to do with how the Civil War is simultaneously present and absent from the stories. Except for “A Story without an End”, the Civil War catastrophe is indirectly represented through narratives of other, more private or localised catastrophes. Like a ghostly presence, the conflict is reverberated in the “tragic, little stories of Ireland’s war that are forgotten” or deliberately “hushed among the many” (59), to quote from a character in the tale “By God’s Mercy”. And it is precisely by displacing the Civil War from her stories and by replacing it with narratives of other disasters that Macardle thematically foregrounds the defining characteristics of internecine conflict: the collapse of the bonds of solidarity and the consequences of that for the most vulnerable. Story after story, through narratives of “slow violence” dispersed across time and space (Franklin 128), readers get a sense of a slow erosion of the Irish community, predating the war and then exploding in the destruction of the conflict, but also a sense that violence – its continuous perpetration now and in the future – is not inevitable.

Acknowledging that Macardle’s short fiction aimed at raising awareness and responsibility among its readers first implies the recognition of a perlocutive plan enacted through literary mediation and, second, complicates the traditional reception of Macardle’s stories as nationalist, one-sided writings. In *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention*, Barbara Harlow observes that literature “composed in prison and from out of the prison experience” is “necessarily partisan, polemical, written as it is against th[e] very structures of a dominant arbitration” or institution (qtd. in McCann 505). Leeann Lane and Ailbhe McDaid spot the trait of partisanship in the stories forming *Earth-Bound*, arguing that the latter and Macardle’s propagandistic activities in the 1920s are marked by the “rigid binary of honour and integrity versus compromise and betrayal” that she constructed while an inmate as well as her need to assert her commitment to the republican cause (McDaid 395). But, in line with Berresford Ellis (xvi), I believe that the complexities of *Earth-Bound* are elided if we view the collection just as a partisan, polemical narrative.

For sure, Republican claims and binary oppositions feature in the earliest stories of the collection, dating to December 1922: “Earth-Bound”, “The Brother”,

and “By God’s Mercy”. They are set during the War of Independence and their protagonists are soldiers or supporters of the IRA fighting the Black and Tans. Recurring is the figure of the ‘non-traitor’ because the protagonists sacrifice their lives or are ready to do so not to betray their comrades and the national cause: after all, the war of independence represented “the dawn of all that Ireland has been waiting for these seven hundred years” (2). We can read these words and the image of the non-traitor as a sort of vindication of the legitimacy of the cause of the Republicans. Such reading appears to be corroborated by the author’s choice to insert supernatural elements in these stories in the form of ghostly apparitions: the soldiers hunted down or tortured by the Black and Tans are rescued by mysterious figures who are then identified with the ghosts of past Irish heroes such as Red Hugh. Here the nationalist view of Irish history is recalled as a coherent and teleological narrative, as a succession of sacrifices and struggles for the nation’s good that the Republicans only claimed to be carrying out. Republicans were generally more prone than Free Staters to recruiting the memory of the revolutionary dead to their side, for the spectres of past heroes were regularly summoned to justify their stance on the Treaty (Flanagan 10).

There are nonetheless dissonant elements in such ‘Republican’ narratives. Both the decision to set the stories during the war of independence and the evocation of a genealogy of patriots who died for Ireland betray a nostalgia for a past unity – at least in the variegated nationalist sphere, between Free Staters and Republicans. People from both sides of the Civil War had previously fought the British and the idea of a genealogy of patriots is part of a broader nationalist tradition cherished by both sides, the one embodied by the Easter Rising rebels who in their 1916 Proclamation invoked “the past generations” in their support. This past unity was then shattered to pieces by the Civil War, which reconfigured suddenly and brutally the lifelong relationships Irish people had fostered among themselves and with the places they inhabited (Anderson).

Moreover, less fitting in a celebratory and Republican narrative is the focus on both the tragic micro-histories of ordinary people and the unflagging generosity of the Irish population at large in helping IRA soldiers on the run. “Earth-Bound”, for instance, gives a heartfelt description of how “poor old” farmers and “brave little” girls offer shelter to two soldiers hunted down by the Black-and-Tans (6). This warm generosity, apparent during the ‘historical’ War of Independence, was but a faded memory in the later conflict, when the Irregulars received little support and were often the targets of open hostility. In 1922-1923,

“towns welcomed the [Free State] soldiers as liberators, freeing them of the unruly clutches of republican occupation, giving them back a longed-for normality” (Dolan 141; see also Grant 54). At the same time, the descriptions of the successes on the Irish side are toned down by remarks on the tragic consequences of it for the people involved. Indeed, “By God’s Mercy” tells of the killing of a young IRA rank-and-filer by fellow countrymen who had betrayed the cause, but does so from the very ‘human’ angle of a sister who mourns the loss of both brother (the soldier) and mother. Significantly, the very last line of the story abruptly shifts focus from the mother’s pride in her son – “he did his work well” she used to comment – to the acknowledgement of her death of heartbreak: “But she died on me before the month was out” (66).

