A Post-Troubles Thriller?

An exploration of the legacy of the Northern Irish Troubles in the novels of Claire McGowan, Brian McGilloway, Anthony Quinn and Stuart Neville

Anders, Hanns-Jörg. *The Troubles*. 1969. Photograph. World Press Photo. Web. 30 June 2016.

MA Thesis Literature and Cultural Criticism
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British English
1 July 2016
Word count: 15.239

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1. Introduction

While it is accepted that the Northern Irish Troubles have started in 1969, "the roots of the conflict may be traced back as far as the sixteenth century" (Kuusisto-Arponen 121). The Troubles are usually seen as a rather violent period in which Northern Ireland, the British and the Republic of Ireland were involved. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 can be seen as the end of this period and is the marker of the beginning of the transition towards peace in Northern Ireland (Mac Ginty et al. 2). However, attaining peace has been very difficult as it is seen as a "top-down intervention" that is imposed on society (Mac Ginty et al. 2). Furthermore, Graham Dawson suggests that in former conflict areas, such as Northern Ireland, "the past continues to torment because it is not past ... but permeates the social and psychic realities of everyday life in the present." (10)

This paper will examine four recent novels that are concerned with the Northern Irish Troubles to discover how they approach this turbulent time and if they contribute to the sense that Northern Ireland has moved on from its past, or offer a way to do so. The novels that will be discussed are Claire McGowan's *The Silent Dead* (2015), Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* (2009), Anthony Quinn's *Disappeared* (2012) and Brian McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* (2012). These novels fall into the detective-thriller genre and deal with both recent and past murders that are in some way connected to the Northern Irish Troubles. The thriller genre has often been used in fiction to write about the Troubles since the 1970s (Kelly 508). Earlier Troubles thrillers have been heavily criticised in academic circles for their misrepresentation of the conflict and the people involved in it. Since some of these novels are still being read after the peace agreement was signed, their stereotypical representations of the conflict which do not facilitate reconciliation within Northern Irish Society. Fortunately, recent works in the genre suggest that a new way of thinking is emerging that may help Northern Ireland to move on from its traumatic past. In light of this, the four novels mentioned above will be examined

to discover how these Northern Irish writers have appropriated the Troubles thriller to constitute a Post-Troubles thriller that may offer a way for Northern Ireland to open up the way to reconciliation and peace.

This paper is organised as follows. In chapter one, the long and complicated history of the conflict that is known as the Northern Irish Troubles will be outlined. This chapter will address the underlying causes, the nature, and the resolution of the conflict. The second chapter will discuss the efforts that have been made to facilitate reconciliation. Specific initiatives, both by the government and non-governmental organisations or individuals, will be examined for their effectiveness. Furthermore, reasons for the failure of some initiatives will be given and alternatives that may prove more effective indicated. Chapter three will outline the main characteristics of the Troubles thriller and the reasons why the genre has been criticised in the past. The fifth chapter will address recent changes in the genre, after which the four novels will be examined. The exploration of the novels will focus on the way in which they remember the Troubles, depict the legacy of the conflict and suggest how Northern Ireland can achieve peace.

2. On the Troubles

Even though, as stated above, the Northern Irish Troubles started in 1969, the conflict is recognised as "the inevitable outcome of a long prior history" that originates in the twelfth century (Dawson 6). King Henry II of England turned his attention to Ireland when he invaded it in 1171 (Frame 19) with the support of the English Pope Adrian IV who proclaimed Henry II as "lord of Ireland" (Frame 19). About five hundred years later the victory of King William III of Orange in the War of Succession (1688-91) decided that the whole of the British State was to be Protestant, thereby suppressing the Irish Catholics (Dawson 6-14).

In 1800, Ireland became an official part of "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (UK) by the Act of Union" (Dawson 6). Since then, Ireland has been separated into supporters of the union with the United Kingdom, called the Irish Unionists, most of whom were Protestants, and the opposition, the Irish nationalists, who were predominantly Catholic (Dawson 6). Tension between these two camps accumulated and led to a "period of revolutionary conflict" and the War of Irish Independence (1919-21) which was resolved in the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 (Dawson 7). This treaty meant that Ireland was still a part of the British State and had to acknowledge the British monarch, but that it was less bound to the United Kingdom than before, as it became the Irish Free State (Fraser 1). The British had hoped this would conclude the war and the problems in Ireland, but the Irish saw it as an opportunity through which, eventually, they would be able to cut all ties with the UK (Fraser 1-2).

In the north, the Ulster Unionists did not accept Irish sovereignty. They renegotiated the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 to incorporate the six Ulster counties, Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, into the United Kingdom as Northern Ireland (Fraser 2). While Irish nationalists in both the South and the North could not imagine

an Ireland without these counties, "the Northern Ireland parliament was allowed to vote itself out of Dublin jurisdiction, thus cementing the partition" (Fraser 3). This left Northern Ireland with "a 34 per cent Catholic nationalist minority" that was predominantly concentrated in Fermanagh and Tyrone, but Londonderry, "south Armagh, south Down, the Glens of Antrim and the Falls district of Belfast" have a nationalist majority as well (Fraser 2). These nationalists were appalled by Partition as they desired a union with Ireland. This, among other things, led to various violent outbursts in the years to come.

These outbursts reached their climax in 1969 when nationalists groups fighting for their civil rights were met with "state-sanctioned violence" (Dawson 7). Catholic nationalists argued that they were continuously discriminated against, most importantly when it came to employment, housing or political representation (Fraser 38). Many nationalists claimed that they were excluded from (local) politics and that (wealthy) Protestant companies, which were the majority of firms, never hired Catholics (Fraser 38). According to the nationalists, the reason for the ongoing discrimination was that the government hoped to force them out of the country (Fraser 40). The discrimination against the Catholics was not merely founded on religious basis, but due to ethnic differences as well. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British government stimulated immigration from Scotland to Ireland, causing many Protestant Scottish people to settle in Ireland (Fitzduff 1). Since their settlement, the two peoples have been segregated, both by the fact that they practised different religions and by British laws that prohibited intermingling (Fitzduff 1). During this period of colonisation, the natives lost the majority of their land to the settlers (Fitzduff 2). Since then, the descendents of both Catholic natives and the Protestant settlers have shown great hatred and mistrust towards one another (Fitzduff 2). This has been the foundation of the segregation on social, political and cultural levels that have prevailed within Northern Irish society (Fitzduff 4). Catholics and Protestants have their own religious practices, churches, schools, sports, and

cultural celebrations which contributes to the division of social life and cultural identities (Fitzduff 5-6). Due to this division, it was very easy for the powerful majority, the Protestants, to continue the discrimination against the minority, the Catholics.

However, Catholic nationalists struggled to end the continuous discrimination against them through civil rights initiatives (Fraser 37). An important group was the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) which was established in 1966 and consisted of "trade unionists, members of the Communist Party and Catholics who were already engaged in civil rights issues" (Fraser 40-1). Several of these civil rights protest marches in Derry ended in violence, arrests and deaths, most notably the People's Democracy's march from 1 January – 4 January 1969 (Fraser 43). During that year, riots and clashes between Catholics and Protestants spread, in particular, to Belfast, "Newry, Armagh, Dungannon and Dungiven" (Fraser 46). As a result, the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC), part of the Ulster police force, was replaced by the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), a division of the British army, as the latter was perceived to be a more neutral force (Fraser 47).

As the Northern Irish government in Stormont weakened, the nationalists saw an opportunity to eventually seize power and unite Ireland (Fraser 47). However, some nationalists were convinced that this should be achieved by political means, while others supported more violent methods. This led to the split in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) into the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA (paramilitary branch) which is often referred to as simply the IRA (Gillespie xxiv). The Provisional IRA perceived the protection of nationalists as its duty and therefore participated in protests and marches to ensure their peaceful course (Fraser 47). However, these events usually led to the use of violence from both the IRA and the UDR (Fraser 49-52). During the riots, the UDR arrested many people who were imprisoned and interrogated using "interrogation techniques such as sleep deprivation, the playing of continuous noise between interrogations and the hooding and standing of suspects

against a wall for between four and six hours" (Fraser 50-51). On 30 January 1972, protestors against the cruelty inflicted on the prisoners in the internment centres and the recent ban on all parades gathered in Derry (Fraser 52). During the protest, the Parachute Regiment of the British army, present at the protest, opened fire on unarmed civilians (Fraser 52). This tragedy came to be known as Bloody Sunday and incited more violence and counter-attacks from the IRA, and then again from the unionist paramilitaries, accumulating in the violent period that is called the Northern Irish Troubles (Fraser 52).

The paramilitary groups involved in this violent conflict are numerous. The most important nationalist group, as explained above, is the (Provisional) IRA. The loyalist counterpart is the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) which was established in 1912 to "fight the threat of independence for Ireland" (Fitzduff 92). While the UVF had not been very active since Partition, the civil rights movement and reforms incited its activity, including "sporadic acts of violence", during the 1960s (Fitzduff 92). Another important loyalist group was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). Established in 1972 as a response to "direct control from London" that replaced a local government, the UDA was the outcome of a merger between several smaller loyalist groups (Fitzduff 92). The military branch of this organisation, called the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), in particular was involved in violent attacks on Catholic areas and individuals (Fitzduff 92).

