

MEDIA RELEASE

Previously unknown James Joyce manuscripts go on display for closing days of *James Joyce and Ulysses at the National Library of Ireland* exhibition

1 March 2006: A six-sheet collection of previously unknown **James Joyce manuscripts**, described by experts as “crucial elements in Joyce’s first efforts at writing a new work after *Ulysses*”, has been acquired by the National Library of Ireland. One of the most significant features of the newly discovered materials is that they appear to provide evidence of collaborative effort between the writer and his wife Nora on certain aspects of his work.

The acquisition was funded by the **AIB Group** under the provisions of the Tax Credit Scheme (Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, Sec. 1003).* The manuscripts date from 1923, the year after *Ulysses* was published. They were acquired from a private collector through the auction house Sotheby’s, at a cost of €1.17 million. This is the Library’s third major acquisition of Joyce manuscripts since 2000. Because of James Joyce’s status in world literature – he is second only to Shakespeare in terms of the number of published studies of his work – any new discovery related to his work is an important worldwide literary event.

These exciting new manuscripts go on display today at the *James Joyce and Ulysses at the National Library of Ireland* exhibition. They will remain on display until Friday 10 March 2006, when the exhibition closes.

All but two pages are heavily revised first drafts in pencil; they are unlike most other Joyce manuscripts in the National Library’s collections in that four of the pages are transcripts of dictation written in Nora Joyce’s hand and contain several misspellings which Joyce retained. All pages contain subsequent corrections and alterations by Joyce; this demonstrates a kind of collaborative effort between Joyce and Nora that has not been documented before – either in scope or in kind. This latest collection marks the National Library’s third major acquisition of Joyce manuscripts in a period of six years.

On 14 December 2000, the Library acquired the 27-page ‘Circe’ manuscript, regarded as the apex of Joyce’s masterpiece *Ulysses*; it was purchased for IR£1.4 million at Christies in New York in an auction which attracted huge international interest.

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On 30 May 2002, it acquired a very large collection of previously unknown Joyce manuscripts at a cost of STG£8 million. The collection included early notebooks, notes and drafts for *Ulysses* as well as proofs and additions to proofs for *Finnegans Wake* – in all more than 500 manuscript pages and some 200 pages of proofs, together with some typescripts.

Ends

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For a detailed description of the manuscripts see page 3 of this release.

Note to editors:

* The Tax Credit Scheme provided for in section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, enables persons, companies etc who donate important national heritage items to the national collections to credit the value of those items against their liabilities for certain taxes.

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Description of the new James Joyce manuscripts acquired by the National Library of Ireland

The collection comprises six large sheets (approximately 40 cm x 30 cm), all of which were written between April and August 1923; it includes drafts of sketches which Joyce called 'Tristan and Isolde', 'Mamalujo' and 'St Kevin'. The manuscripts document the initial stages of Joyce's work which would be published as *Finnegans Wake* 16 years later, in 1939 – just two years before he died.

The new collection contains texts of which there had been no previous material evidence; these are in large measure unknown texts written during a crucial stage in Joyce's artistic development. The fact that Joyce decided to follow only some of these narrative threads, while abandoning the majority of the specific textual elements in these drafts, is important to Joyce scholarship and 20th century literary history.

Among the most notable features of these new manuscripts:

- All of these early sketches are centred on (often mythic) aspects of Irish history, usually distorted in typical, late-Joycean style.
- Unlike Joyce's later drafts of 'Tristan and Isolde' and 'Mamalujo' (i.e. 'Mathew, Mark, Luke and John', the Four Masters or the Four Old Men), the sketches contained in these drafts are presented as a unified narrative. In later drafts, Joyce separated the stories and then decided not to use them in his new work. He recombined them in a flurry of writing as late as 1938, only then incorporating them as an integrated narrative into *Finnegans Wake* (Book II, chapter 4, pages 383 to 399).
- Joyce included an early version of one of his poems, 'Tutto é Sciolto', as a song sung by the Four Old Men to celebrate Tristan and Isolde's first kiss. As he had with another poem, 'Nightpiece', Joyce decided not to include it in this work but later included them in his second volume of poetry, *Pomes Penyeach* (Shakespeare and Company, 1927).
- One of the stories recounted here is of a young Isolde learning her lessons and, among other things, reciting a humorous parody of the Lord's Prayer. Although similar in theme to an entire chapter of *Finnegans Wake* (II.2), when Joyce returned to the subject in the summer of 1926, he did not directly use any of this material to write that chapter.