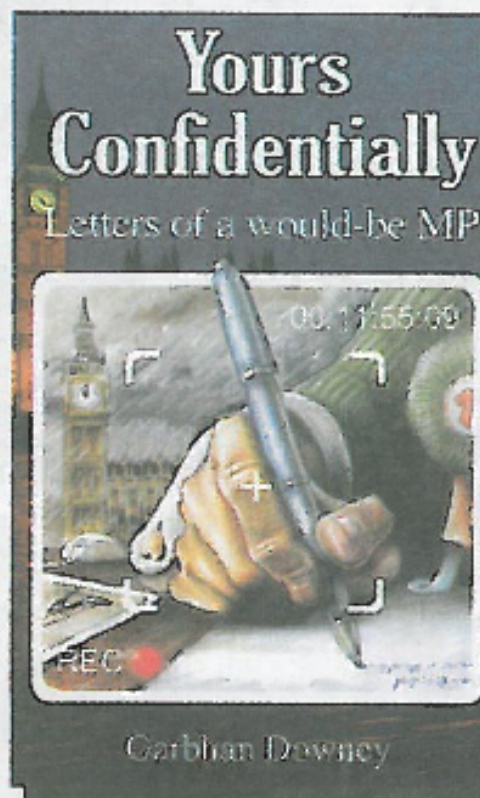


# Yours Confidentially: Letters of a would-be MP

By Garbhan Downey  
(Guildhall Press)

When relocating to a new country I feel that I have a duty to inform myself of the culture and history of my new homeland. With this thought in mind, I've made serious attempts to make heads or tails of this green isle. Having read a few books on Irish history and politics I think I have a fairly good general idea of the issues that have been on the table. But when this slim volume fell into my hands I must admit I was not too excited by the fact that it purported to deal with the travails of an aspiring MP for North Derry, mainly due to me not having too much of an interest in political fiction, but also because I was afraid that I would not be able to fully understand it and thus be unable to enjoy it. Nevertheless, Downey did give me a run for my prejudices.

Downey tells his tale through a series of correspondences between a small group of people who, to different degrees, are involved in the construction of a by-pass of a village. Emotions run high as some are for and some against. Shay Gallagher, the main character of the book, is a



decent handsome, former bad-boy, who finds himself in a first proper grown-up relationship in tandem with running for a seat in the House of Commons. Things are really changing for him, and he hopes it is for the better. Nevertheless, he is deeply mired in the arguments around the by-pass, and although he is to be understood as an honest politician (such a rare creature) it soon becomes apparent that he might be rapidly stumbling closer to the rotten altar of politics upon which he looks to be sacrificed.

The book is littered with references to the Irish political systems, from the North to the Republic, and although I had to dip back into the history books to remind myself of the meanings of certain words, this book is definitely not beyond the grasp of the foreign reader.

This is a fast-paced and fun romp through the dark and dirty world of politics which can be transplanted to most so-called democratic settings. However, be warned: things are not always the way they seem, and in the words of the book's retired North Derry paramilitary boss: "There is always someone smarter than you in the game."



Freelance journalist and writer Jeanette Rehnstrom is a member of the Irish Writers' Exchange. She has been writing extensively for GCN magazine for almost three years with two columns by her featuring in the magazine every month.  
[www.irishwritersexchange.com](http://www.irishwritersexchange.com)