



A Home at the End of the World

Michael Cunningham

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From Michael Cunningham, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Hours*, comes this widely praised novel of two boyhood friends: Jonathan, lonely, introspective, and unsure of himself; and Bobby, hip, dark, and inarticulate. In New York after college, Bobby moves in with Jonathan and his roommate, Clare, a veteran of the city's erotic wars. Bobby and Clare fall in love, scuttling the plans of Jonathan, who is gay, to father Clare's child. Then, when Clare and Bobby have a baby, the three move to a small house upstate to raise "their" child together and, with an odd friend, Alice, create a new kind of family. *A Home at the End of the World* masterfully depicts the charged, fragile relationships of urban life today.

A Home at the End of the World Details

Date : Published July 1st 2004 by Picador USA (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780312424084

Author : Michael Cunningham

Format : Paperback 342 pages

Genre : Fiction, Lgbt, Contemporary, Glbt, Queer, Gay

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From Reader Review *A Home at the End of the World* for online ebook

Juushika says

The story of a relationship between two childhood friends and a woman who enters their lives in adulthood, *A Home at the End of the World* is difficult to summarize because its plot is wide, rambling, and only half the point. Meandering from the childhood deaths that leave Bobby bereft, distant, and desperate for connection, to Jonathan's burgeoning sexuality and his fixation on Bobby, to the entrance of world-weary Clare and the fragile three-way relationship that forms on the basis of the shared love--but disparate sexuality--between them, the book offers constant forward motion but few concrete goals. Its goal, instead, is home--and this abstract concept creates a compelling story. The book's chapter-by-chapter headhopping is its weak point: each character has a strong external voice, but their interior monologues are near identical and unconvincing as a result. But in all other ways, Cunningham's portrayals are unflinching and precise. His characters are mundane and eccentric, intimately familiar and occasionally unlikable; the complex relationships between them are fueled by intense love but are never idealized or static. Cunningham offers moments of startling clarity, clear and sharp and painful as glass, into what it is to be a member of a family, an isolated individual connected to others in the attempt to build a home. *A Home at the End of the World* walks a delicate line between heartwarming and heartbreaking, and it's easy to oversell--but there is little excessive or maudlin about it, despite its brush against tragedies like the AIDS epidemic. It tempers its emotions with the discomfiting mundanity of reality, and finds no easy or stable answers. If not for its moments of beauty, it would be depressing; instead, it's both and more: intimate, quiet, and compelling; a dream set within the realities of life; poignant, beautiful, painful; above all, real. It's not a book I can say I simply "enjoyed," but it is one I'm thankful to have read, and I recommend it.

Mosco says

a me di questo libro è piaciuta solo la colonna sonora.

I personaggi girano attorno al loro ombelico, convinti che sia "al centro del mondo", incapaci di crescere, e l'unico con un po' di attenzione verso gli altri, che sa farsi carico del dolore altrui, ovvero Bobby, è guardato con affettuosa sufficienza, come fosse l'adorato cane di casa.

Kim says

"You don't necessarily meet a lot of people in this world."

This is the first of Michael Cunningham's books I've read, but I will be reading all of them. He just flat gets it. By the time I was halfway through, I more or less disliked two of the three main characters, but I wasn't tired of reading about them. I wanted to figure them out. I wanted to like them and if I didn't, I wanted to understand why.

This is one of those books that you read a sentence or a paragraph or a scene and it hits you deep down, sometimes in the places where you're most insecure. (If you're someone who underlines quotations, get new

pencils. Get a *box* of pencils.) There were times when I was sad or upset about something and would read another book instead because I didn't want to feel everything that this one brought up.

I'm making this book sound like a big downer. It isn't. It's exhilarating, like all the best books, because it tells you what you know is true and then makes you look at it all again.

Nick Pageant says

A million stars. What an amazing book. The writing is incredible - just beautiful, beautiful words. I can't even be coherent about this thing. One of the very, very few books I've read populated by REAL people. READ IT. EVERYONE READ IT.

