Reviewed by Kevin Jeffrey Goldwater

"For far too long, silence, shame and stigma has surrounded mental illness in this country. Everything in our culture has told us to clam up and suck it up. The only way to change this is for people to share their truth" (V).

Patrick J. Kennedy, one of the foremost and loudest political voices in regard to mental illness, introduces *Show Me All Your Scars*, a compilation of twenty stories with a call for vocality.

This call is precisely the purpose of this book; Lee Gutkind brought together twenty authors to let their voices be heard.

These authors wrote about their experiences with mental illness (whether they themselves suffer or a family member), creating an intense, emotional and gripping inner look at mental illness.

As Kennedy refers to it, their 'truth' is shared in this book and brings readers to an expository and thought provoking journey into the hushed world of mental illness.

Just like mental disorders themselves, the stories are diverse in nature. The first entry, *Take Care* by Ella Wilson, immediately brings the reader into her mind mid-manic episode. Filled with heartbreaking and heavy prose and metaphor, Wilson's place as the opening story sets the tone for the rest of the book: it's going to be challenging, confusing, and personal.

Wilson's story is her own, as is the next story, *Chairs* by Yvette Frock Gottshall. Gottshall details her experience with PTSD, and relays a more personal history rather than a specific event.

A Little Crazy by Susie Meserve breaks the trend by introducing a story that is not her own; rather, Meserve discusses her experiences with a former schizophrenic lover. This story shares the views of many of the readers, from an outside standpoint looking in at someone's mental illness.

This pattern continues for the rest of the book; Optimism One's *Goodbye, Suicide*

returns to the personal narrative, in possibly one of the most heartbreaking pieces I've read. Relating his myriad of suicide attempts and the multiple successes by his immediate family, *Goodbye, Suicide* is the poster child for this book. Optimism One reveals the mindset of someone attempting or considering suicide, but brings it together and concludes with his current state: one of peace, recovery, and future hope.

That progression is precisely the mood of *Show Me All Your Scars* and the mission it craves—eventual peace, recovery and future hope. The four titles detailed here are only the beginning of the content.

More family member and personal stories grip the reader, but the title of most notable perhaps belongs to *'Scuse Me While I Fuck the Sky,** by Ryan Bloom. Relating his experience with obsessive compulsive disorder, Bloom manipulates and plays with the formatting in his story to exemplify the thought process and patterns in a way that is both difficult to read and wildly stimulating. Fonts, text effects and margin sizes range wildly for the whole story, not only sharing an experience but *really* allowing the reader to step into the OCD mind and point of view for a moment.

Fifteen additional stories fill the book, tackling trichotillomania (*There's a Name for That?* by Alison Townsend), bipolar disorder (*A Day in the Life with Bipolar* by Madeline Strong Diehl, *Flying High* by Andrea Rizzo), autism spectrum (*Make It a Daisy* by Joyce O'Connor), and self harm (the titular *Show Me All Your Scars* by Jane Campbell) are just some of the many disorders covered.

This book is an excellent compilation that absolutely meets its goal. Rather than a target audience, the book is intended for anyone and everyone, hoping to provide expository and sympathetic looks into the world of mental disorders. Unless the reader is unable to properly feel true emotion, it's practically impossible to finish this book without a tear and caring for at least one of the authors. The stories written by someone who suffered allows a bond and understanding for readers who suffer themselves; the stories written by loved ones about their family members allows the reader to adapt and connect to the outsider's view inwards.

Perhaps the most wonderful part, however, is the diversity in these stories, both in writing style and outcome. Some are straightforward, some are wildly experimental and abstract, some are made of gorgeous prose. Some disorders are covered more than once, but never the same way. It is this diversity that appropriately represents the world of mental disorders, and allows *Show Me All Your Scars* to be a true and honorable dedication to understanding and de-shaming mental illness.

Intriguing, emotional and intensive, *Show Me All Your Scars* truly is an excellent book for anyone wanting to attempt an understanding of mental illness. The expository nature is a phenomenal step towards de-stigmatization and de-shaming, paving the way for further progress. These "journeys through madness" and their authors provide that peace, recovery, and future hope, solidifying the book's place on the shelf of the psychological zeitgeist.

You can read Patrick J. Kennedy's Introduction by clicking here

You can read *Writing Away the Stigma,* by Lee Gutkind by clicking here

Lee Gutkind is an American author and, as put by Vanity Fair, the "godfather behind creative nonfiction." The founder and editor of *Creative Nonfiction*, he has edited more than 25 books and authored 16. Exploring the worlds of medicine, technology and science, Gutkind's work has appeared in the New York Times and on NPR. He lives in Pittsburgh, PA.

Kevin Jeffrey Goldwater studies applied psychology with a minor in music at New York University and is set to graduate in May of 2019. Born in Chicago, Kevin has done immersive research on psychoanalytic theory and the role of gender in today's media. In addition to working for IJP, he writes reviews for *Somatic Psychotherapy Today.*