

Frank's book that put 'Limerick on literary map' finally gets Irish translation

ALAN OWENS
News Reporter

FRANK McCourt's much loved memoir of his early life in Limerick, *Angela's Ashes*, has been translated worldwide to over 25 languages in 30 countries, with more than 6 million sales worldwide - but has never been printed in the Irish language, until now.

The Limerick Writers' Centre, a not-for-profit organisation established to nurture and support writers, which is based on Barrington Street in the city, is set to launch a limited edition Irish translation of McCourt's Pulitzer Prize winning book, first published in 1996 in New York.

The translation was commissioned by the Limerick Writers' Centre from writer and translator Padraic Breathnach and will be launched in the Frank McCourt museum on Hartstonge Street on October 10 by Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan TD.

Dominic Taylor, the project editor for the book, said 'Luaitheach Angela' would be "a tribute to Frank McCourt's Irish roots".

"On the occasion of Frank's untimely passing in 2009, the Limerick Writers' Centre made a decision to honour our famous author in a significant way," explained Mr Taylor.

"After much deliberation, we decided that it would be



McCourt on the march: the late Frank McCourt in his native city back in 2008, accompanied by his wife Ellen and Angela Ashes tour guide Mick O'Donnell. Now an Irish language version of his most famous book is to be released

Picture: Sean Curtin/Press 22

appropriate for us to publish an Irish edition of Angela's Ashes, the book that put Limerick on the literary map," explained Mr Taylor.

Mr Taylor also expressed

the hope that an Irish edition of such a famous book might encourage more people to read books in Irish.

The publication and launch of the book takes place in

association with the museum dedicated to McCourt's memory in Leamy House, where the author went to school as a child in Limerick.

Minister Deenihan will

launch the Irish edition on Monday, October 10 at 4pm. The Irish publication will also be launched at the Irish Consulate in New York on November 15.

Meeting on Transition Town scheme

LIMERICK could follow in the footsteps of Kinsale and the English towns Totnes and Stroud in becoming a 'Transition Town'.

A meeting is set to be held next Monday in the Locke Bar at 8pm in order to introduce the concept, and explain how individuals and communities can get involved.

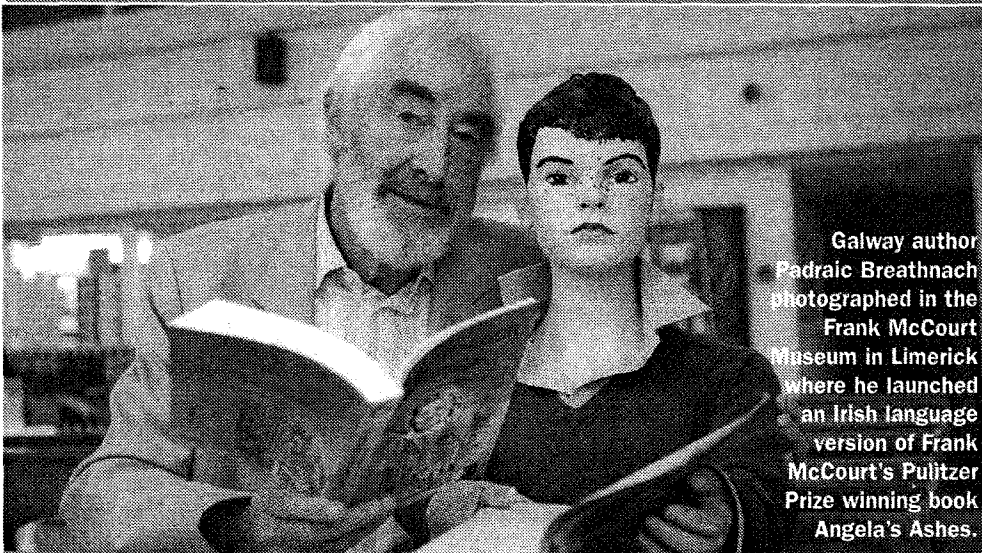
The movement began as a response to peak oil and climate change, and looks for practical ways of making local communities more sustainable. Supporters of the concept believe transition towns are local communities which have become stronger and more self-sufficient through a bottom-up approach.

More than 300 communities have been certified across the world to date, including five in Ireland.

