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Queer Seductions of the Maternal in Dorothy Macardle's *Earth-bound*

*'She died in 1958, and her work has been all but forgotten.'*¹

During her lifetime, Dorothy Macardle was a prominent public figure in both her native Ireland and post-war Europe – a formidable intellectual, an effective political and social activist, and a popular dramatist and fiction writer. In the decades since her death, however, her contributions to Irish literary culture have largely been forgotten. Macardle's passionate engagement in Irish nationalism found expression in her short stories, plays, novels, history writing, and journalism throughout her career, and her intellectual achievements justly deserve new consideration and celebration. Macardle's only collection of short stories, *Earth-bound: Nine Stories of Ireland*, which was published early in her writing career, signals her initial literary contestation of Irish women's socially restricted status.² Complex and ambiguous messages regarding female sexuality are encoded within the collection, particularly in the two Maeve stories (as I have labelled them because of their shared narrator), 'The Return of Níav' and 'The Portrait of Róisín Dhu'.³ At varying levels, these two stories might be read as wartime propaganda, fantasy tales, how-to manuals for various female relationships, or, as I will explore in this essay, coded expressions of the realities of women's lives in early twentieth-century Ireland that the larger public would have preferred remain unspoken, particularly with regard to expressions of female sexuality.

Macardle and her short story collection were intimately entwined in debates about Irish women's public political/military roles, as well as about art, its social role, and women's position vis-à-vis this cultural dyad. *Earth-bound*, driven by her reactions to the many ways that the Irish struggle for national autonomy was purchased by the sacrifice of female autonomy, speaks to these related concerns of Macardle.⁴ For Macardle, the writing of literature is nearly impossible to separate from the writing of history. Macardle herself occupied multiple public roles, a partial list of which includes: historian, republican activist,

journalist, internationalist, fiction writer, feminist, social activist, and hunger striker. She also exemplifies the early-twentieth Irish woman writer whose work has been overlooked, either because it does not fit neatly into prevailing aesthetic or temporal divisions,⁵ or because it has gone out of print.⁶ Macardle's artistic mining of the paradoxes presented in her work to explore women's sexuality in the Maeve stories, though, rewards a feminist reevaluation of them; the stories of *Earth-bound* became for Macardle a vehicle through which she explored socially taboo issues, most notably both heterosexual and homosexual expressions of female sexuality. As Patrick Hanafin has noted of this moment in Irish history, literature was a key vehicle for countering homophobia through 'the expression of such societally prohibited desires, allowing for opposing constructions of homosexuality to be expressed to counter the dominant societal narrative.'⁷

FRAMING THE MAEVE STORIES

Her historical work roundly dismissed by the academic world for her politics,⁸ her journalism forgotten as an ephemeral attempt to influence social policies, Macardle's fiction was similarly neglected in the decades since her death.⁹ Feminist scholarship has begun to rehabilitate her literary reputation, though, and the most recent readings of *Earth-bound* offer perceptive insights into the political messages embedded within Macardle's stories, contextualizing the collection within the Irish fight for Independence (and, secondarily, the closely related cultural movement of the Irish Revival).¹⁰ Indeed, the collection speaks powerfully to women's positions in the political and cultural arenas of 1920s Ireland. This critical focus on the political, however, comes at the expense of the gendered social observations that Macardle offers simultaneously.¹¹ We would have to concede Macardle's *Earth-bound* mere political propaganda – precisely the charge most frequently levelled against her history *Irish Republic* – if we could only read these stories as political allegories. Several other layers of meaning crucially intersect with the political. Each of the stories that comprise *Earth-bound* 'reminds us of the contributions made by women in pursuit of an independent Ireland':¹² these contributions are also notably social in nature. Macardle's stories proffer her fellow inmates a model of female solidarity that encompasses a woman-centred vision of female sexuality and essay a critique of the Irish Revival,¹³ especially its impact on the everyday lives of Irish women. Macardle thus captures not only military and political history, but also cultural history in these stories. Jennifer Molidor offers the first extended engagement with the collection, asserting that *Earth-bound* 'draws attention to overlooked sacrifices

made by women in the Irish cause', thereby highlighting the importance of considering Macardle's early fiction within the context of a 'gendered resistance struggle', in order to argue for an inherently political reading of the collection (pp.43–44, 57). As Molidor notes, Macardle 'found solidarity among the female prisoners' and she argues that the Maeve stories are 'connected by Maeve's failure to rescue a female friend in "the Portrait" and by the abandonment of her young daughter in "The Return of Niav"' (pp.49, 51). The link between these two stories is much more complicated than this assessment suggests, however, as my reading will demonstrate: both stories turn on the question of Maeve's doubtful ability to prioritize the needs of women in her life (her daughter Neoineen, Nuala, even Niav) over those of Hugo (who represents masculine nationalist Ireland). The stories are connected, I contend, by their unflinching exploration of the difficulties inherent in aspirations to female solidarity. When the Maeve stories are read in tandem, then, Macardle's message, while inspirational, is thus also sobering.

As has been well-documented, when the Irish Civil War broke out in 1922, women played a crucial role, just as they had during the War of Independence (1919–21). Now, however, they did not enjoy the protection previously offered by the enemy's underestimation of their capabilities, and the resulting mass arrest of female supporters of the IRA, historian Sinead McCoole argues, was a major factor in the republican defeat.¹⁴ Arrested in November 1922 for her republican activities, Macardle experienced first-hand the traumas of which she wrote in *Earth-bound*; Macardle's ability to listen to her fellow-inmates further enriched the stories (Molidor, p.50), and the structure of the collection mimics the reciprocal nature of the collection's composition. Ultimately, the stories – and the collection which they form – serve as an example of what C.L. Innes characterizes as Irish women's 'artistic collaboration' in the search for Irish independence (Innes, p.127). The nine stories are embedded in a connecting frame-tale: exiled Irish men and women gather in Philadelphia at Una and Frank O'Carroll's home (editors of the republican newspaper, *Tri-Colour*) and encourage each other by sharing significant stories of the Irish War of Independence. Although most of the stories concern masculine exploits during the War, the two Maeve stories explore female relationships outside of this war context. As tales told to an all-female audience imprisoned for their wartime activities, the Maeve stories remind their listeners of the larger, gendered fight they are engaged in precisely through their non-military focus. A closer look at the Maeve stories thus offers Macardle's audience (both those hearing them in the prison cell and those reading them in print) evidence of the crucial importance of female solidarity to their survival and flourishing through their

depiction of a more expansive model of womanhood than the one traditionally promulgated.

