



# The British Society for LITERATURE and SCIENCE

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Dr Jenni Halpin (Savannah State University), North America, Newsletter Editor.*

## BSLS GRANTS REPORTS

### **ENVIRO-MEDICAL APPROACHES TO MODERN FRANCOPHONE CULTURE – UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL MAY 10<sup>TH</sup>-11<sup>TH</sup> #ENVIROMEDICALHUMANITIES**

Thanks to the support of the Institute of Modern Languages Research at the University of London (@IMLR\_News), the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France (@asmcf), the British Society for Literature and Science (@TheBSLS), and the Centre for Environmental Humanities at the University of Bristol (@UoBrisCEH), we were able to hold a workshop for early career researchers working on French and Francophone contexts (day one), followed by a widening participation event for teachers and A-Level students (day two). Day one involved the speakers and

four participants, which proved to be advantageous for focussed discussion of the papers as work-in-progress for a forthcoming special issue edited by Daniel Finch-Race, which will be the primary academic publication from the event. On day two, four workshops were delivered to nine teachers and A-Level learners: close readings of literary texts (session one) and films (session three) bracketed parallel workshops on translation (session two).

Day one began with a panel on nineteenth-century French texts. James Illingworth approached George Sand's volcanic imagery as an instance of eco-feminism *avant la lettre*. Sarah Jones considered Emile Zola's interest in madness and hysteria. Arthur Rose returned to Zola's *Germinal* as a source text for thinking about coal use in the Anthropocene. After a short break, Keir Waddington delivered an excellent keynote on trends in French environmental historiography as part of an argument that sought to recover the role of topography in thinking about environmental health. After lunch, there were two presentations on twentieth-century francophone writing. Joe Ford's close reading of key passages in Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* showed how the narrative plays with subject positions to problematize the protagonist's agency. Holly Langstaff reflected on the animal presence that persists across Maurice Blanchot's oeuvre, particularly his 'mouche importune'. In the final session, Frances Hemsley considered how contemporary Rwandan testimonial writing demonstrates the entwinement of insect-eradication campaigns with the forced displacement of groups during the late colonial period. Kasia Mika introduced us to the 'cholera chronotope' as a mode for considering time and place in activist documentaries about UN peacekeepers introducing cholera into Haiti after the 2010 earthquake.

The BSLS promotes interdisciplinary research into the relationships between science and literature in all periods.

Summer 2019 Newsletter

On day two, Langstaff, Illingworth, Ford, Rose and Finch-Race delivered four one-hour workshops on how the environmental humanities and medical humanities can be used in teaching A-Level French. The close-knit audience was exceptional: each of the ECRs delivering the workshop commented upon the engagement of the teachers and learners. At the end of the day, the audience's feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with several people referring to how the sessions provided the means and motivation to develop their work.

*Arthur Rose*

## **WORKING ACROSS LITERATURE AND SCIENCE: THE METHODS, PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH**

Although the research field of Literature and Science is well-established in Anglophone academia, in Italy it is still relatively little-explored, even in English Studies. In particular, while the importance of scientific concepts and theories in literature has been widely recognised, there's still some resistance against the acceptance of a real 'two-way traffic' between literary and scientific discourse. The tendency is still, to use Gillian Beer's image in *Open Fields*, to look for the 'translation' of concepts from science to literature rather than allowing for the fruitful 'transformation' that may emerge from the complex cultural encounter of literature and science. For this reason, I would like to thank the BSLS for awarding me a Small Grant to organise the seminar "Working across Literature and Science: The Methods, Practices and Challenges of an Interdisciplinary Approach" at the University of Trento in April and May 2019. Thanks to the financial support of both the BSLS and the Department of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Trento, it was possible to invite four distinguished scholars in the field of Literature and Science, both from the UK and Italy. The speakers were Clark Lawlor from Northumbria University, who gave a talk on "Writing Doctors: Representation and Medical Personality, ca. 1660-1832" (2 April); Sally Shuttleworth from St Anne's College, Oxford, whose lecture was titled "Crossing Disciplines: The Challenges of Working Across Literature, Science and Medicine" (7 May); Roger Luckhurst from Birkbeck, University of London, who spoke about "Knots and Crosses: Disciplinary Entanglements" (14 May); and Alessandra Violi from the University of Bergamo, who concluded with the talk "Turning the Screw: Interfacing Literature and Science at the Visual Turn" (28 May). All speakers engagingly illustrated their research methodology and gave practical examples of the extent to which working across literature and science can enrich our understanding of cultural discourse and our study of the literary text (the lectures addressed especially the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century). I am very grateful to the BSLS for supporting the organisation of this seminar, which stimulated questions and interesting discussions among MA and PhD students as well as among colleagues from Trento and other universities in Italy.

