



And the Ass Saw the Angel

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Cave's only novel to date takes on the southern gothic in this bizarre baroque tale. Born mute to a drunken mother and a demented father, tortured Euchrid Eucrow finds more compassion in the family mule than in his fellow men. But he alone will grasp the cruel fate of Cosey Mo, the beautiful young prostitute in the pink caravan on Hooper's Hill. And it is Euchrid, spiraling ever deeper into his mad angelic vision, who will ultimately redeem both the town and its people. "Surprising, remarkable." — The Atlanta Journal

And the Ass Saw the Angel Details

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Author : Nick Cave

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From Reader Review And the Ass Saw the Angel for online ebook

Mel Bossa says

The "cleanness" narrative I've ever read I think. Clean meaning there is no barrier between Eucrid and the reader. You inhabit him wholly and completely for the duration of the book--never driven out by Pastor Reality.

It's a body I couldn't wait to leave and through those demented eyes, I experienced madness and heard the creeks and bangs of its mechanisms. Nick Cave took me to the limits of CrazyTown and then made me turn around and take in the grandiose view of it without permission to blink.

Now, as far as the writing goes: it's lyrical, self-indulgent, brilliant, ridiculous (a lot of the words don't even exist), tedious, relentless, BEAUTIFUL.

What is the whole thing about?

I came away with something, and it was: LONELINESS HURTS PEOPLE.

LeAnne says

Y'all, this is a very, very weird one to rate. I loved/hated it in equal measure and likely would guess most of you would toss it across the room. The written turns of phrase are brilliant and inventive and lovely/horrible, but the growing insanity is very tough to bear.

First, the story is Southern Gothic, and by definition that means we will have at LEAST one mentally ill person in the tale along with dark and bizarre acts. There is, of course, a protagonist who we feel for and yet know that something is not right with him. Antihero, maybe, is the term for Euchrid the blue eyed baby who is conscious of life from the first hour of his birth.

Generally, I won't sum up a book's plot, but because 95% of y'all will be smart enough to avoid the story, here goes. A boy who is born mute and with a hunched body is born to a moonshine-swilling mountain of a woman who is relentless in her abuse to her husband and child. The father comes from a seriously inbred lineage, and while he stays with his wife for years until her death, the way he deals with his daily heaping of poison is to trap animals. He doesn't intentionally kill these animals but removes them from the traps and places them in a menagerie. In this menagerie, the living animals hold battles royale in order to live - he watches them like an emperor enjoying gladiators slaughtering others. It is the father's bizarre stress relief.

These are the people who raise the boy and pass to him their faulty genes.

The kid, Euchrid, grows up despised and bullied by the townspeople who are part of a religious sect that relies on signs and prophecies. They're intolerant of sinners and will punish those who break their moral code.

Over the years, a beautiful child of prophecy is born in this town and found at the feet of their statue of a vengeful angel - her wings alight and hand holding a scythe. Euchrid, now older and grower more insane over the years, believes this young girl and he have a connection. She is believed to be divine, but only he knows better. They are bound for a collision.

Okay, triggers? Animal abuse. And animal abuse. Rape. Beatings. Oh, and also some animal abuse.

Mounting insanity.

As someone who has had two spoiled dogs and two worthless cats sleeping in the bed with her for the past 38 years (live ones, not remains like we find in this book), I was able to distance myself from this portion. Remember the commercial that went: ITS ONLY A MOVIE ITS ONLY A MOVIE ITS ONLY A MOVIE? Yeah, that's my highly technical psychological trick to get past this kind of stuff. In a million years, I wouldn't have read this except our small reading group here in GR has had each of us nominate stuff that nobody but we weirdo-serious readers would enjoy discussing. Our dear buddy Kirk Smith passed away before this, his nomination, came up on our schedule. Like darling, quirky Kirk I loved this. But ah ain't never readin it again!

Excerpts below:

"Mummy was a swine. A scum c@nted likkered up brain-sick swine. She was lazy and slothful and dirty and belligerent and altogether evil. Mom was a soak, a drunk, a piss eyed hell bag with a taste for the homebrew."