The frame of *Earth-bound* is narrated by an unnamed member of the group; each individual story has its own narrator as well. Written during Macardle's incarceration in Mountjoy and Kilmainham Gaols, each story is dedicated to one of her fellow inmates. As Jennifer Molitor reminds us, 'It is crucial to bear in mind that the story first was distributed by Macardle in a prison cell populated by females: this story would clearly remind those women of the fundamental importance of female alliances' (p.54). Another consequence of this 'publication' history, I would suggest, is a layering of orality to the stories. Each story was initially transmitted orally to its intended audience, Macardle's fellow prisoners. The impact of this composition history should be considered in any assessment of the literary quality of the stories,¹⁵ as Walter Ong notes in his study of oral cultures, 'Narrative originality lodges not in making up new stories but in managing a particular interaction with this audience at this time.'¹⁶ Additionally, *Earth-bound's* frame structure ensures that each story shares the narrative conceit of being an orally-transmitted tale shared among friends and fellow expatriates. This doubled orality impacts the reader's reading experience, forcing the reader, as it does, into the position of eavesdropper. And, Ong suggests, the reader is eavesdropping on cultural negotiations: 'oral traditions reflect a society's present cultural values rather than idle curiosity about the past' (p.48). The two Maeve stories, although deceptively separated by the collection's organization, deploy Maeve's special status as the only character to narrate two stories to advance a radical new vision of female sexuality and woman-to-woman solidarity for the varied members of her audience.

'THE RETURN OF NIAV'

As Angela Bourke has so convincingly demonstrated, fairy-lore, particularly about the changeling figure, played a particular social function in turn-of-the-century rural Ireland, and Macardle draws upon this role in her Maeve stories.¹⁷ Of the 'withered, cantankerous changelings' left in place of the children and women snatched by fairies,¹⁸ Bourke notes,

Fairies belong to the margins, and so can serve as reference points and metaphors for all that is marginal in human life. Their mostly underground existence allows them to stand for the unconscious, for the secret, or the unspeakable, and their constant eavesdropping explains the need ... to avoid discussion of certain topics (p.32).

In 'The Return of Niav', Macardle deftly explores the 'marginal in human life'. In this, the literal centrepiece of the collection, Maeve recounts how she almost lost her daughter to the fairies a decade earlier. This story is immediately notable for its confession – indeed almost celebration – of neglectful, dangerous, incompetent mothering. But it draws as well on Celtic images from Yeats's poetry, suggesting a cultural project inclusive of, but also larger than, the rehabilitation of the Irish mother-figure.

Any twenty-first-century reader of the collection does well to consider Dorothy Macardle's age vis-à-vis the youth of her audience: when she went to prison in November 1922, Macardle was thirty-three years old; a number of the women with whom she was imprisoned were in their late teens or early twenties.¹⁹ Macardle's stories, thus, in as much as they could be considered morality tales, targeted two distinctly different constituents: her peers and the young women who could have been her daughters.²⁰ In *Niav* (the fairy creature who tempts Maeve's daughter, *Neoineen*), Macardle creates a figure representative of female sexual experience, particularly of lesbian experience, albeit in a highly coded manner. As a story told to an audience of younger women confined in an all-female environment, 'The Return of *Niav*' must have struck sensitive notes among some of her listeners, prompting questions of morality in sexual issues and debate regarding a mother's duty to protect her daughter.

'The Return of *Niav*' is a simple story in terms of plot: a single mother is raising her daughter out in the country; a mysterious girl appears who befriends the daughter; the mother must go away for a while, during which time the girl bewitches the daughter; upon the mother's return, she must rescue her daughter from the fairies' grasp. The story is significantly centred on *St John's Eve*, a day evocative of fairy-human interactions, as legend holds *Midsummer's Eve* as the time when the fairies venture furthest afield and are at their most powerful. Maeve and *Neoineen* themselves contribute to this heightened import, making 'a song with a sweet, bewitching little tune to it, to lure the fairies to our fire'.²¹ Maeve willingly cedes her assigned role to *Neoineen*, in yet another early signal of the danger to come in their role-playing; they have been acting out the *Fionn* cycle of Irish mythology, *Neoineen* as *Osgar* and Maeve as *Oisín* (i.e., *Neoineen* as son, Maeve as father). When *Neoineen* calls Maeve 'Fionn', Maeve correctly intuits that their 'roles had changed' (p.60) and allows *Neoineen* to assume the role of *Oisín* (Maeve is now the grandfather and *Neoineen* the father). This move leaves *Neoineen* vulnerable to the advances of *Niav*, *Niamh* of course being the legendary Queen of *Tír na nÓg* with whom *Oisín* falls in love after she lures him underground. *Niav*'s presence is first remarked upon by

Neoineen, who tells her mother that she found Niav in the wood; Maeve, however, dismisses Neoineen's 'adventure' as only 'the prettiest she had invented yet' (p.59). Niav's first appearance is marked aurally: 'the spell-bound silence of a June day . . . was pierced then, suddenly, by the most rapturous music I had ever heard, wild singing, joyous and daring as a bird's' (p.60). This music offers an aural hint to the danger to come, as Maeve unwittingly compares it to a swan's death-song, symbolically functioning here to interrogate women's obligations (especially maternal responsibilities) to each other and to question the ways these obligations are employed in the service of Irish nationalism.

The description of Maeve's first sight of Niav echoes legendary descriptions of Queen Niamh: 'The singer was coming towards me through the wood; Neoineen was holding her by the hand . . . she came towards me like some young, triumphant queen, leading her lover by the hand' (p.60). This lover is Neoineen, who in playing Oisín has assumed a masculine role. This re-gendering of Neoineen is confirmed three paragraphs later by Macardle's use of the masculine pronoun and the name 'Oisín' to describe Neoineen's actions:

The foxgloves were Oisín's warriors, it seemed; he went from one to another, praising them for marvelous deeds, bidding Niav lean down and kiss the best; I heard her add her praise to Oisín's with such queenly grace, speak so gravely of their perils and wounds that I became almost rapt in their illusion, too (p.61).

