

Kate O'Brien's pride in Limerick achievements

BY SEAMUS O CINNEIDE

ONE EVENING in the early 1960's, Kate O'Brien came and gave a lecture under the auspices of the Limerick branch of Tuairim to an overflow audience at the Glentworth Hotel.

The theme: "The Novelist in Ireland." Her recipe for anyone writing a novel about the Irish was: "A knowledge of the gossip at the parish pump and an acquaintance with the penny catechism."

After the lecture, she slipped away from the D.Litt lobbyites into the Afrique Bar, where she was delighted to hear Ger (The Poet) Ryan tell stories about the days when his father shot wild geese on the Groody marshes.

Her interest showed how, despite the inescapable exile that being a famous novelist imposed on her, Kate O'Brien carried a nostalgia for the Limerick and Limerick people of her youth with her wherever she went.

The strength of that nostalgia was shown in a series of talks she gave on Radio Eireann in the late 1950s — reminiscences of the green fields of Monacchino and Ballysimon, the little church and graveyard of Kilmurry beside the Shannon and Mulcair rivers and visits with her brothers to Smith's restaurant in Thomas Street, where their favourite treat was the eclairs.

For her Limerick friend, Mrs. Mary Hanley, president of the Kiltartan Yeats Society, Kate O'Brien came as a speaker to the Yeats Seminar Week at Thoor Ballylee, in the Gort countryside, in the summer of 1965. It wasn't a

typically hurried visit of the kind that famous literary people condescendingly make.

Charmingly

Kate O'Brien was billed to speak on her favourite County of Clare — which she did charmingly at Roger Bourke's summer house, at the Flaggy Shore, in the nearby Burren.

She came three days before her own distinguished contribution, and mingled courteously with Limerick students like Margaret Ray (now Mrs. Niall Nestor) and Miss Frances Moran and everyone else at Mrs. Hanley's Yeats Week.

Kate O'Brien's generosity and pride in the achievements of Limerick personalities of a generation much younger than her own, were typically shown in her friendship with Desmond O'Grady, the young Limerick poet, ever since she met him when they both were delegates at the world P.E.N. conference in Florence in the early 1960s... and in her salute to the achievements of that visionary young Limerick politician, Donogh O'Malley, and her lament at his untimely death in the spring of 1968.

Reading the salute and lament (in a column from her Kentish exile to the Irish Times), one could see that she regarded Donogh as our John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and Donogh's death like the Dallas of modern Irish politics.

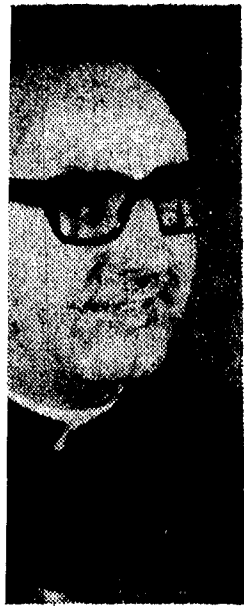
For myself, Kate O'Brien's death means the end of those courteous handshakes and chats with her in O'Mahony's bookshop or the G.P.O., whenever she was back in her native Limerick.

And, saddeningly, there's the thought that the Limerick City Council didn't act on my suggestion — made in a Gaelic feature in this paper in 1972 — that she be given the freedom of this ancient city.

Kate O'Brien in her novels immortalised the Limerick of our parents and grandparents and her portrayals appealed to the sophisticates and to housemaids, as one critic wrote.

The freedom of a city, which her O'Mara relatives served so courageously in the dangerous times of Ireland's Fight for Freedom, would have cheered her ebbing years in exile.

Go raibh si sna bhflaitheas le Naomh Treasa Ailla — an naomh ba rogha le.



Limerick's Rev. Shane I. S.V.D., of the Divine Word, recently conferred with a degree in theology at the University of Chicago, Illinois, and at Catholic universities in the United States. He is the son of Mrs. Frances late Patrick Fitzgerald "Coonavincent", Creagh, brother of Mr. Marjorie, S.P.S.-International, Shannon. He entered the Divine Word in 1969, entered the Divine Word in 1960. He studied the Divine Word College in North Wales, at the headquarters of the Word Missionaries, Castle, Co. Roscommon. He completed his studies in the United States at the Divine Word, Techny, Illinois, in 1970 was conferred a S.T.B. degree in the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He subsequently at the Divine Word in Roscommon before his studies for the which his major is in the field of Scripture will return to continue teaching appointments at the Divine Word College Roscommon this September. Before that, however, he hopes to spend a holiday with his in County Limerick.

ALL-NIGHT VIGIL GROUP

Patronage of Most Rev. Bishop of Killaloe)

IRDES VIGIL LGRIMAGE

MBER 28-29, 1974

Post ex Shannon 250 (No Extras) entries to Hon Sec

Congratulated

Mr. Tony Brazil, managing director of Limerick Travel Ltd., Bedford Row, who was recently appointed a director of Bord Fáilte by the Minister for Transport and Power, has been congratulated on his appointment by Mr. Michael Vaughan, chairman of Shannonside Regional Tourism Organisation.

Signs

Following representations by Councillor Frank Leddin, school warden (yellow) signs are to be



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