

John the Revelator

By Peter Murphy

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This is the story of John Devine—stuck in a small town in the otherworldly landscape of southeastern Ireland, worried over by his single, chain-smoking, Bible-quoting mother, Lily, and spied on by the “neighborly” Mrs. Nagle. When Jamey Corboy, a self-styled Rimbaudian boy wonder, arrives in town, John’s life suddenly seems full of possibility. His loneliness dissipates. He is taken up by mischief and discovery, hiding in the world beyond as Lily’s mysterious illness worsens. But Jamey and John’s nose for trouble may be their undoing, and soon John will be faced with a terrible moral dilemma.

Joining the ranks of the great novels of friendship and betrayal—*A Separate Peace*, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, and

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha—John the Revelator grapples with the pull of the world and the hold of those we love.

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John the Revelator By Peter Murphy Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Product Description

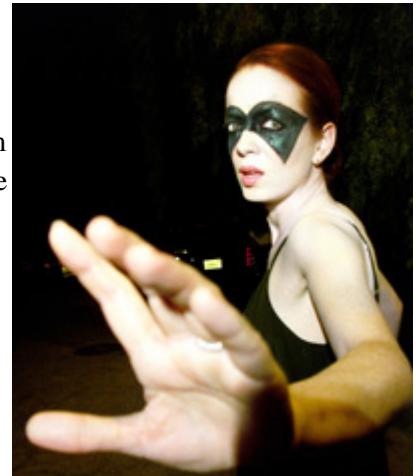
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Read a Q&A: Shirley Manson, Singer and Actress, Interviews Peter Murphy, Author of *John the Revelator*

John the Revelator author Peter Murphy first met Shirley Manson--*Garbage* singer, solo artist incumbent, and actress in Fox's *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*--in the spring of 1998. Back then Manson and her band mates were promoting *Garbage*'s second album *Version 2.0*. Murphy had just turned pro as a music and arts journalist. The five bonded in a mutual melding of spiky Edinburgh wit, sardonic Mid-western drollery and southeastern Irish gallows humor.



The pair's paths are overlapping. Manson cut her journalistic teeth interviewing *U2* several months ago, while Murphy has just completed an album-length spoken word/music adaptation of his novel entitled *The Sounds of John the Revelator*. On a warm evening in late June the tables were turned, as grand inquisitor became quivering quarry. No blood was shed. Well, not much anyway.

Shirley Manson: So Peter, you've been a music journalist for 13 years, and you've just released your debut novel. I want to know why it took you so long when we've all known for years that if anyone were going to write a book it would be you. What spurred you to take the plunge?

Peter Murphy: The spur I think was the oldest one in the book. My father died in 2000, and in the period of about a year after that I started to wake up in the middle of the night afflicted with what I call the Claw of Death, which was a sort of cold icy feeling that I hadn't achieved anything, that I was going to die having only written about other people's work and never having produced any of my own. I had ideas, stories that didn't yet exist and I wanted them to exist. And the only way they would exist was if I wrote them. And it

took a long time because... It just takes a long time. It took me a long time to get even a paragraph or a page that I could stand over and read without flinching, never mind a chapter or a whole book.

Shirley Manson: When I read the book I knew your Mum was ill and struggling with dementia throughout the writing of it. I wonder if the fact that John's mother became a central figure was a result of that?

Peter Murphy: Without doubt. Actually, I hadn't thought about it until you mentioned it, but the whole process was book-ended by my parents' deaths. And I didn't really get a handle on starting the next one until after my mother passed away in May. Y'know, this is the somewhat eerie thing about art and music and writing, its predictive nature. Before my mother fell sick or was diagnosed, I had written some of those scenes. I think what happens is your subconscious divines certain things that your daytime mind doesn't want to acknowledge, so it looks prophetic when you go back and see something that you've written is predicting something that later happened, but I don't think it's prophesy. I think it's that we absorb information or signs or auguries in ways that we don't even comprehend, and some part of us understands what's going to happen, but our conscious mind doesn't want to face up to it. And there's no doubt about it, the character of Lily was a catalyst. I believe it's her book. While the narrator is John, I think his purpose is to bear witness to his mother.

Shirley Manson: Why did you call it *John The Revelator*? I want to know that, even though it's a really moronic question.

Peter Murphy: Oh no, it's crucial. That song title, that aggregation of words was kind of like a talisman for me. What happened was I read Greil Marcus's book *Invisible Republic*, which was about *The Basement Tapes* and Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. And when I read it I was of course compelled to hear the Harry Smith *Anthology*. I remember I bought it in Amherst in Massachusetts and I was sitting on the porch as the crickets were chirping, drinking a beer in the really close heat and looking at the track listing, and I remember my eye just locking on this title. It was the Blind Willie Johnson version, and I just thought it was unbelievable. It was Biblical, it could have been from *Moby Dick*, it could have been a Nick Cave song or a Cormac McCarthy novel, it could have been a John Ford movie. And I couldn't believe that nobody had ascribed a story to it. And once I decided this would be the title, it became a kind of dare. It was like, "Well, can you write something good enough to stand up to this?" It became like a torch to follow.

