



The Convictions of John Delahunt

Andrew Hughes

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Beautifully observed, seductive, and laced with dark humor, a gripping historical thriller — set in 1840s Dublin — about a man who betrays his family, his friends, his society and, ultimately, himself.

Dublin, 1841. On a cold December morning, a small boy is enticed away from his mother and his throat savagely cut. This could be just one more small, sad death in a city riven by poverty, inequality and political unrest, but this murder causes a public outcry. For it appears the culprit - a feckless student named John Delahunt - is also an informant in the pay of the authorities at Dublin Castle. And strangely, this young man seems neither to regret what he did, nor fear his punishment. Indeed, as he awaits the hangman in his cell in Kilmainham Gaol, John Delahunt decides to tell his story in this, his final, deeply unsettling statement...

Based on true events that convulsed Victorian Ireland, *The Convictions of John Delahunt* is the tragic tale of a man who betrays his family, his friends, his society and, ultimately, himself. Set amidst Dublin's taverns, tenements, courtrooms, and alleyways and with a rich, Dickensian cast of characters, this enthralling, at times darkly humorous novel brilliantly evokes a time and a place, and introduces a remarkable new literary voice.

The Convictions of John Delahunt Details

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From Reader Review The Convictions of John Delahunt for online ebook

Kate says

Extremely compelling and atmospheric tale set in Dublin in about 1840. Our narrator is an unusual man; his tale is dark and violent. This book is extremely difficult to put down.

Aurime says

Nereden ba?lasam? Neyi anlatsam size?

Merakla okudum ve elimden b?rakamad?m? Bu yeterli de?il, hay?r...

Yapt???m hiçbir ?eyden pi?man de?ilim, akl?m hâla yapamad?klar?mda (:D) diyerek kendi hikayesini anlatmaya ba?lıyor Delahunt. O kadar ilginç, o kadar etkileyici bir hikaye ki bu... ?rlanda ve Britanya krall???nda adaletin nas?l i?ledi?ini gayet iyi anl?yoruz. 1800'ler Dublını... 1841 y?l?, vah?et devri... Yani? Gerçekten muhte?emdi. "Cinayet" kavram?na yeni bir anlam getirdi bu kitap! Okuyun, okutun dedi?im say?l? kitaptan biri. <3

Ciaran Mcgrath says

A dark, atmospheric and thoroughly detailed recreation of Georgian Dublin is the setting for this tale of murder and deceit. The narrator and protagonist fascinates throughout, as the audience is brought on his journey from respectability to Kilmainham Gaol.

Mieneke says

Dark, gloomy, and oppressive, the Victorian Dublin we're presented with in *The Convictions of John Delahunt* is eerily like Dickensian London and yet quite different. In his debut novel Andrew Hughes takes us to this harsh, but beautiful city to tell us the tale of the murderer John Delahunt. A figure of historical record with documented crimes, Delahunt is the beating heart of this tale, yet it's not just his tale. It's also a look at how the Dublin police force functioned at the time and it's a love story and an unexpected one at that.

When we meet John Delahunt he's awaiting his execution in Kilmainham prison and he is allowed to write down his final testimony. He decides to do so and tell his entire story. So we zip back to his time as a rather feckless student of natural philosophy and learn about the evening that set the events in motion that end up with him in this cell awaiting his death. And it is rather unnerving how one incident can set off this cascade of events. And the reader must wonder whether there isn't more to John's development than this moment in time. Getting drawn into the nefarious goings-on in the Castle doesn't truly excuse some of the actions John takes, as they don't seem out of character for him and I'd expected many people in the same situation didn't make that choice.

John also isn't a very likeable or even sympathetic character, yet he's compelling and I wanted to know how he got where he was when we met him, so I kept reading even if I didn't actually like him. John is indolent, selfish and self-absorbed. He also came across as callous and cruel. There were a few story lines that did make him somewhat more sympathetic, such as his recounting of his childhood and how his father changed after his mother's death and of course his relationship with Helen. At first I thought his involvement with Helen was one of convenience and strategy as he seemed rather indifferent to her, but it is only in the latter half of his narrative that his true feelings for her come to the fore. And I have to say as his marriage came apart at the seams I did feel sorry for him.