"The air had turned tactile and tinted red – it stuffed the valley thickly and there was an electricness about it that crackled inside my head like paper. It kinda oozed – this air - oozed into my lungs, soupy and reeking of evilness. And ah could see it – ah could see it rolling across every crag and crack, every knurl and knoll, every ridge, each ditch, every hill and hole, through groves of cottonwoods, each knotted chine, the knitted boles of the killing vine, each impressed dent and darksome hollow, every glen, gully, gulch, gorge, gill, glade, gallow – even this very fen, and ah expect this bog – yes, this suck, the darkling quag. "

"Humming softly with the child asleep in his arms, Sardus Swift looked to the winking stars and saw the moon - a smirk on the face of heaven - as he made his way home."

"Listen, ah don't wanna speak ill of the dead but have ah told you that may mother was a great whopping whale of a c@nt? Well she was precisely that - a great whopping whale of a hog's c@nt with a dry black maggot for a brain."

"Fireworks hissed and spat aloft. Heaven's darkening vault was scoured by whistling jets of spark. Catherine wheels spun, gushing lurid sprays. Sky rockets, spewing fire, tore the night sky with their blazing egress. Wicks fizzed. Bangers exploded. Smoke and blue sparks filled the air. Children stood in mute wonderment, gazing at the circus of spectral showers above, their gawping faces reflecting, in shouts of colour, all the crackling mischief of the cope."

"A spirit lamp hung in the doorway, throwing a ragged blanket of copper light about the room and spilling the remainder out on to the porch. Every winged bug in a night's flight clamoured in the doorway in a frenzy of death - stupid gnats knocking their brains out to enter the bright eye. The floor beneath was littered with their singed corpses. The room droned with their madness"

Anthony Vacca says

Sleazy, profane, literate, violent, bloated, verbose, apocalyptic, excessive, dense, touching, rhythmic, grotesque, reverent, *And the Ass Saw the Angel* tells the terrible tragicomedy that is the short and weird and wild-on-top life of Euchrid Eucrow—a backwoods outcast born with the divine gift of an angelical purpose that is compounded with an absurdly articulate mental life that goes unappreciated and, ultimately,

unchecked by his hypocritical zealot neighbors on account of Euchrid being born a mute, the repercussions of which bubble and boil over in a biblically horrendous finale with some deliciously deviant implications. This novel was everything this particular Cavehead and Southern Gothic aficionado could hope for and so much much more.

The wonderful lyricist-by-day Nick Cave may be an Aussie but he *gets* the Southern Gothic novel whether or not you want to waste your morning worrying over the authenticity of the dialect that Cave playfully gives to the narrator. Like Elizabethan theater and Greek Mythology, the Southern Gothic yarn is the U.S.'s answer to the tradition of the grand and theatrical, those bloody moral dramas that are such a universal linchpin in this rickshaw of a human condition we all share on this dilapidated vivarium of a planet.

Is this a great book? No. There is zero restraint on display, and one doesn't have a hard time imagining Cave's editing process involved shooting up heroin and then nodding off in the corner of his England flat. Be that as it may, this shaggy rabid dog of a novel is a treasure for admirers of the dark corners of bad people's hearts, and for lovers of experimental-tinged prose (relax, it won't kill you, you pansies) that swoops, swells, slobbers, ruts, belches and yawps across the page. Like nearly every damn one of Cave's songs (especially in the 80's throughout the early 90's) Cave wrestles themes such as GOD and LOVE and MURDER, and the results are finger-licking good.

BONUS FEATURES

Here's my custom-made playlist of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds to accompany your reading of this book:

"Up Jumped the Devil": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVNkA8...>

"Curse of Millhaven": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvnkTU...>

"God is in the House" : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xnh4ps...>

"Get Ready For Love": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFpamP...>

"Saint Huck": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Af275k...>

"Well of Misery": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiSpXL...>

"Into My Arms": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lEUGOR...>

"Papa Won't Leave You Henry": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoFxUJ...>

"Witness Song": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb8NGU...>

Tina says

I am too tired to say much about this waste of time novel. This book I paid too much for is now in the recycle bin where it can be reborn as scratchy, industrial, toilet paper. Nick Cave had to be stoned out of his mind when he wrote this sick nonsense. The publisher had to be smoking wacky weed and I am nuts for reading the majority of it.