Maeve tries to claim some distance (becoming only 'almost' rapt in their illusion), but she has succumbed to Niav's seductive charms. As a result, she ignores warning signs, such as the 'strange, terrified cry that Niav gives when Neoineen falls in the water, in order to bask in the 'Half-forgotten dream' that Niav's appearance creates (pp.61, 62). Even more significantly, Neoineen has been off alone in the woods with Niav; the description of Tir na nOg, as Neoineen deems it, appropriately evokes images of a secret trysting spot for lovers: 'She led us down to a deep hollow in the wood, honey-fragrant, slight with the smouldering purple of foxgloves, loud with the babble of a little waterfall where the brook tumbled into a pool' (p.61). Neoineen's embrace of Oisín's role in the Fionn cycle, as the seduced lover of Niamh, could thus be read as a coded acknowledgement of Neoineen's willing submission to a lesbian experience. Maeve's acceptance of this play-acting could similarly be interpreted as a maternal failure to set appropriate boundaries, a shortcoming that she repeatedly displays.

After Niav joins their little family circle, the summer passes, Maeve says, 'like a half-forgotten dream' (p.62) and all seems perfect to Maeve: 'It was all what my heart's desire for Neoineen would have chosen. I listened and watched their play and painted and forgot there were sorrows in the world' (p.62). But such withdrawal from the world isn't ultimately sustainable, and when September comes, Maeve's godmother dies. Maeve's foster brother, Hugo Blake, implores her to come comfort him and she says without any sense of the maternal failure that this indicates, 'I had to go; and I had to leave Neoineen' (p.63). There is a neat symmetry to this simple declarative sentence: in Maeve's mind, these are two equally compelling demands placed on her, not a request (the former) the fulfilment of which would require an unacceptable condition or sacrifice (the latter). So Maeve leaves Neoineen for several months and only returns in November when a letter from Maura, their housekeeper, indicates a potential problem: Neoineen is not eating properly and is wasting away. Maeve confirms for herself that Neoineen is changing, noting, 'Loving and contented as ever, she seemed, but she had not grown a hair's breadth and had lost weight and had become fastidious about food' (p.64). This observation, however, prompts more questions than it answers. If she is as 'loving and contented as ever,' what exactly is the problem? Maeve points to the physical markers of change to explain her concern, implying that this change in her daughter results from Maeve's long absence and is therefore her own fault. But as Maud Ellmann has argued in her phenomenology of self-starvation, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment*, 'self-starvation is above all a performance'.²² As Ellmann demonstrates, the starving body depends on the spectator to be read, and so Maeve's reading of Neoineen's body in service of her own guilt appropriates Neoineen's story. This dependence sets up an intriguing paradox with significant implications for 'The Return of Niav': Ellmann argues that the starving body's 'emaciation, which seems to indicate a violent rebuff, also bespeaks a strange adventure in seduction' (p. 17).²³ In a centuries-long literary tradition of what Ellmann terms 'hunger artists', the trope of self-starvation has served to signify a refusal to 'traffic with a world that threatens to invade her every orifice' and in the process, fat (which the starving body must shed) symbolizes the 'phobic image of sexual and economic exploitation' (p.81). Thus, as Ellmann reminds us, we cannot look at a self-starving body and not consider the possible ways that it has been sexually (mis)used. And so, reading between the lines of Maeve's description of her daughter, literally reading the codes that Macardle offers, points to the conclusion that Neoineen has gained sexual experience. As Helena Michie has pointed out in her study of Victorian literary codes of

starvation, in an environment in which female hunger bespeaks 'unspeakable desires for sexuality and power', fasting can purify the body by 'obliterating the signs of sexuality'.²⁴ Nor can we ignore the political implications of self-starvation, as Susan Bordo reminds us.²⁵ This reading then returns us to a variation of the question posed at the beginning of this paragraph: If we leave aside her age (which certainly would be problematic) and read Neoineen as the archetypal young virgin that the story's rhetorical register encourages, what is the problem if Neoineen has gained sexual experience?

Gerardine Meaney's claim that, 'Despite Macardle's own experience, the stories are very little concerned with political activity by women: she could not or would not write of female hunger-strikers, for example, though she was one of them', suggests that Macardle neither attends to her hunger-striking experiences in her short stories nor is influenced by it in the construction of her fictional explorations of the Irish war experience.²⁶ But I must argue that, in the figure of Neoineen, Macardle does very clearly and explicitly allude to this nationalist practice, and, by including it in Maeve's tale, returns it to its feminist roots.²⁷ In fact, 'allude to' might be too weak, as Neoineen is engaging in a hunger-strike to protest (successfully, it must be noted) her mother's absence. Considered in this light, Neoineen's hunger strike allegorically decries as well an absence of maternal role models in the Revolution and the weakening of traditional models of maternal strength that was the consequence of the Irish Revival's cultural recalibrations of the Mother Ireland figure as a purely sacrificial vision of maternity.²⁸ Perhaps the answer to the question of the previous paragraph lies here: it is not the experience in and of itself that is so damaging to Neoineen, but rather all that this experience implies about the relative strength of the bond between mother and daughter.

In a complex reconfiguring of the exploration of sexual experience, Macardle significantly revises readers' expectations for the power of an archetypal (first) kiss, embedding it within the complicated triangle of Maeve (mother)/Neoineen (daughter)/Niav (rival). Neoineen lies on the stone, Niav kneels beside her:

For a moment such terror was on me that I could only stand motionless, watching, while Niav laid her kiss on the child's mouth. Then I rushed down, screaming, and seized Neoineen and cried out I know not what fierce things to the girl, telling her to go back to where she came from, that never, never, should she touch or see my darling again. Niav stood up then and lifted her head and laughed — a low sweet laughter — and turned and vanished into the dark (p.66).

This is not the life-giving kiss for the half-dead Neoineen that fairy tales would lead Macardle's audience to expect – rather, instead, this kiss completes Niav's malicious (as Maeve implies) exchange with Neoineen; this is a Judas-like kiss, sealing Neoineen's fate. Curiously, Niav can only steal Neoineen's place because Maeve has tacitly acceded to her attempts. Maeve's complicity in part stems from her own unspoken attraction to Niav: note, for instance, that even in this moment of mortal danger to her daughter, she describes Niav's laughter as 'sweet'. Maeve's heart 'stands still' – out of fear for her daughter, to be sure, but also because this is a highly-charged moment sexually when the sought-after beloved, Niav, makes her preference for the younger lover known to the older one. In this exchange, Maeve and Neoineen function both as mother-daughter and as sexual competitors. This sexual undercurrent complicates the battle between Maeve and Niav for Neoineen's affections, in part through distancing Maeve from her daughter. When she observes Niav kissing Neoineen, Maeve synecdochically refers to Neoineen as 'the child's mouth', and initially at least, Niav seems to have won the contest.

