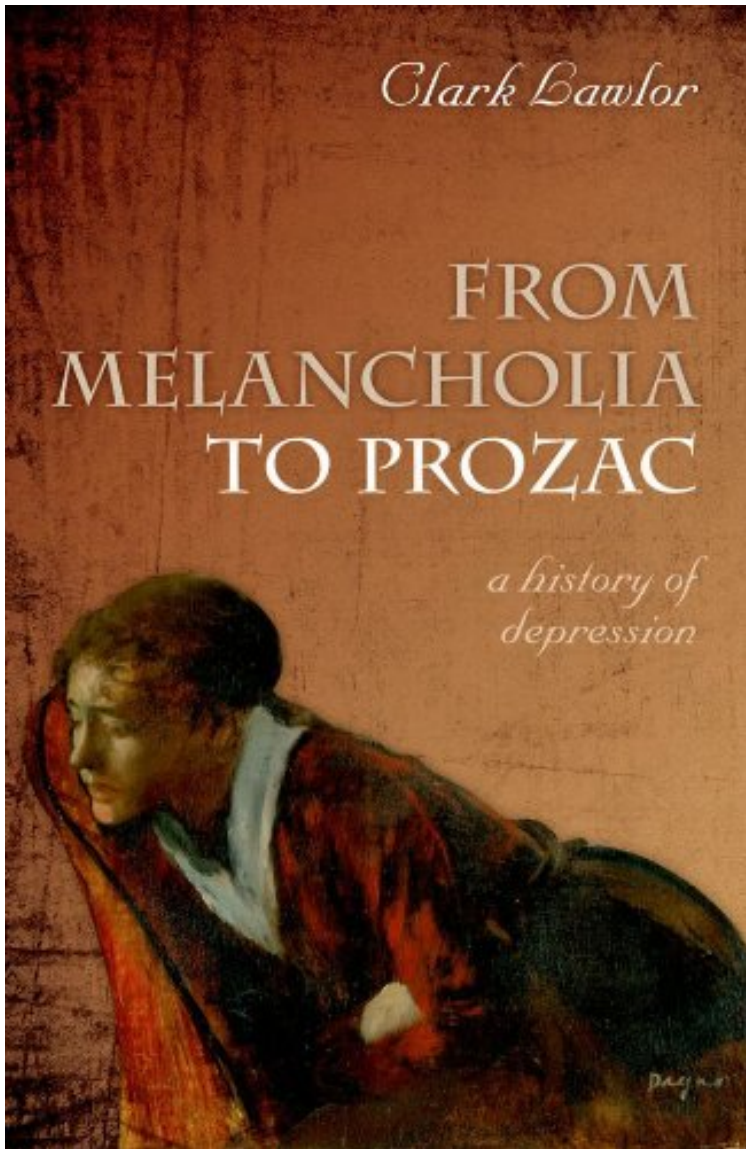


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From Melancholia to Prozac: A history of depression



Par Clark Lawlor
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur
Depression is an experience known to millions. But arguments rage on aspects of its definition and its impact on societies present and past: do drugs work, or are they merely placebos? Is the depression we have today merely a construct of the pharmaceutical industry? Is depression under- or over-diagnosed? Should we be paying for expensive 'talking cure' treatments like psychoanalysis or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy? Here, Clark Lawlor argues that understanding the history of depression is important to understanding its present conflicted status and definition. While it is true that our modern understanding of

the word 'depression' was formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the condition was originally known as melancholia, and characterised by core symptoms of chronic causeless sadness and fear.

Beginning in the Classical period, and moving on to the present, Lawlor shows both continuities and discontinuities in the understanding of what we now call depression, and in the way it has been represented in literature and art. Different cultures defined and constructed melancholy and depression in ways sometimes so different as to be almost unrecognisable. Even the present is still a dynamic history, in the sense that the 'new' form of depression, defined in the 1980s and treated by drugs like Prozac, is under attack by many theories that reject the biomedical model and demand a more humanistic idea of depression - one that perhaps returns us to a form of melancholy. *Revue de presse* A well researched ... thought-provoking book (*The Economist*) the incorporation of a large variety of ideas and models of melancholy into one easily readable (and affordable) overview makes this a useful starting point for student discussion, or for those with no particular background in the history of psychiatry. (Sarah Chaney, *Social History of*

Medicine) Presentation de l'auteur Depression is an experience known to millions. But arguments rage on aspects of its definition and its impact on societies present and past: do drugs work, or are they merely placebos? Is the depression we have today merely a construct of the pharmaceutical industry? Is depression under- or over-diagnosed? Should we be paying for expensive 'talking cure' treatments like psychoanalysis or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy? Here, Clark Lawlor argues that understanding the history of depression is important to understanding its present conflicted status and definition. While it is true that our modern understanding of the word 'depression' was formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the condition was originally known as melancholia, and characterised by core symptoms of chronic causeless sadness and fear. Beginning in the Classical period, and moving on to the present, Lawlor shows both continuities and discontinuities in the understanding of what we now call depression, and in the way it has been represented in literature and art. Different cultures defined and constructed melancholy and depression in ways sometimes so different as to be almost unrecognisable. Even the present is still a dynamic history, in the sense that the 'new' form of depression, defined in the 1980s and treated by drugs like Prozac, is under attack by many theories that reject the biomedical model and demand a more humanistic idea of depression - one that perhaps returns us to a form of melancholy.