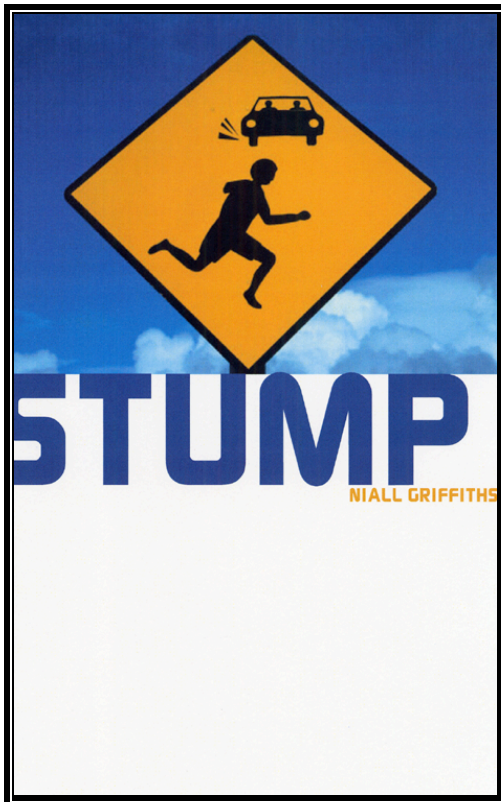




Stump, by Niall Griffiths



lyrical descriptions of the Welsh landscape and a dark, knowing humor. Despite the ever-present drugs, violence, and anger, he reveals a fragile humanity. Graywolf is proud to introduce this striking, distinctive voice to American readers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. This novel is written in scouse, which is an urban Liverpoolian dialect. Why did the author choose to write in this dialect, instead of standard English? What does this aspect of the novel contribute to the work? Are there times when the author doesn't write in vernacular? Who is speaking at these times?
2. The focus and structure of this novel alternate between the main character and his assassins, thus creating a notable juxtaposition between outward and inward dialogue. Why do you think that Griffiths chose to utilize such a unique structure for this particular story?
3. The novel opens with a strong visual image of a fox in the main character's garden, an image that reoccurs throughout the story. Why include such an image? For what could the fox be a metaphor?

It took the loss of a limb and the death threat from the Mob to make one Liverpoolian dry out and move to a small seaside town in Wales. But his past life is a recurring nightmare—filth, desperation, and blackouts. And more trouble is only 100 miles away. Darren and Alistair leave Liverpool, heading south in a rickety old car. They have been sent by their gang-boss to wreak violent revenge, but they have only a rough idea of their quarry: a one-armed man.

Interspersed between the scabrous banter and a pitch-perfect street dialect, Griffiths offers stunning,

4. Would you agree that Griffiths makes his characters outwardly off-putting? How does this affect your reading of the novel? Do the characters redeem themselves?
5. At the end of each of his chapters, Griffiths includes a slightly altered version of a step from the twelve-step program of recovery for an alcoholic or drug addict. Why does he include these sections? Discuss any progression, or lack thereof, of the characters in relation to each of the twelve steps throughout the story.
6. Much of Griffiths' other work, including his previous novel *Sheepshagger*, which is a derogatory term for the Welsh lower class, deals with the disparity between the upper and lower economic classes. Do you see elements of this class struggle in *Stump*?
7. The only female character in the story is Rebecca, who the reader never actually meets in the present, but rather only learns about through the main character's memory. What is Rebecca's role in the story?
8. Does the tone of Stump's narrative change when he talks about his drug use?
9. Discuss the role of fate or divine providence in the story.

PRAISE FOR *STUMP*:

"Like its protagonist, *Stump* is beautiful, flawed, rageful and lyrical...A pulse-quickenning, unique work from what is surely a single-edition mind."

—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"Griffiths is best when he captures those small moments that punctuate the boredom of intermittently savage lives."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Born and raised in Liverpool, but now hailed as the novelist who's doing for Wales what James Kelman and Irvine Welsh did for Scotland, 37-year-old Niall Griffiths has redrawn the Welsh literary map."

—*Glasgow Herald*

"This book is a powerful mix of beauty and rage—a panoramic examination of society's

underbelly, so rarely given a voice in contemporary fiction."

—*Redhanded*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Niall Griffiths was born in Liverpool in 1966 and now lives in Wales. *Stump* won the Welsh Book of the Year Award in 2004. His previous novels include *Sheepshagger*, *Kelly + Victor*, which is being made into a feature film, and *Grits*, which is being filmed for television in the UK.

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