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Political and Social Criticism in Selected Novels by Garbhan Downey

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List of Abbreviations

TAE: The American Envoy

RM: Running Mates

OUAT: Once Upon a Time in the North West

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	9
2. The Conflict in Northern Ireland – From its Origins to the Present	11
2.1. The Onset of the Troubles.....	12
2.1.1. The Civil Rights Movement	12
2.1.2. The Outbreak of Violence	14
2.2. A Country Falling Apart	16
2.2.1. The Politics of the Paramilitaries.....	16
2.2.2. Communities and their Ideologies.....	16
2.2.2.1. Loyalism & Unionism.....	17
2.2.2.2. Nationalism & Republicanism.....	18
2.2.3. The Hunger Strikes and their Consequences	21
2.2.4. Downward Spiral.....	22
2.2.4.1. Political Events	22
2.2.4.2. Economic Events.....	24
2.3. Towards Peace	25
2.3.1. The Anglo Irish Agreement	25
2.3.2. Peace Process.....	27
2.3.3. The Good Friday Agreement.....	28
2.3.4. Present Day	30
3. Literary Background	34
3.1. The Satirist	34
3.1.1. Biography.....	34
3.1.2. Downey as the Satirist	34
4. Theories of Humour.....	37

4.1.	Introduction	37
4.2.	The Four Approaches to Analyzing Satire	39
4.2.1.	Horatian and Juvenalian	39
4.2.2.	Genial and Intellectualized Satire.....	40
4.2.3.	Semantic Script Theory of Humour	41
4.2.4.	Narrative and Counter-narrative Theory	43
4.3.	Satire and Morality	46
5.	Analysis	51
5.1.	The American Envoy	51
5.1.1.	Plot Summary	51
5.2.	Running Mates	53
5.2.1.	Plot Summary	53
5.3.	Once Upon a Time in the North West.....	55
5.3.1.	Plot Summary	55
5.4.	Literary Analysis	56
5.4.1.	Horatian and Juvenalian Satire	56
5.4.1.1.	Optimism	56
5.4.1.2.	Moral Compass	58
5.4.1.3.	Target: Politics.....	59
5.4.1.4.	Target: Northerners/Southerners.....	61
5.4.2.	Genial and Intellectualized Satire.....	62
5.4.3.	Semantic Script Theory of Humour – Master Narrative vs. Counter-narrative	66
5.4.3.1.	Political Presentation	66
5.4.3.2.	North-South Division.....	68

5.4.3.3. References to the Troubles	71
5.4.3.4. Lou/Stan Controversy	76
5.4.3.5. Representation of The Big Four – America, Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland	80
5.4.3.5.1. Of Uncles, Stepmothers and Cinderellas	80
5.4.3.5.2. Britain	83
5.4.3.5.3. The Republic of Ireland	84
5.4.3.5.4. Northern Ireland	86
5.4.3.6. Representation of the Country	89
6. Conclusion	93
7. Bibliography	97
7.1. Primary Sources	97
7.2. Secondary Sources	97
7.3. Homepages	100
8. Abstracts	101
8.1. English	101
8.2. German	102

1. Introduction

“The troubles have nowadays turned into a ghost that still haunts Northern Ireland and occasionally the Republic, a ghost that is far from having been exorcised.”
(Estévez-Saá 31)

This thesis aims at investigating the representation and discussion of the Northern Ireland conflict in contemporary literature. The paper is based on the assumption that “memory, stories and storytelling” (Estévez-Saá 31) are “a medium of handling the past”. (Estévez-Saá 31). The process of coming to terms with the past and moving towards reconciliation is often reflected in literature. For the textual analysis, three novels by the contemporary Derry based author Garbhan Downey will be examined.

What makes these novels especially fascinating in the given context is the excessive usage of black humour, satire and parody when reflecting on the Troubles, a humour, satire and parody which suggests that a certain distance to the events of the past has been reached. Downey allows the reader to laugh thus creating a catharsis.

The novels *“The American Envoy”*, *“Running Mates”*, and *“Once Upon a Time in the North West”* will be examined for the textual analysis. This thesis investigates the representation of the Northern Ireland Conflict in all three of Downey’s novels, with a special emphasis on political satire for the sake of social and political criticism.

Overall, this thesis is divided into three major parts. The first two parts constitute the theoretical framework consisting of an outline of the history of the conflict, euphemistically called “The Troubles” between 1968 and 1998. This specific focus is justified by the contemporary nature of the novels and the higher relevance of more recent history for their analysis. A second theoretical part deals with literary theory concerning satire, irony and humour in English literature with specific focus on political satire and criticism. This theoretical background is the base on which the literary analysis of Downey’s novels will be based. A critical discussion of the representation of “the Troubles” will constitute the third part of this thesis. This analysis consists most importantly of the political, social and cultural landscape of Northern Ireland within the novels and the humorous approach.

2. The Conflict in Northern Ireland – From its Origins to the Present

“The Troubles” refer to the political conflict in Northern Ireland between 1968 and 1998, which resulted from a dispute between two parts of the population of Northern Ireland, which was exacerbated by the British State. While the majority of the Northern Irish population, approximately two thirds, favoured Northern Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom, the minority of the population wished to unite with the Republic of Ireland. Those who preferred to remain within the United Kingdom are “Unionists” or “Loyalists”, those favouring a united Ireland are known “Nationalists” or “Republicans”. (Bew and Gillespie v)

Initially, this conflict emerged in in 1968 from demands made by the Civil Rights Movement who requested political and socio-economic change; a campaign met with excessive police brutality, sectarian violence and an escalation of loyalist and republican violence. A reformation of the Northern Irish legislation at Stormont concerning anti-Catholic laws in respect of housing allocation and voting eligibility were on the agenda.

As a result of the ensuing chaos, the British government dissolved the Stormont parliament and imposed direct rule from Westminster. In addition, the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 gave the Dublin government a voice in the affairs of Northern Ireland. (Bew and Gillespie vf)

Bew and Gillespie suggest that by 1993, over 3,000 people had lost their lives due to the conflict. The victims included soldiers, paramilitaries and civilians. (Bew and Gillespie v)

The British government made several attempts to restore peace in Northern Ireland during the following years. Both sides, the British and Irish government, participated in talks with the central goal of coming to a mutual agreement, culminating in the so-called “Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement, 1998. The central points of this agreement centered on shared identity, freedom of thought in political and religious aspects, the first step of a long journey with peace as its final destination. (Campbell 322-323)

The focus of the present thesis is on the contemporary novels of Garbhan Downey, and this overview will concentrate on the detailed discussion of the Troubles starting in 1968.

2.1. The Onset of the Troubles

Since the division of Ireland into Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in 1921, the Catholic minority had been effectively excluded from politics. (Arthur and Jeffery 33-34) This political peripheralisation of one part of the population led to frustration and estrangement from the political process. In the 1960's changes took place all over the world that affected the situation in Northern Ireland. The US Civil Rights movement encouraged the Catholics in Northern Ireland to "seek social and economic change". (Campbell 302) Although initially the civil rights campaign consisted predominantly of Catholics, liberal Protestants participated, too. They aimed to "achieve reform by documenting, publicizing and lobbying for an end to abuses – discrimination in jobs and housing, unfair electoral procedures and the Special Powers Act." (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 124-125) While both, Catholics and Protestants supported the goals of the civil rights movement and fought together for a common aim, the "communal polarization that followed" (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 128) soon separated the communities once again. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 128)

2.1.1. The Civil Rights Movement

The Troubles date back to 1968 when the Civil Rights Movement started to organize marches and demonstrations. The first peaceful march, held on 24th of August 1968 gave way to a second violent demonstration two months later on the 5th October 1968, which led to the Minister of Home Affairs deploying a large number of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) across Northern Ireland. (Arthur and Jeffery 5)

Civil Rights demonstrations and marches took place in other parts of the world during this time. Detailed media coverage of these events informed people in other countries, including Northern Ireland, about their success. One could argue that the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland formed "part of this international trend" (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 126) and received substantial international support and media coverage. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 125-126)

In the United States, the Civil Rights Movement soon received support from students. (Campbell 302-303) The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association consisted of "nationalists, liberal unionists, trade-union activists and other sympathetic parties" (Arthur and Jeffery 5) had the aim of reforming certain aspects of the Northern Irish government.

Republicans supported the civil rights for Catholics; yet, many believed that the root of the problem lay in the remaining separation between Ulster and the Republic of Ireland. This led to strong opposition from the Protestant Unionists and prepared the ground for the radical Unionist, Reverend Ian Paisley. His main responsibility lay in radicalizing the Protestant working class. This is important, as the Protestant working class might have otherwise become aware that they “shared the social and economic grievances of Catholic workers”. (Campbell 302-303)

“Gerrymandering” of local government boundaries was an important concern for the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA), which effectively led to political underrepresentation of the Catholic population. (Arthur and Jeffery 5) The Catholic working class found itself severely disadvantaged in comparison to the businessmen who had the “right to cast multiple votes based on the size of their companies”. (Campbell 302) This led to the situation that some house-holding citizens had several votes, while others had none at all. NICRA's demand was the ‘one–man-one-vote’ regulation at local elections as the system hitherto favoured businessmen and financially better situated citizens, often Protestants. Thus, the slogan ‘one – man – one – vote’ became the rallying cry of the Civil Rights Movement. (Arthur and Jeffery 5) Lastly, NICRA challenged the fairness of housing allocation, campaigning for a change in allocation procedures, especially in areas with predominantly Catholic population. Protestants secured almost three quarters of the publicly built houses between 1945 and 1968 according to Arthur and Jeffery (5).

The first two marches precipitated a succession of riots and demonstrations throughout the following months, which marked the outbreak of violence and the end of peaceful protest. NICRA received strong support from Queen's University students who had founded the People's Democracy (PD) and supported NICRA's cause. The PD had a strong affiliation with the American Civil Rights Movement and, influenced by Martin Luther King's march in Alabama in 1965, organized a similar march from Belfast to Londonderry. Protestant mobs, supported by the RUC attacked the participants at Burntollet Bridge shortly before entering the city limits. (Arthur and Jeffery 6) Due to the sectarian division of communities and several parts of the cities, the Protestant population perceived the civil rights marches as a direct threat. Fear was not only omnipresent with the Catholic population, at the same time “Unionists were in a frenzy fearing an invasion” (Hennessey 392 qtd. in Rice 240) The problematic

geographical separation of areas led to the initially peaceful marches to be seen as a challenge and “an attack on the state” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 127). Bew and Gillespie suggest that the strong reaction towards the seemingly peaceful march led to a strengthening of Nationalist hostility towards the government. This reaction allegedly moved the focus from civil rights to the religious and political differences between Protestants and Catholics. (Bew and Gillespie 12) Additionally, the police force consisted primarily of Protestant citizens, who were ambiguous about what to make of these marches. The underlying sectarian conflict added a dynamic to the civil rights marches, which might never have been intended. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 126-127) Thus, the originally peaceful Civil Rights Movement soon became so much more than merely Civil Rights. “Both sides were guilty of perpetuating violence.” (Campbell 303)

2.1.2. The Outbreak of Violence

The outbreak of violence and rioting in combination with the pressure exerted by Great Britain to gain control of the situation, coupled with Prime Minister Captain Terence O'Neill attempts to accommodate most of NICRA's original demands ultimately undermined the former's attempts at accommodation and led to a split within his party and transformed Northern Ireland's political landscape. (Arthur and Jeffery 6-7)

The ineffectiveness of the reform programme manifested itself when violent rioting became part of the daily routine during 1969. “As the political climate in Northern Ireland degenerated apace in the late 1960's the province became a focus for the world's media.” (Coulter 151) Londonderry and Belfast suffered the most violence, where Protestants attacked the Catholic areas of the cities. The RUC either could not cope with or contributed to the escalation of violence. Acutely aware of the RUC's inadequacy, Major James Chichester-Clark, O'Neill's successor, requested assistance from London and the British army to regain control of the situation. (Arthur and Jeffery 9)

The rapid decision to send the British army to Northern Ireland had catastrophic implications, especially given that the army was under the control of the Stormont government. As the relationship between the British army and the police force had not been properly coordinated, a meeting took place between the representatives from the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland where the army General-Officer-

Commanding (GOC) would take over the responsibility for security operations from that day onwards. The GOC received instructions to work together closely with the Northern Irish government, while remaining answerable to the Ministry of Defence in London. The RUC retained responsibility for the police duties outside the security field, which remained under the administration of the Northern Ireland government. (Arthur and Jeffery 10)

The British found themselves in a difficult situation, as no matter how they reacted they would make enemies on one side or the other. They tried to calm the situation in order to make a peaceful and democratic solution. (Campbell 306) It is argued that the decision to put the British troops under Stormont control proved to be one of the biggest mistakes of British policy making during the Troubles. (Bew and Gillespie 19) Overall, the British army presence increased from originally 2,000 troops in 1969 to 21,000 troops in 1972. (Jackson 398) The uncertainty and unclear division of responsibility ultimately led to the collapse of the Stormont government. (Arthur and Jeffery 12)

By the year 1970, the increasing violence and frequency of attacks between Protestants and Catholics in Belfast led to the re-emerging of the Irish Republican Army. The original purpose of the IRA was to “protect Catholics against Protestant thugs” (Campbell 304), a motive of the IRA that soon changed and it became their wish to remove the British from Northern Ireland but this ‘terrorist’ organization soon split around about how this goal should be pursued. This led to the separation of the IRA into the Provisionals IRA, who wished to carry on ‘the war’ which focused more on revolutionary violence and the Official IRA, which favoured a ceasefire. (Campbell 304) While the IRA was the main representative of militant nationalist interests, the loyalist movement was divided into different groups. (Campbell 310)

The Protestants in return founded their own paramilitary groups. In 1971, a number of existing groups merged into a renamed Ulster Defence Association. The UDA adopted similar strategies as the PIRA, with the aim of keeping Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. By this time, Belfast was thus “divided into two armed camps”. (Campbell 304)

In 1971 the British Prime Minister Ted Heath introduced the “Special Powers Act” which enabled the British soldiers to “arrest suspected terrorists and to detain them

indefinitely without trial.” (Campbell 306-307) This legislation provided enormous possibility for abusing power. (Campbell 307)

In August 1971, the introduction of internment without trial further increased the violence. Even though its aim had been to increase security, it totally destabilised an already acute situation. This aggression precipitated a Protestant flight from Ardoyne, a mainly Republican district in North Belfast. To prevent the Catholics from taking over their homes they set fire to them. During the dislodging women and children came under attack from armed paramilitaries. The process left 2,000 Protestants homeless and 2,500 Catholics decided to move to refugee camps across the border in the Republic of Ireland. Ongoing violence between the two groups of the population prompted the construction of barricades/peace walls in working-class areas of Belfast and the Official IRA targeted the British army in Belfast. The SDLP, the major nationalist party refused all political negotiations until the abolition of internment. (Bew and Gillespie 37) The damage had been done.

2.2. A Country Falling Apart

2.2.1. The Politics of the Paramilitaries

This conflict gave rise to numerous criminal groups and political organizations trying to push through their own objectives. Overall, the political parties often had a close affiliation with paramilitaries, which reflected the unstable political environment. (Arthur and Jeffery 61) When the British troops first arrived in Derry and Belfast, Catholics welcomed them with open arms as an impartial protective force. British troops also quickly disarmed and replaced the police with the Ulster Defence Regiment, which consisted of British soldiers. (Downey J. 56) Overall, the British troops only served to separate the population further. Only two options seemed to present themselves to the Catholic population: flee or fight; women and children initially fled to the South but soon returned when things seemed to calm down again. However, “thousands supported the second option” (Downey, 1983: 60) and started gathering arms. (Downey J. 60)

2.2.2. Communities and their Ideologies

Irish partition led to the formation of new communities and identities and has made the entire situation on the island much more complex than it was several years earlier.

er. Long years of conflict, war and reconciliation have marked the people of Ireland. Overall, “identities are more diverse, contested, contradictory and ambiguous than they were in the past”. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 83) The prevailing conflict has been so far, that of dichotomies such as “Protestant and Catholic, settler and native, loyal and disloyal”. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 84) Therefore, Northern Ireland remains a place where identities are construed in several different ways. To understand these separations between the communities the main ideologies need to be taken into account. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 84)

2.2.2.1. Loyalism & Unionism

Loyalism is associated with Protestant ideologies and has been in existence since the seventeenth century. The name stems from the loyalty the Protestant settlers in Northern Ireland had towards the Crown. This loyalty in return, ensured the support for the rights of Protestants and protection from enemies of the community. This suggests a strong connection between the Protestants in Northern Ireland and the British Crown. However, “if support is not forthcoming the community will look to its own defence.” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 85) Home Rule posed a threat to the religious and civil liberties of Protestants and loyalism thus became a mass movement once again. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 84-85)

Similarly, Unionism builds on the aspiration and admiration of the “British political identity, economic progress and liberal political rights.” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 88) The underlying belief is that the British economic power is beneficial to both, Protestants and Catholics alike. Its proponents argued that the economic success of east Ulster could be spread throughout the country. The unequal division of economic development, as well as religious inequality and discrimination and the economic peripheralization had enormous impact during the Troubles. The proponents of this ideology believe in the support and protection of the imperial government. The ideology was further entrenched due to the fear of economic repercussions if Home Rule were implemented. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 88-89)

While all of Ireland would suffer under home rule, Protestants in particular would suffer since their political and religious rights, guaranteed under the union, would be overridden by the weight of Catholic dogma in a home rule parliament. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 89)

This process in combination with the spread of fear and uncertainty is one aspect that influenced the formation of Loyalist and Unionist paramilitaries during the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

The Unionist paramilitaries consisted of two main groups; the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), founded in 1971 and deriving its name from a paramilitary group of the same name set up to oppose the passing of the 3rd Home Rule Bill, who had been in existence since the First World War and had wanted to protect and defend Northern Ireland against uniting with the Republic of Ireland, and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) which had come into existence only during the Troubles and supported the idea of restoring Stormont. The UDA is said to have been the main paramilitary counter-force of the IRA during the Troubles (Arthur and Jeffery, 1988: 62), consisting of approximately 26,000 members in total. However, not all of these members were activists. (Downey J. 74-75)

2.2.2.2. Nationalism & Republicanism

The roots of these ideologies can be traced back to various instances starting in the seventeenth century. One decisive aspect was the defeat of the Catholic Old English and Gaelic-Irish during the eighteenth century. Their common belief and their shared identity has made these ideologies so strong.