While paramilitaries were fighting in the streets, peaceful political efforts to resolve the conflict were made as well. During the Troubles, both nationalist and loyalist parties attempted to come to an agreement and set up a new government which would satisfy both parties (Fraser 56-60). This led to several truces from the paramilitaries, most importantly, the ceasefire "from 22 December 1974 to 17 January 1975 and then an indefinite ceasefire from 10 February which officially ended on 22 September 1975" (Fraser 61). After another failure, attacks by the IRA and loyalists groups increased both in frequency and in intensity (Fraser

61-3). The general public showed its abhorrence for the continuous violence in “marches and rallies of the Peace People”, opting for peace (Fraser 63). However, the paramilitaries continued their actions, and even imprisoned members did not cease to fight for their cause. In 1978, the prisoners protested by “smearing their cells with excrement and menstrual blood” and two years later, many went on a hunger strike, during which ten men “starved themselves to death” (Fraser 64).

On November 1985, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed, allowing the Irish government to be involved in the affairs of Northern Ireland, which was supposed to show to the nationalists in the North that they were properly represented in further negotiations (Fraser 67). However, the treaty was met with much resistance from all sides, inciting a new surge of violence, which indicates that the parties involved wished to continue the conflict, as they believed that no satisfying conclusion could be reached (Fraser 68). In 1993, ongoing negotiations reached a high point with the Joint Declaration on Northern Ireland which established the Irish people’s “right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish” (Fraser 71). While Irish nationalists viewed this as an opportunity to unite Ireland, the Unionists felt abandoned by the British (Fraser 72). Nevertheless, the Anglo-Irish Agreement marks the beginning of the official peace process.

While negotiations spanned over five years and the process was difficult, the Good Friday Agreement of 10 April 1998 finally concluded the Northern Irish Troubles (Fraser 77). The agreement states that Northern Ireland is to remain a part of the United Kingdom, as long as the majority of the Northern Irish population wishes this (Fraser 77-8). It was easier for the nationalists to accept this than any offer they had had before, as it suggested that British rule was not imposed on Northern Ireland, but came from within (Fraser 78). Furthermore, it indicated that the United Kingdom “had no other interest” in Northern Ireland, as they handed

responsibility to its people, opening, once again, a door towards uniting Ireland (Fraser 78). Moreover, the new administrative system showed more opportunities for nationalists (Fraser 78). Finally, steps were taken by the British government to support Irish culture and ensure human rights and equality for all parties involved (Fraser 78-9). This caused the unionists to feel that they had lost the peace negotiations as they were forced to give up their privileged position. Even though the agreement was accepted by both nationalists and unionists, the IRA launched several attacks with the aim of unsettling the agreement, indicating that some are still unsatisfied with the current situation (Fraser 80).

According to Graham Dawson, Northern Ireland has been traumatised by the violent Troubles on all levels of society – individuals, “family groups, social networks and whole communities” – which complicates conflict resolution and peace-making (57). Furthermore, Northern Ireland is still considered a divided country, even though many strive for peace (Fraser 81). The following chapter will examine the efforts that have been made to stimulate and facilitate reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

3. Memory and the Past in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, two main historical narratives have been told and retold, namely that of the nationalists and that of the loyalists. The nationalist narrative focuses on how much their people have suffered and been oppressed by the British for "over 800 years" (Dawson 33). This story further emphasises the heroic resistance of the Irish against "the harsh, anti-Irish, economic, political, religious and cultural system imposed by the colonists" which eventually culminated in the founding of the Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland) (Dawson 33). In contrast, the loyalists' story narrates the "legitimate settlement of Ireland in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" and how the Protestants struggled to "withstand the threat of engulfment and destruction by an alien and feared Irish Catholic culture" and the prospect of "nationalist tyranny" that is an independent Irish state (Dawson 34). This fear led to the foundation of the Orange Order (1795), the Ulster Unionist Movement (1880s) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (1912) which were established to "defend and promote Protestant and loyalist interests" (Dawson 34). Since the partition in 1921, Protestants and loyalists have suspected Catholics and nationalists of being "disloyal" and "traitorous", as they are suspected of being loyal to the "'foreign' Irish Free State" (Dawson 34). These narratives played a large part in (the years leading up to) the Northern Irish Troubles and remain important in Northern Irish society.

These two dominant narratives can be perceived as myths. An idea that has been employed to move away from these myths is through uncovering factual history. The notion of the difference between mythology and history that both influence the past-present relationship in Northern Ireland is explained as follows. The mythology concerned with the past, that is told and retold through generations, consists of "damaging misconceptions and falsehoods about the past" which is opposed to the true, scientific history that is "produced by apparently disinterested professional historians" (Dawson 35). According to T.W. Moody,

myth originates in “popular traditions, transmitted orally, in writing and through institutions” which serves to create a national identity or “nations’ consciousness of their past” (qtd. in Dawson 36). However, more than one myth may exist in a country, as it does in Northern Ireland, each having its own community within which the myth is reconfirmed and re-established. Moreover, these separate myths are selective in what elements are included in the historical consciousness they offer, and contain flaws (Dawson 35). According to Moody, myths thus “[foster] obsession and [perpetuate] the closed mind”, allowing no other myths to enter the communities’ consideration (qtd. in Dawson 36). So, while myth may provide the inhabitants of a state with a sense of (national) identity and belonging, it may also create friction within the state when there are more groups with contesting myths, even if all are perceived as “equally valid” (Dawson 35-6).

What Moody offers as an escape from these myths is the creation of a unified sense of identity in societies such as Northern Ireland. This can be achieved at the behest of a historian through “[facing] the historical facts” which will “[enlarge] truth” and “[open] the mind” to this truth (qtd. in Dawson 36). However, Dawson argues, it is not as simple as that. Dawson indicates that because such myths are of a highly subjective nature and provide its subjects with the strong feelings of identity and belonging that are embedded in them (38), challenging these myths and opening up to other myths or historical facts that refute them is a “dynamic and emotive process” which requires time and effort (40). Furthermore, authorities in social and political fields “are assumed to be fully in control of the meanings they make of ‘the past’ and to be consciously manipulating it to express and promote their particular worldview” (Dawson 38). However, when such authorities challenge a group’s or an individual’s myth, and consequently his or her identity, the reactions will be emotionally charged and will have the opposite effect, namely that of reconfirming the myth and identity, regardless of whether or not they are contradicted by historical facts (Dawson 38-9).

An example of how the government could undermine belief in certain myths is the establishment of truth commissions. People who have disappeared during the Troubles are usually presumed to have been killed by paramilitaries. Mostly, the victims' loved ones have only rumours concerning the disappearance. Since 1974, truth commissions, or initiatives, have been established by both governments and by families of victims in several countries, for instance in South Africa (Lundy and McGovern 29). Such commissions are a way to achieve "a process of social remembrance" and "provide a mechanism for victims to air their pain, provide official acknowledgement of a long-silenced past, promote reconciliation, outline needed reforms and reduce the likelihood of such atrocities being repeated in the future" (Lundy and McGovern 30). The "absence of such a truth-telling process" can prevent any sense of reconciliation (Lundy and McGovern 30). While these initiatives can thus be an effective way to move on, they also generate new problems as well (Lundy and McGovern 30). Firstly, truth commissions may contribute to the "destabilizing" of the peace as they may increase tensions between certain groups, including the state (Lundy and McGovern 30). Secondly, truth commissions can increase people's and the country's trauma, rather than stimulate healing, in particular when "justice is sacrificed too obviously on the altar of truth", for instance by "granting amnesty to perpetrators" who have confessed (Lundy and McGovern 31).

In Northern Ireland, opinions on the recovery of truth through commissions amongst the families of victims are divided (Lundy and McGovern 31). Some find that "[truth] is ... itself a form of justice" while "[others] regard truth without justice as an unacceptable compromise" (Lundy and McGovern 31). This is the reason why Northern Ireland has never established an official truth commission. However, similar initiatives have been taken by the Northern Irish government. A recent example is that of the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) which was set up in 2015 (Rowan and McAleese). The aim of

this commission it to recover truth with regards to Troubles-killings to offer victim's families a sense of closure and a way to move on (Rowan and McAleese). While this is certainly beneficial to the peace process, the commission has been heavily criticised as it will not name or punish perpetrators, even though victims' families have shown a desire for this (Rowan and McAleese). This shows that truth recovery and the establishment of official truth commissions continue to be a controversial issue in Northern Ireland.

The second model for managing the past-present relationship in Northern Ireland is the "cultural traditions model" that has been employed in order to facilitate "conflict resolution and political peace-making" (Dawson 42). Dawson describes how the Irish government officially recognised "Unionist and British culture and identity in the North as a distinct tradition warranting respect" in 1985 (Dawson 42). Through this declaration, the government proclaimed tolerance towards the Unionists, while simultaneously hoping that the British would return the gesture by acknowledging and respecting Irish culture in the North (Dawson 42). This tolerance towards cultural traditions included their "national symbols, modes of expression and political aspirations" (Dawson 42). This recognition, tolerance and coexistence of both cultures "was formalised in the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985" (Dawson 43). During the 1990s, the idea of two separate narratives and cultures was revised in order to make way for multiple cultural traditions and stimulate cultural diversity (Dawson 45). The emphasis was put on the fact that there are many different, smaller communities within society that all have their own cultural traditions (Dawson 45). This multiculturalism was supposed to overcome the binary opposition between the Catholic and Protestant traditions (Dawson 45). To perceive society in such a fashion aimed to "reduce the effects of sectarian polarization so as to *manage* conflict and its resolution" (Dawson 45). However, Dawson states that these approaches have ended up naturalising cultural traditions and "fostering and

stimulating the very cultures of sectarianism that it ostensibly seeks to eradicate" (Dawson 47).

