



A Cultural Approach to Emotional Disorders: Psychological and Aesthetic Interpretations (Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies)

E. Deidre Pribram

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In her latest contribution to the growing field of emotion studies, Deidre Pribram makes a compelling argument for why culturalist approaches to the study of emotional "disorders" continue to be eschewed, even as the sociocultural and historical study of mental illness flourishes. The author ties this phenomenon to a tension between two fundamentally different approaches to emotion: an individualist approach, which regards emotions as the property of the individual, whether biologically or psychologically, and a culturalist approach, which regards emotions as collective, social processes with distinctive histories and meanings that work to produce particularized subjects. While she links a strong preference for the individualist construct in Western culture to the rise of the psychological and psychiatric disciplines at the turn of the twentieth century, Pribram also engages with a diverse set of case studies tied to psychological and aesthetic discourses on emotions. These range from Van Gogh's status as emotionally disordered to the public, emotional aesthetics of 19th century melodrama to the diagnostic categories of the DSMs and the fear of "globalizing" emotional disorders in the 21st century. This genuinely interdisciplinary approach makes for a text with potential application in a wide range of disciplines within cultural studies, including sociocultural and historical analysis of psychiatry and psychology, gender theory, subject and identity theory, popular culture studies, and history and theory of the arts.

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