

**After Hysteria—  
Debating Female Fetishism as a Coping Mechanism**

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**Abstract**

This paper seeks to scrutinize the debates over whether hysteria and fetishism can serve as subversive tactics for female subjects to empower themselves. Since some feminists believe hysteria can be employed to deconstruct patriarchy while others assume fetishism as a coping mechanism that is much more powerful, it is necessary to probe into how they approach these two clinical structures from a gendered perspective. In this paper, having explored the Freudian and Lacanian theorization of hysteria, I will deal with the controversies about whether hysterical women successfully debunk the patriarchal discourse by refuting the analysts' interpretation of their symptoms. I will also address the question of whether the structure of hysteria can shed light on our understanding of female desire. On the other hand, this paper aims to inquire if fetishism offers promises to female subjects, as E. L. McCallum and Elizabeth Grosz suggest. Do fetishists know well how to disavow an unwelcome reality and thus have the potential to destabilize the patriarchal imposition of normative sexual division? Will female fetishism effectively subvert patriarchy without falling prey to aggressive transference? I will take up the topic of female fetishism by exploring the aforementioned questions. Having examined the mechanisms of hysteria and fetishism respectively, this paper hopes to help us reconsider if women, when seeking to subvert the patriarchal structure, cannot but choose between being hysterics

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and fetishists.

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