An important tradition that confirms the two tribes' myths is that of parades and public processions. Both the 50th and the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising were commemorated by large audiences and many participants in Northern Ireland, in particular in Belfast (Dawson 14; RTE News). During the centennial in Belfast, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams states that "1916 was right. The men and women of that rising were right" (RTE News) confirming the old idea that the Republicans had a right to stand up to the British empire. Protestant parades, or "the Orange parading tradition", were first held in the 1790s and celebrate "the lifting of the Siege of Derry in 1689 and the victory of King William III of Orange over the Catholic King James ate the battle of the Boyne in 1690" (Dawson 14). Ian McBride notes that both parading traditions have caused unrest in Northern Ireland as "the right to march on Orange anniversaries has been a source of inter-communal conflict for 200 years" and the parades around the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising incited fear in "loyalist extremists" in 1966 (qtd. in Dawson 15). According to Dawson, these remembrances may become mere "[repetitions] of the past [centred] on the important determining role of 'ego defences' activated to preserve the self" (15). Sara McQuaid adds that, due to "the crossing of territories" that belong to the other, these parades are shows of power and ways for groups to territorialise certain places and provide them with their own interpretation with regards to specific events that occurred on these locations in the past. While these sites may be perceived as a useful access to "'lost space' where memories are held", they divide spaces into what is ours and what is theirs, thereby creating " more plural – [but] not shared—space" or memory (McQuaid). The fact that these parades have until recently caused trouble is exemplified by the confrontation and riots that followed the Orange Order's annual Twelfth of July parade in Belfast in 2015. Even though this parade was restricted to the loyalist area,

participants attempted to cross into the nationalist Ardoyne area, using violence against, mostly, the police service (McDonald). This indicates that prohibiting such marches, or even limiting the area within which the parade is to take place, can lead to similar problems.

Murals form an important commemorative performance as well. In Belfast both loyalist and nationalist streets and areas are decorated with large mural paintings that depict Union Jacks, the Irish tricolour, "dead warriors, or ... past battles" (Dawson 1; Rolston 286). The murals shows a "highly selective narrative focused on what the *other* side have done to *us*, what *we* have suffered and how *our* people have fought back" (Dawson 3). Similar to the parades, these murals are ways of claiming areas for only one side of the story of the past, which, again, provide "anchors for ... identity" (Dawson 3). This contributes to, rather than contests, the dominant notion that only two communities exist that will hold on to their own myths.

As the mythology versus history and the cultural traditions approaches to the past-present relation in Northern Ireland have proved to be ineffective and can actually complicate reconciliation, Dawson, drawing on ideas from cultural memory studies, proposes a different way to address this difficult relationship. According to Dawson, collective memory studies is concerned with "cultural representations, conflicting ideologies and the historical construction of subjectivities, and [puts] emphasis on the popular cultural politics whereby collective and personal meanings of the past, in its relation to the present, have been produced and contested" (49). This is applied to "memory texts", which are narrations of the past through different types of media, besides actual texts, in order to analyse how they facilitate and construct the way in which "readers, viewers and participants" of these texts "make sense" of the past (Dawson 49).

An important distinction that must be kept in mind is that between "public representations and private memory" (Dawson 49). Public representations circulate within the

public domain where they have become or been made the predominant representations that are shown to large audiences by “the national and the local state, the culture industries or the public media” (Dawson 49). In this process, the public is exposed to certain representations which in themselves already carry some interpretation or meaning (Dawson 49). In contrast, private memory is highly subjective and “generated within a lived culture and circulates among particular social groups in ... everyday life” (Dawson 49). According to Dawson, the relation between public and private representations is very complex and involves an ongoing “hegemonic process of ideological domination, resistance and contestation” through which both are formed (50). So, while public representations may enforce the notion of a “collective and shared past”, it denies the existence of other representations that may exist in private memory, thereby silencing these alternatives in order to create a unified narrative, called “institutional forgetting” (Dawson 50; 53-4; 61). For parties that have unrecognised private memories this may cause “alienation, silence and internalised trauma” separating the subject further from the shared narrative of the community in which he or she participates (Dawson 51).

Dawson’s theoretical analysis of the past-present relationship in Northern Ireland has extensive advantages over the models described above. In addition to examining how cultural memory works and how predominant narratives are being formed in a continuous process and how these relate to private memory, Dawson’s study takes into account what effects these narratives and their creation have on a community, on political, social and “psychic” levels (54). Furthermore, this approach does not refute mythical narratives for their lack of factual historical evidence, and shows that historians are no objective force that can deconstruct these myths, but are “necessarily implicated in” determining what form of the truth is history, and which varieties of ‘the truth’ are myths (Dawson 54). Moreover, this model does not assume that myths and cultural traditions that have been created in the past and continue in the present

are "fixed" but that they "themselves undergo transformation, as shifting products of the very processes of change that they register and recall" (Dawson 54). To understand this complicated process is paramount to creating an atmosphere in which "a viable process of reparative remembering, and the achievement of a just and peaceful settlement to the conflict" can be attained (Dawson 58). In this atmosphere "trauma may be spoken, attended to, reflected on and absorbed" in order to create "a different kind of remembering" that includes a sense of the trauma of private memory and "the memory world of the other" (Dawson 67; 77).

One initiative that has attempted to create the atmosphere that Dawson suggests here, is that of the removal of murals. As early as 1998, "republican muralists made a firm decision to remove all hooded gunmen from their murals", leaving murals that depicted historical and memorial events without inciting fear through the portrayal of anonymous armed men (Rolston 295). Furthermore, it contributed to the "self-reimaging" of republicans which decreased the image of the violent, anonymous republican (Rolston 295). In contrast, the loyalists had more difficulty with removing such images from walls, as there were too many showing armed and hooded men and the loyalists "ambivalence about the peace process meant that there was little inclination to represent so definitively that the war was over" (Rolston 296). However, in 2006, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, under "external pressures", determined that it was about time that many offensive murals should be painted out as they may "reproduce past anxieties in the present" (McDowell qtd. in Rolston 286; 297). As many of the offensive republican images had already been removed and the republicans had already started the process of self-reimaging, this initiative was predominantly aimed at the loyalists and their murals (Rolston 297). However, Bill Rolston suggests that replacing or removing such murals is not enough to change the communal identity, as some people may not identify with the new images (298; 304). Furthermore, Rolston argues that the old paintings provide an incentive for change (300). Therefore, the

self-reimaging of communities and individuals must be stimulated, rather than "[enforcing] forgetting" by "whitewashing" the past (Rolston 304).

Some murals have been removed to make place for public, "more permanent monuments, statues, plaques and memorial gardens" on both rural and urban memory sites by "local, small-scale communities" (Graham and Whelan 480). According to Brian Graham and Yvonne Whelan, small scale memorial sites like these have three important functions (481). In the first place, these memorials provide a chance for community members to mourn and commemorate their dead (Graham and Whelan 482). This means that small communities may address their private grief and commemorate victims who were unknown to the public or not previously recognised as victims (Graham and Whelan 282). However, Jay Winter argues that such memorials can have the effect of including a particular group, while excluding "those values, groups or individuals that placed it under threat", providing communities with a discourse on "victims and perpetrators" (qtd. in Graham and Whelan 482). This exclusion of individuals or groups deemed the perpetrators can lead to enhanced separation within society. Finally, memorial sites can contribute to "bounding territory, shaping place identities, supporting political ideologies, and ... group identity" (Graham and Whelan 482). Once again, these "localized identities" that are embodied in the memorial sites can cause further separation. So, while such local memorial sites may create an atmosphere in which private grief can be expressed, they do not consider "the memory world of the other" (Dawson 77) and, through this division, can be seen as a "continuation of the conflict" (Graham and Whelan 492-3).

Both in the area of murals and memorial sites, the gendered nature of such commemorative art has been challenged as well. While women have actively participated in the conflict and their lives have been affected by the violent past, the large majority of these memorials portray men (McDowell 340). Even though some murals and memorials have been

added to public spaces that depict women, these women are predominantly displayed in a protective maternal role, mourning their children (McDowell 348-9). This is seen as a highly political move, as it questions “the British state” (McDowell 349). Sara McDowell perceives the lack of memorials showing women to be truly involved in the conflict as problematic, as it not merely leaves women out of history, but leaves them out of the conflict resolution as well, even though they were a part of the conflict (350). McDowell suggests including women in the reconciliation process by acknowledging the role they have played, which can be done, for instance, by raising proper memorials that show their involvement (350).

The arts have been employed to confirm identities and ideologies, but have been used to challenge public narratives and add private memories as well (Rigney 251). Many works of art in the fields of film, poetry, theatre, visual arts, museums, and non-fiction have been produced in order to renegotiate public and private memory concerned with the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The initiatives in all these fields are highly diverse, making it impossible to make a general statement about how they approach the Troubles. What can be remarked is that there is a general desire and need to engage critically with the troubled past in the arts.

