



Are You There Alone?: The Unspeakable Crime of Andrea Yates

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On a June morning in a Houston suburb, a 911 dispatcher questioned the caller on the other end of the line: "ARE YOU HAVING A DISTURBANCE?"

"ARE YOU ILL?"

"ARE YOU AT 942 BEACHCOMBER?"

"ARE YOU THERE ALONE?"

It took a jury less than four hours to find Houston housewife Andrea Yates guilty of the drowning deaths of three of her five children -- and a mere half hour to sentence the troubled woman with a stunning history of severe mental problems to life in prison. But beyond the media coverage of her heinous crimes, there is a story that only investigative reporter Suzanne O'Malley has fully illuminated.

THIS IS THE BOOK THAT INCLUDES THE REVELATION THAT LED TO THE OVERTURNING OF ANDREA YATES'S CONVICTION.

The updated edition of "Are You There Alone?" features a new chapter on the appeal of the Yates case, as well as personal updates on both Andrea and Rusty Yates. Having drawn upon hundreds of interviews -- with expert witnesses, close friends, family advisers, and Andrea and Rusty themselves -- O'Malley has produced a riveting true-crime account that shatters our notions about criminal law, mental illness, death-penalty politics, and religious fanaticism in America today.

Are You There Alone?: The Unspeakable Crime of Andrea Yates Details

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From Reader Review Are You There Alone?: The Unspeakable Crime of Andrea Yates for online ebook

Erin says

O'Malley is a good writer, and she was skillfully able to keep from sensationalizing this story - she focused on the many mental health aspects, and, regardless of how you feel about Andrea Yates when you begin this book, you'll come away from it shaking your head at the mental health system in the United States.

My only gripe is that O'Malley constantly second guesses the lawyers involved with the case. Unless I've missed something, O'Malley is not a lawyer, and since she wasn't privy to most of the trial preparation, I think that it's a bit unfair of her to repeatedly insinuate that both the prosecution and defense should have brought in particular pieces of evidence, called certain witnesses, and so on. Hindsight is easy....just report the facts and let the reader decide. (OK, clearly this is the lawyer in me!)

Recommended reading if you are interested in the case and in psychiatry.

Bunny says

This was an extraordinarily upsetting book. Not just because of the death of those beautiful kids, but because this poor woman showed so many freaking signs of mental damage, but no one cared to help her.

Extremely sad, and upsetting. People should read this before assuming that a woman having a hard time with her child/children is going to get over it.

Maureen Mantrop-utterback says

read this because I lived in Clear Lake City where this happened. I know people have all sorts of opinions about what happened, but I have to say that after reading this book, her husband should have been tried as well as her. Her story is incredibly tragic. This is not written from her point of view, either.

Jennifer says

Mental illness is real, and though I don't condone her actions, my heart is saddened by all the signs that were missed. If only those many times that she and her husband had sought help had been realized ... seven lives may have been spared.

Jennifer Wardrip says

To be honest, I was very hesitant to even read this book. Like most people, when Andrea Yates killed her

five children by drowning them in the family's bathtub, the only information I knew was what I heard from the media. I almost immediately formed my own opinion -- Andrea Yates was evil. So it took me awhile to open my mind to the fact that there could be more to the story.

Once I started reading ARE YOU THERE ALONE? I absolutely could not read fast enough. This book is fascinating in delving into the issue of mental illness, and what it truly means. I learned about psychosis, about postpartum depression, about bipolar disorder, and much, much more.

Although there are things I still don't understand (how Rusty Yates, Andrea's husband, could have left her alone with their children when he knew she was seriously mentally ill, for example), I have to say that I have a greater understanding of why Ms. Yates did what she did.

Hers was a horrific crime, and one for which she deserved to be punished. But she also deserved to get help for the problems that had plagued her for many years. For that, Suzanne O'Malley and the doctors, nurses, and many others involved in the case are to be commended.

Sammantha says

First off I have to say how I felt before reading this book. I got this at the library. I recently found out about Andrea Yates even though the crime happened in 2001. I was watching a documentary on Netflix called "Crimes of the Century" and Andrea Yates was one of them. I was very appalled by this crime. How can you murder all five of your children? How?! She was found not guilty by reason of insanity and so she'll spend her days at North Texas State Hospital. My opinion is she needed the death penalty regardless of insanity. She takes five helpless children's lives that are her own, she doesn't need help because there isn't no helping that kind of inhuman person to commit a crime like that.

