



McCARTHYISM AND AMERICAN COLD WAR IDEOLOGY IN IRISH-AMERICAN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING: THE TANGLED RENDITION OF THE ETHNIC IDENTITY IN FRANK McCOURT'S *'TIS, A MEMOIR*

ANDREA PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

andrea.perezalvarez@educa.madrid.org

ABSTRACT. This article explores the various ways in which the protagonist of Frank McCourt's autobiographical account *'Tis, A Memoir* confronts the McCarthyite proceedings and their unsettling consequences at times of utmost conservatism in America. It addresses his negotiation of an ultimately alienated ethnic identity, arguing that the protagonist's fractured self not only reflects the slippery ground upon which McCarthyite practices are founded, but is also brought about by it. Beyond this analysis, however, the article is set to problematize the very status of McCourt's autobiographical writing by assessing the memoir's narrative codes in association with its content and purported readership. Specifically, the proposal evaluates the fictional strategies on which it is constructed, as well as the inconsistencies inherent in the narrative depiction of the character's partial assimilation into an eventual Irish-American national identity. The proposal ultimately assays McCourt's memoir as a product and reworking of the ideological tenets characteristic of McCarthyism and the early Cold War period.

Keywords: McCarthyism, Irish-American identity, colonial autobiography, ideology, migrant, ambivalence.

**LA HUELLA DEL MACARTISMO Y DE LA GUERRA FRÍA IDEOLÓGICA EN LA
ESCRITURA AUTOBIOGRÁFICA IRLANDO-ESTADOUNIDENSE: LA
TRANSCRIPCIÓN ENMARAÑADA DE LA IDENTIDAD ÉTNICA EN *'TIS, A
MEMOIR DE FRANK McCOURT***

RESUMEN. Este artículo explora las formas en que el protagonista del escrito autobiográfico *'Tis, A Memoir*, del escritor irlando-estadounidense Frank McCourt, hace frente al proceder macartista y sus efectos perturbadores en momentos de conservadurismo extremo en los Estados Unidos. Aborda la negociación que Frank McCourt hace de una identidad étnica que se ve finalmente alienada, y afirma que su consciencia fracturada no solo refleja el terreno movedizo donde se conforma la praxis macartista sino que está provocada por esta. Más allá de este análisis, el artículo se postula para problematizar la condición misma de autobiografía de la obra de McCourt, cuestionando sus códigos narrativos en relación con su contenido y el público al que primeramente va dirigido. La propuesta evalúa las técnicas ficcionales sobre las que estas memorias están construidas, así como las contradicciones en las que se incurren en la representación narrativa de la asimilación parcial que sufre el personaje, que pasa así a experimentar su identidad nacional como irlando-estadounidense. Por tanto, la propuesta en último lugar valora la autobiografía de McCourt como producto y re-confección de los dogmas ideológicos propios del macartismo y del periodo temprano de la Guerra Fría.

Palabras clave: macartismo, identidad irlando-estadounidense, autobiografía colonial, ideología, migrante, ambivalencia.

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1. INTRODUCTION: McCARTHY'S 1950S AMERICA, OR THE ALIEN'S THREAT TO NATIONALISTIC DISCOURSE

There seems to be no disputing the fact that the McCarthy era of the 1950s America proved the zeitgeist of the early and mid-Cold War ideological period. Harry S. Truman's loyalty review programs built the rightful portal to Joseph McCarthy's later indiscriminate allegations, as both put certain social and ethnic groups against the ropes, and the whole national population under threat during the first decade after WWII. McCarthy's policy and the conservative social order of postwar America were hailed by national consensus, which took to promoting the univocal view on the American patriot as the literal and allegorical soldier fighting communism in and out of national borders. And yet it is now a truism to say that liberty was most violated in the name of freedom: McCarthyite discourse and the Cold War mindset waged random yet politically-laden war against all evidence of deviance from the dominant doctrine, resulting in governmental and social persecution of the foreign, the apostate, the subversive and the dissenting. Most citizens, thus, went on to see their constitutional rights undercut while welcoming an unnerving atmosphere of censorship, conspiracy and heightened anxiety.

Not in vain, the -ism traditionally attached to McCarthy's figure and political proceedings suggests that such period in American history has not only become the epitome of mid-20th century ideological conservatism but has also raised sustained attention to the artistic portrayals of this era in national literature. 1950s McCarthyism is now considered to have fenced the American value system within one of the most nationalistic rhetoric of its history, as the proud concept of venerating American identity went hand in hand with its succeeding imperialist expansion – transforming the U.S., as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin claim, into a nation holding a “neo-colonizing role” (2002: 2). Despite large research into the ravaging effects in the public and private lives of citizens, academic literature seems to have neglected a narrower focus on the impact of McCarthyite politics in each of America's different social and ethnic groups. Bearing in mind that, as Edward Said argues, “successful nationalisms consign truth exclusively to themselves and relegate falsehood and inferiority to outsiders” (2000: 176), it appears suitable to push the envelope further into assessing the wrecks of America's most conservative times in its migrant and exile communities, the marginalized others, and their writings.

To this end, what the present article explores is the memorialized experience of an Irish-American immigrant during the Cold War years in New York. Specifically, it tackles Frank McCourt's own portrait in his memoir *'Tis* (1999), and analyzes Frank as a postcolonial and working-class subject interacting with the corollaries of social paranoia during McCarthy's policies and Cold War politics. As McCourt's autobiography delineates the experience of its oppressed character during the early years of the Cold War, it necessarily provides a perspective peripheral to the master rhetoric and potentially challenging to patriotic narrative at a time of utmost nationalistic sentiments. As an immigrant, suppressed, unrooted voice in the metropolis, his outsider position turns out double-sided: it is whence he privately and publicly disturbs the status quo, and, as such, it is also one of the main targets of the McCarthyite dynamics of suspicion, allegation and trial.

This article draws on Linda Anderson's notion of colonial autobiography, which serves both “a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition” (2001: 104). As it levels autobiography with testimony, Anderson's perspective on the memoir written by the colonial subject seizes on paramount importance in this analysis of McCourt's contribution to Irish-American autobiographical writing, as his life narrative courses through a period where attesting to the truth of one's words became the McCarthyite measure of social regulation and subjection. Reading the memoir as a testifying account that openly calls into question McCarthy's figure and period, the article analyzes it as a counter-narrative through which the writer comes into terms with his strong feelings towards the national consensus, both undergoing and problematizing the psychotic malaise and fanatical atmosphere under McCarthyite practices and Cold War discourse. Yet, as a counter-narrative, it nevertheless proves ambivalent, self-contradictory and highly inconclusive in its commentary on American nationalistic discourse. For this reason, the inconsistencies of McCourt's self-portrait are further assessed against the backdrop of his memoir's stylistic and thematic aspects as well

as its public scope, both offering a literary interpretation against its grain and exposing the ideological poles present in his memoir.

2. COLONIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY, IRISH-AMERICAN IDENTITY, THE NARRATIVE OF IDEOLOGY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF NARRATIVE

Tis is Frank McCourt's second memoir and the sequel to Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angela's Ashes* (1997). If the prequel remembers his destitute childhood in impoverished Limerick after Ireland's independence war, the second volume recreates his early arrival in New York as an immigrant worker and spans the Cold War period. The little academic literature on his literary work approaches his memoirs from a sociological perspective on ethnic identity studies. Addressing the memoirs' reconstruction of Irishness, it assesses what it takes to be McCourt's clichéd characterization of his family members and their dispossessed condition in Ireland. Whereas Jennifer McClinton-Temple finds *Angela's Ashes* as McCourt's deromanticizing attempt to go beyond the prejudiced portrait of Irishness (2013: 118), Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh and James B. Mitchell read the depiction of miserable calamities as his inability to transcend the internalization of "colonial stereotypes" (Éigeartaigh 2004: 90-91), which paves a smooth path towards "sensationalizing his subject matter and even rendering it tantalizing" (Mitchell 2003: 618). Where criticism seems to concur is in the analysis of McCourt's prejudiced thematization of the Irish through the narrative's inscription into the autobiographical genre, specifically evaluating how the writer employs the Bildungsroman mode to recreate his personal success over stereotypical images of social deprivation and institutional negligence. To this end, both the creative abilities opened up by the warped remembrance of one's history and the authorial need for a comprehensible life account render autobiography the most suitable genre to represent imagined scenes of past reality, usually structured by well-known narrative codes of fiction. The reinterpretation of one's memories from present circumstances further challenges the veracity of the narrative, thus the author is repurposing the truthfulness of his past by adjusting the narrative within the fictional codes suitable to the narration mode. As it happens, Mitchell studies *Angela's Ashes* as "a narrative that follows the pattern of a classic Bildungsroman" (2003: 615), and *Tis*, indeed, follows the same pattern.

The memoir tracks young Frank's linear evolution into adulthood, showing his encounters with different characters that represent social types in Cold War America, which goes on proving the witness of his ongoing acculturation into the new land. Thus, McCourt's memoir soars over the fictional in its narrative strategies, something that exemplifies Sidonie Smith's and Julia Watson's notion on the structuring use of the Bildungsroman in the colonial autobiography: as they argue, it "continues to be a decisive model for the presentation of twentieth-century lives, for postcolonial writers who cast their narratives in terms of encounters with powerful mentors at cultural crossroads of metropole and colony" (2001: 107). In the same vein, *Tis* fits the categorization of what they term "memoirs of exile", as these "become sites through which formerly marginal or displaced subjects explore the terms of their

cultural identities and their diasporic allegiances” (Smith and Watson 2001: 107). Indeed, the autobiographical genre in McCourt’s memoir also serves a documentary purpose, as it bestows the historical truth of 1950s and 1960s New York in the eyes of an oppressed Irish immigrant at the interface of Irish Catholic and American Protestant cultures. The memoir recurrently displays his inherent status as a colonized Irish individual in Europe and his adoption of the working-class, Catholic, immigrant condition in America. Not to be omitted from the equation is, of course, the undermined social consciousness of the Irish identity after the process of exile and migration undergone for most part of the 20th century. McClinton-Temple rightfully claims that “[t]he poverty and stagnation caused by the centuries of colonial rule in Ireland colored the immigrant experience for most, if not all, who left its shore” (2013: 105). As a result, Seamus Deane defines the Irish in terms of colonial dominance as an in-between national consciousness, a nerve-racking state of mind dependent on the larger actions of the allegedly powerful: “a culture that believes itself always to be provincial, always to be in need of a metropolitan world elsewhere” (qtd. in Éigeartaigh 2004: 89).

However, casting a glance over the historical accounts of Irish immigrants in the U.S. discloses tendency in the opposite direction: as Rhett Jones synthesizes,

The nation’s ethnic groups were often critical of ethnic, religious, and cultural discrimination, but Irish, French, German Americans, and others who set themselves apart and were set apart by “genuine” or White Americans settled on a strategy that blunted their criticism of U.S. institutions. (2001: 121)

Their white skin entailing social privilege at times of utmost conservatism, Irish-Americans succeeded in maintaining balance over their ethnic backgrounds, posing little challenge to national institutions. So much so that, even during America’s most reactionary times, the Irish-American community took part in the underprivileged social sections tracked to have been most supportive of McCarthy’s program: as historian Andrew Burt claims, his followers “were conservative Irish, German, and Italian Catholics, many of them second-generation Americans, who were neither at the top nor at the bottom of the nation’s economic classes” (2015: 132). On the whole, this ambiguous feature of the social behavior of Irish-Americans before and in the new land raises further questions on the truthfulness of McCourt’s portraiture in America, and indeed leads to the memoir’s thematic leitmotif: on the one hand, Frank’s attempt to deal with his idealizing image of the U.S. and wish for Americanization and, on the other, his criticism of its economic, cultural and religious mores, prompted by feelings of social marginality in the face of McCarthy’s politics and Cold War normative order.

