



Cry to Heaven

Anne Rice

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Anne Rice brings to life the exquisite and otherworldly society of the eighteenth-century castrati, the delicate and alluring male sopranos whose graceful bodies and glorious voices brought them the adulation of the royal courts and grand opera houses of Europe, men who lived as idols, concealing their pain as they were adored as angels, yet shunned as half-men.

As we are drawn into their dark and luminous story, as the crowds of Venetians, Neopolitans, and Romans, noblemen and peasants, musicians, prelates, princes, saints, and intriguers swirl around them, Anne Rice brings us into the sweep of eighteenth-century Italian life, into the decadence beneath the shimmering surface of Venice, the wild frivolity of Naples, and the magnetic terror of its shadow, Vesuvius.

Cry to Heaven Details

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From Reader Review Cry to Heaven for online ebook

Amber Lehman says

“Read sometimes for the story . . . Don't be like the book snobs who won't do that. Read sometimes for the words - the language. Don't be like the play-it-safers that won't do that. But when you find a book that has both a good story and good words, treasure that book.”

? Stephen King

I came across the above quote on another author's page. When I read it, it struck me immediately that it summed up my experience with latest book I'd read. It has been a long time since I've read a book that affected me as much as "Cry to Heaven" did. I can now say that this book is one of my definite favorites and has earned a spot on my "cherished books" shelf, right beside my signed and numbered "Imajica" and a tattered copy of "The Brothers Karamazov." I had read Anne Rice before. The usual : "Interview with a Vampire" and "The Vampire Lestat." I found them both enjoyable and then moved on to "The Vampire Armand" - which I found far more appealing and admittedly, became one of my favorite stories. But "Cry to Heaven"? Wow . . . where do I even begin? This novel was such an amazing, breathtaking read. A heartfelt book full of lush prose and emotional suffering shown in such exquisite detail that you cannot help but feel the anguish of the protagonist yourself. When an author is able to make you empathize with a character so deeply, you are undoubtedly going to be invested in their journey. I savored every word of this book and was so sad when it had finally come to an end. For the past few days, since I've finished the novel, my imagination has been reeling in the world that Anne Rice so lovingly constructed, hesitant to leave, wondering what can possibly top such an experience. I highly recommend it.

Lauren Smith says

One of the most boring books I've ever read. It's a dreadful soap opera about sex and revenge, involving a bunch of dull, melodramatic assholes. Most of it is completely predictable, and while you're waiting for the obvious to happen, you have to trudge through chapter after chapter of angsty whining in infuriatingly purple prose. Anne Rice offers no twists, no surprises. There is plenty of sex, which might have been fun if Rice didn't describe it all in ridiculous euphemisms or equate rough sex with rape as if rape could be fun under the right circumstances.

There is actually some interesting content, like Rice's depiction of the world of the castrati and some ideas about their sexuality. Sadly, this wasn't nearly strong enough to drag me out of the pit of misery this novel threw me into. I finished it only because I'd committed to a group read and needed the novel for a reading challenge. I've actually read books where the content was less interesting and the writing even worse, and they still managed to be better reads than Cry to Heaven. One star, for a torturous reading experience that I thought was never going to end.

Adam says

Oh my God!!! Castrati!!!

Unless the idea of men who have had their balls cut off having sex will sustain you for however many hundred pages this book was, you will find it deadly boring. And the writing was painful, too. It made me wish for a good castration to take my mind off the pain of her stilted dialog.

Nirmala mcafee says

Cry to Heaven is a gem! I couldn't believe that this subject would interest me in the way that it did. Although I read Rice's early works, I soon grew tired of the Vampire series. I wasn't going to give her another chance until my niece swore to me that I'd enjoy this book. She said it was one of her favorite books! I read it to be more "connected" to her. What a great decision. I flew through the book! It is amazing. What a story. I passed it on to my husband and he, too, was riveted. It is more than just a story - it teaches of an era - a sociological phenomenon, if you will - that not only has passed, but one that didn't really reach American shores. It is a rare world, for sure, for Americans. In this way alone, the book was refreshingly original!

