

Jan Schäfer

Portraits of Artists
as Young Men:
James Joyce and Frank McCourt

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Erstgutachter:
Prof. Dr. Martin Kuester

Zweitgutachter:
Prof. Dr. Claus Uhlig

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Jan Schäfer

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Abbreviations used in this thesis and its footnotes:

<i>AA</i>	Frank McCourt. <i>Angela's Ashes: A Memoir of a Childhood</i> . London: Flamingo, 1997.
<i>P, Portrait</i>	James Joyce. <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> . Ed. Seamus Deane. London: Penguin, 1992.
<i>OCIL</i>	Robert Welch (ed.). <i>The Concise Oxford Companion to Irish Literature</i> . Oxford/New York: Oxford UP, 1996.
<i>'Tis</i>	Frank McCourt. <i>'Tis : A Memoir</i> . London: Flamingo, 1999.

Introduction

A portrait [...] is a work of art, embodying concepts of form, space, color, and design like any other painting; and it is at the same time a document, a pictorial record of an individual made for the purpose of preserving something of his appearance, character, and social status in order to transmit these qualities to others, either in space or time.¹

A portrait, as the above-quoted entry from *Collier's Encyclopaedia* tells us, is a work of art which is at the same time a document that communicates certain features and characteristics of the object or subject it portrays. Mostly, the term is applied to a certain type of painting. In literature though, there are portraits as well: written descriptions of landscapes, countries, cities, objects, and persons might be referred to as portraits on condition that those texts reveal the most characteristic and the most important features of the portrayed object or subject. Biographies, for instance, are examples of portraits, as well as autobiographies and memoirs.

In this thesis, I deal with two literary portraits that represent the genre of autobiographical writing. At first sight, both texts might not seem appropriate for being analysed side by side. The first one, James Joyce's *A Portrait of The Artist as a*

¹ Frank W. Price; Charles P. Barry (eds.). *Collier's Encyclopaedia*. Volume 16. New York: Collier & Son, 1950, p. 221.

Young Man, was first published in book form in 1916 and is commonly regarded as one of the major achievements in modern literature. The other one, Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, which appeared eighty years later, in 1996, was one of the best-selling books of North America and Europe in the late 1990s. So, why should one compare a piece of highly-acclaimed world literature with a popular memoir written by a retired New York teacher?

There are striking similarities which made me consider writing about those apparently unlike books. The first similarities are of course the common setting and the literary genre, which made me think about a comparison: Both books are (mostly) set in Ireland, and both texts are autobiographical recounts of Irishmen who later in their lives chose to write. Thus, we have two descriptions of childhood and adolescent phases of young men who both give considerable inside views and information on the country they grew up in. And the pieces of information the reader gets about Ireland, as I am going to outline in this thesis, also show remarkable similarities. The family situations, the artists' religious education, and finally their deliberate decision to leave Ireland to live in exile – these elements can be found in both portraits and offer a variety of topics and clues for comparison. Moreover, the narrative techniques and the authors' usages of language underline the correspondences between Joyce and McCourt.

“Portraits of Artists as Young Men” will deal with all the above-mentioned elements, similarities, and differences of the texts. I will first provide the reader with some background information on Irish history in the 19th and 20th centuries, as in both portraits there are various allusions and references to historical events and eras. Furthermore, I will shortly sum up both authors' biographies to be able to judge and interpret the autobiographical dimension of the texts.

The major chapter will then be analysing the actual *portrait* of Ireland as one finds it in the texts. I will show the books' treatments with historical influences on the authors and the protagonists' religious development. The description of their familiar and educational lives will be considered as well as their need to escape from their homes. Following that, I will deal with what I call the young artists' “linguistic awakenings”, i.e. their feeling for and their interest in language. Throughout both texts, linguistic skills and experiments are shown to a more or less obvious extent. I

am going to outline the most striking examples of linguistic awareness in the portraits. After that, I will briefly comment on the authors' "literary awakenings" in which literary influences and intertextual references within the texts will be pointed out. The last chapter then will deal with the narrative techniques and perspectives of the portraits; similarities and differences will be discussed.

As the title of this thesis does not suggest a restriction to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Angela's Ashes*, I have also included references and allusions from other works by James Joyce and Frank McCourt. Stephen Dedalus, as the protagonist of the *Portrait* is called, reappears in Joyce's later novel *Ulysses*. Frank McCourt wrote a sequel to his memoir, *'Tis*, in which he goes on relating his life, and in which he explains some more aspects and facts about him and his family that do not occur in *Angela's Ashes*. Therefore, aspects of the portraits in both *Ulysses* and *'Tis* will be included, as well. Still, the major emphasis is on the two "portraits".

During my research I found it quite easy to get hold of adequate and numerous secondary sources about James Joyce and his works. Over the last century an impressively huge branch of literary studies has been dealing with *the* major Irish novelist. Thus, I had a vast selection of treatments at hand that supported my analysis of the *Portrait*.

Contrary to that, Frank McCourt's work is far too recent to be reflected and criticised in secondary literature. Talking about him, I had to confine myself to some short book reviews and websites on the Internet. I was lucky to get into contact with Frank McCourt himself via e-mail. As he was interested in my project, he answered some of my open questions and was thus very helpful for my interpretation of his writings. Every now and then, I have included excerpts of those e-mails in the text.

Still, as this thesis is mainly a comparison of two autobiographical books portraying the early years of two Irishmen, as well as a comparison of the topics they deal with, my readings and analyses of Joyce's and McCourt's self-portrayals will be very close to the texts.

1. Historical Background

As I am going to scrutinise two portraits of artists as young men whose most important common denominator is the authors' home country, Ireland, it is inevitable to have a look at the historical setting of their autobiographies. Both James Joyce and Frank McCourt show a certain interest in the social, political, and historical backgrounds of their upbringing, and thus give us insights into their subjective perspectives towards the history of the 1880s to –90s (Joyce) and the 1930s to –40s (Mccourt). In order to give some ideas of which topics the Irish were concerned with during those periods of time, I would like to present a short introduction to Irish history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

1.1 James Joyce's Ireland : The 19th Century²

*O Ireland my first and only love
Where Christ and Caesar are hand and glove!*
James Joyce, "Gas from a Burner"³

As James Joyce⁴ was born in 1882, the 1880s and –90s are the decades which are described in the *Portrait* and which were highly influential for the young artist. However, it is important to have a look at what had happened in Irish history before the crucial turn of the century, as the whole of the 19th century led to the developments witnessed by Joyce.

Ireland had been dominated by the English for many centuries, but the actual union of the nations took place on 1 January 1801. Prime Minister William Pitt abolished the Irish Parliament in Dublin and realised the *Act of Union* which made Ireland part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. This meant a political, religious, economical, and financial fusion of the two countries which led to severe protests and aversions among the Irish people. The first actual attempt to

² Most of the information (if not indicated otherwise) is taken from the following two publications:
R. F. Foster. *The Oxford History of Ireland*. Oxford/ New York: Oxford UP, 1989.

Michael Maurer. *Kleine Geschichte Irlands*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998.

³ James Joyce. "Gas from a Burner". In: James Joyce. *The Essential James Joyce*. Ed. Harry Levin. London: Flamingo, 1994, p. 543.

⁴ Of course the *Portrait* is about the life of Stephen Dedalus, not James Joyce's (I will be dealing with that difference in chapter 6.3). But in order to simplify matters in this chapter, I am going to talk about James, not Stephen.

regain independence was Robert Emmet's rebellion in 1803 which failed completely.⁵

One major problem of the Irish was their religion, as their Catholicism did not fit into the doctrines of the Protestant Church of England and Ireland. Even though Pitt had promised the emancipation of the Catholics, nothing was done to realise this aim. In fact, King George III was afraid of the Catholics as their faith to the Pope fiercely menaced their loyalty towards the Crown. The fact that Pope Pius VII was dependent on Napoleon Bonaparte made it even more difficult to find any arguments against those suspicions.

The Irish though were convinced that it was their mere nationality, not their religion, that was disliked by the English. Due to that breeding ground, nationalist movements came into existence, initiated by activists like Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847). This Catholic son of a landowner in county Kerry was one of the main figures in the history of Irish liberation. He founded the *Catholic Association* in 1823 in order to put pressure on the British Government. His successful strategy included a close relation to the Catholic Church and its representatives and his ability to organise mass movements. Furthermore, his organisation founded its own newspaper, the *Morning Register*. O'Connell's motivations were clear: "The English do not dislike us as Catholics – they simply hate us as Irish."⁶ His major aim was the *Repeal of the Union* of 1801.

His actions and propaganda were utterly successful, and apart from various mass meetings and declarations, he successfully fought for the political emancipation of his nation: Whereas the Catholics had no eligibility in the first decades of the 19th century, O'Connell turned out to be the first Catholic Irish MP in Westminster. In the 1830s, there were a couple of more Catholic MPs which formed their own political fraction, *O'Connell's Party*, whose good relations to the liberal Whigs helped to achieve a considerable influence in the House of Commons. O'Connell made the most of this opportunity to defend the Irish rights and to fight for reforms in legislation. A couple of bills improving the situation were passed in Parliament, for instance the *Tithe Act* and the *Irish Poor Law Act* (both in 1838)⁷.

⁵ Robert Emmet (1778-1803), whose rising in May 1803 was absolutely unsuccessful, was finally executed for treason.

⁶ Maurer, p. 196.

⁷ The first one relieved the tenants insofar as the *landlords* had to pay the tithe from now on. The second one was meant to provide the poorest of the poor with the essentials.

In the late 1830s O’Connell’s parliamentary influence shrank as the Tories were about to win the upcoming elections. He therefore focussed more and more on further mass movements demanding an Irish parliament in Dublin which should be still dependent on the British Crown. In 1840, he founded the *Loyal National Repeal Association*⁸, a large-scale organisation whose members willingly paid one shilling a year, the so-called *Repeal Rent*. Its public organ was the newspaper *The Nation* and its most significant products were the *Monster Meetings* (see map⁹), mass declarations that gathered between 100,000 and half a million people. But O’Connell’s strictly non-violent philosophy finally put an end to those meetings as he found no way of defense against Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel’s threat of military intervention with the planned meeting at Clontarf. Thus, O’Connell lost his last means of political pressure. His *Repeal* movement came to an abrupt end, and reforms against Irish self-rule were put forward. The new Prime Minister’s aim was “killing Repeal with kindness”¹⁰.

The next generation of Irish nationalists was formed by a circle of intellectuals and journalists who became known as *Young Ireland*. Contrary to the O’Connellites they consisted of Catholics *and* Protestants, and they did not at all object to pursuing their political aims *violently*. Nevertheless, their actions did not succeed as you can see in the pejorative name their attempted 1848 revolt has been given: “The Battle of Widow McCormack’s Cabbage Patch”¹¹.

The most significant incident in 19th century Ireland was of course the Great Famine (1845-47). Because of its lack of natural resources like coal, Ireland remained an agricultural country that was not affected by industrialisation and urbanisation. Due to its economic unity with Britain, Ireland had developed into a granary for the middle-English industrial regions. Thus, most of the Irish earned their livings with agricultural professions. The demographic charts of that period show an extraordinary increase in population.¹² The dominant way of living in Ireland was that of subsistence farming.

The population explosion and the population’s dependency on farming products were the main reasons for the disastrous extent of the Famine. The spreading of the fatal potato blight led to the biggest catastrophe Ireland had ever

⁸ First known as the *National Association of Ireland*.

⁹ Appendix A 1.2.

¹⁰ Maurer, p. 210.

¹¹ *OCIL*, p. 392.

¹² Cf. Appendix A 1.4.

known. The blight devastated most of the potato crop for three years, causing the starvation of hundreds of thousands of people and forcing millions to emigrate. As the *laissez faire* philosophy of the British Government did not allow the authorities to interfere with the situation, there was nothing to expect from England in the first place, and even when Westminster finally reacted and distributed free food, the emigration did not cease (not until the 1960s, eventually). Consequently, the Irish population was quickly decimated: between 1845 and 1855 the total number of emigrants was about 2.1 millions.¹³ Ireland had changed, and there were still more changes to come.

Due to the situation after the Famine, severe conflicts between landlords and tenants arose which led to the foundation of new organisations like the *Irish Tenant Right League*. More important and influential though was the returning faith in nationalism which brought forward a number of groups that became known as Fenians. Among these groups there were Irish as well as foreign members (most of them Irish emigrants living in New York). They formed the *Irish Republican Brotherhood* (IRB), a secret society, which nonetheless was quite popular amongst their compatriots. Their only aim was *Home Rule*, as they were of the firm conviction that every single Irish problem would be solved if only Ireland became independent.

Scholars are not sure how many people actually approved of the Fenians, but the total number of supporters in Ireland was at a rough estimate more than 54,000 and another 45,000 in the United States. Like the *Young Ireland* movement, the Fenians were not exclusively Catholic and they did not cooperate with the Irish Church. By 1867 they had collected enough money to build up a liberation army, but there were no actions or results worth mentioning.

When William Gladstone (1809-1898) became Prime Minister in 1868, the Irish situation seemed to improve. Gladstone wanted to pacify the country, and he was even prepared to abolish the Church of Ireland, i.e. the Irish branch of the Protestant Church of England. The results of the 1861 census show clearly that the British invaders had never been able to establish the Anglican Church in Ireland: 77.7% of the Irish were still Catholics, in comparison to 9% Presbyterians and 12% Anglicans.¹⁴ Gladstone understood that there was no way of converting the Irish. This important step can be considered as the first milestone towards an independent

¹³ Cf. Appendix A 1.3, A 1.4, and A 1.5.

¹⁴ Cf. Maurer, p. 235.

Ireland. Apart from that, Gladstone changed the tenants' position for the better by passing the *Land Act* of 1870.

Although the Fenians' time had come to an end as most of their leaders were imprisoned, the nation still supported their ideals. Further organisations like the *Home Government Association* were founded, but there were no visible improvements until the enfranchise in England and Ireland was changed in 1872: From then on secret elections were established. As a result, there were not only landlords but also tenants who received seats in the British Parliament.

One of those MPs was Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) who became the most important Irish political figure in the late 19th century. His radical policy included the amnesty of former Fenians and led to the foundation of the *Irish National League*¹⁵ in 1879. Under Parnell's and his partner Michael Davitt's leadership this neo-Fenian organisation chiefly fought for tenant rights, and soon it had its branches all over the country. Gladstone's second and third *Land Acts* in 1881 and 1882 granted "Fair Rents, Fixity of Tenure, [and] Free Sale"¹⁶. "For most Irish farmers [...] rents were now enduring, eviction improbable, and tenure secure."¹⁷ Despite of the changes Parnell's Fenian policy was still so radical that he ended up in prison in Dublin. After some negotiations and making some compromises, Parnell was set free quickly. In consideration of a murder case in Phoenix Park in Dublin in which the new Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary were assassinated by Irish nationalists, Parnell was shocked and wanted to retire from politics. It was Gladstone himself, as well as Parnell's Fenian supporters, who encouraged him to continue his career: His new organisation, the *Irish National League*, was founded in 1882.

During that period, Irish and English electors were given equal rights so that the number of Irishmen who were allowed to vote grew from 220,000 to more than 700,000, which of course meant a lot more supporters for Parnell and his *Home Rule*-party. Furthermore, new laws like the *Ashbourne Land Purchase Act* enabled thousands of tenants to buy the land they had leased, and in 1886, Gladstone brought forward the first *Home Rule* bill. This time it failed, and as Westminster was ruled by the conservative party for the following 20 years, there was no hope for a second

¹⁵ Also known as *Land League*. A further important founder was Parnell's partner Michael Davitt (1846-1906).

¹⁶ Maurer, p. 240.

¹⁷ Foster, p. 179.

chance. In 1887 there was a new, conservative Chief Secretary in Dublin, Arthur Balfour, whose policy was strictly against *Home Rule*.

Unfortunately, a journalist established a bogus connection between Parnell and the Phoenix Park murders. Even though Parnell was proven innocent, he could not return to the political scene anymore, as he was also accused of adultery. Many Irish still sympathised with their *Home Rule* hero, but he had to disappear from politics as Gladstone refused to cooperate with him. The party split up shortly after that, and Parnell died one year later. In 1892 Gladstone's second *Home Rule* was not passed either, but the advantages of further *Land Purchase Acts* were meant to calm down the Irish. Ireland thus became a stable society of small farmers.

In the meantime, the Gaelic roots of Ireland became more and more important. Even though English had been the dominant language of Ireland for the last centuries, and even though the last Irish-speaking¹⁸ communities had been severely reduced by the Famine, there was a growing number of organisations that tried to trace back the nation's Celtic roots in order to find its own identity and a distinctive feature against the British. The most important of these organisations was the *Gaelic League* which was founded in 1893. One of its chief members was the Anglo-Irish Protestant Douglas Hyde (1860-1949) who had published his crucial work *On the Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland* one year earlier. The *Gaelic League* tried to re-establish Irish as the first national language and to resurrect the Celtic culture. Even though most of the efforts turned out futile, they helped Ireland to find its own identity and the self-confidence a home-ruled nation needed.

James Joyce was born in the last part of that crucial period of Irish history and thus witnessed the Parnell affair as a young boy. I will be dealing with his (Stephen's) notion of history in chapter 3.1, and I will direct my attention especially to Joyce's portrayal of the political situation after the split of the *Home Rule* party.

¹⁸ I will have a closer look at the question of language in Ireland in chapter 4.

1.2 Frank McCourt's Ireland: The 20th Century¹⁹

When I look back at my childhood, I wonder how I survived at all.
Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes*²⁰

Frank McCourt was born in 1930 and grew up in Ireland from 1933 to his emigration in October 1949. Thus, the 1930s and –40s are the decades described in *Angela's Ashes*. Nevertheless, in order to get a coherent idea of the crucial events in Irish history, I am going to recount the most important dates from 1900 to the 1950s.

At the turn of the century *Home Rule* was still an aim that was far out of reach for Ireland. After Parnell's decline there were further eager nationalists who tried to find a way to struggle free from the British. One of them was Arthur Griffith (1872-1922), a printer and journalist, who published the weekly *United Irishmen* from 1899 onwards and who wanted to establish a parliament in Dublin as well as Ireland as an autonomous economic zone. In order to gain political power he founded the *Sinn Féin*²¹ party in 1905. Apart from that the IRB became active again while James Connolly and James Larkin created the *Irish Transport and General Workers' Union* in 1909. Nationalism had reached a further climax in Ireland.

As Westminster was ruled by the Liberals after the 1906 election, *Home Rule* was becoming more and more probable. However, bills concerning this topic never passed the House of Lords until 1912, when the British government decided to establish a parliament in Dublin – still without actually releasing Ireland from the United Kingdom. Most of the Irish were glad about that further step towards autonomy, but it made the Protestants (most of them living in Ulster) object severely. In 1913, they founded the *Ulster Volunteer Force* whereas the Catholics created the *Irish Citizen Army* – Ireland's oppositions were now even more polarised than before.

King George V finally signed the *Home Rule* law, but as World War I had already begun, it did not come into force until the end of the war. 200,000 Irish soldiers fought in the war, 60,000 died. After the bill had finally passed, there was no definable task for the *Home Rule* party anymore, and thus the Conservatives and the Unionists (Ulster Protestants) gained power.

¹⁹ Here again, most of my information is based on the history books by Foster and Maurer.

²⁰ *AA*, p. 1.

²¹ Literal translation: 'Ourselves'.

Easter Monday on 24 April 1916 was a crucial day in Irish history, as it was then that the *Gaelic League* leader Padraig Pearse (1879-1916) proclaimed the *Provisional Government of the Irish Republic*. He and his supporters besieged the major public buildings in Dublin, but they were overwhelmed by the British army. Pearse and his men had to surrender: There were 500 people killed and 2500 injured, most of them civilians. Another 3500 people were arrested.²²

The English, who considered this *Easter Rising* as a stab in the back while their forces were still fighting in the war, punished the rebels severely. The Irish public, on the other hand, was shocked and consequently took Pearse's part. Thus, *Sinn Féin* gained popularity and power. Its new leader, Eamon de Valera (1882-1975), was born in New York and could take advantage of his connections in the United States – mostly for financial support. As in 1918 1.9 million Irish had the right to vote, their aversion against the British was evident as *Sinn Féin* became the most powerful party in Ireland. The *Sinn Féin* representatives did not occupy their seats in Westminster but organised a counter-parliament in Dublin, the so-called *Dáil Eireann*²³, a provisional *Home Rule* Government under the chairmanship of president De Valera. Of course, that Government was not at all accepted by anyone, and thus no diplomatic relations could be established. It was then, too, that the *Irish Republican Army* (IRA) came into existence as the official army of the Irish Republic. As the British also recruited their own army, the *Royal Irish Constabulary*, it was a period of assaults and violent attacks on both sides. A civil war had begun.

After World War I, the *Home Rule* discussion rekindled. In December 1920, the Parliament passed the *Government of Ireland Act* which intended a separation of Ireland into two virtually autonomous parts, both being dominions under the Crown. In Ulster, this Act was widely accepted as it had been adapted to the needs of the Protestants in the North. The South, on the other hand, objected to the proposed changes, as they already had their parliament (the *Dáil Eireann*). Due to that there had to be further negotiations which finally led to the *Irish Free State (Agreement) Act* which was passed in January 1922. Still, the Republic of Ireland remained a dominion of the *Commonwealth* (like Canada, for instance), but it was a sovereign republic from then on. However, it took a couple of more years to actually establish a peaceful country – fixing the frontier between North and South was only one of the many problems still unsolved.

