

Royston Ellis:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Ellis, Royston, 1941-
Title:	Royston Ellis Papers
Dates:	1952-1967
Extent:	6 boxes, 1 oversize box (2.52 linear feet), 1 galley folder
Abstract:	Writer, biographer, and beat poet, Royston Ellis published his first book <i>Jiving to Gyp</i> at eighteen. Ellis's blend of poetry and rock music, which he called "rocketry," lead to his meeting other young British talents including John Lennon. In fact, it was Ellis who suggested Lennon spell Beatles with an "a" and the band eventually wrote and recorded the hit song "Paperback Writer" about Ellis. The Royston Ellis Papers document his life in manuscripts, handwritten research notes, correspondence, galley and page proofs, photographs, newsletters, charts, and newspaper clippings.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-01307
Language:	English.
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases, 1963-1973 (R1734, R1973, R2039, R2432, R3756, R5374)
Processed by:	Elizabeth Bittner, Tish Brewer, and Elizabeth Brooks, 2004; Catherine Stollar, 2005
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Christopher Royston George Ellis, writer, biographer and beat poet, was born February 10, 1941, in Pinner, England. He attended state school there until the age of sixteen, when he left school to become a writer. Two years later *Jiving to Gyp*, his first collection of poems, was published. Ellis performed poetry from the book on stage and television accompanied by rock music. His mix of poetry and rock music was called "rocketry." Some of the most famous bands performing with Ellis include Cliff Richard's group The Shadows, as well as Jimmy Page, and John, Paul, and Stuart, who would later become the Beatles. In the sixties, Ellis was in Liverpool where he met John Lennon, who wanted to become a pop star and had already thought of a name for his group. It was Ellis who suggested he spell Beatles with an "a," and the group went on to record the hit song "Paperback Writer," which Lennon and McCartney wrote about Ellis.

Ellis left England at the age of twenty. His travels took him to Berlin in the 1960s where he saw the Berlin Wall being built, and later to Moscow, where he was invited by the poet Yevtushenko to perform his own poetry.

In 1963 his travels took him to the Canary Islands where he acted in the movie *Wonderful Life* with Cliff Richard. While there, he worked for the only English language newspaper on the islands and also as a beachboy renting canoes. In 1964, while living in Las Palmas, Canary Islands, he wrote his unpublished novel based on life in the islands "The Cherry Boy," not to be confused with his published collection of poems under the same name. In September of 1965, after brief travels back to England and to Africa, Greece, and Turkey, Ellis returned to the Canary Islands to write a novel. Commissioned after an article in *The People* exposing the Canary Islands sex market, *The Flesh Merchants*, his new novel, incorporated many chapters he had previously written for his unpublished novel "The Cherry Boy." *The Flesh Merchants* caused enough sensation for Ellis that he claims he was forced to leave Las Palmas in November of 1966 because of police reaction to the novel.

From 1966-1980 Ellis lived in Dominica, where he wrote a series of historical novels under the pen name Richard Tresillian. He has also written under the pseudonym Raynard Devine. In 1980 he settled in Sri Lanka writing guidebooks, biographies, novels, and travel features. Ellis now lives there permanently in a cottage overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Source:

"Meet Royston Ellis," <http://www.roystonellis.com/index.htm> (accessed June 28, 2005).

Scope and Contents

The Royston Ellis Papers include manuscripts, handwritten research notes, correspondence, galley and page proofs, photographs, newsletters, charts, and newspaper clippings. The papers are arranged into a single series, I. Works. Research and working materials for nine works by Ellis are arranged alphabetically by title in the series and document Ellis's creative process.

Titles present in the collection include *The Big Beat Scene* (biography, 1961), *The Cherry Boy* (unpublished novel, ca. 1964), *Driftin' with Cliff Richard* (biography, 1959), *The Flesh Merchants* (novel, 1966), *Jiving to Gyp* (poetry, 1959), *Myself for Fame* (novel, 1964), *Rave* (poetry, 1960), *The Rebel* (biography, 1962), and *The Shadows* (biography, 1961). Many chapters from the unpublished "The Cherry Boy" were later used in *The Flesh Merchants*.

The "working notes" included for most of the works are comprised of drafts, handwritten notes, correspondence, transcripts of interviews, newspaper clippings, magazines, newsletters, and press releases. Early drafts of some titles are interfiled with working notes when Ellis originally kept drafts with his notes, but in general, drafts and manuscripts are arranged separately from working notes. Illuminating the pop and rock and roll trends of the sixties and seventies, the working notes for Ellis's biographies shed light on the lives of icons such as Elvis Presley, James Dean, and Cliff Richard. The working notes remain ordered as Ellis created them, providing evidence of Ellis's research and editing methods for his manuscripts; however, his handwriting is often hard to decipher, and much of the material is not dated. Oversize items and galley proofs have been physically separated from their respective works due to differing housing needs.

Related Material

Additional materials for *Rave* are contained in the Ransom Center's Scorpion Press Collection.

Index Terms

Subjects

- Dean, James, 1931-1955.
- Presley, Elvis, 1935-1977.
- Richard, Cliff.
- Beat generation--Poetry.

Rock music--Biography.

Rock music--History and criticism.

Document Types

Galley proofs.

Page proofs.

Photographs.

Series I. Works, 1952-1967, undated*The Big Beat Scene*, 1952-1961, undated

Working notes, Chapters

1-5

Box 1 Folder 1

6-7

Folder 2

8

Folder 3

9

Folder 4

Typed signed manuscript

Folder 5

Excluded material

Folder 6

The Cherry Boy, typed manuscript with emmendations, 1967, undated

**Box 2
Folder 1***Driftin' with Cliff Richard*, 1958-1959, undated

Working notes (*oversize materials removed to Box 7)

**Box 2
Folder
2-4***

Galley proofs (*removed to galley files)

Folder **The Flesh Merchants*, 1965-1966, undated

Working notes

Box 2 Folder 5

Composite manuscript

Box 3 Folder 1

Typed manuscript with corrections

**Folder
2***Jiving to Gyp*, 1959, undated

Composite manuscript

Box 3 Folder 3-4

Typed manuscript with corrections

**Folder
5**

Proofs

Galleys (*removed to galley files)	Box 3 Folder *
Corrected page proofs	Folder 6
<i>Myself for Fame</i> , 1962-1963, undated	
Working notes	Box 4 Folder 1-3
Original manuscript	Folder 4
Manuscripts with corrections	Folder 5-6
Insertions for manuscript with corrections	Folder 7
Final version manuscript	Folder 8
<i>Rave</i> , 1960, undated	
Handwritten manuscript drafts and working notes	Box 5 Folder 1
Handwritten notes in notebook	Folder 2
Typed signed manuscript	Folder 3
Page proofs	Folder 4
<i>The Rebel</i> , 1956-1962, undated	
Note strips	Box 5 Folder 5-6
Working notes	Folder 7
Typed manuscript with corrections	Box 6 Folder 1
<i>The Shadows</i> , 1961, undated	
Working notes	Box 6 Folder 2-3
Typed manuscript with corrections and inserts	Folder 4
Typed manuscript with corrections	Folder 5
Oversize materials	Box 7