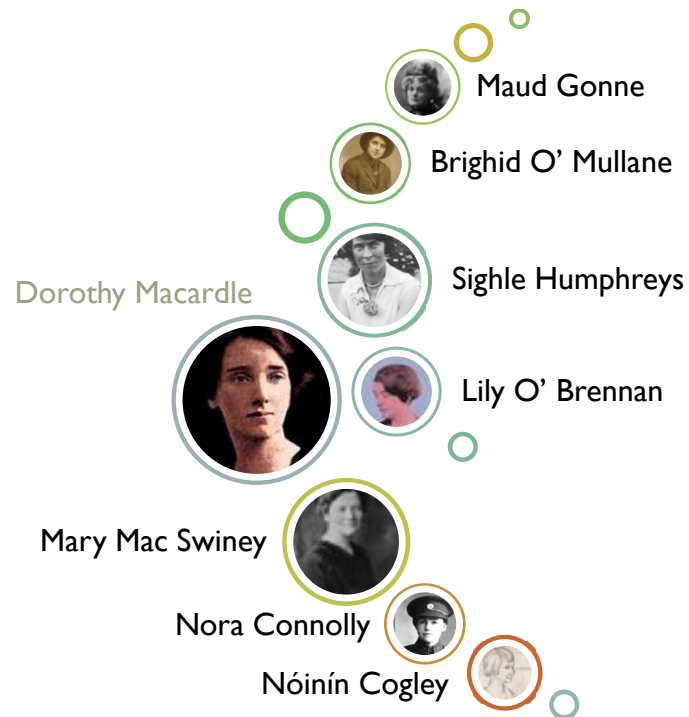


# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Prison Notebooks  
DMAPP

## Dramatis Personae (in order of appearance)



Dorothy Macardle (1889-1958)

She was arrested at the Sinn Féin headquarters at 23 Suffolk Street along with Lily O'Brennan, Teresa O'Connell, Rita Bermingham, Kathleen Devaney and Nónín Cogley.

They were known as the 'Suffolk Street' or political women. Macardle was editing for an anti-treaty propaganda newspaper called Freedom at the time of her arrest. She was one of an estimated 600 women imprisoned during the Civil War. She spent six months in various Dublin Prisons; Mountjoy, Kilmainham and North Dublin Union. She was released in May 1923.

Paudeen (Páidin) O'Keeffe (1881-1973)

He was born in Cork. Joined the Sinn Féin party led by Arthur Griffith. He fought in the Easter Rising in 1916 and interned at Frongoch Camp. He supported the Anglo-Irish treaty.

He was Deputy Governor of Mountjoy during the Civil War 1922-1923. Peadar O' Donnell's Civil War memoir, *The Gates Flew Open*, devotes a chapter to how the female prisoners relentlessly mocked O'Keeffe. He was reputed to drink to excess and carried two revolvers, warning the inmates, 'you'll be shat'.

Brighid (Bridie) O' Mullane (Ni Mhaolain) (1893-1967)

She ran a publicity department for the Republicans, where they published The War Bulletin. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1922, Free State troops raided the office. She was arrested and imprisoned in Mountjoy, Kilmainham and North Dublin Union. She was a prisoner's council member and an Officer Commanding A Wing of Kilmainham Gaol. An authoritarian and militarist. Brighid had what Terence MacSwiney's comrades called a 'Die for Ireland face' (Macardle JJ). Like Sighle and Mrs Humphreys, Brighid was described by Macardle as a 'woman of deeds'.

B. is a young self-confident militant, with the walk and air of a sergeant major; energetic, able to assume at will, a manner full of condescension- with some power of organisation, she regards herself as divinely appointed to rule and without waiting for election, takes upon herself the offices of the head. By an extraordinary number of the prisoners, she is taken at her own valuation. Loyalty to those who do not accord her the same respect does not appear necessary. Her policy is, with each newcomer, to speak depreciatingly of these, as poor-spirited folk who can't fight (Macardle JJ).

Macardle was hostile towards Brighid and despised how she chose militancy over negotiation. Brighid was released from the North Dublin Union in October 1923. She never married and is buried at Glasnevin cemetery in the Republican plot.

Elizabeth (Lily) O' Brennan (Lili Ní Bhraonain) or pen name Esther Graham. (1878-1948)

A little light, faery-like being she is, worn to a ghost of a faery by her burning faith and intense work; a gentle eager- hearted, loving woman (Macardle JJ).