And I thought Infinite Jest was the worst book ever.

Laura says

Can a book start out as a 5 star read but by the end you absolutely despise it? In my experience, yes! I have no idea what I just read nor do I really want to ponder on it anymore. The Doghead section completely did me in. It's completed, shall we move on?!

Laurence says

Wie van de muziek van Nick Cave houdt, moet ook wel van dit boek houden. Niet uit onvoorwaardelijke idolatrie waarbij alles wat de man produceert goud is (integendeel, dit boek heeft veel te lang in mijn kast gelegen, uit vrees dat het zou tegenvallen) maar omdat dit eigenlijk gewoon de boekversie is van nummers als 'Tupelo' of 'Red Right Hand'.

Het verhaal is macaber, donker, broeierig, geschrift en met bijbelse allures. Die bombastische schrijfstijl hoort er dan ook gewoon bij.

Nipt vier sterren, want ik vond dit boek een klein tikje te lang om al die duisternis te blijven verdragen. Maar Jezus en mijn God: dit boek was een trip om nooit te vergeten.

John says

Nick Cave should stick with his music. He is a more than capable writer, but this book was uninteresting for the most part. I had qualms with a lot of it.

My biggest problem is the vocabulary of the main character, Euchrid. Euchrid is a mute and as far as I know never went to school and his parents certainly didn't teach him anything. His mother being a massive drunk and his father pays more attention to the traps he sets and the animals he maims than to Euchrid. Yet, his vocabulary exceeds that of myself or any of my friends and most of us have advanced degrees.

The novel did get a little interesting when a prostitute named Cosey Mo was introduced. However, her presence was short lived.

****Spoiler Alert for the rest of the review****

She is beaten to death by the townsfolk for being a harlot and outing the evangelical women's husbands as customers. After taking the beating, she is brought to the hospital to be saved. She is not. But it turns out that she was pregnant and the baby lives. Either I checked out while reading or Cave just decided that it wasn't worth mentioning that Cosey Mo was pregnant while being pummeled to death by her clientele.

Even crazier than that, apparently the women responsible for the death of the whore decide that the child needs a good home and should be watched after. A character only briefly mentioned previously becomes the father of the orphaned girl and absolutely loves her and names her Beth.

Beth is picked on as a child and ends up getting home schooled by some creepy guy. She is forced to attend, I suppose, Bible study classes with the old women. When she is some age, I'm guessing a teenager, the women bring in a nurse to make sure that Beth is still a virgin. She is supposed to be godly, despite being ripped out of the loins of a prostitute.

So Euchrid develops a fascination with Beth as he did with her mother. He watches her like he watches all of the townsfolk. A pastime that lead him to several whuppings.

As a last stand against the townsfolk that mistreated him, he decides to take advantage of Beth's belief that he is God, by having sex with her. Then a few weeks (maybe) later, Euchrid kills Beth as further revenge for the abuse he has received. The people hunt down Euchrid and his death is delivered. Then guess what, it turns out Beth was pregnant and the baby lives. The same four women that started the whole mess get to do the same thing all over again. Yay!

I'm getting angry again just writing this review. The book blows, but Cave's writing doesn't necessarily suck. His story telling does, but he can write.

One last thing. The novel is split up into 3 books. The first book has chapters that are fairly well spaced apart in regard to amount of pages. The second book has chapters that are 10 pages, 3, 5, 1, and just a paragraph. The third book has no chapters. This is a tremendous pet peeve of mine. I hate authors that do this.