*Greta Perletti*  
*University of Trento*

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## **FUTURE BSLS CONFERENCES**

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The Society welcomes early conversations with members interested in hosting upcoming annual conferences. Please contact the chair, Greg Lynall.

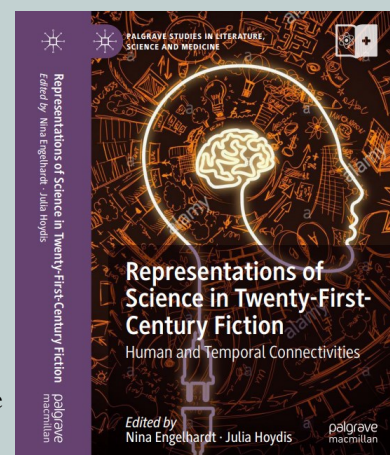
**BSLS 15, SHEFFIELD, 15-17 APRIL 2020**

**BSLS 16, EDINBURGH NAPIER, 8-10 APRIL 2021**

# RECENT PUBLICATIONS

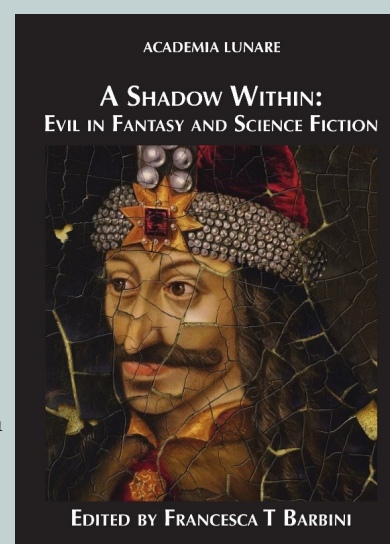
Nina Engelhardt and Julia Hoydis, eds. *Representations of Science in Twenty-First-Century Fiction; Human and Temporal Connectivities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

This collection of essays explores current thematic and aesthetic directions in fictional science narratives in different genres, predominantly novels, but also poetry, film, and drama. The ten case studies, covering a range of British and American texts from the late twentieth to the twenty-first centuries, reflect the diversity of representations of science in contemporary fiction, including psychopharmacology and neuropathology, quantum physics and mathematics, biotechnology, genetics, and chemical weaponry. This collection considers how texts engage with science and technology to explore relations between bodies and minds, how such connectivities shape conceptions and narrations of the human, and how the speculative view of science fiction features alongside realist engagements with the Victorian period and modernism. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, contributors offer new insights into narrative engagement with science and its place in life today, in times past, and in times to come.



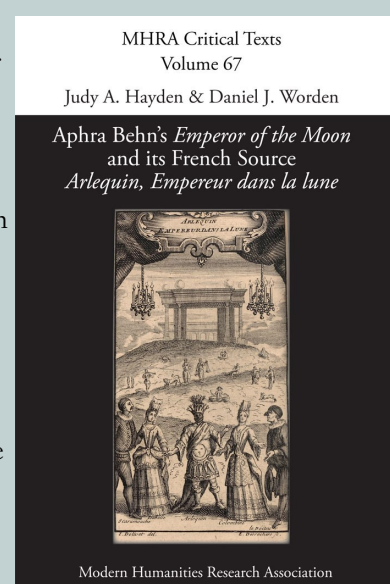
Sean Z Fitzgerald. 'The Fictional Scientist as a Dichotomy of Good and Evil in Contemporary Realist Speculative Fiction'. *A Shadow Within: Evil in Fantasy and Science Fiction*, ed. Francesca T Barbini. Academia Lunare: Luna Press Publishing, 2019. ISBN/SKU: 9781911143918. <https://www.lunapresspublishing.com/product-page/a-shadow-within-evil-in-fantasy-and-science-fiction>

This paper has its origins in one element of the critical work undertaken for a doctoral study in the area of science-as-fiction in contemporary society. I address professional and amateur scientists as both altruistic and selfish, as they often display elements of both 'good' and 'evil'. The context of the paper considers scientist characters in a range of texts, and how science and the process of science is shared with a readership, all framed against whether or not a reader would naturally empathise with a character if they are portrayed as evil or have evil intent.