Punk says

Fiction. This is the story of Bobby and Jonathan -- best friends, almost brothers, almost in love -- how they grow up together, how they grow apart, how they meet Clare, and how they all try to make a home together. It sounds cozy -- I love self-made families -- but this is an exceedingly lonely book. No one's able to make any lasting connections and everyone's alone in one way or another. It's sad, but written so well. Cunningham has an easy way with language; his prose is simple and honest, with wonderful spots of color and noise: *If Bobby moved with the methodical, slightly bovine will of a vacuum cleaner, sucking up each errand and task, Jonathan clattered along like an eggbeater.* That's Clare speaking -- several characters take turns narrating -- and you can sense her resentment even through the humor. Cunningham's prose is delightful, but cutting. As is this book.

Three stars for affecting, sympathetic characters and Cunningham's effortlessly interesting prose.

Taylor says

I only sort of liked this, so I honestly don't have too much to say about it. It wasn't remarkable, but it wasn't awful.

It basically follows a set of three friends - one women, two men - and examines their relationships, both with each other, and with people from the outside world (mothers, fathers, girlfriends, boyfriends).

It reads almost a little blandly. I suppose you could say it's more of a character study and less about the plot. But then I couldn't say that it was very successful, because I didn't feel connected to any of the characters. They had their moments, but the things they felt and experienced weren't enough to move me emotionally - and I'm a pretty big sap. Even this was a little too sappy and unnecessarily dramatic for me. There's not a lot of joy in this book, so after awhile it feels like the characters are just holding on to each other out of history and obligation. They seem almost afraid to meet new people. Or maybe just lazy.

If you're determined to read it, borrow it. Or buy it used. But if you want a better examination of the dynamic between two men and one woman, read *The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*.

Also, has anyone read any of Cunningham's other works? I kind of want to read *The Hours*, but this makes me a little wary.

Jennifer Ochoa says

I think I'm experiencing Cunningham Fatigue. I've read four of his novels in the last two years and they are starting to run together. He does seem to work with very similar themes in his works, something I actually like about him.

This novel reminds me a lot of his most recent novel, *The Snow Queen*, another story about a trio, quartet if you want to count Alice in this novel, and Liz in the other novel. (Liz is very similar to Clare, I should add). It feels like Cunningham uses his novels to work through personal experiences, like maybe there is a Clare/Liz person in his life, maybe he had a Bobby/Tyler brother figure. I know the unhappy housewife character that occurs in this novel, *The Hours*, and *Flesh and Blood* is at least partially based on his mother, who died of cancer a few years after *The Hours* was published. It is no wonder that *The Snow Queen* concerns itself with a young woman dying of cancer, and not the unhappy housewife of earlier novels. It's a beautiful thing to see an author work through the difficulties of his life through his work. And it never fails to amaze me what a light and beautiful touch he has when creating his characters.

So back to this novel. It takes place in the 1980's and centers around two childhood friends (Jonathan and Bobby) who enter into a complicated romantic threesome with a woman (Clare). One could call it a polyamorous relationship, but it's a bit more complex than that. Sex hardly factors in the equation for these three. It's more about creating the family they each want.

Each of the three characters narrate chapters in the book, with Jonathan's mother Alice (the unhappy housewife) narrating some chapters as well. Alice's POV is mostly in the beginning, when Jonathan and Bobby were kids. Clare shows up a bit later, taking over as the central female in the boys' lives. Naturally the two women do not care for each other when they do meet :-)

The characters are pretty good, especially Bobby, whose tragic losses, implied asexuality, and relentless yearning for a family make him the most interesting character in the book. I felt Jonathan and Clare lacked something in comparison. To go back to my *Snow Queen* comparison, the Barrett and Liz characters to which they resemble were more fleshed out.

