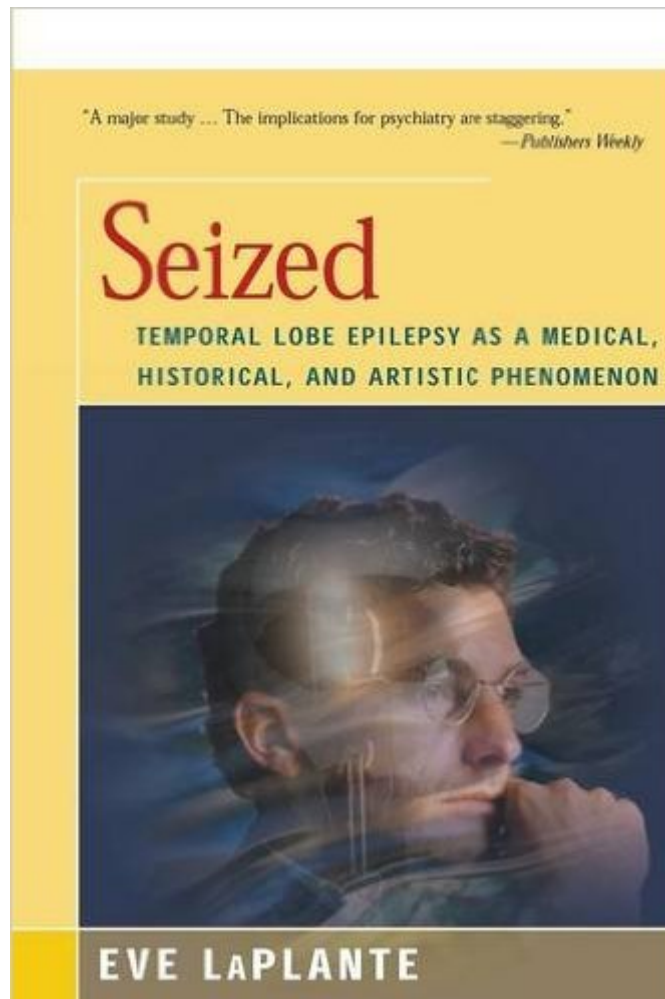


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Seized: Temporal Lobe Epilepsy As A Medical, Historical, And Artistic Phenomenon



Synopsis

Seized is a narrative portrait of a common brain disorder that can alter personality, illuminating the mind-body problem and the limits of free will. An invaluable resource for anyone touched by epilepsy, Seized gives first-hand accounts of three ordinary patients with temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE), explaining what they suffer and how they cope. The book also tells the stories of creative luminaries diagnosed with or suspected of having TLE, including van Gogh, Dostoevsky, Lewis Carroll, Saint Paul, and Flaubert. The psychological implications of Seized are, according to Publishers Weekly, "staggering." Kirkus Reviews called the book "Fascinating." LaPlante's descriptions of the human brain are wonderfully concrete, her historical research is well presented, and her empathy for TLE's victims is clear. In this "fascinating account of medical research," Howard Gardner noted, "LaPlante shows how a brain scar may cause bizarre aggressive or sexual behavior" and works of profound creative imagination.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have had temporal lobe epilepsy for as long as I can remember. My seizures started when I was a baby. I have always had tonic clonic seizures, too, but not until I was an adult did I even learn that the other unusual experiences that I was having were complex partial and simple partial seizures. I was afraid to ask other people if they also had these strange experiences, but they didn't appear to. After I was diagnosed with TLE I found other people with epilepsy to talk to online. For the first time ever, I knew that I was not the only person on earth who lived this way. Some of the feelings of

isolation subsided. Then someone recommended Eve La Plante's book. I am so grateful. I think that a person who has TLE will have a different experience when they read this book than other people will. For me, and others who have written about it on forums related to epilepsy on the internet, it is a revelation. It is an affirmation. It offers some explanation. It has been a moving experience. To read it and recognize some of the traits of Geschwind's syndrome in myself was a relief, in a way. People who don't have epilepsy seem to think that it only involves occasional convulsions, but the truth is that a person with epilepsy, and certainly TLE, is affected by it every minute of their lives. The research discussed in this book acknowledges and confirms that and offers an explanation. Yes, I am different, and this is why. Oddly, I am relieved. So many books about epilepsy are written from the perspective of a doctor, a doctor lecturing the patient and their family. 'This is what you must do, this is what you must never do, you're just going to have to accept that you can't do that.' If you have read one, you've read them all, really.

Epilepsy, despite its frequency (perhaps one person in every 250), remains in many instances the unspeakable illness, still dogged with superstition and others' stigma. The diagnosis of the condition is itself shocking. The lack of information or assistance on the matter continues to add to the problems of the person with the condition. Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (TLE) is, I only now discover after 40 years of attacks, perhaps the most common form. La Plante's description of the many different forms the condition may take tallies closely with my own experience, such as distortion of sound and vision, even loss of memory. I am not, I now discover, some weird, isolated case. The lack of this information, even in the present day, can easily lead to those diagnosed attempting to conceal its presence for fear of social consequences. Knowing no better, they may suppose themselves insane, or even in the grip of diabolic possession. Simple, detailed information on the matter - such as La Plante provides - does much to comfort, but is exceptionally difficult to find. It is strongly recommended for anyone at any point in life, not just those newly-diagnosed. At least as much, sufferers' families should read the work, for its information and assistance. The case-studies are of further value still, for they emphasise that those with the condition may still achieve in life. There is no correlation with mental or physical abilities. Historical case-studies make this point well, as do their parallels in the modern day. A slight failing is La Plante's attempt to discover the condition in semi-mythical (?) figures such as Moses. Evidence in this case (as in St Paul - of whom I hold a similar belief) is quite simply too lacking.

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