This review is almost as bad as the book, but it is considerably shorter.

karen says

so i am going to review this one after all, because the book i am reading now will probably take me forever, and i dont want to get out of practice writing reviews that have nothing to do with the book. its a tricky skill, you understand, it must be honed. this may be one of my favorite books ever. i have gone through so many copies of this because i never learn not to lend it to people, particularly people i might be kissing. i think i gave this to two of them, wayyy back in my kissy youth. and of course, we went our separate ways (thats me and the book, as well as me and the kissed-upon) so i have solved that problem by keeping my lips to myself. and i will never lend this one out again, because it comes and goes in print (right now - out of print) and i couldnt bear to be parted from it again. that being said - its by no means perfect. the biggest gripe is obvious: writing in dialect is tricky; writing in a dialect not your own is even worse. you catch the rhythm after a bit, but its still not perfectly-rendered. i also wonder what mr nick cave would think about the word "antihero" being applied to this book. because this one is even more of an antihero than bunny munro, and if he was surprised at b.m. being judged as antiheroic, i wonder about his acceptance of what is an obvious judgment by the reader. but the story... its so well-written and well-conceived. his powers of description are unbearably good. i havent read this book in at least 5 years, but i can still see every character, every building, fortress, dog, prostitute, church - everything. it has some of the most gruesome descriptions ive ever read, but also some of the most lyrical. its love and madness and biblical misinterpretation and power and callousness and industry. if the three most important rules of door-to-door salesmanship, as we were taught in the death of bunny munro are "vagina, vagina, vagina", this book teaches us the three most important rules of messiah-dom, "crazy, crazy, crazy". but, damn hes endearing. he shouldnt be at all, but euchrid eucrow is one of my favorite characters in all of literature. and that one scene, where it switches from first- to third-person is devastating precisely because you fall in love with him. and then, when that perspective is given - just a gut-punch. i may have to read it again soon - but dont even ask me for my copy because the answer is an emphatic "no". who says i cant be taught?

oh, and i almost forgot- this book also has a soundtrack - which elevates it above most other books.

Fede says

One year ago I quit biting my nails - a lifelong habit I finally seemed to have rid myself of.

Last week though I started reading this book and, before turning page 10, I was munching on my fingers again. Compulsively... no - convulsively. Such was my reaction to Nick Cave's gorgeous first novel: convulsive.

Didn't André Breton write: "Beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all"? Well, this novel has all the hysterical beauty of a medieval tale told by a hermit gone insane. It's an all-American mystery told by a devilish Australian.

My, what a mess... I don't even know where to start. Let's see.

David Lynch's disquieting atmospheres.

The revolting, grotesque horror of Tobe Hooper's "Texas Chainsaw Massacre".

J.P. Witkin's aesthetics of ugliness and deformity.

The heavenly grandeur of William Turner's fiery skies.

Victor Hugo's poetics of the Outcast.

Naaah, no way... I can't compare the violent, visionary, demented mysticism of this masterpiece to anything I know. Here's a gem of literature, ladies and gentlemen.

The title.

One of the most beautiful titles in the history of literature, at least for me, summing up in six words all the truly iconic power of this book.

It's an episode of the Old Testament (Numbers, 22 . 23-31): the 'magus' Balaam's ass sees the Angel of the Lord brandishing his sword and is given the power of speech, in order to warn her master of the presence of the holy emissary. What the arrogant human being can't see is shown to the humble, dirty, exhausted animal; the symbol of any outcast on earth is thus flooded with the light of Heaven.

This is the canvas on which Nick Cave (the Australian frontman of the rock band Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds) paints his allegory of spirituality, evil, corruption and redemption.

A hellish Southern Gothic landscape.

A grotesque protagonist living in a shack surrounded by a junkyard (more precisely, Euchrid Eucrow, a dumb kid doomed to undergo any sort of physical and psychological abuse), with a sadistic alcoholic as a mother and a bipolar psycho as a father.

A life of alienation that soon turns into a messianic obsession - as well as plenty of other mental issues - and a narrative loquacity of magnificent lyricism (the effect is just hilarious in such context).

A village in the middle of nowhere, in which religious fanaticism, incest, brutality, superstition are all-pervading.

Sugar-cane fields, dusty tracks, rusty tool-sheds, rotting carcasses.

A swamp.

Old-school preachers gone insane.

And a calamitous rain that, just like a biblical plague, strikes the bigoted inhabitants of the once thriving valley, bringing forth three years of squalor, sorrow and madness.

