

Holiday of Darkness. A Psychologist's Personal Journey Out of His Depression. Norman S. Endler. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1982, 169 pages, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Mark S. Senak, The Institute of Mind and Behavior

While in his prime and at a peak in his career, the author of this book suddenly suffered from what can only be described as a severe and incapacitating depression. Such a depression is not uncommon and chances are that if it does not occur in our own lives, it will occur in the life of someone we know. What is uncommon is the account of such an experience by a psychologist, pointing out the failures and successes of his own profession in dealing with the problem and discussing it in the personal context of his own depression. Endler attempts to relate the impact which the depression had on his life and the various methods of treatment he underwent by weaving together a personal chronicle of his illness with a professional and sometimes clinical discussion of the nature of his depression. In this, he advocates both the use of drugs and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), which is likely to raise some speculative eyebrows.

Dr. Endler is the author or co-author of four books and over one hundred journal articles. He is also a lecturer. These talents present themselves most starkly in the dual nature of the book. On the one hand, several chapters are used to describe his daily life during the periods of his depression, and it is here that one sees Endler the lecturer. Woven into the middle of the book are chapters which discuss clinical and technical aspects of his treatment, which describe briefly a history of mental illness and the stigma attached to it, and which explain the effect of various treatments; it is here that we see the more expert hand of Dr. Endler the writer of journal articles, for these are far better written than the personal chapters.

The personal chronology and description of events made by Endler are fraught with cliches and repetition. While not unmoving, it is at times drawn out. One is able to understand that Dr. Endler had the support of a loving family, that he was and is extremely successful in his career, and that his pain was real and terrible. The repetitiveness of the narrative of severe depression and anxiety actually succeeds in making the reader begin to feel listless. Endler must have sensed this and sought to offset it by including passages of "Depression Through History" and "A Who's Who of Melancholics". Nevertheless, one cannot help feeling, after a few chapters, that the author is "talking at" or lecturing the reader—with the result that one becomes anxious for a discussion of the treatment of the depression, rather than chapter after chapter chronicling it.

The chapters which discuss the treatment with drugs, the causes and types of disorders, and methods of cure are informative and well written. The only problem with them is that they arrive too late. The author has already thrown terms such as hypomania, and bipolar and unipolar depression at the reader in earlier chapters before completely defining them late in the book. Also, there is a tendency at times to be too technical in his descriptions.

The most valuable point made by this book is, however, the description of treatment and its effects on depression from the perspective of a psychologist. Dr.

Endler, at times, was a walking pharmacy, and he ultimately submitted to ECT as a last possible resort to escape depression. He emphasizes that not all depressions can be dealt with through analysis and in fact, if an individual is so severely depressed, there must be a physical biochemical reason for it that is beyond analysis. Endler explains very well the physical causes of depression and how drug therapy and ECT act effectively to subdue it. While recognizing the negative attitude that most people have toward ECT, and admitting his own reluctance and fear to go through with it, he does an excellent job of dispelling stereotypes of ECT that have formed over the years, explaining his own treatment in detail and showing it to be modern and compassionate, in contrast to the uncivilized and abusive manner in which it has been administered in the past. By his brave acceptance of this form of treatment, Dr. Endler illustrates that the depressed individual will reach a point where he will go through anything just to feel better again, even if it means going through a method of treatment which was previously scorned and feared. This evokes more sympathy, and more effectively conveys the pain and extent of his depression than any of the personal chapters which chronicle the depression. One must decide how one feels about ECT after reading the book, but the presentation of such a personal experience by an individual in Dr. Endler's position suggests that ECT is effective, tolerable, and civilized.

Reading *Holiday of Darkness*, one has to get used to the rather abundant use of exclamation marks by the author, both in the narrative and in the chapter titles. Additionally, there is a question of taste in entitling the chapter on ECT "Living Better Electrically." This gives an altogether serious narrative a flippant title. Such playfulness obscures the author's intent. Still, the book is educational and makes a necessary statement concerning the causes, effects, and treatments of severe biochemically related depression when psychoanalysis cannot, or will not, be successful.