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Sommario/riassunto	Hysteria has generated a vivid popular mythology as well as a vast scientific literature over its long history. In this spirited book, Martha Noel Evans sheds new light on the significance of hysteria both as an actual psychological disorder and as a cultural statement about gender. Drawing on medical and psychoanalytic texts from Charcot to Lacan and Irigaray, Evans traces the evolution of the concept of hysteria in France from the rise of modern psychiatry in the late nineteenth century to the present. Evans focuses her attention on the intertwining of politics, history, and culture. What she finds most striking is that, in spite of its constancy in the nomenclature of mental disorder, hysteria has persistently been defined as indefinable. She illuminates the

processes of denial and projection at work in specialists' encounters with hysteria, showing how even in the discourse of modern science, hysteria itself has been transformed metaphorically into the tricky, oversexed, and elusive woman its sufferers had once been thought to be. Disputing claims that hysteria no longer exists as an illness, Evans links its recent resurgence in France to its function as a locus of repression of cultural anxieties. *Fits and Starts* will be rewarding reading for anyone concerned with the history of psychoanalysis and with the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature, including scholars and students in the fields of women's studies, gender studies, cultural history, and literary theory.