And that *Earth-Bound* is more than a partisan narrative becomes increasingly evident in the later stories, in which Macardle tries to strike a balance between her need to assert her Republicanism and disapproval of Free State authorities *and* a more ‘humanitarian concern’ to give voice to those who were suffering the consequences of the conflict, but whose voices were unheard. These voices are made audible in a very indirect way, through a series of fictional testimonies; the collection *Earth-Bound* has a frame story – some men and women, not all of them Irish, gather in the studio in Philadelphia of editors Úna and Frank and start telling their own stories of tragedies they survived or of which they were witnesses. Through the device of the embedded narratives, Macardle simultaneously shows how it is problematic to recover the actual voices of the most vulnerable and asserts the duty to engage ourselves in making note of their suffering. Moreover, the ‘minor’ tragedies, both collective and individual, are transgenerationally recalled to challenge present societal wrongs (Corporaal 53-4), for the goal is to create not a hierarchy of the traumas, but a common ground made of relatable experiences that enable solidarity out of specificities (Rotheberg 9; 16).

The stories in *Earth-Bound* evoke the Civil War through the fictional creation of spectral and supernatural presences, which, unlike their ghostly counterparts in “Earth-Bound” and “The Brother”, metaphorically symbolise a concern for justice, for their creation aims to bring to light what is hidden in the present (cf. Daniels 394). “Folk wisdom”, Judith Herman reminds us, “is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told” (1) and Macardle drew on Irish lore for themes and ideas that went into the making of her ghostly revenants.

Emblematic in this regard is the story “Samhain”, which, at first glance, seems to be set during the Great Hunger of 1845-1852. “Samhain” is remarkable for its use of Gothic tropes and imagery that Irish writers, since the days of Charles Robert Maturin and Sheridan Le Fanu, have often employed to allusively address the spectres and ‘unspeakable’ problems that haunt Ireland’s history and contemporaneity (Smart and Hutcheson 111). Comparably, in Macardle’s hands, ghosts, prophecies, persecution of the living, and the remembrance of past suffering serve here to “deal with the skeletons in the Irish closet, rather than ignoring them” (Palko 6).

Samhain is the night of the year when the Celtic Otherworld becomes visible to this one, and those who were wronged can return to exact vengeance on the living. The eponymous story begins in the summer, when heavy rains in West Kerry cause the potatoes to rot and famine comes to the village killing, directly or indirectly, a large part of the population: some die of starvation or of diseases that have arisen due to a weakened immune system; others let themselves die in specially dug pits; the village fishermen, who desperately venture out to sea even when it is stormy, drown. On the night of Samhain, all the dead return as ghosts to take their revenge: they spare the village priest who, though in vain, “sent an appeal to the Dublin friends” and begun “corresponding with traders in Cork and Dublin, trying to work up a market for carrigeen moss” (16; 17). The catastrophe is blamed on those who did not care to help, even though they were able to; so the ghosts try to drag their souls to the Otherworld.

In this land of superstitions, the catastrophe is thus displaced from the realm of divine intervention to the human one: emphasis is placed on the lack of solidarity among people and, through the focus on human agency, Macardle frames the famine as a socio-political, not natural, event. This reframing is noteworthy, because, first, it challenges some dominant views concerning famines in Macardle’s times, especially those of George O’Brien, who, in the wake of William Wilde, was the most influential exponent of Ireland as a “land haunted by hunger”, inevitably and cyclically subject to pestilence, flood, and drought (Kennedy et al. 15) Macardle appears to eschew this idea of a chronic vulnerability of Irish society to famine, depicting famine as something whose consequences can be mitigated or prevented if we take action.

Second, for its emphasis on the lack of solidarity, Dorothy’s account seems to fit into that polemical tradition around the Great Hunger aimed at blaming the inadequacy of the measures deployed by London and the landlords in Ireland

during the harshest months of the famine or, even, their deliberate indifference (Corporaal). Yet several things do not add up. The images of blackened potatoes and pits along the roads, the setting in West Kerry on the Atlantic coast, do indeed evoke the Great Hunger – and according to Leeann Lane that is the setting of the story – but the lack of precise time references as well as some passing remarks about the peasants not having any Indian meal and the reminiscence of a Great Hunger in by-gone days complicate this mid-nineteenth century placement. What is more, Macardle does not once mention the English or the Landlords in her story: all the characters are Irish and the emphasis is on the lack of solidarity *between compatriots*.

