

Brinsley MacNamara:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

- Creator:** MacNamara, Brinsley, 1890-1963
- Title:** Brinsley MacNamara Collection
- Dates:** 1868-1968 (bulk 1919-1962), undated
- Extent:** 18 document boxes (7.56 linear feet)
- Abstract:** The Brinsley MacNamara Collection contains manuscripts, correspondence, and other papers of the Irish novelist, actor, playwright, and critic John (or A. E.) Weldon, who was best known by his pen- and stage-name Brinsley MacNamara. The manuscripts represent novels, plays, poems, short stories, and criticism, much of the latter presented as radio broadcasts. Other papers include legal agreements, royalty statements, research materials, and writings by others about MacNamara and/or his works.
- Call Number:** Manuscript Collection MS-02630
- Language:** English; one item translated into Gaelic
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Administrative Information

- Preferred Citation:** Brinsley MacNamara Collection (Manuscript Collection MS-02630). Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Acquisition:** Purchases and gift, 1961-1973 (unnumbered purchase, 1961; R2137, R2969, R3643, R4700, R4990, unnumbered gift 1973).
- Processed by:** Simon Marina and Joan Sibley, 2024. Note: This finding aid replicates and replaces information previously available only in a card catalog. Please see the explanatory note at the end of this finding aid for information regarding the arrangement of the manuscripts as well as the abbreviations commonly used in descriptions.
- Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)
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Sources:

Murray, Christopher. "Brinsley MacNamara (John Weldon)." *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 10, 1982.

Roche, Anthony. "McNamara, Brinsley (John Weldon)." *Dictionary of Irish Biography Online*, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/mcnamara-brinsley-john-weldon-a5276> (accessed 19 September 2024).

Scope and Contents

The Brinsley MacNamara Collection contains manuscripts, correspondence, and other papers of the Irish novelist, actor, playwright, and critic John (or A. E.) Weldon, who was best known by his pen- and stage-name Brinsley MacNamara. The manuscripts represent novels, plays, poems, short stories, and criticism, much of the latter presented as radio broadcasts. Other papers include legal agreements, royalty statements, research materials, and writings by others about MacNamara and/or his works.

This collection was previously accessible only through a card catalog but has now been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project. The material remains as originally organized into four series: I. Works, 1919-1959 (boxes 1-16); II. Letters (outgoing correspondence), 1920-1959 (box 16); III. Recipients (incoming correspondence), 1926-1962 (box 17); and IV. Miscellaneous, 1868-1968 (boxes 17-18), with materials arranged alphabetically by title or author. See the Indexes for Works, Letters, Recipients, and Miscellaneous in this finding aid to identify additional titles of works and correspondent names present in this collection.

The great majority of the collection consists of works by MacNamara, mainly dating from his first staged play *The Rebellion in Ballycullen* at the Abbey Theatre in 1919 through his last published work in 1951, *The Whole Story of X. Y. Z.*, an experimental novella. Two of the works in this series were written using a later pseudonym, Michael Bedannis. MacNamara's work on radio broadcasts is also represented and includes his book reviews as well as programs on the melodies and songs of the Irish poet and lyricist Thomas Moore (1779-1852).

Much of the correspondence (both outgoing and incoming) relates to MacNamara's career and represents actors, authors, broadcasters (Radio Éireann and the BBC) directors (Ria Mooney, artistic director of the Abbey Theatre), literary agents, playwrights, publishers, theaters (the Abbey Theatre and others), and various theater organizations.

Several of MacNamara's works are further documented in the Miscellaneous series, which includes royalty statements from the Abbey Theatre, contracts for plays and novels, reader's reports from the Abbey Theatre Play Competition, and royalty statements from several publishers. Some materials document a legal case arising from the publication of MacNamara's controversial novel *The Valley of the Squinting*

Windows (1918) and the subsequent boycott of a school run by MacNamara's father, James Weldon.