The story-line felt a little dragged out after awhile. There are only so many pages of relationship agony one can deal with before you lose interest and empathy. The beginning of the novel was superior in that regard. The tension between Jonathan, Bobby, and Alice was more exciting than the rather mundane tension between Jonathan, Bobby, and Clare, even with their "unusual" relationship configuration.

The final pages of the book didn't work for me either. Cunningham ended his other works with such poetry, that I found myself in one of those "That's it?" moments when I turned the page to find the Acknowledgements statement.

Not a bad read, especially if you love Cunningham, but I'd recommend *The Snow Queen* before this one.

Nicole says

I want every character in this book to shut the fuck up.

H?i An says

Khi còn là m?t thi?u n? hay ngay c? khi ?ã bi?t yêu tôi luôn tin r?ng trên ??i này v?n t?n t?i m?t th? tình yêu không tình d?c, ?ó là: tri k?, tâm giao. Sau khi k?t hôn tôi ngh? r?ng th? tình yêu không tình d?c không bao gi? t?n t?i, cái g?i là tri k?, tâm giao có ch?ng c?ng ch? là ánh sao v?t qua trong màn ?êm b?t t?n. Và hôm nay tôi b?t g?p cái th? ty ?ó trong " T? ?m n?i t?n cùng th? gi?i". Clare khao khát Bobby nh?ng l?i yêu Jonathan. Jonathan coi Clare nh? b?n tâm giao nh?ng l?i yêu Bobby b?ng th? ty vô cùng d?u dàng, thân thi?t h?n c? tình anh em, s? ??ng ?i?u gi?a h? khi?n ngay c? Clare c?ng không th? xen vào. Ph?i ch?ng tình c?m ?an chéo ?y gi?a Clara, Bobby và Jonathan duy trì ???c là b?i anh chàng Jonathan kia là k? ??ng tính? Hay b?i b?n ch?t con ng?i v?n d? quá tham lam, h? mu?n yêu ng?i này ? m?t vài ?i?m, ng?i kia m?t vài ?i?m, ?? có s? hoàn h?o nh? ?òi h?i c?a b?n thân thì h? ao ??c có s? c?ng h??ng l?n nhau, m?t s? hài hòa tr?n v?n m?i có th? làm nên m?t "t? ?m" k? l?, k? d? và k? đi?u nh? v?y ? M?t ng?i ph? n? và hai ng?i ?àn ông c?m th?y vô cùng ?m áp, hp khi cùng ch?m sóc m?t ??a bé, luôn coi nó là ??a con chung c?a ba ng?i. M?t th? ty vô cùng gi?n d? mà khó ??t tên, sâu s?c h?n b?t c? ty nào trên th? gian này, th? tình c?m ?y ch? xu?t hi?n khi h? ???c làm cha, làm m?.

Cu?i câu chuy?n ?? l?i trong tôi m?t c?m giác n?ng n?, day d?t... Nó thâm u nh? bu?i sáng HN hôm nay v?y.

Giedre says

"A Home at the End of the World" was my first Cunningham's book and I can already say that it's not going to be the last one.

The book is evolving slowly, and my reading was slowed down even more, because I was traveling while I was reading it. I am glad about it, as it seemed to require time to think it over and digest it.

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about "A Home at the End of the World" is that it is an awkward book. It is awkward, because it is too real, too intimate, too raw. It does not try to sell us any illusions about relationships, love or future. Just the opposite, while reading it, I felt thrown into all the complexity of it and in some way it stayed with me even after I finished the book.

The book speaks in four different voices and takes the reader through a long period of lives of the four characters. I found the style and the frequent change of voices confusing at times, but at the same time I enjoyed the opportunity it gave me to live inside the different characters and understand them in a deeper and more complete way.

The four characters, childhood friends Jonathan and Bobby, their flatmate, lover and companion Clare and Jonathan's mother Alice struggle with accepting and understanding the difference between the expectations of their significant others and society, their own idealized visions of what life, home and family is, and the reality. The book is breaking stereotypes and boundaries, provoking us to question conventional wisdom and inviting us to look for our own personal answers to the big questions posed by life.

