

## Call for Papers

**Organizing Institutions:** University of Geneva: Institute for the History of Medicine and Health-Spanish Scientific Council: Centre for Human and Social Sciences.

**Date:** 16-18 September 2013

**Venue:** *Jeantet* Foundation Auditorium. (Geneva, Switzerland)

### ROMANTIC FEELINGS

#### Continuities and Discontinuities in the History of Emotions

##### (From the aftermath of the French Revolution to the Revolutions of 1848)

Does Romanticism really imply a revolt of the affective dimension of the human being above the intellectual, breaking from the beliefs of previous epochs, or can it be better understood as the culmination of a long term process, which started with the 18th century cult of sensibility? Alternatively, should we interpret it as the rise of an “emotional style”, which grew out of the suffering and desperation experienced after the Terror in France and relegated feelings and their expressions to the private, while reason became the virtue cultivated in the public sphere?

This three-day conference seeks to discuss to what extent the Romantic celebration of feelings involved continuities and discontinuities in the history of emotions by means of analysing the representations of passions, feelings and sentiments in the production of artistic and scientific knowledge, as well as their role in world politics during the period from 1780 to 1840's. The nostalgia of childhood innocence described by the poet Novalis, the dark melancholy represented in Francisco de Goya's Saturn or the most elegiac feeling praised by John Keats in his poetry, the emotional flow in Schubert's or Chopin's music, the resentment expressed by German, British, Italian and Spanish national communities against French cultural hegemony, the intense blushing that characterised the embarrassment felt by Jane Austen's heroines or romantic love as portrayed in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* are only a few examples of the most common feelings shaped by different European Romanticisms.

This conference proposes to discuss the multifaceted expression of Romantic feelings in a wide range of disciplines such as literary and artistic creations, anatomical and physiological models, psychiatric and psychological investigations, as well as moral and political theories in order to reevaluate their specificity within the history of emotions. Contributions of scholars interested in participating in this conference are encouraged to focus on the following topics:

- **From heartfelt Feelings to brainful Emotions.** This section discusses the representation of feelings in Romantic art and science as the original manner of expression of the modern self

and its intimate connection with Nature. Coming from very different traditions, William Wordsworth's poetry, Vincenzo Bellini's operas, Eugène Delacroix's paintings, François Maine de Biran's philosophy or Johannes Müller's physiology included detailed explanations on the nature of feelings, their production, their functioning and expression in the human body. We encourage the analysis of Romantic feelings in relation to the prominence of organs such as the heart and the brain, which have been alternatively considered as the place in which lie the emotional identity of the self.

- **Reading Disease in Romantic Bodies.** Taking Goethe's condemnation of Romantic subjectivity as sickness, this section attempts to shed light on the pathological expression of feelings and sentiments –which were usually termed “passions”- by examining diseases such as melancholia, hypochondria, and consumption, or the fear induced by epidemics such as those of cholera and suicide. Particular attention will be focused on the representation of passions as symptoms that explained the rise of mental diseases such as in Johann Christian Reil and Jacques Joseph Moreau de Tours' psychiatry, or in Theodore Gericault's paintings of the criminal insane. Late 18th and early 19th historical perspectives on the affective nature of mental disorders will be explored in connection with experimental practices such as the induction of artificial somnambulism or the ingestion of psychoactive substances. There will also be reference made to artistic techniques such as the use of colours in Romantic painting in order to represent madness.
- **Natural Feelings and Romantic Politics.** From the aftermath of the French Revolution to the Congress of Vienna, European Romanticism takes shape under the influence of the Napoleonic Wars, which shook the foundations of the whole of Europe giving rise to national feelings such as anger, resentment, terror and mourning in Italy, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Greece and Spain. Natural feelings had already been introduced in morals and politics since the publication of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, in order to justify not only rightful actions, but moreover individual's freedom against the abuse of authority as is shown by Henry Thoreau's notion of civil disobedience. Feelings also became the subject of strong criticism coming from writers such as Mary Wollstonescraft, who unmasked the ideology of sensibility as a way of reinforcing women's slavery. Furthermore, this panel proposes to examine the ways in which the colonial discourse made reference to animal feelings in order to portray the non-civilized man as a brute.

If you are interested in participating in this conference, please send a proposal of no more of 300 words in English or French to [Dolores.MartinMoruno@unige.ch](mailto:Dolores.MartinMoruno@unige.ch) or [albfragio@gmail.com](mailto:albfragio@gmail.com) by the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, 2013. A selection of papers presented in this workshop will be included in a publication.