



UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**THE
J.M. O'NEILL
PAPERS**

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Introduction

The J.M. O'Neill Papers were donated to the Glucksman Library, University of Limerick in November 2001 by Joe and Joan Hartnett.

Jerry O'Neill was born in Limerick, where his father was the city's postmaster, and educated at the Augustinian College, Dungarvan, County Waterford. He moved to England in the 1950's where he worked in Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas) and grew to specialise in colonial banking. He was posted to West Africa and ended up in Ghana/The Gold Coast. He returned to England with his wife Mary and his family, and became an agent in the building trade in London and the Home Counties. In 1967 he became the tenant landlord of the Duke of Wellington pub in the Ball's Pond Road in Islington. There he established the Sugawn Theatre and Sugawn Kitchen, a well-known venue for plays and folk music.

In 1980 he left the pub trade and settled in Hornsey, where he wrote a number of plays and four novels. During this time he received two *Irish Post*/AIB awards. His plays include *Now You See Him, Now You Don't, Diehards*, and *God Is Dead on the Ball's Pond Road*. His first novels, *Open Cut* (1986) and *Duffy Is Dead* (1987), were hailed as truly original works, earning him the accolade of being "the laureate of the London Irish". These first two novels were followed by *Canon Bang Bang* (1989) and *Commissar Connell* (1992). He moved to live in Kilkee, County Clare, where he completed his two last novels, *Bennett & Company* (1998) and *Rellighan, Undertaker* (1999). He died in 1999, in his seventies, shortly after being awarded the Kerry Ingredients Book of the Year Award for *Bennett & Company*.

This collection contains the drafts and proofs of O'Neill's novels and plays, as well as other writers' adaptations of his novel *Open Cut* for film. A thesis discussing the significance of O'Neill's work in the context of Irish writing is also included in the collection.

Lisa Collins

November 2001

The J.M. O'Neill Papers

A: Novels (1954-1998)

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|---|-----------|---|-------|
| 1 | 1954 | Typescript draft of <i>TCH! TCH! A Story in Slapstick</i> . Annotated. Paginated. | 160pp |
| 2 | n/d | Typescript draft of <i>Open Cut</i> . Annotated. Paginated. | 201pp |
| 3 | 1983-1984 | Typescript draft of <i>Duffy is Dead</i> . Annotated. Paginated. | 193pp |
| 4 | 1987 | Typescript copy of <i>Duffy is Dead</i> containing passages highlighted 'to facilitate readings given in London and Birmingham'. Paginated. | 193pp |
| 5 | 1989 | Typescript first draft of <i>Canon Bang Bang</i> . Heavily annotated. Paginated. Also Christmas card from Hodder & Stoughton, publishers. | 244pp |
| 6 | 1992 | Typescript draft of <i>Commissar Connell</i> . Annotated. Paginated. Also letter from Majella Crehan, Irish Bookfair Co-ordinator, Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Hall, London N 19, to O'Neill thanking him for agreeing to do a reading at the forthcoming bookfair. | 238pp |

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- 7 n/d Typescript draft of *Bennett & Company*. Annotated. Paginated. 259pp
- 8 October 1997 Typescript draft of *Bennett & Company*. Annotated. Paginated. 258pp
- 9 5 August 1998 Photocopy of typescript galley proofs of *Bennett & Company*. Annotated. Paginated. 276pp

B: Plays (1983)

- 10 n/d Typescript draft of *Now you see him, now you don't*. Note by O'Neill-"Rewrite in progress". Annotated. Partly paginated. 72pp
- 11 1983 Typescript draft of *Commissar Connell* formerly titled *Diehards*. Annotated. Paginated. Also programme from the 1983 performance of the play at the Old Red Lion, Islington, London. 80pp
- 12 n/d Photocopy of typescript copy of *God is Dead on Ball's Pond Road*. 75pp

C: Screenplays adapted from his work (1987-1990)

13 March 1987 First draft of a film adaptation of O'Neill's novel *Open Cut* by Troy Kennedy Martin. Note on folder by O'Neill- "Not a single scene from the novel is treated. Dreadful script rejected by me". Heavily annotated by O'Neill. Paginated. 161pp

14 2 March 1990 First draft of film adaptation of O'Neill's *Open Cut* by Eoghan Harris. Note by O'Neill-"I accepted Eoghan Harris' treatment which was purchased by CENTRAL TELEVISION. But never performed!" Annotated. Paginated. Also newspaper cutting from *The Guardian* (31 May 1990) by Malcom Bradbury on the subject of film adapters. 127pp

D: Analysis of his work

15 January 1995 Treatise/thesis of three of the O'Neill's novels: *Open Cut*, *Duffy is Dead* and *Canon Bang Bang* by John O'Donoghue, 33 Stanley Road, Brighton, Sussex. Note by O'Neill on folder-"The author of this thesis is now Dr. John O'Donoghue of Sussex University (I am told)". 83pp