At the centre of this nationalism was a narrative construction of the history of the Irish nation. This narrative posited a golden age, a fall and a process of rebirth. Ireland was the home of an ancient and independent people with its own distinctive language and culture. In this period of freedom the Irish lived in peace and harmony, the arts and industries flourished. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 87)

This demonstrates the importance of an idealized past and the desire to overcome centuries of English rule and be an independent successful and flourishing nation, deeply rooted in its heritage. This resilient conviction of the Irish people remained over centuries and was expressed during the 1916 rebellion and War of Independence. Nationalism includes the Gaelic-Irish, the settlers who resisted English rule in Ireland and the Catholic Old English, the decedents of the original Anglo-Norman settlers who remained Catholic. Recent settlers “who accept this narrative understanding and support nationalist cultural and political ideals” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 88) would also be included and subsumed. Nationalist goals have been interpreted in several ways by supporters. However, the belief in this shared narrative

was the basis for the support of paramilitaries, which promised to fulfill the Irish dream. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 87-88)

The Irish Republican Army emerged as the most prominent 'terrorist' group and was "the single most potent agent of death in 'the Troubles'." (Bew and Gillespie v) The IRA remained connected to the Sinn Féin political party throughout the time particularly after the hunger strikes. (Bew and Gillespie v-vi)

By 1983, Sinn Féin had increased its vote to 13.4%, which was almost as high as the SDLP's at 17.9%. Thus, Sinn Féin gradually gained importance. (Bew and Gillespie, 1993: 156f) An importance which accelerated and caused a strong affiliation of the Catholic urban ghetto areas and Sinn Féin, (Bew and Gillespie v-vi) which can be explained by the IRAs traditional role. The group had been in existence long before the current Troubles had started, and gave reassurance to people. (Arthur and Jeffery 36)

It is alleged that the Belfast Catholics possessed six guns at the outbreak of the Troubles. The sheer futility of trying to protect thousands of citizens with six guns brought the Provisional IRA into existence. Contrary to their belief that the British Army would protect them against loyalist violence, the Catholics soon realized that they had no defense against the unfolding violence. A large part of the population wished for the Irish army to come to their aid, which never materialized. (Downey J. 61-62) This doubtlessly explains their insecurity. Especially as their new enemy, the British army, had machine guns and armoured cars at their disposal. Downey argues that these circumstances soon led to the formation of the Provisional IRA. (Downey J. 61-62)

The split between Official IRA and the Provisional IRA played an important role. While the Dublin-based Official IRA concerned itself with theoretical aspects, i.e. seminars in Marxist theory, the young people in the Catholic ghettos sought engagement with the British military. This brought about the split within the IRA and, following the attacks on Catholic areas in 1969, gave rise to the more dangerous and ruthless "PIRA". The PIRA set themselves the goal of protecting the Catholic population by the use of extreme violence. (Arthur and Jeffery 37)

In 1960, the Catholic population found itself in a dire situation, and in much need of support and reassurance. These circumstances led to a vacuum, which the Provi-

sional IRA readily filled by presenting “themselves as their defenders and champions” (Downey J. 62). Although the arrival of British troops suggested forthcoming peace and control, these promises could not be fulfilled. A substantial part of the Catholic population hoped for the Irish army to intervene but this did not materialise. (Downey J. 62) Rice mentions a speech made by Jack Lynch, the Irish Taoiseach who claimed “that the Irish Army would be outgunned even by the Ulster Special Constabulary (B Specials) if they crossed the border to intervene.” (Rice 245) This left room for ample assumptions in the population. Northern Nationalists believed this was an indication of the Southern government coming to their aid, while the Northern Unionists feared an invasion at any time. The ‘Union’ Jack’s decision to ‘stand by’ left Catholics with no help or support to turn to. (Rice 245-246) “So a great many Catholics, in Belfast and elsewhere, convinced themselves that their only choices were flight or self-defence.” (Downey J. 62) Left with these two options a great number decided to flee to the Republic of Ireland only to return as soon as the violence seemed to subside. However, a much more substantial group opted for self-defence. They formed individual defence groups within the communities in the cities, responsible for the construction of barricades and the guarding of these borders. These areas later became the so-called “no-go areas”. In retrospect, this division between the two parts of the population stifled any prospects of an accommodation. As soon as these areas were separated, they became the hotspot for recruitment and organization of the Provisional IRA. (Downey J. 62-63)

Animated by the devastating situation in Northern Ireland, many people living in the Republic of Ireland decided to become active. Their support consisted mainly of transporting weapons and guns to the North. Prominent Republican politicians “appeared in the streets of Derry, handing large-denomination banknotes to revolutionary leaders.” (Downey J. 63) Charles Haughey and Neil Blaney would later be sacked from the cabinet and tried for gunrunning. Although many politicians later opted to denounce the actions of the Provisional IRA, many of them were involved in assisting them at the onset of the Troubles. Official support from the Irish government consisted of sending their troops to the border regions and setting up field hospitals. (Downey J. 63-64)

The Provisional IRA had as their ultimate goal that of a reunited Ireland; “They believe that the armed struggle is everything, and that anything resembling a normal

political process must be delayed until Ireland has been united by force of arms.” (Downey J. 67)

2.2.3. *The Hunger Strikes and their Consequences*

By 1977, the British had failed to affect meaningful political change and initiated a new campaign that treated IRA terrorists as common criminals. This led to questionable procedures taking place at the prison at Long Kesh, also known as “the Maze”. Torture became a standard practice in order to gain information from the IRA members. (Campbell 310-311) The British Government regularly appeared before the European Court of Human Rights. While the Republican and Loyalist prisoners had traditionally enjoyed special status, which included them to be able to wear civilian clothing in prison, this right was revoked together with other privileges that the prisoners had. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 110) The prisoners protested against this treatment, with the so called ‘Dirty and Blanket protest, refusing to wear the prison uniform and coating “the walls of their cells in their own feces”. (Campbell 311) (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 111)

Margaret Thatcher reacted to the assassination of Lord Louis Mountbatten, a prominent member of the Royal family, with a “no-nonsense approach” (Campbell 311) by pointedly refusing to accommodate any of the demands of Republican prisoners in the Maze. It was her aim to beat down the terrorism in Northern Ireland without making any concession to the IRA. (Campbell 311) The British Government hoped to end the hunger strikes without having to make any major concessions towards the prisoners. (Campbell 311) The Republic sharply criticised Thatcher’s way of handling the Republican hunger strikes. (Arthur and Jeffery 15) The PM had made it clear that she would not tolerate any concession towards the strikers. Later, the hunger strikes came to be seen as an essential part of the Troubles. (Arthur and Jeffery 15) During the second hunger strike, which began in March 1981 and lasted for seven months, ten men died. This unexpected course of events had massive consequences. “In 1981 hunger strikes were public drama of great symbolic power and emotional intensity which gained world-wide attention.” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 111) The Christian tradition of martyrdom played an essential role in this dynamic. The strikers suffered and died silently, a stark contrast to the loud and active conflict that was under way outside the prison walls. Many murals “portrayed the suffering of the hunger strikers in imagery that evoked the death of Christ.” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics*

111) The fact that these prisoners would give their lives in order to get one step closer to their goal, resonated within the Catholic community. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 111) Many nationalists had not been aware of the prisoners and their concerns but the hunger strikes generated much media attention and raised the awareness so many favoured a government accession to their demands. This change in attitude on the part of the nationalist population towards the prisoners brought about the rise of the Sinn Féin party. The image of the strikers in the Republic resulted in the election of two of the hunger strikers to the Daíl during the general elections in 1981. (Arthur and Jeffery 15)

The hunger strikes have been portrayed differently on each side of the conflict. The Republicans saw them as men who gave their own lives for their cause. The Loyalists viewed the hunger strikes as an attack on the state that was supported by the entire Catholic community. The idealization of the hunger strikers and portrayal of them as victims often meant that the real victims, those killed by loyalist, British and republican terrorism, were forgotten. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 112-113)

2.2.4. Downward Spiral

2.2.4.1. Political Events

Internment and the increase of constant violence hastened the downward spiral. During the year 1972 almost 500 people lost their lives through violence. (Campbell 305) The next paradigm-shifting incident occurred on the 30th of January 1972 and has become infamous as “Bloody Sunday”, when the British army murdered thirteen unarmed men at an illegal civil rights demonstration in Derry. This murder led to an upsurge of resentment and frustration in the Catholic community. In revenge and enraged the Irish republicans attacked and burned the British Embassy in Dublin. Further, it led to a mass recruitment from the IRA. (Arthur and Jeffery 14) The *Irish Press* stated that “if there was an able-bodied man with Republican sympathies within the Derry area who was not in the IRA before yesterday’s butchery there will be none tonight.” (Bew and Gillespie 45) This quote accurately depicted the developments following Bloody Sunday. From here onwards, the Republicans sought to achieve a complete withdrawal of the British troops and an end of the Stormont government. In 1972, the political events ultimately led to the entire responsibility for law and order being transferred to Westminster. (Bew and Gillespie 45-46)

The events of Bloody Sunday finally forced the government to react. In February of 1972, the British government introduced direct rule. The Provisionals saw this as the first step towards a united Ireland. For the Unionist political landscape, it meant a rapid change from the previous status quo. Ironically, the introduction of direct rule formed the basis for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which followed 13 years later. (Bew and Gillespie 50-51)

The elections in 1974 showed a strong opposition to the Sunningdale power-sharing initiative introduced by Brian Faulkner, Northern Ireland's last Prime Minister. The United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC) played an important role in this process, as the election outcome led to a form of legitimization of the loyalist protests in Northern Ireland. (Arthur and Jeffery 12-13) The Ulster Worker's Council's (UWC) strike in May 1974 received strong support from the Protestant population. Bew and Gillespie (88) suggest that the Protestant community viewed the events since 1968 "as one of continual political retreat, if not defeat." (Bew and Gillespie 88) While some nationalists viewed the Sunningdale Agreement as a concession to their demands, the Unionists disdained the agreement, especially since the moderate Nationalists portrayed the Council of Ireland as the first step towards an imminent unification of Ireland. Therefore, although the Sunningdale Agreement obtained the support of some Nationalists, it totally alienated the Unionists and failed to achieve its objective to bridge the void. (Bew and Gillespie 88-89)

In December 1974 the Provisional IRA offered a ceasefire over the Christmas period. This led to the release of 20 internees and parole was granted to 50 other prisoners. Yet, they did not deem this response as sufficient to maintain a permanent ceasefire. The Provisional IRA received support from the Provisional Sinn Féin, which had separated from the Official Sinn Féin around the same time as the split within the IRA had taken place. Provisional Sinn Féin would increasingly be seen as the political counterpart to the IRA. (Campbell 309)

In 1975 the Provisional IRA made clear their willingness, presenting the British government with 12 points they expected to be fulfilled. These included the release of 100 detainees and the withdrawal of British troops. However, the British did not wish to give the impression that they gave in to terrorism. In the course of the year, however, they disconfirmed, "the policy of detainment without trial". (Campbell 310) While the IRA believed that this would lead to a final withdrawal of British troops from

Northern Ireland, the government officially denied any negotiation with the IRA. (Bew and Gillespie 98) However, the government acquiesced some of the IRAs requests. These included the opening of incident centres and the decrease of security in Catholic areas. Furthermore, the British government halted the arrest of leading Provisionals. (Bew and Gillespie 99)

The government considered it necessary to include the PIRA in a future settlement and thus released Gerry Adams, one of the PIRA leadership, shortly after his arrest and invited them to London for negotiations. These negotiations, however, failed, stifling any hope for compromise or accommodation. (Campbell 308)

2.2.4.2. Economic Events

The conflict sharply accentuated the regions high post war unemployment. The ongoing violence and unrest had caused many businesses to close their production sites in Northern Ireland. For example the closure of the Belfast-based Grundig plant with the loss of 1000 jobs in 1980, which produced tape recorders, had a great impact on unemployment numbers. In 1960, the plant had opened in Belfast providing approximately 1,000 jobs. In December 1973, the IRA kidnapped Thomas Niedermayer, the managing director of the plant and consul in Northern Ireland, the plant closed the year that his remains were found in a rubbish tip in west Belfast. (Bew and Gillespie 138-140)

In June of 1980, Courtaulds closed their viscose fibre plant in the city of Carrickfergus in County Antrim, followed by the closure of Du Pont Orlon plant in Derry in September of that year, with the loss of 400 jobs. At this point Northern Ireland was no longer considered a safe place for investment and settlement of companies. The dramatic increase of the unemployment rate reflected this development, and ultimately encouraged their participation in often paramilitary organisations. (Bew and Gillespie 139-140)

Unemployment stood at 40,000 at the beginning of the Troubles; by 1993 this number had risen to over 100,000; furthermore the probability of a Catholic male being unemployed was still twice as high as that of a Protestant. (Bew and Gillespie vi)

Fear of the IRA discouraged Catholics from taking up positions in the security sector, although having been encouraged to do so by the government. This is best exemplified by the fact that fewer Catholics served for the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1993

than during the premiership of Sir James Craig, first PM of Northern Ireland. (Bew and Gillespie vi-vii)

2.3. Towards Peace

By the year 1979, Dublin favoured a peaceful solution as the ongoing conflict had severe repercussions on the country. The Republic could no longer afford the extremely high security measures as well as the economic burden which resulted from the Troubles. This, along with British war weariness led to the initiation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement between the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Irish Taoiseach Dr. Garret Fitzgerald, in which both leaders agreed on working closely together in Northern Irish politics. The negotiations also included a meeting between the constable of the RUC and the Garda Commissioner in order to discuss cross border security issues. (Arthur and Jeffery 15)

2.3.1. The Anglo Irish Agreement

The British and Irish government agreed to numerous meetings during the next few years, which led to Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald the Taoiseach in the Republic of Ireland working together in order to secure a peaceful settlement. (Arthur and Jeffery 16) The result of these negotiations was the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985.

The ceremonial signing of the Agreement was a conscious attempt by the two governments to symbolise the beginning of a new political era, one in which the nationalist tradition was raised to a new status. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 113-114)

The agreement conceded that Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom, as long as the majority of the population wished for this. British and Irish governments agreed to work together and find a successful way of cooperation between both states and both parts of the island effectively. The Anglo-Irish Agreement unequivocally condemned violence overall as a means of settling the dispute. (Campbell 312-313) (Arthur and Jeffery 16)

It sought to address Unionists' worries through Article 1, which promised that the status of Northern Ireland would only change if the majority of the people voted in favour of this change. However, Dublin's receipt of a consultative role concerning policies in the North, the first time legislation had recognised an Irish dimension, utterly infuriated the Unionist population. The Agreement received a predominantly positive reso-

nance in Britain, Ireland and the rest of the world, a favourable international view proved especially important given the regions' dire need for economic investment. The United States, Canada and New Zealand contributed to an International Fund to support Northern Ireland's economy. (Arthur and Jeffery 16-17)

Despite this universal positivity, the Unionists mobilised the population to oppose it. Until then, Margaret Thatcher had reassured Unionists by her approach and they now felt deceived. The signing of the Agreement led to a Loyalist demonstration on November 23rd, 1985 in Belfast city centre. An estimated 100,000 people took part, demonstrating their resistance to the Agreement. Protestants feared the Agreement had effectively acquiesced to Republican demands and unionist fears of a united Ireland had not been addressed adequately in the Agreement. (Arthur and Jeffery 18)

Margaret Thatcher had been seen as a champion of 3-nation unionism; however, the unionist Members of Parliament opposed this agreement and resigned from their positions. Sinn Féin also remained unconvinced that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would facilitate their objective. (Campbell 313) Unionists feared that "nationalism had intruded into the very heart of unionist and British Northern Ireland and displaced unionism at the queen's table" (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 114), a feeling of having been taken over by their enemies and being alienated in their own home that made it impossible for them to accept the Agreement. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 114-115) One year after its signing demonstrations and violence had flared up again. It led to an increase in Loyalist paramilitaries' actions and attacks, particularly attacks on Catholic houses and on members of the RUC. (Arthur and Jeffery 19) However, although there had been an upsurge in violent opposition during the first years after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement opposition against the Agreement declined again following 1987.

Conflict within communities depends strongly on the ideology.

Sectarian divisions are built into the structures and identity of Northern Ireland. Politics has remained polarised around community loyalties, placing severe limitations on the development of class-based or gender-based loyalties. (Sales 202)

"The two communities construct their histories in radically different ways and their image of the world and what is possible within it is shaped by these opposing historical narratives." (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 115) Direct rule had brought about a major change in the region's socio-economic landscape; the Troubles had led to a change of identity within the Protestant as well as the Catholic population. This could

be seen from the fact that in 1968, 20% of the Protestant population had regarded themselves as Irish. In 1989 this number had declined to a mere 3%. For Catholics the significance of the Gaelic language and culture had grown. (Arthur and Jeffery 19-20) These strong opposing forces are one major reason for the long peace process and difficult reconciliation in Northern Ireland. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 115)

2.3.2. *Peace Process*

The peace process started to unfold during the 1990's. At this point the war had proceeded to become an "unwinnable military war; and both sides put aside their moral scruples for the greater good and gathered around the table." (Bew J. 17) A meeting between Ian Paisley and leading Protestants and representatives of the Republic of Ireland in London was held. (Campbell 32-33) Simultaneously, the British government initiated direct and indirect talks with the IRA (Bew J. 17) to find a way to end the ongoing violence. To be successful the processes needed to be constructed carefully, patiently and with special regard to political, cultural and religious sensitivities. (Bew J. 18-19)

What marks the peace process in Northern Ireland is that it "was often unexciting, painfully slow, and constructed with great care." (Bew J. 16) Although many setbacks presented themselves during the process, however, the wish for a solution remained strong. Bew (Bew J. 17) claims, "After three decades of stasis, the British Government changed approach and decided to negotiate with the terrorists." (Bew J. 17) Although evidence would suggest that it kept its lines of communication open with the IRA often through the good officers of MI5, the Catholic Church of Ireland and Presbyterian clerics and various community leaders, this change of approach made it possible for an "inclusive peace settlement that brought in the 'extremes' and ended the violence." (Bew J. 17) Although this strategy had been considered dangerous and impractical for the future development for the country, it ultimately brought about an end of paramilitary violence.

During the Brook/Mayhew Talks in November 1992 it became clear that the relationship between the SDLP and the Unionists remained problematic. After 25 years of the Troubles, a joint effort towards a solution had been made. Although the fear of the Provisional IRA's campaign for a united Ireland remained, both sides had moved from their extreme positions. Unionists had agreed to power-sharing and acknowledging the Irish dimension and the nationalists and republicans had moved their fo-

cus towards sharing authority rather than uniting Ireland. (Bew and Gillespie 277-278) Paramilitaries remained one major obstacle for keeping the peace in Northern Ireland; indeed several splinter groups have evolved since the peace process began and some of these are still convinced that violence provides the only option to achieve their political goals. (Arthur and Jeffery 62)

The Anglo-Irish Agreement failed to marginalise and undermine Sinn Féin. On the rise before the signing of the Agreement, the party now received even broader support as a result of the consequences following the Anglo-Irish Agreement. “The failure of the constitutional parties to reach a deal [...], drove both the Irish and British governments towards a settlement which incorporated not just the contentious middle-ground of Ulster politics, but also the militant periphery.” (Jackson 387)

The real achievement was not only the fact that Sinn Féin got on board the train as it was leaving the station, but it was the fact that the government kept the train on the rails at all, when bringing in Sinn Féin risked derailing it. (Bew J. 19)

However, this achievement would ultimately be rewarded. Following talks and political debates, the IRA finally announced a complete cessation of hostilities on the 31st of August 1994. This ceasefire, however, lasted just until 1996, when the IRA bombed Canary Wharf in London. (Jackson 388)

The fate of the peace process has exposed starkly the irreconcilability of the two communities in Northern Ireland. The explosion of sectarian passions in the summer of 1996, which led to widespread violence and destruction, was depressing evidence of the deep-rootedness of the divisions. (Sales 202)

This attack demonstrated how many Nationalists still believed that unification with the Irish Republic could be achieved, if not with politics then with violence.

2.3.3. The Good Friday Agreement

Bew (J.) deemed “The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 [...] a triumph for moderation and a triumph of normal politics” (Bew J. 19), and as the final sign that the conflict was coming to an end.

It can be seen as “the key moment of the success of the peace process” (Bew J. 16). Both the British and Irish governments participated in the negotiation and drafting of the Agreement. The two-fold goals underlying the Good Friday Agreement were the inclusion of the interests of both communities into the agreement and giving everyone involved a voice for the future as well as ending the precedent status quo by starting a process of transformation that would lead the population away from conflict. (Ruane

and Todd, *Politics* 935) Political and religious aspects are pivotal to an internationally agreed and guaranteed settlement, which received a massive endorsement by referendum on both sides of the border. Although some splinter groups of the IRA that referred to themselves as the “Real IRA” refused to accept the content of the Good Friday Agreement (Campbell 322-323), it received support from the majorities both north and south of the border and represented a path, which both sides were prepared to take. (Ruane and Todd, *Politics* 926) Both communities have been guaranteed a central position in government negotiations, and policy-making, thus acknowledging the individual interests of each community. (Ruane and Todd, *Politics* 929)

In April 1998, all political parties, except for the DUP, signed the Good Friday Agreement. (Jackson 474) The DUP refused to participate in the preceding negotiations, indicating that not all interests sought to reach the common goals. Nevertheless, the Good Friday Agreement can be seen as “the advent of a new form of politics in Northern Ireland” (Ruane and Todd, *Politics* 923). What remains questionable is, whether the war and conflict have been successfully brought to an end through the agreement, or whether it simply means that the “crises will continue within the framework of the new institutions.” (Ruane and Todd, *Politics* 924)

Only a few months after the agreement was signed, dissident Republicans planted a car bomb in Omagh on the 15th of August 1998, killing 29 people. Although this was one of the bloodiest incidents recorded during the Troubles, (Jackson 393) the peace negotiations survived this terrorist attack. After lengthy debates between the parties, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) replaced the RUC in 2000. (Jackson 416) In 2005, the IRA, under the supervision of the international decommissioning body finally put their weapons down. (Jackson 418)

The agreement effectively enabled both sides to come together and move in the direction of a non-violent solution, which included a prioritization of the moderate positions in certain critical situations and “thus creating the conditions for a sustainable deal.” (Bew J. 20)

The St Andrews Agreement in 2006 marked the final step on the road to accommodation. The DUP signalled that they were prepared to share power and Sinn Féin accepted the police force and the criminal justice system. (Jackson 421) Frank Millar suggests that the most important implication of the St Andrews Agreement was the coalition between the DUP and Sinn Féin. (Bew P. 581)

2.3.4. *Present Day*

In spite of the enormous achievement of the Belfast and St. Andrews agreement “the search for a political settlement continues.” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 148) Both communities are diametrically opposed in their political goals for the country. Each of the communities is in perpetual fear of being weak and losing power against the other. “Each community accepts the need for compromise, but not at any price.” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 149)

In recent times “the dominant, totalizing ideological traditions have been reconstructed and now present themselves as open to dialogue, able to recognize and respect differences,” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 115) a positive development towards peace and reconciliation. However, the cultural division is still clearly visible in cities such as Londonderry and Belfast where the survival of so-called peace walls and murals provide a stark visual reality of these divisions. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 115) A recent survey in 2012 showed that two-thirds of the people living in close proximity to the walls do not wish for them to be removed, (Campbell 349) suggesting that the population remains in need of reassurance. It also suggests that peace and reconciliation are an illusion. For these differences to be set aside and resolved entirely a “wider social and political transformation” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 115) is required.