Fictional works have addressed the Troubles and its legacy as well. The manner in which this is done varies greatly, ranging from literary works to more popular fiction, from romantic novels to short stories. However, no genre has been so often employed to depict the conflict as that of the thriller. The following chapter will discuss this popular genre known as the Troubles thriller in order to discover what this genre encompasses.

4. The Troubles Thriller

The Troubles have predominantly been addressed in popular fiction within the thriller genre (Graham-Yool 290; Kelly 508).[1] The thriller "is organised around specific milieus, characters and situations ... [constituted by] violence, generally sordid crime, [and] the amorality of the characters" (Todorov qtd. in Morales-Ladrón 59). According to Palmer, these sordid crimes include "murder, rape, burglary [and] espionage" (qtd. in Morales-Ladrón 59). Furthermore, the thriller genre portrays a society in which "anarchy, horror and destruction" prevail (Morales-Ladrón 59). Laura Pelaschiar adds that the binary oppositions that are almost always present in the thriller genre, such as good versus evil, make "evil readable, and therefore controllable" (54). Furthermore, such binaries are useful as propaganda against "the bad groups" in conflicts such as the Troubles. Robert Bell suggests that the thriller genre requires no explanation for violence, since it is always used against forces presented as evil, and therefore justified (qtd. in Graham-Yool 295). Troubles thrillers that unquestionably assume this position are usually denoted with the derogatory term "Troubles-trash" (Morales-Ladrón 58). In addition to this popular variant of the Troubles thriller, a more literary variant that "draws on serious political matters to reflect upon social and religious disputes that cut across national and cultural identities" can be identified as well (Morales-Ladrón 58; 60).

By the end of the 1970s, a model for the "Troubles-trash" thriller had already been established by the novels that had been written during the first decade of the Troubles (Rafferty 267). This model includes "the pursuit of the IRA, ... the intervention of security forces in a Republican plot ... [and] hostage negotiation" in which "British security forces are the heroes" (Rafferty 267: Graham-Yool 295). Furthermore, Northern Irish society is often depicted in such thrillers as divided into two groups "through the construction of a discourse in which symbols, colours, murals, banners, graffiti, bonfires, parades and other marks of

[1] The CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) website provides a complete overview of all fictional works that are concerned with the Troubles and that were published between 1969 and 2002.

political or religious identity" into which the characters fit perfectly (Morales-Ladrón 60). Pelaschiar adds the recurring elements of "crooked politicians, prying journalists, wicked paramilitaries, CIA agents in disguise, the Secret Service, fat private eyes, ruthless killers, kidnappings, blackmailings, fights, manhunts, shootings, disguises and topsy-turvy love-stories" (60). Examples of such thrillers are Alan Judd's *A Breed of Heroes* (1981), Tom Clancy's *Patriot Games* (1987) and James Daniel's *They Told Me You Were Dead* (1994).

The changes that occur in the Troubles thriller during the 1980s and 1990s are usually concerned with plot, which is the reason that Rafferty calls them "low-level changes" (268). During this period, novels increasingly depict "socio-political events" of the time, such as the hunger strikes or "rumours about secret talks between the IRA and the Irish and British governments" (Rafferty 268; 270). Examples of this are Colin Bateman's *Divorcing Jack* (1995) and Keith Baker's *Inheritance* (1996) that both depict the peace process "as a locus of dark secrets and double dealings which rendered it unstable and vulnerable to the emergence of truth" (Hughes 139). Although such minor changes have emerged, Rafferty's study shows that only a small percentage of Troubles thrillers truly challenge this model (268). Furthermore, in response to the circulating rumours about the peace process a new surge of "ultraconventional thrillers" were published, in particular by British novelists, that show an overall concern with reconfirming the image of the IRA as "unhinged killers" and terrorists who should not be negotiated with (Rafferty 270).

As a result, Troubles thrillers have been criticised "for offering a stagnant and reductive version of the dynamics of the Troubles" that still "bases its premises on clear-cut boundaries between opposing poles with regard to nationality, religion or politics" (Morales-Ladrón 58). The thrillers are seen as highly problematic as many of the representations show a tendency to fit the Irish into "British versions of Ireland and show the Irish as exotic, uncontrollable, intractable, violent, mysterious: in short, as Other" (Kelly 508). These

representations of the Irish are already present in the Troubles thrillers that were written in the first decade of the Northern Irish Troubles (Kelly 508). The low-level changes that have been made within the genre during the latter part of the Troubles show that later exemplars of the genre have continued to contributed to "misrepresentation and misrecognition" of the Irish and the conflict (Pelaschiar 57). Aaron Kelly suggests that these thrillers depict the Troubles as "an anomaly beyond the tenets of a supposedly normative liberal democracy" such as in the United Kingdom (509). This portrayal of the Irish as deviating from the standard by showing such "recalcitrant" behaviour justifies the United Kingdom's intervention in Northern Ireland (Kelly 509). Furthermore, it depoliticises the political violence and reduces it to terrorism or mere rebellion. Moreover, Laura Pelaschiar indicates that the Troubles thriller justifies violence by portraying it as used for ideological reasons only (56).

In contrast to British and American writers, Irish novelists were slow to use the genre to address the Northern Irish Troubles (Kelly 512). Irish novelists who write Troubles thrillers usually show "the intrusion of terror upon a putatively normal bourgeois private sphere" in their work (Kelly 512). An example of this is Brian Moore's *Lies of Silence* (1990) in which a middle-class house is invaded by IRA members forcing the main character to place a bomb at a hotel. Marisol Morales-Ladrón views Moore's novel as a genuine attempt at crossing the binary opposition between Catholics and Protestants by noting that class divides are at the heart of the Troubles (61). However, Kelly argues that thrillers that show the disruption of bourgeois life, such as *Lies of Silence*, emphasise the idea that society is contaminated by "the criminal political violence and networks of the Troubles" (Kelly 513). Through depicting the process of controlling the criminal networks, these novels show the actual disorder in society, and the state's use of "covert violence" to ensure a liberal democracy (Kelly 513). According to Kelly, this is the reason that the more "radical thrillers" do not restore order to society after the problem, or the murder(s), have been solved, as this sense of order is absent from society

in the first place (513). Nevertheless, Eve Patten indicates that many of these thrillers are not "radical thrillers" as they usually end well for the middleclass people involved, and as a result, fail to offer a critical view on the conflict itself (133).

As the Troubles thriller has received such extensive criticism, the question of whether the genre has evolved after the Good Friday Agreement remains to be answered. The following chapter will discuss the development of the genre after 1998, in order to examine whether a new Post-Troubles thriller has emerged to reflect on both the Troubles and its legacy.

5. The Thriller after 1998

After the peace agreement, the Troubles thriller remained a popular genre in which authors addressed Northern Ireland's recent past. Pelaschiar, in her essay "Terrorist and Freedom Fighters in Northern Irish Fiction" (2009), recognises that a "literary refunctualisation" is taking place in the genre of the Troubles thriller which means that the existing "literary themes, norms, and rhetorics" of the genre are being used for different purposes and functions than before (52). In the case of the Post-Troubles thriller, many elements that were previously used, are still employed, but an element of parody or irony is added to the genre (Patten 133; Pelaschiar 59). Young Northern Irish writers have used irony in order to create distance through which a new representation of both the Irish and the conflict is established (Pelaschiar 59). According to Terry Eagleton, irony is a way "of transcending predetermined concepts like those of genre, class and racial identity which have been imposed upon us by 'the ruling order'" (qtd. in Pelaschiar 59). Furthermore, parody has "both cultural and ideological implications" as it mocks the predetermined model and thereby questions or challenges it (Pelaschiar 60). Irony can therefore be useful in overstepping the binary of the two tribes tradition by ridiculing and challenging that image of Northern Irish society which has been established and reaffirmed in the Troubles thriller. Furthermore, it opens up the opportunity to other, or private, views, allowing contesting narratives to appear in public spheres, which allows people to view the past from a different perspective than their own or the predominant public narrative (Dawson 77). This new variety of the Troubles thriller, or Post-Troubles thriller, then, shows a way for Northern Ireland to move away from the oppositions of the past.

An example of an author who has successfully employed the element of irony is Colin Bateman. While Bateman's versions of the Troubles thriller often include many of the elements typical of the genre described above, his novels clearly also move away from the

model (Pelaschiar 60). Terrorists are, for instance, rarely the focus of the narratives, but when they are, they are ridiculed (Pelaschiar 63). Moreover, the main character is often an "incompetent, disinterested and sometimes sarcastic outsider" who questions everything and everyone (Pelaschiar 65). Through irony, and the distance it creates, then, "the Troubles and its terrorists, Irish history, questions of identity, of a sense of belonging, sectarianism, [and] the powerfully symbolic and ever-present city of Belfast" are challenged through the elements of comedy and parody that Bateman employs here (Pelaschiar 63-4).