Related Material

Harry Ransom Center: [Oliver St. John Gogarty Collection](#), 1904-1965

Harry Ransom Center: [George Reavey Papers](#), 1914-1976

Harry Ransom Center: [William Robert Rodgers Collection](#), 1940-1960

National Library of Ireland: [Catalogue](#) (Fourteen manuscripts by Brinsley Macnamara are listed, for *The dark horse*, *The grand house in the city*, *The glorious uncertainty*, *Michael Caravan*, *The master*, *The quenching of the flame*, and *The three thimbles*; also four letters; 1920-1959)

New York Public Library: [A. E. Weldon Collection of Papers](#), 1923-1958

University College Dublin: [RTÉ Radio Drama and Variety Scripts](#), 1931-2000

University of Delaware: [Brinsley MacNamara manuscripts](#), 1938-1954

University of Kansas: [Drafts by Brinsley MacNamara](#), 1917-1930s

Separated Material

Harry Ransom Center: [Photography Literary Files Collection](#) (55 items): Negatives of MacNamara, his family and friends, and places in Ireland, 1890s-1960s (P1-P8, P10-P17, P20-P52); portrait of MacNamara by the College Studios (Dublin, Ireland) (P53); nitrate negatives of views of Banimvanem School (P9A-P9B) and Quinn Abbey, County Clare (P18A-P18B, P19).

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- Unidentified author. The ass's shadow: preservations from oblivion, Tms/fragment/excerpt, 1 page, 1 January 1933. Re establishment of the Irish Academy of Letters. -- 17.12
- Unidentified author. The autograph tree, Tms/duplicated page, undated. Re Lady Gregory. -- 17.12
- Unidentified author. G. B. S. Fund, 1951-1960, Tms, 1 page, undated. Re his letters, mss and estate accounts. -- 17.12
- Unidentified author. Hannaker hill (poem). Ams/copy, 1 page, undated. -- 17.12
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- Unidentified author. Record of performances of plays by Brinsley MacNamara at Abbey Theatre, 1919-1955, mimeo/copy, 2 pages, undated. -- 17.12
- Unidentified author. Review of The valley of the squinting windows by Brinsley MacNamara, mimeo, 3 pages, 1918. -- 17.12
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- Anvil Books Limited. 80 TLS to Weldon, Oliver re reprints of Brinsley MacNamara books, 1962-1968. -- 17.14
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- Cumberland, Marten. The incredible happens, Tms with emendation, 17 pages, undated. Enclosed with this: rejection letter from radio station, 31 October 1945. -- 18.1
- Curran, Constantine P. Review of The master by Brinsley MacNamara, mimeo, 1 page, 10 March 1928. -- 18.1
- Deery, Teresa. ALS to Ó hAodha, Mícheál, 6 April 1962. -- 18.1
- District Inspector's Observation Book. Extracts, mimeo/copy, 6 pages, 1868-1905. For Killough Male National School. -- 18.1
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- Higgins, Fred R. The Boyne walk, mimeo, 2 pages, undated. -- 18.1
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- Irish Academy of Letters. Correspondence re presidency in 1942. Includes 6 TL/copies: 1 from Lord Dunsany to Sean O'Faolain; 2 from Lord Dunsany to Lennox Robinson; and 3 from Lennox Robinson to Lord Dunsany. -- 18.2
- Irish Playgoers. TLS to honorary secretary B. Collins to Radio Éireann, 8 July 1950. Written on this: ANS Séamus Kavanogh to MacNamara, undated. -- 18.2
- Irvin, D. Francis. Christmas lullaby, signed music and lyrics, 1 page, undated. -- 18.2
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- Kiely, Benedict. Extract from Modern Irish fiction re Brinsley MacNamara, mimeo/copy, 1 page, undated. -- 18.2
- Laforcade, X. de. TLS to White, May, 4 February 1956. Written on this: ANS by White, 22 February 1956. -- 18.2
- Lawrence, W. J. Review of The land for the people by Brinsley MacNamara, mimeo/copy, 2 pages, 16 December 1920. -- 18.2
- Lawrence, W. J. Review of The rebellion in Ballycullen by Brinsley MacNamara, mimeo/copy, 2 pages, 20 March 1919. -- 18.2
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- MacGabhann, Liam. Untitled article from Irish Times, mimeo, 3 pages, 1954. -- 18.4
- MacNamara, Brinsley, 1890-1963. Abbey Theatre Play Competition: Reader's reports, Tccms/incomplete with few Ams pages, approximately 150 pages, 1948-1956. Included with this: 2 TccL to Abbey Theatre re competition of 1949-1950 dated 4 and 5 January 1950. -- 18.6
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- Malone, Andrew E. Brinsley MacNamara: an appreciation, mimeo, 7 pages, 1929. -- 18.4
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- Marbury (Elizabeth), Inc. TLS president Carl Reed to European representative to Naylor, Stanley, 14 July 1936. Inter-company communication re MacNamara's play Margaret Gillan. -- 18.4
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 - Weldon, Oliver. Memorandum of agreement with Anvil Books Limited re reprint of *The clanking of chains* by Brinsley MacNamara, TD, 2 pages, 8 June 1967. -- 18.9
 - Weldon, Oliver. TLS to Roberts, Francis Warren, 13 February 1966. Re Texas collection of MacNamara mss. -- 18.9
 - Westmeath Examiner. Brinsley MacNamara lectures in Mullingan, mimeo, 2 pages, 24 November 1928. -- 18.9
 - Westmeath Examiner. News excerpts re the Kullulagh Martyrs and John Weldon (Brinsley MacNamara), mimeo/copies, 5 pages, 1907-1908. -- 18.9
 - Westmeath Examiner. News stories re John Weldon (Brinsley MacNamara), mimeo/copies, 2 pages, 1908. -- 18.9
 - Yeats, William Butler, 1865-1939. An appeal: Weldon subscription fund re MacNamara's *The valley of the squinting windows*, 3 printed sheets, 1 page each, 18 December 1923. Co-signers: George W. Russell; Oliver St. John Gogarty; James Stephens; James G. Douglas; Aodh de Blacam; and Eamon O'Duibhir. -- 18.9
 - Yeats, William Butler, 1865-1939. Reader's report on *The master* by Brinsley MacNamara, mimeo/copy, 1 page, undated. -- 18.9

