



Letters to a Young Madman: A Memoir

Paul Gruchow

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In *Letters to a Young Madman*, a man of genius, of uncanny writing ability, and of profound empathy for the mentally ill, recounts his "spectacular plunge from competency into official madness." Paul Gruchow's account of the mental illness, which eventually claimed his life, explores the double injury inflicted on the mentally ill. First, there is the illness itself, with its often debilitating symptoms. But then there is the more insidious injury made by society, stigmatization: "We no longer believe, as we did 250 years ago, that the mentally ill are animals, but we are not ready to grant that they are fully human, either." In a voice remarkably clear, eloquent, and calm, Gruchow shows us why he came to regard the mentally ill as "his heroes."

Gary Schoener, the Director of the Minneapolis Walk-In Counseling Center, thinks Gruchow writes with "the power of a confessional poet like Anne Sexton." He further says of the book, "It is a first hand account -- an authentic look from the inside -- with graphic personal descriptions admission to a psychiatric ward, electroconvulsive shock treatment, and so many other things familiar to the mentally ill, but not everyone else. What is so illuminating about this very honest and direct personal account is the integration of personal observations with philosophical statements and ideas."

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