What follows will explore another development that can be recognised in the new novels about the Troubles by Northern Irish writers which is the fusion of the thriller genre with that of the detective to deal with the legacy of the Troubles. These novels attempt to show a different side or new perspective on the conflict and society during the Troubles. The most important element of the detective genre is that of plot which involves a mystery or a murder that has to be solved by a detective, regardless of whether this is a certified detective or someone acting as one. The detective is often an outsider who has a difficult relationship with one or more family members. As the detective takes the reader on the journey to discovering the truth, the idea of the "conflict between good and evil or integrity and corruption" is often reflected on (Morales-Ladrón 59). The removal of the source of evil from society at the end of the detective novel is supposed to reassure the reader that society can return to a peaceful state after such crimes have been committed (Morales-Ladrón 59).

While the Post-Troubles novels are predominantly detectives, the significant elements of the thrillers are still present as well. The novels regularly depict deviant behaviour like murder, rape, espionage, and the elements of "anarchy, horror and destruction" inherent to the thriller genre (Morales-Ladrón 59). These elements are either interwoven in the present situation of the novel or are depicted through narratives of past events or descriptions of Northern Irish society during the Troubles. Furthermore, many novels claim that the Troubles

are over and that Northern Ireland has moved on from its violent past. However, through the depiction of thriller elements typical of the Troubles thriller, such as evil paramilitaries, Secret Service spies, and corrupt politicians, this argument is refuted as society is shown to still be rife with violence. Nevertheless, the adaptation of the Troubles thriller into a Post-Troubles detective-thriller can be perceived as an effective tool to address the troubled past, as detectives are always about past crimes, regardless of how long ago the crime was committed. Moreover, in the search for truth concerning the past, interesting questions about truth and the past can be posed. Furthermore, the stereotypical portrayal of the Troubles that dominated the Troubles thriller can be challenged and contested.

Four novels that exemplify this new type of thriller dealing with the Troubles by Northern Irish writers are Claire McGowan's *The Silent Dead* (2015), Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* (2009), Brian McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* (2012) and Anthony Quinn's *Disappeared* (2012). While all four are detective novels, McGowan's and Neville's novels show a less conventional type of detective, as McGowan's is a forensic psychologist and Neville's is a former IRA hit man who acts as amateur detective. All novels show thriller elements as well, either to a lesser extent, as in McGowan's novel, or a greater extent, as in Neville's *The Twelve*. Furthermore, the novels are all concerned with the Troubles or the aftermath of the conflict showing new views on the Troubles or on the 'new' Northern Ireland. Central to the discussion of these novels will be the question of what the novel suggests about the Troubles and whether they show that Northern Ireland has moved on or is in the process of moving on from the Troubles. Moreover, two recurring elements in the Post-Troubles thriller-detective, that of haunting and that of truth-seeking, will be examined in order to discover what these novels propose as an effective way of dealing with the trauma of the Troubles. Firstly, McGowan's *The Silent Dead* and Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* will be

discussed in relation to the haunting motif. Secondly, the element of truth-seeking in Brian McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* and Anthony Quinn's *Disappeared* will be examined.

5.1 Haunting

Claire McGowan's third instalment of the Paula Maguire series, called *The Silent Dead*, was published in 2015. The novel revolves around the fictional murder of the Mayday Five who are members of an equally fictional group called Ireland First, a splinter group of the IRA, which has dedicated itself to the disruption of the peace agreement. The five members were suspected of planting a bomb, aimed at an Orange Day parade in the small, fictional town Ballyterrin near the border with the Republic of Ireland in 2006, but were found not guilty in 2011. When the finding of the first body of one of the suspects leads to an investigation, the police discover that all five members have disappeared. One by one the bodies of the Mayday Five are left behind in the woods for the police to find. Forensic psychologist Paula McGuire, highly pregnant and single, works for the police on the Missing Person's Unit. Paula has to work with her ex, and possibly the father of her unborn child, to reveal who is behind the disappearance of the Mayday Five and stop the killings. In order to do this, she must examine every possible suspect, including the victims' families of the bomb. As if that is not enough cause for tension, the memorial service that is held on the fifth anniversary of the bombing is disrupted by another attack. This time, the mayor of the town, Jarlath Kenny, a former IRA man, is the target of the attack. The novel reaches its climax as Paula is captured by those responsible for the killings, who turn out to be some of the family members of the bomb victims, incited by the young girl Kira, working together with Jarlath Kenny.

The way in which post-Troubles society is described in *The Silent Dead*, shows a community that is determined to keep the peace. However, the peace is disrupted on several occasions by small groups that formed after the IRA has ceased to exist. The novel states that

"[the] peace of those past years had wobbled several times – defused bombs, shootings of police officers, the odd riot or two – but had held, so far held, thank God, and they did every day, whichever God you believed in or even none. It was over. They weren't going back" (30-1). The maintenance of peace is the highest goal, but this calls for personal and public sacrifices. Paula states that "[the] fact that Kenny, Ballyterrin's Republican mayor, was a former member of the IRA did not sit well with her either, even though you weren't supposed to mention these things in this post-conflict, all-friends-here Ireland" (30). The problem here is not that he is a Republican mayor, but rather that he used to have a high rank in the IRA, and was responsible for the killings of several people. The fact that "everything that happened before 1998 had been wiped out by the Good Friday Agreement and no questions asked" (39), poses some real issues for the victims' families as they may "*go out in your home town and see the man who murdered your child filling his car with petrol, whistling a Republican tune, free and alive and getting off scot-free*" (36).[2] According to the novel, forgetting and forgiving such things in order to move on constitutes the problem that Northern Ireland now faces.

The idea of separate communities, rather than one, is still prevalent in the society depicted in McGowan's *The Silent Dead*. The protagonist, Paula, is continuously perceived with suspicion, both by Catholics and by Protestants, as she is a Catholic who works for the police force (116). The detective who is in charge of the investigation, Guy, is an Englishman, "a Brit cop" (59) and is often treated with more suspicion than Paula herself. Certain areas in the town remain obviously Catholic or Protestant as well. The Catholic side shows "walls covered in murals – Hunger Strikes, Peelers Out, Bloody Sunday memorials. Centuries of bitterness slapped up there in lurid colours" (51). The Protestant equivalent displays

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[2] Italics provided by *The Silent Dead*.

"kerbstones painted red, white and blue and the Red Hand of Ulster flag flying over the nearby housing estates" (237).

The novel attempts to overstep these separate communities in several ways. Paula is ashamed that people, including herself, are still categorised as either Protestant or Catholic, as these terms have negative implications. For instance, when she joins Guy in interviewing former IRA man Jarlath Kenny, he says: "*Dia duit*.' The Irish greeting was basically saying – are you Catholic? '*Dia is Mhuire duit*,' she mumbled, hating herself. Yes, Catholic Maguire." (117).[3] Furthermore, McGowan shows a family who refuses to join the healing talks that the victims' support group facilitates because they are Presbyterian and could never talk with Catholics (86; 199). However, this support group shows other Protestants and Catholics remembering and talking about the same atrocity, as a unified group. The leader of this group, John Lennan, a "devout Catholic [minister] who got on well with his Protestant neighbours" (43) crosses this barrier and is as such eventually able to "make the Presbyterian Sheerans sit in the same room as the Connollys, who'd been a Sinn Fein family for years" (199). Moreover, McGowan's text hints at the idea that the two groups are not as different as they may appear when she depicts a slight similarity between the two. The hardened ex-IRA man Flaherty and the Protestant police inspector Hamilton have something in common as their gardens display "garden gnomes fishing in a little pond. Just like at Flaherty's" (237). While this may seem a minor detail, it does imply that between these vastly different communities, there must be some similarities as well that could bring the two closer together.

An interesting element that appears in this novel to deal with the difficult past-present relationship is that of haunting. In her examination of films and novels that address the Spanish Civil War, Jo Labanyi has already found that the theme of haunting is "especially effective in [its] treatment of the war" (97). The stories she encountered included either a

[3] Italics provided by *The Silent Dead*.

mere sense of haunting (for instance through family photos that contained certain secrets) or the appearance of actual ghosts. According to Labanyi, this haunting theme functions to address "the afterlife of the past in the present" which may be unspeakable, as the "ghosts summon us to take responsibility for the past by intervening to correct its injustices" (101; 108). Furthermore, ghosts may provide "the voices from the past that have not previously been allowed a hearing", and therefore, bring a new version of the past into the present (Labanyi 109). These ghosts, then, suggest that the past is "unfinished business, which requires critical reflection and action in the present" (109). The central question that these ghosts ask is "how the past interpellates the present" (Labanyi 112). However, Labanyi also argues that such critical reflection can only be achieved by a new generation that is not traumatised by the past like the previous generation is (Labanyi 98). The critical engagement with the past and the involvement of the next generation that appear in a successful haunting motif show the "belief in the possibility – indeed the need – for a better future while also demanding that the memory of the past be honored" (Labanyi 113).

