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IRISH  
REPUBLIC

THE ABBEY THEATRE.



*Paramount Pictures*

## THE DOROTHY MACARDLE ARCHIVE & PERFORMANCE PROJECT

Programme of Work 2019-20 and beyond

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# Introduction



Dorothy Macardle (1889-1958) writer and revolutionary

The Dorothy Macardle Archive and Performance Project is a research, writing and public engagement process commenced in 2019 by academic researcher & performer Sharon McArdle and independent theatre maker, Declan Gorman. Using the medium of theatre and public art, it aims over 2 – 3 years to reflect upon the life and artistic legacy of Dorothy Macardle: Irish revolutionary, playwright, teacher, novelist, historian, broadcaster, Hollywood screenwriter and author of a significant post-War human rights report.

With the support of an Arts Council Project Award to Sharon McArdle, Sharon and Declan spent sporadic periods of 2019 uncovering, deciphering, transcribing and creating a script from unpublished diaries handwritten in secret by Dorothy Macardle while a political prisoner during the Irish Civil War. Arising from this, the Dorothy Macardle Archive and Research Project was initiated, with the ambition to develop a series of arts processes that would investigate in depth the life and legacy of a remarkable Irish woman. A reading of fragments of the first emerging script, entitled “Prison Notebooks”, took place before a small invited audience at An Táin Arts Centre in Dundalk in December 2019.

Further funding has been raised to complete this script and progress it to public performances at Kilmainham Gaol and other historic sites in 2020. Funding is also being sought to allow the artists to continue the process of experimental writing and workshop explorations into other dimensions of the life and complex achievements of Macardle, a much overlooked artist and humanitarian.



# Who was Dorothy Macardle?



*"She is not a minor Irish writer but someone with a multi-faceted outlook on life; a major talent, whose real worth has been drowned in political and historical revisionism [...]"*

*a poet, playwright, novelist, historian, feminist, progressive politician and internationalist in the true sense of the term – she declared herself to be an unrepentant propagandist, and espoused the causes she knew to be those of truth and justice."* Peter Berresford Ellis

Dorothy Macardle (1889-1958) was born into a prominent Dundalk brewing family. Her father was a 'Home Ruler' and her English mother a Unionist. Educated at Alexandra College and University College Dublin, she lectured at Alexandra during the war of independence, rejected her own social and political background and became an ardent republican, working secretly in Sinn Féin's publicity bureau whilst living with Maud Gonne. Arrested for her anti-treaty propagandist work, she was incarcerated without trial, went on hunger-strike and was subjected to torture and beatings.

An accomplished novelist and playwright. *The Uninvited* (1941) was turned into a Hollywood horror masterpiece. Her early play *Ann Kavanagh* was a miniature classic of the Abbey Theatre one act form. Her literary work was central to her sense of self throughout her life

She is remembered for her monumental study *The Irish Republic* (1937), a major history of Ireland's struggle for independence, commissioned by Eamon DeValera. Macardle's own struggle for independence led to radical breaks with him when she fought against the reduced status of women in the 1937 Constitution, and Ireland's neutrality during the second World War. Aware of the menacing rise of Fascism, she moved to London as a journalist during the war years. Her humanitarian report *Children of Europe* is a vital account of the plight of displaced, orphaned children across Europe in the direct aftermath of World War II. President of the Irish Association of Civil Liberty, she broadcast regularly on Radio Éireann and BBC, toured the USA giving lectures and was awarded an honorary doctorate.



Press Photo of de Valera and Dorothy Macardle examining a copy of *The Irish Republic*.

