

## Curing the Nation?: Towards A Comparative Study of Medicine and Politics in Lu Xun and L.-F. Céline

Wayne C.F. Yeung  
University of Hong Kong

### **Abstract**

The article takes the medical and literary careers of early modernists Lu Xun (1881-1936) and Louis-Ferdinand Céline (1894-1961) as the starting point in order to redefine the relationship between medical and literary discourses and political power. Contrary to Foucault's famous thesis, the article argues that this relationship is not primarily determined by rationality and exclusion of otherness, but concerns more specifically a claim of power to transform actual social reality that is realized by the conjuncture of the people and the state, whose appearance cannot be understood without the conditions of political modernity, the principle of equality of rights. By offering readings of Lu Xun's "Medicine" and Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*, the article seeks to question the East-West cultural dichotomy, highlighting how both writers thematically and stylistically transcended mind/body dualism and realism, two philosophical assumptions usually associated with the Enlightenment episteme. The article then turns to suggest explanations of the writers' apparently diametrically opposed political life by analyzing the difference of the writers' representations of the "people" as a social and political force, which, the article argues, is parallel to the difference of fascism and republicanism as two modes of politics produced in the modern democratic world.

**Keywords:** Lu Xun, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, medicine in modernist literature, fascism, democracy