In *The Silent Dead*, Kira, a thirteen-year-old girl, has lost her sister Rose in the bombing of 2006. When the trial of the suspected perpetrators of the attack concludes that the suspects are not guilty, Kira starts imagining her sister's presence when she needs her (66). Furthermore, the poem that is read at the commemoration service for the victims states "[do] not stand at my grave and cry. I am not there – I did not die" (180). When Kira ventures to invade one of the suspects' houses and to demand an explanation for her sister's death, the novel states that "[she] wasn't even scared. She realised she was supposed to go in all along. And Rose was with her, so she'd be safe" (78). This indicates that the young girl, through her interaction with her dead sister, perceives the confrontation with and investigation of the past as her duty. During her talk with one of the perpetrators, he asks her "[what] can you do when someone's dead? Nothing" (100). However, Kira discovers that in some cultures when

someone "had taken something off you, or done something wrong to you, ... they had to make amends for it. Restitution. She liked that word" (102). Kira feels that the Mayday Five have to make amends by dying, and consequently convinces some of the families of other victims to help her avenge them. The group imitates the courtroom in a cave where they create a new trial, one that will bring justice and due punishment. Furthermore, the bodies of the criminals are deformed in such a way that their wounds and bodies reflect those of the victims. Kira obviously considers this treatment just as she states "[we're] exactly the ones. The judge and jury people, they don't really know, they get to go home to their own families and forget. We can't do that. I'm never going to see Rose again and it isn't fair!" (200)

What is remarkable about this, is that Rose's ghost does not ask for such retribution. Although Rose is present when Kira sets out to investigate the reasons for the bombing (121), "[her] voice had been fading since they killed the first man" (310). Even though Kira asks for Rose's guidance during the killings by stroking Rose's picture and trying "to hear her voice", Rose remains silent (272). However, Rose does speak and appear when Kira refuses to attend the commemoration service (173). The novel shows "Rose looking sad" and telling Kira "*[go] ... It will be OK. I'll look after you*" (173).[4] This indicates that Rose's ghost requires both that she receive an explanation for her death and that she be remembered by those who are still alive. When Kira finally starts to realise that killing is not the just form of retribution, the novel states "so did Rose" (311). After this final realisation, Rose's ghost definitively disappears, while Kira spends some time in a "young offender place" and stops expecting Rose to appear to her. Through this ending, the novel seems to suggest that the simple act of remembering is enough for both the ghosts and the people who are left behind to find peace and carry on with their lives.

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[4] Italics provided by *The Silent Dead.*

Another novel that shows the haunting motif in dealing with the difficult past is Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* (also known by its alternative title *The Ghosts of Belfast*), which was published in 2009. This novel is about Gerry Fegan, a former IRA hit man, who is haunted by the twelve ghosts of the people he has killed during the Troubles who appear to him during his final weeks in the Maze prison in 1998. After his release from prison, Fegan has difficulty adjusting to the new Northern Ireland and coming to terms with the crimes he has committed. Seven years later, the ghosts are still following him, waiting for retribution. One by one the ghosts demand justice in the form of executions of the persons responsible for their deaths. However, Fegan refuses to kill anyone if he is not certain that they were responsible for the ghosts' deaths. This means that he turns himself into an amateur investigator who is determined to find out the truth concerning the ghosts' deaths and bring those responsible to justice. As Fegan starts killing former IRA men, they, in turn, start their own investigation into the question of who is murdering these people. Fegan is questioned as a suspect, but his reputation as a loyal man saves him from more violent interrogations. However, during his search for truth, Fegan becomes involved with McKenna's niece, Marie, who has married, and divorced, a Protestant police officer, and is therefore ostracised by her Catholic family. This enrages the ex-paramilitaries and republican politicians even further, which causes them to open a manhunt on Fegan. The novel reaches its climax in a barn in the borderlands, where Fegan and Marie are taken hostage and tortured. However, Fegan is able to escape his captors, save Marie and her child, and confront the remaining ghosts.

The Twelve depicts the Troubles as a time of "anger, hate, poverty and unemployment. The only way to have anything, to be anything, was to fight. Get the Brits out, seize power from the Unionists, take freedom at gunpoint" (94-5). Some suggest that the Troubles will "never be over ... Not till the Brits get out" (37), while others, mostly politicians, are shown to be committed to peace. However, these politicians, much like in *The Silent Dead*, are shown

to be former IRA members who may claim to have forsworn violence, but still have influence in paramilitary groups. In the novel, Paul McGinty, an important member of the Republican party at Stormont, incites a riot on the street of Belfast in order to show up at the scene and appease the police and the rioters once the press has arrived (73; 91). Furthermore, he blames the PSNI for the murder of a republican that was committed during the riot, so that he will be able to make political claims on the Unionists parties and "squeeze the Brits with it" (110). While the older generations are shown to continue to struggle with the difficult past, the novel indicates that a part of the new generation, "[students] and young professionals" may not be aware of their past and the atrocities that were committed on the streets of Belfast (35).

In Neville's novel the division between the Protestants and Catholics is still present as well. During the Troubles, Belfast was made up of "the west where the Republicans' power was strongest; ... the east where the Loyalists held sway; ... the south where the city's wealthy had always lived; ... the north where Protestant and Catholic fought over every inch of ground" (102). These divisions do not merely have social implications, such as the rejection of the Catholic woman for marrying a Protestant, but affects politics as well. *The Twelve* suggests that the "average Northern Irish pleb" is able to see through "every treacherous word" in political speeches from both sides, "[yet] still they voted as predictably, election after election. [Hargreaves] wondered why they didn't just have a sectarian headcount every four years and be done with it" (44). This indicates that people do not consider the political messages, but simply stick with "their side" of the divide. Neville's novel suggests that the Troubles and the current situation are not merely a problem of Catholics versus Protestants, but that class differences play a large role as well. The novel shows that "[the] city's invisible borders remained the same ... the same lowlifes still fed off the misery they created, deepening the divisions wherever they could. The same hatred still bubbled under the surface"

(102). This suggests that unrest and hatred between the communities will remain within society as long as class differences are not addressed properly.

In *The Twelve*, former IRA man Gerry Fegan is haunted by the twelve ghosts of "three Brits, ... two were Ulster Defence Regiment", an RUC cop, two "Ulster Freedom Fighters", and four civilians: a butcher, a Catholic boy and a woman and her baby who he has killed during the Troubles (12). These spectres have "been with him since his last weeks in the Maze prison" (15). In addition to seeing them, Fegan is able to hear them as well. He indicates that "the civilians ... memories screamed the loudest", which suggests that he feels greater guilt towards them than towards the soldiers (12). While the ghosts follow him everywhere during the day, the screaming and crying usually starts at night, causing Fegan to suffer from insomnia. Fegan has already tried to be relieved of one of the ghosts, the boy's, by telling his mother where he has buried the boy's body, but this is apparently not enough for the ghost (17). Instead, the boy is shown to "[play] out the execution of the man who had taken him apart with a claw hammer more than twenty years ago" (20). Fegan, eager to gain peace, asks "[if] I do it, will you leave me alone?" to which the boy replies in the affirmative (20). When Fegan has killed the man responsible for his death, the boy's ghost disappears. Subsequently, the other's ghosts demand the same treatment for their killers. During this process of elimination, Fegan not only avenges their deaths, but discovers the reasons that he was given the order to kill these people.

While the ghosts in *The Twelve*, in contrast to those in *The Silent Dead*, demand the deaths of those responsible for their murder, it is also suggested that this is not the proper method of moving on. The final ghost, that of the mother, demands Fegan's death, showing that he is just as guilty as the people who gave the orders (336). When the spectre of the woman takes the gun and puts it to his head, Fegan says: "Please ... I can have a life. I can be a real person, a whole person" (337). Finally, he asks her for mercy (337). The woman lowers

the weapon, "no anger or hate" could be found on her face "only sadness" (337), and "disappeared into the morning light beyond, ... [looking] at Fegan once more. 'Mercy,' she said" (338). When Fegan leaves, the novels states that "[no] shadow followed but his own" (341). This passage strongly suggests that retribution or revenge is not enough, but that mercy or forgiveness is paramount to moving on. Furthermore, the presence of a six-year-old girl who can see the ghost in this scene, indicates that the next generation is also a part of forgiveness, mercy and the process of moving on.

While Claire McGowan's novel shows a society that is still separated by the Protestant-Catholic divide, *The Silent Dead* shows that through some conscious effort, these boundaries may be overstepped by focussing on the similarities between the two groups. The similarities may be found in someone's garden or in shared loss and pain. Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* shows this division as well, but emphasises that the Troubles were a class conflict as well. Furthermore, Neville's novel indicates that it is not easy to cross such boundaries, especially not for people like Fegan who have been immersed in one group for as long as they can remember. Both novels depict post-Troubles Northern Ireland as a society that is governed by corrupt politicians with a dark and violent past, who claim to have left that past behind. This indicates that peace and a peaceful society is sustained through "repression and covert violence" (Kelly 513).

The haunting motif is employed differently in the two novels and they also suggest different ways to move on from the troubled past. While the appearance of the ghost in *The Silent Dead* incites a young girl to devise a plan to avenge her sister's death, the ghosts in *The Twelve* demand the deaths of their murderers. *The Silent Dead* shows that such retribution is actually unwanted by the ghosts of the past, but that they merely want to be remembered. This, according to the novel, should lead to peace for both the ghost and the living. While this story attempts to move away from the violent past, it fails to show the complications that this

implies. For instance, the unrest and violence that a sense of failed justice causes, the inability to simply forgive perpetrators, or the fact that some are deemed victims who should be remembered, while other are not. In contrast, *The Twelve* engages in the discussion on forgiveness. While Fegan initially considers the ghosts' demands as justice, the final ghost, the woman, shows him that it is not justice, nor will these murders help Fegan move on. *The Twelve* rather suggests that guilty parties should ask mercy and forgiveness of whom they have wronged as well as themselves. According to the novel, this is the only way for people who have been traumatised by the Troubles to move on from their violent and complicated past.

