

Sometimes A

GREAT DEPRESSION

As the equinox approaches and imagery takes a turn towards holly, snow, and purchasing frenzy, you start to realize that 'tis, indeed, the season. The season, specifically, for Seasonal Affective Disorder. In case you've never heard of the appropriately-anacronymized SAD, it means Depression. Pop-shrinks coined the term in order to make naive laypersons aware of the fact that people get depressed during depressing weather. And that it's mysteriously not improved by being bombarded with a steep flurry of seasonal expenses and ubiquitous media messages that if you aren't well-fed, well-beloved, and deliriously happy there is something wrong with you. Call it what you will, it means winter and it means depression, so let's get on with it.

Our society offers the usual "cure" for being unhappy and having something wrong with you--drugs. Prozac could become the first chemical named "Time" magazine's "Man of the Year". Don't be taken in: Prozac is as rivaled only by another 1994 media star, the Wonderbra" at offering an illusory solution for problems that exist only in the minds of beholders and offering a spurious sense of upliftedness. Maybe it works, but how necessary is it to the average Northwesterner?

Just as cleavage brinkmanship is a bit ludicrous under a down parka, how practical is a Prozacian outlook when you live in Western Washington? If we couldn't handle depression would we be living in an area where winter features dishwater skies, perpetual clamminess and invisible sunsets in the early afternoon? Of course not. Prozac is for wimps that can't handle the cold grey reality of a depressed affect. Drugs are a cheap crutch that only appeal to those without the fortitude to tackle emotional bankruptcy with a straight face. Hip Nor'westers just say "No" and look for ways to enjoy their depression with a little flair.

A perennially popular style of fashionable depression is existential angst...roughly expressed as a desperate lack of essential meaningfulness. Take a Gallic, Left Bank approach to it, smoking Galouises and sipping absinthe or bitter wine dregs as you read "Nausea" or some other bummers by French cyclothymics like Gide and Sartre. Sartre was a sort of patron saint of depression, who propounded a

philosophy of total freedom of existence before deciding that it would make even more sense to be a Maoist. Which may be an intellectual non sequitur, but makes perfect sense when viewed through the jaundiced eye of a depression aficionado.

Another traditional flavor of depression is romantic/poetic license, generally used to woo artistic success or members of the opposite sex. Wax very wan, get fey and cadaverous. Your skin should hover on the border of deathly and luminous. It's been a hit look from La Boheme to Kate Moss and the Cruise LeStat. Moon and pine away; consider some sort of "Love Story" wasting disease. But call it consumption; so much more romantic than tuberculosis. If need be, go ahead and die of it. Dying for love is always the rage--just let word get around that dying or killing yourself for romance is your customary procedure and watch your social calendar start filling up. See, even suicidal depression can work to advantage.

Easier for modern Eastsiders to master, perhaps, is post-quasi-modern, semi-demi punque, new age/wave nadaville. Recall that you are a pampered, middle-class American; overschooled but under-educated and member of the most privileged and spoiled class in history. No excuses; nowhere to go but downhill. Sit in a cold, sterile mall and contemplate the fact that you are lost and unhappy. In no time you'll be totally depressed and ready to sally forth and meet the seasonal crud on its own terms. A good depression, not a Great Depression.

It's been discovered what clothing has a lot to do with mental outlook. Apparel therapists suggest bright colors and jaunty styles to combat the blues. In the Northwest we favor "grunge" and "down". We don't need no steenking jaunty. Among the younger and more energetically depressed, black clothing is popular to the point of becoming a cliché. Everyone's into being nihilistic for its own sake, apparently not realizing that if you don't put nothing into nothingness, you don't get nothing out of it. And out of it, need we remind you, is where depression is supposed to get you in the first place.

If, despite your best efforts, things persist in looking up, just repeat to yourself the phrase, "This, too, shall pass." Hang on, normality will reassert itself. Gloom is just around the corner, so have another cup of absinthe and another non-filter cigarette and hang tough.