



The End of Alice

A.M. Homes

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From the 2013 Orange Prize-winning author of *May We Be Forgiven*

Only a work of such searing, meticulously controlled brilliance could provoke such a wide range of visceral responses. Here is the incredible story of an imprisoned pedophile who is drawn into an erotically charged correspondence with a nineteen-year-old suburban coed. As the two reveal -- and revel in -- their obsessive desires, Homes creates in *The End of Alice* a novel that is part romance, part horror story, at once unnerving and seductive.

The End of Alice Details

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From Reader Review The End of Alice for online ebook

Simply Sam ? says

I hate books like this.

How to rate it?

Should I rate it based on content? Because I tell you, there is some messed up stuff here and I in no way *approve* any of their actions. I feel like giving a high rating signals I'm okay with pedophiles, rapists, and murderers. I'm not. Just so we're on the same page. But I picked up this book knowing it was going to make me squeamish and uncomfortable. That was the point. To see through the eyes and with the feelings of a person of depraved moral character. The unreliable narrator. I felt it delivered here, though I hated the ploy of making the abuser the victim. I don't want to sympathize so much as understand what makes them, well, who they are.

Should I rate it on the author's style? On the disjointed and lyrical way the story is presented? Because honestly, I kind of dig it. That's not always the case and not 100% even in this book but for the most part, yeah it worked for me. The dizzying back and forth, his present and past colliding, her real time actions overlapping. It added to the mania, the overall sense of discord.

Now, I admit. There's some nasty stuff in the first half of the book or so, but I was held in thrall. I wanted to know what was happening, where it was all going, what was the POINT? The point is, you don't really get to know what's real and what's been fabricated. This story is being told from the perspective of a delusional madman. You can't trust anything. There is just no closure there. But at the end of the book, at the end of Alice, I was okay with that.

3.5 stars (rounded up)

The MacHalo month of depravity finale...let's hope it is gruesome and unsettling!

Caro M. says

Have you ever tasted your own scabs? No? Neither did I, but I guess the aftertaste of this story is alike of those - scabs.

Disturbing and unsettling, the book is extremely well written - despite all those literal and metaphorical scabs that made me feel like throwing up quite often, I couldn't stop reading.

It felt like I entered the house full of stink and I was getting inside only to locate and remove the rotting rat or whatever the stinking object was, while wishing to leave the place immediately with all my heart. But the further I went, the stronger I realized that it wasn't a rat, that it was something worse...

I'd give it a solid 5 stars. But I won't. And that's why.

Being gross as it is and driving the reader out of any comfort zone one could ever imagine, this book is a kind of dark masterpiece – it really is, especially taken that it was written almost 20 years ago – I can imagine the shock wave at the time. But while being such a masterpiece it doesn't really discover nor teach anything new. Sexual predators are horrible and disgusting? Yes. Lolas are not that innocent? Yes. Every

psycho has his reasons, more or less twisted? I guess. There's a beast in each one of us? Yes to that too. Are we going to try it at home? God, no.

The stuff is explicit and violent and there's some dangerous twisted poetry in it, that is just too much for me.

So 3 stars, because I'm not liking it at all, but since those scabs and blood stains are going to stay in my mind for some time – lets say I'm fucking impressed.

Blair says

The narrator of this book is a convicted paedophile, serving a life sentence in prison. He starts to receive letters from a 19-year-old girl who believes she is developing a sexual predilection for young boys, and intends to act on this obsession, preying on a neighbour's 12-year-old son. *The End of Alice* is the story of both the narrator and the girl, but all of it is seen through the narrator's eyes. It is, in fact, difficult to distinguish between what the girl is actually telling the narrator, and what he is embellishing in his own mind: it is certainly clear that he often fantasises about her, living vicariously through her stories. The narrator and the girl both remain unnamed, and the Alice of the title is one of the narrator's victims, a child he revisits in dreams and memories until the story builds to a terrible climax and we discover what form 'the end of Alice' took.

I thought this book was excellent but, for obvious reasons, it is one I would hesitate to actually recommend. On top of the sexual abuse of children - which is frequently depicted in great detail - there are also graphic descriptions of incest, prison rape, general violence, and horribly violent fantasies. If any of these things are likely to upset you then I would definitely give it a wide berth: the author doesn't hold back with explicit scenes. The effect is - obviously - incredibly unsettling, but also car-crash compulsive. I read the book in one sitting - it took me no more than a couple of hours to fervently page (or should that be click, in this digital age?) through it, and I don't think I could have put it down before finishing even if someone had tried to pry it from my hands.