Then a foundling - the daughter of a junky whore Euchrid identifies with his guardian angel and is almost lynched by the mob - is rescued in the village, and the Miracle occurs: the following day the rain is over and the child is hastily declared to be a Saint, the Almighty's gift to His penitent sons.

Only our derelict Zealot knows the child was actually conceived in sin and adultery. Year after year Euchrid becomes increasingly obsessed with the girl (the Lord himself has entrusted him with the holy task of doing away with the wicked usurper), but in his sick mind the line between hate and desire is quite blurred... until

his lifelong isolation, sufferings and mental illness eventually take their toll. A devastating burst of insanity and mysticism takes place in the most hallucinatory grand finale.

This is a heartrending black comedy, a mysterious allegory and a tale of cruelty and deranged spirituality, told by a masterful narrator.

Because Cave's writing is like the artefacts of those barbaric tribes from which I - as a northern Italian - happen to be descended: absolute beauty blooming in monstrosity, gold and gems scattered in the filth.

This is one of those books in which literature is on a level with visual art. Only two examples:

"A thin purple cicatrix emerged from one bushy eyebrow and hooked around his right eye, terminating at a small, latent mole sprouting short, clipped hairs - like a fish hook baited with a little black beetle."

And:

"The new spring moon looked naked, almost brazen in its fullness. It was the colour of mah angel's skin, but with a hint of the mistreated in her unblinking majesty, her skin faintly darkened by pale grey bruises."

It's wonderful. It's the kind of talent that makes the English language attain the highest level of its modern literary potential.

In Cave's prose, a kid spitting on the ground opens up a lurid scenario of microscopical and yet gargantuan geography: spit and dust melt and turn into a muddy landslide in front of an ant carrying its cargo of crumbs, stubbornly climbing the tiny impromptu hill standing in its way - almost invisible when you're a kid spitting on the ground, high as a mountain when you're an ant carrying a crumb...

Such is the spellbinding quality of Cave's imagery.

What follows is one of his gorgeous, expressionist descriptions of the landscape:

" The air turned tactile and red - it kinda oozed into mah lungs, soupy and reeking of evilness. There in the very blood of the air ah could sense the most hell-born forecast, hear the hexes and muttered spells - hear the beat of its breath - feel its plodding pulse, its pounding. This special evil - Coming! Drumming! - and this special air tensed to receive it.

(...)

The sky, like my scalp, tightened. It had taken the look of a vast membrane that stretched itself, like peeled skin, across the valley to form a roof, sealing in the stuffed light. It teemed with a network of intumescent red vessels, tested to capacity by their booming blood. "

I could fill a whole notebook with quotes from this book, and never get enough of them (see also the excerpts I picked for my reading updates).

Further more, one must keep in mind that the author is a songwriter; hence the amazing rhythm of his prose, an incomparable - I dare say Elizabethan - musicality, with lots of assonances and even rhymes.

And the lexicon - oh, the lexicon! What a fantastic journey through any conceivable territory of knowledge this book is!

'Phocine' bodies, 'murine' faces, scalps ridden with 'pemphigus'; but also 'atramental' waters, the 'catoptric' surface of a swamp, 'thespian' thunder (or 'thunderama'); not to mention a 'zoophyte-looking' drunkard emerging from a mud pool, a 'pedophagic' mother... and, *dulcis in fundo*, the 'xylocephalic' woman (this one has become legendary: basically, it's Cave's Greek etymology for 'blockhead'!).

It's a Calasso-esque amount of references to any conceivable domain; Cave must have kept a whole encyclopedia at hand while writing this novel. In fact I found myself cursing like queen Jezebel while checking out, for instance, what the hell a *Thysanoptera* is: well, it's what any other writer in the world calls 'bug'.

And, hey, do not expect Cave's characters to say any triviality such as 'I started moving': what they do say is, "Ah make the space about me open up its wounds". They don't scream 'I'll kill you', oh no, they snarl: "Ahm gunna tear your head off and shit in your neck". They don't recall 'the good old times', why should they when the most delicate poetry is at hand:

"Ah remember a time of eudemonia", sighs the protagonist.