One of the organisers of the event, Sheila Cahill, Farranshone, a local member of the Green Party, said: "I think this could be a positive development for Limerick at a time when people are feeling fearful and despondent. This is about people from all political persuasions and none, getting together to help make Limerick more environmentally and economically sustainable."

For more information on the project, telephone Sheila on 061-278922.

FOR



Galway author Padraic Breathnach photographed in the Frank McCourt Museum in Limerick where he launched an Irish language version of Frank McCourt's Pulitzer Prize winning book *Angela's Ashes*.

McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* resurrected as *Gaeilge*

THE Pulitzer prize-winning *Angela's Ashes*, by Limerick author Frank McCourt, and already translated into many languages, now has an Irish version.

Jimmy Deenihan TD Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, officially launched the Irish version in the Frank McCourt Museum this week.

"*Luaithreach Angela*", is a translation in Irish of Frank McCourt's bestselling book, "*Angela's Ashes*," originally published in 1996, and subsequently made into a successful film.

Minister Deenihan said: "Writing and literature in Limerick arguably plays as much of a part in the fabric of the city as sport does. It is obvious that writing ran through the veins of the McCourt family, as two of Frank's brothers Malachy and Alphie, have also had published works".

He said that "great credit must go to the Limerick Writers' Centre who commissioned writer and retired lecturer in Irish at Mary Immaculate College, Padraic

Breathnach, to translate the book into Irish.

"I imagine that this must have been a labour of love for both the centre and Padraic".

Speaking about the limited edition *Luaithreach Angela*, Dominic Taylor, the project editor for the book, explained the reason behind publishing this new version:

"The publication in the Irish language is a tribute to Frank McCourt's Irish roots. On the occasion of Frank's untimely passing in 2009, the Limerick Writers' Centre made a decision to honour our famous author in a significant way and after much deliberation, we decided that it would be appropriate for us to publish an Irish edition of *Angela's Ashes*, the book that put Limerick on the literary map".

The Limerick Writers' Centre also expressed the hope that an Irish edition of such a famous book may encourage more people to read books in Irish.

The Irish publication will also be launched at the Irish Consulate in New York, on November 15.

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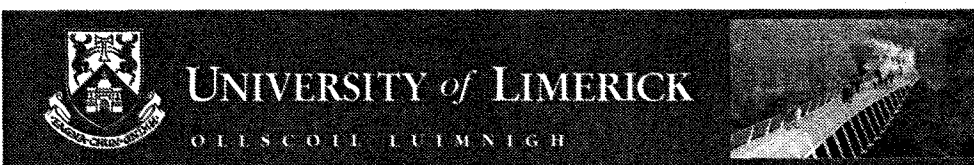
Report gathering dust in Leinster House

THE recommendations of the final report of the West Task Force Report should be made public, says Limerick Chamber president McSweeney, pointing out that the Minister for Enterprise and Trade, Richard Bruton, has had a copy for over six months.

Pointing out that the Task Force was specifically to examine the potential for economic growth in the Mid West, following withdrawal of Dell's manufacturing base at Raheen, McSweeney said it is disappointing that the recommendation of the report now appears contained in yet another report that is gathering dust on a shelf in Leinster House.

"As a region we deserve better than this - see a copy of this report and the recommendations it contains and this needs to happen as a matter of urgency, as our region continues to suffer from deteriorating city centre, uncertainly surrounding the future of one of our key infrastructural assets, Shannon Airport and an unhealthy city regional balance".

The Chamber chief also pointed out that the unemployment rate in the region up by 6,000 men when the "emergency" Task Force was established.