Any book with a plot like this is inevitably compared to *Lolita*, but I think the comparison actually holds up here for reasons other than the paedophilia theme: the writing is lyrical and clever, describing some things in terrible detail but then romanticising others, dancing around the truth - and the narrator is so palpably real he might give you nightmares. He is a brilliant, if disgusting, creation: Homes doesn't make the narrator likeable in any way, but she makes him human enough that the brutality of the ending still comes as a shock.

Disturbing, uncomfortable and provocative, *The End of Alice* is short, sharp, horrifying and astonishing. It may not have been the most 'enjoyable' reading experience, but the author's skill in creating these characters and making the story such compelling reading took my breath away. Not everyone will be able to tolerate the explicit nature of this book, but if you think you can stomach the themes, you MUST read it.

I am indebted to Karen's excellent review for my interest in *The End of Alice*: I would never have read it otherwise, and what a memorable discovery it was.

karen says

i just realized my "greg gets three" shelf only has one. i am a failure.

greg told me to write a review for this book, and i started to think about it, and realized this is going to be one of those reviews that will reflect poorly upon me when my enthusiasm for the book is weighed up against the subject matter. so - a warning.

it is an ungentle book. you can stop reading here if you are not into the rough stuff.

basically, it is about a man in jail for being humbert humbert with a knife. his lolita was named alice. hence. now, enter a nineteen-year-old girl who is hatching her own plan to consummate her desire for a very young boy. she wants someone to commiserate with about her exploits, and who better to "get" her drive? best pen pals ever.

a.m. homes does not hold back here. and i may sound sexist, but that fact that a woman wrote this book is astonishing to me. not because of the violence or the subject matter - that's just nouns and verbs. but the level of detail, and the tone, and when she writes in the voice of the various male characters, there is a pervasive masculine sensibility that sounds completely authentic. (and, yes, those are also nouns and verbs - don't fight me when you know what i mean)

the book is gross and uncomfortable and is far and away the best thing she has ever written. and i wish i liked her other books as much as i like this one. the others were fine, but to me this was a perfect book. *music for torching* got outta hand at the end there - just silly. but this has just the right mix of tenderness and danger. she tells a difficult story, and she tells it well. and manages to have a very convincing masculine voice throughout. (even though she is a woman whose actual voice sounds so cute like sara vowell's.)

and of course, the impulse here as a writer of more-literary-than-just-shock-value material would be to humanize the convict and make him all cuddly and sympathetic and make the girl, who is still free and among us, into the real monster. but she doesn't do that, which is such a relief. she gives some backstory, and some explanation, but it never really humanizes him. he remains a monster, although a more overt monster than the girl, with her ponytail babysitting and tennis lessons. with her dirty smelly young boy who saves his scabs to snack on. i am so thankful that i cannot relate to how these kids are supposed to be sex objects.

it's true that in *lolita* she is also a dirty little kid, not the image of a nymphette that has grown up after her. and, if you are not similarly inclined, you should wonder what the attraction would be. it is even more pronounced in this book, when the object is a young boy. she loves him in his distraction, his stinkiness, his *boyishness*. it is powerfully realized, if still (again - gratefully) obscure.

so - yeah, a great book about terrible things. and another reviewer claims this book is bad and that *zombie* by joyce carol oates is a better treatment of the same subject matter, but that is crazy-talk. *zombie* is bad. really. bad. don't do it.

come to my blog!

Orsodimondo says

PROMESSE DA MARINAIO

A.M.Homes continua a deludermi: è il suo terzo libro che leggo, ed è la terza volta che rimango deluso. Nelle sue parole non sono mai riuscito a trovare quello che aspettavo: la quarta di copertina è sempre più ghiotta delle pagine scritte – le recensioni, la presentazione cui sono riuscito ad andare, tutto suscita interesse e attesa. Ma ogni volta, manca qualcosa e rimane il sapore d'amaro. In questo senso, *La fine di Alice* è il peggiore dei tre che ho letto.

