The Ghosts of Belfast, Stuart Neville, Soho Press, 2009, 1569476004, 9781569476000, 326 pages. "The best first novel I've read in years...It's a flat-out terror trip."--James Ellroy  "Not only one of the finest thriller debuts of the last ten years, but also one of the best Irish novels, in any genre, of recent times."--John Connolly  "The Ghosts of Belfast is the book when the world finally sits up and goes WOW, the Irish really have taken over the world of crime writing. Stuart Neville is Ireland's answer to Henning Mankell."--Ken Bruen  "Sure to garner attention and stir lively pub discussions."--Library Journal  "Neville's debut novel is tragic, violent, exciting, plausible, and compelling. . . . The Ghosts of Belfast is dark, powerful, insightful, and hard to put down."--Booklist  "Neville's debut is as unrelenting as Fegan's ghosts, pulling no punches as it describes the brutality of Ireland's 'troubles' and the crime that has followed, as violent men find new outlets for their skills. Sharp prose places readers in this pitiless place and holds them there. Harsh and unrelenting crime fiction, masterfully done."--Kirkus  "[Stuart] Neville has the talent to believably blend the tropes of the crime novel and those of a horror, in the process creating a page-turning thriller akin to a collaboration between John Connolly and Stephen King. . . [The Ghosts of Belfast] is a superb thriller, and one of the first great post-Troubles novels to emerge from Northern Ireland."--Sunday Independent (Ireland)  Fegan has been a "hard man," an IRA killer in northern Ireland. Now that peace has come, he is being haunted day and night by twelve ghosts: a mother and infant, a schoolboy, a butcher, an RUC constable, and seven other of his innocent victims. In order to appease them, he's going to have to kill the men who gave him orders. As he's working his way down the list he encounters a woman who may offer him redemption; she has borne a child to an RUC officer and is an outsider too. Now he has given Fate--and his quarry--a hostage. Is this Fegan's ultimate mistake? Stuart Neville is a partner in a multimedia design business based in Armagh, northern Ireland. This novel, also known as The Twelve in the UK and Ireland, is the first in a series..

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Slow Horses , Mick Herron, Jan 1, 2010, Fiction, 329 pages. Intelligence agent River Cartwright, after being banished from high-profile work for incompetence, suspects a prominent British journalist with ties to an extremist party of ....

Collusion , Stuart Neville, 2011, Fiction, 356 pages. Former hit man, Gerry Fegan, is in New York, hiding from a past he escaped at a terrible cost. But he has made a fatal mistake; he spared the life of Bull O'Kane, a ruthless ....

The Twelve , Stuart Neville, 2010, Fiction, 466 pages. Sooner or later, everybody pays and the dead will set the price&Gerry Fegan, a former paramilitary contract killer, is haunted by the ghosts of the 12 people he has slaughtered ....


Ratlines , Stuart Neville, Jan 1, 2013, Ex-Nazis, 403 pages. 'Right at the end of the war, some Nazis saw it coming. They knew that even if they escaped, hundreds of others wouldnD²D,â,ct. They needed to set up routes, channels, ways out for ....

Dawn Light , Harv Nowland, Sep 1, 2007, Fiction, 328 pages. In Dublin, young Sean O'Connell discovers a startling source of redemption for his life when he receives an unexpected letter from colonial Maryland. He voyages to the New ....

The Gray Man , Mark Greaney, Sep 29, 2009, Fiction, 464 pages. Court Gentry is known as The Gray Man?a legend in the covert realm, moving silently from job to job, accomplishing the impossible, and then fading away. And he always hits his ....
Heart-Shaped Box: A Novel, Joe Hill, Feb 13, 2007, Fiction, 376 pages. A collector of obscure and macabre artifacts, unscrupulous metal band musician Judas Coyne is unable to resist purchasing a ghost over the Internet, which turns out to be the ....