5.2 Truth and Reconciliation

The two other novels to be discussed here are predominantly concerned with the search for people's bodies who have disappeared during the Troubles and the truth about what has happened to them. Brian McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* (2012) revolves around inspector Benedict Devlin working for the Irish police force called the Garda. The story is set in the border towns of Lifford (the Republic of Ireland) and Strabane (Northern Ireland). Inspector Devlin is called out to the island of Islandmore in the river Foyle as an anonymous tip has been given to the Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains, suggesting that the body of the disappeared Declan Cleary is buried there. However, the team discovers the skeleton of a deformed and strangled baby on the island during the search for Cleary. Due to the laws that restrict investigation of any bodies found on sites that the commission is digging into, Devlin is forbidden to investigate the baby's murder. Unwilling to let the baby's killers get away with their crime, Devlin ignores this rule and secretly attempts to find out who committed this heinous crime. In addition, the fact that Cleary has not been found and that the dig is sabotaged by persons unknown, incites Cleary's son Sean to set up his own truth commission.

However, his search for truth opens up old secrets which some would rather keep buried. As a result, Sean is murdered. When his body is found in Strabane, inspector Devlin has to work together with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to find Sean's killer.

The Nameless Dead suggests that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have moved on from the Troubles as well. Smuggling, people disappearing, and "splinter groups doing the rounds" (51) are "part and parcel of the way things were" (33). However, people still live with uncertainty with regard to the disappeared. Furthermore, the unrest at a commemoration on the bridge over the river Foyle that is held for Dominic Callan shows that the past still plays a large role in the present and that "the new Ireland" has not "put the evils of the past behind" at all (99). Callan was executed by "the Brits" while he was crossing the river in 1976, because he was suspected of smuggling guns into Northern Ireland. However, the police found nothing on his body. In addition, this memorial service is portrayed as a method of "[stirring] up something" (215) and can be seen as a form of "repetition memory" (Ricoeur 477) as some participants "were barely out of their teens; certainly not old enough to have been alive when Dominic Callan was shot" (288). At the commemoration the notion that "[our] politicians have failed us, have failed the cause. They call us traitors, yet they are the ones who have become agents of British justice" is heavily emphasised, suggesting that there are still people who are discontented with the current situation in Northern Ireland (229).

McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* does not focus on the differences between Protestants and Catholics within the (border) community. The separation between "our" Irish side and "their" British or Northern Irish side is more prevalent, predominantly because the police forces have to work together in order to catch criminals who may cross the border as their jurisdiction ends there. This can be explained by the fact that a large majority, if not all, people living on the Irish side of the border are Catholics. Furthermore, refusing to comment on such divides, may indicate that these issues should not be significant in the border

community at all. The novel does comment on one of the traditions in Northern Ireland that confirms the two tribes tradition, namely that of parading. Superintendent Patterson has to provide police officers for maintaining the peace during a peace rally on a bridge between the Republic and the North. Annoyed by the prospect, he states “[if] you ask me, they should stop pissing around with Parades Commission[s] up in the North deciding on this, that and the other, and just ban the whole bloody lot of them” (43). While McGilloway shows that both Catholic and Protestant traditions can cause problems and lead to violence, he fails to recognise that the prohibiting of such traditions, such as the Protestant parades, may have the same effect.

At the heart of the novel lies the issue of truth seeking and reconciliation through the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims’ Remains (ICLVR).[5] This commission was established in 1999 by both the Irish government as the British government (Woods 103). The aim of the initiative was to offer the perpetrators a way to anonymously provide information on the disappeared with the “purpose of locating the missing victims” (Woods 103). Simultaneously, the commission was to return the bodies to their families in order to give them a proper parting, a form of “closure or resolution”, and the bodies a proper burial (Woods 104; 106). While this showed that the families’ suffering was acknowledged, the fact that the perpetrators could not be prosecuted for their deeds has lead to tension and unrest. This is the case in the novel as well, where the Irish Garda have found the body of Declan Cleary, but are prohibited by law from investigating into the murder. Cleary’s son, Sean, states that the mere recovery of his father’s body without the attainment of justice is “not good enough” (23). His mother, Mary, adopts an opposite position, as she thanks the policemen for bringing Declan’s body home and indicates that “[that’s] all [she wants] now”

[5] While this commission actually exists, Declan Cleary is a fictional character and thus is not one of the sixteen Disappeared on the commission’s list (Independent Commission for the Location of Victims’ Remains). http://www.iclvr.ie/en/ICLVR/Pages/TheDisappeared

(22). Since Sean cannot let the perpetrators go unpunished and has a hunger for the truth, he starts his own investigation into what has happened to his father. Sadly, as mentioned earlier, he is killed for his efforts, as some people do not want the truth to surface. While politicians continue to stress that "the recovery of the Disappeared was part of a wider Truth-and-Reconciliation process whereby we could move forward" (99), Sean's reaction to the lack of justice in this process obviously suggests that moving forward is not as simple as merely recovering the truth. Furthermore, the novel shows the difference between an individual's memory and their perception of what is just, which complicates reconciliation further. What the novel lacks, however, is a suggestion of how these issues could be overcome.

In Anthony Quinn's detective novel *Disappeared* (2012), inspector Celcius Daly investigates the disappearance of former Special Branch agent David Hughes who has reopened a closed case, that of the disappearance of Oliver Jordan during the Troubles at the south shore of Lough Neagh. At the time, Jordan's disappearance was blamed on the IRA, but the police failed to give a satisfactory explanation and quickly closed the investigation. Through his inquiry, Hughes has stirred up the secrets of the past and shortly after his disappearance, a former spy, Joseph Devine, who is connected to both Hughes and Jordan is found murdered on Coney Island. As Daly searches for Hughes and Devine's killer, he has to uncover the secrets of their violent pasts. The investigation is complicated by the fact that Daly allows Jordan's son, Dermot, to accompany him. However, the boy who claims that he merely wants work experience, shows himself willing to stray from the law by intimidating and manipulating Hughes in order to discover what has happened to his father. Once he has found his father's grave, all he wants is revenge on those responsible for his murder. Dermot interrupts the funeral of Brendan Sweeney, a former IRA member, and, more recently, a Republican politician, in order to confront his son Owen about Oliver Jordan's death.

However, Devine's killer, Grimes, turns up to take Sweeney, Dermot and Hughes captive. Dermot is able to escape and calls Daly to his aid. The novel reaches its climax at Grimes final altercations with Daly and Dermot as he attempts to murder them for discovering that he was hired to kill both Hughes and Devine.

In *Disappeared*, Northern Ireland is described as "no longer a bad place, ... [bad] food, maybe, and some bad people, but the peace process was beginning to undo a lot of the harm of the past forty years" (44). While this shows a rather positive view on the situation, there are still families, like the Jordans, who are terrorised by small paramilitary groups, in this case a splinter group of the IRA. Even though the IRA are, once again, depicted as the source of evil, inspector Daly suggests that they should not be assumed to be the criminals as "Republican paramilitaries aren't the only pack of dogs about" (49). However, the novel shows a tendency to ridicule the IRA and its splinter groups as well. Daly's colleague asks "[who] do you think it was? The Real IRA, the continuity IRA, the INLA, or the truly, madly, deeply, IRA?" (49) and remarks "there was me thinking Republican paramilitaries had all taken up flower arranging and human-rights campaigning" (51). This can be seen as an attempt to challenge the predetermined image of the 'bad' IRA (Pelaschiar 63). Furthermore, the distrust on both sides of the divide towards politicians who are willing to sacrifice everything in order to maintain the peace in society shows that not only the IRA are to blame for the current situation. Politicians and the Special Branch of the British Security Services are shown to "white-wash [the truth]" (138) and engage in "political blackmail" to ensure peace, which causes many citizens to regard them with suspicion.

Anthony Quinn's *Disappeared* follows the same idea as McGowan's novel. While it shows that "Northern Ireland's rural towns were no longer mute, inhibited little corners of sobriety and sectarianism" (18), "[the] lough shore had two tightly knit communities, one of Protestants, the other of Catholics, both sides wrapped fiercely in a web of mutual suspicion"

(44). Inspector Celcius Daly, like Paula Maguire, is a Catholic working within a predominantly Protestant police force. However, while Paula is seen to take a more neutral stance on religion and the identity that clings to that, Daly seems to strive for acknowledgement of the Catholics' suffering during and after the Troubles. Questioning the British' decision not to reopen the case of the disappearance of her husband, Tessa Jordan states: "'[we] Catholics must be hardwired to feel injustice, don't you thinks, Inspector Daly?' Inwardly, he had to agree" (84). Furthermore, when Daly is faced with an official story about the past he remarks that "[as] a Catholic, [he] tended to believe the unofficial version" indicating both that official reports are biased against the Catholic side of the story, and that his memory of the incident described will divert from what most people will remember (68). Even though these differences are shown in the novel, Quinn's novel does not offer a way to reconcile both sides.