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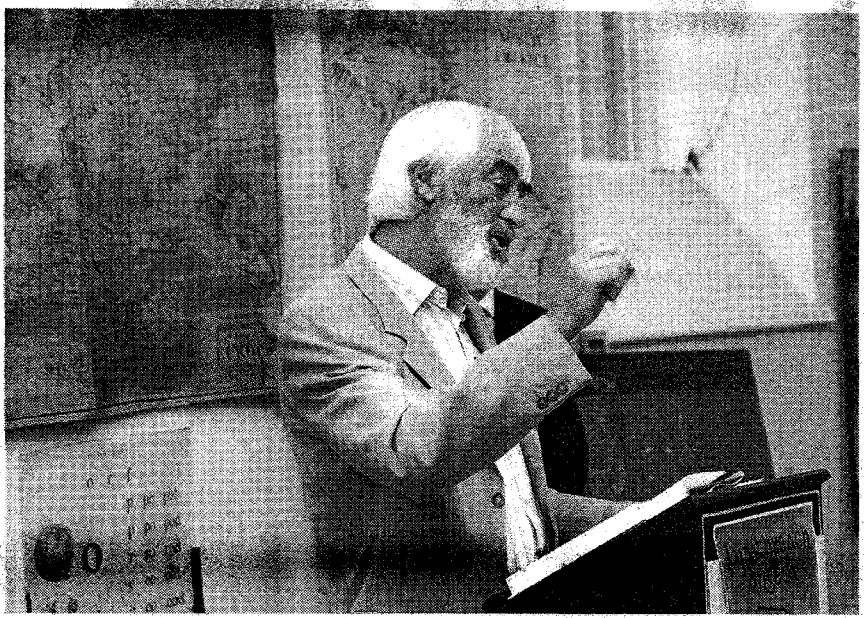
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Translator Pádraic Breathnach reads from the Irish version of Angela's Ashes in the Frank McCourt museum on Hartstonge Street. PICTURE: EUGENE RYAN

Mccourt rises from the 'Ashes' in native tongue

Anne Sheridan

PEIG Sayers was always the quintessential 'misery lit' studied 'as Gaeilge' by Irish school students.

But now, Frank McCourt's first famous memoir, *Angela's Ashes*, has been translated into Irish and is expected to be studied by students at home, as well as many abroad, who have become interested in the complexities of the Irish language.

It may not sell in excess of six million copies like its English predecessor, but 'Luathreach Angela' it is hoped will inspire a new audience.

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, launched the Irish language version of *Angela's Ashes* in the Frank McCourt museum, formerly Leamy's school, on Hartstonge Street this week.

It coincides with the 15th anniversary of the publication of the book in New York, when McCourt became a literary star in his 60s.

Minister Deenihan said *Angela's Ashes* may not be as famous as James Joyce's *Ulysses* "but it is known throughout the

world, and will be very popular with a lot of Irish teachers and pupils", following the latest translation.

It has already been translated in 25 languages worldwide.

"It is very much a reflection of the language of Limerick and the social conditions at the time," he said.

He was presented with a hard copy of the book, signed by translator Pádraic Breathnach.

Dominic Taylor, of the Limerick Writers' Centre, said the project has been ongoing since the death of McCourt two years ago.

"This is in honour of one of Limerick's most successful writers. We don't hope to compete with the original sales, but we hope it will be an inspiring and uplifting read," said Mr Taylor.

Only a few hundred copies of the limited edition Irish translation will be printed initially, depending on demand, with more copies flown to the United States for its New York launch next month.

Translator Pádraic Breathnach, a retired lecturer from Mary Immaculate College, said he went through the book

"with a fine tooth comb" and believes it deserves every award it received, in spite of some criticism levelled at the memoir of a poverty stricken childhood, when it was first published in 1996.

"It's not depressing, actually. It's a very playful book, so full of drama. There isn't a page where it's boring.

"I hope I didn't take away from the spirit of it. It was very important to get the tone, the rhythm and the spirit right. I adhered as strictly as possible to the original," he said.

Even when he thought McCourt made a mistake by placing a comma in the wrong place, he said it stuck to the original - Pulitzer Prize-winning - text.

Deputising as Mayor, Cllr Michael Hourigan, said the author left "a wonderful legacy to Limerick in *Angela's Ashes*." Culture Ireland, Limerick City and County councils, as well as Shannon Development, supported the publication financially.

Eoghan Prendergast of Shannon Development said he hopes when the book is launched in New York it will encourage more tourists to visit Limerick.

LIMERICK LEADER www.limerickleader.ie

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McCourt's masterpiece 'as Gaeilge'

The Irish translation of Frank McCourt's Angela's Ashes will be launched next week. **John Rainsford** discovers why the Limerick Writers' Centre took on a project which ended up taking two years to complete

IT has been translated into around 25 languages, but up until now Frank McCourt's best selling memoir Angela's Ashes has not been available in Irish. On Monday, that will be put to rights when Limerick Writers' Centre completes a two-year project and launches the new edition, entitled 'Luaithreach Angela'. It has been a long but rewarding journey.