The vagueness of the temporal references together with the characterisation in Gothic terms of West Kerry transposes the story into an indefinite time or, rather, along a continuum. The idea of continuity between past and present is then further pressed into the reader's mind by the image of the dead returning from the past, for, in addition to ghosts, the bodies of the fishermen are washed up by the tide on Samhain day. I interpret these narrative choices in light of Macardle's focus on inaction, as an attempt at awakening her public of the 1920s to the 'duty to solidarity'. The seeds of the indifference portrayed in "Samhain", far from rotting away, sprouted in her times to the point that the suffering caused by inaction and indifference in "Samhain" can be viewed as an analogue of the unspoken suffering of women prisoners during the Civil War, which was caused by the collapse of bonds of solidarity inside prisons and the indifference of the people outside.

Female militants not only suffered abuse while incarcerated but were targets of harsh criticism after release, because they had dared to push the boundaries of what was deemed appropriate for a woman in the highly conservative Irish society (Molidor 43). Because of the psychological and social constraints on them, many women preferred not to speak about their prison experience just as many more people felt discomfiture in remembering the civil war after its conclusion (McAtackney 49-50).

It is therefore noteworthy that a mix of realism with the supernatural and the focus on the 'duty to solidarity' characterise also the stories "The Prisoner", "The Return of Niav", and "The Portrait of Roisin Dhu". Here, we see on paper what psychologist Cathy Caruth argues from a Freudian perspective: that, when reality is traumatic, it can only be represented indirectly in distortive figurative or allegorical terms. In Macardle's stories, indeed, the anti-narrative tension of

traumatic experiences is both re-asserted and overcome by the use of supernatural elements that alter reality.

Lisa Weihman deems “The Return of Niav” and “The Portrait” “fascinating simply as relics of Macardle’s imprisonment” (174), although female captivity, psychological abuse, and starvation occur here not in a Free State prison but in the Celtic fringes where the boundaries between this world and the world of the Sidhe are thin. The perpetrators are fairies who exert preternatural violence on their young victims with various degrees of success: whereas the girl in “The Return of Niav” is saved before she dies of starvation, the young woman in “The Portrait of Roisin Dhu” is not because of the awful living conditions imposed on her and because the women residing in the surroundings did not fully commit themselves to her rescue. To see the connection of these supernatural tales with the harsh reality of the Civil War, one has to consider that the stories were first read by Macardle in a prison cell populated by females, who would thus be reminded of the fundamental importance of female alliances (Molidor 47).

But not only that: a closer look at the two stories would also offer Macardle’s *audience* reading them in print evidence of the crucial importance of ‘caring’ to the survival of the imprisoned women *outside* the prison. Macardle, I believe, meant to engage the outside observer by taking her grammar of solidarity into the public sphere through literary mediation so that her personal healing process could also turn into a project of social, nationwide transformation (cf. Anderson 184). Evidence of my claims is contained in “The Prisoner”, the story of the hunger-striker Liam Daly in Kilmainham Goal, which features a tension between the real and the oneiric and an abrupt return to reality akin to those in “A Story without an End”. The tale first appeared in the periodical *Eire/Ireland* in September 1924 under the title “The Prisoners 1798-1923”, which Macardle asked to be changed as soon as she learned of it, preferring to keep any time reference vague.

“The Prisoner” is told by Liam Daly himself after his release and arrival at Úna and Frank’s studio in Philadelphia. As we read in the frame story, he needs to tell what happened to him in Kilmainham as if his salvation depended on this: he has a “glittering eye” like S.T. Coleridge’s ancient mariner and repeatedly states “There is a story I have to tell” (31). It is the story of a hallucination he had in the last days of the strike, when the doctors no longer assisted him and the guards did not care. The same indifference to which Macardle and the other inmates were victims at the hands of their fellow Irish men, with the peculiarity

that the author is here channelling the problematic narrative of the female prisoners of the Civil War into more socially acceptable modes of representation by depicting a *man* prisoner of the War of Independence.

The 'presence' of the female prisoners' repressed stories is nonetheless dealt with in "The Prisoner" through the insertion in the narrative of the ghost of a young lad with his tragic history. On the verge of madness, Liam is saved by the appearance of this boy with "starved features", who had died in Kilmainham in 1798 – the year of Wolfe Tone's rebellion that constitutes a mythical alpha point in Irish nationalistic history. This spooky kid is afraid that he will be remembered as a traitor and that the "name of shame" will be placed on his family, for the British threaten to say that the boy betrayed his Lord to coerce him into giving information. So, he asks Liam to tell him his story if he ever gets out of jail alive (34-5).

