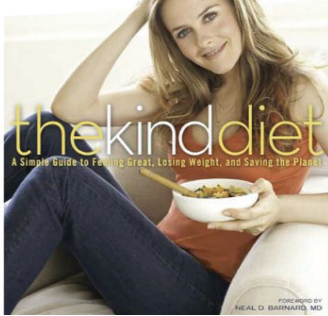


alicia silverstone

ALICIA SILVERSTONE EDITION



My Favorite Things

By Michael Nagrant

LAST WEEK OPRAH DISCOVERED ETHICAL EATING and the whole Michael Pollan anthology. She also piled it on with a profile of Alicia Silverstone's new vegan cookbook, aka "The Kind Diet." Unfortunately the former lip-biting Lolita vilified cheese for ruining her once perfect skin, and thus her new tome should actually be called The Clueless Cookbook.

Based on how many people read James Frey, bought Neti pots or went to see Tyler Perry movies in the last few years, I'm pretty sure the end of food is near. Just in case, I've taken some time, and once again in the tradition of Ms. Winfrey, I share a few of my favorite things you should nosh on before the food O-pocalypse comes raining down.

Curried Butternut Squash Soup – Bagel on Damen

I never met a vegan I liked. But maybe that's because I'm self-hating. Certainly I'm thinking about converting after a few slurps of the vegan-friendly fiery brew of smooth pureed butternut squash outfitted with caramelized sweet bits of Granny Smith apple served at this new Wicker Park hot spot. Now, where can I score a pair of leather-free shoes?

Croquetas de Pollo – Pasha

Everyone's always saying they'd eat a tennis shoe if it were deep-fried, but why chow on a pair of old Nikes when you've got these luscious crispy golden brown orbs oozing with chicken, chorizo and spicy aioli?

"Grilled Cheese" course – Sprout

For the last three years, Sprout chef Dale Levitski pulled a Brian Wilson. After making good as runner-up on "Top Chef," the guy disappeared, squatted in his apartment and ate Tombstone pizzas on his couch until he saw his shadow, came out of hiding and took the reins at this new Lincoln Park organic joint. Though I had questions about his sanity going in, his "grilled cheese," featuring crispy baked cheddar triangles standing in for your usual bread slices stuffed with caramelized onion, tart apples and served with a side of apricot mustard, drove me insane. The whole thing makes you want a shot of deep-fried tomato soup or something on the side.

El Pirata – Mercado

I find that mixing beer with juice, or frankly anything else, is an occupation best left to tennis-playing grannies in the UK. However, this beer kicked up with a shot of El Jimador blanco tequila, pineapple, chili and a touch of cinnamon robbed me of that notion.

Spaghetti Carbonara – Kith and Kin

Featuring the Michelin-quality-inflected mom food of French Laundry, Trio and Alinea vets, this might be Chicago's best neighborhood restaurant. Certainly everything from crispy chicken thighs to crocks of bubbly French onion soup offer more comfort than a La-Z Boy recliner, a few bong hits and a couple gulps of good bourbon. The real chill stuff is the house-made rustic spaghetti tossed with creamy egg, juniper-inflected house-cured crispy guanciale, and micro-dots of parsley.

Penfolds Hyland Riesling – Trader Joes

Though I still love their crazy-happy social-butterfly checkout employees, I've been over Trader Joes as a place to pick up value wine for a couple years now, that is until I happened on to this off-dry \$3.99 beauty, perfect for your favorite BYOB seafood experience.

Bo Bo Platter – Red Dragon, Elmhurst

This might be my favorite American-inflected Cantonese Chinese restaurant in Chicagoland. Recently I indulged my inner-Tiki freak and ordered up the flaming lazy Susan-like platter filled with some serious fat egg rolls, sweet sticky ribs, creamy crab Rangoon, crispy fried rice and foil-wrapped smoky grilled chicken. The 1950's-style honey-lacquered wainscoting and paper lanterns make this the perfect stereotypical Chinese dining oasis.

TIP OF THE WEEK
ELIZABETH KOSTOVA



Once upon a time, before HBO's "True Blood" and those damn "Twilight" movies, there was a novel called "The Historian," the debut from author Elizabeth Kostova that blended the history, adventure and detective-novel genres all around the lore of Count Dracula. It was a fun, epic read, published in 2005, when the literary world was looking for the next "Da Vinci Code"-like sensation. The work debuted at number one on the New York Times bestseller list, the first debut hardcover to do so. (And, for what it's worth, it was a much better book than Dan Brown's slick slop.) With her second novel, "The Swan Thieves," Kostova tries to duplicate her success with similar themes; the past informs the present, in history there's mystery and, if written well, a range of characters and narratives all converging on one point will amount to a rich and sweeping good time. In "The Swan Thieves," swap archival-ists and vampires for painters, as the plot revolves around a successful artist who remains silent for months in an asylum and a fascinated doctor who's determined to learn more about his patient, who only sketches and paints one image: a beautiful young woman in Victorian clothing. *Ooohhh, mysterious... (Tom Lynch)*

Elizabeth Kostova discusses "The Swan Thieves" February 4 at Borders, 2817 North Clark, (773)935-3909, at 7pm, and also February 5 at Barnes & Noble, 55 Old Orchard Center, Skokie, (847)676-2230 at 7:30pm.