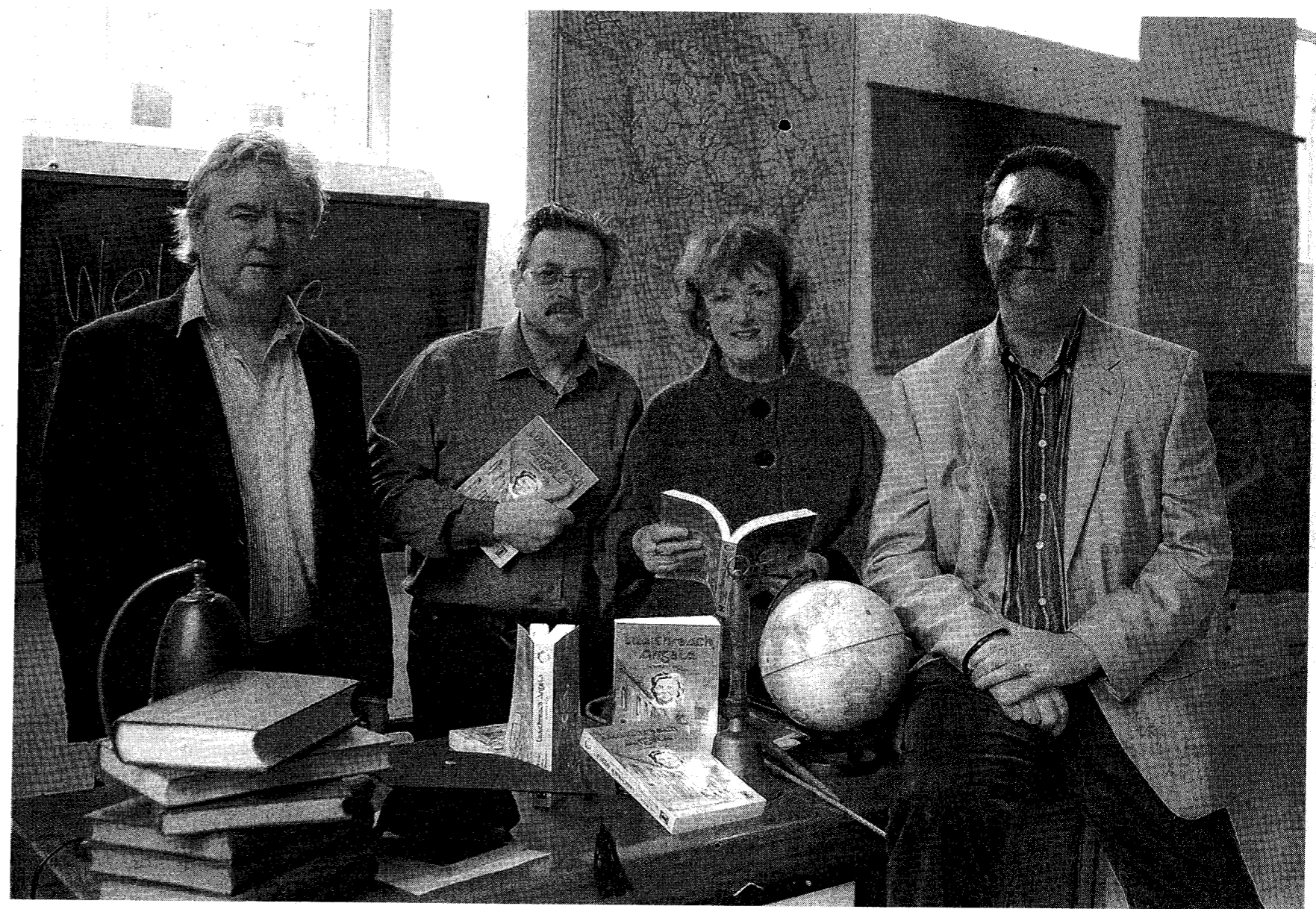
The limited edition Irish translation of the Pulitzer

Prize winning author's biographical account of growing up in Limerick was commissioned by the LWC, with board member Dominic Taylor acting as the project editor, and working alongside writer and translator Pádraic Breathnach. It is hoped that the Irish edition will encourage more people to read books in the Irish language.