When visiting cities in Northern Ireland such as Belfast or Londonderry it soon becomes clear that there is still a strong separation between Nationalists and Unionists even today. Culture is one central area where problems between the two communities become visible. Bilingual road signs are one important example, after all language is an essential part of a community’s culture. Nationalist areas often boast bilingual road signs in English as well as in Gaelic to express their connection to the cultural heritage of their community. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 203)

Although impetus exists for reducing inequality in the past years, this has not been achieved fully yet. Some tensions have been resolved but new ones have arisen in consequence of the new challenges each of the communities have been facing in the past years, amplified by the lack of resources within the communities to work together for a common goal. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 203) Globalization has played a role in this dynamic as well. In some cases the interests of “liberal Catholics and liberal Protestants are now closer to each other theologically than they are to conserva-

tives of their own faith.” (Ruane and Todd, *Politics* 927) This development is difficult to handle for ideologically segregated communities. At the same time, it could also be a dynamic that finally leads to a closer engagement between Protestants and Catholics in certain areas and the realization that there is more that connects them than divides them. The weakening of secularism in Ireland supports this development as well. Younger generations have new priorities and cultural goods that they value more than the continuation of conflict. (Ruane and Todd, *Politics* 927)

Bew (P. 575) summarized the difficult situation as follows:

This leaves modern Irish politics in a strange condition, in which the dominant ideologies (nationalism and unionism) are strong in terms of numerical support, but less strong morally and intellectual. Unionism lacks that warm recognition in London it would love to have: nationalism generates more warmth in Dublin, but also, less visibly, a degree of unease. (Bew P. 575)

This observation strongly supports the view that the ideologies, nationalism and unionism, remain dominant in Northern Ireland today. Another central issue is the lack of recognition and support outside of Northern Ireland for their ideology and their goals. One possible conclusion is that the interest in the conflict and its aftermath has decreased and the populations of the Republic of Ireland and England have come to terms with the power-sharing government and the status quo. (Bew P. 575)

Since the signing of the St. Andrews Agreement 10 years ago there have been many instances when violence flared up again, however, none of these have affected the peace process. Both the DUP and Sinn Féin have provided a relatively stable period of government in Northern Ireland, suggesting victory for the power-sharing arrangement. (Ryan 76)

Ryan has concerned himself with the post-Good Friday situation. His analysis makes use of the differentiation between the terms settlement and resolution of conflict, especially relevant for the conflict. (Ryan 72-73)

For our purposes here, conflict resolution means terminating conflict by methods that are analytical and that get to the roots of the problem. Conflict resolution, as opposed to mere management or “settlement”, points to an outcome that, in the view of the parties involved, is a permanent solution to a problem. (Burton 2 qtd. in Ryan 72-73)

Ryan suggests that the situation in Northern Ireland falls into the category of settlement and not a resolution. This assumption is backed by the ongoing paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland and that of so-called spoilers. This term refers to individuals or groups that reject the peace process and continue to spoil the developments.

According to Ryan, these groups are “restricted to the Republican community, and are made up of three main groups: the Real IRA (RIRA), the Continuity IRA and Oglagh na hEireann.” (Ryan 82) In the year 2009, these groups are held responsible for the murdering of two soldiers and one policeman. Several further attempts of murder were averted. At the same time a rejectionist group on the side of the Protestant community has also formed. The Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) is a strong opposition to the Good Friday Agreement as well as the St. Andrews Agreement. It remains unclear how these new groups on each side of the conflict will develop in the near future. (Ryan 82-83)

Ryan further discusses a fascinating approach to the peace process, which deals with the possible negative aspects that are being overlooked. It is important to note that in March 2007 the DUP and Sinn Féin emerged as the two strongest parties. The success of these hard-liners suggests a strong polarization within the communities, a polarization which suggests a settlement and not a resolution. This leads to the conclusion that the extremists have so far benefited from the peace process and power-sharing agreement. (Ryan 77-78)

The population in Northern Ireland remains haunted by the violence, which they and their ancestors have experienced due to the conflict.

It results in militarization, increased ethnocentrism and the sharpening of the boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, more residential segregation, the construction of the “enemy image,” economic and political underdevelopment, and a strong sense of victimhood. (Ryan 73)

When looking at the contemporary situation in Northern Ireland, it is saddening to admit to oneself, that these results described by Ryan above, are clearly visible.

The first examples are the “interface areas” between Catholic and Protestant residential areas. During a sightseeing tour of Belfast, tourists are told that these interface areas are equipped with bulletproof surveillance cameras. This precaution clearly conveys the image that there remains the danger of armed violence between residents of opposing areas.

Secondly, the so-called “Peace Lines” between these areas remain intact even today. Ryan mentions a study of the Community Relations Council 2008, according to which the number of barriers increased from eighteen to eighty-eight between the early 1990’s and 2008. Since 2008; since then no progress has been made in removing

these barriers. One could conclude that inhabitants from both communities prefer to remain separated and avoid each other wherever possible. This trend does not suggest a final reconciliation between the two communities. (Ryan 79-80) "Northern Ireland remains a highly segregated society where, if anything, the 'two communities seem to be drifting further apart' (Albert 351 qtd. in Ryan 91)

According to a 2009 study, "young men stated that the paramilitaries were still active in both communities and that conflict and violence impacted on their lives on most days" (Ryan 80), an observation which is further supported by the fact that approximately 1,500 sectarian incidents were reported to the PSNI between 2008 and 2009. (Ryan 80) Ryan suggests one possible reason for the drifting apart of the communities and the lack of final reconciliation. The term used in this context is that of "contradictory optimism". Ryan here refers to the fact that during the negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement both sides heard opposing narratives. While the Unionists believed that the Agreement would strengthen the link with Britain, the Republicans viewed the agreement as the "first step on the road to a united Ireland." (Ryan 85) Looking at the developments under this assumption makes it clear that on both sides of the conflict strongly opposing futures for Northern Ireland are being envisioned. (Ryan 86-87) These contrasting ideas on both sides of the conflict become clearly visible in two interviews with women involved in the society called "Women Together for Peace" (Sales 196) The first aspect is that once the direct violence and armed conflict was over the need and wish for peace quickly diminished. Once the direct threat had been eliminated there was no more strong motivation to put one's energy into reconciliation. The second important aspect mentioned is that the peace process was frustratingly slow and during this time both sides started envisioning their own views about how things should continue from this point. (Sales 196) The only problem is that "[e]veryone wants their own peace, not anyone else's peace." (Sales 196) It remains open how the future generations will come to terms with a reality that might not resemble the dreams and narratives promised to them.

It is depressing to walk or drive through cities such as Belfast or Londonderry and to see the remaining walls and barricades, which appear to be scars on the face of these cities that, despite the progress, are far from healed.

3. Literary Background

*But the humorous use of language, which is language at its most free,
is worthy of particular care and protection.
If it is lost, all is lost. (Smith 7)*

3.1. The Satirist

3.1.1. Biography

Born in Derry on February 24, 1966, Garbhan Downey attended University College Galway where he studied French and Latin. During his time at university, Downey got involved in student politics. Following his graduation, he became a full-time Student Union deputy-president as well as editor of the college magazine “*Student*”. From this point onwards, politics and journalism played an important role in his life. After several years of writing for various local newspapers, Downey attended the University of Ulster where he completed his masters in Computing in 1991. In due course, he became a freelance journalist. (1)

In 1995, Downey and his wife moved to the United States for several months before returning to Ireland and he worked as a newspaper editor. During this period he helped found the North West edition of the *Irish News* and gained experience as newsreader, reporter and presenter. In 1998, together with the historian Michael McGuinness, Downey contributed “to one of the most sought-after local history books in the North, *Creggan – More than a History*”. In addition to his writing work Downey also hosted a politics programme on Channel 9. (1)

During his time as editor of the *Derry News* the newspaper won two awards for the fastest circulation growth in the UK. In addition to his historical writing and working as a journalist, he started publishing novels with Guildhall Press. They published “The Private Diary of a Suspended MLA, a satire on the peace process.” He followed this publication with several more, each dealing in a humorous way with the post-Troubles period. (1)

3.1.2. Downey as the Satirist

The Troubles have been a source of inspiration for many writers on both sides of the border. “The Troubles gave a special urgency to the literary impulse, and opened up new themes and emotional possibilities for the prospective artist.” (Kennedy-Andrews

7) Kennedy-Andrews mentions “three received forms of Troubles narrative: the Realist thriller, the ‘national romance’ [...] and ‘domestic fiction’” (Kennedy Andrews 8) All of these three forms deal with a realistic depiction of trauma and the circumstances experienced during the Troubles. It is clear that Downey has found a new form of dealing with the “social and political issues of the conflict” (Kennedy-Andrews 7) by employing irony and satire. Through this novel approach, the reader is put in a new position while being confronted with the history and details of violence and its consequences. The dynamic from Downey’s novels comes from the interactive relationship with his readers. “[...] as readers we are not free interpretative agents, but all the time our responses are controlled by the codes and strategies of the text and our own socially constructed subjectivity.” (Kennedy-Andrews 10) To achieve this goal Downey employs a strategy mentioned by Mahony: “Some authors intentionally or unintentionally have fudged the distinction between nonfiction and fiction.” (Mahony 269) Due to this blurring of boundaries, the reader is more susceptible to be led towards a new reading position, without having to question the truth in every written word.

The satirist can take on two possible roles in literature, that of moralist and of a radical. If the satirist is a moralist, his aim is to point out moral flaws and wrongdoings in the hope of persuading the audience to revise their opinions. The satirist can also be seen as a “radical” who disrupts and shakes up society with provocative statements. (Simpson 55)

Overall, satire is almost always motivated by some political ideology. (Griffin 149-150 qtd. in Simpson 55) Garbhan Downey can be categorized as a moralist. His novels do not reflect the idea of radicalism and he neither aims at provoking nor at unsettling his readers. Rather the reader gains the impression that it is his objective to reform “the thought, morals, and manners of his kind” (Priestly 543). Downey’s novels are set in post-Troubles Northern Ireland and there are numerous references to the region’s ensuing cultural problems. However, the light-hearted representation allows the audience to both distance itself from the rigid existing opinions and allows the relief of laughter.

Another vital trait a satirist must have is that of closeness to the topics he or she is dealing with. “Often the satirist is close to the group s/he is deriding.” (Basu101) In the case of Downey’s novels, the author has in depth knowledge of the political and social situations he is describing, having been born in the region and having lived

there for almost his entire life. The insightful impressions gained during his career as a journalist has had a huge influence on his novels. Downey is closely entwined in the subject matter he is dealing with. Firstly, his historical knowledge is extensive, a testimony to him having contributed to one of the major history books dealing with the Troubles. Secondly, his entire career deals with news, journalism and writing where information and stories about people and their lives were a key part of his daily routine. Lastly, his own personal experiences of living in Northern Ireland are a valuable source for his writing. This broad knowledge enables him to notice the essential and then incorporate it into his satirical writing. The humorist is one who is “he is intellectually very acute and perceives that life is incongruous” (Priestley 542) Downey perceptively shows exactly how to present the incongruous of the post-Troubles society from a modern perspective.

For humorous novels to be successful with their audience “the humorous speaker must either share or at least understand the values of [his or] her audience, so as to monitor what [he or] she says in order to prevent slipping off either side of the emotional tight-rope that the comic must walk.” (Veatch 209) Considering the positive reception of Downey’s novels in Ireland, it can be stated that he has achieved this challenging goal.

4. Theories of Humour

4.1. Introduction

“Humor is an inherently mysterious and interesting phenomenon which pervades human life.” (Veatch 161)

Since the early days of satire, there have been several attempts to define and pinpoint its essence; however, “the very term connotes a richness and variety that even defies specific expressive forms.” (Condren 379-380) The word satire itself stems from the Latin word *satura* and can be translated by the term “a mixed bag”. If one should apply the concept of a “mixed bag” to political satire, it can be defined as a bag of mixed message types, which makes use of several types of humorous messages; irony, sarcasm and parody, all mixed together and applied to a text in different varieties. (Holbert 306) Simpson especially emphasizes irony “as the central mechanism in the production of satire.” (Simpson 52) This combination of several messages makes satire a “multilayered mode of humorous communication.” (Simpson 43) It is this multitude of individual aspects and messages, all combined in order to construct a coherent piece of literature, that make satirical writing and analysis, a challenging task. (Simpson 43).

While the definition of satire may be complex, there is a consensus on the historical development. The first instances of satire can be found in Graeco-Roman literature. (Condren 379) (Simpson 49) Today satire inhabits a variety of genres; during Graeco-Roman times however, it was mostly used for poems. (Condren 379) The classical satirists who established the literary genre of satire include Juvenal, Horace, Persius and Aristophanes. Up to this day, satire is divided into subcategories, originally coined by these noteworthy Roman poets, namely “Juvenal (c.60c.130) and Horace (65-8BCE).” (Condren 380) (Simpson 49)

In satirical texts, may these be poems, prose or novels, “prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule.” (Condren 377) In general, “the sorts of vices, such as pride and pomp” (Simpson 54) are picked upon by satirists frequently. This ridicule can be specific and limited to one single person or address a group of varying size (Condren 377), giving satire a broad field in which it can be employed.

The famous philosopher Socrates is said to have recognized the human trait of taking “amusement in the ignorance of other people.” (Dadlez 2)

It is, says Socrates, malice that makes us take pleasure in the misfortunes of others, particularly the misfortune of ignorance as manifested in false and ridiculous beliefs about themselves and the world. So in Plato, the exposure of false beliefs and ignorance (provided these are not taken to constitute a threat to our well-being on account of being possessed by someone who has power over our lives) is a prime source of amusement, albeit a sometimes uncharitable amusement. (Dadlez 9)

According to Socrates it is part of our human nature to find amusement when the mistakes of others around us are revealed. The revelation often takes place through the presentation of reality in a new and unexpected manner and thus leads to a change of perspective for the audience. (Dadlez 10-11)

When looking back on the history and development there are two periods where satire blossomed; the two “golden ages” of satire. (Simpson 49) The first occurred in the Graeco-Roman time where the previously mentioned “Juvenal, Horace, Persius and Aristophanes” (Simpson 49) were famous representatives. The second period was that of the Anglo-Irish satirists such as “Alexander Pope, John Dryden and Jonathan Swift.” (Simpson 49) These periods of thriving satire stemmed from specific “social and political conditions” (Simpson 49). However, it has not been proven that “conditions of uncertainty, repression and upheaval are in fact precisely the factors that engender prolific satirical output.” (Simpson 50)

Simpson emphasizes that satirical texts do not only serve the purpose of mocking, but can also “function as a mode of resistance, or at least as a ‘coping mechanism’ in difficult social circumstances”. (Simpson 85) Humour is something that is shared between people of a certain culture or society and therefore acts as a way to connect. Laughing at the same joke together is not only a communicative practice but also influences the relationship between people. In the case of satire, there is always a target that is under attack, and the audience is united in solidarity against this common enemy. (Simpson 85)

Estévez-Saá mentions, “the emphasis put on memory, stories and storytelling as a medium of handling the past, assuming its legacy and transforming it into a process of reconciliation.” (Estévez-Saá 31) The theme of the Troubles can be found in both works written by Northern Irish writers and in writers from the Republic of Ireland. Although there have been several ceasefires and power-sharing has been established “sectarian animosity still separates nowadays Catholic Nationalists from Protestant Unionists.” (Estévez-Saá 30)

At the same time this collective trauma is one aspect both parties share and that thus, unites them. The Troubles and the resulting peace process have influenced many literary genres. Writing is after all, one way of dealing with trauma. Thus, Irish writers express their feelings through the medium of the written word. Through satire, Garbhan Downey has found his own original way of incorporating the legacy of the Troubles in his novels.

Researchers in this field seem to agree that there is not one theory of humour that can be applied generally and has unlimited validity. Rather several theories exist, each with its advantages and useful perspectives that combined, shed light on this mysterious literary genre. (Veatch 162) Therefore, in the process of laying the theoretical groundwork for a later analysis of Garbhan Downey's novels, several theories will be introduced with the aim of applying these findings. The theories chosen are Horatian vs. Juvenalian satire, genial vs. intellectualized satire, the Semantic Script Theory of Humour by Simpson and the theory of master narratives by Hill.

4.2. The Four Approaches to Analyzing Satire

4.2.1. Horatian and Juvenalian

The first aspect discussed here is the difference between Horatian and Juvenalian satire, two subcategories that differentiate according to the degree of harshness employed. "Poems in the manner of Horace, Juvenal, and Pope; [...] these can safely be called satires." (Phiddian 45)

The difference between these two types of satire is the manner in which it operates. Horatian satire comments on the social and political status quo in a softer manner than its Juvenalian counterpart does. The main difference between the two categories of satire is that the former sets out to destroy the subject of ridicule. The audience is left with no other option than that of dismissing their traditional views and orient themselves towards the alternative representation. This forced decision is brought about by the destruction caused to the original view by the satirist. The latter leads the audience along a new path without barricading the way back to the original ideas and views. It can be described as a softer version of satire and deals more with subtle persuasion rather than brutal force. (Hill 330)

Condren also discusses the difference between these two types of satire, employing the terms persuasive and punitive satire. It is pointed out that in order to persuade the audience the speaker relies on “the exploitation of shared communal expectations and prejudices.” (Condren 382) In the case of persuasive satire, the satirist does not aim at destroying the audience's view. Persuasion is by definition a gentle and friendly way to convince someone of a certain opinion. In the case of punitive satire, the audience is punished for being foolish and believing what is obviously wrong in the eyes of the satirist.

This distinction is essential because it influences the relationship between the audience and satirist. The audience prefers to be persuaded and left the choice of changing their perspective voluntarily, rather than being forced to see the faults in their views. In the case of Downey's novels, the satire employed can be subsumed under the category of Horatian or persuasive satire. The author deals with serious issues in a light manner, to contrast the hard fronts that exist in the dialogue about the Troubles. Downey leads the reader through his lighthearted and sometimes ridiculous world of Northern Ireland without forcing a certain perspective on the reader. Downey sets out with an “optimism regarding humanity's willingness to overcome its deficiencies once made aware of them.” (Highet 237)

4.2.2. Genial and Intellectualized Satire

The second distinction that will be made is between genial and intellectualized satire, a differentiation which depends on the effort required for the humorous message to be decoded. Overall in humorous writing “the modus operandi of satire is the presentation of human folly – it is a message type that attacks by way of ‘amusement and contempt’” (Holbert 310), which can be described as “genial satire”. (Basu 91) Genial satire is the more simple form of satire and concerns itself with “gently mocking the avoidable follies of everyday human life.” (Basu 91) The audience is not required to fill the blanks and think for themselves but is mainly amused by the disdainful representation of ordinary foolishness. (Basu 91)

In addition to “genial satire” there is “intellectualized satire” (Basu 91), which is more concerned with the challenging of social and political conventions. This form compares and contrasts dominant ideologies and expressing contempt towards them. In

this case, the audience plays a more active role and needs to understand the implications that are related by juxtapositions. (Basu 91)

Concerning the comprehension of humour there is a continuum from simple and straightforward to very complex and difficult. It should however not be too difficult to grasp the humorous aspect, or the audience will be left frustrated by missing the actual point. (Veatch 190)

There is, in fact, a widespread view that humor abandons its true purpose when it ceases to punch upward from below, when it ceases to play David to the great Goliath of state or society, and instead punches down, targeting the weak and the down-trodden [...] (Smith 4).

This statement by Smith sums genial and intellectualized satire together by its common trait. It is essential that satirical writing whether genial or intellectualized does punch down. The targets of Downey's attacks are never real victims and he attempts to challenge society and its stereotypes through his satirical attacks.

4.2.3. Semantic Script Theory of Humour

The Semantic Script Theory of Humour by Paul Simpson will be employed for further analysis in this section.