Because Niav's last appearance concludes with her vanishing in the dark, the archetypal kiss that she bestows on Neoineen evokes the changeling motif. The post-kiss description of Neoineen further confirms the allusion to changeling lore; it also grapples with implications that the result of publicly experiencing lesbian love (as opposed to the private experience of it, a crucial distinction to maintain) is terror-invoking: 'Her little face was terrible; I could scarcely look at it; blue and shrunken it was, like an old woman's – like a cunning old woman, dead' (p.67). Here, Maeve implies that private experiences are not the issue – note that her encounter with Niav gives Neoineen her music. This is a matter of social propriety.²⁹ This (sexual) experience certainly alters Neoineen: 'after their play Neoineen would steal in to me tired – even, I sometimes fancied, a little nervous, and cuddle into my arms and fall asleep' (p.64). The story forces us to question the nature of Neoineen's 'nervousness' – as well as wonder just how seriously we are to take Maeve's 'fancies' when she has repeatedly demonstrated her inability to accurately assess the situation. It is not Neoineen who expresses discomfort with her relationship with Niav; rather, others comment on changes that it has wrought in her and pronounce these changes unacceptable. But are these changes the natural changes that accompany new knowledge, i.e. the new experiences that are an expected consequence of maturing? Is Neoineen simply experiencing a new development that *should* be considered natural (even if Irish society has pathologized it as inappropriate)?

Maeve initially rejects Neoineen because of this new knowledge:

I walked and played, explored and gardened, sang and danced with her as of old; she went with me everywhere, responsive, caressing as ever before — yet — yet — Oh, how can I tell you the truth of those hideous days? I did not believe in her, did not want her, did not love her. I was consumed and tortured with craving for my own little lovely girl (p.68).

Maeve explains away and justifies the repulsion that the changes in her daughter evoke in her by asserting that the girl in front of her is not her own daughter. Maeve 'walk[s] wildly about the mountain seeking and enquiring for any sign' (p.69) in an attempt to bring back Niav to undo whatever she's done, but the only outcome is condemnation of Maeve's mothering:

One old woman drew from me the whole dreadful story; she sat in her corner distressfully shaking her head. 'You were mad foolish, mad foolish,' she said, 'you to lead her by the hand into your home... I heard of them going,' she answered mournfully, 'but I never heard of one coming back' (p.69).

In the conversation between Maeve and the old woman, the conceit that Neoineen has become a changeling is maintained, even as the old woman criticizes Maeve's mothering; social face must be saved, even in the moment of castigating the deleterious mother. It is the mother's responsibility to protect her daughter and inculcate social prohibitions in her, and Maeve has failed in this duty. As Bourke explains, changeling tales are put to a specific cultural use, here the policing of maternal responsibilities:

The overwhelming message of the fairy legends is that the unexpected may be guarded against by careful observance of society's rules. These stories are important components of child-rearing practice, establishing the boundaries of normal, acceptable behavior, and spelling out the ways in which an individual who breaches them may forfeit his or her position (p.34).

The story roundly condemns Maeve for her abdication of maternal responsibilities, explicitly tying Neoineen's endangerment to Maeve's maternal failings. For example, on the first feast of St. John, Maeve pretends that 'She was a faery child and I was a lonely woman with no little girl and when I sang our luring little song she would creep out of

faeryland, steal to me and leap into my arms at last' (p.62) in an attempt to comfort her daughter; here due to failed intuition, Maeve writes the script whereby she will soon lose her daughter to the fairies. Niav's abduction of Neoineen is thus the fulfilling of a drama Maeve unwittingly wills into action.

In a story like Macardle's, to again turn to Bourke's description of fairy-lore, 'Disruptions to social life are identified as coming from outside, and are forcefully repudiated. The protagonists live happily ever after, and the domestic violence the legend depicts has been contained, literally, within the fiction' (p.41). So why, then, does Macardle dedicate this story to Iseult Stuart? The circumstances of her birth, and Maud Gonne's unceasing efforts to maintain the polite fictions with which she explained her daughter's presence in her life, provide a real-life 'disruption to social life', a form of 'domestic violence' that inflicted actual damage on a flesh-and-blood daughter just as Maeve's behaviour threatened Neoineen.

The nature of these stories' composition – as tales to be shared orally as both encouragement and moral inculcations – necessitates paying particular attention to their initial audience. Among her fellow prisoners were both Maud Gonne and her daughter, Iseult Stuart.³⁰ In her autobiography, Gonne continued to maintain the pretence that Iseult was adopted, rather than her birth daughter, as her editors explain:

Iseult's own social acceptability would be very badly affected. Even in the 1930's and for long after, illegitimacy was a stigma and many of Maud's and Iseult's good friends would have found it difficult to accept it. Perhaps some guessed, but the more innocent did not. . . . Iseult herself had dearly wished to be acknowledged as her mother's rightful daughter.³¹

The worldly, well-travelled Macardle, who had lived in Gonne's home at 73 St Stephens Green since autumn 1920,³² was surely not one of their 'more innocent' friends and must have intuited the truth of Iseult's maternal heritage. Dedicating *Earth-bound's* story most centrally concerned with a mother's obligations to her daughter to Iseult suggests intriguing ways to interpret its exploration of a mother's self-professed failure towards her daughter.³³

The collection's narrator describes Maeve as possessing 'an artist's recklessness' (p.57) which exerts a seductive pull on her audience that causes them to forget 'all the world's wars' in 'the talk we had always loved – talk of the enchanted waters and hills of Ireland, of ruins and symbols and rituals, and of the music that would come out of Ireland when we were free' (p.56). Maeve's power to transport and distract her

audience is highly dangerous in that she breaks their single-minded focus on their mission.³⁴ Similarly, this artistic temperament of Maeve endangers her only child, Neoineen, when it impels her to make sympathetic identifications with other artists, the exercise of which empathy demands her sacrifice of Neoineen's needs for other people's priorities.