In this novel, both David Hughes and Dermot Jordan start their own search for the truth regarding Oliver Jordan's body and story. Both Dermot and his mother feel that the police force has failed them, as their investigation into Oliver's disappearance has yielded no results. While they both suspect the IRA of murdering Oliver, as they claimed he was "a tout" (147), they know that the police and the government will never make the perpetrators answer for their actions (82-3; 84; 102). In addition to having to deal with the uncertainty regarding his father, Dermot has been branded as the son of a traitor, which leads to abuse and attacks on the Jordan household (84-5; 88). As a result of the attacks, the mother has given up the search for truth in order not to enrage parties who would not encourage this, while her son wants to prove his father was not a traitor. Initially, Dermot just wants to discover the truth and "to know where [his] father was buried", and did not "care about his killers", but when he discovers that "the great politician and peace broker" Sweeney was involved in his father's disappearance, he "couldn't forgive him" (269-70). In the meantime, the police force's

opinions on the search for truth are divided. While most seem to think that Oliver Jordan was a criminal, a terrorist, who does not deserve justice (92), and that continuing the truth-seeking will only lead to "one more damned conspiracy theory lying hidden inside every shocking revelation", turning it into a never ending goose hunt (281). Inspector Daly feels that the lack of truth renders all Northern Irish citizens "prisoners surrounded by a net of darkness ... He tried to work out how it would all end. Back to the bombs and shootings, to sectarian murder and revenge or into a bright new future of prosperity and forgiveness. He didn't know" (281). While this leaves the novel in a state of uncertainty, Daly indicates that he will continue to search for truth, "even though it meant his mind might never rest" (281). The novel, then, seems to suggest that truth recovery is a slow, maybe continuous, process, but that it is both necessary and worth the effort, no matter what it will bring forth.

While *The Nameless Dead* does not overtly comment on society as being separated into Catholics and Protestants, it does hint at both sides' prevailing traditions through the mention of the commemoration service on the border and the parades in Northern Ireland. This indicates not only that these traditions can lead to violence and separate communities, but that there are still groups who are discontent with the current situation in Northern Ireland as well. In contrast, Quinn's *Disappeared*, clearly portrays the opposition of the Catholic and Protestant communities. However, the protagonist is shown to make an effort at overcoming the divide. While the novel indicates that splinter groups of the IRA are still actively intimidating people and showing violent behaviour, it challenges the stereotypical portrayal of the IRA and Catholics through its protagonist and adds that these splinter groups are not the alone in showing such violence. Moreover, *Disappeared* depicts a society in which politicians and police are perceived with suspicion as they are willing to protect the peace by all means necessary, such as intimidation and silencing voices that contest their version of the truth.

In both *The Nameless Dead* and *Disappeared*, the secrets of the past are embodied in the disappeared. Both works show that the opinions within society are divided when it comes to the question of whether these secrets, and the bodies, should be revealed. These novels depict situations in which the families of the victims can never bring those responsible for their loved one's disappearance to justice. Both novels suggest that while some may accept this and emphasise the importance of burying the body and being able to mourn at a grave, others will consider this as insufficient. The latter group will experience feelings of injustice, hatred and may resort to violence to bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice. While *The Nameless Dead* suggest that acceptance of the situation and the emphasis on the recovery of the body rather than the truth is the only way by which people can move on, it does not offer a suggestion for the second group to overcome their hatred and become a part of the first group. Quinn's *Disappeared* offers a more satisfactory conclusion, as it proposes that the truth should always be uncovered. The novel suggests that this is a slow and painful process, but that it is necessary to lift Northern Ireland out of the "net of darkness" and bring the country forgiveness and peace. This is remarkable since, as mentioned above, Northern Ireland has never established an official truth commission. The fact that both these novels indicate that the truth should be recovered suggests that they consider a truth commission necessary in order to facilitate reconciliation and peace in Northern Ireland.

5. Conclusion

This paper addressed the difficult history of the Northern Irish Troubles which started in 1969 and ended in 1998. While this conflict is usually recognised as a collision between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, the underlying causes were found to be of political, social, ethnic and economic nature. After the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, Northern Irish society remained separated by these divisions of the past. Furthermore, it was indicated that Northern Ireland was traumatised by the violent Troubles. In order to move on from the troubled past, two models have been employed in conflict resolution in Northern Ireland, namely that of using history to undermine both the Protestants' and the Catholics' myths and that of recognising and tolerating both cultural traditions. However, Graham Dawson was shown to argue that both approaches are insufficient in attaining reconciliation and peace. Dawson's theoretical analysis of the past-present relation in Northern Ireland suggests rather that private and public memories should be examined in order to open up discussions on trauma and the exploration of other's traumas and memories. According to Dawson, this is the only process in which reparative remembering can occur, which will facilitate reconciliation. The arts have been suggested to play a large role in the creation of such a process.

The fourth chapter investigated the popular fiction genre of the Troubles thriller. In this chapter the genre was found to have been stuck in, more or less, the same pattern of stereotypical representations of the conflict since the first novels of the genre appeared. These stereotypes included portrayals of the Irish and the IRA as foreign and evil terrorists, while British or Protestants were often shown as the heroes in British and American novels. In the few novels by (Northern) Irish writers about the Troubles, the emphasis lies on the intrusion of bourgeois life by violence and terror. These novels predominantly suggest that society is contaminated by the evil forces and networks of the Troubles which should be removed. However, the discussion of this issue has shown that the achievement of peace and return to a

non-violent society are impossible, as the evil forces are subdued by further use of (covert) violence.

The final chapter discussed the Troubles thriller after the peace agreement. The four detective-thrillers that were the focus of this paper are Claire McGowan's *The Silent Dead* (2015), Anthony Quinn's *Disappeared* (2012), Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* (2009), and Brian McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* (2012). This chapter showed that the genre was adapted by the employment of elements such as parody and irony by young Northern Irish writers. These elements can be used to ridicule prejudices and stereotypes that have existed within the genre of the Troubles thriller, and thereby challenge them. This has been proved to be very effective in allowing contesting stories to appear to the public and, through that, overstepping the binary oppositions of the past in order to move forwards. In addition, the Troubles Thriller was shown to have been adapted by the fusion of the genre with that of the detective novel, like the aforementioned novels. While *The Silent Dead* and *Disappeared* show societies that are still separated by the legacy of the past, the novels successfully cross these boundaries through making the protagonist challenge these divisions. Neville and McGilloway's novels do not emphasise the old Protestant-Catholic divide. While Neville's text suggests that the Troubles were caused by class differences that continue to exist in Northern Ireland, McGilloway's novel largely ignores the separation in order to show that such divisions belong to the past. Something that all the novels have in common, is their representation of the way in which peace is sustained. This involves corruption of politicians and police officers and civil dissatisfaction with the fact that former criminals and murderers are now prestigious politicians who preach peace. While this gives a rather negative view of Northern Irish society, all novels suggest different ways in which it can move towards a brighter future.

McGowan's *The Silent Dead* and Stuart Neville's *The Twelve* used the motif of haunting to illustrate this. Both novels show that retribution for past losses that still cause

feelings of pain or guilt is not an effective method of reconciliation. *The Silent Dead* suggests that merely remembering the victims of the violent past is sufficient to attain peace and move on. However, this novel fails to deal with the complications that such remembrances imply, such as the question of who should be remembered. *The Twelve* is more successful when it suggests its approach to the problem at hand. Neville's novel indicates that the emphasise should be put on the asking of forgiveness and the granting of mercy as a way to obtain a lasting peace.

McGilloway's *The Nameless Dead* and Quinn's *Disappeared* approached the issues of reconciliation and peace through the search for truth concerning the disappeared. Both novels suggests that the secrets of the past that will be stirred up by the search for the bodies of the disappeared may cause feelings of injustice and hatred in individuals and incite them to acts of violence. However, the two novels suggests that the recovery of the bodies and the truth as to what happened to them may also provide individuals with a chance to bury and grieve for their loved ones. While *The Nameless Dead* suggests that only the latter group will find peace, the novel lacks a suggestion as to how the individuals who find themselves in the first group may alter their feelings and accept that the chance to grieve should be sufficient. *Disappeared* offers a more satisfactory conclusion as it shows that the truth may be painful, and lead to further violence, but that this is all part of the process of reconciliation. Without the discovery of the truth concerning the past, Northern Ireland would remain in the dark, and peace may prove unstable. This is a very interesting observation as Northern Ireland has never established an official commission for truth recovery. These novels, then, show that there is a desire and need for such commissions in Northern Ireland in order to deal with and move away from the troubled past.

While the four novels all show different strategies to address the Troubles, they all suggest that the past should not be buried or repressed. In fact, the four novels show, either

through the haunting motif or the search for truth, that the past should be actively engaged with by the Troubles generation as well as the next generation. Through this, the popular fiction genre of the thriller is shown to reflect on how the Troubles should be remembered and the challenges that Northern Irish society faces when it comes to reconciliation and peace. Even though the four novels still show some characteristics of the Troubles thriller, efforts to question and divert from the stereotypical image of the Troubles and society that are found in the Troubles thrillers are made. These developments are the reason that these novels cannot be denoted as Troubles thrillers, but should be regarded as Post-Troubles thrillers that, through their engagement with the past, offer ways to a brighter future for Northern Ireland that is characterised by peace.

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