



Psychedelic Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus

By Erika Dyck

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LSD's short but colorful history in North America carries with it the distinct cachet of counterculture and government experimentation. The truth about this mind-altering chemical cocktail is far more complex?and less controversial?than generally believed.

Psychedelic Psychiatry is the tale of medical researchers working to understand LSD's therapeutic properties just as escalating anxieties about drug abuse in modern society laid the groundwork for the end of experimentation at the edge of psychopharmacology. Historian Erika Dyck deftly recasts our understanding of LSD to show it as an experimental substance, a medical treatment, and a tool for exploring psychotic perspectives?as well as a recreational drug. She recounts the inside story of the early days of LSD research in small-town, prairie Canada, when Humphry Osmond and Abram Hoffer claimed incredible advances in treating alcoholism, understanding schizophrenia and other psychoses, and achieving empathy with their patients.

In relating the drug's short, strange trip, Dyck explains how concerns about countercultural trends led to the criminalization of LSD and other so-called psychedelic drugs?concordantly opening the way for an explosion in legal prescription pharmaceuticals?and points to the recent re-emergence of sanctioned psychotropic research among psychiatric practitioners. This challenge to the prevailing wisdom behind drug regulation and addiction therapy provides a historical corrective to our perception of LSD's medical efficacy.

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Editorial Review

Review

Digs deeply into an area of drug history that has for the most part been ignored.

(Literary Review of Canada)

The story is very well written and researched... The book is a good read and has the bonus of imparting historical understanding of psychiatry during its most exciting and innovative era.

(British Journal of Psychiatry)

A smoothly written account.

(Edward Shorter American Historical Review)

Psychedelic Psychiatry is a highly nuanced work of scholarship that sheds new light on LSD research in Saskatchewan.

(Kam Teo Saskatchewan History)

As Dyck shows well, LSD gives historians a lot to think about.

(John C. Burnham Isis)

Crisply written, well-researched and cogently argued.

(Alex Mold Social History of Medicine)

Psychedelic Psychiatry represents the first archive-based, sober history of LSD's early years as a promising pharmaceutical and its subsequent decline.

(Nicolas Rasmussen Journal of American History)

Psychedelic Psychiatry is intensely interesting; an important and influential period of transition in psychiatry that has direct and important implications for current psychiatry... I highly recommend it to others.

(Mathew Martin-Iverson Health and History)

Dyck combines archival materials, interviews, medical journal articles, and popular press accounts to create

a reliable and original account of the rise and fall of psychedelic psychiatry, and of its central, tragic figure, Humphry Osmond... Her analysis is dead on.

(David T. Courtwright, University of North Florida)

Contributes mightily to our understanding of prairie culture and offers a much needed look into an ethically informed drug therapy that contributed to the struggle for universal healthcare advanced by Tommy Douglas and the CCF.

(Gary Genosko *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*)

About the Author

Erika Dyck is an associate professor of history at the University of Saskatchewan.

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