

SEOIRSE CLANCY

A BELATED FOOTNOTE

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George Clancy, J. F. Byrne, and Joyce, while at University College.

In the 1987 issue of this journal, the life and death of Seoirse Clancy was related in an article "Limerick Curfew Murders." His friendship, at University College Dublin, with James Joyce, is recounted by Richard Ellman in "James Joyce" as follows:

"Joyce and another student, George Clancy, liked to rouse Cadic (Professor of French, native of Brittany) to flights of miscomprehension. In a favourite little drama, Joyce would snicker offensively at Clancy's efforts to translate a passage into English. Clancy pretended to be furious and demanded an apology, which Joyce refused. Then Clancy would challenge Joyce to a duel in the Phoenix Park. The horrified Cadic would rush in to conciliate the fiery Celts, and after much byplay would persuade them to shake hands.

The students of University College were more unusual than their professors. Three of Joyce's close friends, Clancy, Francis Skeffington and Thomas Kettle, indicated the extent of the earnestness of their youth by losing their lives in battle, each for a different cause. Clancy was to end as a victim of the Black and Tans while he was mayor of Limerick. His unfortunate death was appropriate in that, even

as a young man, Clancy subscribed ardently to every aspect of the national movement. He helped form a branch of the Gaelic League at University College, and persuaded his friends including even Joyce for a time, to take lessons in Irish. Joyce gave them up because Patrick Pearse, the instructor, found it necessary to exalt Irish by denigrating English, and in particular denounced the word 'Thunder'-a favourite of Joyce's- as an example of verbal inadequacy. Clancy was an enthusiast also for Gaelic sports like hurling and therefore a great friend of Michael Cusack, the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association. He brought Joyce to meet Cusack a few times, and Joyce liked him little enough to make him model the narrow-minded and rhetorical Cyclops in Ulysses. Clancy appears in Joyce's early work as Madden; he is the only friend who calls Stephen by his first name, and Joyce later confirmed that Clancy alone among his classmates did so. Madden (called Davin is a PORTRAIT) labours with rustic sincerity to make Stephen more Irish, and Stephen's relations with him are more relaxed than with his other friends. There is no indication however, that Joyce ever called Clancy 'George'.