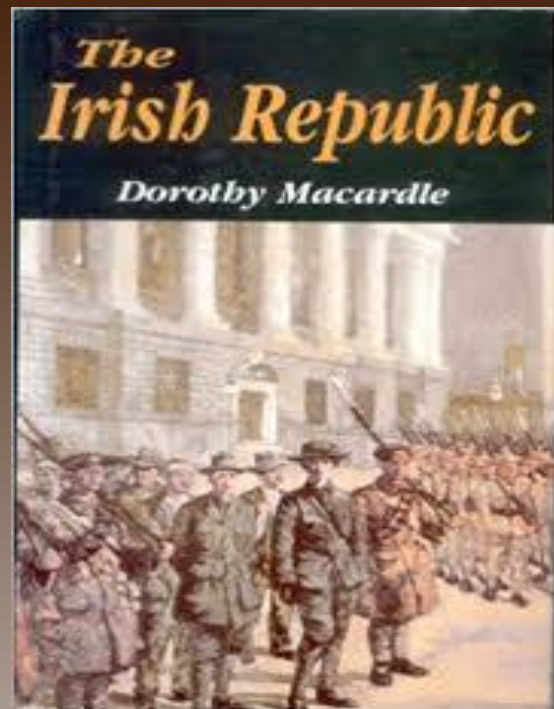
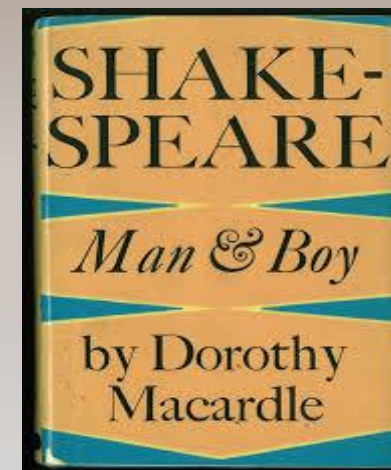
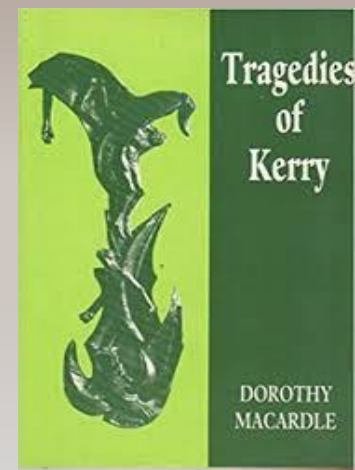
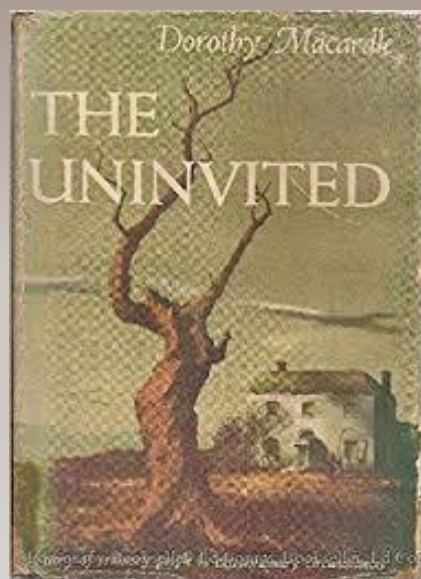
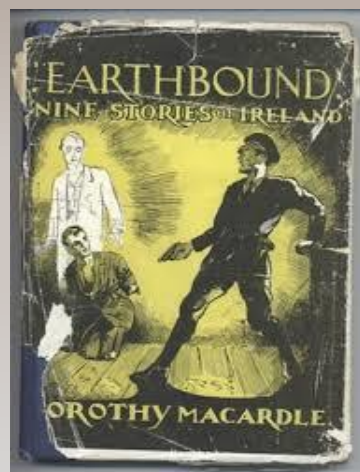
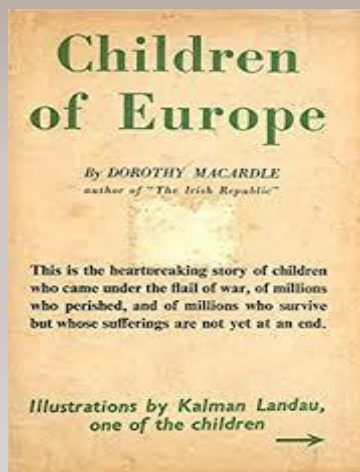