Now after I read this book by Suzanne O'Malley which I might add was a very well written book. It will be definitely be one of my favorite true crime books. I loved the timeline the author, Suzanne, introduced in the beginning of the book. It really gives you a clear outlook on the years to follow of Andrea's life and everything is broke down to give you a timeline before you even begin reading. Even after reading this book and understand what mental illness Andrea did have I still believe she should have went to prison. Say I'm wrong or whatever you please but there was way too many things that Andrea herself could have done. What I mean by that is, how was the death of her children by her not premeditated? She had thoughts of harming her child after his was first born. Why did she not tell anyone or confide in her husband? So from the very first child she had she did have thoughts of harming them. To continue to have children would only add onto more of her stress. Throughout the book you will read that she refused taking her medicine and didn't want to take it, if you knew yourself you had thoughts of harming your children as early as your first child why would you not want to take the medicine? Andrea previously filled the bathtub and claimed she needed it for something else. I don't by that. Also she claims the devil was telling her to do it and if she didn't go through with it her children would not make it to heaven. She never mentioned that to any of her doctors until after the murders. I truly believe she is a sick person but to murder all five of your children well there will never be help for you and you deserve the death penalty. I really enjoyed this book. The author did an excellent job. Definitely recommend this book.

While reading the book I found a quote I really liked:

"Knowing the mind of Andrea Yates was the challenge."

peg says

Infanticide cannot be tolerated by any civilized society. It is one of the most unnatural and heinous crimes one can commit. What drives a parent to commit such crimes can only originate from the depths of the hell of dispairing mental illness. This book forces its reader to take a look at the prodromal signs Andrea Yates exhibited prior to murdering her children and points out startling evidence that these murders could have been prevented had Ms Yates received proper psychiatric care. We can point many fingers in this situation and assign blame but the responsibility not only rests in the hands of those people who were close to the situation. The failure of society to demand better psychiatric management of those who are a danger to themselves and others is the greater issue at hand.

Retnadi Nur'aini says

“Aku bertanya-tanya, apakah duka memiliki kapasitas tertentu? Sebanyak apa yang bisa Anda tanggung?” (Russel ‘Rusty’ Yates, halaman 401)

Pada suatu siang di musim panas tahun 1989, Rusty sedang menuruni tangga menuju kolam renang di kediamannya, Sunscape Apartments. Matanya menangkap sosok gadis bertubuh ramping mengapung di kolam renang. Gadis itu sangat cantik. “Peri air”, demikian Rusty menjuluki gadis yang bernama Andrea Pia Kennedy.

Empat tahun kemudian, mereka menikah. Namun seperti banyak pernikahan lainnya, mereka menemui ujian. Salah satu ujian berat Rusty Yates adalah penyakit mental yang diderita Andrea. Dengan lima orang anak berusia 7, 5, 3, 2, dan 6 bulan yang mereka miliki, penyakit mental Andrea sungguh-sungguh menguji kesabaran Rusty.

Betapapun, ujian terberat datang pada 21 Juni 2001. Karena pada hari itulah, Andrea membunuh kelima anak mereka.

That Day

Baru pukul 09.56 pagi saat Andrea menelepon Rusty dan memaksanya pulang. Delapan menit sebelum menelepon suaminya, Andrea menghubungi 911.

Tak lama, Opsir David Knapp datang. Andrea menyambutnya dengan keadaan basah kuyup, mata terbelalak lebar dan napas tersengal. “Aku baru saja membunuh anak-anakku,” ujar Andrea.

Andrea kemudian membimbing Opsir Knapp menuju kamar tidur. Di sana, terbaring empat mayat anak dengan posisi yang telah diatur. Tubuh mereka ditutupi spreng. Anak kelima, ditemukan di bathtub. Tubuhnya mengambang tertelungkup tak bernyawa.

Kelima anak itu mati ditenggelamkan.

Menelusuri “Akar” Masalah

Akar masalah Andrea sungguh bercabang-cabang. Pertama, penyakit mental yang diderita Andrea. Brian Yates—saudara laki-laki Andrea telah didiagnosis menderita bipolar mood disorder, atau yang juga dikenal sebagai manik depresi. Setelah anak keempat lahir, Andrea mencoba bunuh diri dengan minum Trazodone. Sebulan kemudian, Andrea mencoba menggorok lehernya dengan pisau.