È la storia di un pedofilo, Chappy, rinchiuso da ventitre anni nel carcere di Sing Sing, che ha una fitta corrispondenza con una ragazza di diciannove anni.

Chappy potrebbe essere il maestro di Hannibal Lecter, per intenderci.

Lei gli racconta di come sta iniziando al sesso un ragazzino di 12 anni. Se dico che la ragazza potrebbe essere un'ammiratrice di Chappy, credo di non fornire nessuna anticipazione, di non sciupare nessun passaggio dell'intreccio.

Leggendo le lettere, Chappy ricorda ciò che ha fatto, ciò che gli ha fatto sua madre, come è diventato quello che è, e come è arrivato in prigione.

Mentre lei gli spiega con minuzia come sta seducendo-corrompendo il ragazzino, lui continua a leggere con crescente interesse e coinvolgimento, e continua a subire tutto quello che un detenuto subisce in carcere.

Aggiungo che non è chiaro chi sta dentro e chi sta fuori dalle prigioni.

Si tratta di un argomento poco affrontato, almeno per le mie conoscenze, quindi, evviva, c'è da credere che l'autrice ci porterà a fare un viaggio nell'ignoto. Un viaggio nella mente dell'assassino. L'argomento potrebbe rivelarsi disturbante, ma se si ha talento, disturbare diventa allargare la prospettiva.

In realtà, il romanzo tocca tutti i possibili tabù con un linguaggio diretto e volutamente quasi pornografico: dall'incesto al sesso orale e anale, dalla masturbazione alla violenza sui bambini.

Solo che non aggiunge nulla di nuovo, non svela e non rivela, non spinge a riflessioni. Rimane appiattito sullo sforzo di stupire, e forse anche disgustare qualcuno.

Il viaggio non inizia mai, non si va da nessuna parte.

Pur essendo un soggetto non abusato, ho respirato aria di déjà vu: probabilmente, perché mi è sembrato di aver già visto tutto in qualche film, anche se non saprei dire in quale. Homes scrive pensando molto al cinema, da cui trae ispirazioni (negli snodi, nel montaggio, ma anche nelle situazioni), e al quale, ho la forte sensazione, spera molto di vendere i diritti delle sue opere.

Mi ha subito lasciato perplesso l'uso della prima persona e la scelta di privilegiare l'uomo, il pedofilo, come narratore.

Fattori che aggiunti all'uso del flusso di coscienza accentuano l'impressione che Homes abbia soprattutto voglia di stupire e scandalizzare, piuttosto che esplorare e approfondire.

Il mistero non si svela, il viaggio nella mente di un criminale, l'esplorazione del male rimangono meri propositi iniziali. Non si scopre niente che non si sappia già, pur se non se ne sapeva nulla.

Homes non sceglie temi banali o quotidiani, è attratta dai grandi misteri, e questo è un bene: ma non riesce mai a entrarci dentro, non sa scandagliarli.

In questo specifico caso, non riesce a trascendere, ad andare oltre la perversione sessuale.

Mi viene da dire che tutto sommato, nonostante il grande uso di spezie piccanti, ci viene offerta una buona dose di banalità. Leggendo *La fine di Alice* mi è tornato in mente un libro che ha qualcosa in comune con questo: mi riferisco ad Amabili resti di Alice Sebold, magnifico romanzo, che al confronto di *La fine di Alice* diventa titanico, un capolavoro assoluto.

Ruth Turner says

DNF

I doff my hat to those readers who managed to finish this book! And I'm not talking about the storyline. It was the writing that did my head in.

The author uses words, and words, and more words, and even more words, to no avail. So many words that actually say very little.

Here the narrator is speaking of the young woman who is corresponding with him...

"In a case such as this where one has been looking so hard for so long, it is within the range of possibility that a buildup of ocular imaginings exaggerates the Current draw so that the actual pressure within the eye from such frequent pupil dilation causes a discomfiture not unlike that found in other regions. At peak, it produces a kind of blindness—nearly classically hysterical—during which she does not see what she is doing, giving birth, so to speak, to the notion that her grabbing of his flesh is simply a hand reaching out for direction."

And this little gem...my personal favourite...