In McCourt’s defiance of Cold War outlook, ideology is to be understood in the same vein that Marxist critic Louis Althusser conceptualized the term: “a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (1971: 163). This is, McCourt’s autobiographical writing exposes the Cold War value system by unveiling the hostile conditions imposed on the working-class outsider by the dominant structures, the interests of which are challenged by the

double-sided reality of Frank's initial class struggle and cultural hybridity. Indeed, embodying the well-known terminology of Homi Bhabha's theorization of the colonial experience, Frank's partial acculturation is of course enabled by his own mimicry of the dominant social discourse. But the ruling structure also takes responsibility for this assimilating task, as it attempts to reform and appropriate an ethnic other that never completes its acculturation process. "The observer", Bhabha explains regarding the master discourse, "becomes the observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence" (1994: 89). The colonial subject therefore becomes hybridized, a distorted reflection of the dominant classes, whose ideological rhetoric is further rearticulated and contested. But, most importantly, the alienated psyche of the nation's socio-political structure establishes a kind of rapport with the working-class other based on what Althusser calls interpellation. According to the Marxist philosopher, interpellation alludes to the controlling system's operation that serves ideology to interact with the individual as a subject, who, in his submitted condition, internalizes the master discourse and thus perpetuates a social arrangement that always favors the privileged (Althusser 1971: 175). Sustained on social fraud and reality falsified by the ruling class, there seems to be no better arena to assess the workings of interpellation upon the ethnic individual during the early Cold War era. In it, the hybridized outsider takes biased part in the national discourse that promotes capitalism and the conservative values attached to it through the mechanisms of paranoia and suspicion. These in turn succeed in manipulating the colonial individual into his belief in autonomy from the master forces that actually subdue him. In the period coursed through McCarthyite anxiety, this prepares him to support the era's nationalist conservatism.

In his relation with the governing structure, then, the immigrant self articulates a complex framework that defies and yet assists the nationalistic status quo: not in vain, McCourt's life narrative is in fact an unflinching product of the ideological discourse to which his memoir serves a testifying counter-narrative. In this vein, Marxist critics Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson concur in understanding literature as a further expression of ideological discourse; Jameson's notion of dialectical thought, in turn, presupposes individual works in interaction with their inherent larger structure so as to "spring us outside our own hardened ideas into a new and more vivid apprehension of reality" (1971: 372). From this perspective, not only does McCourt's memoir question the times' contradictory rhetoric and practice, but also his own conflicting allegiances to his ethnic identity and to the American value system at once. Linda Anderson's interpretation of Althusser's concept of ideology gives utterance to a cardinal idea in this vein. By claiming that "[l]iterary texts are embedded in the social and economic circumstances in which they are produced and consumed" (2001: 136), Anderson perceives the autobiographical story as a narrative skein where the author's ideological tenets fall through the net and are thus exposed. McCourt's Irish-American autobiographical writing may properly find a place here: the fictional codes, the thematic concerns and the purported readership of *'Tis* sketch its author as an unappeased yet eventually conforming representative figure of the ideological script of the American 1950s.

3. WHAT FRANK FINDS: ANTI-COMMUNIST FRENZY, CENSORSHIP, WHITE-COLLAR DISCRIMINATION AND ETHNIC SECTARIANISM

McCourt's chronicle of the effects of McCarthyism may be dissected into thematic concerns that are recurrent throughout the memoir. Anti-communist paranoia is axiological to the Cold War years and, in Frank's life account, it is first fleshed out by the military draft for the Korean war. McCourt registers the racist terminology in what conveys the sergeants' fear of the foreign and rejection of the leftist in the belligerent context of the New Jersey infantry training camp and a German camp site. In New Jersey, rifles are referred to as "what comes between you and the goddam gooks and goddam Chinks" (McCourt 1999: 83) while the officer in Germany warns Frank not to allow erasures in the reports as "[w]e're holding the line against the goddam Reds here, men" (107). Nationalistic sentiments are moreover employed as the unequivocal evidence of American patriotism, showing Manichaeist lexicon that demonizes communist ideologies against the defense of American Christian mores: as Frank chronicles, "the lieutenant showing the film said communism is evil, godless, unAmerican" (1999: 95). But the memoir also recreates characters representing anti-communist assumptions that hold explicit links with McCarthy's policies. Such is the case of McCourt's portrayal of two impoverished Catholic nuns whose effervescent allegations of domestic communism at New York University serve McCourt's mocking allegory of the religious fanaticism and persecution of what was held to be un-Christian at the climax of the McCarthyite era. Describing NYU as "a hotbed of Communism where I'm in great danger of losing my immortal soul", sister Mary Thomas urges Frank to get out "before Senator McCarthy goes after it, God bless him and keep him" (1999: 213). When, towards the end of the memoir, Frank, the adult high-school teacher, resumes McCarthy's figure, his students agreed with their parents that "he was a great man for getting rid of the Communists" (1999: 413). In doing so, McCourt elucidates the high-esteem in which McCarthy is held among parents: not in vain are their menacing phone calls warning him to stop discussing McCarthy in class, as "Senator McCarthy was a good man, fought for his country. Tail-gunner Joe. Got rid of the communists" (1999: 413). At the same time, he also provides a dismal perspective on the large legacy of the conservative mindset of McCarthy's dogmatic times on new middle-class generations.

The lengthened neurosis during and after McCarthy's reactionary politics was to be sensed at the workplace, where Truman's loyalty reviews and McCarthy's paranoid accusations aimed their target at union organizers, suspicious of communist alignments. It is Frank's position at a bank where the supervisor gives free rein to indiscriminate allegation and censorship of trade unions, as he fires Frank just because he talked to a union member in the bank (McCourt 1999: 281). In fact, the continuous fear of communist threat under the same roof pervades the 1950s social atmosphere. The memoir recreates Frank's first encounter with the word "paranoid" (1999: 317) at NYU, giving utterance to the social acknowledgement of the anxieties heightened by McCarthy's ideological stirs at more liberal contexts, and presenting such lexicon and reality as a distinctive landmark in the culture and

language of the American 1950s. And, to be sure, the memoir further notes how these constant surges of schizophrenic neurosis inflict more serious harm on the ethnic outsider: on giving the news of the death of an Irishman Frank used to know, Frank's former boss warns him to stay safe as "[t]his country could drive you crazy. It drives people crazy that was born here. How come you're not crazy?" (1999: 371). Frank may not have gone crazy but does feel the weight of communal lunacy, particularly when he faces nightmarish experiences that are alien to his cultural background. When he encounters consumerist America in its array of commodified goods, he admits failing to recognize the fabric used in the clothing at Greenwich Village and its potential allergies, tellingly reflecting how "here danger lurks even in the buying of socks and shirts" (1999: 362).