For a text to be humorous Simpson states, two conditions need to be fulfilled. In the first instance, the text needs to "be compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts." (Simpson 30) In addition, these two scripts need to be opposed in some way or another. This "script opposition" as Simpson refers to it, is what makes the text humorous. (Simpson 30)

Simpson defines script as a "chunk of knowledge" (Simpson 31). By chunking it becomes easier to structure our knowledge and the access is more rapid, leading to a faster understanding of a situation or activity. He supplies the "restaurant script" as an example. (Simpson 31) Going to a restaurant involves the intention of eating something. When this script is activated simultaneously, a vast number of associations are triggered. For instance, there will be a waiter or waitress, people in restaurants sit at tables on chairs and after ordering the desired dish and eating the person will settle the bill and leave the restaurant. Depending on the country where it takes place and the time in which the situation unravels the script will differ. These narratives or scripts encompass social and cultural expectations and commitments. (Simpson 31) Simpson differentiates between three types of script oppositions. First, there

is the opposition between an “actual situation” and a “non-actual situation” (Simpson 32). Secondly, a normal and an unexpected situation can be contrasted. Lastly, there is the combination of a plausible and an implausible situation. (Simpson 32) The Semantic Script Theory of Humour has been further modified by Attardo and Raskin and is referred to the General Theory of Verbal Humour. It “is a general and essentialist theory of verbal humour in the sense that it addresses the “what” question” (Attardo and Raskin 330) In this case the what refers to the question: what is humour? Both the General Theory of Verbal Humour and the Semantic Script Theory of Humour address this essential question. The main aspect is that three stages are seen as essential for a text to be humorous. The setup, incongruity (or script opposition) and the resolution. (Simpson 37-38)

The setup phase is needed to prepare the audience for what comes next “by establishing an accessible, neutral context which is congruent with the experience of the receiver of the text.” (Simpson 38) Veatch describes this state as the “normal” state of things. (Veatch 163-164) At this point, the reader is not yet aware what will happen next. The set up portrays the world as the audience expects it to be, and the audience thinks itself safe. This neutral set up phase highlights the contrast when the script opposition is introduced. (Simpson 38) The setup phase comprises the so-called prime. The prime is the “one particular contextual frame” (Simpson 89) that is activated during the setup phase. This frame is the ground on which the audience builds their perceptions.

The setup phase is then followed by the incongruity phase, which builds on the setup- phase and entails the dialectic, positioned after the prime and is considered an “opposing idea or movement, which stands in contrast to something else” (Simpson 89). Simpson also describes the incongruity phase as two scripts that clash. (Simpson 89) This clash is described by Veatch as a state where something is odd or wrong. It could also be seen as “a violation of the emotional system of opinions about the proper order of the social and natural world” (Veatch 168). It is exactly this “simultaneous experience of contrasting thoughts or feelings” (Veatch 166) that makes it possible for humour to occur. “Absurdity and incongruity are often made out to be essential elements of humour.” (Veatch 185) This juxta positioning and contrasting is one central element of the incongruity phase.

It is the *exposure*, the whipping off of masks and concealments, that is startling and unexpected. This is where the incongruity lies. And the startlement and unexpected-

ness are enjoyable or satisfying because they involve a revelation or insight-because, at least in the kinds of cases that interest us here, they represent an epistemic improvement. (Dadlez 13)

It is essential that the “clash or dissonance [...] is enjoyable rather than distressing or confusing” (Dadlez 2) for the audience. Bringing together images in the mind of the reader, which have contrasting ideas successfully is one challenge for the satirist.

The script opposition is then followed by the last phase, the resolution. A human mind naturally seeks to “resolve the conflict” (Simpson 89) and thus becomes active, a mental process of resolving the opposition and dilemma created during the incongruity phase. (Simpson 39)

While the setup phase and the incongruity phase require work and effort from the producer of the text, this description further suggests that the audience is required to be active in the resolution phase. “As incongruity theory suggests, humour can startle us into the adoption of perspectives that can sometimes present new notions of moral salience.” (Dadlez 15) (Simpson 43) Often this new combination of ideas can lead to a change of perspective, which is potentially difficult or unpleasant for the reader to accept. The audience has certain expectations towards their narrator. Sometimes this trust is violated and the expectations are not met. (Miles 50) This can be observed especially in superiority comedy. It builds on the concept that the superior group exclude the ignorant and share “a common pleasure in an attack on those we enjoy seeing ridiculed.” (Miles 45) This is only enjoyable as long as one belongs to that group. Should one identify oneself with the group that is ridiculed and whose weaknesses are pointed out the humour is lost. Therefore, the presentation of incongruity is one crucial part of humorous writing. The line between creating enjoyment or distress is very narrow.

4.2.4. Narrative and Counter-narrative Theory

The last theory presented in this paper is that of the narrative and counter-narrative. This is one possibility of positioning political satire presented by Megan R. Hill. Hill’s underlying assumption is that narratives are an auxiliary device for the audience to construct the world and define their own place therein. These narratives give the audience the possibility to construct their reality by “organizing actions and events into intelligible sequences” (Hill 326). The human brain is more apt to memorize and recognize schemata and scripts rather than isolated items. Sequences that represent

the dominant worldview are further classified as “master narratives”. “[...] [which] provide a template with a set range of moral positions that individual utilize to make sense of themselves, others, and society.” (Hill 327) These narratives encompass scripts or storylines that describe how the world works and are strongly subjected to social and cultural norms. (Hill 326-327)

The definition of master narratives makes it clear immediately that these moral positions are not only influenced by social and cultural norms, but by the dominant political worldview. Master narratives therefore, do not present the audience with an objective choice but rather with a set of rules to adhere to. Its effect is so influential because most of the population is not interested or willing to challenge the dominant view and therefore subjects itself to the already presented opportunity. In the case of politics, this would entail informing oneself in great detail in order to be able to question and challenge certain concepts. One could also assume that the way of least resistance is favored by a large part of society for reasons of simplicity.

However, there is an alternative to accepting the master narrative. Development takes place through questioning the prevalent system and producing an alternative, termed a “counter-narrative” by Hill, which encompasses all narratives that do not accord with the master narrative. There is a broad field of discrepancies, which the counter-narrative can adopt, ranging from minimal deviation to complete opposition. Overall, each counter-narrative has the effect of undermining the current hegemony. Simpson uses the term opposition to describe the process of counter-narratives. (Hill 326, Simpson 31)

It is exactly this blind adherence to an alleged truth, which satirists aim to disrupt and challenge. Hill also adopts this perspective: “It is this set constellation of positions that produces a sense of normality between individuals and social institutions that satirists attempt to disrupt and distort.” (Hill 327) Therefore, satire could be defined as an alternative to the master narrative that is backed by all institutions who benefit from it. (Hill 326-327)

Satire or parody question the status quo, by challenging the dominant opinion by presenting an unconventional or nonconformist opinion instead. Juxtapositions are often employed to present opposing ideas and to present them to the audience. Readers can have “diverse responses to satiric stimuli” (Phiddian 46). This aim of satire is not necessarily to lead to the adoption of the new opinion, but at least it has

made the audience think about the issue critically. As Phiddian states, “[...] satire does need to be construed as purposive, as intentional. To construe a text as satirical is to construe it as making a point.” (49) This intentionality can be found in the wish of the satirist to change the reader’s view of the world, even if it is just by a few inches.

Satire and parody employ humour and laughter. “At its core, satire uses laughter as a weapon to diminish or derogate a subject and evoke toward it attitudes of amusement, disdain, ridicule, or indignation.” (Abrams qtd.in Hill 329) It is not sufficient to make the audience laugh, but rather to provoke a thought process in the minds of the people. Individuals should be led to rethink the dominant stories of their social and political world. Satirists offer the audience a new perspective and new possibility of looking at the world. (Hill 329) It is exactly this observation that makes satire and humorous writing in general so distinct. The audience is extracted from its usual perspective and forced to view the status quo from a new and different one.

This leads to a major challenge for satirists; to combine the aspect of challenging the audience beliefs and attitudes without displeasing the audience too much, a balance, which requires subtleness in the critical representation. Therefore, the satirical content should not be directed against the audience in an aggressive manner. Horatian satire leaves the way back to the original opinion open for the reader without any immediate face loss. (Hill 332)

This conceptualization of narrative by Hill can be related to that of Simpson’s script. (31) Both theories deal with an alternate representation that consequently should lead the reader towards changing his or her perspective. Therefore, these two theories will be analyzed together in the practical part of this paper. According to Simpson (42) the mere differentiation between master narrative/script and counter-narrative/opposition is not sufficient when examining satire in written form. In addition to investigating the relationship between opposing scripts, another dimension needs to be considered. When a counter-narrative is constructed, it leads to incongruity, which is undesirable to the audience. Veatch (168) suggests this leads to “the emotional system of opinions about the proper order of the social and natural world” (Veatch 168) of the audience being disrupted. This disruption should not be too intense; otherwise, the reader is unable to cope with the implications for him/herself. This aspect will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.3. Satire and Morality

"It is evident that humor frequently constitutes a vehicle for moral criticism, and that it may even possess an occasional advantage over more direct forms of such criticism." (Dadlez 15)

In the previous section, it was decided that Downey is considered a satirist who seeks to express moral criticism rather than spreading radical and disruptive ideas. His writing is humorous and makes use of Horatian satire as well as a combination of genial and intellectualized satire to amuse his audience, while at the same time deriding his various targets. In addition, he employs incongruity to challenge the dominant views by presenting counter narratives for the audience. Concerning moral criticism and the presentation of an alternate reality, one might ask what makes satire unique in this respect.

And that means that there is a distance that humor affords and that outrage and indignation lack, something that permits those who are amused to adopt an unexpected and novel perspective on an issue, to see it with new eyes, or in some surprising new way. (Dadlez 13)

It is exactly this observation that makes satire and humorous writing so distinct. The audience is extracted from its usual perspective and forced to view the status quo from a new and different angle. Satire, wit and irony all reflect the human trait of amusement that depends "on the exposure of some previously unconsidered or neglected truth or on the exposure of a moral flaw." (Dadlez 2)

For an incongruity to be humorous, a "subjective moral principle" (Veatch 163) needs to be violated. Subjective moral principle is a term employed by Veatch, and is defined as "a moral principle that the perceiver cares about" (Veatch 167). The fact that the person is emotionally involved and deeply feels that this is the way the world should be makes him or her very committed to this principle. Should this highly valued principle be violated, it could lead to "anger, offense, or fear" (Veatch 167). Writing about the Troubles means dealing with a topic that has a very high emotional involvement for all concerned. As Downey's novels have the population of the Republic of Ireland as well as Northern Ireland as their primary audience, writing about a sensitive topic brings along certain challenges. Society and cultures are held together by sharing a common worldview. One main human activity that connects individuals is "emotionally judging and evaluating things" (Veatch 168). This activity is only successful if the participants share the common prejudices and animosities. Satire profits largely from this human trait, as collectively laughing at someone or something brings

people closer together. One could say that it leads to reassurance that the highly valued emotional principle is shared by your opposite and you do not need to fear any violation of it.

Moral systems however, are something very subjective. The difference between the perception of humour amongst different societies and cultures is not surprising, when people of the same culture already diverge in their approach to humour. In general, it can be stated that satire from a familiar society and culture will be easier to grasp and understand than a foreign one. Everyone has a different taste when it comes to comedy. The vocabulary, terminology as well as ethical and moral dispositions influence the appreciation of individual satirists. (Condren 391-392)

Different cultures have very different moral values and rules within their societies. (Veatch 168-169) There may be certain values and principles that can be challenged, questioned and ridiculed without triggering a strong emotional reaction. These are topics, which gladly lend themselves to be topic of jokes and satire. On the other hand, there are principles that are held so dearly that it is considered impossible to laugh at, under no circumstances at all. (Veatch, 169f) Therefore certain jokes and anecdotes might be considered hilarious in one culture but improper and offensive in another.

The community at which a certain satirical text is aimed at can be differentiated according to two aspects. First is the "local discourse community, a concrete social entity, definable in demographic terms [...] [and] characterized by restriction to physical location".(Simpson 59) The second is the global discourse community which is based on the "likemindedness and political affiliation"(Simpson 59) of the audience. Furthermore, Simpson rightly points out: "A humour community then is an abstract, dynamic system which is susceptible to shift and change across time, and which is comprised of multiple, yet similar, audiences." (Simpson 59) In addition to positioning his work within his audience, the author must also situate it in "its historical context and in the context of other works" (Simpson 63).

In general, it is easier to laugh at the foolishness or unfortunateness of another, than if one is affected or involved. Clearly, one is not able to feel the emotional pain or embarrassment of another person as well as one's own. Therefore, personal experiences or circumstances strongly influence the humour of people. Being able to relate to the violation taking place, makes it harder to laugh at it in a carefree manner. Ve-

atch states that whether something can be laughed at or not, depends on how threatening the violation in the humorous expression is to the individual. (Veatch 173,182) This threat can be defined by temporal proximity or demographic proximity.

Whether an individual feels threatened depends largely on the temporal proximity to the event that connects the person to the violation. In many cases, something embarrassing or stupid is experienced and at the moment it is impossible to laugh at the situation. However, once some time has passed the individual will be able to laugh at himself/herself and see the comic, foolish or ridiculousness of the situation. Thus, the situation no longer feels threatening as a certain emotional distance facilitates laughter. (Veatch 174, 182) Humour can therefore also be seen as an indication that a certain emotional distance has been reached. In the case of Garbhan Downey's novels, this suggests that the Troubles have moved a little into the past and laughter is now possible. Several years ago, the violations in Downey's novels might have been too threatening and disruptive to be considered amusing. Furthermore, laughing leads to relief and can aid in "transforming the experience into a less painful one." (Veatch 182)

The demographic proximity to the events that are being ridiculed play an essential role as well. The population of Belfast or Londonderry will have a very different approach to people living, for instance, in Wales or Austria. In many countries Maguire notes that "'Northern Ireland' and 'The Troubles' have become synonymous". (Maguire 1) This has an element of truth given many students merely hear about Northern Ireland in the context of discussing the Troubles. This presentation has a strong influence on the perception of the country as a whole. Therefore, these people are most likely not as sensitive for the fine-tuned satire and irony that is employed in Downey's novels. In return, this means all those who are 'in the know' become an exclusive group.

It is problematic for bystanders to truly understand the complex dynamic of the Troubles without prior knowledge. Further, there is a difference between knowledge that is acquired through reading about a topic and the emotional knowledge that comes with personal involvement. "These experiences which are commonplace within Northern Ireland will have inevitably nurtured feelings of suspicion and animosity towards representatives of the other ethnoreligious tradition." (Coulter 176) Therefore, many opinions, reactions and feelings are incomprehensible for an outsider.

One aspect that is unique to civil war is that the opponents are often “working and living closely together on a daily basis, where the assassin can have personal knowledge and be a long-time acquaintance of their victim.” (Kalyvas 334, 336, 351 qtd. in Rice 240) thus, adding a dimension to the war that is unfathomable to an outsider. (Rice 240) This suggests that everyone directly involved in the Troubles or related to someone with firsthand experience will have an entirely different perception. Even more so when it comes through the comic or satirical representation of these violent events. Jokes dealing with the violent and tragic events, which took place during the Troubles, may be a possibility for people to deal with the situation, while others might feel repulsed or deem them improper. Some may be appalled, others consider it a relief to be able to laugh about these tragic events and others and yet others might feel indifferent. (Miles 44) These different vantage points however, offer a more broad view into the cultural contexts in relation to comedy. (Miles 44) He specifically notes the importance of laughter and comedy as a “therapeutic way of responding to ‘the Troubles’” (Miles 44). Similarly, Veatch also notes: “Thus humor can be positively transforming, because previously painful or threatening things are seen during their humorous interpretation as normal or unremarkable, thus acceptable, and non-threatening.” (Veatch 183)

When dealing with humorous texts the question whether it is proper, moral and ethical to laugh at certain jokes arises. This underlines the close connection between humour and moral criticism. Dadlez gives an answer to this question: “sometimes the moral reason will be sufficiently weighty to make amusement inappropriate.” (Dadlez 5) Moral judgement and ethical concerns often play a role in the perception of satire, although this is exactly what is excluded and what makes satire and irony unique. While listening to the satirist, the audience is by no means forced to believe what the satirist says to be true or even accept his or her values. There is a certain extent of freedom and individuality when it comes to humour that it rests with the audience whether they laugh or not. (Condren 391) Whether this exposure of moral flaw is successful at creating amusement or not can be predicted to a certain extent by considering the two aspects mentioned above, proximity and personal emotional involvement.

In conclusion, it can be said that several steps towards a final and permanent reconciliation in Northern Ireland have taken place during the past years. Ceasefires have

been declared, ITA decommissioning took place and power-sharing has been set up in the government of Northern Ireland. While violence has been reduced the animosity and problematic relationship between Catholic Nationalists and Protestant Unionists remains. This dichotomy between the repercussions of the Troubles and reconciliation however, remains. It is not surprising that the theme of the Troubles is recurrent in contemporary Irish literature. (Estévez-Saá 30) Under such circumstances, it is an uplifting thought that “humor can startle us into the adoption of perspectives that can sometimes present new notions of moral salience.” (Dadlez 15)

5. Analysis

5.1. The American Envoy

5.1.1. Plot Summary

Guildhall Press first published *The American Envoy* by Garbhan Downey in February 2010. The events of the novel are related to the reader in form of letters exchanged between David, his family and his friends.

David Schumann, a young handsome journalist from Boston with high political ambitions, is exiled to Derry, Northern Ireland as a consequence of his quick tongue. There David finds himself as the new US consul and his only task is to keep a low profile and most importantly to refrain from any kind of investigating. However, David's Irish background and his weakness for playing investigative reporter prove this task to be more challenging than expected.

Tommy "Bowtie" McGinlay, a solicitor and a friend of David's grandfather, sets up a network for the newly arrived consul to play cards every Saturday night. There David is provided with valuable contacts for instance; Montgomery Boyce the Mayor of Mountrose and Edward O'Conway the chief of police headquarters. Ellie, radio anchor-woman and Tommy's stunning niece, joins the card group later on. Tommy, who has become David's "mentor", supplies David with the essential insider information about the city, politics and local gangsters.

Soon David finds himself in the middle of murder, arson, smuggling and drug trafficking, an issue in Northern Ireland as "dissident paramilitaries have moved into drug trafficking" (Miles 51) Supported by his new associates he sets out to investigate the plot. His romantic relationship with Doctor Chris Diaz, the site manager of the Dunsuffrin plant, and a participant in these criminal on goings, complicates matters. Soon David becomes sidetracked by his investigations into the local murder and drug plots, he fails to procure money and work for Derry. When 700 US jobs are given to Belfast rather than to Derry, he becomes public enemy number one.

In order to re-establish himself he arranges a visit from the vice president of the United States, together with a concert of the band Dirty Big Dogs for the opening of an extension to the Dunsuffrin plant which will provide additional jobs for Derry. Although this improves David's public image again, drug trafficking continues to present a seri-

ous problem the situation escalates when a young girl dies from an overdose. On his father's advice, David helps the police to make a substantial seizure of tablets while the pressure is building up. With every day leading up to the big event the situation gets more out of hand.

David's girlfriend Chris decides to pursue her career in the US and starts looking for a new position behind his back. Ellie, Tommy's stunning niece, also gets involved in the investigation and is almost killed by an overdose while meeting an informant. Thankfully, she recovers from her coma without lasting impediments. It turns out that someone from their card table must have leaked the information. David is now under pressure to call off the festival, as the drug dealing would present a threat to public safety. It now becomes necessary for Chris, David's girlfriend and her accomplice Chad to kill David before he can call off the concert as this would lose them too much money.

David is invited to Dunsuffrin plant for a debriefing, which is really a trap and David finds his life in danger. He is trapped in the building, which is set on fire by Chris Diaz and her assistant Chad. In his farewell letter to his father, David gives a detailed account on what happened. The drugs had been produced at the Dunsuffrin plant all along and the seizures at the airport and the ferry station as well as the romance with Chris, site manager at Dunsuffrin pharmaceutical chemical plant, were meant to sidetrack them. Fortunately, David survives the fire and as Chad, chief of security at Dunsuffrin plant, would get off scot free on account of his diplomatic status David fires at Chad in the presence of his friend the police superintendent Edward O'Conway pretending he has seen somebody.

The novel ends with a compromise; Chad must never return to Ireland, Chris is to move to Anchorage to pursue her career and Montgomery Boyle steps down as Mayor of Mountrose and moves to Anchorage as well. Finally, David manages to get an American company to establish their European headquarters in Mountrose. Following her recovery David settles down with Ellie and remains in Ireland.

5.2. Running Mates

5.2.1. Plot Summary

The novel *Running Mates* can be described as the 'love story' of Stan and Lou, the gorgeous and smart heroes of the novel who have known each other since childhood, lost contact, but meet again in Derry. Shortly before their wedding, the couple falls out and separates. During their separation the couple drifts further and further apart as Stan is recruited by the current Taoiseach Rubber John Blake and Harry the Hurler, former chief executive of all the 'Boys' (i.e. anti British paramilitary group) persuades Lou to join the 'Shinners'. This leads to their lives remaining closely entwined, as they become running mates in the presidential election.

Rubber John Blake, the current Taoiseach, wants to ensure that Joxer O'Duffy, the conservative, anti-immigrant hardliner, has no chance of winning the next presidential election. Rubber John's plan is to make Joxer promote Northern-voting rights in the South and at the same time supply them with daft Northerners in order to embarrass them. By coincidence, Sonny Waterhouse, Rubber John's spy, meets Stan, who is in Dublin for his stag party, and persuades him to get involved. However, Stan is not the naïve simple-minded Northerner they are looking for and has his own agenda. He is a first class newspaper journalist and has many contacts back in Derry who, after he has become a senator in the Seanad, put him forward as President at the next election.

