



The Michael Curtin Papers

P19

**The Special Collections and Archives Department
Glucksman Library
University of Limerick**

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Reference Code: IE 2135 P19
Title: The Michael Curtin Papers
Dates of Creation: 1979-1993
Level of Description: Fonds
Extent and Medium: 5 boxes (22 files and 6 items)

CONTEXT

Name of Creator(s): Curtin, Michael (1942-2016).

Biographical History: Michael Curtin was born in Limerick in 1942 and educated at the Sexton Street Christian Brothers' school. In the 1960s, having spent five years working in a cement plant, he emigrated to London to try his hand as a writer. Finding no success, he returned to Limerick, where the broadcaster David Hanly encouraged him to continue writing. Several of Curtin's short stories were subsequently published in the New Irish Writing column in the *Irish Press* and one of them took first prize at Listowel Writers' Week in 1972. His first novel, *The Self-Made Men*, a partly autobiographical account of immigrant life in England, was published in 1980 by André Deutsch. Five further novels followed: *The Replay* (1981), *The League Against Christmas* (1989), *The Plastic Tomato Cutter* (1991), *The Cove Shivering Club* (1996), and *Sing!* (2001). Many of Curtin's stories are set in his native city of Limerick and are characterised by a darkly comic tone, which became Curtin's trademark. Michael Curtin died in his native city in April 2016.

Archival History: Sold by Michael Curtin to Kenny's Bookshop, Galway.

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Purchased by the University of Limerick from Kenny's Bookshop, Galway, on 19 August 2005.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and Content: This collection contains manuscripts of five of Michael Curtin's six novels and correspondence relating to his career as a writer.

Appraisal, Destruction and Scheduling Information: All records have been retained except for two items unrelated to Michael Curtin which have been destroyed.

Accruals: No accruals are expected.

System of Arrangement: The documents are divided thematically into two series. Series 1 contains manuscripts of five of Curtin's six novels, many with copy editor's alterations. Series 2 comprises correspondence mainly with publishers, literary agents, film and TV producers and artists' associations, and provides an interesting insight into the process of book publishing and the acquisition of film and foreign language rights. The difficulties experienced even by established authors to get their work into print is

illustrated by the eleven rejection letters from publishing companies for Curtin's fourth novel, *The Plastic Tomato Cutter* (see P19/2/1/5).

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions Governing Access: Unrestricted access to most items. A small number of documents contain personal information and are closed for 50 years. These items have been identified in the descriptive catalogue.

Conditions Governing Reproduction: Standard copyright regulations apply to all items. For photocopying or reproducing material, please consult with the staff.

Language/ Scripts of Material: English.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements: Paper documents in good condition.

Finding Aids: A hard copy of the descriptive catalogue is available at the Special Collections and Archives Department, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick.

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related Units of Description: Michael Curtin's six novels, including some foreign translations, are available in the Special Collections and Archives Department and in the Main Library at the University of Limerick.

DESCRIPTION CONTROL

Archivist's Note: Papers arranged and described by Anna-Maria Hajba.

Rules or Conventions: This description follows guidelines based on *ISAD(G)* 2nd edition, 2000; *Irish Guidelines for Archival Description*, 2009; *National Council on Archives: Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names*, 1997; and *EAP Guidance on Data Protection for Archive Services*, 2018.

Date of Description: February 2010. Revised July 2021.

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1 MANUSCRIPTS (c. 1981-c. 2001)