But it is both the utterances of American society's xenophobic oppression of the ethnic other, and the sectarianism among different social groups that Frank finds the most recurrent effect of Cold War conservatism. Early on, his boss at the Biltmore hotel gives utterance to the tacit yet compulsory social norm that governs in New York and throughout the memoir alike: "this is America, [...] stick with your own kind of people" (McCourt 1999: 30). Such idea embodies the era's bigot gist as felt in the experience of an Irish immigrant. The memoir portrays societal groups exerting oppression on the individual deviant from the white, patriotic, America-based norm. Racial discrimination comes from working-class, redneck individuals that share their deprived condition with Frank at the warehouse he works for seasonally. Their racist comments about Horace, the older black man that Frank befriends, who they describe as "a guy whose grandparents just fell out of a tree" (1999: 202), combine with their nationalistic zealotry when criticizing Frank's university education, claiming that "they aren't gonna have the wool pulled over their eyes by a half-ass shithead just off the boat from Ireland" (240). The latter comment on the Irish shipping in New York amounts to a common insult addressed to the Irish community, which is repeatedly uttered in the memoir, revealing Americans' clichéd image of the Irish in the US. However, it is even Frank's wife Alberta on their wedding day who goes on to recreate the prejudiced picture of Irishmen as depraved and fearful of commitment: as she claims, "[e]veryone warned me that the Irish are great to go out with but never marry them" (1999: 395-396). Belonging to white-collar democratic ethics, her comments contribute to the memoir's further chronicle of discrimination of ethnic minorities exerted by middle-class society in their well-accustomed liberal contexts. At the same time, this raises Frank's awareness of the class struggle that gives a political dimension to his intimate engagement with Alberta, in which he always pictures himself holding an inferior position in society. Similarly, this middle-class xenophobia is represented by public institutions where New Yorkers enjoy their education. It is at least twice when Frank's job interviews at suburban high schools are pushed aside due to his accent, which, as the teacher recruiter says, makes him sound "like a Paddy-off-the-boat", just before warning Frank to "stick with [his] own people" (1999: 288). However, cultural and ethnic bias also takes place when the oppressing atmosphere of common xenophobia in New York becomes internalized in the migrant communities themselves. The idea of the Irish sticking together, rather than comprising a cultural

shelter for the Irish community, becomes an exclusionary ethnic label that rejects company with other social groups. Significantly, Frank's friend Paddy Arthur scolds him for hanging out with "Protestants and Negroes", warning him that "next thing it'll be Jews and then you're doomed altogether" (McCourt 1999: 273). To be sure, he embodies the stereotypical image of the Irish immigrant that utters nostalgia for the lost homeland and Catholic, family-based sentiments alike.

4. WHAT FRANK FEELS: CONTRADICTORY ALLIANCES AS REFLECTION OF STRUGGLING CONTEXT OF FEAR AND PARANOIA

Frank's reflections about the Irish community's partisan assumptions, characteristic of the McCarthyite social atmosphere, not only underline his refusal to adhere to such moral dogmatism but, by doing so, they also cast a glance over one of the memoir's predominant tones. This discloses Frank's recurrent attitude all along: his wish for cultural assimilation into the new land's systems of belief. At Paddy's commands to "stick with your own", young Frank regrets that "I'm in New York, land of the free and home of the brave but I'm supposed to behave as if I were still in Limerick, Irish at all times" (McCourt 1999: 274). However, it is paradoxical of Frank to make such a remark at this moment: while it voices his desire for Americanization by idealizing the nation's socio-political underpinnings, it is Frank's same voice the one that registers his previous formative experiences with the contradictions inherent in the American Cold War outlook. That Frank is aware of the inconsistencies of America's McCarthyite ideology and still shows a romanticizing vision of it indeed points at his ongoing crisis of social allegiances in the heyday of America's economic boom and conservative zeitgeist, which contributes to his fractured identity. Not only his colonial subjectivity but also his working-class status in an industrialized country force him to struggle between the rejection of his own figure as social epitome of the Irish community and his infantile view of the U.S. as the escape from his homeland's impoverished conditions. Indeed, the younger voice makes it abundantly clear that the romanticized idealization of the American way of life he entertained in his childhood years was crashed by the reality of national discourse and proceedings: "New York was the city of my dreams but now I'm here the dreams are gone and it's not what I expected at all" (1999: 54). It is this tension between criticism of the Cold War cultural script and the persistent wish for mimicry of its arrangement of beliefs that runs throughout the memoir.

On the one hand, McCourt exposes and mocks the hidden inconsistencies under the moral ideals axiological to the American Cold War period, McCarthyite practices and their persistence all along. As a newly arrived immigrant into the 20th century world's empire, the chronicle of his experience unearths the fake hypocrisy underlying the capitalistic discourse on freedom and social advancement in the American 1950s. After being turned out of the cinema for entering food, Frank's immigrant eyes contrast the nation's patriotic narratives on liberty and the actual practice of this rhetoric against the colonial individual, as he wonders

about all those films where they're waving the Stars and Stripes and placing their hands on their chests and declaring to the world this is the land of the free and the home of the brave and you know yourself you can't even go to see *Hamlet* with your lemon meringue pie [...] (McCourt 1999: 48).

Much the same commonly nationalistic terminology is used to condemn its inconsistencies about the discourse of freedom at the Korean war: Frank's chronicle of his mate Di Angelo's insubordination for appraisal of the communists ends when "[t]he lieutenant told him he was out of order and Di Angelo said this is a free country and that got him confined to barracks and no weekend pass for three weeks" (McCourt 1999: 95).

In the same vein, it is Alberta again who catalyzes Frank's bitterest challenge of the contradictions inherent in the times' value system, targeting no other than the historical antecedents of McCarthyism itself. In his reproach to her xenophobic comment on their wedding day, Frank not only raises a protest over the deceptive façade of the morals attached to Puritan cults. Specifically, he centers on the national history of 17th century witch hunts to recreate the political and religious corruption, paranoid policies and indiscriminate allegations that comprised the acme of McCarthyite politics (McCourt 1999: 412). By choosing this aim as focus of his most defying criticism of Cold War social order, the memoir reaches its thematic watershed, which is symptomatic of the relevance of McCarthyism's far-reaching effects in the colonial, working class outsider. The display of such strong feelings towards this psychotic atmosphere explains why Frank, as a high school teacher in the 1970s, resumes McCarthyite practices as a pedagogical tool in order to introduce his students to the New England witch hunts. In this instance, he explicitly links the paranoid climate of those times with Hitler's and McCarthy's ideological eras (1999: 413). Two pages later, the memoir registers how the headmaster coerces him into leaving *The Catcher in the Rye* out of the syllabus after parental complaint about its morals – as he says, he “warned me to be careful, that I was endangering my satisfactory rating” (1999: 416). The threatening tone does but evidence the dramatic impact of the McCarthyite proceedings of suspicion, regulation, and censorship in his alien perspective, and serves McCourt the purpose of disclosing the continuing furtherance of the McCarthyite conservative structure during the Cold War period.

