

EDITOR'S PICK» BY RACHEL PEPPER



ANN CVETKOVICH

**Depression:
A Public Feeling.**
Ann Cvetkovich
(Duke University Press)

In her latest book, *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Ann Cvetkovich considers depression from cultural, historical, political and personal perspectives. She writes, "I'd like to write about depression in a way that simultaneously captures how it feels and provides an analysis of why and how its feelings are produced by social forces." To this end, she looks at depression as a systematic force and historical category, a "felt experience" which shapes how we live and which is produced by oppressive forces such as racism, cultural violence, political oppression and even academia. "Depression can be seen as a category that manages and medicalizes the effects associated with keeping up with corporate culture and the market economy, or with being completely neglected by it," she writes. Although she is not the first to consider that institutionalized racism causes depression, Cvetkovich's take on academia's ills is unique. She writes, "My episodic narrative tells the story of how academia seemed to be killing me, a statement that seems

very melodramatic...But to feel that your work doesn't matter is to feel dead inside, a condition that is normalized for so many. Academia breeds particular forms of panic and anxiety leading to what gets called depression." To prove her point, Cvetkovich includes a 40-page section of linked vignettes which capture her own struggles with a depression so acute she would wake up feeling paralyzed, with the "only physical difference between being awake and being asleep was that my eyes were open." Still, *Depression: A Public Feeling* is not a pity party. Cvetkovich offers hope to all who fight depression by suggesting that as she has emerged from despair, so can others. She does not promise this through "magic bullet solutions or happy endings." But she does suggest that through the passage of time, we come to understand that people can acknowledge, feel and move through depression in a transformative journey that is "a slow and painstaking process, open-ended and marked by struggle," but a journey that is worth living, nevertheless.