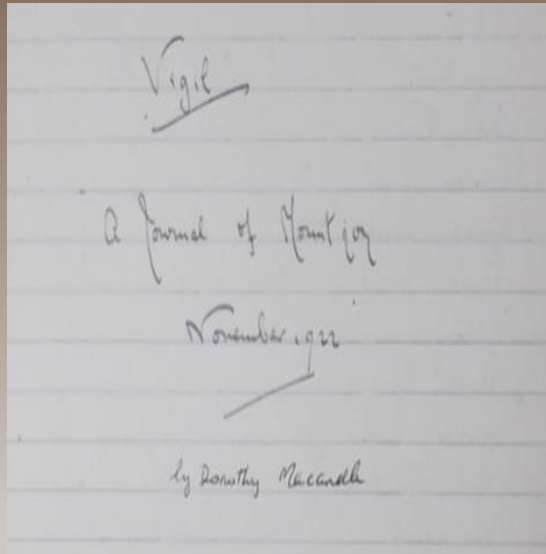
Photo of Cambricville, Dundalk. Macardle's Brewery & Family home of Grandparents.





## Part 2

### Research and Projects undertaken by the artists, 2017-2019



Post-show Q & A at An Táin Arts Centre, December 2019. L to R: Declan Gorman, Imelda O'Loane (moderator) and Sharon McArdle



Declan Gorman and Sharon McArdle first worked together in 2016 on a solo play entitled “Bronte: A Portrait of Charlotte”, performed in a range of historic Irish houses, including Ardgillan Castle, during 2016 and 2017. Costume Designer Sinéad Roberts was centrally involved and will take part in the forthcoming Dorothy Macardle work also.

We were then invited by artist Constance Short to contribute to a conference at Dundalk Old Gaol, entitled “Dorothy Macardle: An Unrepentant Propagandist” which Constance curated on behalf of the Dorothy Macardle Society.

Declan directed an ensemble platform performance of “Ann Kavanagh”, a short play by Macardle, the script of which had been retrieved, part fire-damaged, from the Abbey Theatre archive, by former Abbey Artistic Director Lelia Doolan who also presented at the conference. A troupe of actors brought the 1919 drama to vivid life, with Sharon in the lead role of Ann, a woman caught up in the events of the 1798 Rebellion in Wexford.

Arising from this, in 2018 Sharon McArdle applied to the Arts Council and was awarded a one-off project grant to

*“collaborate with writer/director Declan Gorman to co-create a script for an impressionist solo performance on the life, writings & legacy of revolutionary & humanitarian Dorothy Macardle.”*



Above: Sharon McArdle in “Bronte: a Portrait of Charlotte”: Costume by Sinéad Roberts.

Below: Dundalk Gaol where we presented “Ann Kavanagh”





Above: Artefacts and research materials on display

Following several months of primary research, it was decided that a conventional, one-off, bio-drama would not serve well the complex life and legacy of Macardle.

At that point we determined to focus for 2019 on one aspect of Dorothy's life only, namely her incarceration in 1922-23, when she was interned without trial by the Irish Free State for her propagandist Anti-Treaty activity.



At the same time, we determined to pursue further research and to establish a long term performance programme over 2 – 3 years which would present workshop performances on other aspects of Dorothy.

“Prison Notebooks; A Work-in-Progress” was the outcome of the Arts Council supported process. It took the form of a staged reading of episodic scenes, a moderated post-show Q&A and an exhibition of artefacts.

“The Dorothy Macardle Archive and Performance Project” signals a distinct new phase, and a determination to move this workshop research out to public stagings in found historical spaces. It will have its first manifestation in May-June 2020 (deferred to November due to COVID 19) with performances in Kilmainham Gaol of a full production of “Prison Notebooks”, and will proceed with further workshop explorations and performances over 2 years of other aspects of the full and fascinating life of Dorothy Macardle.