- 1/1 [c. 1981]
Typescript draft of *The Replay* with copy editor's handwritten alterations. Chapter headings on separate handwritten sheets. Pagination on typed sheets. Lacking pages 213-215. In three folders.
321 pp.
- 1/2 [c. 1989]:22 March 1995
Typescript draft of *The League Against Christmas* with copy editor's handwritten alterations. Some of the pages are photocopies. Pagination. In three folders. Also a cover letter from Marie Therese Duggan, Managing Director, Camera Pen Ltd., 10 River Lane, Shangannagh, Shankill, county Dublin, to Conor Kenny, Kenny's Bookshop, Quay Street, Galway.
2 items (337 pp. + 1 p.)
- 1/3 [c. 1991]
Typescript draft of *The Plastic Tomato Cutter*, with some handwritten alterations. Paginated. Text complete but pagination skips p. 194. In three folders.
254 pp.
- 1/4 [c. 1995]
Photocopy of a typescript screen adaptation of *The League Against Christmas*. Paginated. Pages 32-34 and 36-44 have been replaced by photocopied extracts from the original typescript.
48 pp.
- 1/5 [c. 1996]
Typescript draft of chapters 9-22 of *The Cove Shivering Club*, with some handwritten alterations. Paginated.
179 pp.
- 1/6 [c. 2001]
Typescript draft of *Sing!* with some handwritten alterations. Paginated. Text complete but pagination skips pages 101 and 212. In three folders.
249 pp.

2 CORRESPONDENCE (1979-1993)

2.1 From Publishers (1979-1993)

- 2/1/1 1979-1983:1987-1988:1990-1991:1993
From Andre Deutsch Ltd., 105-106 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LJ, to Michael Curtin at various addresses but mainly at 93 O'Connell Street, Limerick. The letters deal with the preparation for publication of *The Replay* and *The League Against Christmas*, the Spanish language rights for *The Self-Made Men* and general financial matters. Correspondents include editor Esther Whitby, rights managers Anne-Louise Fisher, Hilary Delamere and Caroline Knox, contracts manager Marie Malone, managing director T. G. Rosenthal, director Laura Morris, Michèle Young and Shirley Purkiss. In three folders. *Two items closed. Review in 2043.*
- 34 items
- 2/1/2 1980
From Tim Binding, Penguin Books Ltd., 536 King's Road, London SW10 0UH, to Michael Curtin, Mount Pleasant Avenue, Limerick, relating to the paperback rights in *The Self-Made Men*.
- 2 items
- 2/1/3 1981-1982
From managing editor Keith Goldsmith, George Braziller, Inc., One Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016, USA, to Michael Curtin, 13 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Limerick, relating to the American rights in *The Replay* and the novel's first and favourable review in the *New Yorker Magazine*.
- 2 items
- 2/1/4 1989:1991
From Sheila Murphy, Aurum Press, 10 Museum Street, London WC1A 1JS, and from 3 St Andrews Square, Lancaster Road, London W11 1RH, to Michael Curtin, 93 O'Connell Street, Limerick, relating to Curtin's attempts to get an agent, and to the purchase of Aurum Press by former Andre Deutsch employees.
- 2 items
- 2/1/5 1990-1991
Rejection letters from various publishers in relation to *The Plastic Tomato Cutter*.
- 11 items

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- 2/1/6** 30 October 1991
From Mary Loring, Editorial Director, Abacus, 165 Great Dover Street, London SE1 EYA, to Michael Curtin, Lyndon, South Circular Road, Limerick, expressing delight at having acquired [paperback rights in] *The Plastic Tomato Cutter* for Abacus.
1 p.
- 2/1/7** 1991
From Fourth Estate Ltd., 289 Westbourne Grove, London W11 2QA, to Michael Curtin, Lyndon, South Circular Road, Limerick, relating to the preparation for publication of *The Plastic Tomato Cutter*. Correspondents include editorial director Giles O'Bryen and managing editor Debbie Licorish.
3 items
- 2/1/8** 1992-1993
From editorial director Richard Beswick, Little Brown, 165 Great Dover Street, London SE1 4YA, to Michael Curtin, Lyndon, South Circular Road, Limerick, relating to the publication of the paperback edition of *The Plastic Tomato Cutter*.
2 items

2.2 From Literary Agents (1979-1989)

- 2/2/1** 1979-1980:1989
From Michael Shaw, Curtis Brown Limited, 1 Crave Hill, London W2 3EP, to Michael Curtin, 17 Mount Pleasant Road, Limerick, and 93 O'Connell Street, Limerick, offering his firm's services as literary agents, with generic references to *The Self-Made Men*, *The League Against Christmas* and *The Reply*.
5 items
- 2/2/2** 1980:1989
From Caradoc King, A. P. Watt Ltd., 26/28 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4 HL, and 20 John Street, London WC1N 2DR to Michael Curtin, c/o Andre Deutsch Limited, 105 Great Russell Street, London WC1, and 93 O'Connell Street, Limerick, offering his firm's services as literary agents and refusing to take on the unsold rights in *The League Against Christmas*.
2 items