Kedua, pengaruh guru spiritual Andrea, pendeta Michael Woroniecki. Keluarga Woroniecki berkeliling Amerika Serikat menggunakan rumah mobil, mengunjungi banyak kampus dan mal, untuk berkhotbah secara agresif tentang setan dan neraka. Andrea sendiri meyakini bahwa ada setan dalam dirinya, dan dengan membunuh anak-anaknya, ia telah menyelamatkan anak-anaknya dan mengirim mereka ke surga. Seperti khotbah Woroniecki yang pernah didengar oleh mantan guru SMU-nya di sebuah mal: “Kamu tidak akan bisa diselamatkan sampai kamu dibersihkan di dalam air.” (halaman 178).

Ketiga, dugaan malpraktik. Andrea telah bertemu dengan banyak psikiater dan telah dirawat di sejumlah rumah sakit. Semuanya memiliki diagnosis tersendiri atas penyakit mental Andrea. Mulai dari depresi berat, psikosis tipe catatonic, depresi pasca melahirkan, skizofrenik, dan belakangan, manik depresi. Beragam asumsi ini berakibat berganti-gantinya obat yang harus dikonsumsi Andrea—yang memiliki efek samping pada kondisi fisik dan mental Andrea. Pada enam belas hari sebelum Andrea melakukan pembunuhan, psikiater Mohammad Saeed bahkan memutuskan untuk menghentikan obat-obatan anti psikotik Andrea.

Ketiga cabang masalah ini masih memiliki sejumlah ranting. Mulai dari ketidakseimbangan hormon Andrea yang membuatnya mudah hamil dengan jarak sangat berdekatan, Andrea yang berhenti bekerja sebagai perawat dan menjadi IRT, keinginan Rusty dan Andrea untuk memiliki banyak anak, masa-masa saat pasangan ini tinggal di rumah mobil meniru pendeta Woroniecki, kematian ayah Andrea, dan satu faktor yang membuat Andrea kemudian mengajukan naik banding: kegemarannya menonton serial *Law & Order*.

Temuan O'Malley

Sebagai reporter investigasi, Suzanne O'Malley memulai penyelidikan atas kasus pembunuhan Noah, John, Paul, Luke, dan Mary Yates berjam-jam setelah Andrea Yates menenggelamkan mereka. O'Malley mengikuti proses persidangan selama dua tahun, mewawancarai para jaksa penuntut, pengacara, juri, keluarga Andrea, pelatih renang Andrea semasa SMU, dan para psikiater. Tak hanya itu, Suzanne juga rutin berkorespondensi dengan Andrea dan pendeta Woroniecki.

Sehari setelah pembacaan putusan sidang, O'Malley menemukan kesaksian yang salah pada saksi kunci dari pihak penuntut, Dr Park Dietz. Sebagai konsultan serial *Law & Order*, Dietz bersaksi bahwa salah satu episode serial terkenal tersebut tentang seorang ibu penderita depresi pasca melahirkan yang menenggelamkan anaknya di bathtub. Dietz juga bersaksi bahwa episode ini ditayangkan pada malam sebelum Andrea melakukan pembunuhan.

Sebagai salah satu dari tim penulis *Law & Order*, O'Malley tak ingat adanya episode itu. Ia pun langsung menghubungi Dick Wolf—produser *Law & Order*, dan memastikan bahwa dari 269 episode *Law & Order*, episode itu “tidak pernah ditulis, tidak pernah dibuat dan tentu saja, tidak pernah ditayangkan.” (halaman 326)

Berdasarkan temuan ini, hakim menginstruksikan para juri untuk mempertimbangkan kembali hukuman bagi Andrea. Dan pada 15 Maret 2002, alih-alih dihukum mati, Andrea divonis hukuman penjara seumur hidup.

Tak hanya itu, dalam buku ini, O'Malley juga mengungkap sejumlah oknum pengadilan yang memanfaatkan momentum kasus Andrea Yates. Salah satunya, reporter persidangan yang bertugas untuk mengetik transkrip

persidangan. Satu salinan transkrip persidangan Andrea Yates setebal dua belas ribu halaman dijual dengan harga 60 ribu dolar (halaman 344). Pada 3 Oktober 2003, sebuah salinan transkrip digital bahkan diiklankan untuk dijual di e-bay, dengan harga 3,500 dolar.

