



Hysteria Beyond Freud

Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G. S. Rousseau, Elaine Showalter

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"She's hysterical." For centuries, the term "hysteria" has been used by physicians and laymen alike to diagnose and dismiss the extreme emotionality and mysterious physical disorders presumed to bedevil others—especially women. How has this medical concept assumed its power? What cultural purposes does it serve? Why do different centuries and different circumstances produce different kinds of hysteria?

These are among the questions pursued in this absorbing, erudite reevaluation of the history of hysteria. The widely respected authors draw upon the insights of the new social and cultural history, rather than Freudian psychoanalysis, to examine the ways in which hysteria has been conceived by doctors and patients, writers and artists, in Europe and North America, from antiquity to the early years of the twentieth century. In so doing, they show that a history of hysteria is a history of how we understand the mind.

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