²² Cf. *OCIL*, p. 101.

²³ Literal translation: 'Assembly of Ireland'.

While Northern Ireland (consisting of six of the nine Ulster counties) was fully orientated towards Great Britain, the Republic tried to cut every single bond to the Crown. The hatred against the Empire made them recur to their Gaelic culture and traditions, and as their religion was one of the major distinguishing features against the English, Catholicism became extremely important in *Eire* (as the Republic was officially called from now on). Under the rule of De Valera, whose new party *Fianna Fáil*²⁴ won the elections in 1932, *Eire* emancipated completely. The crisis²⁵ of the British monarchy in 1936 was a great opportunity for the Irish to finally struggle free from the Empire. In 1938, Douglas Hyde (the founder of the *Gaelic League*) was elected as the first President of Ireland, and it is since then that the Irish Prime Minister is called *Taoiseach*²⁶.

The new constitution, which was established in 1937, emphasised the bonds to Catholic dogmas and directed Ireland into a unique situation where censorship and taboos characterised the social behaviour and public opinion more than anywhere else in Europe. However, the incomprehensibly high influence of Catholicism and the complete and definite break with England (especially in economic terms) harmed Ireland immensely. The Government still stuck to the *laissez-faire* policy, and the island became an isolated poor agricultural country at the edge of Europe. Even Ulster, the industrialised part of the isle, became impoverished – there were no slums all over Europe in the 1930s that compared to the ones in Belfast.

During World War II, the Irish Republic remained neutral, while Northern Ireland turned into an important area for the production of weapons. Thus, after 1945, Ulster had profited a lot in terms of economy. Contrary to the North, the situation of the Republic worsened: Whereas the standards of living north and south of the frontier used to be equal before the war, the Ulster standard was 75% above that of the Republic by the 1950s.

When Frank McCourt left for New York in October 1949, Ireland was still that unfortunate poor country where emigration seemed to be the most adequate chance to lead a decent and dignified life. As we get to know in *'Tis*, the sequel to his memoirs, McCourt's brothers followed him and also emigrated to the United States, being just four of many young men escaping from *Eire* during that period of time. As

²⁴ Literal translation: 'Band of Warriors'.

²⁵ Edward VIII's abdication.

²⁶ Literal translation: 'Chief' or 'Leader', pronounced as follows: [ˈtiːə k].

I will show in chapter 3, McCourt's memories often refer to the social, religious, and political problems the young artist encountered during his upbringing.

2. Biographical Backgrounds

As we are talking about more or less *autobiographical* texts, it is inevitable to familiarise ourselves with some essential information about the authors' biographical backgrounds. As I will relate later on, Stephen Dedalus cannot be fully identified as Joyce's direct equivalent, as the author deliberately changed some details about his life – he might rather be seen as Joyce's *alter ego*. Frank McCourt, on the other hand, tried to faithfully recollect his own childhood memories. However, as the lives of the authors are important in both cases, I will give a short overview of Joyce's and McCourt's biographies.

2.1 James Joyce

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was born on 2 February 1882 in Rathgar, Dublin, as the first of ten surviving children of John Joyce and Mary Jane Murray. His father's biography was a quite disastrous one: He had grown up in Cork and was the heir of a considerable land property there. Even though he was considered a witty and gifted person, he did not finish his medical studies and thus went to Dublin without a degree. Due to his relations to the Fenians John managed to gain several well-paid posts in the capital, but his social decline was proportional to the growing number of children.

James was sent to Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare, one of Ireland's best Jesuit schools, where he earned himself the reputation of a promising and highly gifted pupil. As the family situation changed because of his father's alcoholism and financial crises, the Joyces had to move houses several times, often in order to "escape" from the landlords' demands. As he could not afford the Jesuit college anymore, John had to send his children to a Christian Brothers School for some time. The Clongowes headmaster though managed to organise a free place for talented James at a Dublin Jesuit school, Belvedere College.

There James won several exhibitions and annual examinations, and he even succeeded in becoming head of the Sodality of Blessed Virgin Mary in 1896. Shortly after that, a school retreat organised by Father James A. Cullen frightened young Joyce enormously, as the life he had led so far (including regular brothel visits) was far from that of a “good Christian”. James’ utterly bad conscience made him repent for a couple of months and even think about becoming a priest. But he finally came to the conclusion that he would never be able to live in chastity and that it was art alone that he was interested in. He became more and more careless in his studies, except for his English lessons. He finally graduated from Belvedere as a mediocre pupil.²⁷

From 1898 on he studied English, Italian, and French at University College, Dublin. It was there that Joyce’s interest in literature was settled. His first publication was an article on his literary all time favourite, the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in April 1900. When Ibsen himself expressed his gratitude for the “benevolent”²⁸ review by the young Irishman, Joyce was even more encouraged to pursue a literary career. With the money he had received for this article, he invited his father to London where he made acquaintance with other writers, such as William Butler Yeats and George “AE” Russell.

In 1902, Joyce started to study medicine in Paris, but he had to return to Dublin soon, as his mother was dying of cancer. Back in Ireland he took singing lessons, worked as a teacher in a school at Dalkey, wrote several book reviews, short stories and the first drafts of his autobiographical novel *Stephen Hero*. Joyce met his future wife Nora Barnacle on 6 June 1904²⁹, with whom he left Ireland for good to live on the Continent. Most of the time the couple spent in Trieste and Zurich where James worked as an English teacher. Nora and James had two children, Giorgio and Lucia, but did not get married until 1931.

His collection of poems was published in 1907 as *Chamber Music*, followed by *Dubliners*, a sequence of short stories which was published in 1914. Two years after that his revised version of *Stephen Hero* was published under the title of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, first serially in *The Egoist*, then in book form. Thanks to the patronage of Miss Harriet Shaw Weaver, one of *The Egoist*’s co-editors, Joyce could live as a full time writer from the mid-1910s on. Apart from his

²⁷ Cf. Ellmann, *Joyce*, p. 57.

²⁸ Ellmann, *Joyce*, p. 77.

²⁹ That very day is commemorated in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (“Bloomsday”).

play *Exiles* (1918), there were only two major publications to follow in Joyce's life: *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

Throughout the last decades of his life, James Joyce turned out to inherit his father's alcoholism and irresponsibility for money. He was devoted to literature as well as to his family. His daughter's worsening schizophrenia was one of the personal problems he had to face at the end of his life, the other one being his bad eyesight as a consequence of which he had to undergo a number of operations. In 1941, Joyce died of a perforated ulcer in Zurich.

2.2 Frank McCourt³⁰

Francis McCourt was born on 19 August 1930 in Brooklyn, as the first son of Malachy McCourt and Angela Sheehan. His father was a Catholic immigrant from County Antrim in Northern Ireland, whose anti-British activism had forced him to leave his home country. His mother, born in Limerick, had received a basic school education, but did not succeed in finding an adequate profession in Ireland. So, each of them left for the United States in the 1920s. Malachy unsuccessfully tried to earn his living with several jobs, some of which even took him to prison. He had a drinking problem and when he met Angela in New York, she instantly got pregnant.

Frank was born into poverty, and as his father did not manage to maintain his family sufficiently the situation worsened when further children were born. His brother Malachy was born in 1932, followed by twins and a daughter. The early death of the latter plunged their father into a miserable state of depression which prevented him from getting back on his feet again. Finally, the family's situation was so devastating that they returned to Ireland in 1934.

Sadly enough things did not change for the better there. After trying to settle in the North and in Dublin, the McCourts had to join Angela's relatives in Limerick. The twin brothers also died one after the other, and two more sons were born in 1936 and 1940. Without the financial security of a permanent job and due to his alcohol abuse, Frank's father was not able to offer his family a decent life. Several times they had to move houses, one being more wretched than the last one. While Malachy senior was buying drinks with the dole money in the pubs, Angela had to beg from

³⁰ There is no detailed biography available yet. Thus, most of the information of this chapter is actually taken from *Angela's Ashes* and *'Tis*.

church and charity organisations. During World War II he finally decided to go to England in order to work in an armaments factory. He then disappeared for years without sending any money back to Limerick.

Throughout his childhood Frank took several jobs in order to make up for his father's faults. He worked as a coal deliverer and a telegram boy, and eventually left school without any diploma. His jobs earned him enough money to realise the dream of returning to America. In 1949 he left for New York³¹ where he had to work hard to struggle free from the poverty he still found himself in. After several minor jobs, e.g. as a cleaner in a hotel lobby, and his military service (which had taken him back to Europe for some time), he was allowed to enrol at New York University, even though he had not graduated from high school. There he studied history and literature and completed his degree in 1957. Shortly after that he passed the Board of Education exams and from then on worked as a high school and college teacher. In 1961 McCourt married his first wife Alberta, who gave birth to their daughter Maggie ten years later. However, their marriage was divorced a couple of years after that.

In the 1990s Frank McCourt retired from teaching and, encouraged by his former students who used to be utterly keen on his childhood memories and anecdotes, started to write down sketches for his first book. He intended to write about the time between his birth and his mother's death in the 1980s, hence the title *Angela's Ashes*. The material was obviously too vast, for the memoir, which was published in 1996 and for which he won the 1997 Pulitzer Prize³², only covers the period between 1930 and his arrival in New York in 1949. In 1999 though, the sequel to his best-selling novel was published as *'Tis*, a title which actually takes up the last chapter of *Angela's Ashes*³³. Apart from his memories, McCourt has written a musical revue, *The Irish and How They Got That Way*, and is currently working on further projects. He and his second wife Ellen still live in New York City.

³¹ His brothers Malachy, Michael, and Alphie, as well as their mother, also emigrated to the USA a couple of years later.

³² In the category "Biography or Autobiography". Cf. URL: <http://www.pulitzer.org>

³³ Cf. *AA*, p. 426.

2.3 Exiles: Ireland from Abroad

exile

1. *expulsion, or the state of being expelled, from one's native land or native town etc.* 2. *long absence abroad, esp. enforced.* 3. *a person expelled or long absent from his or her native country.*³⁴

Literary history has known a vast number of authors living in exile, many of them due to political reasons such as religious or racial persecution, as in the Third Reich for instance. James Joyce and Frank McCourt are both Irish authors whose long absence from their home country would justify to regard them as exiles. In contrast to the politically persecuted authors I have just alluded to, Joyce and McCourt were not actually *enforced* to leave Ireland, they rather expected better living conditions, liberty, and an escape from the restraints they had to face at home.

James Joyce's attitude towards struggling free from Ireland is manifested clearly in the *Portrait*. In his early years, i.e. before his college days, Stephen confines himself with growing into a future in Ireland. After a period of spiritual confusion³⁵ there is a crucial incident in his life that evokes a sudden change in his ambitions. This caesura (or *epiphany*, as Joyce himself called it) is Stephen's encounter with a girl on the beach³⁶ which shows him clearly that he could never lead a life in chastity and that he does not want to endure the limits forced upon him by society. From then on he is sure that he needs to liberate from society, from religious constraints, from Ireland itself. In the penultimate section of the *Portrait* he explains his ambitions to his fellow student Cranly:

I will not serve³⁷ that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning.³⁸

Here the word 'exile' is directly expressed by Stephen. In the following chapters ("it is time to go"³⁹) and the concluding diary entries, the young artist's departure from Ireland is indicated, although, at that stage, Joyce himself was still planning to stay in his home country.

³⁴ Della Thompson (ed.). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995, p. 472.

³⁵ I am going into more detail in chapter 3.2.1.

³⁶ *P*, pp. 183-185.

³⁷ Note the allusion to Lucifer's declaration (Cf. Jeremiah 2:20).

³⁸ *P*, p. 268f.

³⁹ *P*, p. 267.

However, as I have already mentioned in the preceding chapter, Joyce left Ireland and led his life on the Continent. He lived in Pola (now Croatia), Trieste, Rome, Paris, and Zurich. There he seemed to have found the artistic liberty he needed to write his outstanding works. Indeed, he frequented literary circles and had contacts to contemporary authors which he could not have established in Dublin. Living abroad Joyce was able to write as he wanted to, without taking into consideration restraints of any kind, whether social, religious, or even financial⁴⁰ ones.

Having lived two thirds of his life on the Continent, Joyce surprisingly never dealt with anything else but Ireland. In his works he scrutinised public and private life in Dublin and thus became *the* major Irish novelist, even though he published his writings in New York, London, and Paris before they were made available in Ireland. But apparently Joyce could not completely liberate from his Irishness and from his home country. His ambiguous relation to Ireland can be compared to the ambiguous relation he had towards religion⁴¹: He always tried to escape from its influence and power over him, but he never really succeeded in breaking the bonds. Richard Ellman's comment on Joyce's exile:

He was neither bidden to leave nor forbidden to return, and he did in fact go back four times. But whenever his relations with his native land seemed in danger of improving, he found a new incident to solidify his intransigence and reaffirm the rightness of his voluntary exile.⁴²

Frank McCourt had his own reasons to leave Ireland. He was born in New York and never saw any advantages in living in his parents' home country. An impoverished childhood full of misery was all he found in Limerick, and bearing in mind the notion of America as the land of freedom and wealth, Frank always planned to leave Eire for good. Apart from that he got to know Ireland as a country full of societal and religious restraints⁴³ which he got used to, but which he never truly accepted.

⁴⁰ I.e. due to Harriet Shaw Weaver's continuous patronage.

⁴¹ Cf. chapter 3.2.1.

⁴² Richard Ellmann. "On Exile as Artistic Freedom in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*". In: Harold Bloom (ed.). *Bloom's Reviews: James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999, p. 45.

⁴³ Cf. chapter 3.2.2.

In *Angela's Ashes*, the idea of escape back to America is first mentioned in the first sentence of the book: "My father and my mother should have stayed in New York where they met and married and where I was born. Instead, they returned to Ireland [...]." ⁴⁴ This opening sentence somehow indicates the narrator's discontent with his life in Ireland, and thus the reader is prepared to witness the young artist's liberation from the constraints and the miserable conditions McCourt connects with Ireland.

Therefore Frank shows great interest in his teacher O'Halloran's stories about America ⁴⁵, and it is this teacher, too, who evokes and strengthens the thirteen-year-old boy's intention to emigrate to the United States: "You must get out of this country, boys. Go to America, McCourt. Do you hear me?" ⁴⁶

Frank's image of America is an embellished one. For him, America is the country he *believes* to remember (he was merely four years old when his family returned to Europe, so his recollections cannot be trusted) and the country he knows from Hollywood films: "Michael says it must be great to be in America where people have nothing else to do but sing and dance." ⁴⁷ His rising interest in the world outside Ireland, which is also demonstrated by his regular reading of foreign newspapers ⁴⁸, leads to Frank's firm conviction that the only place where he would be able to lead the life he is longing for, is the USA: "Day and night I dream of America." ⁴⁹

In 1949, Frank McCourt emigrated to New York where he actually did find a possibility to live as he had always wanted to live. Despite all the efforts and struggles that he had to face in America (as he recollects in *'Tis*) the American exile is the place he was looking for. The last chapter of *Angela's Ashes* indicates the satisfaction New York has given to McCourt. When the priest asks him: "Isn't this a great country altogether?" ⁵⁰, Frank's short but meaningful answer is just: "'Tis." ⁵¹

Joyce and McCourt join a long list of Irish authors who chose exile in order to realise their artistic visions. Up to the 1960s, the Catholic Church's influence on the literary market was that strong that writers had the choice between limited creativity

⁴⁴ *AA*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *AA*, p. 334f.

⁴⁶ *AA*, p. 338.

⁴⁷ *AA*, p. 367.

⁴⁸ Cf. *AA*, p. 414.

⁴⁹ *AA*, p. 415.

⁵⁰ *AA*, p. 425.

⁵¹ *AA*, p. 426.

due to massive censorship by the clerics on the one hand, and going abroad on the other hand. Literature written in Ireland in the 1920s and –30s tended to be provincial, uncritical and prudent. Apart from Joyce and McCourt, famous authors like George Bernard Shaw, Sean O’Casey and Oscar Wilde chose to live abroad. Their highly-acclaimed writings would not have existed if they had stayed in their home country.⁵² Thus, mainly due to Eire’s bigoted Catholicism, Irish exile literature has a unique significance in the history of world literature.⁵³

In the following chapter, dealing with the portrait of Ireland in James Joyce’s and Frank McCourt’s memoirs, I will analyse most of the reasons for the artists’ escape into their exiles. The notion of ‘exile’ as the only way to live up to one’s dream will recur at the end of the chapter, too.

3. Portraying Ireland in the Works

Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow.
James Joyce, *Portrait*⁵⁴

As I have shown so far, Ireland and being Irish are very important and frequently recurring topics in the works by James Joyce and Frank McCourt. Writing biographical and autobiographical texts, authors tend to take the chance to recount and to comment on the conditions and the surroundings in which their protagonists grow up or live. Thus, one of the most important (if not *the* most important) aspect(s) of the portraits of artists as young men I am dealing with is of course the description of their home, i.e. the portrayal of Ireland as the autobiographers McCourt and Joyce got to know it.

The following chapter will reveal the most important aspects about Ireland that can be found or that are referred to in the *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes*. What was growing up in Ireland like in those times? In how far do the portraits give insights into these topics, do they offer explanations or interpretations of certain aspects?

The historical background of Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries, which has already been discussed in detail, will be the subject of the first section of this chapter: What do we learn about history and the authors’ notion of history in the *Portrait* and

⁵² Cf. Heinz Kosok. *Geschichte der anglo-irischen Literatur*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1990, p. 159.

⁵³ Cf. Ralph Giordano. *Mein irisches Tagebuch*. München: dtv, 1999, p. 273.

⁵⁴ *P*, p. 220.

Angela's Ashes? After that, I will analyse in detail the religious aspects in the novels, followed by a look at the portraits of the families. These major aspects of this chapter can be considered as a 'trinity of Irish values': country, religion, family. An additional chapter will then give some information about the educational lives of the protagonists.

3.1 Growing into History

As we have seen in chapter 1, James Joyce / Stephen Dedalus grew up in the last two decades of the 19th century. The 1880s and –90s were a period of time where the demand for *Home Rule* was the major political topic in Ireland. Nationalists like O'Connell had begun to smooth the way for an emancipated Irish state, and most of the population showed a tendency toward nationalism. In the following chapter I will relate how these historical themes are alluded to in the *Portrait*.

Frank McCourt was born 48 years later than Joyce when Ireland was already a free state. Nevertheless, various topics are referred to in *Angela's Ashes* which show Frank's interest in and his interpretation of history. I will go into further detail in the last part of this chapter (3.1.2).

3.1.1 Stephen and History

Stephen's interest in history can be seen very early in the novel: In the opening passage⁵⁵ the narrator (whose point of view, as we will see throughout my reading of the *Portrait*, is very close to Stephen's) recites a bedtime story by Stephen's father Simon. Simon Dedalus is of course chiefly based upon James Joyce's father John, who actually did tell that story about a moocow.⁵⁶ The critic James Fairhall establishes a connection between elements of that bedtime story and Cuchulain, a popular figure in Irish mythology. Irish and Greek mythology obviously are fruitful bases for Joyce's narrative⁵⁷, and as Stephen's name is apparently based on a Greek mythical hero, the reader should be aware of the ever-recurring

⁵⁵ *P*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Cf. James Fairhall. *James Joyce and the Question of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993, p. 112.

⁵⁷ Cf. the famous mythological pattern of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

parallelism between the hero of the *Portrait* and his Greek model. Throughout the novel we see Stephen's life compared to or rather imbedded in a mythical and, to a certain extent, historical surrounding.

Thus, historical allusions are one of the several leitmotifs in the *Portrait*. Stephen frequently compares himself to historical and mythical persons: "The artist's material [in the *Portrait*] is his own life, his history, which he transforms into a story of his growth into self-awareness."⁵⁸ There is one scene at Clongowes Wood College in which Stephen is wrongly punished by a strict teacher whereupon his classmates talk him into going to the rector in order to complain about that teacher. Here the situation is compared to a historical one the young boys were taught in their history lesson: "The senate of the Roman people declared that Dedalus had been wrongly punished."⁵⁹ The courage Stephen needs to go to the rector's room derives from his comparison to historical "heroes". He draws parallels to figures which appear in *Richard Magnall's Questions*⁶⁰: "A thing like that had been done before by somebody in history, by some great person whose head was in the books of history."⁶¹ In the end, Stephen – like that "great person in history" – also wins; his complaint gains the rector's hearing. This is the young artist's first triumph, and there are a couple of more of those incidents where Stephen compares himself to historical, and more often than that, *mythical* figures. In his college time he is finally aware of the importance of his family name: Daedalus, whose name he rejects in the early phases of his life, now becomes Stephen's role model ("old father, old artificer"⁶²) whom he even addresses directly in the last diary entry at the end of the *Portrait*.

The major historical theme Stephen refers to directly is that of the Parnell affair Joyce witnessed at the age of nine. John Joyce was a devoted supporter and admirer of Charles Stewart Parnell (cf. page 11) which made James grow up in a house of dedicated Parnellites. The first allusion to the political tendency in his father's house can be found in the opening section of chapter 1, where "Dante had two brushes in her press. The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael

⁵⁸ Fairhall, p. 113.

⁵⁹ *P*, p. 54.

⁶⁰ An important Irish history school book, published in 1800.

⁶¹ *P*, p. 54f.

⁶² *P*, p. 276.

