

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, 15th August 2019

Archive of 'The Ginger Man' author JP Donleavy donated to National Library

The [National Library of Ireland](#) (NLI) has today (15.08.19) announced receipt of the archive of the internationally renowned, award-winning Irish American author JP Donleavy. The author's archive is wide-ranging, comprising notebooks, manuscripts, playscripts, letters, theatrical posters and programmes, as well as first editions of the author's work.

A son of Irish immigrants, Donleavy was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1926, before moving to Ireland in 1946, having served in the US navy during World War 2. Following time spent studying at Trinity College Dublin, he turned to writing full-time. Donleavy became an Irish citizen at the end of the 1960s and lived in Westmeath until his death in 2017. In 2015, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Awards, and in 2016 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Letters (Litt.D) by Trinity College Dublin.

Donleavy is best-known for his novel 'The Ginger Man', which was first published in France in 1955. Banned in Ireland on the grounds of obscenity, the book went on to be published in two dozen languages, selling in the region of 50 million copies, and has never been out of print. Today, Donleavy has a worldwide readership in the tens of millions, and is also considered a successful painter and playwright.

Spanning 300 boxes, the donated archive reveals a fascinating career that has spanned decades. Highlights include:

- A typescript draft of 'The Ginger Man' from 1951, with various notes by Brendan Behan, bringing together two of Ireland's most fascinating literary figures of the mid-20th century;
- A notebook with diary entries, including a note of a meeting with author Muriel Spark;
- A programme for the 1959 Gaiety production of 'The Ginger Man', starring Richard Harris;
- Correspondence with a wide range of friends and acquaintances, including from his schooldays in New York, his years in TCD, from the worlds of literature and art, and many from theatre and film such as Billy Connolly and Pamela Stephenson, Susan Hampshire, George Roy Hill, Malcolm McDowell, Sam Wanamaker and Susannah York.

The donation, made under Section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, was marked at an event in the NLI today. Speaking at the event, Director of the NLI, Dr Sandra Collins, commented: "JP Donleavy's work made him a major figure of 20th century Irish writing, with a fascinating circle of literary and artistic friends. In the draft of 'The Ginger Man' you can

see handwritten notes by his friend Brendan Behan. We are delighted that this archive, which reveals the writer's work and life over many decades, is joining the National Library's extensive literary collections. It will be a wonderful resource for all those interested in 20th century Irish writing and in JP Donleavy – the writer and his world."

Chairman of the Board of the NLI, Paul Shovlin added: "JP Donleavy's legacy is evident in the sustained popularity of his work worldwide, and we are grateful to the Donleavy family for donating his papers to the National Library of Ireland under Section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. Irish literary collections are of major international interest, so it is extremely important that Section 1003 makes it possible to add significant heritage materials like this archive to the Irish national collections, where they are preserved and protected now and for future generations.'

Further information about the NLI is available at: www.nli.ie.

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Note to Editors:

- Director of the NLI, Dr Sandra Collins is available for comment on request.
- Under Section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, tax relief is available in respect of the donation of important national heritage items to the Irish national collections. The relief consists of a tax credit equal to 80% of the value of the heritage item(s) donated which can be credited against particular tax liabilities incurred by the donor. The National Library is an Approved Body for donations under the legislation. Other Approved Bodies are the National Archives of Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland, National Museum of Ireland, Irish Museum of Modern Art, and The Crawford Art Gallery Cork

About the Library: The National Library of Ireland is the library of record for Ireland. Established in 1877, it shares the story of Ireland with the world through its unique collections. The NLI cares for more than ten million items, including books, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, prints, maps, drawings, ephemera, music and digital media. The Library is open, free of charge, to all those who wish to consult the collections. The five strategic priorities for the National Library of Ireland for 2016-2021 are to collect, protect, connect, innovate and collaborate. Further information is available at www.nli.ie. Follow the NLI on Twitter [@NLIreland](https://twitter.com/NLIreland), Facebook [National Library of Ireland](https://www.facebook.com/NationalLibraryofIreland), [Flickr on the Commons](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nliireland/) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4YU9R3U8L1U8L1U8L1U8L1).