And we sigh with him. We cry with him. We laugh with him, even though:

" Ah knew that sort of laughter all too well. Ah was acquainted with the sort of fun it could inspire. Out of all the correction that has been dealt mah way, ah cannot remember a solitary time when laughter has not been the battle-cry. "

Wow.

This is Nick Cave, though: so, no worries, the reader is also generously provided with plenty of shit, piss, fuck, asshole, cocks & cunts - and this cacophonic contrast is the very source of our delight.

I've been postponing this read for years, and I should bash my head against a concrete wall begging for mercy for having been such an idiot. Because I've always sensed this book had ALL I look for in literature and art: the Beauty of Outrage and the Outrage of Beauty - the horrible, omnipotent Beauty that flourishes where she's supposed to wither, like a flower blooming on a battlefield.

" Fingers down the throat of love", as the song goes.

Beware though: this book goes deeper down than a finger.

Nick Davies says

A beautifully rich and intelligent novel - the language playful and complex and colourful (though most of the colours are greys, browns and red.. lots of red), this was almost poetry at times. The story - as much as I understood/followed it (and I admit that I only 'got' about eighty percent of it) follows a mute young man growing up in a backwoods American town of hicks, religious nutters, freaks, alcoholics, whores and much more. There is a sub-theme concerning a young girl suspected to be a 'chosen one', there is lots of detailed description of various violent, gory, perverse happenings. It's all pretty much what one would expect of a Nick Cave novel, if you were familiar with his song-writing.

I did enjoy it - like Will Self and Douglas Coupland etc. there is a lot of entertainment to be gleaned from the unusual, oft twisted, challenging and clever writing. At times though it did get a bit difficult to follow, and with hindsight there was less plot than there should maybe have been - at times it involved working pretty hard for what was a bit self-indulgent on the part of the author. On balance though it was impressive and interesting.

Thomas Strömquist says

Nick Cave is truly one of a kind. This book blew my mind when I read it in my early 20's. To realize how it came to be, from a chaotic and obsessive situation in chaotic surroundings - a 20-something strung out Cave living in a loft in Berlin (as seen in the brilliant *20,000 days on earth*) was a kind of surreal experience as well. I need to put this high on my tbr - a re-read is long overdue.

V. says

This is one of my favorite novels. I have to recommend it with a string of caveats, however. The writing is gloriously, indulgently, and shamelessly overwrought. If you go in for clean, crisp prose, you'll probably hate this. It is also an incredibly grim book, but with a wicked and sometimes viciously dark sense of humor throughout (this is Nick Cave, after all).

The novel's protagonist is a character named Euchrid Euchrow, a physically deformed and mentally deranged mute living in the fictional backwoods town of Ukulore. He struggles to find some solace and acceptance in the small town, which is mostly within the grip of the "Ukulite" religious sect--similar to the American evangelist cults from which spring handling of snakes and laying on of hands.

The outlook is grim and harsh, but it's an exquisite sort of pain. I think I read this book cover to cover in a day, as I recall, but that was about eight years ago. I will try to find time to read it again, soon.

Anyway, there you go. The novel is insane, grim, and overwrought. If that sounds like your cup of tea, and you don't mind a slightly self-indulgent author, do read this.

Kirk Smith says

It has been nearly a decade since I first read this, and it was probably the first Southern Gothic that I read. It does still hold up and is in fact in good company as one of the most gruesome in the category. I place it next to *The Devil all the Time* by Donald Ray Pollock and also *Child of God* by Cormac McCarthy and that is among very good company indeed. One interesting thing I noticed is that while many readers placed it in the Southern Gothic style, the majority placed it in Horror. This is in fact true for all three books. Among the most hardcore of the style, I found it mildly humorous and would even call it "charming".

The Crimson Fucker says

To say that I'm giving this book 5 stars based on the fact of how much I enjoyed it, would be a lie. The book had a really weak start and a pretty damn weak plot. In my one, dumb, humble opinion the book is aiight. Yes, here comes the big but...BUT! There were 2 things I fucking loved about this book.

