



On Hysteria: The Invention of a Medical Category between 1670 and 1820

Sabine Arnaud

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These days, hysteria is known as a discredited diagnosis that was used to group and pathologize a wide range of conditions and behaviors in women. But for a long time, it was seen as a legitimate category of medical problem—and one that, originally, was applied to men as often as to women.

In *On Hysteria*, Sabine Arnaud traces the creation and rise of hysteria, from its invention in the eighteenth century through nineteenth-century therapeutic practice. Hysteria took shape, she shows, as a predominantly aristocratic malady, only beginning to cross class boundaries (and be limited to women) during the French Revolution. Unlike most studies of the role and status of medicine and its categories in this period, *On Hysteria* focuses not on institutions but on narrative strategies and writing—the ways that texts in a wide range of genres helped to build knowledge through misinterpretation and recontextualized citation.

Powerfully interdisciplinary, and offering access to rare historical material for the first time in English, *On Hysteria* will speak to scholars in a wide range of fields, including the history of science, French studies, and comparative literature.

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