



# The British Society for LITERATURE and SCIENCE

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## MEMBER ENGAGEMENTS

### DAVY NOTEBOOKS PROJECT

The Davy Notebooks Project has launched!

A public-facing project set to uncover previously unpublished material from the early nineteenth century's 'foremost man of science' has launched online.

Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) discovered more chemical elements than any individual has before or since. His achievements saw him rise up through society's ranks from relatively modest origins to become, just over 200 years ago, the President of the Royal Society.

In 1815, he invented a miners' safety lamp that came to be known as the Davy Lamp, saving countless lives in Britain and Europe, and vastly improving the nation's industrial capability.

The £1 million project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and led by Lancaster University with the University of Manchester and UCL, will use the people-powered

research platform [Zooniverse](#) to bring to light Davy's notebooks—the documents he used to work out scientific ideas alongside lines of poetry, philosophical musings, geological drawings, and accounts of his life.

Davy kept notebooks throughout his life, but most of the pages of these notebooks have never been transcribed before. Most entries have yet to be dated or considered in the light of what they tell us about Davy, his scientific discoveries, and the relationship between poetry and science.

In 2019, AHRC funding enabled Professor Sharon Ruston and Dr Andrew Lacey, both of the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing at Lancaster University, to crowdsource transcriptions of five of Davy's notebooks, dating from between 1795 and 1805, using Zooniverse.

Following on from this successful pilot project, during which more than 500 participants from around the world transcribed 626 notebook pages in under 20 days, the project team will now crowdsource transcriptions of Davy's entire 75-strong notebook collection.

Some 70 notebooks are held at the [Royal Institution of Great Britain](#) in London and 5 are held in [Kresen Kernow](#) in Redruth, Cornwall.

Crowdsourcing is now underway. It's free to take part, and you can transcribe as much or as little as you like. The edited transcriptions will later be published online, alongside images of the

The BSLs promotes interdisciplinary research into the relationship between science and literature in all periods.

Summer 2021 Newsletter

notebooks, on a free-to-access website, as part of Lancaster Digital Collections.

Online and in-person discussions with participants will enable the project team to find out how transcribing Davy's notebooks changes their views of how poetry and science could co-exist today.

To take part in transcribing Davy's notebooks, sign up at [Zooniverse](https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project):  
<<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project>>

Thanks, and we hope to see you there!

—*The Davy Notebooks Project Team*  
[wp.lancs.ac.uk/davynotebooks](http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/davynotebooks)  
Lancaster University

## **WET FEET? FLOOD, RESILIENCE AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

19 May 2021

Organisers: Gemma Curto and Juliet de Little

On 19th May we held an online conference exploring flooding through a focus on resilience and the climate crisis. The conference was hosted by the University of Sheffield, and generously sponsored by [Sheffield Water Centre](#).

We were very pleased for Dr Kate Smith to open the conference with a thought-provoking presentation which opened our minds to consider different experiences of engaging with water. Similarly, our closing afternoon panel discussion with keynote speaker Dr Katie Ritson was engaging and brought together many of the conversations we had throughout the day. Conference attendees had already watched video presentations of pre-recorded papers in the week prior to the conference on the conference website that we built for the event.

Throughout the day of the conference, attendees enjoyed lively conversations in the hour-long panel sessions. Over 30 delegates were in attendance, contributing from all over the world, including the UK, Germany, Australia, Switzerland, Ireland, Turkey, India, the US, Romania and Poland. The panel sessions were as follows:

- conceptualising flooding,
- hydro-politics and adaptation,
- shorelines,
- non-anthropocentric approaches to climate change, and
- flooding and dystopian landscapes.

Some recurring themes included tensions of scale between the collective and the individual, or across bodies—of human and non-human animal and in bodies of water. We traversed definitions and meanings about agency, responsibility, and culture. Borders and boundaries were also prevalent in considerations of how elusive and concrete representations of boundaries and walls are used in managing flood risks and the multi-scalar nature of climate change.

We extended website access to the conference presentations for a week beyond the conference day. On our conference website, discussions continued through use of embedded padlets. We had positive feedback from attendees, who were particularly happy with the use of technology, the clear and prompt communications from the organisers, the interdisciplinary approach of the conference, the supportive atmosphere, the high quality of the presentations, and the fact that it was highly interactive, blending synchronous and asynchronous formats to enable passionate discussions in every panel. We were asked more than once if there would be a second edition of the conference!

—*Gemma Curto and Juliet de Little*

Applications for BSLS Small Grants to facilitate and promote the study of literature and science and for BSLS bursaries to support postgraduate student members and early career researchers are now accepted quarterly, by the first of March, June, September, and December. See the [funding](#) section of the BSLS website for further details.

