



# Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse

By Denis Johnson

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

**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:

#### Sylvia Silva:

Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. Advantages you got of course the knowledge even the information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education books but if you want truly feel happy read one with theme for entertaining including comic or novel. Typically the *Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse* is kind of publication which is giving the reader capricious experience.

**Robert Goddard:**

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they doing activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book is usually option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the publication untitled Soul of a Whore and Purvis: Two Plays in Verse can be fine book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

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**Bruce Alexander:**

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