"On the sixth day following her return, the previous days spent in a state of deep tranquilization, a close-to-comatose, chain-reactive, biochemically linked readjustment period replete with headaches severe enough to warrant the use of prescription medication, the stunning, stoning combination of Fiorinal and Percocet—pass the bottle, dear—and the development of a full series of symptoms fully related to the life of a female nineteen-year-old—anorexia, followed by gorging on mother's good cooking, a bloating feeling, four tempers played against declarations of love, nausea, strange dreams buried in the sound sleep of one's own bed, diarrhea—the closet cleaned and reorganized, still more of the unending supply of childhood remnants left in plastic bags at the end of the driveway for the Salvation Army to claim, purging."

Then I read this...the narrator speaking to the reader...

"Before continuing I must also ask that you excuse the idiosyncrasies of my sound, of my thought, for I so rarely speak these days that all I do say seems to hurl itself forward, collecting references, attachments to both past and present as it goes."

And with that timely warning on page 10, for which I am devoutly grateful, I stopped reading.

christa says

I'll say one thing for A.M. Homes: She is one brave writer. "The End of Alice" stars an imprisoned pedophile who has become pen pals with a 19-year-old woman who is dabbling in a similar avocation with a boy who is at that in-between age where he wants to see a naked girl, but also keeps a collection of his own scabs for snacking on, aged to create different tastes.

The narrator takes the woman's words, visualizes the scenes, and gets curious and jealous. All the while, it's uncertain whether he is inventing this relationship, filling in her blanks, or whether she has dictated the events. At the same time, he is telling about his own lurid past: a mentally unstable mother who coaxes him into providing her with sexual relief while they are sharing a bath, and later his relationship with the 12-year-old Lolita-esque Alice -- the relationship that ends with the loathsome narrator in prison and a submissive in a relationship with another inmate.

This is not a comfortable read. It's violent and graphic and gruesome. It couldn't have been a comfortable book to write. The inappropriate relationships are more thorough, more detailed, than a duet penned by Anais Nin and Henry Miller. The characters play complicated roles: Alice is still young enough to enjoy a tea party, but old enough to sneak out and tie herself to the narrator's bed. Too young to understand menstruation; But with the vocabulary of a woman performing in a curtained cage, switching positions while an ogler feeds coins into the equivalent of a parking meter to keep her in motion.

Is this a good book? Not according to a lot of people. It's been banned and Holmes has been criticized. It has been likened to pornography in the NY Times and given a D in a 200-word write up in Entertainment Weekly. Me? I thought it was fantastic. It feels like I should apologize for admitting that. It is a complicated but well-executed story by a woman with some crazy writing chops. To me, this begs the questions: What makes a book good and why do we like what we like?

I like to read something shocking. I like to think "is this believable?" I like when my mouth hangs open in disgust. I like a protagonist who makes me squirm with hate. [The completely unlikeable protagonist isn't used often enough.:] I'd say this definitely is not a book for everyone, though. Obviously. Six-to-eight hours is a long time to spend with a vile creature.

There is a point in the story where Homes writes something in the voice of the narrator that feels like she is granting permission to read the book and feel okay about reading the book:

"Some might believe that I blither just to shock, but what is shock if not some ancient identification, meaning that I have touched a sore spot, hit a nerve -- think on it, you will--and some may believe that I blither to get a rise, and admittedly I've done that, too, but it is hardly my goal. True, I get trapped in my tirade, but would assume, would trust that you -- being who you are, where you are, out there and not in here -- have sense enough not to get caught up in it. I would assume that you are bright enough not to buy the surface of my grotesque but know how to push it aside in order to see what's really there."

Dan says

The obsession of Humbert Humbert, the sexual excesses of de Sade, and the twisted mind of a Hannibal Lecter. This book isn't for everyone, but if you can handle those things, it's quite a compelling read. Well written and an excellent execution of the unreliable narrator.

Arch says

i don't really understand why this book has so many glowing reviews on this site. sure, homes has written this well (hence the second star),but... i just don't buy it. it seems to me that she just really, REALLY wanted to shock you out of your cozy, middle-class, suburban old navy socks with this one. she tried excruciatingly hard to crawl under your skin and blow your mind with the depravity of her imagination. well, i'll tell you what -it's just too obvious that that was her mission. i mean, there are some **incredibly** detailed sex scenes in the book and all of them involve a minor - a pre-teen minor. and if that doesn't freak out the squares, there's also some S&M and other deviant sexual activites to make 'em faint. yeah! take that soccer moms! i don't want to sound too jaded or whatever but i just wasn't impressed. if you want to read a much better story written by a woman and told from the perspective of a male pedophile, read 'zombie' by joyce carol oates. this book is just a much less subtle trek through already explored territory.