Davitt and the brush with the green velvet back was for Parnell”⁶³. Dante Riordan⁶⁴, the governess of the Dedalus family, shows her absolute affection for Parnell and his ally Davitt and obviously tries to symbolise and demonstrate those politicians’ roles and relations with the help of the brushes. Thus, Stephen’s first notion of political issues is that of rather simplified explanations about the nationalist *Home Rule* movement and its leading figures.

The Parnell theme is taken up again in one of the most celebrated scenes of the *Portrait* – the Christmas dinner⁶⁵ of 1891. Here the reader is confronted with a severe inner-familiar quarrel about politics. Parnell had died shortly before that dinner⁶⁶, and thus the affair about him and his resignation was still *the* central issue for Irish nationalists. After Parnell’s temporary abdication and his return to the political scene, his party was split into *loyal* Parnellites and *anti*-Parnellites who were convinced that they had to decide between their former leader and the actual *Home Rule* aim. Partly because of the fateful adultery case, most of the clerics were against Parnell, as was his former partner Michael Davitt.

The split of the *Home Rule* party is clearly shown in the Christmas dinner episode: Simon Dedalus and Mr Casey are still devoted to their late “Chief”, whereas Dante has completely lost her faith in him:

[...] Dante had ripped the green velvet back off the brush that was for Parnell one day with her scissors and had told [Stephen] that Parnell was a bad man. [Stephen] wondered if they were arguing at home about that. That was called politics. There were two sides in it: Dante was on one side and his father and Mr Casey were on the other side but his mother and uncle Charles were on no side.⁶⁷

Dante, being convinced that Parnell’s behaviour was not at all adequate, strictly supports the dogmas of the Church and the virtues of the Catholic Irish nationalists. Mr Dedalus and Mr Casey on the other hand believe in the “Parnell myth”, which regards the deceased politician as the victim of a conspiracy, of an unscrupulous campaign initiated by the British:

- What? cried Mr Dedalus. Were we to desert [Parnell] at the bidding of the English people?
- He was no longer worthy to lead, said Dante. He was a public sinner.⁶⁸

⁶³ *P*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Based on “Dante” Hearn Conway, the Joyce family’s governess.

⁶⁵ *P*, pp. 25-39.

⁶⁶ He died on 6 October 1891.

⁶⁷ *P*, p. 14.

⁶⁸ *P*, p. 31.

Supporters like Mr Dedalus even went so far as to regard Parnell's death as a kind of murder, as one can see from his utterance: "Before he was killed, you mean."⁶⁹

The quarrel between Dante and the two opposing men ends up in a severe verbal fight in which Dante defends the position of the Church ("The priests were always the true friends of Ireland"⁷⁰) whereas the men even pretend to defy their belief. The argumentation on both sides is clearly directed by emotions and thus leads to a bitter ending: "Stephen, raising his terrorstricken face, saw his father's eyes were full of tears."⁷¹

James Fairhall raises a critical objection to the description of those historical events in the Christmas dinner scene. According to Fairhall's investigation of the Parnell affair and of the political situation after his death, Joyce simplified the actual events in order to create such a powerful and dramatic scene:

The Split in Irish political life that arose out of Parnell's tacit admission of adultery was a complex phenomenon which is reduced, in the Christmas dinner scene, to a conflict between Parnell and the church. [...] Joyce had good technical reasons for simplifying political issues in this scene; it grips us because of its dramatic, not its argumentative power. But he had ideological and emotional reasons as well.⁷²

Fairhall emphasises the moral and political pressure in every single social branch that led to the split of the party, "though everyone agrees on the crucial role of the Church in overthrowing Parnell"⁷³. The ideological and emotional reasons he refers to in the quotation above are, of course, fixed in Joyce's upbringing. The author's opinion about Parnell was undoubtedly dinned on him by his father John, who, as a true Parnellite⁷⁴, taught his son his very own version of the affair – thus, James' attitude towards the "Chief" was not at all an objective and distinguished one. It was rather very much like the impression the reader gets of Parnell in the dinner scene.

However, the Christmas dinner scene interestingly demonstrates how a young child gets acquainted with politics and history. At the beginning of the *Portrait*, Stephen does not understand a single word about these topics, and he depends on the simplifying methods of Dante's education. Later then he witnesses the family's dispute about historical and political events without being able to adequately evaluate

⁶⁹ *P*, p. 35.

⁷⁰ *P*, p. 38.

⁷¹ *P*, p. 39.

⁷² Fairhall, p. 133f.

⁷³ Fairhall, p. 134.

⁷⁴ Revealed in Richard Ellmann's celebrated biography: Richard Ellmann. *James Joyce*. New York: Oxford UP, 1959.

the situation. Thus, James Joyce's Stephen offers us a clever analysis of how one gets familiar with political issues, and he demonstrates the subjectivity of historical understanding. Joyce's simplification, which Fairhall has pointed out, is a brilliant example of how human beings tend to simplify matters in order to make them more comprehensible.

3.1.2 Frank and History

Although Frank McCourt does not give any detailed explanations or interpretations of specific historical events in *Angela's Ashes*, the reader is frequently confronted with a number of allusions to the political and social situation of Ireland in those sixteen years young artist Frank spent in his parents' home country. Of course, the first remarks about the situation of Ireland can be found in the first years of Frank's life, still in New York. His father always sings nationalist Irish rebel songs and asks his sons to promise "to die for Ireland"⁷⁵. The recitation of the Irish chants shows the reader that Malachy McCourt, a Catholic who grew up in Northern Ireland in the early 20th century, belongs to the group of Ulster nationalists who never accepted the British rule over their part of Eire:

My father [...] was born on a farm in Toome, County Antrim. Like his father before, he grew up wild, in trouble with the English, or the Irish, or both. He fought with the Old IRA and for some desperate act he wound up a fugitive with a price on his head.⁷⁶

Malachy McCourt's involvement in IRA actions was his reason for leaving Ireland, and even when returning to his home country and not getting any help from the IRA in Dublin, he does not lose his faith in his nationalist beliefs. As his way of explaining is not very intelligent and convincing, his sons never really adopt his nationalist views. For them their father's ideology is nothing more than a folly due to his being dropped on his head when he was a child.⁷⁷

McCourt always yearned for a return to the United States, away from the sufferings of his miserable childhood. Yet, despite his non-nationalist attitude, he

⁷⁵ *AA*, p. 18.

⁷⁶ *AA*, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Angela's explanation for her husband's peculiar behaviour (cf. *AA*, p. 2).

knew the words of all the songs that were commonplace all over Ireland (this actually has not changed much until today!), as he told me in an e-mail:

Because we shared the same culture we all sang the same songs – and they usually dealt with Irish sufferings: emigration and war, etc. If you went to any gathering of my generation you'd notice everyone knew the words of every song.⁷⁸

So, young Frank's notion of Irish history – very much like Stephen's – is a simplified one, based on his father's mere ideological opinions. I would even claim that, in *Angela's Ashes*, Frank shows a typically Irish point of view towards the history of his country: Based on lyrics of rebel songs, legends and blind anger, many Irish simply used to despise the English oppressors as the one and only cause for all the troubles and miseries their nation had faced throughout the centuries, which sometimes leads to most ridiculous conclusions:

[Dad said:] It is said there were no fleas in ancient Ireland, that they were brought in be [sic] the English to drive us out of our wits entirely, an' I wouldn't put it past the English. An' isn't it a very curious thing that St. Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland an' the English brought in the fleas.⁷⁹

Frank does not really *care* about the reason for Ireland's distress, as he is mostly concerned with his very personal future, but the historical and political patterns induced by the father's utterances are always in the McCourt boys' minds.

When Frank is about ten years old, it is the school's headmaster Mr O'Halloran who is responsible for the boy's historical awakening. In contrast to Frank's father, O'Halloran does have a critical view on Irish history:

Now Hoppy O'Halloran is saying the Irish did bad things. Next thing he'll be saying is the English did good things. He says, You have to study and learn so that you can make up your own mind about history and everything else but you can't make up an empty mind. Stock your mind, stock your mind.⁸⁰

O'Halloran's diversified opinion changes Frank's attitude towards history and towards his father's somewhat empty phrases, such as the following: “[...]Hitler, Mussolini, Franco. [Dad] says this war is none of our business because the English are up to their tricks again.”⁸¹ Finally, Frank's interest in what really had happened before he was born arises. Still, he is far too young to fully comprehend the ongoing

⁷⁸ Appendix A 3.1.

⁷⁹ *AA*, p. 60f.

⁸⁰ *AA*, p. 236.

⁸¹ *AA*, p. 237.

war. World War II actually concerns the McCourt family, as Malachy goes to Coventry to work in a British armaments factory. As I have explained in chapter 1.2, Ireland was not directly involved in the warfare. Hence, Frank witnesses the war in a very theoretical way only, without really being able to give any profound judgements: “The men in the pub are talking about the terrible state of the world and how in God’s name Hermann Goering escaped the hangman an hour before the hanging.”⁸² He needs some more maturity and insights before he is able to understand what these men were actually talking about, a maturity Frank starts showing in *Tis*.

As I have pointed out, both Stephen and Frank prove to be interested in (Irish) history. As they are quite young throughout the *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes*, they do not demonstrate a profound understanding nor an objective view of history. They are dependent on and prejudiced by their fathers’ opinions and attitudes before they are able to find their own ways of evaluating things. Both books do not offer an objective insight into Irish history, they both offer some aspects and pieces of information which are of course strongly biased. As we are talking about autobiographical books, not history reference books, it is absolutely legitimate and understandable that we are not confronted with more than those particular fragments of Irish history, or as McCourt himself puts it: “These are the ingredients of a particular life at a particular time in Ireland.”⁸³

⁸² *AA*, p. 398.

⁸³ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 Oct. 2001, Appendix A 3.1.

3.2 Scorn, Threat, and Vocations: Religion in the Portraits

That all true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end.
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*⁸⁴

Religion has always been, and it still is, a very important and problematic issue in Ireland. Since the christianisation by St Patrick in the 5th century the majority of the island's population has been Catholic, and despite numerous attempts there has not been a successful way to reform Ireland and to introduce the Protestant denomination. As I have already pointed out in chapter 1, the immense impact of Catholicism on Irish politics, society, and private life has survived until the late 20th century. I will now shortly sum up the crucial incidents that made Catholicism such an important power in Ireland:

In the late 17th century, under the reign of William of Orange, the so-called *Penal Laws* were enacted which cut the Catholics' rights immensely. They were excluded from politics, and every office-holder in Ireland had to take an oath renouncing the major dogmas of the Catholic Church. The *Penal Laws* were not abolished until 1829, when Daniel O'Connell successfully had the *Relief Act* passed in Westminster. After that Catholic emancipation, the clergy gained considerable power in the course of the 19th century. As the majority of the Irish were Catholic tenant farmers, who devotedly supported the representatives of their Church, the bishops' and priests' political and social influence was enormous. Whereas the clergy was losing power all over Europe due to the developments of industrialisation and urbanisation in the other countries (and several intellectual movements which consequently arose), the impact of the Catholic Church on such a rural community as Ireland was comparatively constant. In his book on Catholicism in Ireland Patrick Corish describes the somewhat limited Irish perspective in the 1850s as follows:

The *Freeman's Journal* and the local weekly paper opened up the horizons as far as London; beyond this lay largely unknown lands, with a 'single familiar point', Rome, the centre of a world of faith almost as real as the world about [the Irish].⁸⁵

Furthermore, the clergy's influence was strengthened by the extension of the infrastructural power of the Church: The bishops and priests increased in number and thus easily succeeded in promoting doctrines like the Eucharistic presence and the admiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When Pope Pius died in 1878, the profound gap between his Church and modern civilisation was notably perceptible in Ireland,

⁸⁴ Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p. 85.

⁸⁵ Patrick Corish. *The Irish Catholic Experience*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985, p. 193.

and his influence there was evident and all-pervasive through his Irish “Governor”, the island’s first cardinal, Paul Cullen. The Irish Church quickly gained the reputation of *the* model Catholic Church in Europe.

Another important reason for the Church’s power was of course its crucial role in the nationalist movement. Since O’Connell’s time Catholicism was a dominant force within the Irish nationalist culture, very much like the Celtic movements around 1900. The Church considered itself “the historical, psychic, and societal core of Irish experience”⁸⁶. And interestingly enough the central Catholic values did not change much until the mid-1900s. Whereas religion was replaced, to a certain extent, by a “social Catholicism”⁸⁷ in industrialised countries like Belgium or northern Italy, the Irish clergy’s control could be referred to as “political Catholicism”⁸⁸.

One of the main interests of the priests and bishops in Ireland, and hence the field they tried to exert most of their influence on, was that of the land question. This is probably due to most of the clergymen’s descents – the majority of them were sons of tenant farmers. The other topic of huge importance for them was education. According to the *Penal Laws* Catholics were not allowed to teach in schools and thus had to organise secret *hedge schools* where they could promulgate their belief and lecture about their culture. In the second half of the 19th century then, the *Penal Laws* being abolished, more and more denominational schools were established which were directly led and controlled by the clergy. As a matter of fact, priests teaching in schools had an immense direct influence on their pupils’ education, which was consequently strongly biased.

Obviously Catholicism has overshadowed most parts of public life since it had become an established and official denomination in Ireland. The clergymen’s more or less subtle leadership in the rural regions of Ireland was indisputable, and even in the cities their impact was detectable, especially in nationalist groups and denominational institutions and schools. It was not before some thirty years ago that the Church’s special position, that was even laid down in the Constitution of the Irish Republic (1937), was officially abolished. So the periods of time recollected in the memories of Joyce and McCourt were strongly marked by the Catholic Church. In both texts the influence of Catholicism on the protagonists’ upbringing is clearly

⁸⁶ *OCIL*, p. 55.

⁸⁷ Corish, p. 228.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

shown. In the case of Joyce this religious education is one of the major topics in his autobiographical notes (a topic one comes across in most of his fiction), and there are many allusions and confusions concerning religious life in *McCourt* as well. In the following chapters I am going to reveal the young artists' notions of religion which is mostly connected with fear, threat, and hierarchy.

3.2.1 Stephen's Spiritual Development

It is a curious thing, do you know, Cranly said dispassionately, how your mind is supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve.
James Joyce, *Portrait*⁸⁹

Due to his father's personality, James did not grow up in a strictly Catholic environment. John Joyce, as we have already seen, was an intellectual person, highly talented yet chaotic, who showed much more interest in political issues than in religious ones. His position in society, his devotion to Fenian attitudes and Parnellism were far stronger than his devotion to the Church. Thus, making his children go to a Jesuit college was basically due to the school's reputation and highly acclaimed teaching methods and results, whereas their Catholicism was not at all important for John Joyce: "Those are the fellows that can get you a position."⁹⁰ Still, the family's governess, Dante, considered herself responsible for the spiritual education of the children, and thus religion naturally had a lot of influence on James' life.

In the *Portrait* there are many references to religion, Church, Catholicism, and spiritual education. The very first one can be found in the opening passage. Stephen, then being a little boy, utters his wish to marry Eileen as an adult. As Eileen is a *Protestant* neighbour's daughter, Mrs Dedalus and Dante both ask Stephen to apologise, as they consider it a sin to marry a non-Catholic woman. Dante even goes so far as to threaten the boy in a cruel way by telling him that his eyes will be pulled out by eagles if he does not ask for forgiveness.⁹¹ It is evident though that the conflict the narrator alludes to in this scene is not only a religious one but also, at least as much, a political one.⁹²

⁸⁹ *P*, p. 261.

⁹⁰ *P*, p. 75.

⁹¹ *P*, p. 2.

⁹² Cf. Fairhall, p. 115.

Due to that kind of early childhood lessons, Stephen's mind works according to certain patterns when it comes to spiritual questions. A very interesting example of Stephen's (and of course many other Catholics' in late 19th century Ireland) black-and-white thinking are his reflections about the name of God:

Dieu was French for God and that was God's name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said *Dieu* then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God.⁹³

At the beginning of this reflection I quoted here Stephen seems to understand that there are different perspectives towards religion which might be contradictory but still right. It does not matter what name God is given, as long as it still is the same deity. This can also mean that it does not matter *how* you practise your religious duties, if you are Catholic, Protestant or whatever. At that moment, Stephen demonstrates a great deal of intellectual maturity towards his religion. But in the last sentence he comes to the conclusion that "God's real name was God" which contradicts the distinguished, diversified point of view he has been trying to establish and to express. The fact that he finally assumes that "God" is the only correct way of calling that supernatural being he believes in, symbolises the indoctrinated dogmas of his Church – i.e. the conviction that there is only *one* religion and all the others are mistaken.

Young Stephen's reflections thus represent the source of many of the societal and religious problems between ethnic and religious groups that can be witnessed even today. Although the absurd source of religious quarrels has already been demonstrated centuries before Joyce (cf. the quotation taken from *Gulliver's Travels* at the beginning of this chapter), he was not the last one to base his world view on such a ridiculous pseudo-conflict. As we will see, Joyce's (i.e. Stephen's) attitude is going to change a lot in the course of the narrative and he himself will understand that the religious dogmas he was taught as a child are not appropriate for his later life anymore.

The authority of the Church in Ireland is shown very clearly in the Christmas dinner episode I have already talked about in detail.⁹⁴ Here it is the character of Dante who represents the devoted Irish Catholic who does not question anything that

⁹³ *P*, p. 13.

⁹⁴ Cf. chapter 3.1.

is connected with the Church. As Parnell has fallen out of the Church's favour, Dante instantly turns away from her former hero. And more than that, she even considers Mr Dedalus and Mr Casey as "renegade Catholics"⁹⁵ as they still support the Parnellite ideals. Here again, political and religious quarrels intermingle resulting in Simon Dedalus's provocative utterances: "[The Irish are a] priestridden Godforsaken race! [...] No God for Ireland! We have had too much God in Ireland. Away with God!"⁹⁶ Of course, these blasphemous statements do not show Simon's lack of faith, and he should not be considered as a heathen. At this point his utterances symbolise the problems Ireland has always had due to its religion. Here, through the character of Simon Dedalus, the narrator emphasises the fact that Ireland's situation, had it not been sabotaged by the Irish Catholic Church, would have developed much more at the end of the 18th century. Simon, whose opinion is identical with John and James Joyce's, considered Parnell as a great chance for the Irish movement to reach their aim. For him it is the blind faith of the Irish that prevented them from seizing the possibilities Parnell had offered.

Other interesting remarks on religion are made in the Christmas dinner scene, which illustrate the impertinent behaviour towards the respective counter-denomination. Mr Casey's report of how he treated a woman who had insulted his hero Parnell (he spat a mouth full of tobacco juice into her eyes⁹⁷) and Stephen's recollection of Dante's reaction to a man singing the English national anthem (she hit him on the head⁹⁸) demonstrate the despicable and disrespectful conduct against the other religious communities. Of course the world has not changed too much in this respect: The news pictures of the shameful running the gauntlet of Catholic children in Northern Ireland that were shown in the summer of 2001 as well as the motivations for the ongoing war in Afghanistan (referred to as the "Holy War" by one side and as a "crusade" by the others) undoubtedly show that these problems discussed in the *Portrait* (and in *Gulliver's Travels*) still exist nowadays.

Throughout the *Portrait*, Stephen's conduct is led by religious doubts and constraints. Being educated in a denominational institution like the Jesuit Clongowes College, Stephen is trained into a Catholic community where strict hierarchies do not allow the boy to develop, to express his own thoughts, and to find his own identity.

⁹⁵ *P*, p. 33.

⁹⁶ *P*, pp. 37/ 39.

⁹⁷ Cf. *P*, p. 36.

⁹⁸ Cf. *P*, p. 37.

He finally knows how to behave in such a Jesuit environment and learns the formulaic language one needs in order to survive there. The importance of that kind of formulaic expression is emphasised a couple of years later, at Belvedere College. There Stephen writes his weekly essay in which his English teacher has detected a heretic formulation about God: “[...] *without a possibility of ever approaching nearer*. That’s heresy.”⁹⁹ Stephen instantly corrects this sentence into “[...] *without a possibility of ever reaching*”¹⁰⁰ and thus reassures the teacher.

The most important part of the *Portrait* in terms of religion is Stephen’s phase after his first brothel visits. There he knows that his deeds, to which he is driven by his bodily needs, are utterly sinful and dire. However, visiting prostitutes has become a regular practice for Stephen which finally leads him to the worst crisis in his adolescent phase, as the shame due to his fleshly desires collides with the virtues he believes in. During a retreat in honour of saint Francis Xavier, a series of powerful, menacing sermons¹⁰¹ are given by Father Arnall, which drive the young artist into a severe abyss of self-doubt and self-scorn. Arnall’s four sermons are brilliant examples of how the priests successfully forced the Catholic dogmas onto the parishioners.

Arnall arouses attention by the rhetorical power and the contents of his speeches. They are meant to deal with the ‘four last things’ from the catechism, namely “death, judgement, hell and heaven”¹⁰². The four lectures he gives on these topics painfully reveal what “good” Christians should do or should not do in order to please God. In his first sermon the Father comes to the conclusion that death is fearsome to sinners, but not to the righteous. Directly after death comes the ‘particular judgement’, where the souls are sent “to the abode of bliss, the prison of purgatory or [...] into hell”¹⁰³. Stephen directly considers the speeches to be meant for him. The wicked behaviour he has led recently upsets him immeasurably, and he is convinced that he will be punished severely for his sins.