Stan fights hard and with conviction to introduce a bill to bring about voting rights for Northerners in the South and eventually also speaking rights in the Assembly. His success exceeds all expectations; "The following morning, the Southern papers were trumpeting him as the new Mandela and lauding the Stan Plan as a vital safeguard against 'Northern oppression'." (RM 168) Stan suddenly becomes the center of attention of the media. Stan's actions are not only honorable. He also assists Harry the Hurler and Tommy McGinlay to free themselves from charges at the Dunavady Inquiry. As Stan gets more deeply involved in the twisted plot of blackmail and conspiracies, Stan and Lou are driven further apart. They both find new partners, these relationships however, are merely temporary.

Their main opponent Joxer tries everything to get rid of Stan and Lou towards the end of the presidential campaign. He is involved in making Stan the prime suspect in

the murders of Barry Magee, the newspaper photographer and freelance blackmailer in Derry, King Size Barkly, the local millionaire and moral low life, and Jim Wynne, political associate of Joxer. The conspiracy against Stan is so strong that even Lou seriously starts to doubt his innocence.

At this point in the novel, Stan has sacrificed everything for his political ideals. He has lost the love of his life, his family and fears being convicted of murders, which he never committed. He is completely isolated from his family and friends, because he wants to protect them. However, he remains hopeful and continues to fight for what he believes to be right, while simultaneously trying to find the real murderer.

Luckily, Sonny Waterhouse, Stan's connection to the Taoiseach, coincidentally meets Eva, a young acting student and prostitute who Stan met during his stag night in Dublin. During this night, Eva was forced by King Size Barkly to take incriminating pictures with Stan, which he later used to blackmail him. Apart from Stan's affiliation with Barkly, "[t]he people of this borough have been ripped off to the tune of three million quid by the IRA and their criminal front man Barkley" (RM 80), thus, making him disliked and despised by most of the population. It turns out Eva killed King Size Barkly because he had blackmailed Stan and forced him to turn his back on his family. Barry Magee in turn, had tried to blackmail Eva and threatened to ruin her acting career, which led to her shooting Barry as well. She also murders Jim Wynne, Joxer's political associate and friend, and ultimately, Joxer himself. The reason why she kills is her mental instability caused by her diabetes. Eva returns into the plot when Sonny Waterhouse begins an affair with her and finds the murder weapon in Eva's flat, thus, solving all three murders just in time before the election.

Once Stan's plan has been successfully implemented, he is finally able to open up towards his family and friends again. He succeeds in protecting the ones dear to him from the threats of blackmail and murder and takes the first step towards reconciliation with Lou. She has finally come to realize that Stan had been trying to protect her and the couple is happily reunited.

As Joxer O'Duffy has been murdered, Stan and Lou remain the only two candidates. They have in the meantime solved the murders, rid the country of evil politicians and reunited. After casting their votes, the couple arranges for a quiet wedding, when the news comes through that Stan has won the election by 2%.

5.3. Once Upon a Time in the North West

5.3.1. Plot Summary

The novel *Once Upon a Time in the North West* can be considered a history of the Troubles, wrapped in a contemporary narrative setting. In comparison to Downey's novels *The American Envoy* and *Running Mates*, the focus in *Once Upon a Time in the North West* is clearly on the retelling of history and not on the main plot, set in contemporary times. Following a brief introduction of the characters, the novel is mainly set in the past as it relays Sèan's memoirs reaching as far back as 1912 up until 1994. Through this medium Downey creates a platform for political dialogue and historical representation.

The US American agent Ally is sent to Derry on the occasion of Seán Madden's death, to investigate whether his death is connected to the shooting which occurred in 1994. Although Seán Madden dies more than ten years after the shooting, his death is considered "possible complications due to 1994 GSW." (OUAT 8) This circumstance makes it essential for Ally to determine whether the shooting was politically motivated to ensure there are no consequences in the present.

Séan Madden was the editor of the Chronicle for his entire life, and the story of Séan Madden's life and his family is influenced by the close ties to his Irish relatives in the United States, particularly US politicians like the Kennedy Family and Tip O'Neal. Over long stretches, the diary entries read like a history book. It turns out that Séan, partly due to his family links and his job as newspaper editor of the Chronicle, had contacts to almost all social, business and political circles of the time, including Republicans, Unionists, Westminster, US Politicians, the Catholic Church and the IRA.

During the Troubles Séan becomes an intermediary for US, British, Irish spies, politicians and businessmen and even the IRA. He is witness of the difficulties of the independence process in Ireland, the political and social changes in the North and particularly in Derry. He is a witness of the Troubles and the peace process and all these experiences together with the fate of his family and friends are reflected in his memoirs. "The suffering which political violence creates has been felt especially by families. The persistence of the troubles has deprived countless people of their loved ones." (Coulter 165)

A few years before his death Séan recorded his memoirs, including all details he collected over the years as newspaper editor. The existence of the recordings are of great concern to all the major players of the past: the British, the Irish and the Americans. They all fear that their actions during these times are recorded and could be used against them in the future. For instance, “the next time that Harry Hurley or some other reformed Provo threatens to throw his toys out of the pram, the Brits would pull out a skeleton from Séan’s drawer.” (OUAT 34) Therefore, Séan’s family seeks to protect these tapes.

During his investigations in Derry, Ally is up against Mo O ‘Sullivan, Séan’s lifelong friend and partner in the newspaper business and Maeve, Séan’s granddaughter. Ultimately, their motives are good, which the reader finds out during the course of the novel. As the story gradually unfolds, Ally is invited to Séan’s mansion to watch a selection of his memoirs under strict supervision in order to conduct his investigation successfully. Ultimately, all parties involved learn to respect each other, and Ally and Maeve fall in love. The reader learns that a cunning plan on the part of Séan underlies the posting of Ally to Derry for precisely this investigation; namely to be reunited with his Irish ancestors and to take over a part of the *Chronicle* as Maeve’s husband.

The novel ends with the successful investigation on Ally’s part and a happy end for him in Ireland with his wife Maeve.

5.4. Literary Analysis

5.4.1. Horatian and Juvenalian Satire

In the novels *The American Envoy*, *Running Mates* and *Once Upon a Time in the North West* there are several instances of both Horatian and Juvenalian satire.

5.4.1.1. Optimism

Overall, the “optimism regarding humanity’s willingness to overcome its deficiencies once made aware of them” (Highet 237) can be found in the general tone that the novel is written in. At the novel’s end, characters that are deserving of punishment, are set out to be ridiculed and destroyed, punishments that are not legal ones, but rather moral. “Five years in Anchorage for you, Chris,” continued Dave, a judge handing down a sentence.” (TAE 175) Chris is sent to Anchorage, the most despicable place for her as she had been longing to go to “get some heat in her bones” (TAE

140). Chad is shot by David and exiled from Ireland forever. Lastly, Monty, the mayor of Mountrose, is forced to step down from his position by David.

The novel *Running Mates* also reflects the optimism mentioned above, although the tone of the novel is harsher than in *The American Envoy*. It can be observed, that the punishments in *Running Mates* are a lot more severe than in *The American Envoy*. This is not surprising when one regards the plot:

King Size Barkly is finally murdered as punishment for his blackmailing of Stan and various other characters. However, the reader knows about his criminal past and does not feel sorry for his death. Everyone in town dislikes Barry Magee, the newspapers photographer. “Which is pretty much why Barry decided to combine his talents and start up a sideline in professional blackmail.” (RM 15) Even after his death, the impact of his actions remain visible. Barry had incriminating pictures of almost everyone in town and was prepared to use them to his advantage. Jim Wynne and Joxer O’Duffy are punished for their illegal actions during their time in politics. The picture painted of these characters is extremely negative: “O’Duffy was the man who said that if every single Northerner was fucked into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean – the only person who’d miss them would be guy who got to drown them.” (RM 142) This dehumanizing stance shows their disregard and makes them despicable for the audience.

In *Running Mates* the ‘bad guys’ are murdered in return for their wrongdoings. As these offenses are a lot more serious than the ones portrayed in *The American Envoy*, Downey also adapts his punishments accordingly. *Running Mates* represents a more drastic, Juvenalian approach, when one considers the outcome for Barkly, Magee, Joxer and Wynne.

In *Once Upon a Time in the North West* Downey presents a much more realistic and dreary view of the Troubles. Seán’s family history is pervaded by tragic instances of loss and disillusionment. However, “[t]he satirical is not a brute, formal fact about texts, but a perception of purpose speaking rhetorically through them.” (Phiddian, 2013: 46) Downey’s purpose is to shed light on the circumstances many families experienced during the Troubles while keeping a balance between the tragic facts and the humorous narrative. Although the novel’s plot is tragic from a sober perspective, a positive feeling prevails for the reader. This is achieved because ultimately, Downey’s characters get what they deserve.

5.4.1.2. Moral Compass

Generally, Downey expresses optimism through David's honest and morally high opinion. He is the only character that is not corrupted during the entire novel, but functions as a moral compass for the reader. In this context it is essential to note that the reader experiences everything during the novel from David's perspective and this leads to an identification with the protagonist. It could be implied that the identification of the audience with the moral, decent David is an expression of the optimism towards his readership. Therefore, it can be inferred that the author expressed his trust in humanity that there are people who will do whatever lies in their power to restore fairness and justice.

In the novel *Running Mates*, Downey uses Stan as the moral compass for the readers. He is portrayed as good-natured and has high moral values. Stan is idealistic and truly believes that he can make a difference; "You've provided leadership through your columns – real leadership – and provided inspiration for people like me to go out and make a change." (RM 68) His efforts and sacrifices throughout the novel are honored and rewarded at the end; Stan and Lou are reunited as a couple and both look towards a successful future in politics.

In contrast to the two novels above, there is no character that functions as a moral compass in *Once Upon a Time in the North West*. Wrongdoings of all people involved are portrayed and the only moral compass is the reader.

The various agencies that have collided in the six counties over recent generations have striven to claim the moral high ground. The British state, Irish republicans and Ulster loyalists alike have struggled to establish the moral authority of their own actions and ambitions and to discredit those of others. (Coulter 149)

As mentioned by Coulter above, exactly this situation is portrayed by Downey in *Once Upon a Time in the North West*. Each entity involved in the conflict has its own way of telling the story of how things were. They all have their own excuses, explanations and justifications. Downey, coming from one side of the conflict, naturally expresses what seems vital to him.

Satirists certainly tend to moralise, but they do not do so from a single, coherent morality that comes pre-installed in the genre. They can be reactionary, progressive, anarchistic, or revolutionary; to call something satirical is to predict very little about its ideological content. (Phiddian 52)

However, Downey succeeds in presenting his narrative without sliding into an ideology too deeply. His Catholic background is known to the reader, but he does not claim

the moral high ground for his characters and what they have done. This constellation leads to the unique position of the reader having to find his or her own moral compass throughout the novel and the numerous instances of morally questionable situations. His characters are neither painted black nor white but rather presented as human beings with a past. One could suggest that he equips the reader with information and thus, the necessary tools to think and make up his or her own mind. A process that is demanding due to the nature of the conflict. This difficulty is addressed towards the end of the novel where Downey writes: “And yes, there was only black and white with Connie – she was too old to worry about shades of grey any more.” (OUAT 241) This attitude, expressed by Connie is questioned by the characters and points towards the danger of not questioning and thinking for oneself. After all satirical writing “[...] seeks wittily to provoke an emotional and intellectual reaction in an audience on a matter of public (or at least inter-subjective) significance.” (Phiddian 44) The responsibility of looking closer and determining the shades of grey between black and white in this novel clearly lies with the reader.

5.4.1.3. Target: Politics

One major target group of Downey’s satirical attacks are politicians; “[...] this man was sharp and wouldn’t need prolonged and undue hand-holding, unlike most of our local politicians” (TAE 9), thereby suggesting that Northern Ireland’s politicians are incapable and useless. They seem to consider politics to be a hobby, and therefore cannot be taken seriously. “The problem with living in the North was that serious people like Stan didn’t do politics. Not as players at least. They realized the futility of it.” (RM 6) “It’s an office for amateurs, not serious politicians. No executive power.” (RM 30) In these quotes, Downey underlines the low importance of politics in Northern Ireland. He makes clear that it is not a lack of interest on the part of the population, but rather a problem stemming from the conditions, which they have no influence on:

The Brits, cynical bastards, had devised the perfect system to cope with the natives: give them all the responsibility and none of the power. So the smart money had all opted out of the process and stood at the sidelines making smart remarks, while the lower orders fucked everything up. (RM 6)

With all due respect to Stan, the president has absolutely no power. Head of Ireland’s armed forces? Fuck’s sake, you’d do more damage as president of the Sisters of Mercy. Most parties select their candidates as a payoff or a retirement present. (RM 191)

Thus, the hopeless situation of the people interested in politics is expressed. In a Juvenalian manner Downey ridicules the characters that express the notion of politics being a medium of change. The characters pretend not to care; however, they do this because they are left with no other option. This criticism of the system is conveyed under this surface of pretended triviality and sarcasm. Downey contrasts this sincere criticism with a more Horatian and light-hearted approach as well: "Politics is a very simple business – it's about making your friends rich. Nothing more, nothing less. It doesn't matter if you're on the right or the left, you're only going to succeed if you put money in people's pockets." (RM 141) This is a stark contrast to the in depth criticism of the quotes above, as here he ridicules and mocks politics in a very general and manner, expressing mainstream criticism.

While the quotes above portray the general opinion of the frustrated and pessimistic characters about the status quo, Downey cannot resist including someone with ideals and the drive to change something. In *Running Mates*, the character of Sonny Waterhouse represents hope and ideals. He is slightly naïve and makes some wrong decisions; however, he does it for the right reasons:

I look around, saw the quality of the arseholes representing me and thought to myself, I can't have that. So I joined the party, spent three terms on the backbenches, and after I got elected last time out, Rubber John asked me if I fancied a special assignment. (RM 141)

Downey shows Sonny's dedication towards making a change for the better. He also succeeds in convincing Stan to participate in his scheme and supports him throughout the novel thus, initiating the Stan Plan.

Further criticism however, is conveyed through several light ironic and satirical remarks instead of destructive and harsh criticism;

Just a word on my address, as above, by the way. It used to be known as Drumbridge Avenue. But then, two local politicians went and opened constituency offices just down from me, so the locals jokingly reamed the street. Then some smart-arse made a formal proposal at Council, and here we are. (TAE 28)

The reader gets a clear understanding of the negative picture Downey wishes to paint of local Irish politicians. His Horatian and genial employment of satire however, leaves the reader amused. In a second step, the audience might start contemplating the truth behind these humorous words.

Downey directly deals with the topic of ridicule in the novel; “And we take no joy in your pain (or at least very little).” (TAE 91) The theme of laughing at the expense of others is discussed in some detail.

It's not that our friend doesn't deserve to be publicly ridiculed: I haven't seen anyone behave so stupidly since one of my clients left his mistress's address on his wife's sat-nav. (TAE 80)

To him, human frailty was a commodity to be exposed and ridiculed. (RM 104)

However, the consensus between the characters is that friends ridiculing each other is acceptable, because they are “entitled to be cruel because we love you.” (TAE 91) This can be compared to the distinction between Horatian and Juvenalian satire. Friends aim at persuading their counterpart to change their actions in a softer manner, while enemies set out to destroy their subject of ridicule.

5.4.1.4. Target: Northerners/Southerners

The second major target of ridicule in Downey's novels are the people of Ireland. Both Northerners and Southerners are ridiculed and exaggerated. Northerners of course, are portrayed as the worst nightmare of any civilized Southerner. “All apart, that is, from the Sunday Irishman, which ran twelve separate opinion pieces on how Dunavady was a Provo backwater populated by inbred Satanists.” (RM 201) This quote demonstrates the dichotomy of civilized and uncivilized. This depiction is especially interesting as it contrasts with the way the dichotomy was used during the past centuries. During this period the Southern population was regarded and portrayed as uncivilized, while the North was industrial and flourishing. Downey switches the positions and thus humorously questions the legitimacy of such remarks. The Sinn Féin party is also depicted negatively: “The soft left were still toying with the idea of putting up another nominee to shaft the dastardly Shinnners.” (RM 201), thus referring to the remaining connection between Sinn Féin and the IRA.

The fact that there remains animosity between the population of the North and the South is expressed directly in further instances: „Bad enough we're stuck living next door to the whinging bastards without having to listen to them day in, day out in our own parliament. “(RM 1) This opinion expressed by Sonny Waterhouse on page one already clearly sets the tone. It is further elaborated as the current Taoiseach responds by suggesting: “But sometimes there's no harm wrapping an oul flag round you and throwing a nod to the North. Keeps the poor saps up there happy – not to

mention out own hardliners.” (RM 1) Through the voice of the Taoiseach Downey expresses the relations between the North and the South, at the same time disregarding the hardliners in the South as well as the idealists in the North seeking support from the Republic.

5.4.2. *Genial and Intellectualized Satire*

Downey’s novels exhibit instances of both “genial and intellectualized” satire; mocking individual characters in their everyday struggles can be classified as “genial” satire, while in depth politically and socially relevant passages can be associated with “intellectualized” satire.

Genial satire can be found in the passage where Downey introduces the reader to the people of Derry who believe the world rotates solely around them. The citizens of Derry do not only think they have everything they require within the city limits or its immediate surroundings, they are absolutely certain of it. While many people might be convinced that their hometown is the best city on earth, the people from Derry take this one step further;

We’re not talking opinion here, either. They don’t *think* Derry is the center of the universe – not in the way that we believe DC to be – they *know* it. Forget whatever Galileo taught you. The world, the solar system and the universe all revolve around them. All life begins, ends and is centered here. Everything else is gauged solely on how it relates to Derry. (14)

In this quote, Downey humorously describes the new level to which the inhabitants of Derry take this. The idea that a small city with approximately 110,000 inhabitants is the centre of the universe seems strange at first. However, there seems to be a history of Irish writers referring to Ireland as the centre of the universe. (Graham 32) Downey adheres to this traditional representation of Ireland as the centre of everything, an ironic means to exaggerate its importance. Reference to this sentence is made in several instances later in the novel to underline the importance of this peculiar conviction. The fact that all citizens in the novel are convinced that Derry is the centre of the universe, influences their views and actions. This constricted view of the characters leads to the plot revolving around Derry and the little town of Mountrose. Furthermore, it emphasizes that not everything should be taken completely seriously. The humorous approach towards the political, social and societal conventions of the past and present lighten the content for the reader.

A second instance of genial satire surfaces when the feelings of hatred and animosity are very strong for the characters in the novel; leading David and his associates to seek revenge for the 700 jobs stolen from Derry. Downey vividly expresses Derry's sentiments; "As soon as our Visitor is wrapped up here, Air Force One will fly directly on to London, pausing only momentarily to empty the toilet traps out over Belfast." (TAE 66) This genial satire contributes to the jovial tone of the novel throughout; issues that would not be possible to be voiced under normal circumstances are expressed thus it enables the audience to laugh at the revenge thoughts harboured by the main characters. This suggested revenge however, does not pose a real threat but functions to vent anger and frustration. Although the novel's characters despise Belfast with a passion, they never suggest or imply any criminal or violent actions to reach their goals. Instead, David deploys non-violent ways to regain the jobs stolen from Derry.

A further instance of genial satire is the mocking of the importance put on the Irish language. During the final part of the presidential election in *Running Mates*, the candidates are asked a question in Irish, which Downey comments as follows:

The first question, as they were in Galway, centred on funding for Irish-language TV – and was asked in Irish. The trio all knew it was coming and read carefully from their notes, while the viewing public at home flicked over to the football on Sky Sports. (RM 264)

Downey contrasts the significance of the Irish language with clear disinterest from the public by suggesting the viewers at home immediately changed channels. In addition, he implies that the candidates were only able to answer in Irish due to their prior preparation and notes. He thus ridicules the significance by proposing that it is a mere 'show' and is not taken seriously.

The representation of Harry the Hurler and his 'boys' is often very sarcastic and humorous, although Downey is dealing with former criminals. "He was afraid the Boys were going to blow the selection process – make it too democratic." (RM 186) This is how Harry the Hurler argues his nomination of Lou as the 'Shinners' presidential candidate. The humorous element lies in the juxta positioning of an election, which is democratic per se, with the term 'too democratic', thus, questioning the value of democracy in his party. "I took her down to a meeting of, how can I put this, our, ah, officer board." (RM 205) Downey further extends this representation of the Sinn Féin party in the quote above, implying that the officer board of the party consists of the

former 'hard boys'. A jest directed at the Sinn Féin party due to their alleged close connection to the IRA.