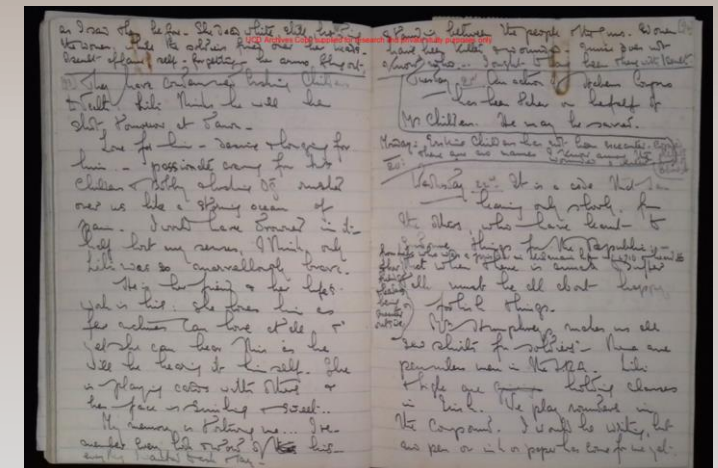
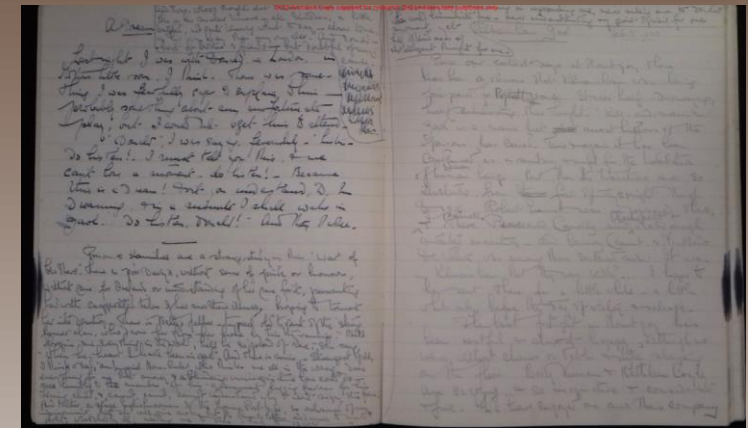
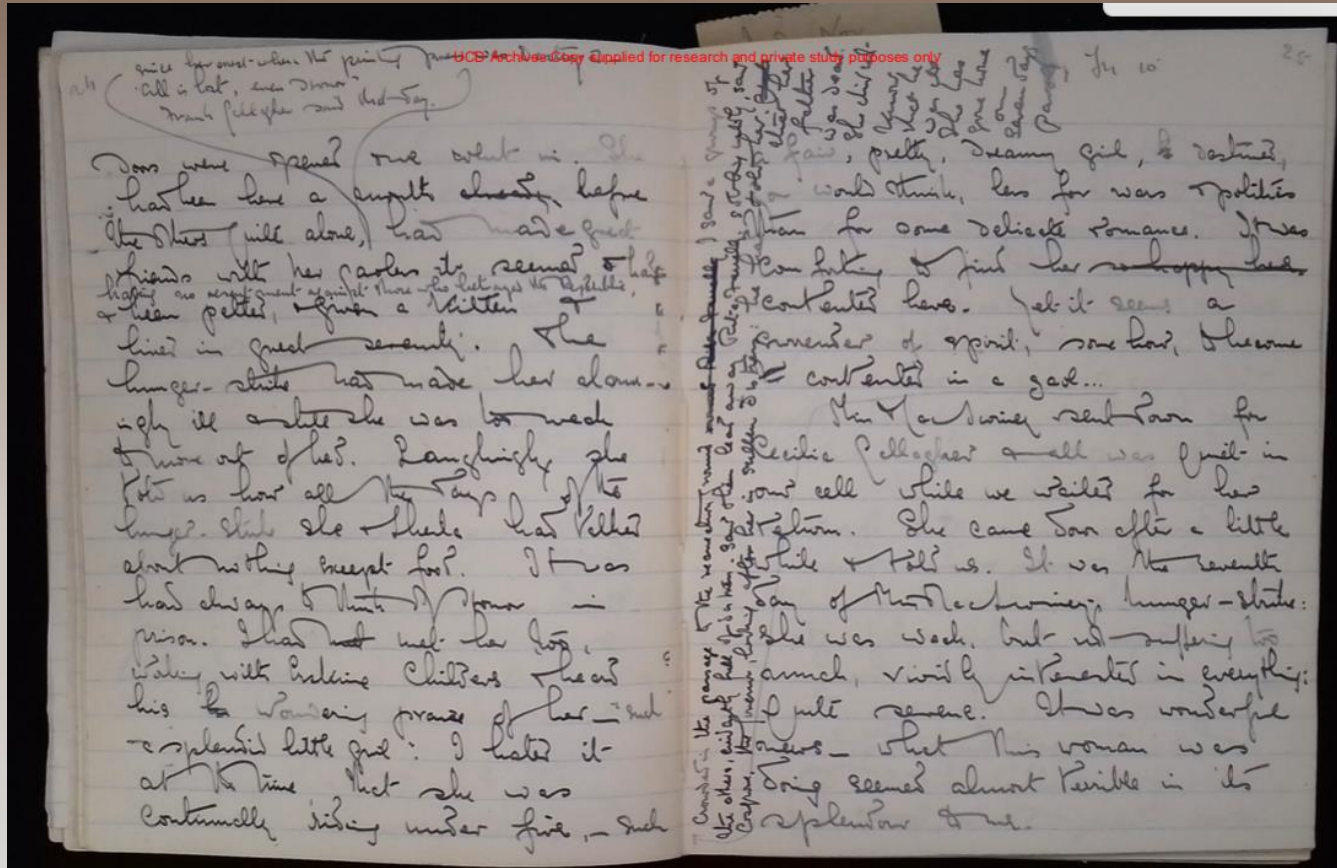
Left: Dorothy weeps at news her manuscripts have been burned by Free State soldiers : accepts a gift of sacred soil from an enemy guard : senses the presence of a ghost – perhaps Terence MacSwiney.