Bear in the Woods, R. A. P. Duval, 2010, Fiction, 296 pages. Set in Britain and America during a Presidential election year in the very near future, Bear in the Woods explores some of the darker and more dangerous connections within our ....

Revelation, Bill Napier, Aug 26, 2008, Fiction, 480 pages. Fred Findhorn heads for the Arctic to find the wreckage of a 1944 Russian military aircraft that had been carrying brilliant atomic scientist Lev Petrosian and top-secret ....

The Winter of Frankie Machine, Don Winslow, Sep 26, 2006, Fiction, 299 pages. From the bestselling author of Savages (now an Oliver Stone film). Frankie Machiannino, a hard-working entrepreneur, passionate lover, part-time surf bum, and full-time dad, is a ....

Fegan has been a "hard man," an IRA killer in northern Ireland. Now that peace has come, he is being haunted day and night by twelve ghosts: a mother and infant, a schoolboy, a butcher, an RUC constable, and seven other of his innocent victims. In order to appease them, he's going to have to kill the men who gave him orders.

Starred Review. With this stunning debut, Neville joins a select group of Irish writers, including Ken Bruen, Declan Hughes and Adrian McKinty, who have reinvigorated the noir tradition with a Celtic edge. Gerry Fegan, a former IRA hit man haunted by the ghosts of the 12 people he killed, realizes the only way these specters will give him rest is to systematically assassinate the men who gave him his orders. Though those in the militant IRA underworld have written him off as a babbling drunk and a liability to the movement, they take note when their members start turning up dead. Meanwhile, Fegan is attracted to Marie McKenna, a relative of one of the newly slain men and a pariah to the Republicans. Can Fegan satisfy his demons and redeem himself, or will the ghosts of Belfast consume him first? This is not only an action-packed, visceral thriller but also an insightful insider's glimpse into the complex political machinations and networks that maintain the uneasy truce in Northern Ireland. (Oct.)

"Stuart Neville belongs to a younger generation of writers for whom the region's darkest years are history—but that history endures, as his first novel, The Ghosts of Belfast, shockingly demonstrates.... This noir thriller plays out in a Belfast that, even in summer sunshine, remains oppressively gray. The clannishness of its inhabitants is vividly evoked in Neville's descriptions of a tiny rowhouse packed with mourners for a murdered man's wake or a seedy pub where the bartender has learned to look the other way when violence arrives. A riot scene, one of the novel's best, captures a new generation's appetite for blood and an old veteran's nostalgia.... In scene after gruesome scene, Neville attempts to persuade us that this time around, with this repentant murderer, the killing is different."

"Neville's debut is as unrelenting as Fegan's ghosts, pulling no punches as it describes the brutality of Ireland's 'troubles' and the crime that has followed, as violent men find new outlets for their skills. Sharp prose places readers in this pitiless place and holds them there. Harsh and unrelenting crime fiction, masterfully done."

"In this well-crafted and intriguing series debut, Neville evokes the terrors of living in Belfast during 'the Troubles' and manages to makes Fegan, a murderer many times over, a sympathetic character.... The buzz around this novel is well deserved and readers will be anticipating the next book in the series."

"The Ghosts of Belfast is a tale of revenge and reconciliation shrouded in a bloody original crime thriller.... Fierce dialogue and the stark political realities of a Northern Ireland recovering from the Troubles; drive this novel. It's not difficult to read this brilliant book as an allegory
for a brutal past that must be confronted so the present can be clean.

In his stunning debut, Stuart Neville delivers an inspired, gritty view of how violence's aftermath lasts for years and the toll it takes on each person involved. The Ghosts of Belfast also insightfully delves into Irish politics, the uneasy truce in Northern Ireland, redemption, guilt and responsibility... Neville delivers an emotionally packed novel that is both empathetic and savage. Neville never makes Gerry's visions of ghosts seem trite or silly. Like his countryman, John Connolly, Neville keeps the supernatural aspects believable... The Ghosts of Belfast is a haunting debut.