Paul says

I enjoyed this book though at many points it read too much like a romance novel for my taste. If you can't stand "his throbbing member" lines then the plot will be lost on you, particularly if you're turned off by her sometimes S&M overtones. Also the plot was a bit predictable and at over 500 pages this novel could have been a much more worthwhile read had it been considerably shorter. That said, Rice's 18th Century Italy is a vivid world and it is an engaging work. I'd recommend her "Feast of All Saints" over this.

Dreamer says

I have read this excellent intense novel more than once over the years. Our hero, Tonio Treschi is forcibly castrated as a teenager robbing him of his birthright and preserving his beautiful voice as one of the castrati.

"In all my life I have never wooed and suffered as I have over you. But there is love and love, and I am spent trying to separate the one from the other...."

- Guido to Tonio

Julianne Davidow says

I have read some of the other reviews, and while I agree that this book is long, perhaps too long and drawn out for some, I deeply appreciate Rice's detail and elaborate descriptions of people, places, and emotions. It is through the richness of her prose that the full experience of each character is explored. I have spent a lot of time in Italy, have lived in Venice, so perhaps that has something to do with my fascination for this story. But it's more than that. The suffering, fortitude, and transformation of the characters is so clearly written, so beautifully elaborated, that the reader too feels he/she has been transformed as well. Tonio and Guido suffer through alienation, intimacy, love, betrayal, loss. But they also are able to enjoy the deep satisfaction of using their talents, of having their talents and abilities appreciated by others.

This has become one of my favorite novels.

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

2018 Reading Challenge: LGBTQ protagonist

Rice ripped my heart from my chest and stomped on it a few times. This book was so beautifully written, quite emotional, everyone spoke from the heart. Also quite informative about the castrati of Italy. May be my favorite Rice novel ever

Aracne Mileto says

Anne Rice es por mucho una de mis escritoras favoritas, y con este libro me dejó claro que eso no va a cambiar.

Un grito al cielo nos lleva al mundo de los Castrati, hombres que eran sometidos a la castración a corta edad para conservar sus voces intactas. La historia nos narra la vida de Tonio Treschi, un patricio veneciano poseedor de una voz magnífica; y de Guido, un maestro de música Castrato perturbado por su pasado y por lo que el azar le arrebató. El destino juega con ambos quitándoles lo que más amaban; sin embargo, esto solo será el comienzo de un viaje para descubrir lo que realmente valen.

Suelo ser muy exigente con autores que ya me han enamorado con historias anteriores, siempre llego a sus libros esperando más, y Rice no me decepcionó. Este es el primer libro de corte histórico que leo de ella, y pude reencontrarme con aquella narrativa suya que me hace flotar en sus páginas. Aunque tengo que admitir que hubo partes que pudo haber omitido en la obra, pero igual las disfruté.

Los personajes fueron toda la obra, puesto que no solo eran parte de la historia; sino, la historia misma. Las personalidades están tan bien definidas e irradian todo tipo de sensaciones, que casi he podido sentir el sufrimiento de Tonio como si fuese el propio, pues a veces a quién no le ha resultado difícil quitarse de la cabeza el ansia de la venganza. Aquella espina que solo parece adentrarse más en la carne. Tener todo a veces solo te hace sentir más necesitado.

En conclusión, a mí me ha encantado conocer un poco más sobre la vida de los castrati. Si les gustan las novelas cargadas de sentimientos y llenas de dilemas morales, este libro les puede interesar. (Advertencia: el libro contiene muchas escenas de sexo homosexual)

Michalyn says

I don't even have words to begin to describe the sorrow and poignancy of "Cry to Heaven". The novel's protagonist is Tonio, who is unwillingly castrated in a series of events riddled with deceit and betrayal. Enraged and tormented, at first Tonio refuses his fate, but as the novel progresses he is slowly transformed

into an ultimately triumphant figure. Lush, sensual prose and an ending that will hold you by the throat, this is a book that will stay with you long, long after it is read.

Janet says

I found "Cry to Heaven" to be as rich, baroque and sensual as the previous works, I've read, by Anne Rice. [The Mayfair witch series]

A young boy was brutally castrated because of a struggle for power in a Venetian household of the 18th century. After a life-time of study and vocal training, he eventually becomes a star of the opera in Rome. The public is entranced by his remarkable voice and stunning good looks. He can play both male and female roles with authenticity, and is larger than life on stage.

