



# Cast A Cold Eye

*Alan Ryan*

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The remote western coast of Ireland: a place of rock and mist and lashing waves, where the old customs and the oldest fears are still alive. Jack Quinlan, an American writer, is researching a book on the horrors of the Irish Famine. As the days pass, and the longer nights, the darkness of history parts ... only to reveal an even greater darkness in the present.

## Cast A Cold Eye Details

Date : Published July 1984 by Tor Books (first published January 1st 1984)

ISBN : 9780812525434

Author : Alan Ryan

Format : Paperback 351 pages

Genre : Horror



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# From Reader Review Cast A Cold Eye for online ebook

## Jon Recluse says

Cast a Cold Eye is a perfect storm of a novel, bringing together atmosphere, location and mystery in one of the finest ghost stories it has been my pleasure to read.

An American author travels to a remote village in Ireland to gather background for a book on the Irish Famine, and discovers that the past is closer than he thinks.....and it does not lie quietly.

A beautifully constructed example of literary ghost story that doesn't burn slowly....it creeps up on you like the mists off the moors, slow and relentless, running chill fingers down the back of your neck. The suspense builds just as slowly, ratcheting up the reader's unease to the breaking point.

Kudos to Valancourt Books for bringing this masterwork by an underappreciated author back into print.

Highly recommended.

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## Horace Derwent says

i think i'm seriously a freak...and a paranoiac

now, finally this book is being held in my hands, which spent me rmb 180

now, i finally know why this title was named Cast a Cold Eye, it's a yeats poem, from Under Ben Bulbin

Cast a Cold Eye

on life, on death

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## Nancy Oakes says

What great atmosphere!

There are two stories at work here that will, given time and above all circumstance, ultimately converge. The novel begins with a scene that launches the first of these, as four men are waiting in a shabreen trying to keep warm while awaiting a funeral procession before going on to an ancient graveyard to perform some strange rites. As good writers will, Ryan gives us no explanations, so the question of what's going on here and why is planted in the reader's head from the outset and stays in the back of the mind throughout the novel until all is revealed. Great way to start a horror novel, if you ask me. The second storyline belongs to Jack Quinlan, who has come to Ireland, home of his ancestors, to do some research on a novel he's writing about the Famine. More specifically, his book is about

"a family and its struggles to survive through the Famine of 1846 and 1847, and about the horrible thing ...

that happened to three members of his family in particular."

Jack takes a house in the rather isolated village of Doolin, planning to stay for three months, and it isn't too long before he sets up a nice routine of research, writing, and sometimes hanging out at the local pubs, where traditional music is played of an evening. He's met a girl, Grainne, to whom he's very much attracted, and all seems to be well with him right up until the moment when he starts to see and hear some very disturbing things which seem to follow him whenever he's out and about. And then one night he witnesses something he knows is real, but has no explanation for. The only person he can talk to about it is the local priest Father Henning, the local *seanachie* who loves telling eerie stories, yet is reluctant at best to talk with Jack about his experiences. The question becomes whether or not Jack's actually experiencing these horrific things -- is the research he's doing getting to him, or is it the remoteness and isolation of the place that's affecting him? And if it is true that Jack is not going off his rocker but is really seeing what he thinks he's seeing, why him?

Reading *Cast a Cold Eye* is to find yourself in the middle of an eerie mystery that grows darker and creepier along the way, one that is not solved up until the last minute. A lot of readers have noted, like the Kirkus reviewer of this book, that the story "doesn't add up," that there are too many loose ends, yada yada yada, but it all made perfectly good sense to me. I won't say why, since I'm sure many people will want to read this novel, but the answers really are all there. My regular habit is to finish a novel and then go back and reread the first chapter, and in this case, it's a hugely eye-opening moment, stunningly circular in nature. It may not scare the bejeebies out of modern horror readers, but for those of us who aren't looking for chainsaw-wielding killer clowns or the like, it's a delightful tale of ghostly horrors that will stay in your head for a long time after turning that last page.

<http://www.oddlyweirdfiction.com/2016...>

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### **Kevin Lucia says**

Excellent. Balanced, fine prose. Tense atmosphere. Very subtle. A gentle, somber ghost story.

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### **Jack Tripper says**

This was one of the very best ghost story novels I've read in recent years. It's extremely quiet and understated, but the unsettling atmosphere slowly builds at an almost pitch-perfect pace. It concerns an American writer who decides to rent a house in a remote and insular coastal village in Ireland while he works on his book about the Great Famine of the mid-19th century, which the village had been hard-hit by. Little does he know that some traumatic events are etched in the earth's memory, not to be forgotten.

Though it's been nearly three years since I'd read *Cast a Cold Eye*, every time I catch a glimpse of it on my shelves, I'm struck with the same feeling as when I was enveloped in the story. That feeling can best be described as melancholy and despair mixed with unnerved and, oddly, the sensation of coldness. Once you've read it and experienced the icy chill of the town's air, its rain, its foggy nights, its rocky shore's ocean spray, its residents (and their "old ways"), its stone houses, its crumbling fences, its sad history, its restless ghosts, and the entire vibe of the book in general, you'll see what I mean.

Not to be missed by fans of ghost tales. Too bad Alan Ryan didn't write much fiction after this, as his

storytelling abilities and graceful prose were finally coming into their own.