Helen was quite interesting as well. On the one hand she's the demure daughter of a prosperous Dublin society family, hemmed in by rules and zealously watched over by a governess. On the other she's strong-willed and adventurous, setting her cap at John and going after him as well, even suggesting that they elope when John doesn't get her father's consent to marry her. Similarly, she's an active participant in John work for the Castle, helping him make lists of acquaintances and thinking off information to provide the Castle on them. Her story broke my heart and while her sudden return to a virtuous patrician's daughter was jarring, I also felt glad she was able to return to her family and with a chance at re-entering society and building a happier life for herself.

Hughes' portrayal of Castle practices and the way they collect and hoard information on citizens and put that information to use is chilling. It rather reminded me of the argument used in the whole NSA discussion, that even if you've done nothing wrong you don't want people to keep all this information on you, because it's all about how that information is interpreted and how an interpretation can be used against you. It was also frightening how quickly and far John went down the rabbit hole once the agents at the Castle got their hooks in him. They are corrupt and unscrupulous and to satisfy their demands, John commits increasingly baser and crueller acts though he doesn't seem to suffer huge pangs of conscience over it.

Due to the nature of the narrative – a first-person confession – at times the reader has to wonder about its reliability. Not only the usual caveats of a first-person limited narration apply, but in addition we know John isn't the most trustworthy person, so how much faith should we place in his veracity? This kept going through my mind throughout the book, especially as there are several scenes where John asks to see Sibthorpe, the chief intelligencer, and gets told that there is no such person. In the end though, even if Delahunt twists some things to put himself in a better light, I do think his narration is largely reliable. The fact that he seems to feel a need for honesty in his last hours and the purpose he puts his testimony to argue in his favour.

The Convictions of John Delahunt is a fascinating story, compellingly written, featuring a protagonist who would have been called grimdark had he been the star of a fantasy novel. Andrew Hughes paints his story with swift, sure strokes and manages to create a vivid picture of Victorian Dublin complete with a murky atmosphere that matches that of the time's penny dreadfuls. I very much enjoyed Hughes' debut, it was a rich and gripping reading experience. If this is his first novel, I can't wait to see where he goes in the future. *The Convictions of John Delahunt* comes highly recommended.

This book was provided for review by the publisher.

?smet Uluer says

Yazar Fitzwilliam Sakinleri üzerine yapt??? bir ara?t?rmada tesadüfen rastl?yor John Delahunt ismine. ?rlanda istihbarat? Kale'ye muhbirlik yapan Dublinli bir üniversite ö?rencisinin hayat? çerçevesinde hikayesini okuyoruz. Karakterin kay?ts?zl??? beni zaman zaman rahats?z ve huzursuz etse de oldukça ilginç bir hikaye.

Mirella says

In the novel, *The Convictions of John Delahunt*, author Andrew Hughes takes us deep in the mind of a serial killer. Based on a true story, John Delahunt was a man who was convicted and hanged for the murder of a very young boy in England in the year 1842. He slashed the young boy's throat.

The story begins while John is in jail awaiting his execution. He is given an opportunity to write about his life and crimes. Through flashbacks, John reflects on his life and his crimes. Married and in love with Helen, a wealthy young woman whose family disowned her for marrying John. They live in poverty, where every day is an ordeal. By chance, John becomes an informant and operative for the corrupt Dublin Castle, a semi-law enforcement agency with ruthless and evil tendencies, using extortion, and even murder to achieve their aspirations. As John becomes ever more dependent and involved in his machinations with Dublin Castle, he falls into a life of crime, and becomes a killer without remorse.

Although this is a very dark, sinister story about a violent and heartless killer, the character of John isn't completely hateful. His brutality is stark and ruthless, but sometimes he is a victim too, and there are moments when the reader will feel sympathy for the particular plight he finds himself in.

The story is not for the faint of heart, but for those who love being thrilled, gripped by an unputdownable book, and who loves reading about the dark side of life, then this is the book for them. This chilling novel is amazing and I loved every page. Simply fabulous.

J.R. says

A chilling insight into the mind of a killer based on an actual murder case in 19th century Ireland.

While researching for a non-fiction social history, archivist Andrew Hughes stumbled upon references to a sensational murder that had been problematic for police in Dublin in the 1840s. This led him to the real John Delahunt who sparked his imagination and resulted in this excellent first novel.

The recreated Delahunt is an amoral young man who becomes a tool of a clandestine government agency, informing on others for pay. He soon discovers the highest reward is for murder and, when there are none to report, has no compunction about doing the deed himself and putting the blame on others.

