

Writer attacks 'Ashes' author

By TRISH O'DEA

LIMERICK'S most famous son Frank McCourt has been accused of emotional manipulation by well-known journalist and talk show guest Mary Kenny in a recent edition of the Irish Catholic.

Admitting that she may be "in a minority of one" Ms Kenny tells how she only managed to get as far as page 114 in Angela's Ashes, the much acclaimed Pulitzer Prize winning account of a miserable Irish Catholic childhood.

"The relentlessness of the family tragedy" by which she felt "lowered", is cited as the first reason why Ms Kenny couldn't finish the book.

And she adds: "You also knew that (at least up until page 114) virtually no one in Limerick would ever be nice to them. They would live in hunger and squalor and the death of their children and no one would care."

Neither did the role of the church as portrayed in the book appeal to Ms Kenny who said that she felt "I was being emotionally manipulated".

The counter-points between America and Ireland are also criticised, and she says: "Ireland represented the dark, heartless, cruel old world, sunk in inertia and despair, whereas America represented freedom, enlightenment, decency and a break from those dark chains of the past."

Christoir O'Flynn's There is an Isle: A Limerick



Frank McCourt, his awarding winning penmanship has been labelled emotional manipulation.

Boyhood is, according to Mary Kenny, "a much richer source of social memory, and much more dependable as an autobiography".

An extract from McCourt's new work which deals with his daughter Maggie was recently published in the Sunday Independent and this too comes in for some sharp criticism from Ms Kenny.

She asks: "Is he entitled to expose his daughter's private life, with its evident shortcomings, in this way? Is it acceptable to publish pictures of his grandchildren along with confessional ruminations on how disappointed he is with the circumstances of their lives? Is it mature?"

This extract also led to comment from McCourt's

most outspoken Limerick critic, Paddy Malone.

In the extract, McCourt says that his marriage couldn't have worked because slum-reared Irish Catholics just have nothing in common with nice girls from New England.

Mr Malone points out that many of the people he knew who were "slum-reared" turned out very well. They even include in their number a bishop.

He added: "I resent McCourt saying that about the people of Limerick."

Mr Malone is still in correspondence with McCourt's London publishers demanding that they acknowledge that the photograph used on the cover of Angela's Ashes is a copy of his original.



Cantairi at the Scoil Naisiunta an Phairtin, who performed on the traditional fund-raising tape in aid of the East Clare Chernobyl Children's project: front, Edel Hickey, Orla Walshe, Laura Kinsella, Sinead Quinn, Georgina Cooper, and Paul Mooney; back, Jody Cox, Caron McMahon, Michelle Enright, and Triona O'Callaghan.

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