America and its politicians are also not spared from Downey genial attacks. "That's a degree certificate from Harvard on the wall behind you, if you can read those big Latin words. Yeah, but didn't they give one of those to George W Bush as well?" (OUAT 13) In this exchange Mo and Maeve are engaging in a friendly battle of wits, and Mo suggests that a degree in Harvard cannot be worth anything as after all George W. Bush has one as well, thus, building on the general assumption that Bush is considered intellectually challenged. Through these witty exchanges throughout the novel, Downey brightens the tone of the novel overall.

In order to understand the irony and satire in Downey's novels it is essential that the reader has a certain background knowledge about politics. An awareness of the political landscape in Northern Ireland is prerequisite in order to be able to understand the allusions that are made. "Many of the political points, stances, and perspectives offered by political satirists are implied, requiring audience members to fill in the blanks to generate meaning from the messages." (Holbert 313)

For instance in the following passage the reader is required to fill the blanks and think about the content that is conveyed. "Derry is Ireland's oldest Christian settlement, so you've stuff dating back 1,400 years, maybe more. (And here on the left, we have Dick Cheney's first cave drawing...)" (TAE 24) The reader needs to make certain connections to understand the humorous element. In this case, the former American politician Dick Cheney is referred to being as old as the cave drawings on the walls of Derry. To be able to understand these allusions it is important to know who Dick Cheney is and to be aware of the jokes that were made during and after the Bush election victories. He was often ridiculed for being old and, therefore, the allusion to the cave paintings can be explained.

Further along in the novel, when David becomes public enemy no. 1, the newspapers print the headline: "Governor Lundy Schumann" (TAE 57) This headline is accompanied by "(Lundy is their Benedict Arnold)". This witty remark only makes sense to a

reader who knows of Benedict Arnold duplicitous treacherous role in the American Revolution¹.

In *Running Mates*, the protagonist Stan says: “At least Haughey sent up guns, retorted Stan, anxious to break the ice again.” (RM 92), referring to the former Taoiseach Charles Haughey. Readers not familiar with Irish history would not be able to grasp the full meaning of this remark.

A further reference is made to the novel, *Shadow of a Gunman* by Sean O’Casey. “The South has had its fill of *Shadow of a Gunman* politics.” (RM 143) This remark can only be understood when familiar with the novel and its content. It can be said that the novel honors violence and destruction, and therefore represents the violent past, which is no longer of any interest to the population. Downey expresses the sentiments of the people who wish for the new political order to desist from the former practices and look towards a peaceful future.

Another instance of intellectualized satire, which is rather shocking, is the following: “You lot think anyone born north of Monaghan should get numbers tattooed on their arms...” (RM 26) It is a clear reference to the practice during Hitler’s reign in Nazi Germany, where Jews and other unwanted people were dehumanized and received numbers tattooed on their arms. This is quite possibly the most extreme remark found in any of Downey’s novels and clearly expresses, although exaggerated, the strong hatred and animosity felt by some people even today.

This hatred is further emphasized through the depiction: “At least in Alabama, they wear white hoods and robes so you can pick them out easier.” (OUAT 192) The statement is presented in a humorous context and thus, it is suggested that Loyalists/Unionists are racist to such an extent that a comparison to the members of the Ku Klux Klan seems adequate. The connection can only be made if the reader has the right connotation to white hoods and robes. This is another instance where Downey adds depth to his ironic statements that can be explored by the reader.

Overall it can be said, that without the necessary background knowledge, the humorous elements in all the above instances would be lost. At the same time the reader

¹ The historical figure Benedict Arnold is considered the archetype of a traitor.

feels content once the connection is made and the intellectual element of the passage is understood, this combination of genial satire and intellectualized satire leads to a well-balanced experience for the reader of Garbhan Downey's novels.

5.4.3. Semantic Script Theory of Humour – Master Narrative vs. Counter-narrative

5.4.3.1. Political Presentation

Politics provide a central theme in Downey's novels. Therefore, not only the present plays an important role but also there are numerous references to the political matters of the past. Throughout the novel, there is merely one instance when Derry is called Londonderry, namely, when David's father writes to his son.

The choice of name has a political dimension to it. Recent political developments have shown that the issue of the city's name has obviously not yet been settled. In 2010 in accordance with Sinn Féin, the SDLP proposed again to change the name of the city. This proposal was rejected with 9,000 votes against the change and merely 3,000 in favour. (2)

During the Troubles, the name of the city became a political issue and the choice of name led to an immediate association to either the Unionists or Republicans. Although the official name of the city remains Londonderry, nowadays many people refer to it as Derry. The reason for this can be seen either as a political statement towards the Nationalists or merely as an abbreviation of the longer name Londonderry².

In *Once Upon a Time in the North West* Downey employs the novel as a platform to retell Irish history from 1912 up until 1994 in the form of the adventurous memoirs of Seán Madden and his family. Downey takes the opportunity to point towards issues that are worth mentioning in his opinion and thus, creates a narrative of his own.

The reader finds out very early that Seán's "[...] father, Johnny [was] a prominent anti-Treaty campaigner and [...] had been killed in a contentious road accident along the 'Provisional Broder'." (OUAT 21) Through this information, the readers know

² As the city is referred to as Derry throughout the novel, this name has been chosen for the course of the novel's analysis.

where to position Seán and his family within the political spectrum. “He railed consistently against gerrymandering, vote rigging and the failures of the Unionists. He cut lumps out of the Nationalist Party for their appeasement and cowardice.” (OUAT 23) Therefore showing that they did not support all actions of the Nationalists.

During the early years of the conflict, Seán’s father “[...] set up the first ‘Six-County Support Network’ in Boston, which would fund civil rights groups in Derry and, later, political campaigns across the North.” (OUAT 23) Unfortunately, although many people became active and tried to bring about change “[...] the Unionists simply redrew the boundaries in the city to gerrymander a safe new majority for themselves, and MacNeill scurried back South.” (OUAT 68) Through the narrative presented over several chapters, the reader delves into the frustration and hopelessness many experienced during these times.

Downey projects these emotions onto certain characters and thus lets the reader experience the issues through the character’s eyes. This allows the reader to decide how much credibility to give to each character and how much of this narrative to accept. After all, the entire narrative builds on the memories of one person and these “[...] are not objects or artefacts that can be filed away or conveniently accessed at will, nor are they literal records of experiences.” (Brewster 279) These memories do not represent true historical facts in their entirety but can be seen as “interpretations of experiences and they preserve what is relevant to the individual at the time of particular experiences [...]” (Conway 150) Thus, Seán’s memoirs reflect his interpretations and what seems relevant to be retold.

To keep the balance Downey incorporates the position of Protestants through the Cunningham family, who run the opposing Protestant newspaper in Derry.

This, I am happy to say, wasn’t the position of ordinary, decent Protestants in the city – people like Alfie Cunningham – but rather spoke to a particular hidden section of the political class, who would later become known as ‘the faceless men’. (OUAT 132)

Thus, showing that there is not a blind sectarian hatred and animosity. These two families present the solidarity between the people of Derry, showing an alternative to the rigid and intolerant perceptions around.

This narrative presented by Downey enables “[...] rich and correct interpretations (plural) [...]” (Phiddian 46) There is not one interpretation that should be reached by the reader, but rather multiple possible interpretations that may vary from one reader

to the next. It is clear that the message a satirist wishes to convey “[...] so often reflects their own pre-existing opinion, sometimes despite a more obvious construction of meaning being available to a more dispassionate or differently opinionated viewer [...]” (Phiddian 49) This is apparent when one considers Downey’s own political background. However, it is up to the reader to interpret the narrative and come to his or her own conclusion.

5.4.3.2. North-South Division

On the first page of the novel *Running Mates* Downey broaches the topic of a unification between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The idea is presented as “an academic debate, at strongest, in the South for almost a century.” (RM 1) The main political parties in the novel support this opinion, apart from one; Joxer O’Duffy. He is the leader of the Committee of Eight “And their aim was simple – to bring down the government and get the Celtic Tiger back up on all four paws.” (RM 23) In addition, Joxer represents the far right and has extreme opinions, which he discusses openly.

O’Duffy was the man who said that if every single Northerner was fucked into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean – the only person who’d miss them would be guy who got to drown them.” “[...] and what’s more worrying again is that the day after Joxer said that, an Irish Star poll showed that ninety-two per cent of the public in the Free State agree with him. (RM 142)

Downey not only openly presents this opinion but goes even further by suggesting that 92% of the population actually agree with such an extreme position. Through this Downey creates two possible interpretations for the reader. The first is that Joxer’s opinion represents actual reality in Ireland; the second is that Downey over-exaggerates. In both cases, such an extreme statement leads the reader to delve into the issue.

The far right is not the only political entity whose opinion about a united Ireland is presented. Fine Gael is shown to oppose the idea of reaching out towards the North.

He didn’t betray us outright, in the way that Fine Gaelers do when they claim that all the problems in the North are of our own making. They intellectualize their moral cowardice and inaction by convincing themselves that the Northern Irish are a race apart. (OUAT 142)

Further, they are represented as intellectuals who are too distanced from the subject at hand to be of any use to Seán and his family.

“As ‘the Republican Party’, Fianna Fáil always liked to talk the talk – though up until now no one had seriously expected them to walk the walk.” (RM 24) Considering that Fianna Fáil is the Republican Party in Ireland, it is surprising that they do not openly advocate a reunification. The weariness of the population with the political parties is further expressed through the fact that Sinn Féin is gaining support. “We’re leaking republican votes to Sinn Féin every day. They’re the only party operating both sides of the border, and we have to show there’s an alternative.” (RM 3) Therefore again emphasizing the importance of working together and having politics with inclusion as their goal instead of exclusion.

Another central theme in Downey’s novels is the border. As Downey puts it in *Once Upon a Time in the North West*: “Smuggling is not a crime – the only crime in Ireland is the border!” (OUAT 22) He deals with the theme of the border throughout all of his novels from a different angle. In *The American Envoy*, the border plays a rather minor role. He makes the border a subject of discussion because it allows the criminals to “slip across” and evade the police and their just punishments. In the novel *Running Mates*, it has a prominent position as it functions as Stan’s protection from the Northern Irish investigations and judicial power. In this case, it is one of the “good guys” who profit from the border and the existence of two countries.

Furthermore, the political consequences of the border are elaborated on in the novel as well. The situation of only one political party working on both sides of the border, leads to the loss of votes for many other parties in the novel. A common party to represent both the Republic of Ireland as well as Northern Ireland would be one big step towards bridging the differences. Downey shows that the interests of the people on both sides of the border are not that alien, therefore indirectly suggesting that a border might not even be necessary if the same political party rules both countries.

In *Once Upon a Time in the North West* Downey introduces a new aspect entirely. In the novel the border and all issue connected are presented from the viewpoint of the publishing houses and newspapers. One could suggest this to be a way of creating some distance to the issue, by containing the theme within this restricted area of life. Downey starts out by explaining to the reader that the border did not only exist physically between the two countries, but also in the minds of the population living in Derry. “There was no rivalry for sales: one paper was for Catholic clients, the other for Protestants.” (OUAT 41) Newspapers are meant to open up the eyes of the popula-

tion towards what is going on in the world, the reader should be informed and his or her knowledge enriched after having read it. Through this depiction an image of people physically living door to door in some cases being pulled apart ideologically and mentally through the selective exposure to different newspapers is conjured in the readers mind. A very powerful image that conveys the complete alienation and animosity between these two parts of the population in Northern Ireland at the time.

Downey contrasts this strong image with a humorous and satirical representation of the same issue. Downey shows the ridiculous consequences the border has as well. Although “the natives hated the mostly invisible border with a passion, but they played it for every advantage.” (OUAT 49) This portrays how the people create an advantage and a gain for themselves, at the same time questioning whether such abuse should not be prevented.

The difficulties between the two countries is further portrayed during the presidential election when Stan is arrested in Derry under suspicion of having murdered three people. “So by Audrey putting the squeeze on him, she’s implying that the South were in some way involved in the shootings.” (RM 167) This implication has far-reaching consequences, as the relationship between the countries is already strained. This circumstance aids Stan and his acquaintances to get him freed. His lawyer Tommy ensure that “[w]ithin an hour, the entire country had heard how the British state was trying to stop the senator from introducing his bill.” (RM 165) Through the problematic relationship between Britain and the Republic is portrayed. The characters exploit this situation and represent Stan’s arrest as a “draconian interference’ in Southern governmental affairs, and called the Northern Secretary direct to demand Stan’s release.” (RM 166) This tactical move leads to Stan’s immediate release and shows how simple it is to exploit the tense situation. Using the Anglo-Irish Secretariat is justified as follows. „First – they wanted to hit the Brits a good Stay-Out-Of-Our-Fucking-Business slap. And second, I think it’s now pretty apparent who Stan had been talking to – and is refusing to give up.” (RM 167) In this context, Downey brings up the British dimension so directly to ensure that every reader is able to comprehend the underlying implications. There is a component of malicious glee in the above quote that reflects the satisfaction of a small victory over the empire, which the audience can relate to.

5.4.3.3. References to the Troubles

In the novel, several often-satirical direct and indirect allusions to the Troubles can be found. The author does not tell the reader when exactly these events take place. However, inferences can be made from the electronical devices found in everyday use. The following three facts lead the reader to believe that the novel is set in the early 21st century. Firstly, each character owns a mobile phone with a camera function. Secondly, the spying devices used in the novel match current day state of the art. Thirdly, it is mentioned that “[...] since the Troubles stopped fifteen years ago, it’s one of the safest cities in Europe” (TAE 13). Taking into account that the Anglo Irish Agreement was signed in 1985 and that the IRA declared the official end of armed hostilities in the year 1994 and again in 2005, the novel cannot be set in a much earlier than the beginning of the 21st century.

The sentence quoted from the novel above is taken from the reassurance speech of Joe Biden, the Vice President of the United States. Feeling partly responsible for David’s posting to Northern Ireland Biden wants to reassure David and the reader that Derry is “one of the safest cities in Europe” (TAE 13).

One could assume that reassurance, from the Vice President of the United States provides ultimate authority. However, Downey questions and invalidates this authority by presenting Joe Biden as an opportunist politician who merely emphasizes his Irish ancestry during the election time and has never been to Ireland himself.

The reader gets to know Northern Ireland and especially Derry as an idyllic and idealized place where the Troubles are a thing of the past, and play no immediate role in the present. “But Derry, typically, had resolved its marching issues shortly after that, long before the rest of the prehistoric North.” (OUAT 137) This suggests that Derry is a city that is ahead of the rest of the North when it comes to resolution strategies. This is further emphasized in the following quote, “But like virtually everyone I’ve met here, he’s totally focused on the future – there’s no reheating old ashes. The war is over, even if the British still like to pretend it was nothing but a criminal insurgency against their honest rule.” (TAE 24) Readers can draw several fascinating conclusions from this quote.

Firstly, the people of Derry are described as looking towards a peaceful future and have absolutely no interest in continuing the conflict and the past no longer has an impact. Citizens wish to live together peacefully or at least this impression is evoked

at the beginning of the novel. However, later events lead the readers to question this attitude. Secondly, the word war is used to describe 'The Troubles', a much stronger term than the euphemistically chosen term 'Troubles'.

As the usage of war sharply contrasts with "insurgency", normally used to describe the British attitude towards the Troubles, to downplay armed clashes with the IRA. In addition, Britain's 'honest rule' is directly questioned, as is the author's critique of the RUCs campaign of blackmail and intimidation;

The quickest way, however, to own a man, and one which we have learned much about over the last fifty years, is blackmail. It's now the favoured weapon of police forces across the world, though I like to think our own Northern Irish constabulary set a very high bar when it came to using extortion to 'keep the peace'. (TAE 82)

It implies that under the cover of establishing peace they exercised their police powers in criminal ways, a criticism nonetheless expressed in a very light-hearted and satirical manner. However, extortion was not their only questionable tactic.

Tommy was explaining to me that it was a favourite police tactic during the Troubles here: plant the seeds of doubt and make everyone suspect the other guy is an informer. Keeps them honest. I'm glad to see that some of the old methods can be so successfully applied in these non-paramilitary times. But it's also good that you no longer have the power to whack people you suspect of doing you harm, even if you catch them in the act of committing blatant crimes – as you did up to about ten years ago. (TAE 52)

The author details additional conniving method used by the police during the Troubles, namely that of planting the seeds of doubt. These tactics described in the novel undermine the authority and professionalism of the police forces during the Troubles. In the novel *Running Mates*, Harry the Hurler suggests: "But can I also say I think it's a bit rich for a former member of the RUC to be handing me out lessons in morality." (RM 205) A point that Audrey, concedes to and indirectly admits to the prior wrongdoings of the RUC during the 'Troubles'.

Lastly, he alludes to the arbitrary police violence during the Troubles. By stating that in current times, the police no longer have the right to whack people that are suspected of criminal actions without any evidence, he implies that this was a standard practice during the past. The grave misconduct, which is alluded to in the quote, is expressed in a comical manner. The lack of control over the police forces during the Troubles is brought up and strongly criticized at his point.

His allusion to the Belfast based administration provides reference to the nature of Irish and English relations.

Belfast is home to the new Stormont Administration, set up to try to run this little bastard 'country' after forty, eighty or even 800 years of war – depending on what size grudge you carry. (TAE 15)

This quote shows a slight contradiction towards the statement concerning the fact that people are focused on the future. By stating that it depends on the size of grudge you carry, this implies that people are in fact holding a grudge. "Holding a grudge" also seems a rather light term to refer to the years of frustration, hatred, violence and animosity that had existed between the parties involved. This is another instance where Downey gives extra weight to decades or centuries of unprecedented violence by downplaying these feelings, making them look smaller, almost as if they are not worth mentioning, thus downplaying the gravity of the topic with humour.

The fact that some people are doing more than merely holding a grudge can be seen in the following quotes.

The PSNI and Special Branch have given our consulate their total guarantee that there was no involvement from traditional republicans – pro Sinn Féin IRA personnel, whether past, present, retired or freelance. It is vital that this message goes out both in Britain and in the wider world, for the sake of political – and hence economic – stability. (TAE 96)

"[...] there was no official republican sanction for this shooting – even at the lowest level. Not so much as a wink." (TAE 96)

"[...] that dissidents may have carried out the murder to embarrass Sinn Féin. These dissidents are particularly keen to garner support in hard-line republican areas where there is some discontent at high crime levels and the perceived failure of the IRA to intervene." (TAE 96)

At this point, the suspected drug dealer, who is held responsible for the death of a young girl, has been shot and found dead within Derry's city limits. The quotes are taken from the official statement of police superintendent Ed O'Conway, which underlines the authorities' fear of IRA involvement. The first quote refers to IRA personnel, whether past, present, retired or freelance, implying that there are presently active members of the IRA who could be affiliated with this crime. It is also especially important for everyone involved to stress that the IRA is not involved in the murder at all.

Furthermore, there is juxtaposition in this quote that makes it satirical, IRA membership being tied to the concept of employment. It is amusing to consider the membership of a terrorist organization comparable to a form of freelance employment, a juxtaposition that serves to lighten the mood on the grave topic of currently active IRA members.

The second quote denies any republican sanctioning of the shooting, which throws up the question whether there still are shootings or criminal acts that are enforced by the IRA and its members. If so, this would be an opposition to the attitude presented at the beginning of the novel.

This assumption is further encouraged by a later reference to members of the paramilitary forces that remain active to this day; “He also disclosed that Mr Cotton has dealings with some very hard boys in Dunavady – guys not quite ready to give up their fight for Irish freedom and who had retained some of their hardware.” (TAE 48) In this quote, Irish freedom is obviously still very much an issue for certain hard boys living in Ireland. A further indication of this is the statement: “Flattery threats and guilt, all in the one sentence. This guy was a natural. He should be recruiting for the IRA.” (RM 30), which suggests that currently IRA recruiting is still taking place.

This ‘fight’ does not appear to be harmless, since, they “had retained some of their hardware”, indicating that, while the surface of Derry and Northern Ireland seems to be peaceful, there are still remaining violent undercurrents.

These undercurrents are represented in both *The American Envoy* and *Running Mates* through the character of Harry the Hurler, “[...] the retired chief executive of all the Boys in Derry had adapted well to the end of the cold order.” (RM 10) While Harry tries to distance himself from his violent history, he remains active in criminal actions such as smuggling, drug dealing and other minor offences. The impression of Harry is deliberately held vague through the usage of euphemisms such as “old boys, hard boys” and many more. However, in the novel *Once Upon a Time in the North West* Downey names him for what he actually was; an IRA leader. (OUAT 281)

Harry’s loyalist counterpart is introduced in the novel *Running Mates* through “Gigi’s father, Switchblade Vic, [who] got to hear about every fly that broke a wing in loyalist Ulster.” (RM 178) Switchblade Vic is characterized mainly through comparison to Harry, a character well known to the reader: “Harry the Hurler in red, white and blue stripes” (RM 159) Although these two characters present the most extremely opposed positions in the dynamic of conflict, Downey does not present them as competitors or opponents. He rather chooses to emphasize the idea of reconciliation by letting “[...] the North’s most senior loyalist hardman – [come] out and [give the Stan Plan] his backing in the *Irish Times*.” (RM 162) This action contributes vastly to the

victory of Stan's aspirations and clearly shows that a common goal can only be reached when both sides contribute together.