Delahunt is abetted in his decline by Helen, an odd young woman he courts (among their first 'romantic' outings is attendance at a hanging) and with whom he eventually elopes after her family rejects him as a suitor. Despite abject poverty, Helen stands by her man for the greater part of the novel until he learns near the end she is, like him, a manipulative liar.

Hughes' skill at depicting the harsh life of Dublin's poor is reminiscent of Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Despite the grim nature of the subject, there are passages of dark humor and there were moments when I found myself sympathizing with Delahunt's plight as the narrative brought him closer to the gallows. A gripping read.

Cphe says

This is a fictionalised account of John Delahunt who was hanged in 1842 for the murder of a young boy Thomas MacGuire. The story opens with Delahunt awaiting execution in Kilmainham Jail. He is given the opportunity to write an account of events leading up to his incarceration.

The story begins with his time at Trinity College as a student, his marriage to Helen and becoming a paid informer for the inner sanctum of the sinister and infamous Dublin Castle.

What struck me about this book was how very unlikeable the characters were. John Delahunt was a psychopath and his wife Helen not far behind him. Delahunt comes across as quite a chilling character, devoid of any morality except towards his wife Helen. It's a world of predators, where only the strongest survive. The author was able to portray a seedy, and grim existence. There is a feeling of malevolence and foreboding in this story, and a brutal violence that made for some difficult reading in parts.

However, I found it to be a compelling and intense read. The prose is seamless and the story well crafted. For a debut, I thought it was very well done.

Ariel says

A fascinating story of how one mans character flaw, lazziness, lands him in jail for child murder. When John Delahunt can't summon the wherewithal to pass his final exams he stumbles upon the job of snitching on his neighbors to the police. When he is no longer of use as an informer he starts to get creative and play loose with the law in order to get his payday. It is no secret, as we learn in the first few pages, that things don't go so well for the scheming John.

I loved the gothic mood of this novel based on an actual crime in the 1800's in Dublin. Hughes dark tale takes the reader on the journey of John Delahunt, a man of dubious morals who starts out on the right side of the law but because of his greed and aversion to real work, ends up on the end of the hangman's noose. Once you start this book you won't want to put it down until you reach the final twisty conclusion.

Liz Barnsley says

On a cold December morning, a small boy is enticed away from his mother and his throat savagely cut. This could be just one more small, sad death in a city riven by poverty, inequality and political unrest, but this killing causes a public outcry. For it appears the culprit – a feckless student named John Delahunt – is also an informant and in the pay of the authorities at Dublin Castle. And strangely, this young man seems neither to regret what he did nor fear his punishment. Indeed, as he awaits the hangman in his cell in Kilmainham Gaol, John Delahunt decides to tell his story in this, his final, deeply unsettling statement . . .

This is a terrific tale based on a true story and a real page turner of the highest order. I was immediately captivated by the ambience of the setting and the truly strange and wonderful character of John Delahunt.

There are two excellent things in this novel – firstly the main protagonist – not a nice man, no not at all. Needy and selfish, with a hard edge, it is unsurprising that he ends up where he does and yet – he is probably

not the most nefarious character here. Malleable and dangerous he is manipulated by dangerous men...

Then you have an absolutely authentic setting, chilling in its intensity, a snapshot of a different time – you will be transported there entirely, following Mr Delahunt's life as it unfolds and leads to tragedy and murder..

Utterly compelling, completely fascinating and ultimately a sad and intense tale of violence and greed. Hard to put down and even harder to put away from your mind once done, this is a hugely impressive debut. Highly Recommended.

Happy Reading Folks!

Helen says

Imagine you're a poor student at Dublin's Trinity College in the 1840s. You're newly married and living with your wife in a squalid tenement, cut off from friends and family. The future looks bleak, so when the authorities at Dublin Castle suggest that you become an informer, it seems to be the perfect solution. You will be rewarded well for any information you can give them leading to a conviction...and if you could just manage to witness a few murders, your money troubles could be over!

This is the situation in which our narrator finds himself in this wonderfully moody and sinister historical crime novel, *The Convictions of John Delahunt*. As the novel opens, John is sitting in a prison cell awaiting his death. We're not sure exactly what he has done, except that it appears to involve the murder of a child. As he begins to write his final testimony, we are taken back to the origins of John's dangerous career as an informer and discover how and why this young student of natural philosophy has been sentenced to hang.