Shirley Manson: Do you think your book will resonate with an American audience?

Peter Murphy: Absolutely. Because American stories resonated with me and were so similar to my upbringing. When I was 12 or 13 I started the Stephen King canon and just didn't stop until they were all devoured. That was my first obsessive reading of any one author. And then it moved onto Steinbeck. And it was quite late in life that I made the connection: Faulkner, McCullers, O'Connor: what do these names have in common?

Shirley Manson: What do you think is the purpose of fictional writing? Why do you want to write?

Peter Murphy: At a certain stage in my life I realized that this is what makes me feel useful and whole as a person. I'd be delighted if the book made people feel better than they felt before they started it, or if it made a bus journey shorter, or if it got them through a morning in the motor tax office. Beyond that, I've just surrendered to the fact that this is what I do, I live in language, the music of language. I discovered something through the reading of the work... I don't think of it as separate from the person I am, I think of it as integral to my own organs and breathing and walking around. It's just hardwired into my purpose. When I'm working well I'm a dream to be around, and if I'm not working...

Shirley Manson: You have a myspace page up that centers around a spoken word/music project. Was that inspired by the book or did it come before the book?

Peter Murphy: There was an open mike night here in Enniscorthy last November, and there was a lull between singer-songwriters doing their thing, so I got up and read a couple of passages. And afterwards an old friend of mine who I used to play in a band with and who was doing the sound said, 'Do you fancy recording some of that?' So he came out to the house and set up the mikes and we recorded some stuff. And he had a library of recordings by local musicians, and he almost randomly began to throw the readings at these pieces of music, and 60% of the time they just sat really well. That was a really effortless and pure

experience.

(Photo © Sophie Muller)

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. In the hallowed pantheon of Irish coming-of-age novels, Murphy's strongly written debut splits the difference between the sensitivity of *Portrait of an Artist* and the freakishness of *Butcher Boy*. John Devine lives a marginal life with his single mother in the small Irish town of Kilmurry. He has a love for the lore of creepy-crawly things (thanks to his favorite book, *Harper's Compendium of Bizarre Nature Facts*). His mother, a maid for the rich folks in the area, is versed in Irish myth, which gives him an enchanted, slightly sinister sense of the world. As a teenager, John befriends the posh James Corboy, who fancies himself quite the young Rimbaud. Two events define John's coming into manhood: one involves James, a video camera and a drunken rampage; the other, John's mother, who is dying and whose weakness necessitates the frequent assistance of nosy neighbor Mrs. Nagle. Murphy understands the gracelessness of teenage boys and that peculiar delinquent wisdom shared by all the great coming-of-age novelists. With this novel, he doesn't have to bow to any of them. (Aug.)

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Review

In the hallowed pantheon of Irish coming-of-age novels, Murphy's strongly written debut splits the difference between the sensitivity of *Portrait of an Artist* and the freakishness of *Butcher Boy*. . . . Murphy understands the gracelessness of teenage boys and that peculiar delinquent wisdom shared by all the great coming-of-age novelists. With this novel, he doesn't have to bow to any of them. *Publishers Weekly*

[A] jaw-dropping debut. . . . Murphy works literary alchemy on every page, filtering the daily tedium of small-town life through John's bizarre worldview and enriching the story with a caustic humor that still leaves room for genuine moments of friendship and familial tenderness. . . . A terrific, disquieting addition to the long tradition of Irish storytelling. --Kirkus Review

This may be a story of relatively recent contemporary Irish life, but Murphy also conveys a sense of the Ireland that went into making John's world, a place in which the Bible and folklore walked hand in hand. --The Irish Times

This work establishes Murphy as an author of tremendous imaginative and linguistic power who has mastered Flann O'Brien's supernatural whimsy, Beckett's grim irony, and McCabe's unsparing brutality. --Library Journal (starred review)

An absolutely wonderful book. . . . Books like Peter Murphy's can change things and be so fresh and so contemporary, so original and so disturbing and brave. --Colm Toibin, award-winning author

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Robinson:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for

us to understand everything in the world. Each publication has different aim or goal; it means that book has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. These are reading whatever they consider because their hobby is actually reading a book. Why not the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, particular person feel need book once they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you should have this John the Revelator.

Donna Hoffmann:

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Michele Brown:

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book specifically book entitled John the Revelator your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a publication then become one web form conclusion and explanation which maybe you never get prior to. The John the Revelator giving you an additional experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful details for your better life on this era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a casino game. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

Luz Cox:

John the Revelator can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into joy arrangement in writing John the Revelator however doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource info that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information may drawn you into brand-new stage of crucial considering.

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