Lili, a member of Cumann na mBan, Arthur Griffith's secretary in 1922, but later took an anti-treaty stance and became Erskine Childers' private secretary. In November 1922, she and Dorothy were arrested at 23 Suffolk Street. Lily was imprisoned in Kilmainham in 1916 when the leaders were shot outside her cell. When the Civil War female prisoners heard the bullets on December 8, 1922, they went to Lili to see if the sounds indicated an execution. In the play, we first meet Lili in conversation with Our Lady as she experiences an apparition through a guttering candle. This, in turn, prompts Dorothy to question her own beliefs. Upon arrival to Mountjoy, Lili was the first to volunteer to go on a sympathetic hunger strike and said 'she would not urge it on any others, but she would do it herself. It would not be long for her; she was ill...' (Macardle JJ).

The prisoner women were divided with the militants, under Brigid O'Mullane, determined to protest, while the "political women", whose spokesperson was Lili O'Brennan, preferred to negotiate. Despite her deep friendship with Childers, Lili maintains stoicism during the news of his arrest and execution. When word comes from the outside of an apparent but ultimately averted surrender by the Republican Army. The external division between Liam Deasy, who seeks accord, and Liam Lynch, who rejects it, is again mirrored within the women's prison. Dorothy and Nora lean more towards noble surrender, whereas Lili disagrees with any such strategy.

Cecilia Gallagher (1889-1967)

She was arrested on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1922, and imprisoned in Mountjoy, Kilmainham and North Dublin Union. Although not politicised, she was imprisoned because of her husband, Journalist and Sinn Féin member, Frank Gallagher's anti-treaty stance. They spent their first Christmas as a married couple in opposite wings of Mountjoy. Upon arrival at Mountjoy, the potential of a sympathetic hunger strike in support of Miss MacSwiney was discussed. Cecilia proposed postponing the strike and taking supper that evening before deciding one way or the other the next morning.

Sighle Humphreys (1899 – 1994)

Sighle, brave and laughing, supple and straight of body as a boy... I delighted in her from the first, her frail blue eyes, coils of beautiful hair, friendly, radiant smile, and sincere manner.

(Macardle JJ)

A member of Cumann na mBan. In 1922, Ernie O' Malley was captured in O'Rahilly's home, and it was here, Sighle and her mother, Nell, were arrested.

When the 'Suffolk Street' women arrive in Mountjoy, Sighle, who has been on hunger strike for a week, informs them that the sympathetic strike for Miss MacSwiney is over. Sighle, like Brigid, is a 'woman of deeds'. Despite this, Dorothy finds the 'challenging, reckless spirit and boyish beauty of those girls very lovable; however, they frown on us' (Macardle JJ).

Mrs Humphrey is referred to as the 'Mother Catholic'. Sighle was among the last prisoners released in November 1923 following a thirty-one-day hunger strike (O'Toole, 2008).

Mary MacSwiney (1872-1942)

Sister of Terence MacSwiney. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1922, Mary MacSwiney was arrested in Nannie O'Rahilly's house and imprisoned in Mountjoy, where she immediately went on a hunger strike. When Dorothy arrives in prison, she and her fellow new detainees face an immediate challenge: to join Mary MacSwiney on a sympathetic hunger strike or not.

MacSwiney insists that she will continue her protest, but alone. The women keep a 24-hour vigil while she is conducting her hunger strike. She was released on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November on humanitarian grounds but arrested again in April 1923 en route to Liam Lynch's funeral, taken to Kilmainham Gaol, and released in May after spending nineteen days on hunger strike. She defiantly advocated military opposition to the Irish Free State. She supported Eamon de Valera until he broke with Sinn Féin and established Fianna Fáil. Dorothy has a dream in Mountjoy, which seems to prefigure a significant political split in the Republican movement between de Valera and Mary MacSwiney.

Tess: Little is known about Tess, a 'pretty, apple-cheeked, dark-haired girl from Kerry' (Macardle JJ). She was one of the first girls to volunteer to go on a sympathetic hunger strike with Miss MacSwiney, despite being 'scarcely more than a child'. A girl always attempting to add humour to the most gloomy conditions in prison. Dorothy's Earthbound story 'Samhain', was founded on a ghost tale that Tessie told her in prison. Tessie and Dorothy were keeping vigil for Miss MacSwiney one night when they sensed a mysterious visitor who they believed to be the ghost of Terence MacSwiney.