Luka, dan Harapan yang Ditinggalkan

Kasus Andrea Yates bukanlah kasus yang pertama. Pada 30 Mei 1990, Maria Amaya, 36 tahun, menggunakan pisau dapur untuk menggorok leher keempat anaknya—yang berumur 3-11 tahun. Namun kasus Andrea telah memicu adanya debat nasional di Amerika Serikat, tentang depresi pasca melahirkan, psikosis, penyakit mental dan definisi hukum tentang kegilaan. Terjadi sebuah perubahan penting dalam opini publik.

Pada 2003, Texas mengeluarkan Undang-undang Andrea Yates, yang mengharuskan pekerja perawat kesehatan untuk mengajarkan ibu-ibu baru tentang risiko kesehatan mental selama kehamilan. “Psikiater lain mengatakan kepada saya, dia merasa bahwa kasus Andrea Yates telah memajukan ‘penyebab kesehatan mental wanita’ selama lima puluh tahun ke depan.” (halaman 415).

Dan terbitnya buku ini, yang ditulis dengan kritis sekaligus diterjemahkan secara runut dan detil, turut melukis harapan itu di Indonesia.

Paul Gaya Ochieng Simeon Juma says

A just about to finish this book and I think that am justified to write something about it.

Andrea Yates Killed her five children. That is the bottomline. The question is whether she had the intention to murder the children. I have noted that there was sufficient evidence to show that Andrea Yates was mentally sick. She was suffering from, am told. Postpartum Disorder. She had both visual and auditory hallucination. She believed that she was saving her children at the time she was drowning them.

Her case can be looked at from different angle, religiously, emotionally, psychologically or legally. After that you make your own decision as to whether she is guilty.

If am to be asked, I would say legally she clearly insane. Everything was so clear during the trial. That is what I thought after reading the book and even now. Judging Andrea Yates with the other standards which I have stated is a personal preference which leads to different conclusions.

I personally sympathise with her.

It's unfortunate that in my country (Kenya) mental illness is not considered during trial and mental patients still suffer from discrimination.

Jane says

How could a person - a mother - do such a horrid thing???? Suzanne O'Malley did a nice job of shedding light on Andrea Yates, her condition and how this tragedy was able to unfold right before everyone's eyes. I read this in an effort to try to understand why.... Still don't know "why" but definitely understand mental

illness more and the dangers of complacency and denial in dark situations. Very sad and tragic, but hope in some small way Andrea's story can help someone else reach out for help or make sure a loved one gets the help they need. Sad... interesting... educational... and in a weird way O'Malley's words helped me find a place within myself where compassion lived for Andrea.

Bookmarks Magazine says

O'Malley brings dignity to the true crime genre with *Are You There Alone?*. Through her in-depth research, interviews, and personal correspondence, O'Malley exposes the history of Yates's mental illness, attempted suicides, and the medical system that failed her. She asserts that if Yates had received a proper diagnosis and appropriate medical treatment, her children might still be alive today. While some critics found O'Malley's writing tedious, most were impressed with her exhaustive details, analysis of Yates's medical condition, and corrective to the media's story. Indeed, her attention to detail contributed to the discovery of a major flaw in the prosecution's case. Unfortunately, it came too late to reverse the jury's guilty plea, but influenced Yates's sentence of life in prison, rather than death, sentence. Overall, this book offers compelling insight into mental illness, healthcare, childcare, and the legal system.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Terry Russler says

I would have never believed that the US court system would not see such a blatant mental health crisis in Andrea but this book is a prime example of how sad the mental health system is in the US. My heart went out to Andrea Yates and her poor children... Thank God her conviction was over-turned in 2006 and she is now being treated in a mental hospital and not living her life in a prison (reality, she is her prison). I have read this book at least 4 times and still get information from it.

Jessica White says

Oh boy, who doesn't know the name Andrea Yates?

If you haven't, here's a quick recap:

One morning in June 1999, Andrea Yates waited for her husband to leave for work before drowning their five children in the bathtub. She immediately called her husband, Rusty, saying he needed to come home. She then called 911 asking for police to be dispatched to her home...