The young man, Tonio, has amorous liaisons with both men and women, who find him irresistible. However, he cannot accept his physical impairment and refers to his elongated physique, that of the eunuch, as the body of a monster. His character is marked by sadness and a deep longing.

The end of the story is powerful and dramatic. Tonio does deal with the past and those who sought to destroy him.

A further note, I rated this book a 4-star because of its excessive length (566 pp.)

Fenriz Angelo says

DNF on page 170 - Hmmm i just have a hard time reading this, the premise sounds interesting but it's not catching up my attention enough to read it instead of read the other book or play videogames, and it being a paperback is making it 300% harder so... nope. Atm i need a book to *really* capture me.

Kerste says

This book was the first time I really understood what a brave writer Anne Rice is. I had read many of her books and appreciated her style, but this book took me to a dark place that I dreaded going and figured she couldn't possibly go...but she went there, just as she promised. When I met her, this is the book I had her sign (even though she was touring in support of a different book).

Kathryn says

My husband is a big fan of Anne Rice's early works, but he won't read this one, for obvious reasons (just read the first sentence of the book and you'll understand). I thought the whole book was wonderful; I love stories of transformations, and the main character changes so much from the beginning to the end that he becomes a completely different person. Heck, it's almost as if he becomes a different species. Anne Rice spends a lot of time describing the gorgeous exotic world of the Venetian castrati in loving detail, and also

manages to make the specifics of voice-training downright fascinating. Be warned; LOT'S of sex in this one (mostly with guys, but that's kind of a given with Anne Rice's books), and also one scene of violence that's not for the faint of heart. Given the subject matter, it won't give anything away to say it's every man's worst nightmare.

Alice Lee says

I absolutely adored this one. When Anne Rice is good, she is *really* good (of course when she's bad, she's pretty deplorable).

Cry to Heaven is first and foremost, an intensely romantic novel. And Anne Rice is really best at crafting deeply romantic, decadent, excessively beautiful, homosexuality-laden erotica, which is exactly what this is, along with pedophilic elements. Her prose is deliberate, ponderous and Gothic (as if taking after Mary Shelley's style), the plot is very dramatic and, well, juicy.

I'm sure late teenage girls or romance-minded dreamers will enjoy this one as much as I do :)

***EDIT**

I re-read this recently and it's obvious that my taste has changed since high school. Her writing is pretentious and insufferable (yes, I understand "scarce" is an adverb too, but do you really have to use "scarce" instead of "scarcely" just to make your sentences feel fancier?), and the plot was just...so...juvenile. It's like it's pulled right out of a 16-year-old girl's imagination. I hate you, I hate you, oh let's have sex, now I love you and kind of still hate you, and I'm going to keep having sex with random people and fall in love left and right and we can all be angsty together, yay!

I remember being quite taken by two specific characters in my first read-through - Domenico and Carlo. I don't understand how, the first time I read it, I managed to be self-deluded enough to believe Carlo was a good guy all the way to the end. That guy's a jerk, end of story, but for whatever reason I thought he was so complex and conflicted. No, he really isn't.

The ONLY part of this book that I still read with rapt attention was the parts involving Domenico. Hoo boy, I love, love, love that pretty little boy. Whatever of that 16-year-old girl's ability to fantasize about yaoi-ism still remaining in me just devoured Domenico and hungered for more. As soon as Domenico left the plot, I became immediately bored.

Laurel LaFlamme says

Cry to Heaven was the second Anne Rice novel I ever read. The subject matter is intense (sometimes graphic) from PAGE ONE; yet too fascinating to put down!

What I did NOT now until way after the fact, is Anne's work in this well written book is historically correct and highly researched.

Among other things, Cry to Heaven is a story of life-long revenge! It's steeped in rich historicity of 18th Century Opera, the Church, the history of the "Castrati" -- and some other sexuality explicit, yet apparently accurate, goings-on of the Church at that time.

"Italian Opera had conquered the world. But it was the Soprano singer the world worshiped." Bam!

I NEVER in a million years would've guessed such abominable practices went on at that time; alas, it's heartbreakingly true. Young boys were forcibly castrated to prevent the pre-puberty change in voice and keep their voices soprano alto high so they could sing in the choir...and the Operas of the day supported this venue.