The Limerick Writers' Centre is a non-profit organisation established

to nurture and support writers and the project is helping to advance its role in promoting the artistic and educational life of the Mid-West. Dominic Taylor established the centre three years ago along with three others - Dermott Petty, Mike Finn and Mark Lloyd - in an effort to mentor and support Limerick-based writers. Its headquarters are on Barrington Street

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Derry McGrath, Dominic Taylor, Dorothy Cantrell and Pat Nolan thumb through the pages of "Luaithreach Angela" at the Frank McCourt Museum and Leamy Art Gallery on Hartstone Street

PICTURE: OWEN SOUTH

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Writers translate Frank's 'scéal'

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and the members run it solely on a voluntary basis.

Dominic explains: "Two years ago the Writers' Centre took on one publishing project called 'Kemmy's Limerick Miscellany'. Last year we secured the rights to translate Angela's Ashes into Gaelic, which was a huge boost. The project has taken two years to complete and we intend that the book should stand up, in its own right, as a piece of Gaelic literature.

"Our reasons for taking on this project were, first of all, that such a famous book, by an Irish author, should be available to read in Gaelic and secondly, as Frank McCourt was a proud Limerick man, we want to publish the book in Limerick as a tribute to him."

Frank McCourt was born in Brooklyn, New York. His parents were Malachy McCourt from Antrim and Angela Sheehan who was born in Limerick. With the depression looming the family returned to Limerick in 1934 but almost immediately began a descent into poverty. His twin brothers, Oliver and Eugene and a sister Margaret, all died within a short period of time.

Dominic adds: "There is a huge demand in Limerick for a Writers' Centre. Indeed, we have started a series of creative writing workshops that are aimed at both beginners and advanced writers.

"The workshops are held in the Leamy Art Gallery and School on Hartstonge Street. The owner of Leamys, Una Heaton, expressed a wish that a literary connection be formed as part of her plans to turn the premises into an art and cultural centre in honour of the late Frank McCourt. He was a past pupil of the original school. We were only too happy to oblige, in this regard, as Frank McCourt had been a supporter of our efforts at the Centre also."

Frank McCourt was



Frank McCourt pointing out a place of interest on Windmill Street during an Angela's Ashes tour in the summer of 2008

PICTURE: OWEN SOUTH

diagnosed with malignant melanoma in May 2009. He subsequently died in a hospice in Manhattan on July 19, 2009.

The translator of his book, Pádraic Breathnach, was born in Moycullen, overlooking Lough Corrib, in County Galway but came to Limerick in 1969 to take up a position as lecturer in Irish at Mary Immaculate College. He continued to lecture at Mary Immaculate College until 2007 when he retired.

"My father was by far my greatest influence although he was not literate in any way," he says. "He made us work very hard on our small family farm but we also knew that he loved us. Although it seems

like an obvious thing to say, a writer is a person who writes. I also write because I must. For me life would have little meaning otherwise. To quote Frank McCourt: "Things don't happen unless you make them happen. Nothing is significant unless you make it significant." It pains me if I experience something beautiful but fail to capture it in print.

"I have no idea what else I could do with my life. Writing is what I want to do. Riches or fame do not matter much to me. Writing in Irish is always going to be low profile but that does not bother me either. It is less difficult to be a writer than not to be. You must persist and overcome those rejections and

frustrations."

He added: "In the end, it really is a matter of life and death. One chooses life. One has to fight, all of the way, forever. Although I would like to think that I produce 'art' I do not go about thinking that I must produce 'art'. I try to write what I wish to write and to write it as well as possible. Generally you know in a flash what you want to produce but producing it can be difficult. Try to satisfy yourself first and foremost. You might, then, be in a position to satisfy others!"

Dominic Taylor agrees: "We have a stream of people coming here. We want to get moving on developing other projects also. Currently we

run the 'On the Nail' reading series on the first Thursday of every month which caters for all types of creative writing including poetry, fiction, short stories and so on. We also hold various workshops on poetry, children's writing, a non-fiction workshop and a series of creative writing workshops aimed at both beginners and advanced writers.

