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A look at why Frank McCourt's book, *Angela's Ashes*, has touched such a sensitive spot with some Limerick people

By Sean Ryan



Angela McCourt

The controversy over Frank McCourt's book, *Angela's Ashes*, continues to rage here in Limerick and whether it reflects a true account of his life in the city or not. As usual the first casualty is itself truth. But perhaps there's more to the controversy than meets the eye.



The bed where they slept

Certainly there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is possibly a case to be answered by Frank McCourt for his description of the extent of his familie's poverty while they lived in Limerick. but to have it portrayed on national television, by a fellow Limerickman, in the form of an emotional outburst surely renders this evidence insubmissable and the whole country will justly take it as begrudgeary.



The old house in Roden Lane

However, I'd like to initiate a discussion on the fundamental truth contained on every page of *Angela's Ashes*. A truth that should justly make us proud of Frank McCourt.

This truth uses Limerick and the events of Frank McCourt's life only as a canvas and is, I believe, why the book has sold over 5 million copies worldwide. Within it's pages Frank McCourt has managed to portray the fundamental truths about the human condition. This truth is not to be found by



The young Frank

Angela's Ashes
'Tis: A Memoir
Songs From The Ashes CD
Fall out

analysing superficially the events described in the book - the real truth is hidden between the lines and by what is not said.

And this is where our insularity comes to the fore -the Walls of Limerick may long since be gone but psychologically they still stand - we have taken everything personally. For within the pages of Angela's Ashes you will find greed, lust, anger, jealousy, pride in fact, every deadly sin you come to mention and they are not unique to Limerick. For instance, the jealousy of the young man from Easons towards the imagined carrying on of his girlfriend, is truly frightening in it's ferocity. This event may or may not have occurred, but is it not certain that people like those exist and more frighteningly, exist within us all?

Perhaps the events most talked about are his treatment of his mother and her affair with Leman Griffin. Again, why are we so reluctant to believe this? Could it not be true? We have concern for Angela McCourt while castigating Frank for talking about it. I believe it took a supreme act of courage for him to expose to the world these events and was a necessary thing to do in order to heal the hurt and anger he carried with him for years. Who are we to deny him that healing?

Only by examining our lives can we begin to grow and set ourselves free from the bondage of our egos. Time and time again through the pages of Angela's Ashes Frank McCourt has done this. The book is in fact a public confession.

There is more I would like to say about this aspect of the phenomenon of Angela's Ashes but I think there is sufficient food for thought here. If you'd like to keep in touch with Limerick you can register here for our Newsletter.

Photos: Conor McCourt/New Video