

Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse

By Denis Johnson

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Two plays—hilarious and searing in equal measure—by one of our most essential and original authors

In his poetry, short stories, novels, and plays, the National Book Award-winning author Denis Johnson has explored the story of America—especially of the West, land of self-made men and self-perpetuating myths—with searing honesty and genuine sympathy. These two plays, written in verse at once hypnotic and clear, confirm his position as one of our great verbal stylists and a literary conscience for our times.

In *Soul of a Whore*, a lively cast of characters—faith healers, pimps, strippers, actual demons—converge, with unexpected hilarity, as Bess Cassandra awaits execution for the murder of her infant daughter. *Purvis*'s seven reverse-chronological scenes catalog the fall and rise of Melvin Purvis, the G-man who brought down John Dillinger and Charles Arthur "Pretty Boy" Floyd. Johnson takes us from Washington's back rooms to a Midwestern cornfield, dramatizing the seductive allure of power and our own human capacity for both pettiness and grace.

In these furiously entertaining, occasionally terrifying works, Johnson chronicles and questions America's myths, heroes, and everyday realities with verve and elegance, revealing himself once again to be at the height of his linguistic and insightful powers.

Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse By Denis Johnson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

“The raw power of poetically concentrated passion . . . [*Soul of a Whore*] is a resonant fulfillment of the promise in [Johnson's] earlier work . . . [This is] Johnson's best constructed and most evocatively passionate outing yet.” ?*Robert Hurwitt, San Francisco Chronicle*

“Johnson has found a new speed, or a new style, for his age-old theme of hell, and it's a good, rare thing to watch a modern poet write so well for the stage.” ?*Michael Scott Moore, SF Weekly*

“*Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse* comprises Johnson's third- and fifth-ever attempts at playwriting, but his enthusiasm for experimentation is present and overriding, and it reads vividly.” ?*Jillian Goodman, Slate*

“These plays are everything you'd expect and want from a dramatic creation written by Denis Johnson--grit, poetry, passionate prose, a host of devilishly dirty characters steeped in backbreaking honesty, and a whirlwind ride that takes us to the polar reaches of the human experience.” ?*Emily Temple, Flavorwire*

“‘Soul’ inhabits a world of hookers and hoodlums and murderers and executioners. The tale is both hallucinatory and immediate, hilarious and horrifying. It moves from the god-forsaken way station to a hospital ward to an execution chamber, where one Bess Cassandra is awaiting her death for ‘vehicular infanticide.’ Along the way, it asks questions about the death penalty, the justice system, Christianity, and morality . . . These drifters and derelicts are the sort of folks who pop out of the pages of Johnson's fiction, and in writing for the stage, Johnson creates down-and-out characters with an uncommon attention to language.” ?*Patti Hartigan, The Boston Globe*

About the Author

Denis Johnson is the author of eight novels, one novella, one book of short stories, three collections of poetry, two collections of plays, and one book of reportage. His novel *Tree of Smoke* won the 2007 National Book Award.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jared Williams:

This Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse are reliable for you who want to be considered a successful person, why. The reason of this Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse can be among the great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple examining food but feed you with information that probably will shock your preceding knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed versions. Beside that this Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse giving you an enormous of experience for example rich vocabulary, giving you demo of critical thinking that we realize it useful in your day activity. So , let's have it and luxuriate in reading.

Madeline Edwards:

Often the book Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse has a lot associated with on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was compiled by the very famous author. The writer makes some research prior to write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you will get the point easily after scanning this book.

Larry Devries:

The reason? Because this Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will jolt you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such amazing way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have got such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking way. So , still want to delay having that book? If I were being you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Rebecca Muldoon:

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