And yet, the memoir also features Frank's struggling managing of his ethnic identity when facing the American way of life that he seems to challenge throughout. His mockery of middle-class luxury stands cheek by jowl with his conflicting idealization of the new land's cultural mindset, which at times channels his further wish for Americanization. For once, Frank conveys his wish to take part in the wealthy and consumerist credo of Protestant America. Such desire for mimicry is triggered by his ongoing assimilation into the capitalistic rationale that lines social advancement in business with success in traditional conceptualizations of the patriarchal family: while studying at university, he indeed accepts a position in an insurance company because “I might move up in the world and Emer will take me back” (McCourt 1999: 177). However, where Frank finds the zenith of the possibilities of the American value system is in education. Although the view on

education as the scaffolding towards success through the social ladder stands in opposition to the 1950s pervading capitalist ideology of economic profit, American education not only comprises one of its increasing developing industries at the time but also stands for Frank as the romanticized last stage he targets in his pursuit of the American Dream. Thus, the memoir repeatedly registers his ongoing foray into white-collar social values of consumerism and conformity by alluding to his desire for further mimicry of U.S. college life: as he says, "I'd like to be a college student in the subway because you can see from the books they're carrying their heads must be stuffed with all kinds of knowledge" (1999: 75). He indeed plunges into the inner workings of the university structure by aligning his behavior in class with the necessary requirements to achieve his own view of the American Dream. As he thinks about a professor at university, "I can't take the risk of offending him with all the power he has to keep me from the American dream" (1999: 238-239): his dream, as it happens, involves gaining a college degree to become a secondary school teacher in New York.

This tension between the fierce criticism of socio-political networks alien to his ethnic background and the simultaneous wish for adherence to the ideological narrative of the new land results in Frank's hybrid social subjectivity, sitting at an uncomfortable in-between space. In this fashion, Frank embodies the "nomadic" feature inherent in the writer of autobiographical narratives of exile, who, as Smith and Watson justly declare, is "set in motion for a variety of reasons and now inhabiting cultural borderlands" where he "necessarily negotiates cultural spaces of the in-between" (2001: 194). In this framing, the fluctuating anxiety governing Frank's consciousness is greatly enlarged by the time period of Cold War conservatism and McCarthyite paranoid effects, which have a dramatic impact on the targeted outsider. Not in vain, it is McCourt himself who points up the era's struggling context of nationalistic paranoia as the layer underlying his own contradictory outlook. Most specifically, anti-communist anxiety during his first years of American nationality sets the tone for a leitmotif recurrent for the rest of the memoir. That Frank would like to thank "Mao Tse-Tung for attacking Korea and liberating me from the Palm Court at the Biltmore Hotel" (Mccourt 1999: 96) entails a remark on war apparatus whose underlying cynicism seems to be brought about by the inconsistencies of Cold War ideology, especially the contradiction between the ideals on freedom and its applications in the everyday reality of a colonial subject who can only serve as degraded workforce in the new land. And does not Frank know that such contradictory reflection entails a great deal of irony? Of course, he cannot say it publicly for fear of suspicion about communist alignments in the zeitgeist of McCarthyism. When he is sent to the German camp, Frank wants to know if any of the Germans there had participated in the Holocaust, although "we were told in army orientation sessions to keep our mouths shut and treat Germans as allies in the war against godless communism" (1999: 144). His well-naïve curiosity at remembering this episode further exposes the absurd contradictions inherent in the shallowness of the ideological war, thereby challenging the implicit dominant discourses of Cold War America. Like this, Frank's internalized anxiety further decries how the alleged goal of McCarthyite practices, while avowing to fight for

freedom in and out of domestic borders, does but deprive the ethnic outsider of it within national territory. As such, the ideological bewilderment of McCarthyite times and the deceptive fault lines of the Cold War mindset result in an increasing struggling migrant, working-class identity.

The era's inconsistencies are indeed projected on Frank's view on what he increasingly needs to consider his hybrid self. The urge to specify his stay at the in-between space by using a hyphenated term to designate his ethnicity is something first imposed by the others, as Frank goes on understanding that such is one of America's hypocrite slogans to name its ethnic populations and its attempt to appropriate and reform the colonial other. Indeed, he not only regrets what he takes as a fashionable designation but he also despises his perpetual stay in this in-between space: as he complains at the outset of his American life experience, "[y]ou always have to be something else, Irish-American, German-American, and you'd wonder how they'd get along if someone hadn't invented the hyphen" (McCourt 1999: 113). Instead of welcoming the potential richness of cultural hybridity, Frank envisages the official naming of his background as a shameful burden and a reminder of his unprivileged condition, a feeling that in his case is strengthened by the anxiously moralistic, conservative, class-ridden society of the McCarthyite era and later Cold War period. Indeed, Frank's aim for adjustment to the hostile requirements of the Cold War period pervades the meaning underlying one of the scenes registered in the memoir, when Frank decides to overlook Alberta's xenophobic comment and rather stay to enjoy dinner no matter how many "barbs at myself and the Irish in general" (McCourt 1999: 360). Although meant to become ethically reprehensible, this memory in the end also conveys the sense of the times' ideological chaos and its violent impact on the alien self. When Frank finally regrets, "I'd like to be Irish-American or American-Irish though I know I can't be two things" (1999: 360), he employs a pathetic tone that conveys the dilemma of the ethnic other's mimicry at times of utmost reactionaryism: both his wish for and his inability of complete adjustment to the contentious social and moral requirements of the ankylosed Cold War mindset. It is the oppressing power of America's utmost paranoid policies on Frank's Irish-American identity that which unfolds his struggling inconsistencies and contradictory experience of ethnic bonds.

5. WHAT MCCOURT WRITES: ETHNIC SELF-VICTIMIZATION, ROMANTIC MEMOIR, THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THE AMERICAN READER

McCourt's memoir, then, becomes a testifying narrative that strongly counteracts the dominant rhetoric of paranoid procedures during McCarthyism and, at the same time, partly settles its protagonist in the national discourse. And, we need hardly emphasize, the memoir presents itself as a personal register of Frank's troubled migrant identity as a product of the uses and abuses of the Cold War community. If the individual subject embodies the reflection of such chagrined era, would not it be reasonable to argue that the narrative codes and moral rationale behind the text that has conveyed its character are also the ideological product of the same period?