I am really happy I embarked upon this awkward journey and learned from seeing my own reflection in the different voices of the book.

Lena♥Ribka says

Directly after I've finished the book:

THAT, my friends, is an excellent example of a literary fiction.

And it is not easy to rate the books of the genre.
They could be everything - from 2 to 5 stars.

Well, I have to decide between 4 or 5 in this specific case, but it won't be easier to write a review for it. The reason WHY I love literary fiction-it makes you not only feel, but think, think a lot.
Oh, yes, it can even detect our hidden individual talent for philosophy.

Now I'll go into my tub to think about...the fragility of life, the variety of love, the power of human bonding, the senseless of death, the significance of the moment and the solemnity of words...

I decided not to hide my review within the spoiler tags=>spoiler-free :

Michael Cunningham is an extraordinary story teller. I was drawn into this multifaceted journey across years and cities from the very first page. I re-read some lines again and again letting the words slowly grow on me before turning to the next page. The writing is rich and compelling. I highlighted the half of the book.

The author takes us through the lives of the three main characters- Bobby, Jonathan and Clare- their childhood, families, their loves, lives, dreams, disappointments, losses, small triumphs, big changes, ups and downs. The trio would find themselves becoming major parts of each others lives. The relationships between these three characters between the late 70s and the early 80s are the core of the story.

This book is about friendship and family bond. And it is about love, that is so different in all its facets and appearances.

There is no rules for love, it is genderless and ageless, and timeless.

And because all my dear friends wanted to know if there is a HEA:

It is a very realistic ending, full of hope and *mererly present* and at the same it is an open ending - Michael Cunningham trusts his readers to draw the right conclusions about his characters - and this ending is melancholic, poignant and simply BEAUTIFUL.

My only complaint, a very tiny one - the multiple first person's POV. I would have given it 5 stars if not every character had his own first person's POV. In spite of the fact that this kind of telling is my favourite, I think the book was a bit overloaded with it. As the result -all these different POVs sounded very similar at the end. It was always ONLY the voice of Michael Cunningham behind.

Highly recommended!

P.S. I'd like to thank Nick for a nice exchange of opinions about the book. It is this kind of books you NEED to talk about while/after reading it. It is a kind of book you shouldn't read alone. It is why I love my GR friends so much.

Lukas (LukeLaneReads) says

A couple of jumbled thoughts...

I found this to be quite an introspective character focused novel. It's plot is sort used as a backdrop to the characters working through their insecurities about relationships, loneliness, and the expectations they have about their life. Not a lot happens plot wise really, it's more about what is going on within the heads of the characters.

Sometimes I was completely enthralled with them. The first half is especially engaging with the dynamic between the boys and Johnathan's mum, but I will admit it lost be a bit with the introduction of Clare, she never truly felt like a real character to me.

I also didn't like the focus one character took towards the end, it felt a bit more like introducing an 'issue' instead of the character feeling organic.

Ultimately, while this book seems to sell itself on it's unconventional relationship, to me it was more about a fear of loneliness and them trying to fix that. If I was to give this a book another title it would be '*Being lonely with other people*'.

Svetlana says

[illegible]

Madeline says

Well - there are a couple of really good lines in this book, but they are almost invariably followed by something truly horrible and trite, expanding upon the theme and beating it into your head. So the prose is overwritten and labored (and sometimes mannered and affected), but as a reader of Victorian literature, I could probably forgive that - Hardy has committed greater sins, and I have read and enjoyed those sins as committed by lesser writers than Hardy - but the *problem* with *A Home at the End of the World* is that it never feels authentic: particularly, the characters. They are all a collection of surfaces; Cunningham constantly explains them to us, but does little to justify his explanations, and their supposed virtues just make them cowards.* Also, although it is a novel in alternating first person chapters, none of them have unique voices - they all sound like each other, there are no psychological/verbal idiosyncrasies. You want something

more nuanced and developed from a novel like this - and something more challenging, too. I think the general idea that "these people are too afraid of the world and themselves to be part of it" is a good one, if perhaps more suited to short fiction than a novel, except I'm not 100% sure that the novel actually takes this position: there's a nasty undercurrent of sanctimony.