THE GHOSTS OF BELFAST, the first novel by young master wordsmith Stuart Neville, is by turns bleak, gut wrenching and tense. Haunted by the spectres of the twelve victims whose blood he has on his mortal soul, ex-IRA hitman Gerry Fegan must appease them by murdering the men who ordered their deaths. Nothing less will suffice. The fallout from Fegan's bloody expiations threaten to disrupt a fragile country barely on the mend.

Neville has an instinctive sense-of-place in his writing that hearkens back not only to Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man but also to the writings of legendary Texas writers Rolando Hinojosa-Smith and Cormac McCarthy. Having never spent any time in Ireland, I not only saw and heard Armagh and Belfast, I felt, deep in the marrow of my bones, those cities' war-fatigue, wariness and fear of plunging back towards the black abyss of loathing and violence; I chafed at the hot hate festering within those for whom the past is an ever-present and unending prison of the mind and heart, even while the younger generations move past them towards hopeful futures, seemingly oblivious to past bloodshed, knowing nothing of the shudders of sudden bomb blasts.

Make no mistake, THE GHOSTS OF BELFAST surpasses its genre. It is a truly stunning debut wrought by a young master of rare talent, insight and truth. No one gets away clean here, including Fegan. I've cut my teeth on the best published works of writers like James Ellroy and Don DeLillo. I have every confidence that young Mr. Read more ›

A lot of what the author, Neville, writes in "Ghosts of Belfast" rings very true to me. I'm not a native of Northern Ireland (or the "North of Ireland," "Ulster," "the Six Counties," or "the Province") but I have read a lot about the violence there that seems to have mostly wound down. I've also been there multiple times, and while I certainly didn't hobnob with paramilitaries, I met at least one former one and I suspect met a few others whose status I didn't know. I've also visited the Maze Prison--to interview someone for a book I wrote about an incident that took place a looong time ago.

But the book has one flaw that I found myself getting increasingly annoyed about as it approached its conclusion. It depicts all of the IRA men (or shall we say "former IRA men") as weak, cowardly, corrupt, psychotic, or sell-outs. One threatens to kill a woman and a little girl to save his life. Another favors the brutal "sport" of dog-fighting.

I'm not a fan of the IRA. I know full well that that organization committed some appalling crimes and killed a lot of innocent civilians. Moreover, it's undeniable that the IRA --pretty much like any clandestine organization that engages in violence-- had its fair share of corrupt, weak, cowardly, psychotic, or treacherous members.

Set in Belfast in the aftermath of Northern Ireland's Troubles, The Ghosts of Belfast introduces us to ex-con Gerry Fegan. Treated by the locals as a hero for his activities as a "hard man" during the Troubles, activities that got him sent to prison for twelve years, Fegan just wants to leave his past in the past and live out his life in peace. That, unfortunately, isn't going to happen.

The guilt of his own conscience weighs heavily enough upon him, but that is not the only burden Fegan has to bear. Shortly before his release from prison Fegan began getting visits. Not from friends or family, but from the ghosts of the twelve people he killed during the Troubles. Sometimes only one or two at a time, other times all twelve at once, when we meet Fegan it has been seven long years since his "followers," as he calls them, first came calling.
Tortured to the very edge of sanity, Fegan barely manages to do more each day than wander down to the pub, get drunk, go home and pass out, then get up and do it all over again. One night a friend Fegan used to run with before his time in prison comes to visit him in the pub. Now a smooth talking politician, Fegan's friend, McKenna, was once one of the men Fegan took orders from during the Troubles. Orders that led to deaths including one of Fegan's followers, the one he calls "The Boy."

Former paramilitary killer Gerry Fegan is haunted by his victims, twelve souls who shadow his every waking day and scream through every drunken night. Just as he reaches the edge of sanity they reveal their desire: vengeance on those who engineered their deaths. From the greedy politicians to the corrupt security forces, the street thugs to the complacent bystanders who let it happen, all must pay the price.