As it happens, the memoir eventually reproduces Frank's considerable success in late Cold War society through the increasing social prestige achieved in the teaching positions held in the education system, which proves McCourt's partial yet definite cultural assimilation into the national community. Illuminating this movement towards the oppressed protagonist's eventual accretion of institutional and social entitlement is a whole subtext whereby McCourt draws a self-victimizing picture about his Irishness and its implicatures in his new American life experience. In this vein it is Frank's display of a reductive conceptualization of Irish culture. This courses through the abuse of Irish stereotyping so as to stress his victimized portrait as an impoverished, colonial subject faced with what he takes to be the privileges of the new land: as he reproaches Alberta about her childhood years, "you had hot and cold running water, thick towels, soap, sheets on the bed, two clear blue eyes and fine teeth" (Mccourt 1999: 355). When asked to write about his younger days for a literary composition at university, Frank further daubs his own ethnic identity into stereotyped images to convey his experience as a kid in Ireland (1999: 226). As such, his victimized portrait of Irish domesticity seen from the eyes of a child contributes to popular culture's well-known prejudiced association of early and mid-20th century Irishness with destitution, Catholic fanaticism, and great misery. According to Bhabha, stereotyping "sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised" (1994: 78), a kind of exercise which in McCourt's case is repurposed by the colonial subject in order to meet the national expectations on the ethnic other. This pathetic attitude, in fact, brings into union McCourt's felt experience as an Irish immigrant in the new land – and, thus, his life narrative – and the autobiographical and fictional accounts written by other Irish-American authors: as Daniel Casey and Robert Rhodes suitably suggest, "there is some reason to think that many Irish Americans in the twentieth century have been preoccupied with not only distancing themselves from their proletarian roots but with concealing them and even creating appearances to the contrary" (1989: 13). In this line, Frank feels ashamed of a struggling past on which he nevertheless capitalizes to produce pitiful entertainment for his new audience: even if he regrets that "I'm so ashamed of the past that all I can do is to lie about it" (Mccourt 1999: 226), not only does he not hide his past dearth but he also draws a tearful account of his years of deprivation and poverty, wondering at the end of his composition if his classmates are "already feeling sorry for me" (229).

Towards the end of the memoir, it becomes clear that, although still managing a perpetuating identity in conflict as a working-class immigrant at times of utmost nationalistic discourse, McCourt has succeeded in leading a lifestyle assimilated into the traditional praxis promoted by Cold War ideology in the American land of promise. A secondary school teacher in New York, he holds a struggling marriage to a Protestant middle-class woman and starts a family. His gradual growth into this moral outlook is best exemplified by a familiar scene that features elements characteristic of American domestic life indeed: at the end of the marriage scene, he joins his male Irish friend and ends up in his apartment, drinking beer and watching "television Indians drop from the bullets of John Wayne" (Mccourt 1999: 399). A farcical scene representing America's conformist, patriarchal, racist societal dynamics

at large, this episode symbolizes McCourt's eventual advantage of the national values of opportunity and prestige, therefore rendering a lame picture of his own social triumph in the Cold War America in which he partakes. This image goes on to reinforce the disputed position of the Irish migrant condition in America: as Manning Marable clarifies, "[the Irish] had assimilated the values of privilege and the discourses and behaviors of domination, which permitted them to claim status within the social hierarchy" (2001: 44). True enough, he registers qualms about his victimized portrayal as an ethnic exile when facing New York's urban traces of the previous waves of European migrants (Mccourt 1999: 184), and so he gains significant insight into a higher stage of his Irish-American identity. And yet, there is a cynical hue suggested by the infantile simplicity that governs his misguided reflections about racism in America – as he thinks, "it must be a nuisance when you're black and people think they have to talk about black matters just because you're there with that skin" (1999: 312). The childish undertones of such statement render it humorous: this again proves, through a domesticated view on racist discrimination, his ongoing assimilation into the current ideological discourse.

Indeed, McCourt feels the urge to show in his memoir his eventual allegiance with an adulcorated depiction of the immigrant's personal and economic success in the new land. The thematic core of this tame portrayal rests upon McCourt's sweetened view of the American Dream and the migrant subject's pursuit of it. Indeed, it should be claimed that, by criticizing the national discourse about business and opportunism, McCourt at the same time embodies the nationalistic view on spiritual success through the possibilities offered by the American education system. At a turning point for Frank's development from workforce into white-collar society, he elaborates the memoir's best exercise of epic rhetoric, based on the American culture of hard work and meritocracy, written by the protagonist in his urge to encourage himself to become a high-school teacher and reject the business industry: as he thinks, "I'd accuse myself of taking the easy way" (Mccourt 1999: 343). Although apparently non-conformist, Frank's attitude actually becomes servile when looked in the light of the national rhetoric of prestige and opportunity, as it indeed promotes a sense of personal sacrifice to achieve his dream. This behavior manifests a subjectivity short of agency, therefore becoming manipulated – interpellated, in Althusser's terminology – by the ideological tenets that inform American exceptionalism, reproduced through the institutions that advocate the national education network. In this line, McCourt's memoir comprises a triumphant autobiographical narrative that extols a romanticized perspective on the prosperity promoted by the American Dream, ending on an optimistic note sustained on the economic and spiritual support that American post-war institutions and moral scripts offer the newly arrived. This positive portraiture of the insidious yet prosperous workings of the American Dream puts the focus on how overcoming past grievances through hard work, despite conservative morals and infringement on the ethnic outsider, can inform the personal rhetoric of a new self forged in the new land thanks to the American Dream. And this conceptualization of the national myth elucidates Frank's alignment with nationalistic discourse and settles McCourt's memoir as a patriotic autobiography written by an Irish-American member of the community.

It is interesting to note, to this end, how the episode in which Frank reads his university compositions metaphorizes his activity as the author of this memoir. The fact that he pays sustained attention to the prospective effect caused by his narrative skills in his classmates – as he forebears, “If I go on writing about my miserable childhood they’ll say, Stop, Stop, life is hard enough” (McCourt 1999: 251) – already reveals his interest in literary writing, and foreshadows the memoir’s portrait of the artist as a young man. As such, this episode in the memoir amounts to a simulacrum of his first autobiography, materializing in a sort of *mise-en-abyme* that betrays McCourt’s investment in the memoir’s ideal readership by using fictional techniques that render his autobiographical account a fictionalized narrative.