Daisy 'Toto' Bannard Cogley (born Jeanne Marie Desirée Bannard), referred to as Nóinín or by her stage name Helen Carter (1884-1965)

Born in Paris. An actor, director, and costume designer. An active figure on Dublin's theatrical scene, launching multiple theatres and cabaret studios. She was a co-founder of the Gate Theatre. She directed a production of Dorothy Macardle's *Asthara* in 1918. Nóinín was arrested from 23 Suffolk St. along with Dorothy Macardle in November 1922. Her husband, Irish independent Journalist Frederick Joseph Cogley was also imprisoned at the same time as her. Her young sons were left without any relatives in the country. Dorothy describes her as a woman quite unlike any other, possibly due to her French nationality and French girlhood-hood and South American adventures. She was the first of the Suffolk Street women to break

down. On the second night of their imprisonment, Dorothy awoke to hear Cogley sobbing. Nónín sings at night for Miss MacSwiney. Dorothy describes in her JJ how Nónín's music seemed to 'fill the prison and melt away the walls'. Dorothy wrote a song about Terence MacSwiney, 'The Beacon Song', which goes to the old time 'The Heath is Brown on Carrigdhoun', for Nónín to sing.

#### Betty Kiernan

It is uncertain who exactly Betty was. She first appears in the play when the women are transferred from Mountjoy to Kilmainham Gaol. Dorothy refers to her as her 'wife' and sleeps on the edge of her bed for company's sake. In Kilmainham, Betty 'keeps the kitchen' while Dorothy 'keeps the study'. Betty tells Dorothy how her brother Shawn died from his injuries in the Four Courts fight. Betty confides in Dorothy about a broken love for an enemy soldier, Tom. This man, it transpires, had been a spy for the IRA but has now been outed and captured. Betty dreams about Carts and White Sheets, which Dorothy interprets as portents of doom. One night, Betty looks out her prison window at the moon, which triggers a breakdown.

#### Nora Connolly O'Brien (1893-1981)

She first appears in the play during the transfer of the women from Mountjoy to Kilmainham Gaol. Daughter of James Connolly. At the time of her arrest, she was recovering from a nervous breakdown. She is working on a book about her father as well as a book of psychic stories. She helped her father in preparing for the 1916 rebellion. She believed that Ireland would not have been a republic if her father had not died. She tells Dorothy how the spirit of her father came to her one night as a source of comfort. She claimed that after her father died, the sun left her world. Dorothy's JJ compares looking into Nora's dark brown eyes to 'looking into deep pools in the bottom of which lies some mysterious gleaming thing'. Nora was in Kilmainham on the 7<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. She was part of the prison cohort in which Dorothy Macardle placed herself which comprised of individualists, writers and propagandists, many of whom had military records since 1916. Nora was chosen as the group's Representative.

Mr Begley

Free State Soldier at Kilmainham Gaol. In May 1923, he informed the prisoner women at Kilmainham that 81 prisoners would be removed to the North Dublin Union and, if necessary, by force. When asked whether woman-beating was a soldier's work, he replied, according to Macardle's JJ, 'I don't mind that. I have beaten my wife'. According to Macardle's understanding of the Civil War division, he was guilty of moral failure not only in his readiness to allow violence against women in both the personal and political domains but also in acting in a comparable repressive manner as the British had previously acted against the Irish (Lane, 2019).

The following women prisoners are referred to in the play:

Rita Farrelly, Mrs Winnie Gordon, Florence MacDermott, Sheila Bowen, Kathleen O'Carroll, Iseult Stuart, Moira Broderick, Kathleen O'Carroll, Kate (Kitty) O Callaghan (1885-1961), Grace Plunkett Nee Gifford (1888-1955), Mrs Agnes (Nell) Humphreys.

The following persons outside the prison are referred to in the play:

Maud Gonne, Eamonn de Valera, Terence MacSwiney, Erskine Childers, Minnie Macardle (Mother), Mona Macardle (Sister), Donald Macardle (Brother), Liam Deasy, Liam Lynch, Kevin Barry, Shawn Kiernan (Betty's brother), Tom (Betty's Free State Soldier boy), Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor.

**Erskine Childers** is ever present as a civilising alternative – but he is dead. Personal Friend and mentor in the Republican cause. Arrested at the home of his cousin Robert Barton, while in possession of a small automatic pistol, which was a violation of the Emergency Powers Resolution of 27<sup>th</sup> September 1922. Tried by court martial and executed. The first inclination of his execution was registered by the women inmates when they heard a 'stop -press' being cried in the streets.

**Terence MacSwiney** (b.1879) Although dead at the time of Macardles imprisonment. He is a presence and a strength. His ghost appears to Dorothy. 'Not to those who can inflict most but

to those who can suffer most, the victory will come'. Works: The *Principles of Freedom*, published after his death.

#### References

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