Ken says

I picked up this book looking for something uncomfortable to read. I certainly found that! What I wasn't expecting was a book so well written.

5 STARS

Beth says

[in the case of where it's menti

David says

Ew, that was a yucky experience, but why exactly? (And why is it important that you know that I found it yucky in my opening sentence?)

We're inured to violent images, aren't we? Isn't the TV full of suffering? On the face of it, why should the thought of child abuse as entertainment be so shocking when it's the premise of so many thrillers and crime novels?

While I was reading this I was thinking of a horrifying painting by Christiaan van Couwenbergh called Three Young White Men and a Black Woman from 1632. It's the most disturbing painting of violence that I've seen and it works in a similar way to The End of Alice.

First of all, it's the depiction of a disgusting crime. Secondly, the crime is depicted in a humorous context. Thirdly, the viewer is implicated in the action as a kind of co-conspirator.

All of this is profoundly disturbing and makes the picture much more shocking than any number of Rape of the Sabine Women images, or crucifixions, or any of the other repeated images of violence and suffering in our western tradition.

Homes does something similar in her novel. Chappy, the pedophile and child murderer who narrates the book is constantly deploying humor to undermine the seriousness of what he does. He does this with a tone that treats all events, no-matter how awful, with the same flatness and matter-of-factness. He uses a

playfulness of language, primarily alliteration, to undercut the darkness of the action. This deployment of humour seems like a reference to *Lolita*, but also a similar technique to *Funny Games*, the Haneke movie, where horror is played as farce. It's more shocking in the Homes novel because the levity and playfulness and fun that the narrator has with language only emphasizes his psychopathy. It also creates another tension and further level of disgust in the reader because the book is brilliantly and beautifully written, so I was constantly having to come out of the story as assess myself. OMG, am I actually 'enjoying' this? Well, yes. It can't be denied that it's brilliantly written and realized. And the uncomfortableness of this experience is compounded when Chappy starts to implicate the reader. By enjoying this book am I in a sense condoning the action? No, of course not! But I was having to constantly assess the nature of my response in a quite uncomfortable way. Reading this book is like handling highly dangerous radioactive material. There is also a sense that it might contaminate you. I'm aware that that sounds ridiculously melodramatic, but why would you want to be in the head of a sadistic psychopath for hundreds of pages? What is keeping you there?

By the end of the book, the sense of stuckness and repetition is overwhelming. Chappy is constantly asking people what the time is, but never gets a response. The sexual imagery is transformed by obsessive repetition into something else so that you can reverse the Freudian mantra that everything is about sex, to say that nothing is about sex when even sex isn't about sex. Sex is all that is talked about, everything is sexualized. Everything is euphemism and double-endre and reminds you of the famous Robert Hughes quote about the repeated joke that through repetition stops being funny and becomes a threat.

It's interesting to think about this book in relation to *Lolita* and de Sade. But another figure I kept thinking about was Hannibal Lector, and his cultural ancestor, Dracula. These are images of an aristocracy who feed on their social inferiors. The 1% for whom the rest of us are simply the free-range rude. They are depraved and vampiric, but they are also exceptional and other. How is Chappy exceptional and other? In his use of language. He affects a pretentious, purple prose style that marks him out as being different from the hoi polloi. Why didn't Homes write him as a bland, brain-dead, slack-jawed simpleton? (Like the character in Joyce Carol Oates' *Zombie*) Or even as a plain-speaking, regular-guy? I'm sure there are plenty of psychopaths that come in this variety. I think it's because she wanted to make reference to de Sade and Humbert Humbert.

By the end of the book the tone changes, and although Chappy's story, if it's to be believed, gives him some motivation and makes him a more human and understandable character, he is still not "one of us". He never makes that transformation to being completely human.

One of the reasons I admired this book is because of the depiction of prison life. It's one of the greatest prison books ever.

