

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



Jack White's Writing

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Jack White was the author of a number of pamphlets and articles (see below) as well as an autobiography, *Misfit* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1930). However at the time of his death, it seems that White may have completed a second part of his autobiography¹ — *Misfit* ends c.1916. Moreover, Albert Meltzer who knew White from his days with *Spain and The World*, states² that White worked with Matt Kavanagh, a Liverpoolian anarchist of Irish extraction, on a 'survey of Irish labour and Irish aspirations in relation to anarchism'; this would've been c. 1937 or later. In the same article Meltzer also mentions 'White's study of the little known Cork 'Soviet''. As with White's collaboration with Kavanagh, this latter work may have been suggested to White after his exposure to the workers self-management movement in revolutionary Spain in 1936–37.

¹ R. McDonnell, *Cushendun in the Glens of Antrim*, 1995, p42. See also C.E.B. Brett, *Five Big Houses of Cushendun*, Belfast, 1997 p69. The source of this information is Randal McDonnell, author of a number of booklets on touring and walks in the Glens of Antrim, from conversations he had with Patricia English, Jack White's niece. The English family retained a summer home outside Cushendun and until her recent death, Mrs English was a regular visitor to the area.

² J.R. White, *Anarchy*, Belfast, 1972. Introduction by Albert Meltzer, p9.

Although it has not been conclusively established as to why, it does beyond doubt that White's second wife, Noreen Shanahan, either alone or in conjunction with the White family, disposed of the bulk of her husband's papers in the aftermath of his death³. It is possible that this may have occurred through neglect⁴ or simple expediency, but it is more likely that it was driven by White's conflict with his wife, an ardent Catholic, about his views on the evils of the Catholic Church and Catholicism itself⁵. White's arguments with his wife were well known in his circle.⁶

Whatever the exact circumstances, it cannot be ruled out that a wider agenda was served by the destruction of the papers. For anarchists this is all the more tragic as these papers may well have shed a greater and more reflective light on White's views on anarchism in the Spanish Civil War, as well as anarchism in relation to the revolutionary struggle in Ireland.

³ R. McDonnell, op cit., p42.

⁴ Information from Derrick White.

⁵ Information from Derrick White.

⁶ Information from Andrew Boyd. Boyd knew Jack Mulvenna, a long-standing Belfast socialist republican, "Mulvenna often spoke of the terrible domestic rows White would have with his wife – all over religion."