Furthermore, Father Arnall explains the fall of Lucifer, the case of Adam and Eve, the way Jesus had to repent for our sins, and how an adequate Catholic life will be followed by eternal happiness with God. The major part of his speech though is

⁹⁹ *P*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁰¹ *P*, pp. 116-146.

¹⁰² *P*, p. 117.

¹⁰³ *P*, p. 121.

the description of hell which he skilfully illustrates, emphasising its six unbearable torments:

1. The sinners are “heaped together in their awful prison”¹⁰⁴,
2. have to face eternal darkness
3. and a horrible stench,
4. they have to endure painful flames,
5. the company of the other damned,
6. and last but not least the company of the devils.

The priest’s description of those six major “rules of hell” is full of metaphors and powerful imagery. Due to its rhetoric brilliancy and its emotive appeal, the reader easily gets to understand and to virtually “feel” Stephen’s fears: Even though Arnall’s description of hell¹⁰⁵ is sometimes contradictory (e.g. his discussions about light and darkness), its almost terrifying message has an enormous intimidating effect on the reader. Apart from the six *physical* torments listed up above, sinners have to expect a list of *spiritual* ones as well (i.e. the pains of loss, conscience, intensity, and of course the *eternity* of those pains). A powerful example of Arnall’s rhetoric power is the Father’s explanation of the term ‘eternity’:

Now imagine a mountain of [...]sand, a million miles high, reaching from the earth to the farthest heavens, and a million miles broad, extending to remotest space, and a million miles in thickness: and imagine such an enormous mass of countless particles of sand multiplied as often as there are leaves in the forest, drops of water in the mighty ocean, feathers on birds, scales on fish, hairs on animals, atoms in the vast expanse of the air: and imagine that at the end of every million years a bird came to that mountain and carried away in its beak a tiny grain of that sand. How many millions upon millions of centuries would pass before that bird had carried away even a square foot of that mountain, how many eons upon eons of ages before it had carried away all [...]. At the end of all those billions and trillions of years eternity would have scarcely begun.¹⁰⁶

Sure of having to face such an *eternal* period of time in hell, Stephen repents all his sins and tries to struggle free from the bodily drives that have made him lead an unworthy, unchristian life. He now subjects himself to a self-disciplined life, full of repentance, righteousness, and prayer. Stephen commits himself to a life in complete chastity and is finally asked by the director of studies if he had ever felt a vocation to the priesthood, which is supposed to be “the greatest honour that the

¹⁰⁴ *P*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁵ This description is said to be based upon a description by Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti, cf. annotations in: *P*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁶ *P*, p. 142.

Almighty God can bestow upon a man”¹⁰⁷. Stephen is confused, yet flattered, and he seriously thinks about leading a life as “The Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S.J.”¹⁰⁸.

But in the end, the only vocation he detects in his life, is the one to creativity, the vocation to becoming an artist. Moreover, when he finally finds his way towards creativity, he neglects spiritual studies entirely. Stephen believes that he has to ultimately decide between religion and arts, between a “Roman mask” (i.e. priesthood) and a “Greek mask” (i.e. artistry).¹⁰⁹

Throughout the *Portrait*, the Catholic Irish Church represents an important theme in the young artist’s development. In the beginning, he adapts his father’s anger towards the Church’s role in ousting Parnell (cf. chapter 3.1.1). His spiritual education at the Jesuit schools he attends almost drives him into a priest’s life of prayer and chastity, but in the end he even shows atheistic tendencies¹¹⁰, regarding art as an adequate substitute for religion.

James Joyce, although Stephen is not *completely* modelled after him, also went through that kind of religious development in his life. In the end he decided to be an artist and to concentrate all his belief and intellectual power on his creativity as a poet and writer. His relation to religion though was somewhat ambiguous, as Richard Ellmann points out:

[...A]lthough he was able to say in his less uxorious moments that he had never loved anybody but God, and in Trieste even intimated to his brother Stanislaus that everyone retained some faith in a supreme being, he anchored himself in unbelief.¹¹¹

3.2.2 Frank on Religion

If there’s a hell it’s here on earth.

¹⁰⁷ *P*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁸ *P*, p. 174.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Richard Ellmann. *The Consciousness of Joyce*. London: Faber & Faber, 1977, p. 18.

¹¹⁰ E.g. Stephen’s allusion to Lucifer’s exclamation “I will not serve”, *P*, p. 260.

¹¹¹ Ellmann, *Consciousness*, p. 50.

As I have already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Irish Catholicism and its influence on society did not change much from the late 19th century to the last third of the 20th century. The comparison of the *Portrait* with *Angela's Ashes* gives a good impression of how little had actually changed between the 1880s and the 1930s. So, despite of the gap of two generations between James Joyce and Frank McCourt, the pictures they draw of Catholicism in Ireland have very much in common.

In the beginning of McCourt's memoirs the close connection between Irish Catholicism and Ireland itself becomes more than obvious. Having lived in New York City for the first years of his life, Frank is quite surprised when moving to Ireland and being confronted with religion for the first time. Although his parents Angela and Malachy are as faithful as any average Irish at those times, they have not "exported" their Catholicism to the New World, whereas the family members remaining in Ireland have never ceased to live up to the dogmas of their Church:

There is a picture on the wall by the range of a man with long brown hair and sad eyes. He is pointing to his chest where there is a big heart with flames coming out of it. Mam tells us, That's the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and I want to know why the man's heart is on fire and why doesn't He throw water on it? Grandma says, Don't these children know anything about their religion?¹¹³

The return to Ireland thus implies a return to a religious life. The idea of the McCourt family's tendency towards religion one gets in the novel though is not that of a firm conviction; Malachy and Angela seem to consider faith more or less like a kind of behaviour pattern. Frank himself is raised in a pseudo-religious world where nobody is willing to explain the meaning of religion to him. He rather does what he is told, and he is punished when he dares to ask awkward questions: "You are here to learn the catechism and do what you're told. You're not here to be asking questions."¹¹⁴

The first "event" of his religious life is his First Communion.¹¹⁵ Frank learns that you cannot be a proper Catholic without having received your First Communion. However, whereas the priests regard this feast as the holiest moment in the children's lives, Frank and his friends are simply looking forward to raising a lot of money

¹¹² Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 Oct. 2001, Appendix A 3.2.

¹¹³ *AA*, p. 56f.

¹¹⁴ *AA*, p. 130.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *AA*, pp. 124 ff.

from the collection afterwards. Here, the young narrator shows very honestly how Catholic children like himself used to consider their First Communion.¹¹⁶ The confession which comes along with it reveals the ridiculousness of the procedure due to the children's immaturity. The sins everybody lists up talking to the priest show the uselessness of that first confession: "The master helped us with our sins and everyone has the same sins. I hit my brother. I told a lie. I stole a penny from my mother's purse. I disobeyed my parents, I ate a sausage on Friday."¹¹⁷ With the citation of those innocent "sins", Frank McCourt mocks the ways in which the Catholic Church has always imposed its rules on the people. In one of his e-mails, McCourt summed up his memories of religious education in two words, "guilt and fear"¹¹⁸. The narration's *ironic* mood remains dominant in most of the descriptions of religion, religious education, and religious behaviour that can be found in *Angela's Ashes* and thus clearly shows the grown-up McCourt's attitude towards religion.

Beside Frank's ironic yet innocent allusions to his religious upbringing, the Catholicism of the people around him is very interesting as well. His grandmother for instance, who is presented as a very bigoted and devoted Catholic throughout the memoir, often conducts in a ridiculously religious way which shows the blind enthusiasm and blinkered faith of her generation: When Frank feels sick after the First Communion breakfast, he suddenly runs to the backyard to vomit. For the grandmother, this incident is a blasphemous deed as the boy has thrown up the host he had received in Church. "I have God in me backyard. What am I goin' to do?"¹¹⁹ What she actually does then, is to send Frank to confession in order to ask the priest what to do with the Holy Ghost in the backyard. The answer of the annoyed clergyman emphasises the absurdity of the old woman's faith: "[T]ell your grandmother to wash God away with a little water [...]."¹²⁰

Although their interest in spiritual fulfilment is not a very profound one, Malachy and Angela want Frank to become an altar boy. Therefore Frank has to learn all the Latin formulas he needs for the Mass. But due to his poor descent, he is rejected twice by the Church, which for his parents is a shameful societal decline.

¹¹⁶ A repetition of that feast is the Confirmation which is considered very much in the same way by the boys. Frank describes his Confirmation (which is overshadowed by his illness) on pp. 211 ff.

¹¹⁷ *AA*, p. 137.

¹¹⁸ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 October 2001, Appendix A 3.2.

¹¹⁹ *AA*, p. 143.

¹²⁰ *AA*, p. 144.

As I have shown, Frank's Catholicism is no more than a behaviour pattern. He does not openly object to what he is told about a decent religious life and he is convinced of many Catholic assumptions, for instance he believes that Protestants are doomed¹²¹ and that babies that are not baptised cannot enter Heaven but go to Limbo¹²². In his puberty, the farce of confession is highlighted again as he finds a way to receive absolution for the "bodily sins" he commits: As he "can't stop interfering with [him]self"¹²³ he has to find a way to find God's forgiveness:

I go from church to church looking for an easy priest till Paddy Clohessy tells me there's one in the Dominican church who's ninety years old and deaf as a turnip [...]. Sometimes he falls asleep [...]. It's not my fault if priests fall asleep on me and surely I'm in a state of grace just for going to confession.¹²⁴

That of course is an easy way to cope with Catholic directives. However, Frank begins to make up his own mind about religion when he starts reading about saints and martyrs. He somehow adores the likes of St. Wilgefortis and St. Agatha, but I consider his rising interest in finding out more about the backgrounds on his own as a caesura from blind and blinkered belief to a more or less reflected tackling of Catholicism. Still, Frank's final spiritual crisis takes place when Theresa, the girl with whom he has his first sexual relationship, dies of consumption. Frank's grievance is surpassed by a strong feeling of guilt; he is convinced that Theresa is doomed due to *his* shameful behaviour: "[...] I'm the one who sent Theresa to hell."¹²⁵ In his utter confusion he even tries to baptise a Protestant woman in order to repent.¹²⁶

As I have pointed out, Frank McCourt's life was strongly influenced and biased by his religious upbringing. We have seen that it was not necessary to have been brought up in a devotedly religious family to be influenced by Catholicism – the Church's power in society, in schools, and in family life was so strong that almost nobody could grow up in a non-spiritual way. Frank's departure to America at the age of 19 finally marks the first rupture with his Catholic principles. Religion becomes more and more unimportant in his life as an Irish-American adult, far away

¹²¹ *AA*, p. 194.

¹²² *AA*, p. 205.

¹²³ *AA*, p. 341.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *AA*, p. 381.

¹²⁶ *AA*, p. 383.

from the Irish Church.¹²⁷ Today, his position towards religion is clear. When I asked him if his childhood experience with Catholicism had any influence on the way he brought up his child, he answered: “I have one daughter. But she has no religion. I wouldn’t impose the Catholicism of John Paul the Second on anyone. If there’s a hell it’s here on earth.”¹²⁸

3.3 Portraits of Families

Autobiographies offer interesting insights into the protagonists’ families, their social statuses, and their relationships. Both the *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes* introduce the reader to the inner-familiar structures and hierarchies of the Dedalus and McCourt families. In this chapter I will analyse those structures in order to find out if one can trace back profound influences on the young artists’ creativity and on their later lives. Are there any obstacles produced by the protagonists’ familiar bonds? In this chapter I am going to portray the artists’ families, paying special attention to the relationships between fathers and sons, the role of the artists’ mothers, and the liberation from their homes.

3.3.1 The Dedalus Family

One of the most crucial aspects of the *Portrait* is the narrator’s (and thus Stephen’s) utterly *egocentric* point-of-view, which can be clearly detected in the portrayal of the Dedalus family. Even though the reader gets to know that Stephen has a number of siblings, it is very difficult to find any definite information about them. It is notable, for instance, that they are excluded from the most important “family scene” in the book, i.e. the Christmas dinner¹²⁹ (Stephen, as the oldest child, is the only one who is allowed to attend that dinner). This exclusion actually exemplifies the impression of the relation to and the importance of the Dedalus siblings one gets throughout the novel. We can assume that there are four sons and six daughters to the Dedalus family (which was the actual number of children in the Joyce family). In the novel though, Stephen himself is not sure of the exact number

¹²⁷ As it is shown in *'Tis*.

¹²⁸ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 Oct. 2001, Appendix A 3.2.

¹²⁹ *P*, pp. 25-39. Cf. also chapter 3.1.1.

of children his mother has given birth to: “Nine or ten, Stephen answered. Some died.”¹³⁰ There are some further references to the other Dedalus children, but they are of minor interest to the narrator.

Stephen’s mother also plays a minor role in the young artist’s biography. Interestingly enough the narrator never tells her name, she is always referred to as ‘Mrs Dedalus’ or ‘mother’. This is a meaningful sign of Stephen’s relationship to and his esteem of her. Mrs Dedalus, who is introduced as a “nice mother”¹³¹, is never treated with any sort of respect in the *Portrait*, except for her description in Stephen’s early childhood, where the homesick young artist longs “to be at home and lay his head on his mother’s lap”¹³². After this allusion to a normal mother-and-son-relation Stephen’s interest in her obviously fades away. Throughout the novel, Mrs Dedalus thus is not characterised in detail, she remains one of the flat characters in the artist’s biography, whereas the relationship between Stephen and his father is shown in a more complex and developing way (as I am going to relate in chapter 3.3.3.1). In his interesting essay on narration in the *Portrait*¹³³, the critic Patrick Pearse underlines Mrs Dedalus’s lacking importance for Stephen and for the *Portrait* by quoting every single line she utters in the novel. The poor number of no more than 18 lines of direct speech throughout the whole book are a clear sign for her position in Stephen’s life.

In the end, Mrs Dedalus is a mere source of trouble for Stephen: She does not understand his attitude towards life, society, and religion; she does not want him to stay away from the Easter communion.¹³⁴ Very early, the unsatisfactory bond between Stephen and his mother and siblings leads to the protagonist’s harsh judgement of his family situation:

[Stephen] saw clearly too his own futile isolation. He had not gone one step nearer the lives he had sought to approach nor bridged the restless shame and rancour that divided him from mother and brother and sister. He felt that he was hardly one of the one blood with them but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ *P*, p. 262.

¹³¹ *P*, p. 5.

¹³² *P*, p. 9.

¹³³ Patrick Pearse. “*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Stephen’s Struggle with Author-ity.*” In: *The Politics of Narration: James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf*. New Brunswick/London: Rutgers UP, 1991, pp. 37-49, p. 43f.

¹³⁴ Cf. *P*, p. 259.

¹³⁵ *P*, p. 105.

The only scene where Stephen shows a kind of fellowship within his family can be found in chapter IV, when they are told to move houses again. There, Stephen joins the family circle who sing consoling Irish songs.¹³⁶

3.3.2 The McCourt Family

Contrary to the description of the Dedalus family in the *Portrait*, Frank McCourt's portrayal of his family is much more complex. Whereas Joyce's novel is a series of loosely connected episodes in Stephen's life, *Angela's Ashes* offers a coherent summary of McCourt's childhood. Therefore, it naturally includes a detailed description of his family. Angela's pregnancies and the births of Frank's siblings are all recollected in the book and familiarise the reader with the structure of the McCourt family:

Malachy and Angela marry on 28 March 1930, five months before Frank is born. Malachy jun. is born in 1931, followed by a sister, Margaret who dies as an infant. Two further siblings, the twin brothers Oliver and Eugene, do not survive their childhood, either. In 1936 and 1940 two more brothers are born to the McCourt family, Michael and Alphie.

As Frank's mother Angela is a far more complex character than Mrs Dedalus, a mother whose impact on her son is much more important, I have decided to dedicate one separate chapter to the relationship between Frank and Angela:

3.3.2.1 Portrait of a Mother: Angela McCourt

I had my life, didn't I, and of what use was it?
Angela in 'Tis¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *P*, p. 177.

¹³⁷ *'Tis*, p. 360.

As I have already mentioned in the biographical chapter, Angela is described as a naïve woman of a poor Limerick background who had to leave Ireland due to personal failure. Throughout the two memoirs she is portrayed as a rather unintelligent and weak character, a woman who is devoted to her children but still under a lot of pressure from society. Frank's grandmother's impact on the children's education, Angela's religious serfdom, and her lack of influence on her husband's behaviour clearly illustrate her flaws.

Frank's relationship with her undergoes a development in the course of the book, beginning as a "normal" mother-and-son bond, one caring for the other, one helping the other. Problems start to arise when Angela, in order to support her family, is forced to take measures which Frank regards as undignified and utterly humiliating. She becomes a beggar and finally prostitutes herself for free rent to her cousin Laman Griffin.¹³⁸ Due to her shameful behaviour, Frank's respect for his mother is weakened enormously which finally leads to a brutal quarrel between them: On the eve of his 16th birthday, Frank is invited to his first pint, gets drunk and strongly reminds his mother of his father. After an exchange of tactless insults, the boy finally slaps his mother in the face.¹³⁹ The profound destruction of their relationship becomes more than obvious in that scene. Even though Frank is ashamed of his behaviour, he cannot forgive his mother's deeds.

However, McCourt always had a certain affection for his mother. As he was a considerably conscientious and caring son and brother, he sent quite a lot of money from his American exile to support his family in Ireland. He never forgot his responsibility for his brothers and Angela, but there always seemed to be a gap in the relationship between mother and son. Angela, like all of her sons, moved to New York where she lived for the 20-odd last years of her life.

Frank's reaction to Angela's death in 1981 shows that their relationship was still an intense one, despite all the conflicts they had:

I'm sitting up in the bed with my knees pulled to my chest and there are tears that won't come to my eyes but beat instead like a small sea around my heart. For once, Mam, my bladder is not near my eye and why isn't it?¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Cf. *AA*, p. 344.

¹³⁹ *AA*, p. 400.

¹⁴⁰ *'Tis*, p. 387.

In the end, the McCourt brothers say good-bye to their deceased mother by singing songs, dancing and kissing her: “[W]hen we walk the long corridor to the elevator I look back at her coffin, my gray mother in a cheap gray coffin, the color of beggary.”¹⁴¹ Regardless of the problems he had with his mother, Frank’s sentimental parting from her appears like a memorial to Angela McCourt. Moreover, the title of the first book is the greatest memorial to her one could think of: *Angela’s Ashes*.

3.3.3 Fathers and Sons

In both portraits, the relationships between the artists and their fathers are extraordinary ones. Even though the fathers’ mistakes and inabilities were the reasons for the families’ misfortune and misery, Stephen and Frank never fully despise Simon and Malachy. In both books, the fathers are treated in a somewhat indulgent manner, their advantages and wits are emphasised in an astonishing way. In the following chapter I will scrutinise the importance of the father-characters in the *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes*.

3.3.3.1 Stephen and Simon

*I don’t want to pry into your family affairs. But
was your father what is called well-to-do?
James Joyce, Portrait*¹⁴²

Stephen’s very first memory, the bedtime story in the first section of the novel, foreshadows the close relationship he is going to have with his father throughout his childhood. As a child, Stephen hardly questions his father (in contrast to that, he *does* question his mother, cf. chapter 3.3.1), he admires him highly and adopts Simon’s political and historical opinions¹⁴³. However, the over-idealisation of Simon has to be regarded carefully, as his fallibility is already hinted at when Stephen compares his father to his school mates’ fathers:

¹⁴¹ *Tis*, p. 381.

¹⁴² *P*, p. 262.

¹⁴³ Cf. the Christmas dinner scene, pp. 25-39.

He thought of his own father how he sang songs while his mother played and of how he always gave him a shilling when he asked for sixpence and he felt sorry for him that he was not a magistrate like the other boys' fathers.¹⁴⁴

Still, Stephen does not doubt his father – the reflection I have quoted here is rather a kind of dramatic irony: Stephen firmly believes in his father's virtues and superiority, but comparing him to other men, he involuntarily makes the reader aware of Simon's imperfection.

Stephen's blinded attitude towards his father is challenged by the social decline of the family. The first crucial turning point of the father-and-son relation is their trip to Cork, where Simon is forced to sell the last part of his highly mortgaged property he once inherited.¹⁴⁵ There Stephen becomes aware of his father's true nature: He gets to know him as a pitiful drunkard, who is very talkative and eloquent but lacks responsibility, a man living in the past, far away from reality. For the first time, the young artist is ashamed of his father, and their relationship will never be the same again.

Throughout the rest of the *Portrait* Simon is portrayed in a rather negative way, although his genuine fondness of his eldest son and his attempts to offer him an adequate education still emphasise the good sides of his character. The last impression we get of Simon though is the one of a family tyrant: In the beginning of chapter V he shouts at Stephen, who is a college student at that time, for being too late for his lectures. When his friend Cranly asks him about his father, Stephen finally describes Simon as follows:

- A medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a taxgatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past.¹⁴⁶

This enumeration, representing Simon's downward spiral on the social ladder, expresses Stephen's later attitude towards his father, which is far away from the belief in Simon's infallibility at the beginning of the novel. In the last diary entry at the end of the *Portrait*, Stephen even tries to completely detach from his father when he addresses the original Daedalus as a substitute for Simon.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ *P*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁵ *P*, pp. 91-102.

¹⁴⁶ *P*, p. 262.

¹⁴⁷ *P*, p. 276.