I'm aware that every time I say something positive about *The End of Alice*, I have a strong urge to say how uncomfortable that makes me feel, that I could find pleasure in such a book. What am I saying then? I want you to know that I'm not a horrible pervy weirdo? And yet it's odd that I wouldn't feel this way about enjoying *Silence of the Lambs*.

The End of Alice has made me think about why I read. More specifically, about the 'pleasure' of reading. It's also made me think about the difference between entertainment and art which was always a distinction I used to dismiss.

Cathy (cathepsut) says

Buddy read with MacHalos. And "9. A book that is outside your comfort zone" for my 2016 reading

challenge.

At 19%: So far mostly boring, unnecessarily verbose, lots of vague introspection. Some paragraphs feel like a word game--how many expressions for the same thing can I squeeze into one sentence? Is that really a sign of good writing? Or is the author simply trying too hard to be clever?

At 32%: Odd. It's not bad, once the narrative gets going. Jumps between her story, his story, his pasts and possible what-ifs. Disjointed, muddled.

I had no difficulties to figure out, who is addressed by our main character at any given point. Comments and sentences, relating to persons not directly involved in a scene, are slipped in frequently. Cleverly done. Nice gimmick. And it did feel like a gimmick.

At 51%: I like the prison scenes. No idea what to think of the girl's relationship. I am not connecting with her, I don't get any good or bad vibes of any kind from her. I am in his head, so I see how he ticks. But she's just a blank.

The sex scenes are either too clinical or uncomfortable and gross. The whole point of the book seems to be to shock with its increasingly disgusting imagery. I don't really feel an emotional connection, good or bad. I just read over these scenes and keep going. So far the book pretty much fails to engage me. Horrific scenes without a point are just that, horrific and gross, and have no redeeming value in itself.

At 73%, the plot thickens: *She wears war paint and carries a quiver filled with white arrows ending in blue suction cups and a bow to match. She giggles and makes a gesture that points to my shriveled self down below.*

At 100%: Done! And that was it? It's not as if we didn't know how it would end. What was the point of this book?

I am obviously not well suited to A-list authors. I don't get it. I like my stories with a suspenseful cliffhanger or a satisfying ending with a bow tied on. Not this. No suspense, no twist, just a running out of prose and nothing. What was I supposed to take away from this, besides some gross imagery that I do not need to have stuck in my brain? I need bleach and distance and maybe I will have an attempt at a proper review at some later point. But probably not.

Clarissa says

I suppose I picked up this book because I felt something akin to the emotion of having been "double-dog-dared". I have read a few of A.M Homes short stories (the one that springs to mind is the one about the boy and the barbie doll), and enjoyed them immensely, and greatly admired her writing style and unusual subject matter. Like a lot of people (whether or not they admit it), I do enjoy being horrified, grossed out, disgusted and mildly traumatized by art. Books and movies that people hype as being extremely disturbing, raunchy, racy, horrifying, etc, rarely bother me to the extent that I'm led to believe I will be bothered.

So obviously, after reading the summary, and the reviews, I felt like I just needed to see if it was all true. It was.

The book details the correspondence between an incarcerated pedophile (who has been locked up for twenty-three years), and a burgeoning female pedophile- the latter of whom is nineteen years old with sights set on the twelve year old neighbor boy. Our narrator, the former of the two, lured me in with his Humbert-reminiscent articulation. Like someone standing at the oceans edge, rip-current well concealed, I dipped my toe in, then my foot. And then it was too late for me.

By the end of this book, I felt assaulted. I hope I do not trivialize the horrors of being victimized by a pedophile by saying that, but it was how I felt. I feel like the first few chapters of the book "groomed" me for the lurid and sickening descriptions of pedophilic rape, incest, and torture that followed. There were several moments where I thought "I know what she is about to describe, but surely she won't be that *graphic*", and then she WAS, and then some. By the end of it I felt like I'd been forcibly subjected to it all against my will and was then left to deal alone- desolate, and shameful.

I made it through the whole book basically trying to answer the question "why the hell am I reading this?". I know better than to look for a "happy ending" or anything redeeming, so why? Did I take pleasure in reading about the torture of children? NO. Did I enjoy being disgusted? Well yes, but not to that extent. Maybe just to push my limits. I still don't know.

It has been said that this book is a gratuitous piece of filth, and worse, that it is the kind of child pornography in the written form that a true pedophile would get off on. I fear the latter might be true.