An obvious maternal shortcoming is Maeve's over-reliance on Celtic Revival principles in raising her daughter; the narrator notes with seeming admiration, 'Maeve was making a little pagan of her, filling her imagination with the wonder-tales of Ireland, inventing druid rituals, making magical songs' (p.57). They live in near-total isolation, because Maeve does not want Neoineen to 'hear English at all' (p.58); her near-impossible task of finding a 'satisfying playmate' who speaks Irish for her daughter prompts her to unquestioningly welcome Níav despite evidence that should have prompted her suspicions. But Maeve is, above all else, caught up in art, both hers and Hugo's (Hugo symbolically functioning as the male hero/artist who fights for Ireland),³⁵ to the point that she does not trust her instincts: Maeve gives herself over to the fantasy that Níav can fulfill the unmet needs of both her and Neoineen, thereby relinquishing her only daughter to the woman who fights harder for her; the triad of Maeve-Neoineen-Níav is constructed around sublimated feminine desires. The neglectful mother ultimately learns her lesson in this story and reclaims her daughter, explicitly, verbally announcing Neoineen as her own 'baby girl' (p.71): 'I carried her to the fire, stripped and warmed her, held her in the glow, wrapped her in my shawl, and then carried her home, hugged her to my heart, calling her every name she had ever heard – my star-flower, my daisy-bud, vein of my heart' (p.71).

Lisa Weihman's assessment of Maeve-as-mother is particularly harsh, indicting 'Maeve's careless parenting, her pursuit of her art at the expense of her child, her failure to provide proper Christian instruction, the complete absence of a father figure in Neoineen's life' (p.185). Weihman posits a moralistic ending to the tale when Maeve shares her story, 'celebrating the potency of the "real" Ireland and yet simultaneously warning women of its archaic power' (p.185). The story's ending, however, complicates this moral, as we see if we consider Neoineen's music.

Ultimately, the story's conclusion points to a moral through its return to Neoineen's music, mention of which marks the beginning of the story as well: Maeve tries to assert, 'No memory remains of it at all; it is gone like a dream' (p.71), but this is wishful thinking, as she has already unconsciously admitted. Twelve years after this experience, Neoineen is 'as creative . . . at seventeen as any composer in his prime' (p.56) according to her music masters. Not merely creative, Neoineen

is, in her own way, rebellious as well: rather than studying the history of music, she composes a symphony, the 'strangest, most marvelous music' (p.56). Maeve even dispenses with social decorum to brag, 'She will be giving the music of Ireland to the world' (p.57). Before confessing to her maternal neglect, in fact, Maeve can admit, 'I think that was how her music came' (p.58); only after sharing details of this maternal neglect, coded with the language of fairies and changelings, does Maeve feel compelled to deny the evident connection between experience and art that Neoineen's music embodies. The story offers a highly ambiguous ending: while Neoineen ostensibly has no memory of her relationship with Niav, descriptions of her music belie this assertion. It thus seems to suggest the mixed message that sexual experience requires a form of cleansing, as we see in the final scene of the story when Maeve recreates the Midsummer's Eve bonfire and 'rebirths' her daughter, but, social propriety appeased, this very experience bestows new gifts, like Neoineen's music. Maeve claims early on 'All beautiful things are good': the story confirms this, since with Maeve's acceptance, Neoineen is able to use her experience with Niav to create her music (and the creation of music is equated in the beginning of the story with Irish freedom). The story thereby strongly suggests the great extent to which the daughter needs her mother to accept her experience in order for her to thrive.

Alluding to both the old woman's observation that she 'never heard of one coming back' (p.69) and to Maeve's agency in calling Niav back to reclaim her daughter, the story's title punctuates its multi-faceted message of acceptance. 'The Return of Niav' offers two coded messages: the first, to Macardle's general audience, suggests that sexual experience is a natural part of growing up; that it is pathologized when mothers reject its validity and prioritize social customs over their daughters' needs; and that lesbian experience is potentially powerfully affirming – so long as it is not publicly discussed. This is not to suggest that Macardle is advocating closeted sexuality, but rather that she is commenting on the realities of 1920s Ireland. As Maria Luddy has suggested, in the early years of the twentieth century, 'women were experimenting with all kinds of relationships',³⁶ and Macardle's prison tales pay homage to them in the Maeve stories.³⁷ The second coded message is more explicitly targeted to Iseult, the story's dedicatee. In Maeve, Macardle portrays a mother who prioritizes the needs of Ireland (represented by Hugo Blake and his art) and the creation of a new Ireland (represented by her commitment to living an isolated rural Irish lifestyle) over the emotional needs of her daughter. In the process, Maeve cedes her claim to the role of primary nurturer of Neoineen to Niav, the fairy woman who ultimately steals Neoineen away. To the young Iseult,

whose mother Maud Gonne would not (or could not) acknowledge as her birth daughter, Macardle offers this story wherein Maeve both realizes only almost-too-late the need to claim her daughter as her own, and is able to share this experience (thereby confessing her maternal failures) with her friends and fellow revolutionaries. We can thus speculate that Macardle offers Iseult's fictional counterpart the acceptance that Iseult herself desired – and in the process, perhaps, offers Iseult the reassurance that the observant among Gonne's circle knew and accepted the truth.

'THE PORTRAIT OF ROISIN DHU'

The penultimate story of *Earth-bound* is the second Maeve story; reprinted in volume V of the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, it is the only story from *Earth-bound* that is widely available today. In 'The Portrait of Roisin Dhu', set about a decade after 'The Return of Niav', coded messages of encouragement and of social subversion are again embedded. Ultimately, the story offers a harsh condemnation of both the creation of art that dehumanizes women and more crucially, of women's failure to prioritize feminine solidarity over men's artistic needs. While Maeve plays the proper artist's helper role, she still abdicates her sisterly responsibilities in favour of pseudo-maternal ones for Hugo. Maeve's actions in this story are troubling: after her experience with Neoineen and Niav, she still displays a need to protect Hugo here, always at Nuala's expense. For instance, she shrouds the reality of the portrait's painting in secrecy because, 'Hugo, unless one understands to the heights and depths, might seem to have been ... unkind' (p.91, ellipses in the original). To safeguard Hugo's reputation, Maeve is willing to let Nuala remain anonymous; this willingness is merely the continuation of Maeve's treatment of Nuala during the painting of her portrait.