4.5 Stars

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### **Kimberly says**

CAST A COLD EYE, by Alan Ryan is a "slow-burn" horror story. If you're looking for a gory splatterfest, you won't find that here.... What you WILL find is an intensely creepy feeling that continues to build up with the suspense up until the very end. The atmosphere is both beautiful, and oppressive--a combination that fits naturally into the story--making you both wish you could be there in person, and yet, dreading what the final outcome might bring.

In my opinion, this is an old-fashioned ghost story of the best kind. One that brings many questions to mind, while steadily building that expectation of something horrible yet to come.

Highly recommended!

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### **Latasha says**

ah this book! how could I not love it? Traditions of our ancestors being kept alive and being shown some of the magic they hold? yes all over this book! Alan Ryan creates a beautiful rich Ireland (is it really like that?) and gets you all cozy and starts throwing in creepy, creepy stuff. Then! he throws in the priest. uh oh! you just know this is no good but i don't think anyone in the book was bad or evil. they were keeping traditions alive and i will always fall for a story with that in the plot.

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### **William says**

Probably the best "ghost" novel of recent years, and all the better for it for having a rarely seen setting.

Ryan sets his tale on a remote corner of Ireland, and captures the feeling of desperation in the community perfectly.

It starts with a meeting with a phantom by the roadside, then steadily ratchets up the tension as the protagonist finds out the true cost of living in the community, and what must be done to placate those who don't sleep easily in their graves.

There are many genuinely suspenseful scenes, well developed characters, and sympathetic ghosts who are only doing what has to be done.

Creepy as hell, well constructed, beautifully written. It's a great pity that Ryan didn't write more in the genre.

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## Denny says

A slow paced well written horror novel without a word out of place. I loved the cover and everything about it.

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## Abbie | ab\_reads says

2.5 stars - not the best but not the worst either.

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## Char says

Feast your eyes upon this super creepy cover! What horror fan wouldn't want to read this book?

A seanachie in ancient Ireland was an historian and storyteller. It's a word mentioned to Jack Quinlan, an American visiting Ireland to research a book he's writing about the Irish potato famine. Jack sets himself up in a rental house for 3 months so he can explore the area and get to writing. The Irish towns he visits are small with old buildings, and the townspeople are all simple folk with simple traditions. However, these towns often have secrets and rituals and Jack is about to stumble onto some of them. Will he survive the encounter? You'll have to read **Cast A Cold Eye** to find out!

This book drips with atmosphere. A ghost story set in October, on the western shores of Ireland. There's fog, there's moors nearby, there's the sea bashing the rocky land day and night. Alan Ryan's prose when describing the delights of the Irish scenery was rich and vivid. It created a contrast in my mind with the horrible facts about the Irish potato famine: Such natural beauty in the scenery yet many people starved to death in the middle of it.

Unfortunately, I felt that the atmosphere did not deliver in the end. I was somehow expecting more of a bang and when the denouement arrived it somehow felt anti-climactic. However, that does not mean that I didn't enjoy the journey because I did.

Recommended to fans of atmospheric ghost stories and beautiful prose!

\*Thanks to Valancourt Books for providing a free e-copy in exchange for my honest review. This is it!\*

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## Jonathan Janz says

Alan Ryan's CAST A COLD EYE is atmospheric and engrossing, a read well worth your while. And while I really dug the book, here's the biggest revelation I experienced while reading it:

Valancourt Books has become my first stop when looking for something great to read. Sure, there are tons of great publishers, and yeah, I like all sorts of variety. But what Valancourt is doing is nothing short of remarkable, and if you aren't mining from their catalogue, you're doing yourself a disservice.

Just a few of the names I've enjoyed over the several months:

Michael McDowell  
Bernard Taylor  
Robert Westall  
Michael Talbot  
Ken Greenhall  
Alan Ryan

Throw in Charles Beaumont, Gerald Kersh, John Metcalfe, Oliver Onions, David Case, and Robert Marasco, and you have a roster that can go toe-to-toe with any publisher's dark fiction list.

So read CAST A COLD EYE. It's a slow burn, but it's an immersive read. And support Valancourt Books. They're doing something unique and wonderful, and I, for one, am thankful for it.

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### **Janie C. says**

While this novel was rich in atmosphere and steeped in local tradition, I found the pace to be a bit slow.

3.5 stars

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### **William says**

CAST A COLD EYE preys on my mind. I first read it from our local library when it came out and it gave me nightmares. Then I found a 1st Edition hardcover of it in a book shop in Inverness, where it was stacked by accident in a shelf of Scottish hardcover crime books. I bought it, read it again, and got more nightmares.

There's something going on in these pages that keys directly into my psyche. I think it's a Celt thing, and small towns where old men mutter secrets to each other in smoky bars while someone in the background sings the old songs. I know a bit about that kind of place. And so did Alan Ryan, a wonderful writer taken from us too soon.

He spoke in interviews of how he didn't spend much time on research, but went for feel and gut instinct in writing it, and in doing so, I think he too tapped into something primal about blood, and kin, and community.

It's a book with heart and soul, wearing both on its sleeve. Sure, it gets melodramatic in places, but in others there's a deft handling of creeping dread, and of how the supernatural might creep into a world view otherwise inimical to it.

I've found that not many of my supernatural fiction writing buddies have read this one -- it seems to have gone under the radar back in the day, and been largely ignored. Which is a great shame, as it's a great ghost story, a fine piece of writing, and a lovely examination of a way of life that's disappearing fast. Hopefully the Valacourt edition means more people are finding it.

I love it...even if it still gives me nightmares.