McCourt’s choice of narrative devices provides the memoir with fictional traits that include the use of the present-tense narration for most part of the memoir. This renders the told experiences immediate, intimate, and ongoing, and paves an easy path to the description of the impressions gathered in Frank’s consciousness – a kind of reading experience to which the memoir’s constant free-indirect style also contributes. Similarly, the presentational mode strikes for comprising a late 20th century memoir that nevertheless aligns its fictional codes with those of prototypical 19th century autobiographies in their conventional form, employing a first-person narration and a linear arrangement of events in its chronological storyline, traditional of Bildungsroman narratives. On the same note, McCourt’s protagonist is not spare in his comments: by descanting on the motives that bring about moments of narrative climax, he sometimes gives free rein to the most hectic prose, and, in so doing, he tries to explain himself and convince the reader of the truth of his word. This indeed pinpoints how McCourt provides the memoir with a protagonist relying on a unitary, stable subjectivity. In fact, Mitchell delineates criticism about *Angela’s Ashes* that can be similarly applied to *‘Tis*: as he suggests, McCourt never problematizes neither the written reconstruction of the difficult workings of memory nor the speaking subject that is telling, remembering and thus resenting the traumatic memories of his youth again (Mitchell 2003: 614).

Running parallel and opposite to this line, the reflections on autobiography by South-African writer J. M. Coetzee¹ are tantalizing when analyzed within the scope of McCourt’s choice of narrative codes and the McCarthyite atmosphere coursing most of its protagonist’s time in the memoir. Claiming that autobiography deals with the confession of guilt, Coetzee suggests that, because it implies the author’s

¹ The mention of J. M. Coetzee here responds to the interests of the exploration of McCourt’s managing of his national and ethnic identity. For one, Coetzee’s experience of whiteness in a racist country where white skin has historically entailed privilege and higher status is largely reflected on his autobiographical work, where he usually appears as an impostor of his prestige and a traitor to his community. Moreover, the fictional devices used in his memoirs succeed in blurring the line between fact and invention, and his reflections on the confessional and testimonial tone of this genre definitely mark it as a hybrid form of writing. Both the depiction of their ambivalent condition as colonial individuals and the hybrid narrative in which they construct their life accounts make Coetzee’s and McCourt’s work speak volumes to each other.

“selective vision”, autobiography requires the memoirist to turn the subject of his life narrative into a fictional character – sentencing that “[a]ll autobiography is storytelling” (1992: 391). This is, the reinterpretation of one’s memories from present circumstances further challenges the veracity of the narrative, thus the author repurposing the truthfulness of his past by adjusting the narrative within the fictional codes suitable to the narration mode. In McCourt’s case, it is clear that his choice of artificial strategy reinforces the already-fictionalized status of the memoir, making it sit between a historical account of his life narrative and a prose piece of fiction. In the same vein, Coetzee explains how the author, through the compulsory exercise of self-examination and further “self-doubt” (1992: 269) when confessing in the autobiographical account, is impelled to question his truth, in the end “betraying” (269) the sincerity of his account and, thus, his own fictional subject by picturing himself and his foray into the depicted social context in a distorted light. A testimony that both exposes the profound effects of McCarthyite practices on the colonial individual, and disputes the conservative rationale and paranoid havoc of McCarthyism, McCourt’s testifying, confessional narrative consolidates the interpretation of experienced reality as a fictional reconstruction. This becomes a narrative storyline that, as such, contests the veracity of his own narrative and, thus, makes McCourt undergo an exercise of self-betrayal. This blurring of lines between reality and narrative and the ensuing self-deception becomes especially relevant for a protagonist who is portrayed to endure inner struggles when testimony served as a powerful governmental tool to imbue the fear of treachery among citizens. The official systematization of the testifying account also brought side effects, especially the legitimization of lie or the fictionalization of facts that instantly became untruths. In fact, this was exercised both by those who were questioned but most importantly by that who was questioning: as it is well-known, McCarthy’s political strategy was sustained on the manipulation of the truth of the accused citizen’s life events to build an easy path towards incriminating his target.

Reading against the grain, this interpretation reinforces the perception of McCourt’s memoir as a literary manifestation of the ideological discourse of which it partakes. Jameson and his view on narrative suitably find a place here as he argues that “individual period formulations always secretly imply or project narratives or ‘stories’ – narrative representations – of the historical sequence in which such individual periods take their place” (Jameson 1981: 13). He studies how subjects can only understand experience in the shape of narrative, and how the ideological poles of society are reproduced by its individuals, their stories and their interpretations. Therefore, he promotes a perspective on society as the interaction of individual stories, the construction and interpretation of which depend on their ideological context. In this framing, if literature, in Althusserian Marxism, entails a significant means of the values that support the existing conditions of society, is not it interesting to note how the rationalization behind McCarthy’s procedures is to be identified with the theoretical vision of Marxist critics?

Indeed, McCarthy’s falsified storylines synchronize with McCourt’s memoir as interpreting narratives developed in American Cold War ideology to deliver an

altered, staged view of the truth of one's life events and surrounding context. This is explained because McCourt's decision to structure his autobiography through fictional devices that aim to establish a pattern of unity throughout an unconflicted narrative form proves how the accounts about his own life and the interpretation of the surrounding social context are immersed in the same conservative pool in which they were engendered. What is more, Jameson's idea synthesizes the predicament encountered by McCourt as the author of a memoir where the complex social psyche of the time depicted finds an insufficient expression, and by Frank as the character that stands to tell a truthful experience that he nevertheless finds contradictory, diluted, paranoid. As Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker develop Jameson's concept of narrative, "[t]he realist writer intends to unify all the elements in the text, but the work that goes on in the textual process inevitably produces certain lapses and omissions which correspond to the incoherence of the ideological discourse it uses" (2005: 98). McCourt's realist-attuned memoir deliberately exposes the contradictions of Cold War America, but this paradoxically reflects, in the text's inconsistencies when delineating Frank's Irish-American identity, his comfortable seat in the conservative values of his society.