It's a story about great contrasts in life: Love vs Revenge, internal struggles with Right & Wrong, sexual awakening & the desire to be loved and find peace in your skin where you stand, confusion vs ambition...there are so many threads in this book that for me, while deeply interesting, the read at times seemed too long.

Now that I've had several years & a few casual re-reads of the book, I think there can be a modern day correlation: The desire for fame & becoming an music "Idol" revered by the masses comes at a HIGH price many are not willing to pay.

It's a bitter-sweet story. *The Church states it never "officially" sanctioned the Castrati. However, it happened.

I never would have chosen this book on my own had it not been recommended by a dear friend. Once I got into it...it was like a train wreck (in a good way) & I couldn't put it down.

Again, Anne Rice amazes me with her rich descriptions of...anything! Anne Rice verbally paints vivid, realistic feeling prose so that you imagine you're there.

I could have done without some of the sexual content, but seriously, HOW can you relate to a cast of characters who are struggling with what they have become and HOW they find intimacy without "going there?"

It's was their life; in the story & apparently in real-life history, too. Describing sexuality in the face of castration, the Church, the Opera, Aristocracy, fame & fortune, AND tremendous heartache...seems the natural way to go to help you bond with and/or root for a character. It defines the people and further defines "their times."

*A Bio of almost any modern day rock star an be far more tawdry.

Since my first read of Cry to Heaven, I've seen some good & some horrible reviews. IF you are closed minded, prude, homophobic, or hate history & the Arts, this is not the historical tale for you.

Conversely, if you're new to Anne Rice, enjoy music history, descriptive details about life in the 1700s, are compassionate, and have the time to dedicate to a long, concentrated read -- I'd say it's a Good Read.

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Note: A review is not an endorsement of any sort of lifestyle choice, religious affirmation, not a discrimination or exaltation of one view over another. It's simply an opinion and they all vary from person to

person.

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I enjoyed recalling the memories of a book I read at a very good time in my life, recommended by a dear friend. Just talking about it was cathartic.

My description is intentionally vague. I've noticed that some reviews are quite the spoiler, almost like Cliff Notes. I see no need to re-write a book someone else has not even read yet.

Kiwi Begs2Differ \ says

A sensual tale of revenge. I wanted to read a book set in Venice and I remembered I enjoyed this novel many years ago. This book recreates Italy (Venice ambience is done beautifully, but also Naples and Rome) in the 18th century really well, the historical aspects are spot on, the costumes, the music and visual arts, the places, the atmosphere all vividly described.

There's a lot more sex than I remembered, a lot of drama (fit for the Opera, hehe) but it should have been edited to a shorter version IMO. I guess my tastes have somewhat moved on, but it wasn't the disappointment I feared, I'm glad I have re-read it.

3.5 stars rounded up because of the dramatic final scene in Venice (reminiscent of a Greek tragedy).

Marleen says

The blurb on the back of the book:

“IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY THE CASTRATI RECREATED HEAVEN ON EARTH.

Their exquisite voices soured above the glittering world of courtiers and nobility. Those who achieved fame were showered with riches and sexual favours. But their success also had a terrible sadness.

TONIO, of noble birth, is the victim of a vengeful brother. Disinherited and forced to join the ranks of the castrati, he plans his revenge while striving to become the greatest of all singers.

GUIDO, sacrificed to the knife at an early age, composes opera and dreams of the perfect voice to give it life. He discovers Toni and becomes his teacher.

Together they reach the very pinnacle of success. Tonio is pushed to the extremes of endurance as he tries to resolve his lust for glory and for vengeance.”

“Don't weep in front of these strangers! Cry to heaven, cry to heaven, cry to heaven.”