Music is supposed to be a big part of their lives, but it never feels that way - Nick Hornby, among others, has done that better. And food is also supposed to be important. Those are two rich thematic elements, but they just *lie there* on the page, like gestures at depth and sensual experience. It sort of gave me second-hand embarrassment.

* Like, if you want to read that, Hemingway, Wharton, and Fitzgerald are your go-to writers, right? And I say this as someone who doesn't even like Hemingway.

El?na Jurberga says

tik skaisti un neparasti, ?sti un gais?gi.

par pieaugšanu, sevis mekl?šanu un citu atrašanu sev?. par sadz?vošanu un par dz?vi kopum?.

esmu saj?sm? par Kaningema rakst?bas manieri un Brices burv?go tulkojumu, š?d? kombin?cij? par dz?ves rit?jumu var?tu las?t daudz un dikti, neremdin?mi.

vair?k šeit - <http://naktsskapitis.blogspot.com/201...>

Fabian says

This is the "Less than Zero"-ish novel of the popular NYC writer, and just like Bret Easton Ellis' depiction of the derelict children of sunny Cali in the 80's, Cunningham encapsulates the latter 80's in the East Village (and early 60's, 70's in the stark midwest) with lost souls and unique individuals.

The plot is this: Two guys and a gal play house together because they are (equally?) in love.

Obviously there is more to it, as it differs somewhat from the pretty damn good movie with an additional character Erich (he, not Jonathan, gets AIDS!) & a fourth point of view: that of Alice, the pot smoking desperate housewife (later widow).

This episodic drama is written carefully, it seems, and it sometimes drifts into insane allusions (see: The Hours) while keeping the normalcy so entertaining to behold. The reader mirrors Bobby in that ethereal aspect... one is not alive nor dead following the triplets around. One just IS.

Like I said, this one is an early example of a genius master. My favorite Cunningham is "Specimen Days" which sounds, and is (spectacularly) weird. Here he tries to get something right, and thoroughly succeeds. I like that he is taking another direction currently however, even after all the fame and acclaim garnered by "The Hours". Cunningham is ambitious, and I am yet to be disappointed, though I probably never will*.

* False. See: The Snow Queen

Amy says

I wish we could do half stars -- I would like to give this book 2.5 stars to rate it a C.

I really wanted to like it more than I did; however, I felt there was not enough internal distinction among the characters to make the shifting viewpoints work. Each person's narrative voice sounded like all the others, resulting in homogenous characters that did not seem sufficiently fleshed out.

Simay Yildiz says

For English, please visit Community BookStop.

Bu yaz?n?n orijinali CAN'la Bir Sene'de yay?nland?.

Kitab? bitirir bitirmez yaz?yorum bu yaz?y?. A?layacak gibiyim asl?nda ama ya? gelmiyor gözümden. ?imdiye kadar tan?d???m insanlar?, ho?çakal diyemeden bir daha göremediklerimi, ho?çakal deyip de y?llar sonra tekrar bir araya geldiklerimi... Oturup yazsam kimi nas?l tasvir edece?imi dü?ünüyorum. Ne kadar a?lad???m?z?, ne kadar da güldü?ümüzü birlikte... Hatta bazen, hem de hala, sessizlik içerisinde oturup huzur bulabildi?imizi... Sevip de söyleyememelerimizi... Nefret edip de ba??m?zdan atamad?klar?m?z?... Önce yarg?lay?p, sonradan olmazsa olmazlar?m?zdan olanlar?...