I'm honestly not sure when I first heard of the Andrea Yates case (I was 4 when it happened) but I have done extensive research and written many, many papers on Post-Partum Depression (called Post Partum Psychosis in the book) and many papers on Infanticide (called Filicide in the book).

That being said, it is amazing to me how much has changed in 18 years in the psychology/psychiatry field.

So here's the jist of the book.

Andrea Yates suffered from some unknown disorder for many, many years. She had an education, a career, and a life before she married Rusty and began bearing his children. Soon after their son Noah was born, she began having delusions of hurting him. None of the other children, just Noah. When these delusions began coming more frequently, she started spiraling down an unknown road of mental illness. After their 4th child was born, they were advised to stop having children based on her unstable mental state. The baby blues are normal, but what she had was much stronger. Instead, they persisted that another baby was what they needed. So baby number 5 comes along, their first baby girl. Since Andrea was so unstable, she actually tried to commit suicide twice, in the hopes that she could save her children from Satan. In the end, she argued that killing her children was the only way she could save them from Satan and guarantee each of them a spot in Heaven.

Now, there is a large portion of this book that is 100% from the trial. Which is quite dry to read, but it definitely added to the story. Not to mention there are many interviews with Andrea trying to explain her reasoning through yes/no questions because of the catatonic state she was in through the extremely hard diagnosis.

If you like true crime, get this book.

This review and other true crime reviews can be found at [A Reader's Diary!](#)

Carol says

This book had me waffling many times between anger at Andrea Yates, for her brutal drowning of her five children, and anger at her husband, Rusty, for doing nothing, or almost nothing, so it seemed, to help his wife. The medical community was another entity that won a lot of my anger for their seemingly misdiagnoses or faulty treatment of Andrea Yates throughout the years that she battled mental illness.

The main character, Andrea Yates, does not say much in *Are You There Alone?* Throughout almost the whole story she says very little so it is hard to really get to know much about her other than that she suffers from some form of mental illness. Andrea's illness, postpartum depression with psychotic features (this is just one of the diagnoses given for the illness that this young mother suffers from), also known as postpartum psychosis presents itself just shortly before and after the murders. That does not stop the reader from knowing that something terrible is in the wind.

Rusty Yates character is not really seen in this novel either. There is some stories from the past that are brought out in an attempt to show what type of person he is but the character himself is seldom heard from. Rusty is seen more the day his five children are murdered by their mother and a few other times throughout this story. In spite of this or because of this I am left with a question regarding Rusty: Why did you not take some type of action to help your wife?

Suzanne O'Malley presents a story in which it appears as though Rusty Yates did not do much to aid his wife throughout her illness and he did not seem to be present much of the time. I felt like he knew there was something terribly wrong with his wife yet he chose to stay at work, at times not taking Andrea to the hospital or to see a doctor until it was too late and she was seriously ill and needing heavy sedation and medical attention. I also am left with another question for Rusty: How could you leave your five small children alone with someone so sick?

The cast of characters in *Are You There Alone* also includes the Woroniekis who practice their religion fanatically and are instrumental in giving Andrea religious advice which is then misinterpreted by her. This advice will eventually lead Andrea down a very dark path in which there will seemingly be no escape except by drowning her small children.

Are You There Alone? The Unspeakable Crime of Andrea Yates gives us much reason to question a diagnoses by doctors who are either too busy to treat patients carefully or are not educated properly in all the nuances of a mental illness. It is scary that there seem to be many people who suffer through a mental illness and may never get the proper treatment. Suzanne O'Malley does a fantastic job of creating an opening for discussion and change in the treatment of the mentally ill.

This was a poignant story of one woman's descent into mental illness and the result of misdiagnoses and mistreatment of this young mother. As I stated at the beginning, I waffled in my feelings for Andrea Yates between anger and being sympathetic to her. I do hope that she will eventually be given the correct treatment and can come to terms with the horribly unspeakable thing she has done to her children and to her husband as well.

Lennie says

I've read several true-crime books and *ARE YOU THERE ALONE?* has to be my least favorite. The author, who also happens to be a reporter, does just that, she reports the crime of Andrea Yates (the mother who drowned her five children in a bathtub) in such a way, that it feels like you're reading a police report (just the facts, m'am) rather than a non-fiction book. It would have been nice if she could have included a personal/human angle to this story so that the reader could have had a better understanding of the enormous impact this horrible crime had on the community.