In the end, Daly survives the strike and keeps his word by telling the lad's story to Úna and Frank so that they can write it down in their newspaper. Hence, "The Prisoner" highlights to the reader the significance of rebuilding and keeping bonds of solidarity even in tragic times, as Liam Daly almost dies in the hands of his jailers, but is saved by the companionship of the lad. And the appeal to Daly ultimately extends to the 'actual' readers of the story, as the creation of the tormented lad as a ghostly revenant invites them to ponder their own role as witnesses to others' lives and personal tragedies. Stories need audiences, which in turn need to have the capacity to listen and record. This would explain the centrality given to the act of narrating and the duty to write down the stories of ordinary people, for memory is unstable: asked his name, the ghost says, "I've forgotten. I can't remember my name" (37; cf. Weihman 176-7).

The allusion to the fleeting nature of memory is also a reminder of the urgency of much-needed help. "The Prisoner" is a call to action, via the literary medium, to help Republican women prisoners of the Civil War: the "name of shame" and the purgatorial life of the young lad were arguably what befell them. Until the very end, indeed, the reader hesitates between a supernatural and a natural interpretation of the story told by Daly due to the insistent repetition that he was probably hallucinating. But the very last words of the story – "Mountjoy and Kilmainham", the places of composition (38) – brutally bring readers back to reality and remind them that "The Prisoner" is a reworking of Macardle's experiences, which she wanted to unbury.

Works Cited:

- Aiken, Síobhra. *Spiritual Wounds: Trauma, Testimony and the Irish Civil War*. Irish Academic Press, 2022.
- Andharia, Janki. "Thinking About Disasters: A Call for Intersectionality and Transdisciplinarity in Disaster Studies." *Disaster Studies*, edited by Janki Andharia, Springer, 2020: 3-32.
- Boyce, David G. *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923*. Macmillan, 1988.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1995.
- Coogan, Tim. *Ireland in the Twentieth Century*. Hutchinson, 2003.
- Corporaal, Margu rite. "Moving Towards Multidirectionality: Famine Memory, Migration and the Slavery Past in Fiction, 1860-1890." *Irish University Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2017: 48-61.
- Creedon, C nal. "Art Imitating Life Imitating Death. an Exploration of 'Guests of the Nation' by Frank O'Connor." *Studi Irlandesi*, vol. 11, 2021: 271-97.
- Daniels, Jill. "Trauma and Silence: Strategies of Mediation in the Aftermath of Civil War." *Rethinking History*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2014: 391-9.
- Dolan, Anne. *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Flanagan, Frances. *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Franklin, Jocelyn S. "Timescapes of 'Catastrophe Permanente': Writing the Interstices of Disaster in Emmelie Proph te's *Impasse Dignit *." *Journal of Haitian Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2020: 124-42.
- Grant, John. "'I was Too Chickenhearted to Publish it': Se n O'Faol in, Displacement and History Re-Written." *Estudios Irlandeses*, vol. 12, no. 12, 2017: 50-9.
- Hall, Donal. "The Public Life of Dorothy Macardle." *Irish Literary Supplement*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2021: 4-6.
- Herman, Judith L. *Trauma and Recovery*. BasicBooks, New York, 1997.
- Laanes, Eneken. "Unsayable or Merely Unsaid?" *Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma*, edited by Philipp Schweighauser et al., University of Toronto Press, 2018: 123-8.
- Luckhurst, Roger. *The Trauma Question*. Routledge, 2008.
- Malone, Irina R. "Spectral History: The Ghost Stories of Dorothy Macardle."

Partial Answers, vol. 9, no. 1, 2011: 95-109.

- McAtackney, Laura. "Gender, Incarceration, and Power Relations during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923)." *Gender Violence in Peace and War: States of Complicity*, edited by Victoria Sanford et al., Rutgers University Press, 2016: 47-63.
- McCann, Fiona. "Writing by and about Republican Women Prisoners: 'Wilful Subjects'" *Irish University Review*, vol. 47, 2017: 502-14.
- Molidor, Jennifer. "Dying for Ireland: Violence, Silence, and Sacrifice in Dorothy Macardle's *Earth-Bound: Nine Stories of Ireland* (1924)." *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2008: 43-61.
- Palko, Abigail L. "From *The Uninvited* to the Visitor: The Post-Independence Dilemma Faced by Irish Women Writers." *Frontiers*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2010: 1-34.
- Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Smart, Robert A., and Michael Hutcheson. "'Negative History' and Irish Gothic Literature: Persistence and Politics." *Anglophonia/Caliban*, no 15, 2004: 105-18.
- Vees-Gulani, Susanne. *Trauma and Guilt Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*. Walter de Gruyter, 2003.
- Weihman, Lisa. "Female Militancy and Irish Primitivism: Dorothy Macardle's *Earth-Bound*." *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive*, ed. by Maria McGarrity and Claire A. Culleton, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.