Dünyan?n Sonundaki Ev'de bütün bunlar var i?te. Cunningham, bu kitab? Saatler'den 8 y?l önce yazm??. Bence Saatler'in temellerini atan kitap da bu olmu?; havas?, dili, hisleri o kadar benziyor ki... Dünyan?n Sonundaki Ev'de çocukluk arkada?lar? olan Bobby ve Jonathan'ın birlikte geçirdikleri zamanlara, ikisinin de belli bir ?eylerden ve biraz da birbirlerinden kaç?p sonra New York'ta tekrar bir araya gelmelerine tan?k oluyoruz. Ac?lar?n?, hayal k?r?kl?klar?n?, seviçlerini, hepsini onlarla birlikte hissediyoruz. Cunningham hikayeyi farklı farklı karakterlerin a?z?ndan anlat?yor; hepsini teker teker tan?rken, bir yandan da di?erlerinin gözünden nas?l göründüklerine de ?ahit oluyoruz.

GoodReads'de bu kitaba yorum yazanlardan biri, "okurken sat?rlar?n alt?n? çiziyorsan?z yeni kalemler al?n; hatta bir kutu yeni kalem al?n" yazm??. Nas?l da do?ru yazm??! Ben de alt çizerim okurken; konumum alt çizmeye müsait de?ilse de sonradan dönmek için k?v?r?r?m sayfalar?. CAN'la bu projeyi yapmaya ba?lad???m?zdan beri de kitab? okurken kafamda çalmaya ba?layan ?ark? olursa onlar? not almay? adet edindim. Not ald???m defterdekiler ve alt?n? çizdi?im yerler d???nda kitab?n durumu ?u anda resimde gördü?ünüz gibi. Bu da Cunningham'ın kelimeleri ne kadar ustaca kulland???n? aç?kça gösteriyor diye dü?ünüyorum.

(view spoiler)

?unu da söylemeden geçemeyece?im; bu kitap müzik dolu! Hepsi de hikayedeki farklı durumlara, hislere uygun. O nedenle "bu kitapla ne dinlenir?" k?sm?n? benim en etkilendi?im k?s?mlara göre seçtim.

AMEERA says

3.5

Lee says

This book was my introduction to Michael Cunningham, and when I finished it I cried. And then went out and bought everything he'd ever written.

I fell in love with this book. At that time in my life I could relate to its characters and their story in a unique way, but it was also Cunningham's writing: spare, lovely, gorgeously aware of minutiae, devastatingly honest. There is a sadness in his work that fills me with a profound loneliness that I find myself both overwhelmed by and grateful for.

"A Home at the End of the World" tells the story of Jonathan and Bobby, friends since their childhood in Cleveland. Thanks to various family tragedies, Bobby is damaged and strange. Jonathan, raised by a loving family, is naive and kind. The boys become friends, as close as brothers, but the friendship is quickly complicated by the their muddled teenaged libidos. They begin to experiment together sexually.

Embarrassed and confused, they lose touch for years only to reunite in New York. Jonathan is openly gay and living with Clare, an older, quirky single woman. Bobby is still lost, simply wandering. Clare and Jonathan, in the classic gay-man-straight-woman pact, have already agreed to have a baby together, but Clare and Bobby immediately become lovers and Clare quickly becomes pregnant. Pact off. Or so it seems, until the group manages to cobble together a little family and a life of the most patchwork variety.

It's become, in this "Will & Grace" era, a familiar story. But what Cunningham does with the characters is stunning. Bobby's rootlessness and desperate pansexuality in lieu of true love and nurturing is haunting. Jonathan's desire for a "traditional" life (kids, home, security) and the sadness that comes when he sees that life slipping away is heartbreaking. Clare's mix of selfishness and determined independence is compelling. Cunningham manages, beautifully, to shed new light on the old questions: how do we find home and how are we best loved? The answer, according to "A Home at the End of the World" is a refreshing one: we create it ourselves.