When Fegan's vendetta threatens to derail Northern Ireland's peace process and destabilise its fledgling government, old comrades and enemies alike want him gone. David Campbell, a double agent lost between the forces of law and terror, takes the job. But he has his own reasons for eliminating Fegan; the secrets of a dirty war should stay buried, even if its ghosts do not.

"If you read only one thriller on your summer holiday, then make sure it is Neville's stunning debut. It's an astonishing first novel ... Written with a wonderful touch for the politics of the post-Good Friday agreement, it is as fresh and subtle as you could wish for. Awesomely powerful, fabulously written, this novel is simply unmissable." - Daily Mai

"A crime novel that counts among the best brought out this calendar year ... [THE TWELVE] would have been a superior effort had it been just about Fegan's struggle to assert his inner goodness in the face of larger evil, but its narrative power draws further strength from Neville's acute understanding of Northern Ireland's true state." - LA Times

"Neville has the talent to believably blend the tropes of the crime novel and those of a horror, in the process creating a page-turning thriller akin to a collaboration between John Connolly and Stephen King. The Twelve is a superb thriller, and one of the first great post-Troubles novels to emerge from Northern Ireland." - Sunday Independent

"Stuart Neville's blistering debut thriller is a walk on the wild side of post-conflict Northern Ireland that brilliantly exposes the suffering still lurking beneath the surface of reconciliation and the hypocrisies that sustain the peace. Neville ceaselessly cranks up the tension ... but it's his caustic assessments of present-day Northern Ireland, penetrating its sad, confused predicaments, that really hit home." - Metro

"A dark thriller which refuses to remain within the boundaries which can often confine Northern Irish literature. Neville instead breaks free of the mould, producing a novel which is both honest and refreshing. If you want a thriller which will have your heart thudding from start to finish, you will not be disappointed by the first offering from Stuart Neville." - Ulster Tatler

Stuart Neville's Belfast-set thriller Stolen Souls has been shortlisted for the 2013 Theakstons Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year. The prestigious award will be presented on 18th July by Radio Four's Mark Lawson as part of the annual Harrogate Crime Writing Festival, and the winner is partially decided by a public vote. More.

This week, world leaders are gathered in Northern Ireland for the G-8 conference, but such a meeting would have been unthinkable before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which brought Catholics and Protestants together in a new, tense, power-sharing government. Neville sets most of his work in the time following that agreement, which ended the 30-year conflict known as The Troubles.

"They drove a lorry up the side, opened the door, money was loaded into the lorry and away they
"went," Neville says. "Of course it turned out within a few days it was the IRA who'd done it. They had
kidnapped somebody who worked for the bank, forced them to come and load the money up. I
remember jokes at the time, you know: This was a retirement fund for the boys."

"The boys" means the leadership of the Irish Republican Army, and jokers called the heist a
"retirement fund" because the robbery happened in 2004, while The Troubles ended in 1998 â€” at
least, on paper. From that point forward, there was officially a truce between the Protestant loyalists
who want Northern Ireland to stay in the United Kingdom and the Catholic Republicans who want all
of Ireland to be united.

Neville writes about the aftermath of The Troubles â€” the crime that continued, the demand for
revenge, the tensions within the police and the paramilitaries. His first book, The Ghosts of Belfast,
examines the shattered life of an IRA killer, and in two other novels he continues to explore the
legacy of The Troubles. It's a tense history of violence that isn't always visible on Belfast's surface.

"It's such a pretty place," Neville says, on a bench at the Botanic Gardens park near Queens
University. He's describing both the real-world view and a scene that he wrote set in this picturesque
location. "We're sitting here in front of the Palm House, which is all white, metal and plasterwork and
glass. Surrounded by all these gardens and so on, and there's a man with murder in his heart. "

"And the little girl wants to hold his hand, and he finds the idea of it just terrifying, of being a normal
person," Neville says. "You know, he's out with Marie McKenna for what should be a pleasant walk.
Internally he's dealing with the killings that he's been a part of and that he's still part of."