The relationship between Stephen and Simon is based on the one between James Joyce and his father. John Joyce¹⁴⁸ was a man from Cork, whose family claimed to be of a somewhat noble descent. As a medical student, he earned himself a considerable reputation in sports, singing, and acting, but he did not succeed in his studies. However, his inheritance granted him financial independence, and his connections to several politicians and activists in Dublin made him settle down in the capital. The “career” he made there was similar to the one retold in the *Portrait*. One can imagine that the father-and-son relation described in the novel thus is as authentic as the description of the family’s social decline: Both Simon and John were devoted fathers, grand storytellers, whose failures in life spoilt their lives as well as the lives of their wives and children.

3.3.3.2 Malachy and Frank

*I flew to my father’s funeral in Belfast in the hope I might discover
why I was flying to my father’s funeral in Belfast.*
Frank McCourt, *’Tis*¹⁴⁹

The relationship between Malachy and his eldest son Frank is one of the most interesting aspects of McCourt’s memoirs, for it is a complex and ambiguous one. Malachy is introduced as a warm-hearted man from Northern Ireland, whose patriotism had once made him an IRA activist. As I have already mentioned, his besmirched past was the reason for his escape to the United States. Back in Ireland then, he has no help to expect from the Irish Republican Army and thus has to start a new life in Limerick. But as there “is no hope of a laboring man with a North of Ireland accent getting a job in Limerick”¹⁵⁰, and as he cannot fight against his destructive alcohol abuse, Malachy is not able to make ends meet and to support his family sufficiently.

Nevertheless, Frank’s description of his father is not as one might expect after reading the quotation at the beginning of this chapter (taken from *’Tis*). For him, his father has two faces: On the one hand he is an incorrigible drunkard who spends the family’s budget in pubs, on the other hand he is portrayed as a devoted father who tries to support his children. The best-remembered character trait, from the children’s

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Ellmann, *Joyce*, p. 11 ff.

¹⁴⁹ McCourt, *’Tis*, p. 383.

¹⁵⁰ *AA*, p. 63.

point of view, is his talent as a storyteller.¹⁵¹ Those stories refer to Irish mythology (e.g. Cuchulain¹⁵²), history, and politics, and sometimes they give relief from the family's sufferings (e.g. the invented story about the angel on the seventh step¹⁵³).

The McCourt boys are overwhelmed by their father's stories and care, but they are also aware of Malachy's weaknesses, as one can see in Frank's dreaming of Heaven, which for him is a place "where all the fathers bring home the money from the Labour Exchange and you don't have to be running around to pubs to find them"¹⁵⁴. This excerpt clearly demonstrates the young artist's rising doubts concerning his father's responsibility. A man who takes his late son's coffin into a pub, using it as a table for his pint of stout¹⁵⁵, must appear dubious to a child.

Throughout *Angela's Ashes* Frank's doubts and reservations against his father increase. The situation within the family becomes more and more unpleasant, and the children are aware of the bad mood caused by the alternation of Malachy's alcoholic excesses and unemployment. Frank is still not able to turn away from his father, as he always remembers the warmth and the feeling of security Malachy is able to produce:

I know when Dad does the bad thing. I know when he drinks the dole money and Mam is desperate and has to beg at the St. Vincent de Paul society and ask for credit at Kathleen O'Connell's shop but I want to back away from him and run to Mam. How can I do that when I'm up with him early every morning with the whole world asleep? He lights the fire and makes the tea and sings to himself or reads the paper to me in a whisper that won't wake up the rest of the family. [...] I think my father is like the Holy Trinity with three people in him, the one in the morning with the paper, the one at night with the stories and prayers, and then the one who does the bad thing and comes home with the smell of whiskey and wants us to die for Ireland.¹⁵⁶

Even after Malachy's egotistic refusal to send money home to his family when working in the armament factory in Coventry, Frank does not defy his father as can be exemplified by Frank's pursuit¹⁵⁷ of Malachy after a brief visit: Frank does not want to separate from his dad, and he misses him throughout the rest of the memoir.

The reader might be wondering why Frank's affection for his father does not change into a kind of revulsion or hatred that would unquestionably be comprehensible. In *'Tis* that feeling of scorn does occur in Frank's narration, here his

¹⁵¹ Cf. John Joyce, chapter 3.3.3.1

¹⁵² Cf. *AA*, p. 28.

¹⁵³ *AA*, p. 111.

¹⁵⁴ *AA*, p. 97.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *AA*, p. 92.

¹⁵⁶ *AA*, p. 237 / 239.

¹⁵⁷ *AA*, p. 286f.

father, who abandons his family for the most time of his life, appears as a pathetic, lonely but not at all pitiful man. In 1963, he turns up in New York, pretending to be “a new man”¹⁵⁸ and hoping to be warmly received by his wife and children. Angela though does believe in his “transition”, whereas Frank doubts it immediately: “He was the same lunatic with the drink and all that talk about being a new man was a lie and [finally my mother] was glad he had a three-week return ticket.”¹⁵⁹ Malachy even has to leave his wife earlier than that, having attempted to rape her after drinking a bottle of whiskey.

At this point in Frank McCourt’s life, it is understandable that there are harsh comments on his father like the one I quoted at the head of this chapter. In 1985, Frank attends Malachy’s funeral with a bad grace. He cannot forgive him, he cannot mourn adequately – he even starts laughing at the burial ceremony. Due to Malachy’s disappointing behaviour the relationship between father and son is broken completely. Frank’s farewell sums up all he blames his father for: “All this was your doing, Dad, and even if we came out of it, your sons, you inflicted a life of misfortune on our mother.”¹⁶⁰

3.3.4 Repudiation: Leaving One’s Family

I do not fear to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave. And I’m not afraid to make a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake and perhaps as long as eternity too.
Stephen in *Portrait*¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ *Tis*, p. 311.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁰ *Tis*, p. 384.

¹⁶¹ *P*, p. 269.

As we know from their biographies and their notion of exile¹⁶², both authors left their families to lead a life isolated from their former surroundings which did not allow them to develop as much as they wanted to. In the case of McCourt, it was not a disrupted relationship to his family (apart from Frank's aversion against his father) that drove him out of his home country. It was his mere longing for a better life, a life far away from the misery he had been confronted with in Ireland. So, it would not be fair to blame the McCourt's inner-familiar situation for Frank's repudiation.

Stephen, on the other hand, unquestionably shows a need to liberate from his family (in the same way as from religion and society). Mr Dedalus' behaviour in Cork, for example, shocks and shames him so much that he is annoyed when hearing utterances by his father's fellow drunkards, like: "Well, I hope he'll be as good a man as his father."¹⁶³ This and further references to "the law of heredity"¹⁶⁴ make Stephen afraid of taking after his father. He has to be freed completely from any familiar bonds in order to pursue the artist's life he is longing for.

However, one can easily be unjust in judging Simon Dedalus (and thus John Joyce) as one of the people who prevent Stephen from developing into an artist. One should not forget Simon's efforts to find places in schools and colleges which made it possible for his son to acquire the education he needed as a basis for his later liberation. Simon (very much like John) always believes in his son's gifts and potential, and, being a nonconformist and freethinker himself, he has to be considered as one of the driving forces of Stephen's (James') repudiation.

In *Ulysses*, where Stephen reappears as one of the novel's main characters, he works as a teacher in Ireland after having come back from his medical studies in Paris. The reason for his early return was his mother's fatal illness. To a certain extent, this fact reassesses the artist's relationship to Mrs Dedalus; Stephen no longer shows an absolute aversion against his family – he would not have come back had he not felt some sort of affection for his mother who wished to see him once again.

3.4 On Education: The Scholastic Lives of the Young Artists

*When a boy was rough and unruly there was nothing
would do him any good but a good sound whipping.
James Joyce, "An Encounter"*¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Cf. chapter 2.3.

¹⁶³ *P*, p. 101.

¹⁶⁴ *P*, p. 250.

¹⁶⁵ James Joyce. "An Encounter". In: *Dubliners*. Hare: Wordsworth Classics, 1993, pp. 9-15, p. 14.

I have already mentioned some of the impacts the young artists' education had on their lives, and I have pointed out the close relationship between scholastic and ecclesiastic institutions and how influential religious and political dogmas and attitudes were in Ireland throughout the eras described in the two portraits. After thus having dealt with what I call the 'trinity of Irish values'¹⁶⁶ (nation, religion, and family) I will now have a look at the aspect of education, i.e. the protagonists' academic developments.

3.4.1 Stephen: A Promising Student

Stephen's recollections of his first years at school are also recollections of fear and abandonment. He is sent to a boarding school about 40 kilometres from his parents' home. Clongowes Wood College is set in Sallins, Co. Kildare, and it is one of the best Jesuit schools in Ireland.¹⁶⁷ For Stephen, living apart from his family is very hard. He misses his parents and ticks off the number of days left until the end of term.¹⁶⁸ In addition to that, the young boy's situation is worsened by his being intimidated by some of his classmates.

The school system itself, as I have already mentioned above, is very much affected by its close connection to the clerics. Clongowes, being a Jesuit college, is led by priests, and thus the major emphasis of the boys' education is on religion. Lessons in the morning are overshadowed by the Catholic dogmas, and even in the pupils' leisure time there are compulsory masses and prayers. Father Arnall, Stephen's teacher, whose sermons I have already talked about,¹⁶⁹ is a very harsh and choleric person. He and his colleagues threaten and punish their pupils severely and sometimes even unjustly: Having caught a couple of boys who were "smuggling"¹⁷⁰ (i.e. they were probably masturbating), the teachers consider punishing all of the pupils for it.

When Stephen cannot fully take part in the morning lessons because his glasses are broken, he is tormented by one of the priests. The boy feels treated unfairly and goes to the rector in order to complain about that incident. Surprisingly,

¹⁶⁶ Cf. introduction to chapter 3.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. URL: <http://www.clongowes.ie>

¹⁶⁸ *P*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. chapter 3.2.1.

¹⁷⁰ *P*, p. 42.

the rector reacts in a friendly way, apologises for his colleague's mistake and promises to discuss the matter with that teacher.¹⁷¹

Due to his family's worsening financial situation, Stephen has to leave Clongowes – his father cannot afford the fees anymore. Mr Dedalus, still fussy about his children's education, does not want them to attend a Christian Brothers school: "Christian brothers be damned! Said Mr Dedalus. [...] No, let him stick to the Jesuits in God's name since he began with them. They'll be of service to him after years."¹⁷² Thanks to his good connections, Simon Dedalus arranges a place at Belvedere College, a Jesuit institution in Dublin.¹⁷³ There the boy becomes known as a very good pupil. At the end of his second year at Belvedere, he is cast for the leading part in the school's Whitsuntide play, and his outstanding achievements during the school year earn him an "exhibition and essay prize"¹⁷⁴.

In the following chapters the narration somehow loses its interest in Stephen's school experiences, with the exception of his religious crisis which is again based on a collaboration between school and Church (I have already talked about that episode in Stephen's life in chapter 3.2.1). Apart from that, school life renders the young artist into an isolated person who often objects to his fellow pupils' (and the public's) opinions. At university then, Stephen's isolation and peculiarity become even more obvious. The description of his days at University College, Dublin, is outshined by several discussions and arguments with other students and teachers and underlines the artist's distinguished world view – his isolation finally reaches its climax at the end of his university days.

3.4.2 Frank: A Talented Autodidact

The method of teaching was to threaten and sometimes beat us.
Frank McCourt¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ P, pp. 58-61.

¹⁷² P, p. 74f.

¹⁷³ Contrary to that, James Joyce *did* spend some time at a Christian Brothers school in North Richmond Street. Cf. Ellmann, *Joyce*, p. 35.

¹⁷⁴ P, p. 102.

¹⁷⁵ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 Oct. 2001, Appendix A 3.2.

Frank's memories of his early school days remind me very much of Stephen's first experiences in Clongowes. Having just arrived from America, Frank and his brother Malachy are sent to Leamy's National School in Limerick. Due to his strong American accent he has acquired in New York, he is immediately intimidated and made fun of by the other boys at school.

Being a *national* school, Leamy's is a compulsory institution in which all the children from the lower classes get their basic education. It does not compare to high standard colleges like Clongowes and Belvedere. It *does* compare in the respect of the teachers' comportment towards their pupils. Frank gives a shocking description of the everyday routine in school:

There are seven masters in Leamy's National School and they all have leather straps, canes, blackthorn sticks. They hit you with the sticks on the shoulders, the back, the legs, and, especially, the hands. If they hit you on the hands it's called a slap. They hit you if you're late, if you have a leaky nib on your pen, if you laugh, if you talk, and if you don't know things.¹⁷⁶

Arbitrary and illogical punishment is the daily routine, as one teacher punishes the boys for utterances none of his colleagues would ever object to.

The portrayal of Frank's school life also illustrates the societal state Limerick is in. The McCourt boys are laughed at because of their amateurishly mended shoes (their father used old tyres to restore the soles¹⁷⁷), but they are not worst off in their school; a couple of pupils even come to class barefooted. The gathering of a lot of poor and deprived children in Leamy's thus exemplifies the misery Limerick's inhabitants are in. A further example of that kind of illustration can be found in the class given by Mr O'Neill, who rewards good pupils by giving them the peel of his apple. This is actually a very effective motivation for the ever-hungry boys:

It is torture to watch Mr. O'Neill peel the apple every day, to see the length of it, red or green, and if you're up near him to catch the freshness of it in your nose. If you're the good boy for that day and you answer the question he gives it to you and lets you eat it there at your desk [...]. There are days when the questions are too hard and he torments us by dropping the apple peel into the wastebasket.¹⁷⁸

As we can see, the portrayal of school presented in *Angela's Ashes* is dominated by the description of the teachers' utterly brutal treatment of their pupils. The boys are hit, they are humiliated, and they are not allowed to ask curious

¹⁷⁶ *AA*, p. 84.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *AA*, p. 115.

¹⁷⁸ *AA*, p. 172.

questions. Absolute obedience to the teacher is the first commandment at Leamy's, and as the teachers' opinions are quite diverse, it is sometimes hard for the young boys to be spared punishment. Secondly, obedience to the rules of the Holy Church is expected.

Comparable to Stephen, Frank turns out to be a good and eager pupil. He is interested in history, literature and obeys the rules imposed on him. After his long sojourn in hospital due to his severe illness, he is put back into fifth grade – but a witty essay¹⁷⁹ he writes there shows his maturity, and he is allowed to attend his old class again. His new teacher Mr O'Halloran's methods differ from what the boys have experienced so far. He “makes you learn everything by heart [...], and that makes him the hardest master in the school”¹⁸⁰, as Frank tells us, but he is actually interested in a successful education and development of his pupils. O'Halloran's international insights and his objective assessment of history and politics invite the school boys to make up their own minds, to broaden their horizons: “You might be poor, your shoes might be broken, but your mind is a palace.”¹⁸¹ As I have already pointed out in chapter 2.3, O'Halloran is one of the driving forces that encourage Frank to emigrate to America.

Frank is aware that the school he attends will not help him make a decent career. Only graduates from Christian Brothers and Jesuit institutions are the ones who are highly accepted by society:

We know they're the ones who will go to university, take over the family business, run the government, run the world. We'll be the messenger boys on bicycles who deliver their groceries or we'll go to England to work on the building sites. [...] We're ashamed of the way we look and if boys from rich schools pass remarks we'll get into a fight and wind up with bloody noses or torn clothes. Our masters will have no patience with us and our fights because their sons go to the rich schools and, Ye have no right to raise your hands to a better class of people so ye don't.¹⁸²

And even though he is a good and intelligent pupil, Frank does not mind leaving school. O'Halloran persuades him to apply at the Christian Brothers college. The school's rejection does not bother Frank at all; all he longs for is having a job to earn some money (and finally to leave Ireland).

¹⁷⁹ *AA*, p. 234f.

¹⁸⁰ *AA*, p. 235.

¹⁸¹ *AA*, p. 237.

¹⁸² *AA*, p. 316f.

So, in the summer of 1944 McCourt left school at the age of fourteen. Hence, it is very interesting that he finally was allowed to work as a high school and college teacher in the United States. The “American part” of his academic career is truly astonishing, as he managed to study at New York University (NYU) without having finished high school. In *'Tis* one gets to know that he had to work hard before he was given the chance to attend lectures: He worked in lower jobs, but his interest in literature never ceased. Finally, Frank went to the NYU admissions office and fortunately was allowed to study¹⁸³, and thus to work as a high school teacher for most of his life – a teacher rather modelled on Mr O’Halloran than on any other of his colleagues, I assume.

3.5 Growing up in Ireland: The Quest for Identity

History, religion, family, education: Those are the key words for what might be considered the bases for a person’s identity. I have talked about each of these influential aspects in detail, and I have paid attention to the reactions and results these four elements have on the young authors’ personalities. I will now try to summarise the development and the quest for identity that can be traced in both the *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes*. There are two more aspects which I could have dealt with in separate chapters as well: Adolescence and sexuality. Both narratives cope with the protagonists’ maturing and their bodily developments, but as I have already hinted at many examples, I will confine myself to just shortly alluding to the major problems that occur in the books.

ADOLESCENCE AND SEXUAL AWAKENING

Stephen’s commencing puberty is indicated by the gossip at school where everyone talks about two boys who are supposed to have committed some unspecified sexual deeds¹⁸⁴. His interest in girls is shown by his coveting of E. C.

¹⁸³ *'Tis*, p. 150.

¹⁸⁴ *P*, p. 39f.

(Emma Clery, as critics know from *Stephen Hero*¹⁸⁵), which is one of the recurring leitmotifs in the *Portrait* – Stephen never comes any closer to her, but his admiration for her never ceases. In the end Emma is merely a kind of muse for his artistic development. Stephen's bodily needs grow stronger and he finally ends up visiting brothels on a regular basis. Here, the young artist's sexuality, his bodily drives clash with religious and societal restraints that weigh heavily on Stephen's conscience. For some time, repentance seems to be a decent solution for his inner conflict between religion / society and his personal yearnings. But in the end, as we have already seen in chapter 3.2.1, his personal needs overpower the pressure imposed upon him by his surroundings.

Frank's sexual development is comparable to Stephen's insofar as he is also limited in realizing his personal desires: Catholics are demanded to repress their urges, and Frank's awareness and fear of his sinful behaviour make him repent very much like Stephen. Nevertheless, the puberty in Limerick does not differ from the one on the Irish east coast forty years earlier – the young artist talks about a kind of "peep show", where one boy collects money from his school mates who want to see his sisters naked.¹⁸⁶ At confession he has to admit having done "dirty things"¹⁸⁷ (masturbation). And finally Frank talks about his first sexual intercourse with Theresa.¹⁸⁸ These stages of the protagonist's sexual development clearly demonstrate that he also tries to struggle free from the religious and societal restraints his actual deeds collide with. Even though he does repent for what he commits, he conquers those limitations imposed on him. In *'Tis*, McCourt's sexual behaviour (including several brothel visits in Germany) does not correspond to the Catholic ideal, either.

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

In chapter 2.3, I have already shown the artists' utter need to leave their home country and to find their identity in their personal exiles. Both books recount the protagonists' quests for identity that in the end conclude in escaping from Ireland.

¹⁸⁵ In chapter III of the *Portrait* she is identified as 'Emma'. In *Stephen Hero* her last name is revealed. Cf. annotations in *P*, p. 292.

¹⁸⁶ *AA*, p. 212.

¹⁸⁷ *AA*, p. 342.

¹⁸⁸ *AA*, p. 378f.

Whereas Frank McCourt's identity is dominantly marked by his family's situation (he *has* to find his own way to liberate himself from poverty and thus just does what is best in his opinion – to go to New York), the *Portrait* goes into much more detail. James Joyce's novel can be referred to as a 'Bildungsroman', and thus, we can outline some of the stages of Stephen's quest for identity:

First, Stephen's identity is based on his descent: His school mates ask him about his father and his name ("a queer name"¹⁸⁹), and in a geography lesson he demonstrates his awareness of being no more than one little element amongst many others when scribbling on a paper:

Stephen Dedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Sallins
County Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
*The Universe*¹⁹⁰

In the end of the novel, as we have seen chapter 3.3.1, *family relations* do not offer him any basis for identity any more. So, Stephen invests further efforts in finding roots for finding his personality:

The first incident which strengthens Stephen's self-esteem is his supposed triumph over the teacher who has punished him unjustly.¹⁹¹ But as the narrator reveals a couple of pages later, the rector does not take the young pupil seriously. He and his colleagues have "a great laugh over [Stephen's complaint]"¹⁹². From now on, Stephen's bad opinion about authority worsens continuously throughout the novel. His problem with that form of inferiority will be one of the reasons for him to turn against Irish society. *Authority* is thus no basis for Stephen's identity, either, as he is not willing to integrate in any form of hierarchy.

Religion would be the third potential pillar of his quest for identity. As we have already seen in chapter 3.2.1 on Stephen's spiritual development, the stability of this pillar does not last very long. A *relationship* with Emma would be the fourth possibility of finding his identity, but Stephen does not even succeed in communicating with her.

¹⁸⁹ *P*, p. 23.

¹⁹⁰ *P*, p. 12.

¹⁹¹ Cf. chapter 3.4.1.

¹⁹² *P*, p. 76.