1. The addition of a new kick ass word to my "cool as hell words" list (the word Fornicatrix, which according to a dictionary means: a woman who engages in Fornication). I fucking love that word! When I read it on the bus, I remember thinking, "FUCK, WHY DIDN'T I KNOW THAT WORD?!" followed by a maniacal laughter... and saying, "That's hot!" So, there is one extra star... now the second reason.
2. I was sitting on the Q11 when a couple of kids (proly like 12 or 14 years old) started laughing at the title of the book. I usually avoid kids like an earthworm avoids the shore. But! I couldn't help myself there. At the beginning of the book there is excerpt from Numbers 22 (and the ass saw an angel) so I decided to open that page and pass it to one of the kids. I said, "Here's where the title comes from...this Bible passage..." and they both started reading it and laughing and

I felt so cool!!! When they were done he passed me the book back and said, "That was funny, thank you." Now as a fast food worker, I don't usually get a chance to give people cool shit to read =(but this time I got away with it. I made this 2 kids read something funny about the most read book in history.... that made me feel great!

So there you have it Mr. Cave... I think you books is like your music... just ok nothing extraordinary... and yet you get 5 stars cuz now I have one more kick ass word added to my vocabulary and I also had the chance to teach something funny and cool to a couple of kids =)

gaby says

Mah God, ah am at last free! From this book, that is.

Overwritten, overwrought, and truly poorly edited, Nick Cave's debut novel is a grimacing, death trodden and DARKSOME tale of mental madness and religious madness and hillbilly hell and rotten mash liqueur and hobos and godsent rain curses and child rape and hooker rape and child lust and hooker lust and child killing and hooker killing.

The one and only star here is the beautiful, inventive and utterly creative use of language throughout. Having loved Cave's music all my life, and especially his storytelling through lyrics, I determined to slog through this book till the bitter end in tribute to his many-faceted brilliance.

With a good editor and some intensive fiction-writing classes, I believe Cave could be a tremendously powerful writer. But this book smacks of having been vetted by yes-people or non-writers. Though I love him still, I don't know that I will rush to suffer another of his novels!

El says

Southern Gothic, at nearly its finest. Better than Faulkner (although that's probably unfair since I've only managed to read his short stories), but not as good as Flannery O'Connor (though she wrote more short stories than novels). Cave is somewhere between them, but darker, dirtier, and creepier.

I absolutely loved this.

I wouldn't recommend it to people. I probably wouldn't recommend it to anyone. I went into it not knowing anything about it other than it was written by Nick Cave (be still, my heart). I've had this on my shelf forever and have put it off for so long because I was scared I would hate it and then my image of him would forever be tarnished. Or something.

There's also a soundtrack which is wonderful from what I've heard of it, and fits the book perfectly.

The whole kit and caboodle... loved it. But it's one of those secret loves, except for all of you in GR and anyone else who asks; I guess my point is I probably won't go around talking about it because I like that not

a lot of people have read it or even heard about it. It's out-of-print, so finding a copy is like finding a rare gem. A really dark, dirty, creepy gem. A blood gem.

Diane Barnes says

Review and rating to come.....maybe. As soon as I figure out what happened here, and why.

Whitney says

If Gabriel Garcia Marquez got knocked up by William Faulkner and birthed a deranged novel that was kept locked up in the basement and beaten daily, it would be 'And The Ass Saw The Angel.'

I don't normally write reviews, but this book keeps tumbling around in my mind like shoes in a dryer. I read a review on here that said (and I'm paraphrasing) that immediately after finishing the book, the reviewer wanted to 're-read it armed with a battle axe.' That, I think, is most appropriate given the feelings left with after this book.

So, I had originally intended to talk about the book, discuss interpretations and whatnot, what was made meaningful and all that garbage, but I won't. I will NOT. I will make you work for it, because I had to. And I appreciate it more that way.

However, for future readers experiencing trouble, I have this advice: Let Cave's overwrought, but insidiously beautiful words, and the snarling insanity wash over you, holding onto the word "mirror" like a life raft, and you just might make it to the end of the novel and be better for it.

There. That's all you're gettin'.