We need only look at the narrator's language when describing the presumption that Hugo painted without a human model to see the power that Nuala exerts: 'No woman in the world, we said, had been Hugo's Roisin Dhu; no mortal face had troubled him when he painted that immortal dream—that ecstasy beyond fear, that splendour beyond anguish—that wild, sweet holiness of Ireland for which men die' (p.91). The dramatic irony lies in the juxtaposition of two crucial facts: Hugo *did* have a model, Nuala (who functions in the story as the personification of Ireland), and he *does* die for love of her 'wild, sweet holiness.' Furthermore, here, as in 'The Return of Niav', Macardle plays with the connotations of consumption; Maeve laughingly (but not untruthfully) calls Hugo a vampire for his treatment of his subjects; Hugo's serious response, 'Yes: that is true; corpses are ugly things' (p.93) reveals gendered implications about the attitude of Irish

nationalists to beauty, wherein beauty is the feminine embodiment of a masculine-constructed ideal.

A side-by-side comparison of two descriptions of Nuala's beauty demonstrates the power she assumes over the course of the story. The first description given of her is actually a description of the painting's 'heart-breaking, entrancing face':

Knowledge of the secrets of God was in the eyes; on the lips was the memory, the endurance and the fore-knowledge of endless pain; yet from the luminous, serene face shone out a beauty that made one crave for the spaces beyond death (p.91).

This first description is voiced by the anonymous crowds admiring Hugo's painting. The second description, given by Maeve, represents her initial impressions of Nuala:

her beauty was so delicate and so remote. . . 'Those red lips with all their mournful pride' . . . Poems of Yeats were haunting me while I looked at her. But it was the beauty of one asleep, unaware of life or of sorrow or of love. . . the face of a woman whose light is hidden. . . (p.94).

Nuala's implied maturation from the latter description to the former can be directly traced to the agency she claims for herself at Hugo's tower. The King of the Blasket Islands' daughter, Nuala functions symbolically as an Ireland-figure both within the story for the frame's narrator and for Hugo in the embedded tale. Nuala leaves her island to come to Ireland (to echo her father's attitude) against her father's wishes; she actively chooses to engage in the fight for Irish freedom and for a new Irish state. So, while the men attempt to determine Nuala's future, she takes matters into her own hands, displaying more agency than Maeve does in her two stories combined. Nuala's declaration to Maeve that 'It is a pity of him to be so lonely so long . . . but he will not be lonely any more' because 'I myself will be giving him love' (p.96) should not be read as an indication of weakness on her part. Quite the opposite, in fact: she will radically alter Hugo's life because she has decided to do so (and the story's ending bears out this assertion). Thus, Macardle seems to suggest to her own audience that behind the public images of a docile feminine figure of inspiration for masculine exploits, projected by the nationalists and the Revivalists, lies a model of a woman worthy of their own emulation.

Maeve's greatest injustice towards Nuala lies precisely in underestimating her. Maeve declares on Nuala's first night, 'there was only one possible end to this; Hugo, at his best, was loving and

kind and selfless – all might be well – but I knew my Hugo after work’ (p.95): Maeve might know ‘her’ Hugo; however, she does not know Nuala. And once again, as she did in the earlier story, Maeve prioritizes Hugo’s painting over the needs and welfare of Nuala and Neoineen in ‘The Portrait of Roisin Dhu’, despite her protestations to the contrary. Once Nuala arrives, Maeve ‘gave up all thought of going home. Nuala would need me’ (p.96). This is not the unselfish move of feminine solidarity that Maeve intimates it might be, however. First, this is a moment when the reader should pause to question where Neoineen is at this point. Internal dating suggests that Neoineen is still only about fifteen or sixteen at the time of the story’s events, yet Maeve never mentions her once in the story. Second – and much more important – just two sentences later, Maeve confesses her impotence: ‘I marveled at Nuala’s endurance, but I dared not plead for her’ (p.96).

Like Neoineen, who awakes to sexual experience, symbolized by her journeys into the woods with Niav, Nuala undergoes a similar awakening, metaphorically presented as having her portrait painted. Nuala’s brothers, in fact, seemingly unwittingly allude to this potential in their objection to her participation in Hugo’s plan, arguing, ‘Tis not good to be put in a picture: it takes from you’ (p.95); again, it is the rural Irish who voice the inherent dangers in the elite’s attempt to capture a bygone past. And like Neoineen, Nuala wears her new experience physically:

the change that came over Nuala frightened me; he was wearing her away: her face had a clear, luminous look, her eyes were large and dark; I saw an expression in them sometimes as of one gazing into an abyss of pain. . . . I feared that Nuala would die: she had the beauty you could imagine in a spirit new-awakened from death, a look of anguish and ecstasy in one. . . . She was frail and spent. (pp.96, 97–8)

In this turning point, Maeve squanders the opportunity to atone for her earlier negligence of Neoineen: ‘I would have rebelled that night, taken any risk, to make Hugo undo what he had done. . . . One hour more! She must endure it: I would not sacrifice him for that’ (pp.98, 99). In the jump between these two sentences is Hugo’s carelessly thrown compliment, ‘You have been such a good sister-friend’ (p.99), which causes Maeve’s utter reversal of intention. Clearly unable to resist Hugo’s charms, even when the very life of another woman is at stake, Maeve has not learned the lessons of her encounter with Niav.³⁸

On the other hand, Nuala offers a much different image of woman, of one empowered to sacrifice her life for her country just as her male compatriots could. Maeve’s last view of Nuala is the supernatural

apparition in Hugo's studio after he completes the painting: 'on the dais, glimmering in the misty silver light, stood Nuala, gazing at him, all a radiance of consummated sacrifice and sweet, unconquerable love – Nuala as you have seen her in the portrait of Roisin Dhu' (pp.99–100). The crux of Macardle's message can be found in the adjective 'unconquerable': Nuala wins out over Hugo in the end because she has exerted her own desire. Thus, the foreboding proclamation in the story's closing lines, 'It is written in Destiny [...] the lovers of Roisin Dhu must die' (p.101), attests to the power Nuala claims for herself. Here, Molidor offers an important observation about the story: 'Hugo's portraiture invites not the female jouissance of suffering suggested in the poems, stories, and plays of Patrick Pearse, or the regenerative powers in Yeats, but the literal and figurative death of the female self' (p.53). Yes, she dies (hence Macardle's phrase 'consummated sacrifice'), but he dies, too. It is not his fate to enjoy a freedom she does not; in fact, it is not his privilege to enjoy a sacrifice she may not. Furthermore, the medium of this victory, the details suggest, is through their sexual union. As in the case of Neoineen, Macardle offers the example of a young female character whose sexual experience empowers her. And one significant manifestation of that empowerment lies in Nuala's ability to claim agency. She ceases to merely symbolize Roisin Dhu; she *becomes* her, becomes a figure of female empowerment and encouragement for Macardle's audience, most particularly for Sheila Humphreys, the story's dedicatee who had already undergone force-feeding in prison. In the fictional world of the story, then, Nuala is permitted to waste away in self-sacrifice, while members of the historical audience (including Humphreys) were denied this opportunity.