Explanatory Note Concerning Manuscript Collections Cataloged in the Card Catalog

Prior to 1990 when archival cataloging procedures were adopted at the Ransom Center, all manuscript collections were described in a card catalog.

Organization of Collections:

- Manuscripts for each author collection were organized into four categories:
- **Works:** manuscripts by the author, arranged alphabetically by title;
- **Letters:** the author's outgoing correspondence, arranged alphabetically by recipient name;
- **Recipient:** the author's incoming correspondence, arranged alphabetically by the author of the letter; and
- **Miscellaneous:** all other manuscripts and correspondence, arranged alphabetically by creator.

Materials that did not fit into these categories, such as art, photographs, books, and near-print materials such as newspaper clippings, were dispersed to other Ransom Center collections for cataloging and storage.

Abbreviations Used in Descriptions:

The symbols below were used in combinations. For example **ALS** means autograph letter signed; **Tccms** means typed carbon copy manuscript, etc.

- **A** = autograph (i.e., handwritten)
- **T** = typed
- **S** = signed
- **I** = initialed
- **Ms** = manuscript
- **Mss** = manuscripts
- **L** = letter
- **FL** = form letter
- **N** = note
- **D** = document
- **C** = card
- **PC** = post card
- **cc** = carbon copy
- **p** = page
- **pp** = pages
- **l** = leaf
- **ll** = leaves
- **nd** = no date
- **inc d** = incomplete date