## Archive Samples of Dorothy Macardle's Gaol Journal, 1922

The December 2019 work in progress script drew exclusively on Macardle's three surviving gaol journals. These were located in the UCD archive and painstakingly transcribed to type by Sharon McArdle. (3 other volumes were believed destroyed after Dorothy's death in 1958).



# 3. Collaborators



Declan Gorman  
Theatre maker:



Sharon McArdle  
Academic researcher / performer:

A number of other artists and cultural workers have been invited to engage with the project as advisers and occasional contributors over the coming two years. These include:



Cara Holmes  
Film maker



Leeane Mullen  
Visual Artist



Sophie Cassidy  
Lighting  
Designer



Paul Hayes  
Executive  
Producer



Ella Clarke  
Choreographer



# Part 4:

## Future Modules

Dorothy Macardle Archive and Performance Project.  
Future Projects:

*Beyond the 2020 Kilmainham Gaol performances of “Prison Notebooks”, it is intended in 2021-22 to collaborate with the empanelled artists and partners through archive research; workshop experimentation and occasional work-in-progress showings to explore the following aspects of Macardles life.*

- 1. Radicalisation through the Irish Literary Movement & the Abbey: Connecting with the Abbey and other archives – experimental presentations, in recreated literary salons and Edwardian theatre spaces*
- 2. Gothic Horror Novelist & Hollywood Writer: Mining Dorothy’s books for narrative; drawing from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century horror cinema for lighting, sound and dramatic conventions - experimental presentations in disused cinema*
- 3. UN Humanitarian work in aftermath of WW2: An in-depth reading of Dorothy’s immense humanitarian work for the U.N.- reflections on the Holocaust, carpet bombing of cities and the plight of unaccompanied refugee minors, then and now.*