This is not merely a story of art or of the (masculine) representation of a (feminine) Ireland; the narrator of this story is the same woman who previously admitted her (maternal) failures; here, she confesses her failure to honour the female bonds of solidarity on which Macardle's audience's lives depended. Maeve's stories betray Macardle's nascent qualms about the Irish Revival's celebration of Celtic mythology, glorification of the artist, and idealization of the Irish Mother figure, offering a gendered critique of the literary movement that had drawn her into political militancy. The complexity of Maeve's stories – and their position within *Earth-bound* – is the complexity of Macardle's emotional and intellectual position vis-à-vis art, its social role, and revolution, a mental position physically bounded and anchored by her status as a political prisoner of war.

After delving into the coded messages that characterize the Maeve stories, the question still remains, why does it matter? To answer, we might turn to history and consider Margaret Ward's analysis of the

perceived nature of Irish women's contributions to the Civil War. Ward describes the 1923 memorial service the women prisoners held (prominent participants included Macardle, Gonne, and Stuart) to commemorate the Easter Rising:

the brief ceremony has, for feminists, additional significance. [...] in more symbolic terms, a strong impression is conveyed of women's role as being solely one of bearing witness for the male representatives of the republican movement rather than, on their own terms, incorporating that ideal into an autonomous vision. As the cult of martyrology has always been a powerful motivating force in Irish history and it has always been men who have paid the supreme penalty, this sacrifice of male lives for the national cause has obscured the continual yet less dramatic sacrifices made by women working for the same cause (pp. 193-4).

These stories, however, present a different picture; each story contains female characters who, to borrow Ward's formulation, incorporate the republican 'ideal into an autonomous vision'. The problem with reading the Maeve stories as straightforward exhortations to female solidarity is that 'The Portrait of Roisin Dhu' seemingly undercuts any notion of its possibility: by the time it begins, both in the collection's fictional time and in the reader's experience of this fictional world, Maeve has apparently forgotten the lessons she learned in 'The Return of Niav'. But if we read the stories differently, a much more sympathetic view emerges of Maeve's anguish when confronted with the dilemma posed by Nuala and Hugo's conflicting needs and desires.

The story's rhetoric positions Nuala as a 'lover of Roisin Dhu', a reading supported by Niav's position as the lover of Neoineen: Niav, the Irish queen figure, is described in terms that evoke the Irish flag: 'A high little head she had with a glory of red-gold hair about it; a green, ragged gown was on her and her delicate white feet and arms were bare' (p.60). Nuala, as I have suggested, makes the choice to sacrifice herself for Ireland, using Hugo in the process for her own ends. Nuala is an active agent. Maeve's highest obligation to Nuala is to see her actions clearly, as autonomous decisions to be respected and supported.

Thus, the Maeve stories are far from simple fairy tales told to while away the time that the women must pass in Kilmainham. Molider's assertion that they hold political significance is completely correct. But they are neither tales told merely to bolster morale amongst her fellow inmates. The Maeve stories in particular are deeply significant

precisely because they are stories told in prison to fellow female inmates, to women who (like herself) had already transgressed one gender taboo by fighting militantly. As such, they need to be read not just in the context of the larger story collection (as recent criticism has done), but also outside of it as a paired expression of Macardle's feminist vision. These tales offer examples – and subtle encouragement – of women who transgress other social boundaries, with the lesbian interaction between Niav and Neoineen, Maeve's prioritizing of her art over her mothering practices, and Nuala's sexual aggression towards Hugo; by transcending Macardle's apparent discomfort with 'deep emotional or physical intimacy with either sex',³⁹ the Maeve stories speak to their audience's concerns, fulfilling a central tenet of oral culture. They offer Macardle's audience alternate models of feminine behaviour at the moment of the new Irish State's founding, models that enable women to love Roisin Dhu and even, at times, survive the experience.

NOTES

A portion of this article was presented at the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies' Irish Seminar, and I am grateful for the participants' comments and questions. This research was supported by a grant from the Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Letters, University of Notre Dame.

1. Janet Madden-Simpson, *Woman's Part: An anthology of short fiction by and about Irishwomen 1890–1960* (Dublin: Arlen House, 1984), p.97.
2. *Earth-bound* continues the Irish literary short story tradition exemplified by Samuel Ferguson's *Hibernian Nights' Entertainments* (1897) or James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914).
3. A comparative reading of Macardle's stories and Eva Gore-Booth's play *The Triumph of Maeve* would offer further insight into this cultural moment, but is beyond the scope of my essay.
4. For more about the feminism-nationalism dichotomy, see C.L. Innes, *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880–1935* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993), especially chapter 7; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
5. Critics alternately discuss her as a primitive modernist, a late-Revivalist, and a neo-gothic writer.
6. In this neglect, she is in good company; for two outstanding recuperative efforts of other Irish women writers, see Sonja Tiernan's *Eva Gore-Booth: An Image of Such Politics* (Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 2012) and Catherine Morris's *Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012).
7. Patrick Hanafin, 'Rewriting Desire: The Construction of Sexual Identity in Literary and Legal Discourse in Postcolonial Ireland', *Social & Legal Studies* 7.3 (1998), 409–29 (p.416).
8. See Joseph J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), p. 270 and Eunan O'Halpin, 'Historical Revisit: Dorothy Macardle, 'The Irish Republic' (1937)', *Irish Historical Studies* 31.123 (May, 1999), 389–394 (p.389).
9. For the first accurate biographical material on Macardle, in which he calls *Earth-bound* a 'series of nine weird tales' that she wrote to pass the time in prison,

