

Quand la médecine nous prend par les sentiments: *Le magnétiseur amoureux* de Charles de Villers*

Dolores Martín Moruno

Summary

This article analyses the representation of affective phenomena brought into play in Charles de Villers' *Le magnétiseur amoureux* (1787) as it helps to better understand the historical transition from the Galenic conception of the passions of the soul to the cerebral interpretation of emotions. While feelings became the condition of possibility in the occurrence of the therapy, passion is identified as the cause of the young woman's illness, Caroline, who according to the interpretation proposed in this article, suffers from what was identified in the eighteenth century medical tradition as «love melancholy» or «hysterical affection», which were both pathologies that alluded to vapors in order to explain their symptoms. The analysis of the logic of feeling running across Villers' novel impels us to interpret the magnetic fluid in terms of the sympathy created between the two main characters. The ambivalence expressed by Villers between the meaning of «love sentiment» and that of «love passion» allows us to finally understand the somnambulist therapy as erotic knowledge that implies a reflection on love codes in late eighteenth century France.

Keywords: History of emotions, feelings, love's passion, artificial somnambulism, vapors, hysterical affection, Charles de Villers

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Dolores Martín Moruno, iEH2, Faculté de Médecine, Centre Médical Universitaire, CH-1211 Genève 4 (dolores.martinmoruno@unige.ch)