In order to support his new position after the war, Harry would, equally quietly, give the odd nod to Audrey as to where the anti-truce brigade were stashing their blowpipes." (RM 125) Although he does his best to adapt, he and especially his younger brother Jimmy are not able to shake off their past completely. Proof of the long lasting consequences of having been involved during the 'Troubles' are presented to the reader through Jimmy. "The trouble was, Jimmy had spent one too many years in jail, along with the memory of what he'd done in the war." (RM 11) Downey shows how the actions of the past still influence the present day for many people through Jimmy's story. The reader learns that Jimmy is responsible for the death of an eight-year-old girl, a crime that haunts Jimmy up to the present day. It is noteworthy how Downey emphasizes the responsibility for this action on Jimmy's part. Instead of brushing it off as one necessary casualty and sacrifice for the greater good of the war, Jimmy personally takes responsibility. "[...] and we – or, I should say, I – sent a mortar right through her bedroom window." (RM 113-114) Jimmy's past has the consequence that he is mentally instable, unable to cope with the peaceful times and often needs reminding that "The war's over [...]. Time to make a new start." (RM 114) Downey here speaks to everyone haunted by the ghost of the past.

Apart from these criminal dissidents, the reader also learns that the now "good ones" have not always been "good" at all in the past. The solicitor Tommy (Bowtie) McGinlay is portrayed as a slightly corrupt but likeable man. Later on, the reader finds out that Tommy has been closely linked with paramilitary violence during the Troubles. "Tommy, as his own niece disclosed, used to serve as an 'honest observer' at in-house paramilitary trials during the bad old days here. (Though less sympathetic individuals have claimed his role was more that of a judge.)" (TAE 154) This is the first instance where one of the major characters has a direct connection with the Troubles. Up to this point, they are depicted in an abstract past with which criminals are affiliated with, a statement not elaborated or justified. However, it soon becomes clear that the jovial and helpful solicitor and loving uncle of Ellie McGinlay has a criminal and violent past. Normally such an allegation would ensure condemnation from the reader and ultimately lead to his deserved punishment. Although Tommy has a despicable past, he is not punished, but is amongst the well-established citizens.

The case mentioned above is an example where the author questions the “master narrative”. The dominant view that criminal actions should be punished and the person needs to take the full responsibility for his actions this aspect is completely ignored. Thus, the reader receives the information about Tommy’s past but the topic is not pursued any further, instead a counter-narrative is presented, which questions the condemnation of actions that occurred during the Troubles. The fact that Tommy is not punished or shows any remorse towards his actions lets the reader conclude that the actions of the past should not be condemned. Although Tommy has a criminal past in one respect this does not deter him from being a loving uncle and well-respected citizen. It might not be a coincidence that this character features in almost every Downey novel. This representation deviates from the “master narrative” and provides the reader with an alternative interpretation. Overall, the reader gains the impression that there is clearly a network of criminal paramilitary action still going on in the underground, which is juxtaposed with the idyllic and picturesque city of Derry.

5.4.3.4. Lou/Stan Controversy

In the novel *Running Mates*, the reader gets a much more detailed impression of Downey’s political opinions than in for instance, *The American Envoy*. The protagonists in *Running Mates*, Stan and Lou, are involved in the presidential election during the novel and Downey thus, sets the scene for his political representations.

One method Downey employs is the juxta-positioning of the two central characters in the novel. It is noteworthy how Downey succeeds in ridiculing and condemning the violent history of certain characters, while still making them likeable for the readers. It is a fascinating example of a counter-narrative that is spun so skillfully it is hard to grasp. This can be best demonstrated by comparing the representation of the two protagonists Lou and Stan. Lou is introduced by Downey in an almost idealized manner.

No socks, no makeup, and no frills – and yet if you’d taken her into the restaurant downstairs, she’d have turned every head in the place. Maybe it was the sleek coal-black hair, currently tied up in a bundle to reveal her long, slender neck. (RM 12)

This characterization reflects the fact that there is a romantic relationship between Lou and Stan. Their relationship builds on a common history in the Bogside. Although Lou is described as stunningly beautiful, she is unbelievably witty and has a sharp tongue. “If there’s one thing that Fianna Fáilers are more scared of than an IRA gun-

man with tattoos on his knuckles, it's a smartarse IRA intellectual with a postgraduate degree. No offence, Miss." (RM 52) However, not only Fianna Fáilers but rather none of the characters, not even the former criminal Harry the 'Hurler' would dare to engage in a discussion with her. "Personally, Stan put it down to the natural confidence that exudes from a beautiful woman who'd think nothing of banging you into a twelve-by-eight cell for twenty years." (RM 12) Nussbaum mentions that in literature women usually have stereotypical roles. The beautiful positive female character is often contrasted to the ugly and negative. In addition, women are often portrayed as soft and weak in comparison to male characters. However, in satire Nussbaum sees an alternate possibility, namely "a real woman, flawed, wrinkled, but perhaps witty and wise". (Nussbaum 160) This statement ideally describes the main female characters in Garbhan Downey's novels. A further example is the depiction of Maeve in *Once Upon a Time in the North West*: "She was wearing a white T-shirt, blue jeans, pink canvas sneakers and not a drop of make-up. But every head in room turned. And for a second it was like time stopped." (OUAT 290) The beauty of Maeve is again contrasted with her character because " [...] underneath the sweet façade, she had a shell of steel and a mouth on her like a wounded cage-fighter." (OUAT 11) This is a parallel to Lou's depiction in *Running Mates*.

Lou is respected as a judge and held in high esteem by everyone. This is surprising, as Lou's past is not untainted by crimes. Firstly, it is hinted that she worked together closely with Harry the 'Hurler' during his active times, which is reflected Audrey chief inspector " 'And of course, she has personal experience of how things operate at the sharp end,' said Audrey coldly." (RM 205) Although Lou and Audrey often pursue different outcomes, they remain friends throughout the novel despite their differences.

Lou's dark history is elaborated on when Downey clearly implies that her involvement with the 'hard boys' and Harry the 'Hurler' went a lot further. "And no, if we're to be honest, it wasn't the first private tribunal Lou had chaired for Harry. Nor would it be the last. And not all of them were for libel either." (RM 21) Audrey further consolidates this implication in the novel: "[...] Belfast High Court isn't the only place she's been sitting in judgement. Word about my patch is that you and your friends used to draft her in to chair your own private tribunals when things got tricky...." (RM 205) Harry and Lou remain close associates, although Lou cannot help him as much in her cur-

rent position as high court judge. There are several instances where her loyalty to Harry and his boys remains visible and she finds a way to support him.

'The Boys,' continued Stan, 'are very impressed with how Louise has performed over the past month or so. Mightily impressed even. She speaks well, fears no one, looks damn good and, best of all, she's got the sharpest legal mind of her generation. So, Boys being Boys, they've got plans for her.' (RM 181)

Lou is never condemned for her morally improper actions and the details of Lou's involvement in criminal and illegal issues are left to the reader's imagination. Overall, it is clear that Lou is not an entirely innocent or neutral character in the novel. This is further supported by her candidature for Sinn Féin and Harry's comment: "But you're a Shinner, now," declared Harry in mock protest. 'What's a couple of dead bodies you can't explain?'" (RM 156) This quote illustrates the ambiguous impressions the reader gains about Lou.

In contrast, Stan is portrayed far more soft and easy-going than Lou is. Downey clearly states that Stan was never involved in any criminal activities during the past and also condemned such actions sharply. "Besides, Stanley is very straight-laced back in the old days, he always made it very clear to me he didn't approve of our non-political activities." (RM 126) Downey emphasizes Stan's aversion to these issues in the quote above. Furthermore, there are several instances in the novel, especially when Stan is suspected of being involved in the murders taking place, where Downey repeatedly confirms how good natured and straight Stan is.

"He's a good man, who doesn't have it in him." (RM 137)

"He's just too damned straight." (RM 149)

Although Stan is portrayed as a straight and good man, he is not stupid. In many ways his intelligence and wit is a match for Lou's. This is one reason for their close connection. He is not portrayed as entirely innocent. Tommy and Harry the Hurler are both involved in the scandal of the Dunavady Improvement Agency and by making a deal with Stan, who is elected into the Dunavady Council for the exactly the reason to control the inquiry and help Harry and Tommy to get off. Further Stan's connection to Harry is held against him during the electoral campaign.

[...] 'as regards his politics, one call to Cyril Murnay of the Ulster Unionists, who I know, ahem, socially, confirmed that Stan Stevenson is a lifelong friend of one Harold Hurley. A name you may recognize from such soundbites as "the Republican leader Harry the Hurler is currently helping the RUC with their inquiries."' (RM 189)

The reader however knows that Stan is merely associated with Harry because he has no other choice. In contrast to Lou, he never openly supports Harry and his criminal actions. Stan's positive character is depicted as inspiration for other characters as well: "You've provided leadership through your columns – real leadership – and provided inspiration for people like me to go out and make a change." (RM 68) This quote clearly shows Stan's influence on others. His determination to do the right thing, at all costs, is visible to the reader throughout the novel. Even when Lou starts questioning Stan's innocence, the reader feels confident, that Stan would never be capable of such a deed. Stan's isolation from his family and friends during the novel gives the reader the impression to be his only ally against the accusation and further nurtures the positive image of Stan.

It can be argued that Lou is the realist and Stan the idealist in their relationship. These character traits extend into their daily lives. While, Lou remains involved with Harry the 'Hurler', Stan has hopes and aspirations to make Ireland a better place.

"And what's that, Lou?' he replied. 'You want me to tear up the Ulster Covenant, pack one million Prods into boats and set sail back to the mainland?'" (RM 172)

"[...] ' that's very generous indeed. I'd settle for half a million Prods – if you give us all of our land back.'" (RM 172)

This exchange sums up the difference between the two protagonists. While Stan might very well share Lou's general aversion towards a separated Ireland, he is well aware that there is no other option than to accept it. He questions Lou's radical view directly; well aware that in the current situation a radical position is not realistic. In contrast, Lou steadfastly holds on to the idea of removing all 'Prods' from Ireland. Stan's reaction and opinion seems to be far more down to earth, realistic and most of all mature compared to Lou's almost childish defiance.

Through the characterization of the two protagonists, Downey shows the difficulty of seeing everything as either black or white. The reader starts to question whether Lou is blamable for her opinions. He skillfully does this by positioning Stan in contrast to Lou, creating a situation where the reader must take responsibility, think for himself or herself and ultimately make up his or her own mind.

5.4.3.5. Representation of The Big Four – America, Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland

5.4.3.5.1. Of Uncles, Stepmothers and Cinderellas

The novel makes reference to four important countries: America, Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Each is portrayed in a different manner and comparisons and contrasts between the different countries occur throughout the novel. There is an interrelation and dynamic between these countries, which is essential for the novel. In order to create sympathies for the various countries, Downey gives each country its own individual personality, which serves to activate connotations that are not explicitly expressed. The central character is an American Envoy and therefore the relationship between Ireland and the United States provides one central theme in the novel. There is a strong, long-standing connection between Ireland and the United States, a consequence of the hundreds of thousands of Irish emigrants who fled from the Great Famine of 1845-1848. These emigrants brought the desire to free Ireland from the British rule with them to the United States. Consequently, the War of Independence received financial support from the Irish living in the United States. Both the Irish and the Americans shared a common enemy. The Irish were optimistic that the emerging US superpower would aid them in their quest for freedom (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 273-274); “Their generosity, and the fact that we’d already beaten Britain in a war, made us many friends.” (TAE 15) The generosity mentioned in this quote refers to America’s financial and economic support for the Northern Irish economy, a theme portrayed in the novel when David tries to get financial support from American companies to create additional jobs in and around Derry. This turns out to be a more challenging task than expected, as there is strong British competition for jobs.

As an English-speaking country whose economic development was heavily dependent on US FDI, Ireland was being drawn away from the EU and towards the Anglo-American world, including its economic models and political attitudes. (Ruane 160)

Ruane briefly summarizes the development of the close economical connection between America and Ireland. However, this connection is not only based on financial support. It is estimated that the IRA received approximately “2,000 and 2,500 guns and a million rounds of ammunition” (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 274) from the United States during the conflict. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 273-274)

The British dimension stems from the Republic of Ireland's, Derry's and the America's apparent dislike towards their awkward neighbour. Another aspect that connects Ireland and America are the numerous Irish immigrants living in the United States. In addition, Downey also mentions the importance of the Irish president in the United States.

Then, in the 1960's, we gave them an Irish Catholic president, and Derry all but signed up to become the 51st state. No lie; there are still dozens of homes here that have pictures of Kennedy on the kitchen wall, right up alongside Pope Benedict. (TAE 15)

Downey clearly and purposely exaggerates this connection between Ireland and America. However, America's support plays an important role for Ireland's economy in the novel. David is constantly concerned with gaining jobs and support from America for Derry.

The United States is viewed both as a consumer and producer of Irishness, and its effects on the maintenance of Irishness are charted through the tongue-in-the-cheekness of the double representation of the American Presidential desire to affix an Irishness to the Presidency. (Graham 149)

This quote clearly shows the interrelation between Ireland and the United States. Irish migration to America over the years might explain this close connection, as does the fact that American politicians use their Irish connections. Joe Biden, the American Vice President in the novel, allegedly only remembers his connection to Ireland during election times. "Joe Biden is where he is by convincing the Philly Irish that he's a Derryman, born and bred." (OUAT 10) This opportunist attitude can be explained by the desire to gain Irish votes. The political outlook presented in *The American Envoy* as well as *Once Upon A Time in the North West* is rather bleak, as everything is reduced to opportunism.

Downey uses the familial metaphor to describe the political relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In this metaphor, America plays a role as well. "America, however, is a particular friend of the city: we're pretty much regarded by all as the kindly uncle." (TAE 15) A further reference is made that even implies the Americans are responsible for the peace process in Ireland: "[...] on the Glorious Mystery that was the Irish Peace Process – and how the Yanks had delivered it. God Bless Uncle/Auntie Sam." (OUAT 8) These quotes emphasize the positive impression that the characters in the novel have of America, based predominantly on the jobs that American companies create in and around Derry in the novel and as an ally against their apparently common enemy, Britain.

In contrast to the kindly uncle, Downey describes Northern Ireland's capital as the evil stepmother, "If the US is Derry's favourite uncle, however, there's little doubt who, or what, is the city's evil stepmother: Belfast, the state 'capital'." (TAE 15) The connotation of 'stepmother' is predominantly negative, clearly showing that the citizens of Derry do not identify with Northern Ireland and its capital Belfast, whose political affiliates are portrayed as evil and malicious. Furthermore, the fact that Belfast is the capital of 'the country' is questioned by printing it in inverted commas. This rejection of Belfast is described in more detail in several instances in the novel. The citizens of Derry do not seem to recognize Belfast as the capital of their country; rather they see themselves as a separate entity within Northern Ireland. Additionally, Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland are depicted as their enemy.

Downey spins the metaphor even further to incorporate Derry as well. Derry is represented as "good" in contrast to "evil" Belfast; "So in effect, the Derry Cinderellas are left sucking thistles while their Belfast stepmothers keep all the jam for themselves and the two ugly sisters, Ballymena and Lisburn." (TAE 16) The reader gets the impression that Belfast, together with these cities, tries to exclude Derry from any positive economic developments. The people of Derry are referred to as "Cinderellas", which has the connotation of the neglected and disadvantaged. They are portrayed as the victims of the political and economic decisions of their evil stepmother, Belfast. "Possibly it's because you have a common enemy in Belfast, which, you all insist, has been screwing you royally for so long." (OUAT 265) This can be explained because Belfast is the capital city, however, it also implies a certain dependency on Derry's side. Exactly this dependency on Belfast leads to serious issues when it comes to the division of jobs and funding.

Although Downey presents Derry as the good counterpart to evil Belfast, he does this in an ironic manner. "Derry is too moral for its own good and still entertains nineteenth-century notions of fairness and justice when it comes to trade," (TAE 101) an obvious exaggeration when one considers the criminal and immoral actions that have taken place later in Derry. Montgomery Boyle, the Major of Mountrose is one example. He is corrupt and endangers the life of David to reach his goals. Tommy McGinlay the solicitor has his office in a road that is renamed "Liars Lane". In addition, the reader confronts Derry as a city that is over flooded by corruption and criminal actions, which makes this statement seem more than ironic.

This metaphor clearly shows the relationship Downey wishes to describe in his novel. The main entity in the novel is Derry, which identifies with the Republic of Ireland. This could be due to the fact that there has always been a dense Catholic population in Derry, which is confined to certain areas. As far as the reader can discern all characters in *The American Envoy* are Catholics and therefore represent this stance. Its citizens clearly reject Belfast, Britain and everything associated with either of the two.

5.4.3.5.2. *Britain*

Britain plays an important role in the novel. However, in comparison to America, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland its role might be considered more marginal. It does not have an active role within the novel's plot. America is viewed as a supportive entity, while Britain is a target of the citizen's ire. The British support is mostly financial. However, not only America funds jobs in Ireland;

England, for example, exists solely as the country to blame for all of Derry's woes. And while the British public sector still funds two out of every three jobs here, it is only fitting that it does so – to pay for the colonial injustices of yesteryear. (TAE 14)

The quote clearly illustrates that Britain is seen as Derry's enemy and America is the "kindly uncle". Britain's support for Derry's economy is in recompense for her colonial injustices.

To emphasize this dynamic between Derry and Britain, Downey deploys the traditional symbolism of the injured lady used by Swift. British fault, guilt and debts towards Ireland is compared to a husband with a guilty conscience after having been caught cheating on his wife with the housemaid; "And the poor British have much to feel guilty about. So they've spent the past ten years cutting 'I'm Sorry' checks quicker than you did when Mom caught you with Sally the housemaid." (TAE 14) Britain is accused of wrongdoings and the only way their guilty conscience can be put to rest is by substantial financial remunerations. The allegory also serves to ridicule the situation by depicting Britain as a cheating husband. Britain is portrayed as a country that is, like the cheating husband, well aware of its misconduct; the fact that Britain is supplying this money could be seen as a concession of their transgressions.

One major character during the Troubles was definitely Margaret Thatcher. Her reaction towards the hunger strikers was condemned by many. Downey broaches this topic in a humorous manner:

Thatcher had never understood that simply labelling a city British and then expecting it to behave as such was about as much use as labelling a loaded pistol a feather duster and expecting it not to blow your head off. (OUAT 265)

Downey thus, summarizes a complex issue into a short and witty statement. “Satires moralise and they also simplify.” (Phiddian 52) This is one incident that clearly demonstrates this form of simplification. It is remarkable however, that the gist of the issue is not lost, but rather conserved.

Furthermore, British people are ridiculed throughout the novels for instance on the occasion of Seán’s funeral in *Once Upon a Time in the North West*: “Water, one guest was told, would be given to Brits, of which there were none present, and pregnant women.” (OUAT 36) Thus, implying that British would not be able to measure up to the Irish when it comes to drinking. The apparent superiority of the Irish over the British is conveyed through this trivial aspect of being able to handle drink, showing the deeply rooted antipathy and hatred towards the British.

Overall, Britain is illustrated as one of Derry’s main opponents, reflected in their thinking that they “[...] might even be able to blame it on the Brits, too, if anything went wrong.” (OUAT 18) The only thing that gives it a right of existence is the fact that they are paying in order to make up for their errors of the past.

5.4.3.5.3. *The Republic of Ireland*

Britain is not the only country that is considered guilty by Derry’s citizens. In addition, Dublin and the Republic of Ireland are also criticised; “Dublin’s guilt is compounded by the fact that, for all their anti-British saber-rattling, they’d sooner put their *shmekls*³ in the microwave than re-unite the country.” (TAE 14) Firstly, Dublin is accused of not supporting the cause of re-uniting the country. Derry “[...] like the rest of the North West, had worked out they were being left on their own when it mattered most.” (OUAT 75) The reader gains the impression that Derry and its citizens are disappointed by its lack of enthusiasm, as previously the population is illustrated as looking towards peace and not “reheating the old ashes” (TAE 24).

³ Shmekls is Yiddish and translates to penis. (3)

Downey continues to portray Dublin as being inefficient and its financial support they supply to Derry is considered irrelevant. This lack of financial support mirrors their lack of support for a united Ireland;

But the Irish influence, and their money, is largely notional rather than actual: they kick in squat compared to Downing Street. So in effect, they spend most of their time acting as a back-up tag-wrestler for Derry when things aren't going too well with the Brits. (TAE 14-15)

A comparison between Britain and the Republic of Ireland is made here. Clearly, their usefulness is largely dependent on the amount of financial payments they make to Derry. This suggests that the only purpose the people of Derry see in the Republic of Ireland is their support towards their individual cause. Furthermore, the relationship to Ireland is rather opportunist at least according to the above quote. Whenever Derry does not achieve its goals with Britain, they can rely on Ireland to back them up. Thus, and in keeping with Downey's family metaphor, the relationship between Derry and the Republic of Ireland could be described as that of a big brother. Whenever Derry is in need of support against Britain, Ireland is there to assist them.