- see Peter Tremayne, 'A Reflection of Ghosts,' in *Gaslight and Ghosts*, ed. by Stephen Jones and Jo Fletcher (London: Robinson, 1988), pp.86–94 (p.90).
10. Gerardine Meaney positions the collection within debates about women's symbolic role in nationalist ideology, particularly in relation to the Mother Ireland figure, and their active military involvement in 'Identity and Opposition: Women's Writing, 1890–1960', in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 5: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions, ed. by Angela Bourke, et al. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), pp.976–80 (p.978); subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text. More recently, she has noted the stories' propagandist aim and the way they echo the 'desperation and bravado of the time' in *Gender, Ireland, and Cultural Change: Race, Sex, and Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.53. Lisa Weihman explores how Macardle negotiates the colonial double bind that forced militant nationalist women to repress their militancy in favour of socially acceptable behaviour in 'Female Militancy and Irish Primitivism: Dorothy Macardle's *Earth-Bound*', in *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive*, ed. by Maria McGarrity and Claire A. Culleton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.173–94 (p.173); subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text. Weihman reads the collection as a cautionary tale driven by contradictory currents, suggesting that it both attempts to control sexual licentiousness and acknowledges that the 'path to independence runs through modernity,' p.191.
 11. Irina Ruppo Malone actually argues that the 'feminist import of the collection is part of its *ostensible* agenda' (p.106) and suggests that the 'conflict between nationalist idealism and humanism, evidenced in this and other stories in the collection, is not gendered' (p.107) in 'Spectral History: The Ghost Stories of Dorothy Macardle', *Partial Answers* 9.1 (2011), 95–109; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text. This assertion, however, oversimplifies *Earth-bound's* contradictory impulses.
 12. 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 (Geimhreadh/Winter 2008), 43–61 (p.50); subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 13. See Weihman, 'Female Militancy' for a reading of Macardle's engagement with Yeats (pp.181–3).
 14. Sinéad McCoolle, *Guns and Chiffon: Women Revolutionaries and Kilmainham Gaol 1916–1923* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1997), p.40; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 15. See Malone for an assessment of the literary qualities of *Earth-bound* within an Anglo-Irish gothic context (pp.96, 99, 108). Malone's insightful reading nuances earlier political readings of the collection through her attention to the generic conventions deployed by Macardle, explicating ways that these conventions activate a turn-of-the-screw mechanism to guide an against-the-grain reading (p.99).
 16. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p.41; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 17. I am grateful to Kevin Whelan for asking me how the changeling figure works in this story.
 18. Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* (New York: Penguin, 2001), pp.31–2; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 19. McCoolle notes that 'Between February and September 1923, over 500 women and girls aged between twelve and seventy were incarcerated in Kilmainham Gaol' in *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900–1923* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p.104; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text. This discrepancy in age might also account in

- part for the "strong dislike taken by many prisoners to Macardle" that Rosamund Jacob, Macardle's future flatmate, recorded in her diary; see Leeann Lane, *Rosamund Jacob: Third Person Singular* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010), p.212.
20. This maternal mentoring role, while the only maternal role Macardle ever played, was one that she enthusiastically embraced. See Abigail L. Palko, 'From *The Uninvited* to *The Visitor*: Irish Women Respond to Independence,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31.2 (Fall 2010), 1–34.
 21. Dorothy Macardle, *Earth-Bound: Nine Stories of Ireland* (Worcester, MA: Harrigan Press, 1924), p.59; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 22. Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p.17; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 23. Furthermore, any consideration of Neoineen's 'fastidious[ness] about food' must account for the dual influences on Macardle, I would suggest, of modernity's 'incipient hostility to fat' and the Irish people's long history and tradition of starvation (Ellmann, pp.2, 11).
 24. Helena Michie, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), pp.13, 21.
 25. Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993), p.168.
 26. 'Identity and Opposition,' p.978. While Malone does dissent from this view, suggesting that 'The Prisoner,' the preceding story in the collection, 'may in fact be a survival-account of the author's own imprisonment' (p.100), no critical attention has been paid to Neoineen's refusal to eat.
 27. See Ellmann for a discussion of the Irish nationalists' use of the suffragette strategy in the fight for Irish independence and its gender implications (pp.11–12).
 28. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer who prompted me to think through additional implications of Neoineen's protest in this direction.
 29. See Maria Luddy, 'Sex and the Single Girl in 1920s and 1930s Ireland', *The Irish Review* 35 (Summer 2007), 79–91, for a discussion of the public conversations, debates, and concerns about young female sexuality in 1920s Ireland.
 30. Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), p.192; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
 31. Maud Gonne, *The Autobiography of Maud Gonne: A Servant of the Queen*, Ed. by A. Norman Jeffares and Anna MacBride White (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp.xi-xii.
 32. Patrick Maume, 'Macardle, Dorothy Margaret', in *Dictionary of Irish Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2002*, Volume V. Ed. by James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 700–3 (p.700). Nadia Clare Smith, *Dorothy Macardle: A Life* (Dublin: Woodfield Press, 2007), p.33.
 33. I am indebted to Maud Ellmann, whose query prompted me to consider Maeve and Neoineen as fictional stand-ins for Maud Gonne and Iseult Stuart.
 34. This is one of several instances when a particular story undercuts the collection's moral; where the overall thrust of *Earth-bound* is the vicarious encouragement of Macardle's audience through the encouragement of the narrator's audience, Maeve's enchanting power hints at a latent power in women artists, a power to be feared.
 35. Molitor notes the echoes of the Gonne-Yeats affair in the figures of Maeve and Hugo (p.59).
 36. Maria Luddy, public lecture 2011. 'The Political Life of Eva Gore Booth', NEH/KN Fellow Mini Conference, The Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies. University of Notre Dame. April 29 2011.

37. Leeann Lane has also noted that a number of the women of Macardle's social/political circle 'were committed to the intimacy of same-sex relationships' (p.107).
38. In an otherwise powerful analysis of the collection, Molidor argues that 'The fact that Maeve, the narrator of "The Rescue [sic] of Niav" who failed to rescue the young woman in "The Portrait of Roisin Dhu", is able to rescue her daughter in the second story is a striking advocacy of female solidarity' (p.59). The trouble with this interpretation is that chronologically both within the world of *Earth-bound* and in terms of the order of the stories within the text, Maeve rescues her daughter before she fails to save Nuala. It thus looks like a regression of female solidarity, an implication I will unpack in subsequent paragraphs.
39. Maume, p.701.

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