

The 41st National Comparative Literature Conference  
Theme: **Medical Humanities in the New Millennium**

Conference Organizers:

Comparative Literature Association of the Republic of China

National Chiao Tung University

Date: June 22 (Saturday), 2019

Venue:

Building HR3

National Chiao Tung University (Guang-fu Campus), Hsin-chu, Taiwan

### Call for Papers

Originally a part of medical education, medical humanities emerged as an independent research area in the mid-twentieth century, and has since then become a prominent field for interdisciplinary inquiries, with its scope broadened in recent years to include the discussion of health humanities.

In the studies of medical humanities, the presence of health and disease in the human body often serves as a metaphor in which other longstanding sets of polarities, such as light and shadow, good and evil, purity and filth, the soul and the body, the sacred and the profane, are yoked together, with the clear-cut line between these seemingly opposing ideas often obscured. Diseases enter and leave the human body through both visible and invisible bodily orifices, affecting the physical and mental state of a person. Discussions about health and diseases have thus focused mainly on the im/possibility of understanding the symptoms and curing them. Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine, advocated a “holistic” concept of disease, arguing that harmony between the nature and the human body was the key to maintaining the health of the latter. Diseases, therefore, happen as the result of imbalance between the internal and external environments, as when any of the four bodily fluids, corresponding to the four seasons and the four elements, dominates the others in a human body. The natural medicine of Hippocrates and his theory of humors were perpetuated into the medieval period in Europe through the works of Galen, which shaped the intimate and inseparable relationship between disease and nature, and by extension, with devils and God, mystic experiences, and religion in medieval ideas of medicine and healing.

This medieval unity between humans and nature gradually gave way to Francis

Bacon's concept of the "mechanical" human body in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. People during this time believed that, by overcoming nature and repairing a damaged organ, they could control diseases and maintain the normal function of the human body. The development of forensic anatomy in the eighteenth century helped to further strengthen the connection between a particular damaged organ and the alleviation of a symptom, bringing new light into disease taxonomy, rendering pathology a natural extension of physiology.

Georges Canguilhem's mid-twentieth-century seminal work, *Le normal et la pathologique*, examined the paradoxical relationship between the normal and the pathological under the framework of medical philosophy and biology. His philosophical exploration is a firm ground and good starting point for us to reflect on and examine relevant issues in the fields of medicine and biology: in the age of the Anthropocene, how do we redefine or re-evaluate diseases which have been traditionally categorized as exception to or deviation from the norm, such as ageing, Alzheimer's, disability, and other diseases. Is it possible that these cases of exception and deviation could be seen as a constituent of the normal state of society?

This conference takes medical humanities as its subject, inviting scholars from around the world to reflect on the current state of this research field. In addition to creating a new point of engagement for literary studies to participate in pressing social issues, and a new channel of dialogue with global research for literary scholars in Taiwan, the conference also hopes to explore the multifaceted conjunction of medical ethics, technology, and life.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- medical politics and biopolitics
- medical life writing: autobiography or biography studies
- medical inequality/inequity: races, gender and classes
- eugenics and reproductive politics
- issues of ageing in literary works and cultural studies
- discourse of disease
- critical disability studies
- the body, medicine and narratives
- literature and neuroscience
- graphic medicine
- ageism

- narrative medicine
- ableism
- medical humanities in the age of Anthropocene

We encourage individuals to submit abstracts of 300-500 words, including short CVs (name, title, affiliations, selected publications, contact information) to the committee at [claroc100@gmail.com](mailto:claroc100@gmail.com) by September 30, 2018. For pre-formed panel organizers, please submit a panel proposal of 500 words, and a Chinese abstract of 500-800 words for each paper, with the CVs of all the panel members included.

Electronic acknowledgements of submission will be sent to all submitters upon receipt of the abstract. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by October 31, 2018. Full papers for accepted abstracts should be submitted by April 30, 2019. Presenters are advised to acquire membership of the Association by May 31, 2019.

#### Important Dates:

- Abstract submission deadline: September 30, 2018
- Abstract acceptance notification: October 31, 2018
- Full paper submission deadline: April 30, 2019
- Conference date: June 22, 2019