Andrew Hughes is also the author of a non-fiction book about the residents of Dublin's Fitzwilliam Square, *Lives Less Ordinary*, and so he has been able to draw on his knowledge of the city's history to make John Delahunt's world feel authentic and real. Because of the circles in which Delahunt moves, the focus is on the darker side of society – workhouses, grave robbing, illegal abortions, rat-killing and laudanum addiction are all explored. Dublin's streets and alleys, taverns and parks, courtrooms and drawing rooms are all vividly described and although the language the author uses is modern enough to be accessible and easy to read, it never feels out of place with the Victorian setting.

John Delahunt himself is an intriguing narrator, though not always entirely reliable. He is certainly not easy to like – one of his first actions in the book is to tell a lie to the police that leads to a friend being found guilty of a crime he didn't commit – yet I could still feel for him when things didn't go according to plan and when he saw his life beginning to disintegrate around him.

A large part of John's story revolves around his relationship with his wife, Helen, who is another interesting character – although we never get to see things from her perspective as John is narrating in the first person. At first Helen seems to be on the same wavelength as her husband, attending a hanging with him and even helping him to compile a list of friends, family and neighbours to inform on. Later in the book she experiences a personal tragedy and after this she seems to undergo a change, though because we only see her through John's eyes, her true thoughts and emotions are not very clear.

I loved this dark and atmospheric book and was completely gripped by John Delahunt's fascinating story (based on true events, by the way). A word of advice to potential readers – don't start reading it in your lunch break at work or in bed when you need to be up early the next day, as you may find that you really don't want to put it down!

Tony Woods says

Immensely enjoyable. Narration and observance is superb. Characters are rich and evolved. Great novel

Susana Sassi says

Loved it. I got it out from the library with little expectation and was surprised how much I enjoyed it. The atmosphere of mid 19th century Ireland is vividly recreated, the plot winds through many twists and turns to the inevitable conclusion but through the narration I found myself at the end liking the character of Delahunt and feeling more than a little sympathy for his outcome.

Well written.

Laura Lee says

Excellent! Read quickly in short amount of time. Page turner! Dublin, 1840s. John Delahunt is a victim of his own crimes. He falls into a trap and can't get himself out. Truth blends with lies. I cannot say much without giving it away. It has black moments but overall a very powerful book. Want more from this author.

Laura says

I was recommended The Convictions of John Delahunt through Goodreads because I liked Wolf Winter, actually, and liked the summary. I figured I'd be getting a dark, atmospheric novel about Dublin in the 1840s and, of course, the murder of a young child. That's not really what I got.

When I first started reading, I figured my inability to focus on it would go away soon, as I got more and more into the novel. In fact, I knew it would take me a little time to get acquainted with these books, as my experiences with Wolf Winter and Burial Rites attested to- Wolf Winter's writing style didn't immediately click with me and Burial Rites was just too slow for my tastes at the beginning. But as I got further and further along in The Convictions of John Delahunt, I found myself just tapping the screen on my iPad listlessly, uninterested in anything that was going on. Even the sizable body count the characters in this book were racking up made it hard to care, because the writing style and the lack of depth behind the characters made it hard for me to care.

Not only that, there was none of that atmosphere I love in these types of historical mysteries. Hughes didn't take full advantage of the creepiness his chosen setting of Dublin in the 1840s could have provided us. In fact, Dublin felt like another generic Victorian city, like it could have been Edinburgh or London or any of the other major cities in that part of the world. One of the biggest things I look for in any of the books I read, but especially historical fiction, is strength of setting. I like feeling like I'm right there with the protagonists, like I can practically taste the whiskey or smell the smog. The Dublin Murder Squad series isn't a historical fiction series, but one of the biggest draws those books have is their Irishness. I was hoping for something along the same lines as those books in a Victorian-era setting and I was disappointed.

Which is a shame, because *The Convictions of John Delahunt* is a good story, but Hughes just didn't do a very good job at executing it. I understand that he was trying to go for a *Crime and Punishment* feel to it, with Delahunt acting as Raskolnikov, and Hughes is trying to show us how poverty drove him to committing the crimes he did. In that case, I wish the book opened up with the murder and followed Delahunt as he covered up the crime, and slowly goes more and more crazy due to hiding it, and also due to the horrific nature of the crime. That is, after all, the main appeal to *Crime and Punishment*, the psychological aspects. Perhaps if Hughes had amped up the psychological distress he would have created a more engrossing novel.

Andrew Hughes had a great idea with *The Convictions of John Delahunt* and a lackluster execution. This isn't the worst novel I've read this month, but it is one I was underwhelmed and disinterested by, and I don't really think I'd recommend it out much.
