

Book Review

Lawrence C. Rubin, *Mental Illness in Popular Media: Essays on the Representation of Disorders*

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Mental Illness in Popular Media: Essays on the Representation of Disorders is an exploration of the development in the expression of psychology and culture, and how they mirror and reinforce one another. The book goes on to discuss the ways that various popular medias represent matters of mental illness and mental health - in other words: society's peripheral voices.

The author, Lawrence C. Rubin, is a professor of counsellor education at St. Thomas University in Florida, where he directs the Mental Health Counselling Programme. Due to popular demand, he was asked to construct courses at the University on the basis of popular culture in correlation to psychology. His books, and the essays within, stem from his belief that the recognition of psychological aspects of popular media enables a deeper understanding of ourselves. His objective is a compilation of essays that deepens the understanding of mental illness.

Lawrence C. Rubin's book is both compelling and eye-opening. His in-depth discussion of differing types of mental illnesses alongside aspects of media subsequently leads to an informative yet emotional piece. By bringing together a number of writers and topics, it suggests that every hidden or quashed voice in society is being given recognition.

The essays in Section One, 'Mental Illness Depicted in Popular Culture', address how numerous forms of psychiatric disorder have been conveyed in film, on stage and in literature. For instance, Debra Merskin's 'Smooth Operator: The Compensated Psychopath in Cinema' describes the subclinical expression of psychopathy and how it is romanticised in Hollywood cinema. Laura Tropp's 'Off Their Rockers: Representation of Postpartum Depression' examines the stereotypes and associations of postpartum depression and how depictions of this illness position the role of motherhood in society.

The essays in Section Two, entitled 'Popular Culture Genres and Mental Illness', delve into the ways the latter communicate our often confusing and conflictual relationship with the mentally ill. One example is Katie Ellis's 'New Media as a Powerful Ally in the Representation of Mental Illness: YouTube, Resistance and Change' which attempts to explore the ways in which homemade videos can explore mental health.

The final essays in Section Three, 'Mental Illness and Popular Culture Abroad', is based on the alternative ways in which popular culture reflects mental health outside the scope of the United States. Included in this is Lee Knifton's 'Reframing Mental Health and Illness: Perspectives from the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival' which takes readers to Scotland to investigate a grassroots movement that has affected the observer's perception of people with chronic psychiatric disorders.

The fact that the book is assembled entirely of a wide spectrum of voices, stories, histories and genres makes for a compelling collection. The author selects essays that complement one another, yet also differ in their contexts so as to cover a range of topics related to mental health as conveyed in popular culture. Rubin's edited collection of essays poses to the reader important social questions based on the representation of mental health within popular culture.