Judy A. Hayden and Daniel Worden. *Aphra Behn's Emperor of the Moon and its French Source Arlequin, Empereur dans la lune*. Modern Humanities Research Association. ISBN: 978-1-781888-85-8 (paperback) RRP £12.99, \$17.99, €14.99 ISBN: 978-1-781888-86-5 (JSTOR ebook)

*Aphra Behn's Emperor of the Moon and Its French Source* looks at Behn's 1687 play through the lens of 17th century astronomy. Behn does not offer in this play opposition to the new astronomy nor to heliocentrism, which was still a matter of some contention, but rather she appears to point out that arguments for a plurality of worlds had become so extreme that they were ridiculous. Behn, always a loyal Stuart, also uses the science in this text to address the political moment—a year before the Glorious Revolution and the turmoil in the reign of James II. This carefully annotated edition provides a complete translation of the French source, Fatouville's *Arlequin, Empereur dans la lune*, which Behn adapted for her text, perhaps the first English translation of the full French play.



Gregory Lynall, 'Science and Satire', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eighteenth-Century Satire*, ed. Paddy Bullard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 387-402 <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-eighteenth-century-satire-9780198727835?cc=gb&lang=en&>

This chapter surveys the variety of ways in which satire interrogated science circa 1660-1750, whilst also challenging the conventional view of an antagonism between these two cultural practices during the period. It demonstrates how satirists often transformed scientific ideas into witty conceits and vehicles of ridicule, and acknowledges that some of the most important satirists on science were themselves involved in scientific pursuits. What is probably most distinctive about the essay though, is that it outlines how irony, satire, and parody were sometimes deployed by natural philosophers themselves, since they recognized the distinctive rhetorical power of these modes within their intellectual and personal disputes. The chapter argues that satire made a significant contribution to the social circulation and validation of natural knowledge in this period and that the recovery of this history should modify our reading of not only the wider relationship between literature and science, but also the cultural agency of satire.

Martin Willis. "Sleeping Science-Fictionally: Nineteenth-Century Utopian Fictions and Contemporary Sleep Research." *Osiris* 34.1 (2019).

The most recent issue of *Osiris* focuses on science fiction and the history of science. The volume is titled "Presenting Futures Past" and it includes my article on sleep and utopia (a subject which I have presented at BSLS conferences over the last couple of years) which is concerned to bring together contemporary sleep research and Victorian histories of sleep, including fictional representations. It offers a new methodology for "colliding" past and present scientific knowledge in ways that are generative of different modes of thought and the creation of new knowledge. This essay, but also many of the others in the volume, should be of interest to BSLS members. The full issue's contents can be found and read here: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/osiris/current>

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

### 'HOUSTON, WE HAVE A STEREOTYPE' – ANALYZING REPRESENTATIONS OF SCIENCE IN FICTION

What is a stereotype? How and when does it emerge? In what way is it linked to cultural representations of science and scientists? In March 2019, the BSLS member and literary scholar Dr. Jennifer S. Henke jointly conducted the 30 hour interdisciplinary seminar "Houston, we have a stereotype" – Analyzing representations of science in fiction" together with the sociologist and graphic designer Dr. Luz María Hernández Nieto at the Universidad Autónoma (UASLP), Facultad del Hábitat, in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. The seminar's learning goals were to raise awareness for (gendered) stereotypes both in the real and fictional sphere of science. The event also aimed at increasing students' media literacy and critical skills through explorative learning. After providing students with the appropriate tools, the heterogeneous group of Bachelor and Master students from the fields of graphic design, politics, history, engineering and literature engaged in a critical discussion of a variety of media formats dealing with science and its agents ranging from novels such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to films like Ridley Scott's *The Martian*, Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* and Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* to comics including Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *Doctor Doom* and many more. Methodologically, the seminar utilized current theories from the areas of empiricism, semiotics, gender and spatial studies. The overall goal of the seminar was to jointly develop hypotheses from a variety of perspectives and critically reflect on the relevance of fiction and mass media for science and vice versa. The productive outcome of the discussions was not only the insight that scientist stereotypes are in flux and thus need to be constantly challenged, but that literary and socio-scientific approaches to questions of cultural representations of science are more similar than we think. This recognition repeatedly confirmed the great benefit of interdisciplinary work.

