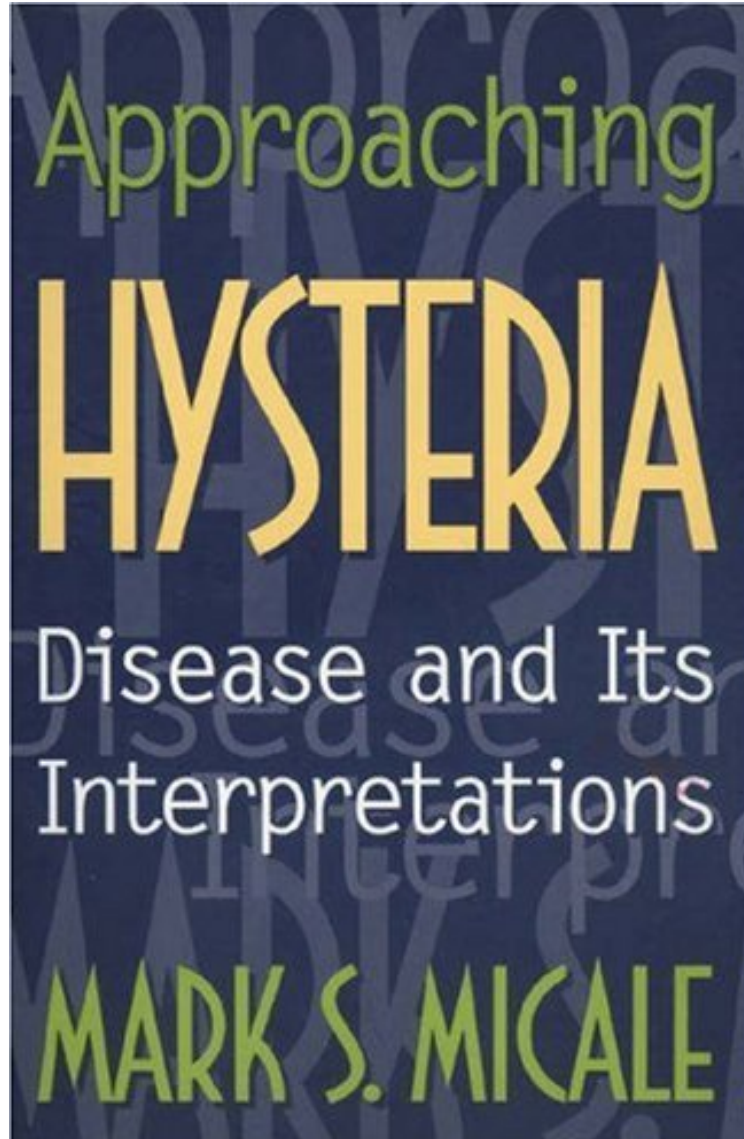


Approaching Hysteria

Mark S. Micale

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Mark S. Micale : Approaching Hysteria before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Approaching Hysteria:

Few diseases have exercised the Western imagination as chronically as hysteria--from the wandering womb of ancient Greek medicine, to the demonically possessed witch of the Renaissance; from the "vaporous" salon women of

Enlightenment Paris, through to the celebrated patients of Sigmund Freud, with their extravagant, erotically charged symptoms. In this fascinating and authoritative book, Mark Micale surveys the range of past and present readings of hysteria by intellectual historians; historians of science and medicine; scholars in gender studies, art history, and literature; and psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and neurologists. In so doing, he explores numerous questions raised by this ever-growing body of literature: Why, in recent years, has the history of hysterical disorders carried such resonance for commentators in the sciences and humanities? What can we learn from the textual traditions of hysteria about writing the history of disease in general? What is the broader cultural meaning of the new hysteria studies? In the second half of the book, Micale discusses the many historical "cultures of hysteria." He reconstructs in detail the past usages of the hysteria concept as a powerful, descriptive trope in various nonmedical domains, including poetry, fiction, theater, social thought, political criticism, and the arts. His book is a pioneering attempt to write the historical phenomenology of disease in an age preoccupied with health, and a prescriptive remedy for writing histories of disease in the future.

"Approaching Hysteria affords a comprehensive mapping of recent avenues of inquiry, evaluating the work of hundreds of scholars who have contributed over the past 20 years to the revival of inquiry into hysteria. . . . Readers seeking a lucid and scrupulously balanced introduction to current debates on this puzzling condition, . . . will be deeply grateful to Mark Micale. . . . [a] lucid, literate, and extremely sane book."--Roy Porter, *Nature* "Unlike traditional historical accounts of disease, *Approaching Hysteria* examines the history of hysteria from a variety of perspectives and disciplines of medicine. . . . [Summarizes] an impressive array of studies that place historical accounts of hysteria within social, political, legal, religious, and literary contexts. The book's strength lies in its being an interdisciplinary and comprehensive history that avoids singular or narrow interpretations. . . . Whether or not hysteria is a thing of the past, however, *Approaching Hysteria* is a worthwhile and enjoyable read for the present. It will have obvious appeal to anyone interested in the history of medicine and will fascinate those who want to add nuance and insight to their current understanding of hysteria."--Cynthia Stonnington, M.D., *New England Journal of Medicine* "[An] enthralling account of the history of one particular disease-hysteria. . . . [Micale] uses hysteria to illuminate the history of ideas, tracing it through its diverse appearances in the psychiatric, neurological, literary, feminist, psychoanalytic, sociological, and historical literatures."--Simon Wessely, *British Medical Journal* "An excellent, comprehensive historical view of a much misunderstood disorder."--Choice "Micale has made an important contribution to the historical understanding of hysteria; his breadth of scholarship is remarkable and his open-minded approach a refreshing contrast to the many ideological axe-grinders."--Hugh Freeman, *The Times Higher Education Supplement* "[Micale] is learned in the new scholarship, which he surveys comprehensively, judges intelligently, and writes about with lucid insight. . . . *Approaching Hysteria* is a most timely, informative, and stimulating book. It deserves a place on the shelf of major modern works on hysteria."--Theodore M. Brown, *Lancet*