The fifth possible pillar for his quest would be *nationality*. But as Ireland in Joyce's time, as we have seen so far, is clearly dominated by its Catholic society and its one-eyed view on history, there is no way for Stephen to find his identity in supporting that limiting country and its culture. In a discussion with his friend Davin, Stephen shows his unfashionable anti-nationalist tendencies:

I can't understand you, said Davin. One time I hear you talk against English literature. Now you talk against Irish reformers. What with your name and your ideas... Are you Irish at all?¹⁹³

None of these five potential bases for Stephen's identity seem adequate to the young artist. His personality cannot develop freely in a country / a society in which so many restrictions prevent him from unfolding his creative potential. Pillars six and seven, the *artistic career* and *exile*, are the only fruitful bases for Stephen's identity. Of course, one might argue that Stephen's rejection of religion, nationality, and authority do help to form his identity. Nevertheless, he does not see a possibility to lead his life in Ireland anymore.

Although we do not find those "seven pillars of identity" in Frank McCourt's novel, it is obvious that his attitude towards Ireland and its society is very similar to the one expressed by James Joyce. Due to historical, religious, and societal restraints there is no way for neither of the young artists to live up to their dreams in Ireland, no way to find a way of living they would consider adequate.

4. Linguistic Awakening

I wish to God you could understand me.
Brian Friel, *Translations*¹⁹⁴

Stephen and Frank are very much aware of the language they use. As they are both Irish, they are automatically concerned with the issue of that mode of communication. Their mother tongue is English, as it has been and still is for most of the Irish population throughout the last centuries. But an influence of the Gaelic language remains, an influence that is visible even in today's Ireland and in the works by Joyce and McCourt. Interestingly enough, since 1922, Irish is the first national language of the Republic of Ireland, English being the second official

¹⁹³ *P*, p. 219.

¹⁹⁴ Brian Friel. *Translations*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000, p. 66.

tongue. In order to explain the importance of the opposition of English and Irish and the effects reflections about that language might have on Irish authors, I am going to give a brief overview of the history of language on Emerald Island.

4.1 A Brief History of Language in Ireland¹⁹⁵

Around 500 BC, at the beginning of the Iron Age, the earliest Celtic settlers came to Ireland where they mingled with the inhabitants of the isle. From then on, Irish was one of the three major dialects of the Gaelic language (the others being Scottish Gaelic and Manx Gaelic), hence a variation of the westernmost branch of Indo-European. Contact with the English language dates back to the late 12th century when a group of Englishmen led by a couple of Anglo-Norman knights arrived in Ireland. They settled on the south coast and around Wexford and brought a variation of the English language which became known as *Yola* (meaning ‘old’). Shortly after that early invasion, King Henry II. (who reigned from 1154 until 1189) set foot on Ireland, a visit which is commonly regarded as the beginning of English domination.¹⁹⁶

Throughout the following centuries, although many English followed those early settlers, the Celtic culture managed to survive, and even to rule over the English influences. Thus, the majority of the immigrants from the neighbouring isle was “gaelicized ... [and] became more Irish than the Irish themselves”¹⁹⁷. In 1366, the Statutes of Kilkenny were passed in the Irish Parliament in order to put an end to that development. They proscribed the adoption of the Irish language and culture. Furthermore, marriages and alliances between Anglo-Normans and Irish were forbidden.¹⁹⁸ In the mid-15th century, the importance and the predominance of the native Irish tongue became even more distinct because of the Roman Catholic opposition to the Reformation which aggravated the relations between the Irish (who remained strictly Catholic) and the Protestant English. Around 1600, the English language had almost vanished from Ireland.

¹⁹⁵ Most of the information is taken from *OCIL* and: R. McCrum; W. Crain; R. MacNeil (eds.). *The Story of English*. London/ Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986, pp. 163-195.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Appendix A 4.1.

¹⁹⁷ *Story of English*, p. 165.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *OCIL*, p. 345.

During the Tudor and Stuart suppressions, the population resettlements (1534-1610), the Cromwellian settlement (1654), the Williamite War (1689-91), and as a result of the *Penal Laws*¹⁹⁹ (1695), the Irish language was menaced again. The Irish-speaking aristocracy and learned classes disappeared and their institutions were destroyed. By the 18th century, Irish was still the language of a great mass of the population, but it was regarded as the language of the poor and the disenfranchised. This tendency was even more visible after the *Act of Union* in 1801. From then on, the Anglo-Irish aristocracy became more and more distinct and had their children educated in England. The education for the rural Catholic population during the 18th and the 19th centuries was partly provided by so-called *hedge schools*, which were run on a fee-paying basis and had their pupils taught by amateurs.²⁰⁰ Those schools were in fact the only possibility for Catholics to teach in schools, as this was officially forbidden since 1695.

The Famine (1845-48) reduced the number of Irish-speakers immensely, as did the large-scale emigration which took place afterwards: “According to the 1851 census, [...] the total number of Irish-speakers (including Irish-English bilinguals) had been reduced to [...] just below a quarter of the population of Ireland.”²⁰¹ During the Victorian Age, the efforts to extinguish the Irish language foreshadowed certain methods that came up in the 20th century. Children who dared to speak Irish were punished severely:

Brothers were encouraged to spy on sisters. Under the regime of tally-sticks, the child would wear a stick on a string around its neck. Every time the child used an Irish Gaelic word, the parents would cut a notch in the wood. At the end of the week, the village schoolmaster would tally up the notches and administer punishment accordingly. There was only one end in the view: the eradication of Irish.²⁰²

However, the Irish language still exists today. On the one hand, the language managed to survive in the westernmost parts of the island, as some relatively densely populated areas there obviously did not allow the English language to overrule the native tongue. On the other hand, there are political efforts that keep Irish alive: Following the tradition of the Irish Revival around 1900 which produced a complex self-aware culture as a sign of Ireland’s self-esteem and pride, it became the first

¹⁹⁹ Cf. chapter 1.1.

²⁰⁰ Cf. chapter 3.2.

²⁰¹ *OCIL*, p. 166.

²⁰² *Story of English*, p. 183.

national language in the constitution of the Irish State in 1922. As a result, Irish still is a compulsory school subject all over the Republic, and every pupil is supposed to be able to communicate in his “mother tongue”.

But in practice, things are quite different. Apart from the people living in the so-called Gaeltacht regions²⁰³, where the Irish-speaking tradition actually still exists nowadays, Irish is no more than a second language for Irish children: “The majority know it about as well as most English know French.”²⁰⁴ Of course there are Irish-speaking radio stations and, since October 1996, even a television channel, TG4, the studios of which are set in the countryside in County Galway, one of the Gaeltachts. The major broadcaster in Ireland though (beside the BBC and some other British channels) is RTE (Radio Telefís Éireann), whose two channels provide the nation with nothing else but *English*-speaking programmes. Similarly to the influence the BBC has had in Great Britain, this Dublin station has helped to standardise the English spoken all over Ireland. Last but not least, one should mention the so-called “cúpla focal”²⁰⁵ tradition. Following that principle, Irish politicians are demanded to speak some Irish words as an introduction to their speeches. For foreign observers though it is somewhat weird to see the President holding her annual Christmas speech, beginning with two Irish salute sentences and then going on in English.

So, there seems to be no “real” need for the Irish language anymore. Of course, due to the history of the Irish nation (as it is the case in all of the former British colonies), there is a certain demand for emancipation from and opposition against the English, and evidently for the outward signs proving that newfound identity. The Gaelic language is one of those signs.

The *English* language on the other hand, as we have seen, has a long-term history on the Irish territory. It thus has gone through a certain development which is different from the changes the language has faced in Great Britain. In each colonised country of the world one can trace influences of the national language which is the mother tongue of the colonised. Thus, a mutual relation of two languages can be found, one being the *superstratum* (the dominating one), the other one being the *substratum* (the native tongue which is dominated by the invaders’ language, which still has visible influences on the latter one). In Ireland, the Irish Gaelic language obviously is the *substratum*, English the *superstratum*.

²⁰³ Cf. map, Appendix A 4.2.

²⁰⁴ *Story of English*, p. 183.

²⁰⁵ Literal translation: ‘A couple of words’.

As I have explained in my definition, a *substratum* has important influences on the *superstratum*. Those influences can be traced in the English variant spoken in Ireland. They have created an English dialect which is widely known as ‘Hiberno English’²⁰⁶. This term is applied to the Irish varieties of English which are mostly spoken, but which sometimes can also be found in literary texts, e.g. in Maria Edgeworth’s regional novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and in Molly Bloom’s soliloquy in the last chapter of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922).²⁰⁷

I do not want to enumerate every single peculiarity of the Irish version of English, but it “has shown a remarkable power partly to fossilize, and partly to reinterpret the English language”²⁰⁸. Thus, it has created a distinct type of English which has produced its own vocabulary, distinctive syntactical structures, and its own pronunciation. As I am going to relate in the following chapter, these characteristics are mentioned and reflected in both *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes*, and show the importance of the linguistic awareness of the narrators.

Being educated in a bicultural and bilingual society, in which the domination of the British and the emancipation from them has always been an important topic, both of the protagonists are affected by linguistic analyses. As they are both very sensitive about language (especially the English language), they reflect the characteristic features and the impacts of the words they use. Both, Frank and Stephen, often face problems like misunderstandings and ambiguity that are based on language use. I would like to define that arising interest and awareness of language as a “linguistic awakening”.

4.2 James Joyce’s Linguistic Awakening

Words he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him.
James Joyce, *Portrait*²⁰⁹

Analysing James Joyce’s works, one can hardly fail to notice the interest the author demonstrates in language and language use. His early writings collected in *Dubliners* show the effects of language (e.g. the plentiful use of symbols, the elliptical narrative of “The Sisters”, shifts of perspectives and early examples of his

²⁰⁶ Cf. *OCIL*, p. 150f.

²⁰⁷ Cf. *OCIL*, p. 170f.

²⁰⁸ *Story of English*, p. 172.

²⁰⁹ *P*, p. 64.

stream-of-consciousness technique in “The Dead”), and it is apparent that Joyce’s interest in language grew more and more intense throughout his life. In the *Portrait*, too, as I am going to relate in this chapter, he expresses his interest in language. In *Ulysses* (1922), his experiments with language become even more complex. Finally, his last novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939) can be considered as a mere linguistic experiment, reflecting many different aspects of language and also combining dozens of languages in the novel’s narrative.

In the *Portrait* Joyce’s interest in language already becomes visible on the very first page. There the narrator adapts infant language combined with fairy tale elements in order to designate the setting of this opening passage:

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo...²¹⁰

The narrator comes very close to the protagonist’s consciousness by imitating the style of language a boy of about three years of age would use, a language full of repetitions, naïvely mispronounced and made-up words. This innovative opening gives the reader a promise that will be kept throughout the novel: The use of language will be one of its recurring themes. Following the narrative until the end of the book, one sees that the narrator continues to follow the way he has chosen in this very first paragraph. Stephen’s state of mind, his development from naivety to maturity, is reflected and paralleled by the mode of language, as well as, to a certain extent, by the frequency of intertextual allusions²¹¹ and quotations. The final chapter of the *Portrait* shows the intellectual maturity of young college student Stephen by the use of complex, syntactical sentences that prove the protagonist’s ability to cope with abstract and philosophical topics.

In his commentary on the *Portrait*, Harry Blamires²¹² points out five stages of style which are detectable in the narrative:

1. INFANCY: The earliest memories of Stephen are recollected in the very first passage of the book. They include parts of a bedtime story and simplistic expressions, e.g. “That had the queer smell”²¹³.

²¹⁰ *P*, p. 3.

²¹¹ Cf. chapter 5.1.

²¹² Blamires, Harry. *York Notes on A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harlow: Longman York Press, 1984, p. 54f.

2. YOUNG SCHOOLBOY AT CLONGOWES: At this stage, Stephen's "[...] reflections are framed in short, plain sentences, direct, never complex in syntax, never decorated"²¹⁴. Here, we find typical schoolboy expressions (e.g. "to get into a wax"²¹⁵), as well as phrases from text-books used in school (e.g. "the senate and the Roman people"²¹⁶).
3. ADOLESCENT STAGE AT BELVEDERE COLLEGE: Here Stephen's thoughts are reflected in a more and more complex and sophisticated style, marked by the educational and literary influences he has had so far.
4. UNIVERSITY STUDENT: Here, Blamires detects on the one hand "a bookishness appropriate for a philosophically minded young man" and, on the other hand, when talking to his fellow students, "a blend of mock-pedantry and irreverent crudity expressive of the undergraduate mentality"²¹⁷.
5. DIARY ENTRIES: In this final section of the *Portrait*, "the style has become that of a conscious literary artist, one who has begun to discipline himself to a sharp selectivity in what he records"²¹⁸.

These five stages give a clear and adequate overview of how the style of Joyce's narrative develops in the course of the *Portrait* and of how it parallels and corresponds to its protagonist's state of mind and maturity. Let me add one further example of Stephen's highly developed awareness of language, which is represented by the narrator's virtually "poetic" style in chapter V:

Towards dawn he awoke. O what sweet music! His soul was all dewy and wet. Over his limbs in sleep pale cool waves of light had passed. He lay still, as if his soul lay amid cool waters, conscious of faint sweet music. His mind was waking slowly to a tremulous morning knowledge, a morning inspiration. A spirit filled him, pure as the purest water, sweet as dew, moving as music. But how faintly it was inbreathed, how passionlessly, as if the seraphim themselves were breathing upon him! His soul was waking slowly, fearing to awake wholly. It was that windless hour of dawn when madness wakes and strange plants open to the light and the moth flies forth silently.²¹⁹

²¹³ *P*, p. 3.

²¹⁴ Blamires, p. 54.

²¹⁵ *P*, p. 46.

²¹⁶ *P*, p. 54.

²¹⁷ Blamires, p. 55.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*.

²¹⁹ *P*, p. 235.

Here, we are not given an objective, realistic description of the protagonist's thoughts after waking up in the morning. This excerpt rather reminds me of Romantic literature, as it is full of emotionally biased, metaphorical expressions and exclamations.

Naturally, a portrait of a *literary* artist as a young man is expected to show the protagonist's awareness of language (as language is the writers' tool). An interesting early example of a scene in which Stephen demonstrates his interest in language is a semantic observation he makes at the playground. There he discovers the ambiguity of the word "belt" which has two very different meanings:

He kept his hands in the sidepockets of his belted grey suit. That was a belt round his pocket. And belt was also to give a fellow a belt. One day a fellow had said to Cantwell: - I'd give you a belt in a second.²²⁰

So, a belt is not only the strip of leather worn around one's waist in order to retain one's trousers. There also is an idiomatic expression ("to give somebody a belt"), meaning to slap somebody. In this scene the narrator explores the protagonist's first acquaintance with the complexity of language, a language which does not have strictly logical structures and designations. This passage is Stephen's first experience with the *pragmatic* dimension of the English language.

With amazement and curiosity Stephen encounters many more characteristics and consequences of certain words, as the German scholar Wilhelm Füger²²¹ puts it: Stephen learns that words may evoke negative or positive emotions and associations, but they might also be highly irritating due to their instability and ambiguity. Because of those irritations, Stephen finally loses his faith in the "truth" of words. He learns that words might be unstable, ambiguous and even dangerous.

Symbolical, metaphorical, and indirect use of language can be found throughout the *Portrait*. There is one example of that usage at the Christmas dinner scene, when Stephen wonders why the Dedalus' guest Mr Casey was not able to straighten his fingers. Casey explains that "he had got those three cramped fingers making a birthday present for Queen Victoria"²²². Of course, that "birthday present", as he puts it, is an euphemistic expression for hard prison work: Casey is said to be a Fenian who had been sentenced to hard labour in one of the queen's gaols.

²²⁰ P, p. 5.

²²¹ Wilhelm Füger. *James Joyce: Epoche, Werk, Wirkung*. München: Beck, 1994, p. 166.

²²² P, p. 26.

The enormous effect that certain words can have is demonstrated in one scene in the *Portrait* that shows Stephen's reaction to a simple word cut into a desk of the anatomy theatre where his father used to study: "foetus". Reading the word Stephen instantly invents a story about how that inscription was made and then connects it with himself. Stephen's assumption that his own obsession with sexuality "was a crude private malady"²²³ is proven wrong:

It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then as a brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His recent monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They too had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words.²²⁴

As an adolescent, Stephen begins to think about the relation between English and the Irish variant of that language. There is one major scene in chapter V where he clearly shows that a language is not always as universal as it is said to be. In that passage, Stephen is talking to a priest:

– [...]You must choose the pure oil and you must be careful when you pour it in not to overflow it, not to pour in more than a funnel can hold.
 – What funnel? asked Stephen.
 – The funnel through which you pour the oil into your lamp.
 – That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is it not a tundish?
 – What is a tundish?
 – That. The ... the funnel.
 – Is that called a tundish in Ireland? asked the dean. I never heard that word in my life.²²⁵

The difference between the English spoken by the British and the English spoken in Ireland (cf. chapter 4.1) becomes evident in this dialogue. There are differences in usage, differences Stephen considers as proof for the fact that the English language is not his native language (even though he was not brought up in an Irish-speaking environment). The discussion about the words "tundish" and "funnel" leads Stephen to the following conclusion:

The language in which we [the Irish] are speaking is his [the English priest's] before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.²²⁶

²²³ Blamires, p. 27.

²²⁴ *P*, p. 95.

²²⁵ *P*, p. 203f.

²²⁶ *P*, p. 205.

This observation interestingly describes the ambiguous attitude Joyce himself had towards the English language. On the one hand, he maintained it brilliantly, it was his mode of expression, his first language, and the major tool of his art. He discovered the creative possibilities that are in this language, he invented witty puns and riddles with English words. Even though he regarded English as a language imposed on the Irish people, he never preferred Irish to the English language. He did not learn the native tongue at home, and he never sympathised with the Irish cultural revival²²⁷ and its products. Still he was aware that English was a language imposed on the Irish by their suppressors. Very much like his character Gabriel Conroy in “The Dead”, James Joyce wrote and published his texts in English, he was not interested too much in the western, traditional parts of Ireland, and he rather sought for intellectual inspiration throughout Europe. Like Gabriel, Joyce was one of the persons Molly Ivors would have called “West Briton”²²⁸.

4.3 Frank McCourt’s Linguistic Awakening

Similarly to the several stages in Stephen’s linguistic development, the style of *Angela’s Ashes* also reflects young artist Frank’s state of mind. As McCourt chose the first-person narrative, the reader constantly witnesses the protagonist’s intellectual stage.²²⁹

The very beginning of *Angela’s Ashes* introduces us to the world of the young future artist told from the mature point of view of the 1990s’ Frank McCourt. We are given a brief overview of the incidents, conditions and backgrounds which led to the famous “miserable, Irish Catholic childhood”²³⁰ of the McCourt siblings. After this passage of introduction, there is a caesura in the narrative perspective. From now on, it is Frank as a child, then as an adolescent, then as a young man – the narrator grows

²²⁷ Cf. *OCIL*, p. 197f.

²²⁸ Joyce, James. “The Dead”. In: *Dubliners*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1993, pp. 127-161, p. 137.

²²⁹ I will give more information on the narrative perspectives in both portraits in chapter 6.

²³⁰ *AA*, p. 1.

parallel to the narrated story. This caesura is clearly indicated by a shift from past to present tense.

I'm in a playground on Classon Avenue in Brooklyn with my brother, Malachy. He's two, I'm three. We're on the seesaw. Up, down, up, down. Malachy goes up. I get off. Malachy goes down. Seesaw hits the ground. He screams. His hand is on his mouth and there's blood. Oh God. Blood is bad. My mother will kill me. And here she is, trying to run across the playground. Her big belly slows her. She says, What did you do? What did you do to the child? I don't know what to say. I don't want to know what I did. She pulls my ear. Go home. Go to bed. Bed? In the middle of day? She pushes me toward the playground gate. Go. She picks up Malachy and waddles off.²³¹

This is the actual opening passage of *Angela's Ashes* through young Frank's mind, and it strongly reminds me of James Joyce's Stephen and his childish talk in the beginning of the *Portrait*. Frank uses paratactic and elliptical sentences and shows the intellectual state and the typical misjudgements of a three year old boy. For him, his mother Angela is somehow handicapped by her "big belly", but he does not understand that the "big belly" of course stands for a further pregnancy.

From now on, it is only through Frank's limited point of view and understanding that we are told the story. As a matter of fact, a three year old boy is not at all able to correctly evaluate what is going on around him. The narration is thus full of those misinterpretations which are very crucial to what we are told. As it is the case in Stephen's account (or rather the *Portrait's* narrator's account which is often very close to Stephen's mind), the reader of Frank's memoirs has to reflect and to rearrange what the young narrator is trying to communicate.

Frank McCourt's style is much more comprehensible than Joyce's. Thus, the incidents in Frank's life are shown much more clearly than Stephen's. Frank's account is quite straight-forward, but it still includes strong ironic features which sometimes come very close to dramatic irony due to the above-mentioned misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

In contrast to the *Portrait*, *Angela's Ashes* is not divided into five loosely connected parts. That is why it is not as easy to define the stages of the protagonist's language use and style (cf. my efforts in chapter 4.2). The reader witnesses a constant process of linguistic development as Frank is growing older while telling us about his upbringing. Frank's linguistic awakening is foreshadowed by the repetition of somehow meaningless paroles his father frequently utters when he is drunk. Malachy

²³¹ *AA*, p. 11.

senior's identity is based on dumb and mostly unfounded expressions with the help of which the Irish try to struggle free from the English suppression. Malachy, as I have mentioned before, who used to be active in the IRA in Ulster, recites and sings rebel songs without actually finding any convincing arguments for his motives. He keeps up his dull resentment against the English by quoting those lyrics and by making his children promise to be faithful to their country: "He comes to the bedroom door. Up, boys, up. A nickel for everyone who promises to die for Ireland."²³² Of course, the children do not have the slightest idea of what their father is aiming at with his demand. The promise does not mean anything, as they just have to repeat the words in order to get their weekly penny. Thus, for young Frank, the promise is no more than idle talk, a completely meaningless utterance. Making the reader aware of that specific use of language he heralds in some measure that language (use) is going to be of a certain importance throughout the book.

