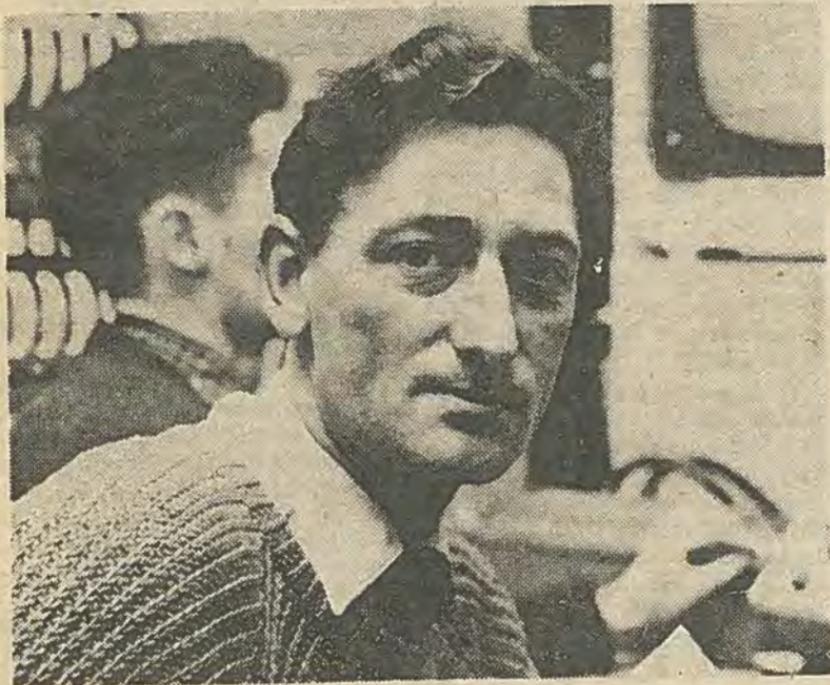


## Writer in Profile—

# James Plunkett

Niall Sheridan introduces this week's edition of the Wednesday television series, *Writer In Profile*, in which he interviews author James Plunkett.



James Plunkett

JAMES PLUNKETT, internationally acclaimed as a novelist and short story writer, was born James Plunkett Kelly, in the Dublin suburb of Sandymount in 1920. He was educated at the Christian Brothers' School, Synge Street, and later studied at the School of Music. He then worked for some time with the Dublin Gas Company and subsequently as a freelance writer and musician, playing occasionally with the then Radio Eireann Symphony Orchestra.

In 1946, he became a full-time Trade Union Official and was closely associated with "Big Jim" Larkin and his son, the late Jim Larkin, Junior.

In 1955, Plunkett joined Radio Eireann as Assistant Head of Drama and five years later he was the first producer to transfer to television, where he is at present head of Features Department.

He had begun to write seriously in the late 1930's and was first published in *The Bell* in 1942. He was much encouraged and helped by the then editor of the magazine, Sean O Faolain, and later by his successor, Peadar O'Donnell.

In 1953, O'Donnell devoted an entire issue to a group of short

stories by Plunkett under the title *The Eagles and the Trumpets*.

American publication of his collected short stories, in a volume entitled *The Trusting and the Maimed*, followed in 1955, and four years later this collection, augmented by additional stories, was published in Britain. These stories, distinguished by clarity of style, acute social observation and deep, un sentimental compassion, announced the emergence of a new formidable talent.

During the late forties and through the fifties he produced numerous radio adaptations and wrote several plays for radio — notably *Big Jim*, *Home-Coming* and *Farewell, Harper*. His stage play, *The Risen People* (based on the character of "Big Jim" Larkin) was produced by the Abbey Theatre in 1958.

By the end of the fifties James Plunkett was widely recognised as one of the more important writers of his time.

Working in television for the past eight years Plunkett has written and produced a number of distinguished programmes, including *The Life and Times of Jimmy O'Dea*, *Memory Harbour* and "When do You Die, Friend?" He also collaborated with the late Myles na gCopaleen on the

script of the series entitled *O'Dea's Your Man*.

Commissioned in 1958, his first novel grew far beyond the scope originally envisaged and occupied him intermittently for ten years. It was published in 1969 under the title *Strumpet City*. This vast, brilliantly - orchestrated work recreates with astonishing authenticity the atmosphere of Dublin during the seven years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War I. Many of the leading critics have hailed it as a masterpiece, and it became an immediate best-seller. Following publication in England and the United States, it is shortly to appear in France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Spain.

Like many of the greatest writers, James Plunkett has made his parish into a universe. Fundamentally he has one setting and one subject — the city he so passionately loves, and those tough, humorous, tender, cynical and indestructible Dubliners to whom his work has given a new lease of immortality.

James Plunkett lives in Dublin and is married with four children. He is at present at work on a new novel set in the Dublin of the 1940's and 1950's.