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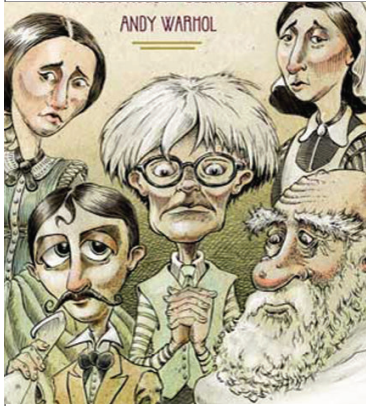
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“THE HYPOCHONDRIACS” GETS INSIDE THE HEADS OF FAMOUS SUFFERERS



Mind Games

By Tom Lynch

EVERYBODY WORRIES. SOME MORE THAN OTHERS. SOME HAVE REASON TO DO SO. SOME DO NOT.

The great paradoxical affliction of hypochondria has become a laughable curse; sometimes it simply elicits mocking, sometimes Woody Allen wakes in a cold sweat and proclaims to the dark, lonely room, “I’m dying!”

But under the hysterical sheen of the surface lies a deep sadness and hatred—yes, hatred—of knowledge. If we were all ignorant to all things, we would have no stresses. But if one was to attain the front-to-back knowledge of his bodyworks, how could he not go insane? How many panic attacks has WebMd.com caused since its launch? Most likely, the number is comparable to the number of lives its helped.

Famous men and women in history have suffered from hypochondria: iconoclasts like Andy Warhol, authors like Marcel Proust, men of science like Charles Darwin. Irish author Brian Dillon’s new book, “The Hypochondriacs: Nine Tormented Lives” (Faber and Faber), analyzes nine historical figures—Warhol, Proust and Darwin, but also James Boswell, Charlotte Bronte, Florence Nightingale, Alice James, Daniel Paul Schreber and Glenn Gould—and their varying degrees of consuming psychological illness. Dillon doesn’t poke fun at his subjects; quite the contrary, actually, as at times he’s in agreement with their worries. But his book is no research paper either, as its littered with humorous anecdotes and factoids, the sort of things only fit for the secret lives of the famous.

Dillon manages to explain to us so well even the most absurd beliefs that some of these people had—how master pianist Glenn Gould was certain a tap on his shoulder cost him his ability to play; how the German attorney Daniel Paul Schreber was convinced little men had invaded his body and worked to destroy his spinal cord—without the mocking judgment you might expect, but rather an aching sympathy. While Dillon might not be able to convince you of some of his subjects’ more extravagant “illnesses,” he certainly is capable of helping you understand why these unfortunate few had their own insurmountable fears.

The sadness here, the overwhelming realization, is that Dillon’s subjects were never equipped to live in this world, where most fortunate folks can give and take away leverage to and from the worries that enter their minds. Hypochondria allows its sufferers to pull back from the world around them, to disengage from obligation, responsibility and emotional attachment. Seclusion, physical and emotional, isn’t uncommon, which in some ways makes hypochondriacs impossible to entirely know.

Andy Warhol was born into a psychology of sickness. Broken bones, mysterious illnesses, scarlet fever, tonsillectomy—all before he was 8 years old, and then came the annual nervous breakdowns that “always started on the first day of summer vacation.” He would obsess over his weight and acne. He wore a gray wig in middle age to give the impression to strangers that he was older, because “When you’ve got gray hair, every move you make seems ‘young’ and ‘spry,’ instead of just being normally active. It’s like you’re getting a new talent.” These specific details, and quotes that come directly from the patient’s mouth, are what make Dillon’s book so fascinating and frightening at once.

Of course, hypochondriacs all fear death, and this ultimate concern is not necessarily irrational. If you haven’t heard, we’ll all die someday; when death comes, or any illness for that matter, hypochondriacs enjoy vindication, perhaps occasionally even reveling in it. Alice James, another of Dillon’s subjects, is eventually diagnosed with breast cancer after a short life of fear, torment and “nervous trouble.” She spent the majority of life as an invalid—James was simply unable to live, and at 42, she stopped. When she was informed of her cancer, she wrote, “It is the most supremely interesting moment in life, the only one when living seems life, and I count it as the greatest good fortune to have these few months so full of interest and instruction in the knowledge of my approaching death,” as if the end was a relief.

Dillon understands his subjects’ motivations and impulses, which makes this book much more than an amusing timeline of worries or a dry and depressing catalogue of ailments. The stories herein aren’t happy ones, make no mistake, and the author’s compassion leads to a bittersweet affair, and a book that, despite its premise, breathes deeply with perfect health.

“The Hypochondriacs: Nine Tormented Lives”

By Brian Dillon

Faber and Faber, 280 pages, \$25

→ =RECOMMENDED

All events are free to the public unless otherwise noted.

THU/4

→ Elizabeth Kostova

The bestselling author discusses her new novel, “The Swan Thieves.” See **Tip of the Week**. Borders, 2817 N. Clark, (773)935-3909. 7pm.

Jeffrey Haas

The author discusses “The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther.” Bill Ayers, Alice Kim, LaDonna Redmond and David Omtoso Stovall also appear. Barbara’s Bookstore, 1218 N. Halsted, (312)413-2665. 6pm.

SUN/7

→ Myopic Poetry Series

Featuring Alyssa Wolf and Philip Jenks. Myopic Books, 1564 N. Milwaukee, (773)862-4882. 7pm.

MON/8

→ So You Think You Have Nerves of Steel?

Featuring Kyle Beachy. The Whistler, 2421 N. Milwaukee, (773)227-3530. 8pm.

TUE/9

→ Funny Ha-Ha

This installment features James Kennedy, Cameron Esposito, Fred Sasaki, Robbie Telfer and host Claire Zulkey. Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, (773)227-4433. 6:30pm.

WED/10

→ Global Voices Author Series

Featuring readings by author Angela Jackson and poet Haki R. Madhubuti. University of Chicago’s International House, 1414 E. 59th, (773)753-2275. 6pm.

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