But it is more than just a piece of filth. Homes stated in an interview that she desired to narrate from the perspective of a murderer, a sex-offender of the worst kind. That it wasn't a place that many authors had dared to go. And she did it well. Maybe too well. I felt that "Chappy" was a living, breathing being, locked up in the prison just a few towns over.

The major conflict I keep going through in my head was this: did this book really need to be written? Our culture is so inundated with shows like "to catch a predator" and to an extent, sensationalizes sexual crimes with shows like Law and Order SVU. I would argue that it is thrilling to watch things like these, and then tell ourselves it's ok to be thrilled because of the punitive nature of these shows. We feel glorious and self-righteous in our hate for people like Chappy and the nineteen year old, and take glee in their punishment. We are never forced to actually go inside their heads, or consider their upbringing.

PLEASE NOTE that I believe child molesters deserve everything they get, and maybe more.

However, this book doesn't smack with said self-righteousness. If you expect that Homes is going to come in and make you feel ok about the sickening slurry of horror-arousal you may feel throughout this book by shivving the main character, she won't. And this is what makes her a truly great writer. She pushes our heads in and says "LOOK" in such a subtle way, it is hard to tear away. And makes us confront sides of ourselves we may not have wanted to in the process.

Franco Santos says

El fin de Alice, de Amy Homes, probablemente sea el libro más grotesco y perturbador que haya leído en mucho tiempo. Y esto, aunque pueda generar rechazo, lo considero un gran logro de la autora, que fue capaz de explorar los lugares más oscuros e inquietantes de la mente humana sin ceder ante lo falso o forzado, con una prosa fascinante. Jamás había leído un libro que tratara de una manera tan cruda la moralidad, manipulada con filosofía a través de un pedófilo (más exactamente condenado por hebefilia, en principio) recluido en la cárcel que, en sus memorias, va detallando con una precisión estremecedora sus delitos sexuales.

Pero esto no se queda ahí, puesto que en la vida del pedófilo entra en escena una joven que lo admira, y que tiene el propósito de conquistar y aprovecharse impudicamente de un niño de 12 años, mientras cuenta sus planes y progresos a través de cartas impactantes que intercambia con el preso. Y con esto comienza la verdadera historia, que se va desplegando con una calidad insuperable, mediante el uso de la fragmentación narrativa y saltos temporales que ciertamente muchas veces me dejaron desconcertado. A medida que uno va avanzando en el libro, al lector se le van a ir revelando las caras ocultas de estos dos protagonistas, que van a despegarse poco a poco de lo que quieren mostrar para exponer lo que realmente son. Brillante lo de Homes.

Creo que no hace falta aclararlo, pero aun así menciono que esta es una novela profundamente explícita, de

modo que no es apta para todos. En *El fin de Alice* leí algunas de las descripciones sexuales más horrosas con las que me he encontrado, y no solo se limita a eso. Este es un libro que sin lugar a dudas no puede dejar indiferente a nadie, en especial teniendo en cuenta el final, que es una locura. Lo recomiendo si se tiene estómago.

Jennifer says

WARNING: HORROR NOVEL. EVERY PARENTS NIGHTMARE.

I just thought I should make that (the above) very clear. It starts out innocently enough a letter to a prisoner. But then the story evolves into something terrible, horrible. And lots of gruesome. Have I made it clear? This book is about a pedophile. A old one in prison and a new one...free. Your asking why did you read this? I do not know. I thought "oh it is less than 300 pages, it should be a quick read and it will be like a Dateline episode". Well, it was a quick read; once I started this was not something I wanted lingering around. You could have put it down you say. I could have. But I chose not to. The subject (at one point I considered vomiting) is repulsive. It is not something we should look away from. Hide from. Not talk to our children about. IGNORE. It is scary.

(view spoiler)

And it it not a nice clean sanitized Dateline episode. This is raw in your face sexual violence. This folks is the sad reality. It made me think of the documentary I watched on PBS about the camps of pedophiles in the woods in Florida.

One blurb on my book calls this a "love story". The Los Angeles times can FUCK OFF. Love story?! That is not okay. This is absolutely not a love story. Not at all. And if we fool ourselves into thinking that well, I am scared for all of us.

About the book, the writing you ask? I can say it was well done. I am not sure that I would really recommend this anyone I know. I advise to read at your own risk. I have nothing to offer. I feel like bathing in bleach after this one.