In the novel *Running Mates* Downey clearly idealizes the Republic of Ireland. He elaborates on the reasons why Stan and all republicans living in the north deem the link with the Republic as vital. This idealizing presentation is conveyed through one of Stan's speeches during the presidential election. "But the simple truth is, people like me – and there are huge numbers of us in the North – greatly admire you in the South. We envy you, even." (RM 272) Downey goes into great detail to describe the extent of this admiration and envy felt by many Northerners. "We love your culture and history and heritage – in fact many of us like to believe that it's a common heritage." (RM 273) Through this quote, Downey emphasizes the common heritage between the people living on both sides of the border, clearly questioning the animosity and violence that still exists. He adeptly puts the reader in the position of listening to Stan, a character who is greatly admired and respected by the reader, and hearing the narrative of a common and shared history and heritage. However, through his continuous praise of the Republic of Ireland: "We love your openness, your friendliness, and your laid-back attitude to life. We love the fact that you govern your country in a fair and sympathetic way." (RM 272) Downey questions the status quo inherent in Northern Ireland. Considering that inhabitants of Northern Ireland envy these positive traits, suggests that they lack these in their current government. This is further emphasized during the last passage of Stan's speech:

That you don't split and divide – but unite for the common good. We look at how you've turned a small rural nation into one of the most successful in the world, and we take our hats off to you. (RM 272-273)

Through these suggestions, Downey presents the reader with two possible readings. The first has been touched upon above, suggesting a covert criticism and expression of dissatisfaction with the current status quo in Northern Ireland. The population would not be looking towards the Republic in awe and admiration, if they felt these ideals were represented and their expectations met by the politicians in power in Northern Ireland. The dichotomy between dividing and uniting used above, a very emotionally laden concept in this context, surely effects the reader on the emotional level. However, a second, alternative reading is that of over-exaggeration for the sake of shaking the audience up. This interpretation can be concluded from the fact that the Republic of Ireland is described as one of the most successful in the world, a fact that suggests exaggeration. The narrative that everything is better and ideal on 'the other side of the fence' has been in existence for centuries. Possibly, Downey is trying to show the reader that idealizing and concentrating on the other side does not bring about any change on your own side of the fence. In combination with the political weariness and disinterest of the northern Irish population, this suggests itself as an alternative reading of the hymn of praise above. This aspect is one instance that shows the multiple facets inherent to Downey's writing.

5.4.3.5.4. Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland, where the novel is set is featured most prominently. In this respect especially the representation of Belfast is worth putting a focus on.

When taking a closer look at the representation of Belfast in recent literature, it is striking that it has started to play a more major role since the end of the Troubles. Hughes summarizes this process as follows: Belfast "has only comparatively recently begun to emerge from invisibility into fictional representation." (Hughes 141) The reason for this is, according to Hughes can be found in the history of the city itself. Belfast was generally conceived to be a place of battle, conflict and war. Connotations of the city were strongly influenced by these, and led to the city becoming a symbol for "danger, violence and mayhem." (Hughes 141) Therefore, when Belfast started being represented in literature, it was used as a symbol for negative aspects. (Hughes 141) This negative depiction and connotation of Belfast can also be found in Downey's novels:

[...] Belfast was a minefield of sectarianism in those days, and you wouldn't have reared a rat in it. That tallied with my own experience of the place, too, when I was at Queen's in the forties – it was a humorless, industrial town riddled with bitter and unforgiving people. (OUAT 58)

Apart from the capital Belfast being described as the evil stepmother that tries to steal everything from Derry there are several other unflattering portraits, which support the statement above.

By any rational reckoning, Stormont is not a government at all. It has no tax-raising powers, no law-making powers and can be overridden at the flick of a pen by London. (Kinda like when you gave me my first motorcycle and fitted the block to make sure it couldn't go over thirty) (TAE 15)

In this quote Stormont, the Northern Irish government is denied right or legitimacy, justified by the claim that it does not have any law-making power, and decisions made there can be overruled by London.

Downey again makes use of allegory, describing the complex political division of power between London and Stormont by using an example from everyday life. Thus, Stormont is a teenager who needs supervision by his parents. Britain is in the position of the parents who wish to grant their child certain freedom, but not too much. By choosing this allegory, Downey ridicules the regulations and division of power. The allegory also functions as a political criticism of the status quo. The influence and power of Britain in Northern Ireland is the issue in question here. Derry's citizens do not look kindly upon the interference of Britain in Northern Irish concerns, as inferred from the choice of words and implicit criticism.

Although Stormont and the Northern Irish government is held in contempt and viewed as ineffective, it does have the power to infuriate Derry and its inhabitants:

But it still manages to piss off Derry no end by ensuring that what little money and industry there is stays in and around Belfast. (By the way, if you ever want to start a fight in Derry, just refer to Belfast as the capital, without any ironic inflection. They'll hang you from the Guildhall clock.) (TAE 16)

The government succeeds in irritating people by supporting the economy and industry in and around Belfast, thereby exacerbating the already strained relationship between Derry and Belfast.

This might be one reason why the citizens of Derry refuse to accept Belfast as the 'country's' capital city, which clearly shows that they do not approve of the current political situation and would not be opposed to certain changes.

One change Derry would like to see is an end to Belfast stealing all its jobs and economic development; “Worst of all options, though, is when Belfast nips in and steals 700 American jobs earmarked for Derry, and you’re the guy whose sole purpose in life is to stop Belfast doing it.” (TAE 56) This is one central theme throughout the novel. David is constantly competing with Belfast for jobs and projects; “My other great frustration here is that, not content with keeping all her own cookies for herself, Belfast is still attempting to steal whatever crumbs are left for the rest of us.” (TAE 105) This quote implies that Belfast does not steal the jobs in order to push the economy, but directly targets Derry. This is one justification for her portrayal as a Cinderella neglected and ripped off by its evil stepmother.

Regrettably, for Derry “Belfast, unfortunately, is still light years ahead of us in terms of commercial enterprise, nuance and outright corruption.” (TAE 101) In this case Downey uses inversion in order to reverse the normal way of enumeration. The first two characteristics are positive but then surprisingly followed by a negative trait. This element of surprise catches the reader off guard and causes temporary confusion. While the reader first believes that something positive is going to be said this expectation is then not met.

The city’s personality is elaborated upon in the novel. One could say that Belfast is characterized with negative traits that have a connotation to the evil stepmother. “Belfast, like all evil stepmothers, is greedy, selfish and gloating in victory.” (TAE 56) This description sums up the city’s negative role. Lastly, the fact that Belfast is ruthless and devoid of all morals is emphasized once again. “Belfast, like all successful capitals, knows the only moral worth talking about in business is to close the deal at all costs.” (TAE 101)

Although David employs the same strategies to steal back the jobs he is reprimanded for his actions; “Belfast were extremely pissed at Zonk-Zonk’s volte face – no-one had ever stolen jobs back from them before. So much so that the consulate was forced to ban me from all trade missions for a year.” (TAE 179) By the end of the novel, the reader has been introduced to the numerous instances where Belfast stole jobs and opportunities from Derry. Ultimately, David succeeds in stealing back the jobs originally promised to Derry, an important victory for ‘Cinderella’ over her evil stepmother. Thus, Downey ends the novel with an optimistic and positive tone by restoring fairness and justice in the eyes of the citizens of Derry.

In addition to the negative political representation Downey also criticises “[...] our isolation; our crappy infrastructure; our deprivation, and the fact that our situation is, at best, an academic debate in the South [...]” (RM 208) Thus putting emphasis on the frustration of Derry’s inhabitants with the general status quo in Northern Ireland. This depiction is elaborated by the opinions expressed by southern politicians about the people in Northern Ireland. “He’d also suggested building a ‘dirty big fucking wall’ right along the border with the Six Counties – to keep out ‘Northern hoors’ as well.” (RM 24) It is noteworthy, that the Southerners extend this negative stereotype to republicans living in Northern Ireland as well. The reader gains the impression that Southerners completely reject Northerners and harbour hostile feelings towards everyone north of the border.

5.4.3.6. Representation of the Country

In addition to setting the political scene for the novel, Downey gives a detailed description of the beauty of Ireland’s countryside and the cities. All over the world, Ireland is famous for its idyllic breath-taking coastlines and picturesque scenery. In the novel, the reader is introduced to the countryside through the eyes of the American David Schumann and it becomes clear that he is quite obviously very taken with what he is seeing.

The scene is set through following passage. In his first letter, addressed to his father, David described the Irish countryside; “Though I’m only here a week, I’ve already fallen in love with the place. The city itself is stunningly beautiful, more of which anon.” (TAE 13) Although his posting to Northern Ireland had originally been a reprimand David is not at all resigned and negative about it; instead he is overwhelmed by the beauty of this country. After only one week, he develops a strong bond with his new home, a bond which is strengthened throughout the novel.

The author also draws the reader’s attention to the historic landmarks surrounding Derry. In another letter to his father, David expresses his infatuation with the country’s history and architecture;

Pop, you have to come and see the Old City. [...] They have a complete set of seventeenth-century walls, forty feet high in places, with original battlements wide enough to drive a truck around. A complete set, I repeat; unmatched in Western Europe, or so they tell me. (TAE 24)

Downey's representation of the beautiful countryside is not restricted to *The American Envoy*. In *Once Upon a Time in the North West*, the famous Guildhall clock is mentioned:

"[...] including a landmark clock-tower centrepiece, had been perfectly restored to create a city within a city, while the former parade ground directly in front of him had been turned into a huge multi-purpose plaza, exposing long-hidden views of the other riverbank." (OUAT 31)

The clock is depicted as the pride of everyone living in Derry. "Imaginatively, Derry is the most advanced city in Ireland and the Guildhall is a temple which joins the stained, bright images of empire to the idea of a new *res publica*." (Kirkland 135) It represents the city and everything its inhabitants hold dear. "The splendour of the regional landscape is held to find reflection in the nature of the Northern Irish people." (Coulter 177)

This contrasts with the traditional view of Derry as a bombed-out crucible of the 'Troubles'. Thus, David's first impression is not one of destruction wrought by political conflict and civil unrest, but rather that of stunning beauty; "The view would stop you in your tracks. It's hard to believe you're in a city, there's so much green. Some of the woods here are maybe 3,000 years old." (TAE 23) While Downey mentions historical facts about the city and landmarks, there are no historical facts about the Troubles mentioned in *The American Envoy*. However, in *Once Upon a Time in the North West*, the efforts of rebuilding the stunning city is broached.

Most of Derry's Georgian inner city, which had been badly damaged in the IRA's economic war in the 1970's, had been rebuilt and restored in a spectacular fashion by similar people in the Inner City Trust. (OUAT 47)

Downey expresses the people pride in their city and the joint efforts to rebuild everything that had been destroyed during the war. These efforts reflect the wish of removing all traces of war from the city and thus, putting the focus on Derry as a city with historical and architectural sights rather than as a city demolished by war.

Downey achieves this through the description of the breath-taking beauty of the countryside as if taken from a tourist guidebook;

We walked for three miles along spectacular beaches with coastal views you'd only ever see in hollywood sea pictures, watching yachts tacking their way across the four-mile Lough Swilly to Rathmullan. (TAE 106)

"[...] with the beautiful view of Ebrington Square and the meandering River Foyle behind it [...]" (OUAT 15)

Only Hollywood could compete with Ireland's unique magnificence. A charming and idyllic picture is conjured up in the reader's mind, a picture which stands in contrast to the criminal and corrupt events, which take place in this beautiful place. This contrast is built up by the idealized and romantic description of the countryside. No one would assume that such horrible things could happen in a city of such great beauty.

In conclusion, Downey constructs a parallel universe where the history of the Troubles and political and social criticism is dealt with in an innovative and humorous way, which enables the reader to smirk and sometimes outright laugh at his ironic and satirical take on the history and its implications in the present;

Political satire should also aim to arouse and awaken the perceptions of 'men asleep' by shining the brightest, most piercing light into the gaps present in dominant discourse, thereby highlighting the discrepancy between lived experience and that which is the 'ideal'. (Hill 331)

Downey succeeds in creating a witty, outright hilarious counter narrative through the medium of humour he "shines the brightest, most piercing light into the gaps present in dominant discourse, [...]" (Hill 331), enabling the reader to escape from the rigid given discourse on this topic.

6. Conclusion

Garbhan Downey has created an original, creative and unique way of representing the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland through humour, satire and irony in his novels.

The analysis of the novels *The American Envoy*, *Running Mates* and *Once Upon a Time in the North West* has given insights into the humorous combination of historical events with fictional narratives that challenges the reader on several levels.

Firstly, the reader experiences genuine pleasure while following the plot, which incorporates aspects from several genres including romance, action, drama, and detective stories. The well-balanced plots of the novels thus address both a female and male readership. Due to the necessary background knowledge required to understand certain allusions and references the target group of Downey's novels would most probably be adults.

In addition to the pleasurable reading experience caused by the plot, the reader takes great delight in the numerous instances of genial satire, where Downey "gently mock[s] the avoidable follies of everyday human life." (Basu 91) The commonplace foolishness of the characters that is depicted in several instances is an aspect that virtually every reader can relate to and thus lightens the mood of the plots substantially. The rather superficial aspect of genial satire is complemented through the employment of the more complex intellectualized satire that challenges the reader. Many instances require pre-existing knowledge about the history of the 'Troubles' and politics in general as many humorous remarks relate to these topics. While some statements might require brief research, the reader is able to understand the allusions through connotations that are widely recognized, thus, leading to satisfaction once the connection is made and giving the novels more intellectual depth.

Another criteria for the analysis was the classification of humorous remarks under the concepts of Horatian and Juvenalian satire. Through this differentiation, the intentions of the author become visible. Targets such as politics, politicians and the representation of 'Northerners' and 'Southerners' are subjected to harsh criticism conveyed through the use of Juvenalian satire. In contrast, individuals and ideologies are questioned and criticized in a more subtle Horatian approach, thus, leaving the readers a wide field for interpretation.

The usage of genial, intellectualized, Horatian and Juvenalian satire is complemented with the Semantic Script Theory of Humour by Simpson in combination with the theory of master narratives by Hill. The social and political criticism, of both the past and the present situation in Northern Ireland, which is represented wittily and subtly becomes visible through the application of these theories. In combination the two theories light up the undercurrents of Downey's writing, that aim at achieving ideological change and the rethinking of the status quo. Downey transports the reader to this peculiar parallel universe, where he points out the discrepancies and misconceptions of an exaggerated world. These deviations from the master narrative are both subtle and straightforward. Thus, Downey succeeds in creating a stage where things can be said that would not be possible under other circumstances.

The essential message, which can be extracted from the novels summed up in Downey's words is: "It's not right for us to inflict it on every generation below us. We have to sort it out. It has to end with us. You and I knew some peace in our lives, Seán." (OUAT 245)

It is this claim that runs through Downey's novels as a common theme. The various representations attempt to point towards the futility of continuing animosity, violence and thus, risking another outbreak of violence.

Downey's motivation for considering such a message to be necessary can be found when taking a closer look at the previous years. Approximately seventeen barriers separating Catholic and Protestant areas, which are ironically called peace walls "have been built, extended or heightened in Belfast since the ceasefires of 1994." (Miles 52) Such developments are unmistakable proof that "[s]ectarian violence, on some level, has continued throughout the peace process" (Miles 52), thus making sectarian divisions necessary in the eyes of the population. This evidence leads to the conclusion that the peace process is far from completed and "whilst the outward signs of conflict have diminished considerably its underlying causes remain largely unaddressed" (Brewster 272), with the ultimate outcome that "the government in Northern Ireland cannot be distinguished from crisis management." (Brewster 272) All the while the real issues remain unaddressed and continue to propagate under the surface.

The stated aims are to work together to remove the causes of conflict, overcome the legacy of history, heal divisions and end a conflict which has been detrimental to all; to achieve peace, stability and reconciliation and to create a new era of trust; to grasp

the opportunity for a new beginning and for dialogue that addresses with honesty and integrity the fears of all traditions, to break decisively the cycle of violence. (Ruane and Todd, *Dynamics* 315-316)

One conclusion to be drawn from these circumstances is that the ongoing involvement of the government with crisis management and short-term settlements leads to the lack of time and investment into long-term resolution of the conflict. This leads to the voices of the people being disregarded by the ones in charge, thus, often leading to authors and musicians being the only representatives of these muted voices. Under this assumption additional significance and relevance is added to Downey's novels.

No matter whether people divide themselves by calling Northern Ireland the 'Six Counties', 'Ulster', 'Northern Ireland', 'the North', or 'the Province', what needs to be understood is that all these people have one thing in common, namely, that they all call Northern Ireland 'home'.

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7.3. Homepages

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8. Abstracts

8.1. English

More than ten years following the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland the ghost of the 'Troubles' still haunts the people. Although the new generations have gained more distance to this topic, their lives today are still influenced by the conflict and its manifold consequences.

The northern Irish journalist and novelist Garbhan Downey has developed a new and inspiring way of processing these events, namely through humorous writing. Among Downey's tools are satire, irony and dark humour, which he employs in such a witty manner, that the readers might find themselves laughing at topics they considered deadly serious.

This paper analyses how the employment of humour, irony and especially satire in the novels of Garbhan Downey functions as a coping mechanism and whether this innovative approach of social and political criticism might lead to rethinking of rigid conceptions. For the textual analysis, three contemporary novels by Garbhan Downey have been chosen: *The American Envoy*, *Running Mates* and *Once Upon a Time in the North West*, in which the representation of the 'Troubles' is investigated with special focus on satire for the sake of social and political criticism.

The first part of the thesis presents the reader with a historical outline of the Northern Ireland conflict between 1968 and 1998 and facilitates the understanding of the representations, events and references portrayed in the novels. The second part presents the four literary theories of humorous writing employed for the analysis; Horatian and Juvenalian satire, genial and intellectualized satire, the Semantic Script Theory of Humour and the theory of the master-narrative. The in depth analysis of the three novels constitutes the final part of the paper.

The conclusion, which is reached, is that humorous writing and especially satire has great potential when it comes to dealing with the troublesome past. The employment of Downey's strategies is successful at shaking the readers from their lethargy, and offers an alternative view that forces them to rethink their political beliefs. Whether this potential is recognized and the opportunity is grasped by society will be seen in the future.

8.2. German

Obwohl bereits mehr als zehn Jahre seit dem Karfreitagsabkommen verstrichen sind, lässt diese Thematik die Menschen nicht los. Selbst neue Generationen, welche bereits Abstand zur gewalttätigen Vergangenheit haben, werden in ihren Leben tagtäglich durch die mannigfaltigen Auswirkungen beeinflusst.

Garbhan Downey, ein nordirischer Journalist und zeitgenössischer Autor hat eine neue und inspirierende literarische Bewältigungsstrategie gefunden, durch den Einsatz von Humor. Seine Bücher zeichnen sich durch den Einsatz von Satire, Ironie und schwarzem Humor aus, welche er als Instrument nutzt um die Vergangenheit zu bewältigen und gleichzeitig soziale und politische Kritik zu üben.

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist die Analyse der Verwendung von Humor, Ironie und Satire zur Mobilisierung zum Umdenken in dreier Werke von Garbhan Downey: *The American Envoy*, *Running Mates* und *Once Upon a Time in the North West*.

Der erste Teil bietet dem Leser einen historischen Überblick über den Nordirland Konflikt zwischen 1968 und 1998 zum besseren Verständnis der Repräsentationen, Ereignisse und Andeutungen, welche die Werke ausmachen. Anschließend werden die vier Theorien, auf welchen die Analyse aufbaut, vorgestellt. Horazische und Juvenalische Satire, genial und intellektuelle Satire, die Semantic Script Theory of Humor und die Theorie der Meistererzählung. Der letzte Teil der Arbeit setzt sich aus der detaillierten Analyse der drei Werke anhand der vier literarischen Theorien zusammen.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich feststellen, dass der humorvolle Zugang von Downey und insbesondere Satire großes Potenzial besitzt um traumatisches und schwieriges zu bewältigen und zu verarbeiten. Der Einsatz seiner Strategien um seine Leserschaft aus der Lethargie wach zu rütteln und Sie zum Überdenken ihrer politischen Überzeugungen zu bewegen indem er ihnen eine alternative Sichtweise auf diese eingefahrene und rigide Thematik bietet ist einzigartig. Ob dieses Potential von der Gesellschaft erkannt wird und die Gelegenheit ergriffen wird diese Dynamik für eine bessere Zukunft genutzt wird, wird sich zeigen.