There is definite evidence of McCourt's memoir as an ideological object reproducing the gesture of the social psyche, conservative and unsettling alike. That is the concert between both the presentational mode used as well as the self-portrait pictured, and his purported audience. Mitchell rightly intimates that the artifice that makes McCourt's first memoir an example of unitary autobiography "is highly appealing to a reading sensibility craving a story with easily identifiable signposts that mark a beginning, middle, and end" (2003: 614). The unproblematized formal rendering of his life narrative in *Angela's Ashes*, which he recreates in his second publication, is of a piece with the criticism on his literature, especially that which addresses his victimizing voice and image. Claiming "the current American vogue for stories of victimage – and of upbeat recovery from that condition" (qtd. in Mitchell 2003: 615), Deane mentions McCourt's use of this trend to rationalize his popularity among the entertained American audience. This highlights, then, that the victimization in McCourt's imaginary reconstruction of historical fact and personal remembrance is written in the fictional codes and portrait devices suitable to entertain the American public, therefore comprising a reworking of Cold War normativism.

Most of Irish criticism indeed reproach his excessive wielding of colonial stereotyping and dubious delineation of his Irish-American identity as a way to sustain the national audience's attention², illuminating the fact that migrant writers' narratives have "drawn criticism for being a literature without loyalties" (Boehmer

² Both Éigearthaigh and Mitchell conclude their articles by providing a critical explanation of McCourt's popularity in the U.S., the two of them alluding to the docile expectations held by this national readership: while Éigearthaigh asserts that "Mccourt ultimately cedes control of his own memories to his target American audience and their expectations" (2004: 91), Mitchell argues that it meets "reader's expectations while cultivating a reality effect its American readers find comfortably familiar" (2003: 621).

2005: 232). And yet, as we have analyzed, McCourt's felt depiction of his complex Irish-American subjectivity in *'Tis* does feature community allegiances with both his old Irish heritage and the identity newly forged in America. The main issue at stake is his adult choice of narrative form and thematic picture to represent both alliances: as Elleke Boehmer writes, once acquired a comfortable place "in the wider neo-colonial world", immigrant authors' work "willy-nilly remains collusive with and an expression of that neo-colonial world" (2005: 231). McCourt's memoir amply embodies this contradictory movement, even if his narrative pinpoints his compliance with the new land's morals, which makes him partake of the need of America's immigrant population "to affirm for other Americans their legitimate membership in the nation by telling stories of assimilation" (Smith and Watson 2001: 53). Restricted to the American arena, the migrant writer's urge to show his acculturation into the rhetoric of the times finds a perfect niche of welcoming readership in late 20th century audiences: Boehmer intimates that "Western readers find that they are entertained yet at the same time morally absolved" (2005: 232) when they are made to encounter stories of the exile's suffering and his eventual readjustment to the required cultural norms – this is, Frank's life narrative in New York. From the colonial author's perspective, McCourt writes a patriotic memoir that approaches the national discourse through the attractive depiction of the American Dream and its hard-work culture. In this sense, Edward Said's words are illuminating: "[t]riumphant, achieved nationalism then justifies, retrospectively as well as prospectively, a history selectively strung together in a narrative form" (2000: 176). Within Jameson's parameters of narrative and ideology, McCourt's memoir suitably fleshes out the national myth in a self-testifying story that at once becomes a site of registration and criticism, and yet a betraying replication of the contradictory praxis of the McCarthyite era, resulting in a much-troubled negotiation of the expression of his Irish-American consciousness.

6. CONCLUSION: TESTIFYING TO THE DISRUPTIVE, OR THE AFTERMATHS OF AN UPPERMOST PSYCHOTIC ERA

It can be opportunely argued, to sum up, that the narrative, the tone and the style of *'Tis, A Memoir* succeed in demonstrating the complex engagement of the Irish-American experience with post-war culture in New York, where the psychotic surges of the paranoid atmosphere during McCarthy's stirrings inflicted an irreparable wound on the colonial identity of the immigrant individual. This article has carried out a historical-literary reading of McCourt's autobiographical narrative as a Cold War literary piece. Firstly, as a historical testimony of McCarthyism, analyzing it as a narrative: showing, counteracting, and aligning to the nationalistic rhetoric of the times. Secondly, as a reworking of the American value system and conservative doctrine of the 1950s. As the former, it has evaluated the conflicted cultural identity of Frank's colonial character as the outgrowth of the disruptive ideological context of McCarthyite times chronicled in his autobiography. As the latter, it has employed Marxist critical views on ideology and narration to argue that this piece of autobiographical writing reproduces the rationale behind McCarthy's

political practices. As a genre that features confession and testimony in the shape of narrative, the memoir's compulsory fictionalization discloses McCourt's act of betrayal of others and of himself. By purporting to express the reality of his experience and that of his social context, McCourt cannot but convey the ideological and political weight of the discomfiting grounds depicted in the text and experienced by his own self. And this ambivalent movement, in turn, emphasizes the delineation of Frank's problematized ethnic, working-class former self and the negotiation of a new national identity, which complies with the unsettling discourse of the early Cold War period.

That his autobiographical account should be understood as a romanticizing view on America's ideological underpinnings and, thus, as contributing to Cold War patriotic narrative is evident in the very title: "'Tis" is actually what Frank, at Ellis Island for the first time, answers to the officer's question that "Isn't this a great country altogether?" (Mccourt 1997: 517). And yet, does not McCourt's second autobiography feature turning points in which his experience as an ethnically hybridized individual seems to be unsurmountable? As analyzed, this can be seen in his uncertain verbalization as to where his shifting cultural allegiances lie: as he thinks while coming back from one of his visits to Limerick, "even though I'm happy to be returning to New York I hardly know where I belong anymore" (1999: 375).

The complex layering of this analysis, then, testifies to the struggling dynamics at work in McCourt's memorialized attempt to define his own grasp of Irish-American identity. As such, sociologically condemning his prejudiced rendering of Irishness, which has been a recurrent pattern in the criticism of his work, is necessary, but seems to be reductive of his contribution to cultural studies; instead, considering the intersection where autobiographical codes, post-colonial theory and Marxist views meet in the analysis of the colonial, working-class character takes into account the historical circumstances depicted in the autobiography – this is, experienced by the author – and assays their ideological relevance in the writing and reception of it. The fact that McCarthyite practices and their consequences appear in the memoir in a light emphasized by Frank's quivering voice reveals their impact on his growing consciousness and the harm inflicted on the ethnic, working-class outsider. Edward Said, in this vein, rightfully puts forward the fair idea that "[e]xiles feel [...] an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology" (2000: 177). And that is what McCourt appears to realize in and through *'Tis*. The McCarthyite proceedings, experienced and portrayed alike, account for the way in which McCourt's Irish-American self, this is, the conflicted writing of his national and ethnic identity, favors and embodies the triumphant discourse on both paranoid fear and nationalistic success in Cold War America.

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