Oh my, what a book. Beautifully written, it tells a story filled with beauty, music and love while portraying unimaginable pain, desperation and hate. The idea of the mutilation young boys went through so that they

might avoid losing their beautiful soprano voices is so cruel, so very inhumane it is hard to imagine that it really happened. But it did. Young boys gifted with promising voices, often from very poor families, were subjected to this form of mutilation to alleviate their family's hardship and give them a chance at a more prosperous future. Young boys such as Guido in this story, who would never know what it would be like to be a man. Young boys who would grow up to look different from other men, who would be instantly recognisable as castrati, who could achieve fame and fortune but would never have been seen as "normal" people. But if the boys were young enough when the operation took place and if they were good enough to make a name for themselves, they had every opportunity to make a satisfying life for themselves with often only a vague idea of exactly what it was they had lost.

How much worse to have the mutilation inflicted upon you when you're fifteen, when you've had your first glimpses of what it might mean to be a man, when you've started to think and dream of everything you might do and achieve in just a few more years. How much worse when you're Tonio and the thing you love most in the world – singing – is used against you to rob you of your heritage, your family, your home and everything you thought was waiting for you in the future.

And how very well does Anne Rice share the pain of this loss with her readers. Because this is, for the most part, a story about loss. There is Guido who has to come to terms with the loss of his voice.

"It was as if his own voice had been his lover, and his lover had forsaken him."

And while he finds his salvation in teaching others to sing and writing his masterful songs and operas, it isn't until he hears Tonio's voice and is given the opportunity to mentor him that he finds a new and maybe his true purpose in his life.

Guido may have lost his voice, Tonio loses everything he has ever known when he's just fifteen years old. Exiled from his home in Venice, robbed of his manhood and his inheritance it is no wonder he falls victim to anger and despair.

"No matter how he felt, he would behave as if he did not feel it, and everything would be better."

And even when Tonio does allow his love of singing to ease his pain, the taboos he still has to overcome are as enormous as the mountain he can see from his bedroom in Naples.

But this is also a story about love; love found in the most unexpected places. The love between Guido and Tonio, enduring, volatile but indestructible. The love of music. The love for others, strong, beautiful and engrossing but never replacing or diminishing the love between the teacher and his star pupil. This is a story about facing the hard life has dealt you and playing it the best you can, only to discover that maybe you ended up with a winner after all.

This is a story that will break your heart in a multitude of ways only to put it back together. This is a book filled with characters that will captivate you and stay in your thoughts for a long time after you finish reading. For me this was a book about a phenomenon I was barely aware of; a phenomenon I found as fascinating as I found it abhorrent. There is a quiet beauty in this book. The writing appears distant and yet gives such a wealth of emotion and beauty.

I don't quite have the words to describe just how much this book affected me; how strongly this story touched me. I have the emotion though; I love this book and this story.

I owe Tiffany Reisz a debt of gratitude for recommending yet another jewel of a book. Once again she has brought me to a story that has made a lasting impression on me. I will forever be grateful for the day I found a description of “The Siren” on NetGalley and decided I needed to read it. Who knew that one click on a “request” button would bring me such a wealth of literary, as well as other, delights.

Lucy says

[My main interest was finally getting to read Tonio's revenge against his father but it took forever to get to that part, and by then I had grown tired of all the opera talk. The romance between Tonio and Cristina also did not work for me. I didn't have the investment in them like I did with Tonio and Guido. This probably would have been a 5 stars if the dull character of Cristina had no

Danny Tyran says

In my opinion, Cry to Heaven is definitely one of Anne Rice's finest books. Beautifully written in the lush, gorgeous prose for which Rice is famous, Cry to Heaven is rich in detail and presents a fascinating look at the lives of Italy's 18th century castrati. The protagonist, Tonio is extremely well-drawn and memorable. His struggles to come to terms with both his life as a whole and his sexuality in particular are nothing less than soul-wrenching. I found the erotic scenes, criticized by some reviewers, to be beautifully written and central to the book's premise. I did think, though, that the character of Christina, a central figure in Tonio's struggles, could have been more fully drawn and introduced earlier. It seemed to me as though Rice, herself, was not completely acquainted with Christina and I think the book suffers slightly because of this. Cry to Heaven, which contains no witches, vampires or other preternatural beings, is well-plotted and well-paced, something which cannot be said for all of Rice's books. She controls this story masterfully and resists the urge to people the novel with extraneous characters, ultimately ending the story on a haunting but richly rewarding note. With Cry to Heaven, I can pay Anne Rice the highest compliment--this is the novel I wish I had written and I can say that about no other book.
