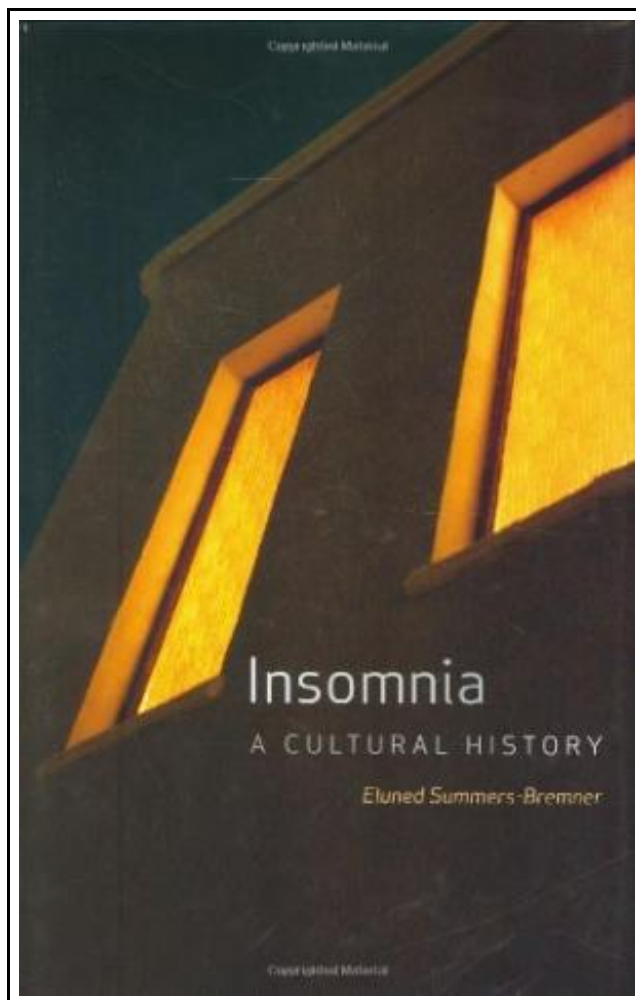


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Reviews

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(Meredith Hoppe)

INSOMNIA: A CULTURAL HISTORY (HARDBACK)

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Reaktion Books, United Kingdom, 2008. Hardback. Book Condition: New. 218 x 140 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. In today s media-saturated and hyperconnected society, increasing numbers of people are finding it hard to switch off their overstimulated brains and escape the demands of daily life. We are becoming, it seems, a world of insomniacs but this condition of perpetual unrest has plagued people for centuries. The roots and effects of insomnia are complex, Eluned Summers-Bremner reveals in this fascinating study, and humans have employed everything from art to science to understand, explain and mitigate this problem. This exploration of sleeplessness begins with the literature of ancient times, and finds its sufferers in such prominent texts as the Iliad , the Odyssey , the Mesopotamian epic Gilgamesh , and the Bible. Insomnia continued to figure large in Romantic and Gothic literature, as the advent of street lighting in the nineteenth century inspired the fantastical blurring of daytime reality and night spectres, and authors connected insomnia to the ephemeral worlds of nightmares and the Sublime. Meanwhile, throughout the ages insomnia has been variously categorized by the medical community as a manifestation of a deeper psychological or physical malady: in medieval and early modern times, for example, physicians and philosophers saw insomnia as a symptom of lovesickness, melancholy or even demonic possession. As modern medicine and science evolved, insomnia emerged as a distinct symptom of such ailments as psychological illness or post-traumatic stress disorder following war. Today s medical solutions tend to involve prescription drugs, and Insomnia raises important questions about the role of the pharmaceutical industry and the effectiveness of such treatments. Bedside reading of the most useful sort, Insomnia won t put you to sleep, but it will help you understand the problem and its surprisingly rich cultural legacy.



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