Serene Tintaglia says

"The plot, rife with gory atrocities, is relayed through clotted, gutsy prose which ranges from poetic to rabid, and is interspersed throughout with graphs, lists, genealogies and scraps of Scripture. Although Cave's manic effort will not lure traditionalists, it may snare the more adventurous." - Publisher's Weekly

This book was scummy, degrading, depraved, soul-draining, woeful, surreal and sinister; the prose continually drove the point of the unforgiving, despicable nature of humankind to all manners of life in times of fear. From Euchrid's father's love for torturing animals to a group of hag's grooming a young girl to birth the new Messiah, every page is next level fucked up.

I genuinely do not know how I feel about this book. Only upon reflection did I realise the true horror of what I just read. Nick Cave was so clever with the way he carried out writing this, though. As a lyricist, he applied poetic tone throughout the novel and increased Euchrid's resonance of insanity as his disastrous life unfolded. This component made reading so smooth and elegant, despite the material. Because of this, I think this book is outstanding. It capitalised on the actuality of life and once you got over the initial surrealism, well, it left me a little mundane about life in general if I am honest. You could argue the evil and cruelty within this book has been spun out of proportion but who are we to deny how depraved humankind can be in the environment of the unknown.

God, humans are fucking monsters.

Seth T. says

While not the worst book I've ever had the displeasure of reading*, Nick Cave's work here may be the worst that I've both read *and* finished. *Eragon* ? Gave up with extreme prejudice. *Da Vinci Code* ? Accidentally left it in an airport bathroom in Denver with eleven pages left and did not care enough to visit the library to see how it ended. *The Lovely Bones* ? Granted, I did finish it and it was bad, but it was a shiny, gold-plated sliver of heaven compared to *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, which I was unfortunately compelled to finish.

Ah, the joy of being in a book club.

The first thing one will notice in Cave's book is that the principal narrator is dense with a lugubrious sort of prose made up in striking part by words that won't be found in any dictionary (as they are made up). So dense, in fact, is the narration that it stifles to the point of petrification. The author himself describes the language as, "kind of a hyper-poetic thought-speak, not meant to be spoken - a mongrel language that was part-Biblical, part-Deep South dialect, part-gutter slang, at times obscenely reverent and at others reverently obscene." Cave forces the reader to invest a lot of work into deciphering a story that is far too slight to merit the effort. And I hate him for that.

Well, not really. But maybe.

In any case, with the exception of the first and last chapters, the entire tale is told in flashback by a single narrator, named Eucrid, using two different voices (one fantastical and the other only slightly more grounded in reality). Eucrid Euchrow, dying from the start, tells the tales of the divine vengeance he wreaked upon the odd religious community in his isolated Southern town and how he now dies with his glorious work complete. What is not at all clear until the last third is whether we should believe any of it. Euchrid, a mute from birth, is the product of mentally disabled man and a woman whose only nourishment is the moonshine she stills in their yard. He is, to be plain, quite insane.

If Cave would have either held personal restraint or kept an editor worth more than the cost of a community college education, *And the Ass Saw the Angel* would have clocked in at novella-length of slightly more than a hundred pages - and would, by that measure, have made a terse, quirky, intriguing look at madness. Instead, Cave shows no wisdom of this kind and remorselessly fills over three hundred pages with a sprawling, cacophonous garble of madness. We cannot even say that he explores Euchrid's madness for there is neither consideration nor reflection. Only revelry.

There were moments when I thought I might have a good (if offbeat) book in my hands. Moments of

interpretive joy when it could be realized that things might not be as they seem. Pieces of prose that made me think that Cave really did know what he was doing, such as his description of a particular woman as a "xylocephalic ogress." But such rays of warm and happy light were always and inevitably to be short-lived, as Cave would draw the reader, nails scrabbling for some hold on light and sanity and good reading, inexorably back into his drearilous swampfief of monotonating garballations.

Not, by any means, recommended. I read somewhere that Cave himself doesn't even think the book is any good. This would have been good to know three months ago when I started reading this tripe.

*NOTE: I really have no justification to say that it isn't beside the fact that I'm being generous.