1. Radicalisation through the Irish Literary Movement and the Abbey Theatre.  
Key figures involved were Constance Markievicz, Maud Gonne, W.B Yeats, AE Russell

Perhaps some ancestral chord was touched and unconscious racial allegiance wakened by the genius of those poets and dramatists. I don't know; but I know that before my student years were at an end, Ireland possessed my imagination and my heart. Dorothy Macardle

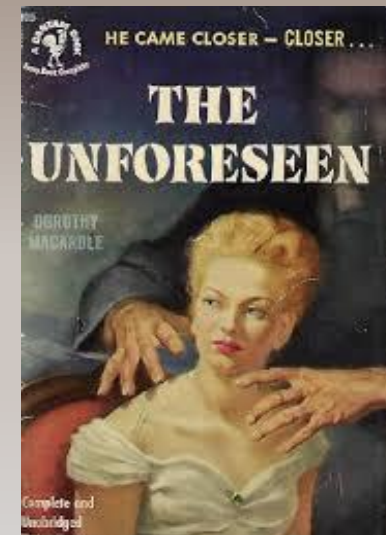
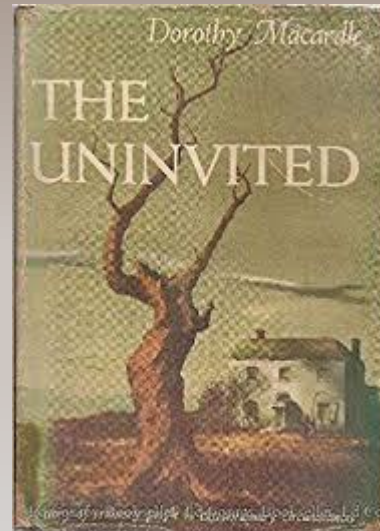
Plays written by Macardle for the Abbey Stage:  
Atonement (1918) Ann Kavanagh (1922) .



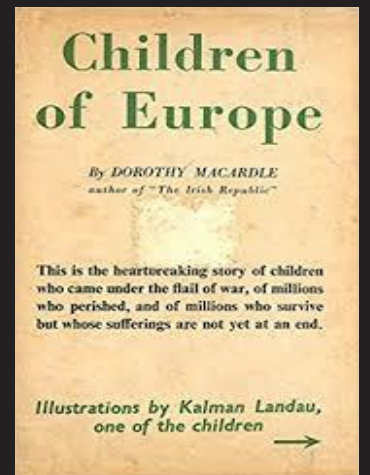
## 2. Gothic Horror Novelist & Hollywood Writer



*The Uninvited*, Paramount Pictures, United States. Written by Dorothy Macardle, Directed by Lewis Allen. Starring Ray Milland & Ruth Hussey, 1944.



3. UN Humanitarian work in aftermath of WW2  
Macardle worked with the UN and wrote *Children of Europe: A study of the children of liberated countries; their wartime experiences, their reactions, and their needs* (1948) an account of the devastating experiences she witnessed of orphaned and refugee children, as she travelled across 20 countries in Europe after WW2.



Illustrations in the book included some by Holocaust survivor, Kalman Landau (aged 16 years).



# Acknowledgements

The copyright of the Jail Notebook papers used in our December 2019 performance and reproduced in photos in this presentation is the property of the Irish Province of the Order of Friars Minor and is administered by UCD Archives under the terms of the UCD-OFM Partnership.

We are grateful to the Dorothy Macardle Society and in particular to artist Constance Short for her early encouragement which has led to the initiation of this artist project.

An Táin Arts Centre has indicated its willingness to provide future supports to our work on this project

Vere Lenox-Conyngham has made the resources of his home and converted outhouses available to us at Anaverna House in County Louth for workshops

Thanks to the staff and archivists of UCD

Intensive archive research and script development towards Jail Notebooks was made possible by a Theatre Project (Research Strand) Award in 2018 to Sharon McArdle, who led the preliminary phase prior to embarking upon her PhD.

Recent awards from Create Louth and Fingal Arts Office have enabled the continuation of the project into 2020