The collaboration was made possible by Dr. Luz María Hernández Nieto in cooperation with the UASLP and the interdisciplinary research group *Fiction Meets Science*, based in Germany and led by Prof. Norbert Schaffeld and Prof. Anton Kirchhofer among others.



Jennifer S. Henke  
University of Bremen

# CALLS

## BSLS WINTER SYMPOSIUM 2019 EXTINCTIONS AND REBELLIONS

SATURDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2019, UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL  
ORGANISERS: ANNA BURTON AND SALLY BLACKBURN-DANIELS

“We are at a time in history where everyone with any insight of the climate crisis that threatens our civilisation – and the entire biosphere – must speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be.”

In 2019, extinction is no longer the province of dinosaurs, the Dodo, or species far away in space and time. As Greta Thunberg argued in her Davos speech earlier this year, and as the ongoing socio-political efforts of the Extinction Rebellion suggest, extinction of the human (as well as the non-human) is an immediate concern and a very possible outcome of the climate crisis, unless significant action is taken by all. With this in mind, the ‘Extinctions and Rebellions’ symposium will think about the varied cultural discourses of extinction, past and present. It will not only be a platform to discuss current environmental and ecological concerns of the Anthropocene in the cultural imagination, but it also offers a space to think about how previous literary and scientific forms have imagined extinction as a process or finality, and how these conversations speak to and could offer a means to think about our current climate crisis. Moreover, we will explore ‘extinction’ and ‘rebellion’ as they pertain to questions of literary form and scientific theory and practice. This one-day event will allow postgraduates, early-career researchers, and academics to think about how the sciences and humanities can work together, inform, and facilitate the “clear language” needed to rebel against human and non-human extinction.

The questions presented by this symposium theme are relevant to all researchers, and we welcome delegates from varied career stages to allow for a diverse discussion. However, ‘Extinctions and Rebellions’ will also focus on how researchers in the earlier phases of their career can start (or continue) to think about the relevance and impacts of their work. The question of ‘Impact’ for REF2021 is one often discussed by established academics, but through a ‘Literature, Science, and Impact’ roundtable, this event will encourage postgraduates and ECRs to discuss the ways in which this field and their work can create changes to thinking and behaviours, and what this can mean for their future research too.

### **Potential topics include, but are not limited to:**

Non-human Species and Ecological Biodiversity

Climate Crisis, Environmentalism, and the Anthropocene

Imagining the End of the World and/or the Apocalypse

Scientific Extinctions (discourses that have been disproved or are no longer relevant)

Extinct or Dormant Literary Forms (which have a bearing on science)

Transhumanism and/or Posthumanism (ways of extending life and humanity beyond extinction using technology)

Creative writing and Extinction

We welcome proposals for 20 minute papers. Please send an abstract of no more than 300 words to [bslsrebellions@gmail.com](mailto:bslsrebellions@gmail.com) by **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019**, accompanied by a short biography (100 words). We are also seeking a couple of kind volunteers for the Impact Roundtable, so if interested in participating, please get in touch!

## BSLS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ‘ENGLISH: SHARED FUTURES 2’ CONFERENCE MANCHESTER, 26-28 JUNE 2020

BSLS will be proposing two panels to the ‘English: Shared Futures 2’ conference in Manchester next year, and seeks members to represent us, following the Society’s successful panel at the first ‘Shared Futures’ in 2017. The first will be a general panel on the latest research in literature and science, consisting of 5 x 10-minute papers followed by Q&A. There is no theme for this panel, but we particularly welcome papers on literature and science in relation to recent trends/topics in the field, such as popular literature, children’s literature, decanonizing and decolonizing, and the environment. The second is a roundtable, ‘Turning English into STEAM: what can English do with Science - for schools, universities and the public?’, which will seek to showcase (and encourage further) outward-facing work by our members, and will involve 5 speakers.