An early example of true linguistic awareness is shown in the narrator's reflections about different words in British and American English:

[Mrs. Leibowitz and Minnie MacAdorey] show us how to take care of the twins, how to wash their bottoms and how to wash diaper rags after they get them shitty. Mrs. Leibowitz calls them diapers and Minnie calls them nappies but it doesn't matter what they call them because the twins get them shitty anyway.²³³

Even though Frank does not really understand why one person uses one certain word for the rags his mother wraps his brothers' backsides in and another person uses a different word for the same thing, he demonstrates that he is already aware of linguistic details at a very early stage of his life. As Frank is strongly influenced by two cultures and nationalities when his family moves to Ireland, there are a lot of further examples of differences between American and Irish English, one of them being the two fashions of calling policemen: In America the McCourt boys had learned the word "cops" whereas in Ireland they are told to call them "guards".²³⁴

Soon, Frank begins to understand that even *moods* can be simply expressed by the choice of words. There is an early scene set in Dublin where Frank is asked to help his father to carry a box. Angela tells him to go with his "Pop" which leads young Frank to the following conclusion: "Your Pop. That means she is in a good

²³² AA, p. 18.

²³³ AA, p. 39.

²³⁴ AA, p. 51.

mood. If she says your father it means she is in a bad mood.”²³⁵ His mother’s good temper is thus brought forth in the mere choice of the word “Pop”. This specific use of a selected word is indeed a very common device of expressing one’s temper.

Being able to express moods and tempers, language can also be capable of helping people cope with harsh conditions. If one uses euphemistic expressions and words, one might be relieved to a certain extent. Parents like Angela and Malachy, as a matter of fact, who raise their sons in absolute misery, are often masters of euphemistic language use. And they know that it is possible to comfort their offspring with that kind of mere linguistic escapism. One of the major euphemisms in *Angela’s Ashes* is used by the parents when living in the Limerick back lanes. Two weeks before Christmas the Irish rain does not cease and turns the ground floor of the McCourts’ simple dwelling place into a damp, making it impossible for the family to live downstairs. Having to squeeze his family into the upper floor, Malachy (as the born story teller he is) tries to ease the children’s worries by establishing a connection between the upper part of their house with a much more appealing place – Italy:

[My mother] thinks we should stay upstairs as long as there is rain. We’ll be warm through the winter months and then we can go downstairs in the springtime if there is any sign of a dryness in the walls or the floor. Dad says it’s like going away on our holidays to a warm foreign place like Italy. That’s what we’ll call the upstairs from now on, Italy.²³⁶

From now on, the McCourts really “live” in Italy – the upstairs floor will never be called anything else than Italy while the downstairs damp remains a part of miserable Ireland.

When he is about ten years old, Frank gets severely ill and has to spend a long period in hospital. There he becomes acquainted with the works of Shakespeare by whom he is immediately fascinated. This arising interest in high literature of course indicates Frank’s curiosity and urge for knowledge, and it strengthens his linguistic competence – the power of language, of expressions, of simple words become more and more clear to Frank. His linguistic awareness grows as well as he himself grows.

As I have explained in the introduction to this chapter, the Irish language has always been a delicate topic throughout Ireland’s struggle for independence and

²³⁵ *AA*, p. 49.

²³⁶ *AA*, p. 104.

freedom. Joyce's first language was English (cf. chapter 4.2), he was not interested too much in Gaelic Irish, and he never supported or sympathised with movements like the Gaelic League. Frank McCourt grew up some fifty years later than Joyce, and the tendency of losing the connection to the Irish language was even more visible than around the turn of the century. For Frank, Irish was no more than a subject in school – more than that, he compares it to Latin and Greek, thus interpreting it as a *dead* language. By the time the McCourt boys were growing up in Limerick, there was no one anymore who communicated in Irish in that city, the remaining Gaeltacht regions being far more in the West. As Malachy senior was born and educated in Ulster, the most British part of the isle, he never learnt Irish at all. So, Frank grew up in a family where the Irish language was never spoken, and that naturally explains why he never got any closer to that tongue. The way Frank regarded the Irish language as a schoolboy gives an idea of what learning Irish has meant and still means for Irish pupils nowadays – no more than a somewhat abstract school subject. However, Frank's opinion of the languages he came in contact with was clearly defined: "Irish is fine for patriots. English for traitors and informers, but it's the Latin that gains us entrance in heaven itself."²³⁷ By the way, Frank McCourt regards himself as being influenced by three languages:

Besides the study of the Irish language we were also exposed to Latin. We absorbed it from the Mass – and who can ever tell how much it influenced our language? Street urchins (like myself) were able to recite passages of Mass Latin. (That made us trilingual!)²³⁸

As we have seen, Frank's growing up and the stages of his maturity are not only shown by the happenings or the tasks he has to face during the reported time. We also find many *linguistic* hints and, as Joyce would have put it, 'epiphanies' that designate crucial moments for his development. Another example of those decisive moments can be found in one of the passages where he works as a coal deliverer for Mr Hannon. There, he suddenly is aware of having made a further step into adolescence:

[Mrs. Hannon] asks Mam if Frank would ever go down to the coal yard and tell the man in the office that Mr. Hannon can't come in today [...]. Mrs. Hannon always calls me Frank now. Anyone that delivers hundredweights of coal is not a Frankie.²³⁹

²³⁷ *AA*, p. 130.

²³⁸ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 Oct. 2001, Appendix A 3.2.

²³⁹ *AA*, p. 308.

For the boy, the shift from being called Frankie to being called Frank is a clear sign of a certain evolution. From now on he believes himself to rather be a grown-up than a child.

But Frank still has to learn much about language, there still are a lot of obstacles to overcome. One of them he has to face when he is curious about a word he does not understand and which he has to look up in a dictionary. The word he is looking up is “virgin”, a word one definitely comes across in a severely Catholic education. The dictionary entry says: “[...] Virgin, woman (usually a young woman) who is and remains in a state of inviolate chastity.”²⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, the boy knows neither the word “inviolate” nor “chastity”, and he has to look them up as well. This leads to a kind of chain-reaction because in every single entry he reads, there is at least one word he does not know and which he has to look up as well. Frank describes this annoying browsing as “a wild goose chase from this word to that word and all because the people who wrote the dictionary don’t want the likes of [him] to know anything”²⁴¹. Here, he describes a situation we probably all know, and he proves again his interest and curiosity about words and language.

Frank’s linguistic skills are best demonstrated in his ability to write, which he proves for the first time when he returns to school after his stay in hospital. He is involuntarily put back into the class of his younger brother, where he shows that his writing is evidently powerful. He writes about what Jesus’ life would have been like if he had lived in Limerick, Ireland. The hilarious essay he composes astonishes the teacher and the headmaster so much that Frank is “taken out of the fifth class and put into Mr O’Halloran’s sixth class with all the boys [he knows]”²⁴². Besides, this scene might remind the reader of the essay young Stephen Dedalus writes in Belvedere.²⁴³

Later in his youth, Frank’s obvious writing gift helps him to earn enough money to leave Ireland and to return to the United States. By chance he gets a job with Brigid Finuncane, an elderly woman who is a kind of loan shark, and for whom he composes threatening letters to the people whose payments are overdue. The nasty letters he writes for her are extremely well-written and effective. They clearly

²⁴⁰ *AA*, p. 333.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *AA*, p. 235.

²⁴³ *P*, p. 83.

demonstrate that by now Frank has learned very well to make use of words and, more than that, how important the chosen level of style is:

Dear Mrs. O'Brien,
Inasmuch as you have not succumbed to the imminence of litigation in our previous epistle be advised that we are in consultation with our barrister above in Dublin.²⁴⁴

I consider these letters as a kind of “linguistic graduation” in Frank’s life. He shows more than clearly that he maintains his language almost perfectly, and that, in his later life, language will be an important tool for him.

4.4 The Art of Language

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art.
Oscar Wilde²⁴⁵

Both James Joyce and Frank McCourt have managed to develop their use of language from the stage of a child through the stage of an adolescent into a perfection that proves that their talents are far over-average. The linguistic awakening of both has created an awareness of language which makes it possible for them to use this medium as a tool. I do not want to claim that McCourt’s maintenance of that tool is demonstrated as brilliantly in his works as James Joyce’s, for the latter focuses in the *Portrait*, and of course even more in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, much more on language, on linguistic matters and language experiments than McCourt does in *Angela’s Ashes* and *'Tis*. For McCourt the focus

²⁴⁴ *AA*, p. 389.

²⁴⁵ Oscar Wilde. “Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*”. In: *The Collected Works of Oscar Wilde*. Ware: Wordsworth, 1997, p. 3.

is much more on *what* is related than on *how* it is related, but his style still shows that he is a skilled and gifted writer.

As I have pointed out in the previous chapters, both authors foreshadow their literary career in their portraits of artists as young men. They both put their interest, curiosity, knowledge, and their concern with language on show. They both reveal their literary influences and inspirations which turned them into authors in the end.

Stephen's first literary work can be found in the very first passage of chapter one. There, the infant boy combines two utterances he has heard into one short poem, thus his first artistic act, representing the beginnings of his artistic consciousness:

*Pull out his eyes,
Apologise,
Apologise,
Pull out his eyes.*

*Apologise,
Pull out his eyes,
Pull out his eyes,
Apologise.²⁴⁶*

During his life as a child and then at school, Stephen discovers that his maintenance of language is very good. He quotes a number of poems, proves that he can change the meaning of his essay²⁴⁷ by just replacing one word by another and thus only modifying the most subtle nuance of the questionable sentence. Stephen's feeling for language turns out to be extraordinary. Towards the end, the young artist tries to compose a poem (a villanelle) for Emma, the girl he admires and thus practices his poetic skills. In the very last part of the book we find his diary entries that reveal his thoughts about his poems ("11 April. Read what I wrote last night. Vague words for a vague emotion."²⁴⁸) and about the society he lives in ("A race of clodhoppers!"²⁴⁹). Stephen also returns to one word that had disturbed him earlier on (cf. chapter 4.2):

13 April: That tundish has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? Damn him one way or the other!²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ *P*, p. 4.

²⁴⁷ *P*, p. 83. Cf. also chapter 3.2.1.

²⁴⁸ *P*, p. 274.

²⁴⁹ *P*, p. 272.

²⁵⁰ *P*, p. 274.

This circular recurrence of the “funnel”-discussion is yet another proof of how important pragmatic language use is for Stephen, and thus for Joyce as the man behind the protagonist. The famous last diary entry (“27 April: Old father, old artificer, stand me now and forever in good stead.”²⁵¹) symbolises Stephen’s entrance into the world of art.

Young Frank, on the other hand, does not prove his own literary skills by writing or composing poems, his literary awareness and interest rather show in quotations and intertextual references. Hence, we never hear about his literary ambitions; throughout his memoirs Frank is interested in literature in a scholarly but not in a creative way. Contrary to Stephen he does not write nor compose, he rather reflects about literary works and demonstrates a rising interest in reading. The McCourt parents’ education is far lower than the Dedalus parents’. Thus, Frank does not have the same conditions and possibilities as Stephen, who, even though his father is not at all wealthy in the end, still manages to go to college and graduate. I will go into more detail in chapter 5.

5. Literary Awakening

That Shakespeare is that good he must have been an Irishman.
Frank McCourt, *Angela’s Ashes*²⁵²

People who want to become authors, mostly have three major motivations for realizing their literary ambitions: The first one being their urge to communicate certain topics through their writings, the second one being a kind of passion about their language, the third one being their interest in literature as a medium. Talking about Joyce and McCourt, I have already pointed out the first motivation (the portrayal of Ireland, their need to write about their experiences), and I have also dealt with the second one (their linguistic awakening). There still is one motivation left which I am going to cope with in this chapter: The artists’ interest in literature itself and their interest in other literary artists.

²⁵¹ P, p. 276.

²⁵² AA, p. 320.

5.1 Literature in the *Portrait*

Fudge! said Heron. Ask Dedalus. Who is the greatest writer, Dedalus?
James Joyce, *Portrait*²⁵³

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Stephen's interest in artistic use of language shows very early in the *Portrait*. Parallel to that, he very soon reveals his fascination with other people's artistic work. Hidden quotations not only from the Bible²⁵⁴ but also from the likes of Shakespeare²⁵⁵ are indicators of the narrator's (and through him, Stephen's) interest in literary history. The first *obvious* declaration of the protagonist's fascination with books is his reading experience of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Christo*, an adventurous novel which is a typical reading matter for young boys. The fictional world Stephen discovers in that book makes him dream about the "dark avenger"²⁵⁶ and the beautiful Mercedes; he regards Dumas' fictional world as a comforting refuge to escape to.

The villanelle Stephen wants to dedicate to Emma (cf. chapter 4.3) contains elements he has found in the verse of his favourite poet: "He knew it was right to begin [his poem] so as he had seen similar titles in the collected poems of Byron."²⁵⁷ The protagonist's admiration for George Gordon, Lord Byron, the Romantic poet, is also the reason for a discussion between him and some of his school mates. There is one scene at Belvedere College where they argue about the quality of authors. Stephen shows his extravagant interest in Cardinal Newman's prose and Byron's poetry, whereas his friends prefer Lord Tennyson whom Stephen pejoratively entitles "a rhymester"²⁵⁸, not a poet. Here, the young artist proves his genuine interest in literature: Whereas the others' opinion is based on society's prejudices about Byron ("In any case Byron was a heretic and immoral too"²⁵⁹) and on the still resonant reputation of the former poet laureate Tennyson, Stephen makes up his own mind. By the way, his extraordinary taste and interest in literature enforce the feeling of isolation Stephen has throughout the *Portrait*.

Similarly to his reading experience of Alexandre Dumas, young Dedalus finds comfort in literature throughout his life, as you can see from his reactions to a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley: "He repeated to himself the lines of Shelley's

²⁵³ *P*, p. 84.

²⁵⁴ *P*, p. 31.

²⁵⁵ E.g. a quotation from *Macbeth* (act V, scene 4), *P*, p. 50.

²⁵⁶ *P*, p. 64.

²⁵⁷ *P*, p. 73.

²⁵⁸ *P*, p. 85.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

fragment. Its alternation of sad human ineffectualness with vast inhuman cycles of activity chilled him, and he forgot his own human and ineffectual grieving.”²⁶⁰

Literature – written by himself or others – offers Stephen a possibility to escape from his grievance and problems. So, the literary awakening of the young artist is included in the *Portrait* as a layer parallel to his linguistic awakening and his quest for identity. There is one scene in chapter IV which interestingly demonstrates the role of literature in Stephen’s quest for identity, in his struggle from the Church’s influence: “From the door of Byron’s publichouse to the gate of Clontarf Chapel, from the Gate of Clontarf Chapel to the door of Byron’s publichouse and then back again to the chapel and then back again to the publichouse he [...] paced [...]”²⁶¹ The symbolism of Stephen’s going to an fro between a place dedicated to a representative of the world of literature and a religious building shows his inner conflict. In the end, as we know, he decides in favour of literature.

5.2 Literature in *Angela’s Ashes*

*I tell [Mam] I had to read A Modest Proposal from the back of Gulliver’s Travels
and she says, That’s all right, ‘tis only a children’s book.
Frank McCourt, Angela’s Ashes*²⁶²

Frank McCourt’s mediocre school education does not allow him to get into contact with literature as early as Stephen. At Leamy’s National School he is instructed in the basic skills of writing, reading, mathematics and other sciences, and of course in religious duties. The literary education of the young boys in Limerick, however, is quite bad. During the early years of his childhood, Frank’s only contact with some sort of “literature” is a spoken one, namely the recitation and performance of songs as well as his father’s bedtime stories: “Because we had no books at home, magazines, newspapers, we fell back on the spoken language. We used language as a form of entertainment (storytelling, poetry) [...]”²⁶³

Frank actually encounters *written* literature for the first time at Mr Timoney’s house. The old blind man asks the boy to read aloud some of his favourite pieces of literature: Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*. The boy turns

²⁶⁰ *P*, p. 103.

²⁶¹ *P*, p. 178.

²⁶² *AA*, p. 198.

²⁶³ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 4 Oct. 2001, Appendix A 3.2.

out to be a “good reader”²⁶⁴, but he does not actually understand the meanings behind Swift’s satire. Nevertheless, his sensitivity for and interest in literature is aroused by Mr Timoney. During his long stay at hospital, Frank’s passion for literature is fully developed thanks to the cleaner’s vast supply with reading material. Very much like Stephen, Frank finds comfort in the texts he reads, and he is especially fascinated by highly-acclaimed literature: “[...It’s] Shakespeare and it’s like having jewels in my mouth when I say the words. If I had a whole book of Shakespeare they could keep me in the hospital for a year.”²⁶⁵

From then on, Frank is utterly keen on reading, which evidently helps him to broaden his horizon. He lends books from the library, secretly listens to the BBC radio version of *Macbeth*.²⁶⁶ The profound knowledge of literature he thus acquires later helps him to enrol at New York University (cf. chapter 3.4.2) where he studies English literature. As we get to know in *'Tis*, his interest focuses on literature that does not always respond to the public taste: His efforts to introduce J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in The Rye* as a text for school²⁶⁷ remind me very much of the conflicts Stephen has to endure because of his somewhat “special” literary interests (cf. chapter 5.1).

6. On Narration: Techniques and Perspectives

So far, I have talked about the major aspects of the portraits as regards *content* (roughly comparable to what Seymour Chatman understands as the ‘story’ of a novel²⁶⁸), i.e. the events, the characters, the historical background, the dominating problems of the protagonists, and their family backgrounds. Moreover, I have analysed the linguistic dimension of the novels, which Seymour Chatman would call part of the ‘discourse’. The most important part of the latter aspect though is the texts’ *narrative* techniques. In the following chapter I will outline the characteristic features of the narrators in the *Portrait* and *Angela’s Ashes*. What kind of narrator and which kind of perspective did James Joyce and Frank McCourt choose in order to convey the ‘story’ of their works?

²⁶⁴ *AA*, p. 198.

²⁶⁵ *AA*, p. 222.

²⁶⁶ *AA*, p. 319.

²⁶⁷ Cf. *'Tis*, p. 321ff.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Seymour Chatman. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structures in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca/London: Cornell UP, 1978.

6.1 The Narrator in the *Portrait*

What then is your point of view? Cranly asked.
James Joyce, *Portrait*²⁶⁹

The work of Joyce has been of interest to numerous literary critics and narratologists who paid a lot of attention to its linguistic and structural devices. The narrative technique of the *Portrait* (and that of *Ulysses*) was in fact one of the basic examples of the Austrian scholar Franz K. Stanzel's publication *A Theory of Narrative*²⁷⁰ which qualifies and identifies the narrators of fictional text considering the following features: identity vs. non-identity, interior vs. exterior perspective, reflective vs. telling mode. The three poles of narrative perspective are referred to as 'first-person narrator', 'figural narrator', and 'authorial narrator' (in German: 'auktorialer Erzähler'). In Stanzel's theoretical approach, the narrator in the *Portrait* is an example of the 'figural' narrative situation (see illustration in chapter 6.2, page 85). But the voice in Joyce's novel is actually a complex and rather unstable one, as I would like to show with the help of some crucial quotations from the text.

The narrator of the *Portrait* clearly distinguishes himself (or *itself*²⁷¹) from Stephen by the third-person perspective: The young artist is referred to as "he" and "Stephen", and thus he is definitely not identical with the narrator (even though some critics like John Blades emphasise the remarkable similarity between Stephen and the anonymous narrator²⁷²). In the course of the text the narrator clearly reveals his intimate knowledge about the protagonist; the events are presented through Stephen's perception and thoughts. However, the narrator regularly detaches himself from the young artist's mind; the alternation of interior and exterior perspectives makes it rather difficult to speak of one *single* narrator. Joyce employs a variable perspective rather than a fixed one²⁷³, as becomes obvious in the following passage:

The slide was shot to suddenly. The penitent came out. He was next. He stood up in terror and walked blindly into the box. At last it had come. He knelt in the silent gloom and raised his eyes to the white crucifix suspended above him. God could see that he was sorry. He would tell him all his sins. His confession would be long, long. Everybody in the chapel would know then what a sinner he had been. Let them know. It was true. But God had promised to forgive him if he was sorry. He was sorry. He clasped his hands and raised them towards the white form, praying

²⁶⁹ P, p. 268.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Franz K. Stanzel. *A Theory of Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

²⁷¹ As Mieke Bal puts it in: Mielke Bal. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto/ Buffalo/ London: U of Toronto P, 1985.

²⁷² Cf. John Blades. *James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991, p. 139.

²⁷³ Cf. Rudolf Beck; Hildegard Kuester; Martin Kuester. *Terminologie der Literaturwissenschaft: Ein Handbuch für das Anglistikstudium*. Ismaning: Hueber 1998, p. 196.

with his darkened eyes, praying with all his trembling body, swaying his head to and fro like a lost creature with whimpering lips. – Sorry! Sorry! O sorry!²⁷⁴

The lines I have emphasised in italic letters clearly recount the events through Stephen's perception and thoughts. Here, the perspective is obviously *interior* whereas the last sentence of this quotation is told from the narrator's *exterior* perspective.

