



The Hypochondriacs: Nine Tormented Lives

Brian Dillon

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Charlotte Brontë found in her illnesses, real and imagined, an escape from familial and social duties, and the perfect conditions for writing. The German jurist Daniel Paul Schreber believed his body was being colonized and transformed at the hands of God and doctors alike. Andy Warhol was terrified by disease and by the idea of disease. Glenn Gould claimed a friendly pat on his shoulder had destroyed his ability to play piano. And we all know someone who has trawled the Internet in solitude, seeking to pinpoint the source of his or her fantastical symptoms.

The Hypochondriacs is a book about fear and hope, illness and imagination, despair and creativity. It explores, in the stories of nine individuals, the relationship between mind and body as it is mediated by the experience, or simply the terror, of being ill. And, in an intimate investigation of those lives, it shows how the mind can make a prison of the body by distorting our sense of ourselves as physical beings. Through witty, entertaining, and often moving examinations of the lives of these eminent hypochondriacs—James Boswell, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, Alice James, Daniel Paul Schreber, Marcel Proust, Glenn Gould, and Andy Warhol—Brian Dillon brilliantly unravels the tortuous connections between real and imagined illness, irrational fear and rational concern, the mind's aches and the body's ideas.



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