"Our long-term goal is to find a permanent residence for the Writers' Centre in Limerick City. Currently our residence has been given to us by a private individual who graciously allows us to use it as a Writers' Centre."

Dominic acknowledges that there is currently an absence

of money for acquiring such a permanent residence but believes, given the level of public interest, that they must persist with the project. More and more people today have time on their hands and want to spend it creatively in the arts, he feels. A fully functioning Writers' Centre could play a vital part in this.

"Money is clearly diminishing at present and everything is being cut back. We sell some books to raise funds and we get the odd bit of support from the city council. We need nurturing and every bit of funding helps, even if it is only a hundred euros, given by a benefactor.

"We are naturally creative beings and through literature and other artistic pursuits we can change our world for the better. It is an alternative to the 'rat race' if you like. I mean new venues are buzzing with literature each month. A crop of new writers is being groomed and some are beginning to get acknowledgement outside of the country. It pleases me to see new people coming through the ranks."

Although there is little money in the arts currently and the LWC is surviving on a shoestring budget Dominic is not downbeat. He says: "I do not get discouraged as obstacles are there to be overcome. It was never going to be easy. Once you get over those initial obstacles and start achieving your objectives everything becomes easier. In the beginning you do not have to get it right, you just have to get it going."

The launch of 'Luathreach Angela' takes place 15 years after the publication of the original book in New York, in 1996. The Irish translation will be launched in Limerick on Monday and at the Irish Consulate in New York, on November 15.

For further information about the launch see: www.limerick-writerscentre.com/ and www.frankmccourt-museum.com.

Limerick man's account of writer's honour

John Liddy

CASTILIAN hospitality was everywhere to be seen for the naming of the Kate O'Brien Street in the city of Ávila on September 27.

Kate wrote about this abulense trait and I had visited Ávila many times, so it did not come as a surprise to many people. But it was clear from the warmth of initial greetings from Miguel Ángel García Nieto, Mayor of Ávila and Montserrat Sánchez García, the Culture and Education Officer, that this was going to be a day to remember.

On entering the Mayor's office with the Irish Ambassador to Spain, Justin Harmon, I thought of what Kate O'Brien had started all those years ago when she first came to this walled city. For here, seated around the room, was the Mayor of Limerick, Jim Long beside Sheila Deegan of Limerick Arts, along with various representatives of enterprise and education. She would have enjoyed the moment.

At midday the local band opened proceedings on a street in front of the train station. There was a purple cloth fluttering in the breeze covering the sign Calle Kate O'Brien and then the Mayor of Ávila stepped forward to say how Ávila was the motive for her predilection for Spain and the works of Saint Teresa, her favourite reading, and with the inauguration of a new street a debt is repaid to one of Ávila's most distinguished ambassadors the world over.

The Mayor of Limerick, Jim Long, spoke eloquently and with emotion about how proud he felt to be here in Ávila

unveiling of the street name and the band played the national anthems of Ireland and Spain, followed by a reading in Spanish and English of a poem Kate O'Brien in Ávila from myself, written after my first visit in 1982.

KATE O'BRIEN
IN ÁVILA

Here was the Spain she loved most.

The white light of her heart's content,

among market faces rooted

in a Limerick childhood,

the Encarnación her Laurel Hill.

High within the walled embrace

of Teresa's Castile,

its cathedral silence touching her like

fingertips in a candlelight intimacy of friends.

During a walkabout I chatted to José Antonio Sierra, first director of the Cervantes Institute in Dublin and prime mover for making the inauguration of the Calle Kate O'Brien possible. I agreed with José Antonio that the street outside the train station was the ideal street to bear the name of Kate O'Brien, a much travelled lady, who arrived and left from here on numerous occasions. We both wondered what the taxi drivers would call it. Perhaps La Calle Miss Katie or La irlandesa?

During the course of the day plans for future cooperation were discussed regarding school exchanges, the Kate O'Brien Weekend Festival in Ávila and possible book translations. Interest in bringing these ideas forward is there in abundance from the respective mayors and arts officers. The Embassy

Mindra realises her African volunteering dream