We would like the panels to demonstrate the full breadth of what we do as literature and science scholars, and to

involve researchers at all career stages. For those without permanent positions or access to research funds, BSLS will provide bursaries for travel/ accommodation/ registration fees.

Please send a title, 100-word description, and brief biography (which includes details regarding your career stage) to the Chair of BSLS, Greg Lynall ([glynall@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:glynall@liverpool.ac.uk)), by Monday 23 September.

Details regarding the conference itself can be found at <<https://www.englishsharedfutures.uk/>>

## THE DAVY NOTEBOOKS PROJECT

Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) was one of the most significant and famous figures in the scientific and literary culture of early nineteenth-century Britain, Europe, and America. Davy's scientific accomplishments include: conducting pioneering research into the physiological effects of nitrous oxide (often called 'laughing gas'); isolating seven chemical elements (magnesium, calcium, potassium, sodium, strontium, barium, and boron) and establishing the elemental status of chlorine and iodine; inventing a miners' safety lamp; developing the electrochemical protection of the copper sheeting of Royal Navy vessels; conserving the Herculaneum papyri; and writing an influential text on agricultural chemistry. Davy was also a poet, moving in the same literary circles as Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, and William Wordsworth.

The notebooks selected for this pilot run of the Davy Notebooks Project reveal how Davy's mind worked and how his thinking developed. Containing details of his scientific experiments, poetry, geological observations, travel accounts, and personal philosophy, Davy's notebooks present us with a wide range of fascinating insights. Many of the pages of these notebooks have never been transcribed before. By transcribing these notebooks, we will find out more about the young Davy, his life, and the cultures and networks of which he was part.

All you need to contribute is a Zooniverse account - sign up today at <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project>. If you have any questions, please send them to [humphrydavyzooniverse@gmail.com](mailto:humphrydavyzooniverse@gmail.com), or post them on our Zooniverse Talk boards. Project updates will be posted to our Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/davynotebooks>

## JLS/BSLS ESSAY PRIZE

Following the success of the *JLS*/BSLS essay prize in previous years, The *JLS* and the British Society for Literature and Science would like to announce the 2019 prize for the best new essay by an early career scholar on a topic within the field of literature and science.

Essays should be currently unpublished and not under consideration by another journal. They should be approx. 8,000 words long, inclusive of references, and should be sent by email to both Will Tattersdill, Communications Officer of the BSLS ([w.j.tattersdill@bham.ac.uk](mailto:w.j.tattersdill@bham.ac.uk)), and Martin Willis, Editor of the *JLS* ([willism8@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:willism8@cardiff.ac.uk)), by 12 noon on **Friday, 30 August 2019**

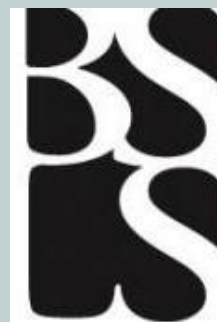
The prize is open to BSLS members who are postgraduate students or have completed a doctorate within three years of this date.

(To join BSLS, go to <http://www.bsls.ac.uk/join-us/>).

The prize will be judged jointly by representatives of the BSLS and *JLS*. The winning essay will be announced on the BSLS website and published in the *JLS*. The winner will also receive a prize of £100.

Read previous prize winning essays in the *JLS*: [www.literatureandscience.org](http://www.literatureandscience.org)

(The judges reserve the right not to award the prize should no essay of a high enough standard be submitted.)



## JOURNAL OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE REVIEWS

The *Journal of Literature and Science* is once again looking for reviewers to review various articles published in the last year to 18 months in the field of literature and science. Please find below a number of articles that we would like to offer for review for the Journal's forthcoming 2019 Winter issue. It is largely first come, first served, so do get in touch with an offer to review a specific article by emailing Michelle Geric [m.geric@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:m.geric@westminster.ac.uk). I would also be very happy to receive suggestions for other relevant articles for review that aren't listed below. Reviews should be 750 words long. For more details please follow the link: <http://www.literatureandscience.org> or contact Michelle [m.geric@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:m.geric@westminster.ac.uk) to register your interest.

