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This special issue of the *JRS* for the AHRC-funded Reading Bodies project, led by University of Exeter, brings together multilingual perspectives from Hispanic, French, Italian, and Portuguese studies to explore cultural narratives of health and illness from the 1870s to the 1960s. Across literature, journalism, film, and visual art, the contributions trace how medical discourses were reinforced and contested in relation to gender, race, class, and colonial contexts, highlighting both metaphorical and material experiences of illness. By linking historical representations to present-day health inequalities, the issue contributes to the development of a transcultural and multilingual medical humanities beyond Anglocentric frameworks. [The introduction to the issue is available Open Access.](#)

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This special issue was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH/X01133X/1], 2023–2025.

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