Throughout the *Portrait* the alternation of perspectives characterises the narrative mode. In the Stanzelian sense, the 'figural narrator' tells the story through Stephen as a reflector, but he does not offer a stable, fixed perspective. Sometimes the reader perceives the novel's world as Stephen does, sometimes he gets an outward description of the events. But even those pieces of exterior information are not completely detached from the reflector-character. The narrator's point-of-view is not at all omniscient; he is almost as limited as Stephen himself. Neither does he give any comments on the young artist's behaviour, nor does he forecast future events. There are some flashbacks, but those must be strictly ascribed to Stephen's own reflections. The telling agent, when not reporting through the protagonist's view, is a mere limited spectator.

However, even though the third-person narrator does not include any obvious comments on the young artist and his development, Joyce managed to insert some annotations on Stephen in the text. Irony is the device he makes use of for this purpose: "[...] Joyce is here providing us with a part-loving, part-ironic portrait of himself as a (very) young man."²⁷⁵ Many of the episodes Stephen goes through seem ironic to a certain extent, e.g. his ridiculous ways of performing repentance after Father Arnall's sermons. The lack of actual success in writing poetry throughout the novel despite Stephen's numerous eager attempts is a further example of Joyce's irony regarding his protagonist.

The only passage in which the novel's narrative perspective becomes clear is the last part of chapter V, the ending of the novel. Here, we find diary entries written by Stephen Dedalus. So, it is definitely the protagonist himself who narrates the last pages of the *Portrait*. This is hence the most immediate and least confusing point-of-view one finds in the novel. But as a matter of fact, it is also the least interesting one.

²⁷⁴ *P*, p. 155.

²⁷⁵ Seamus Deane. "Introduction". In: *P*, p. xlii.

The confusion of narrative perspectives and telling agents in the *Portrait* is intensified by Joyce's use of (or rather deliberate lack of) punctuation: He chose not to employ the inverted comma which distinguishes between direct speech and the narrator's descriptions. There are several scenes in the novel where one might have problems to definitely assign every single utterance to the characters involved in the discussions. The most striking example is, again, the Christmas dinner. That scene is mostly composed of the dialogue between Mr Dedalus, Dante, and Mr Casey. Mere dashes indicate direct speech by the characters, which was regarded as a mistake by several critics of the novel's first publication. In 1917 H. G. Wells, for instance, criticised Joyce's ignorance towards punctuation, as well as the novel's sudden elliptical leaps in time:

Like so many Irish writers from Sterne to Shaw Mr. Joyce is a bold experimentalist with paragraph and punctuation. He breaks away from scene to scene without a hint of the change of time and place; at the end he passes suddenly from the third person to the first; he uses no inverted commas to mark off his speeches. [...] One conversation in this book is a superb success, the one in which Mr. Dedalus carves the Christmas turkey; I write with all due liberation that Sterne himself could not have done it better; but most of the talk flickers blindingly with these dashes, one has the same wincing feeling of being flicked at that one used to have in the early cinema shows. I think Mr. Joyce has failed to discredit the inverted comma.²⁷⁶

When the *Portrait* was published, many reviews blamed Joyce for this confusing way of using shifts in narration, time, and space without any obvious indicators. There are considerable gaps between each of the chapters without any relieving explanations. At first sight, all five chapters seem to be unconnected episodes in Stephen's life. Further analyses though help the reader to find linking elements that hold the text together: There are recurring symbols (e.g. the cow) and metaphors (e.g. colours) that give the *Portrait* a kind of congruency.²⁷⁷

For the readers in the early 20th century, the narrative and structural experiments of Joyce must have been difficult to follow. Hence, remarks like the one by Wells are comprehensible. Nowadays on the other hand, readers are already used to confusing narrative methods in fiction. Post-modern literature and parallel developments in cinema have enabled us to find our ways through difficult texts and films. Current readers do not automatically expect traditional perspectives or narrators in fiction (and films) anymore. Whereas some cultures are not able to

²⁷⁶ H. G. Wells. "On the merits and Politics of *A Portrait of the Artist*". In: Harold Bloom (ed.) *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999, p. 31.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Harold Bloom. "Thematic and Structural Analysis". In: *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999, pp.13-26.

understand current films as the editing methods are not at all intelligible for them, we do not have any difficulties to follow certain leaps in time and space and parallel scenes on the screen. Likewise, today's readers of fictional texts are accustomed to innovative methods in narration. Thus, the lack of punctuation in *Angela's Ashes*, which is very much like the one in Joyce's book, did not disturb the readers when McCourt's memoir was published in the 1990s. Both texts demand a certain activity by the reader who is meant to assign the utterances and narratives to the agents and characters of and in the texts.

6.2 The Narrator in *Angela's Ashes*

Angela's Ashes took thirteen months to write and thirty years to prepare (and despair). It was never easy but once I found the voice and the tone and the diction of Limerick the story moved on.
Frank McCourt²⁷⁸

The narrative perspective of *Angela's Ashes* seems to be revealed in one of the first paragraphs which introduces the point-of-view (and the protagonist) as follows:

My father and mother should have stayed in New York where they met and married and where I was born. Instead, they returned to Ireland when I was four, my brother, Malachy, three, the twins, Oliver and Eugene, barely one, and my sister, Margaret, dead and gone.²⁷⁹

Reading these opening lines, the reader expects a conventional autobiographical account of a somewhat miserable life. We are told the first part of the memoir through Frank McCourt's perspective, i.e. the perspective of the later Frank McCourt, who wrote the book in the mid-1990s. More than sixty years have passed between the narrated period and the period in which the author reflects about his childhood. Franz K. Stanzel would classify the narrator of *Angela's Ashes* as a typical 'first-person narrator', a telling agent who is characterised by his identity and interior perspective. The past tense is a clear indicator for that type of narrator.

Nevertheless, Frank McCourt chose to make use of a second narrative agent. The narration I have just identified as 'first-person' from the retired teacher Frank McCourt's view, serves as the frame narrative of the memoir. The first ten pages

²⁷⁸ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 15 Nov. 2001, Appendix A 3.3.

²⁷⁹ *AA*, p. 1.

give the reader some background information about what happened before Frank was able to (consciously) witness the events and developments of his family. On page 11, there is a sudden shift in narration, which can be clearly recognised in a shift of tense. The agent who is now relating the story uses the present tense. Due to his linguistic limitation (cf. chapter 4.3) that we recognise as a child's form of expression, I suggest to classify this narrator as a 'figural' one. Young Frank, through whose perception we are told the story, is rather a reflector-character than a telling agent.

His perspective is limited, he shows the events without commenting on them. His form of comment, like Stephen's, is a form of irony. As I have said before, one can detect a kind of dramatic irony in Frank's account in *Angela's Ashes* which substitutes critical comments by the narrator. Misunderstandings, misjudgements, and misinterpretations of what is going on around him are the major ingredients of this form of dramatic irony:

My mother tells me all the time, Never, never leave that playground except to come home. But what am I to do with the twins bawling with the hunger in the pram? I tell Malachy I'll be back in a minute. I make sure no one is looking, grab a bunch of bananas outside the Italian grocery shop and run down Myrtle Avenue, away from the playground, around the block to the other end where there's a hole in the fence. We push the pram to a dark corner and peel the bananas for the twins. There are five bananas in the bunch and we feast on them in the dark corner. The twins slobber and chew and spread banana over their faces, their hair, their clothes. I realize then that questions will be asked.²⁸⁰

In the end, the narrator of the first ten pages returns. In the penultimate chapter, Frank is asked if he considers America "a great country altogether"²⁸¹. Of course, he (i.e. the young reflector-character) has just arrived and cannot yet give any judgements about the country he has been away from for fifteen years. But the last chapter *does* give an answer to that question, an answer that I consider as the *old* Frank McCourt's: "'Tis."²⁸² Here, the author has returned to the frame narrative.

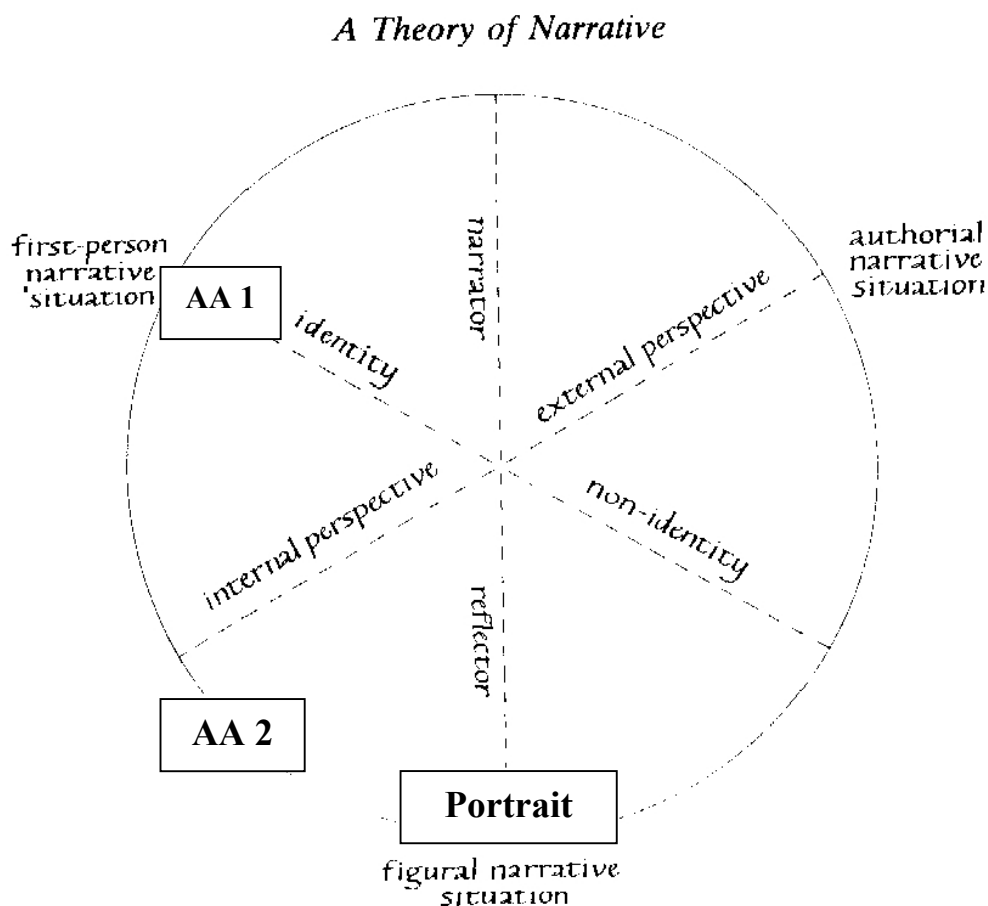
As we have seen, there are two narrating agents in the novel: One being a 'first-person narrator' who can be identified very much with the mid-1990s' Frank McCourt, the other one being a reflector-character, relating through the limited first-

²⁸⁰ *AA*, p. 26f.

²⁸¹ *AA*, p. 425.

²⁸² *AA*, p. 426.

person perspective of young Frank. The following illustration shows how I would place the narrators of *Angela's Ashes* in F. K. Stanzel's 'Typological Circle'²⁸³:



Narrative situations in *Angela's Ashes*:

AA 1 = frame story narration (old Frank), **AA 2** = present tense narration (young Frank)

(Portrait = F. K. Stanzel's definition of the narrator in the *Portrait*)

In his third e-mail, Frank Mc Court explained his way of finding the most adequate perspective for narrating his memoirs:

During the thirty years of my teaching I tried to write this memoir: I tried it as a novel, a play, as a series of short stories. I despaired. [...] I had no plan. I just started writing. [...] The first nineteen pages are done in a 'traditional' way but then I moved into a childhood mode when recalling my first memories in Brooklyn. I found the present tense (they call it 'historical present') and that felt comfortable. I also found it comfortable to write from the perspective of child into adolescent.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Cf. Stanzel, *A Theory of Narrative*, p. xvi.

²⁸⁴ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 15 Nov. 2001, Appendix A 3.3.

We cannot fail to notice parallels between Joyce's and McCourt's ways of reflecting their protagonists' maturing processes. Both chose to adapt the narration's style to the transition from toddler to adolescent perspective. Thus, there is a visible Joycean influence on the work by McCourt. But, as Frank McCourt told me, he "hardly thought of [Joyce] when [...] writing [*Angela's Ashes*]"²⁸⁵. On the other hand, he had been familiar with the *Portrait* and very much admired it when he started to write his memoirs. I reckon he is right when claiming that "[o]nce you've read Joyce's *Portrait* it haunts you forever, especially if you are writing along autobiographical lines"²⁸⁶.

6.3 Autobiography or Fiction: Remarks on Identity

[Joyce] attempts to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves [him], even if to do so [he] must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist.
Virginia Woolf²⁸⁷

Analysing the narrators of the *Portrait* and *Angela's Ashes*, I have already drawn attention to the fact that Frank McCourt chose to write his memoir through the eyes of two 'first-person narrators' who are both identical with himself, whereas James Joyce created a fictional character. Stephen Dedalus is, as we have seen in the comparison between his and Joyce's biographies, the author's alter ego, a person who is very much based on himself, who reflects Joyce's own past, his development, and his experiences. Joyce expressed the attitudes he had during his youth *through* his protagonist. The striking similarities between himself and the young artist justify the novel being called an autobiography.

However, the reader should be aware of the differences between Stephen and James. Stephen, for instance, does not go to a Christian Brothers school (cf. chapter 3.4.1); James, as we learn in Ellmann's biography, had to go there between his times at Clongowes and Belvedere.²⁸⁸ A further example can be found in the commentaries by Joyce's brother Stanislaus who reveals that "[...] Joyce as a schoolboy was much more athletic and popular than Stephen seems to be"²⁸⁹. Apart from that, Stephen's

²⁸⁵ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 15 Nov. 2001, Appendix A 3.3.

²⁸⁶ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 17 Sep. 2001, Appendix A 3.1.

²⁸⁷ Virginia Woolf. "Modern Fiction." In: M. H. Abrahams et al. (eds.). *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume 2. New York / London: Norton, 1993, pp.1921-1926, p. 1924.

²⁸⁸ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 35.

²⁸⁹ David G. Wright. *Characters of Joyce*. Totowa: Barnes & Noble: 1983, p. 36.

poor health that is manifested in the *Portrait* does not correspond to the physical condition the author had at that age. There are some more examples that could underline the difference between Joyce and Dedalus. Nevertheless, I will confine myself to the above-mentioned, as they make this point clear enough.

One could argue about the motivations Joyce had for being that selective when writing his autobiography. James could have been ashamed of some periods of his life, he might have wanted to embellish some of the facts. But in my opinion he was keen on creating a fictional character with whom he could make some linguistic, structural, and literary experiments. He used bits of his own past, he communicated the major ideas that he had when he was young. But in the meantime he was interested in having a kind of “poetic licence” and liberty as regards the characterisation of his protagonist.

The young artist’s artificiality becomes more obvious when we have a closer look at the name Joyce invented for him: Stephen Dedalus. Dedalus is not an Irish name, as Stephen is often told in the novel. But apart from its being unusual, it is also associated with the Greek artist Daedalus. Joyce’s decision to erase the letter *a* from that name is an apparent sign of the protagonist’s artificiality, as David G. Wright puts it: “[...] Between *Stephen Hero* and the *Portrait* Stephen’s surname changes from *Daedalus* to *Dedalus*. This change moves him away from a classical prototype, so that he appears more convincingly as a character in his own right.”²⁹⁰

For Joyce, there were more possibilities to develop his alter ego’s personality when re-inventing him as a fictional character. Due to the novel’s *semi*-autobiographical nature, there was much more space for Joyce’s artistic creativity, as well as the literary and linguistic experiments the *Portrait* has become famous for. Frank McCourt, on the other hand, was much more interested in promulgating his memoirs which had proved interesting and worthwhile being retold throughout his life. In his surroundings, he has always been known as a born storyteller who has made astonishing, extraordinary experiences. Retelling those memories as faithfully and as entertainingly as possible was the major motivation for McCourt’s writing. Having created such a two-part piece of quality literature (i.e. *Angela’s Ashes* and *’Tis*) that would even “survive” a comparison with James Joyce’s highly-acclaimed *Portrait* (as I have done in this thesis), is of course a pleasant and likewise welcome side-effect.

²⁹⁰ Wright, p. 34.

Conclusion

It's very flattering to be compared with Joyce – especially when I hardly thought of him at all when I was writing Ashes.
Frank McCourt²⁹¹

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* might not be the first book one thinks of when reading Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*. As he expresses in the quotation above, McCourt himself was not thinking of Joyce's novel when preparing and writing his memoirs. He considers Sean O'Casey, P. G. Wodehouse and Ernest Hemingway as his major influences. Still, McCourt was familiar with the *Portrait* when working on his memoir, and as Joyce's work is one of the most impressive and innovative autobiographical works in English literature (which I believe every Irish writer has read), there must have been some sort of influence on McCourt's writing. Since its publication in 1916, the *Portrait* has overshadowed most of the biographical literature written afterwards. Hence, the comparison of the two books has indeed proven worthwhile throughout my detailed analysis.

Even though their motivations to write and their careers were rather unlike, I have found various similarities between Joyce and McCourt, as well as between the *Portrait* and *Angela's Ashes*. First of all, the authors' biographical backgrounds have some interesting aspects in common: Both fathers, John Joyce and Malachy McCourt, ruined their families' living conditions. Their relationships to their sons were intense and outstanding, but they somehow destroyed or at least challenged those bonds by their behaviour. In the end, although their motivations are not completely comparable, both Joyce and McCourt left Ireland and their homes in order to find adequate living conditions abroad.

In my analysis of the portrayal of Ireland in those two works I have confined myself to deal with treatments of the country and its society conveyed *in the books*. I have tried to concentrate on the pieces of information one can find in the texts, and I have thus excluded extra-textual aspects as far as possible. That kind of "close reading" of the portraits has shown that there are numerous common denominators justifying an analysis side by side. I have shown that the notion of history and its effects on the artists' lives are rather diverse, whereas there are some striking parallelisms in the religious impacts the authors are dealing with. Both Frank and Stephen are undoubtedly influenced by their semi-religious upbringing. Both

²⁹¹ Frank McCourt, e-mail to the author, 15 Nov. 2001, Appendix A 3.3.

undergo spiritual crises that drive them into phases of self-doubt and repentance; and in the end, both decide not to live according to the rules and traditions imposed on them by the Catholic Church.

The portraits of families are somewhat contrasting, as Frank's affection for his family is far more intense than the one expressed by Stephen Dedalus. Whereas Stephen treats his mother and his siblings with an obvious disinterest (they are presented as minor characters in the *Portrait*, if not ignored completely), Frank is much more concerned with family affairs. He does not feel "trapped" by his surroundings – his escape from home is a flight from the miserable societal conditions he has grown up in. Stephen, on the other hand, struggles free from his family as well as from Irish society. It is true that both McCourt and Joyce proved their concern with their families in their later lives (Joyce had some of his siblings living with him in Trieste, and McCourt's brothers and his mother followed him to the United States); but according to the information in the portraits, Frank seems more involved in family affairs than Stephen (Joyce).

I have also pointed out the educational development of the artists as young men. There, it has become clear that Frank and Stephen do not have the same conditions in the first place: Stephen's father lets his son attend an upper-class school and university; the McCourts' financial situation does not allow Frank to graduate from any school. Thus, Frank has to struggle a lot more to reach his aims. Still, there are some important similarities in the boys' scholastic lives I have pointed out: Both prove their writing talents and their passionate interest in literature.

There are also striking parallels in the authors' usages of language. Living in a bilingual culture, both McCourt and Joyce are concerned with linguistic skills and characteristics. Language is one of the major ingredients of the *Portrait*, as is visible in Joyce's experimental way of making the narration "grow up" parallel to Stephen, as well as in the latter's recurring reflections on the English language. This form of linguistic "growing up" can also be found in Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*. Here, the protagonist also shows an utter interest in his native language. Both show their ability to make use of the English language, to apply it as a tool.

The protagonists' awareness of other writers' achievements has been revealed in the chapter entitled "Literary Awakening". Despite the different circumstances of their upbringings, Stephen and Frank show their extraordinary affection for and

fascination with literature. Both individually develop their taste for great literary writings, both find relief and enlightenment in fiction.

In the final chapter I have paid attention to the narrative techniques and perspectives in the portraits. Current developments in the theory of narratology make it difficult to give a compact analysis of narrative methods in the portraits. Taking into account every single narratological theory when talking about the narrators of the two books would certainly be a topic for a thesis in its own right. As I have decided to deal with that aspect only in one of the shorter sections of my analysis, I am merely scratching on the surface of narratology, basically considering a more or less “traditional” view on techniques and perspectives in the texts. Still, my observations on narration there might be useful and meaningful for the comparison I have provided. They might of course be the start for a much more detailed discussion.

Further aspects could have been taken account of in this work, especially regarding the portrayal of Ireland. I was thinking about including such topics as conflicts between North and South / Ireland and England / Ireland and the USA and further societal problems. Another possibility would have been to intensify the aspects of adolescence, sexuality, identity, and authority. Including Joyce’s proto-portrait *Stephen Hero* in the comparison would also suggest exciting issues for a further analysis. Nevertheless, I have decided to leave out some topics and to elaborate upon others in order to provide a broad overview on what I consider the most important, interesting, and intriguing aspects the portraits offer.

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²⁹² As at December 2001.