### SUGGESTED ARTICLES:

- Sandra Robinson. "Databases and Doppelgängers: New Articulations of Power." *Configurations* 26. 4 (2018): 411-440.
- Valerie O'Brien. "'A Genius for Unreality': Neurodiversity in Elizabeth Bowen's *Eva Trout*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 42. 2 (2019): 75-93.
- Lorenzo Servitje. "Of Drugs and Droogs: Cultural Dynamics, Psychopharmacology, and Neuroscience in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*." *Literature and Medicine* 36. 1 (2018): 101-123.
- Kurt Beals. "'Do the New Poets Think? It's Possible': Computer Poetry and Cyborg Subjectivity." *Configurations* 26. 2 (2018): 149-177.
- Ursula K Heise. "Science Fiction and the Time Scales of the Anthropocene." *ELH* 86. 2 (2019): 275-304.
- Jocelyn Rodal. "Patterned Ambiguities: Virginia Woolf, Mathematical Variables, and Form." *Configurations* 26. 1 (2018): 73-101.
- Christy Rieger. "Chemical Romance: Genre and Materia Medica in Late-Victorian Drug Fiction." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 47. 2 (2019): 409-437.
- Pascale McCullough Manning. "The Hyde We Live In: Stevenson, Evolution, and the Anthropogenic Fog." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 46. 1 (2018): 181-99.
- Katja Jylkka. "'Witness the Plesiosaurus': Geological Traces and the Loch Ness Monster Narrative." *Configurations* 26. 2 (2018): 207-234.
- Thomas M. Stuart. "Out of Time: Queer Temporality and Eugenic Monstrosity." *Victorian Studies* 60. 2 (2018): 218-227.
- Haley Larsen. "'The Spirit of Electricity': Henry James's *In the Cage* and Electric Female Imagination at the Turn of the Century." *Configurations* 26. 4 (2018): 357-387.
- Elisavet Ioannidou. "Neo-Victorian Visions of the Future: Science, Crime, and Modernity." *Victoriographies* 8. 2 (2018): 187-205.
- Mary Kuhn. "Dickinson and the Politics of Plant Sensibility." *ELH* 85. 1 (2018): 141-170.
- Doreen Thierauf. "Tending to Old Stories: *Daniel Deronda* and Hysteria, Revisited." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 46. 2 (2018): 443-465.
- Sara Brio. "The Shocking Truth: Science, Religion, and Ancient Egypt in Early Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 40. 4 (2018): 331-344.
- John Rogers. "Newton's Arian Epistemology and the Cosmogony of *Paradise Lost*." *ELH* 86. 1 (2019): 77-106.
- Alexander Jakobidze-Gitman. "The Rise of Machines in Reformation Nuremberg: Jakob Ayer's 'Fastnachtspiel of Fritz Dölla with His Bewitched Fiddle'." *Configurations* 26. 4 (2018): 441-469.

I would also like to draw the attention of potential reviewers to the recent issue of *Literature and Medicine* which is themed "Chemistry, Disability, and *Frankenstein*" (volume 36, no. 2, 2018). Please do get in touch if there is an article from this issue that you would like to review.

Michelle Geric  
Reviews Editor, *Journal of Literature and Science*

The ERC-funded project Diseases of Modern Life: Nineteenth Century Perspectives is pleased to announce the launch of its [database for researchers](#). The database contains a list of over 3000 references, gathered together by researchers on the project. The majority of these are primary sources, with a small selection of secondary sources which provide historical context, from seven of the thematic strands explored by the project: Finance and Speculation, Diseases of Professions and Occupations, Addiction, Climate and Health, Education and Overpressure, Nervous Diseases, Technology and New Inventions. Primary sources range from newspaper and journal articles to printed books, from across the long nineteenth century.

The entries will be helpful for research ranging across nineteenth-century medicine, science and culture. It can be accessed online or downloaded for full functionality at the following link: <https://diseasesofmodernlife.web.ox.ac.uk/database>. Please share this far and wide!