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2/2/3

1983

From Stephen Durbridge, Harvey Unna & Stephen Durbridge Ltd., 24 Pottery Lane, Holland Park, London W11 4LZ to Michael Curtin, 13 Mount Pleasant Avenue, and a copy letter to Donald Hyams, Magic Lantern Productions S.A., 8 Place Grenus, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland, relating to the film and television rights in *The Self-Made Men*. Also see **P19/2/3/1**.

3 items

2.3 From Film and TV Production Companies (1983-1990)

2/3/1

1983

From Donald Hyams, Magic Lantern Productions SA, 8 Place Grenus, 1201 Geneva Switzerland, to Michael Curtin, O'Connell Street, Limerick, relating to film rights in *The Self-Made Men*. Also see **P19/2/2/3**.

2 items

2/3/2

1989-1990

From producer Marie Therese Duggan, Cathal Black Film & Video Productions, 'St Nessans', Sandyford Village, Sandyford, county Dublin, to Michael Curtin, 93 O'Connell Street, Limerick, relating to the prospect of adapting *The League Against Christmas* for film and the subsequent abandonment of the plan. Also see **P19/1/2**.

3 items

2.4 From Artists' Associations (1988-1992)

2/4/1

1988:1991

From Fiona M. Clark, Secretary, The Royal Literary Fund, 144 Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, London EC4Y 0DT, to Michael Curtin, 93 O'Connell Street, Limerick, and Lyndon, South Circular Road, Limerick, relating to grant assistance from the Fund. *Closed. Review in 2041*.

2 items

2/4/2

1992

From Aosdána, 70 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, to Michael Curtin, Lyndon, South Circular Road, Limerick, relating to Curtin's nomination for membership. Correspondents include registrar Adrian Munnely and his assistant Bernadette O'Leary. Also see **P19/2/5/1-2**.

2 items

2.5 From Authors (1989-1991)

- 2/5/1** [1989-1990]
From Ben[edict] Kiely, 119 Morehampton Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4, mainly relating to Curtin's nomination for membership for Aosdána. Also see **P19/2/4/2**.
4 items
- 2/5/2** 1990-1991
From John B. Keane, 37 William Street, Listowel, relating to Curtin's nomination for membership for Aosdána, and to Keane's declination to launch Curtin's book [*The Plastic Tomato Cutter?*] owing to the recent death of his two brothers. Also see **P19/2/4/2**.
3 items

2.6 From other Correspondents (1980-1993)

- 2/6/1** 1980-1983:1989:[c. 1992]
From Kieran [Simpson] at various addresses, exchanging childhood reminiscences and conveying domestic and professional news. *Closed. Review in 2035.*
14 items
- 2/6/2** 1982
From James J. Curtin, discussing the merits of *The Replay* and *The Self-Made Men*. *Closed. Review in 2035.*
2 items
- 2/6/3** 1985:1992-1993
From Charles Frewin, expressing his enthusiasm for *The Self-Made Men*, *The Replay*, and *The League Against Christmas*. Later letters relate to Frewin's subsequent bookselling career in Australia and his release of a paperback version of *The League Against Christmas* under Two Heads Publishing. *Closed. Review in 2035.*
5 items
- 2/6/4** 1990:1993
From Ted McCarthy, Solicitor, Damian Woods, Solicitor, and Irish Nationwide Building Society, relating to Curtin's financial difficulties. *Closed. Review in 2043.*
5 items

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2/6/5

1981:1988:1992

From assorted friends and acquaintances, including Danny Blanchflower, Hubert Butler, Dick Amaral and 'Una [?], Jessica and Michael'. *Closed. Review in 2035.*

4 items