And yes. I gave it a high rating. It was thought provoking. Made me want to vomit. Made me want to educate my child better. These are the monsters we should worry about. The ones that walk among us. In order to know them better we cannot ignore them. We owe our children that.

Mel says

Haunting, oftentimes disturbing, sometimes disgusting, and one of the best books I have ever read.

This book has come to be the book with the most profound impact on me. Not just because of the haunting disturbing content, but because the author managed to create a narrator's voice that felt as though he was a real person of flesh and bones speaking to you through the text on each page.

Reading the book I felt like I suddenly shrunk and was placed inside a small cage. And someone carried me around inside this cage, that someone being the narrator. And he took me into his world, showing me around every nook and cranny of every corner. And I, helpless and unable to escape this cage and tear myself away

from this disturbing world, was trapped and unable to miss a single detail. Occasionally he would look at me through the bars of my cage and speak directly at me.

Reading this book was like looking into a whole new world, and it sucked me in from the first page onwards and would not let me rest until I kept reading that book. Though I loved this book very much, I would not recommend it for many. There is some really disturbing stuff in there, and if you are someone who is really squirmish about that stuff, don't go there. However if you're like me and are able to tolerate even the deepest level of the underbelly of the taboo then have a go at reading this book.

Brian says

Vivid, brutal, unrelenting.

How does an author inhabit the place necessary to construct a work like this? In an interview Homes said, "I write the things we don't want to say aloud." I'd add that she also writes about things we didn't ever want to witness with such intimacy.

The story is a fictional memoir of a convicted murderer and pedophile. His musings are not for the squeamish. There were several times when I had to put the book down for a day or two, the imagery as grotesque as a freshly made highway pileup.

I purchased this book somewhere around the turn of the century - it has sat unread in my library for 15 years. I wonder how I would have approached this book had I read it in 2000 for the first time when I didn't have a 10 year-old daughter?

Patrick says

It's hard for me to give this book a proper review, mainly because it was hard for me to read. I'd like to say that the reason for this is because of the lurid and explicit detail the author goes into in telling the story of an incarcerated pedophile exchanging letters and depravities with a similarly minded young woman on the outside, and maybe that was part of it, certainly. However, more than anything else, aside from the graphic nature of the storyline and details therein, it's actually pretty boring. The "twist" at the end of the book is pretty apparent early on (so much so that I'm not sure it is even meant to be considered a twist, although I'm sure some people would be surprised), and the story, such as it is, isn't all that interesting outside of the titillating explicitness of disgusting acts.

That said, it is a very well-written and constructed novel. I felt a little dirty reading it in public, almost as if passing strangers were judging me for the details contained within the pages (not that anyone could tell based on the cover; they just *knew, man*). Homes is clearly a talented writer, although I think the shock-and-awe factor seemed to weigh a bit heavily in the writing process. It gets explicit, perhaps unnecessarily so, but I suppose that's part of it's charm, such as it is.

I guess what I'm trying to say is I liked the book; it was, on the whole, an interesting read. However, there were stretches where I simply could not be bothered to pick it up, despite my desire to continue on with the story to it's inevitable conclusion. Take from that what you will, but on the whole, consider it recommended (though not for the prudish or faint of heart).

Elaine says

Ok, I get Lolita. I get American Psycho (even think it might be a work of genius). I don't get this one. Yet another exploration of the mindset of a truly sick fuck. Sections of this book are just gross beyond belief. Ok, it's well described (but I can't even say the prose uplifts or illuminates or sheds understanding in any way -- nor does anything stick because it's a phrase that just had to be written). The content though -- if you're looking for something that sickens you to the stomach, this one will do the trick.

If A.M. Homes is hoping to skirt as close to the line between literature and pornographic filth, this one is a tour de force, it comes dangerously close.

The final rolldown to credits...it's as if Homes herself can no longer abide her monster. The last section of what happened with Alice is told in warp speed.

My humble opinion ---- if you're going to write about totally sick subject matter (one that might give the sick whacks out there a few good ideas), you'd better damn well blow me away with something worth my time (not this mediocre attempt at literary apotheosis).

Feel free to disagree -- frankly, I'd love to hear a different opinion. What an absolute waste of time this was.