# REPORTS ON BSLS SMALL GRANTS

## “THE FUTURE OF/AS INEQUALITY” SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**VIRTUAL HOST: SENECA COLLEGE  
TORONTO, CANADA, 18-21 JUNE 2021**

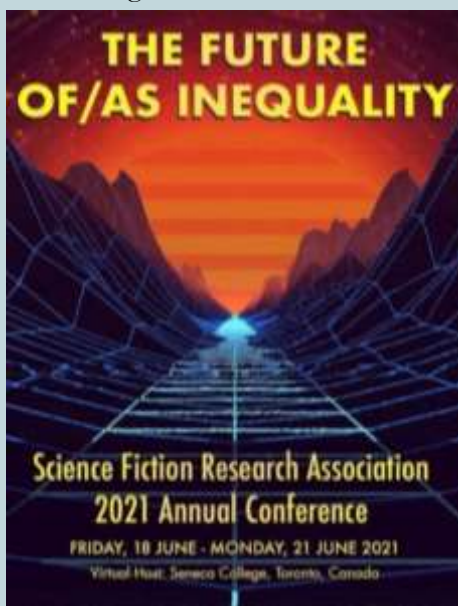
The BSLS generously funded my membership and registration fees for the Science Fiction Research Association Conference 2021. I presented a paper entitled “Sorting Bodies, Sorting Trash: An Analysis of Posthuman Capital in Chen Quifan’s *Waste Tide*”. *Waste Tide* is a Chinese dystopian novel and it was first published in China in 2013 to great success. Head of Zeus published Ken Liu’s English translation of *Waste Tide* in 2019.

In my paper, I discussed the ways in which the migrant workers at the e-waste recycling factories in *Waste Tide* were equated with, and treated like, the trash they sort. I provided an overview of Chen’s comments regarding their visit to the e-waste recycling centres in Guiyu, Guangdong Province, China and how this experience led Chen to write their first novel. In the novel, the migrant workers are labelled ‘waste people’ by the locals, and they live, work, and die in a toxic, polluted environment. I read the novel through the lenses of posthuman capital and waste studies. In their monograph *Posthuman Capital and Biotechnology in Contemporary Novels* (2019), Justin Omar Johnston states that the ‘directive to become “more human” is a call to appreciate one’s human capital or to upgrade one’s body through various biotechnical self-investments. Critically, however, if one can always become “more human,” then one can never, finally, become human enough or fully human’ (2). In the novel, the ‘waste people’ are physically scarred by the pollution and, at the same time, richer citizens have prosthetics to upgrade their capabilities. There are many instances in the novel where the ‘waste people’ are treated as sub-human and are viewed as trash by the locals. In their

monograph, *Waste Matters: Urban Margins in Contemporary Literature* (2017), Sarah K. Harrison states that literary criticism in the field of waste studies shows how ‘waste is figured as both a physical problem and unwelcome social status’ (5); Harrison defines urban waste as ‘things, places and people that have commonly been discarded’ (6). In *Waste Tide*, the migrant workers are the people who have been discarded. My conference paper originates from a thesis chapter, which evaluates social class and climate change in contemporary dystopian novels. I chose to discuss this aspect of my PhD research at the SFRA conference because it fit in well with the conference theme.

I thoroughly enjoyed watching the papers at the SFRA international conference. There were papers on American SF, British SF, Chinese SF, Latinx SF, Spanish SF, South Korean SF, Turkish SF, and more, which showcases the diversity of global SF today. As my thesis examines global dystopian fiction, it was very useful to hear from other researchers working on global SF. I found the PhD/ECR professional development workshop on finding a job in SF particularly helpful and the session felt much more interactive and informal. I thought that the SFRA conference was very engaging. I made new connections and felt a sense of solidarity and community—particularly during the professional development workshop—which is very difficult to achieve in an online format. Thank you to the BSLS for providing financial support to enable me to present at and attend the SFRA conference.

—Jade Hinchliffe  
The University of Hull



Designed by Carma Spence

A specific ‘PGR/ECR Resources’ page is now available in the Members’ Section of the BSLS website. Please e-mail [resourcesbsls@gmail.com](mailto:resourcesbsls@gmail.com) to request types of resources or to offer to contribute.

## RESEARCH STAY AT THE RACHEL CARSON CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

As a visiting doctoral student at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich this July, I have had the opportunity, through funding from the BSLS and my department, to work on my research project, which comes from a thesis chapter that explores how pesticides and vegetation growth were seen in Rachel Carson's and in Margaret Atwood's works (from *Surfacing* and *Survival* [1972] to *Oryx and Crake* [2003] and *The Year of the Flood* [2009]). Having access to their library, which houses a one-of-a-kind collection in the environmental humanities has been extremely helpful to start this project. As well as working on my research, I have made the most of this exciting opportunity, attending weekly Works-in-Progress forums, a lunchtime colloquium, and even German lessons. I've discussed my research with the Center Director, Prof. Dr. Christof Mauch, and I have presented my work at the Synergic Symposium. This Symposium ended in a performance in which I played the keyboards and Huiying Ng (who is a current doctoral candidate) and Olusegun Stephen Titus sang, premiering some of music in the book



entitled, 'African Ecomusicology: Blood and Oil'. The feedback I received from fellows and PhD candidates after sharing my work was very positive, and I had some interesting questions that have inspired me to develop some aspects of my work further. It has been an incredible experience to be able to be surrounded by such a welcoming group of scholars and to be able to share research within the interdisciplinary fields of literature and science and environmental humanities.

—Gemma Curto  
PhD Candidate, *The University of Sheffield*



## DEGREE CONFERRED

Jim Scown

### Soil, Science, and the English Realist Novel: 1840-1872

My thesis, supervised by Martin Willis (Cardiff) and Ralph Pite (Bristol), examines soils in mid-nineteenth-century literary realism and science. For novelists and scientists of the period, soils offered access to truthful knowledge of the world. This is my primary argument. In novels by Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot, soil description situates studies of lived experience in a material world that is empirically verifiable as it is dirtied and imperfect. In the same years, chemists were developing new methods of analysis and experimentation to explore soils as never before; Justus von Liebig's organic chemistry promised to reveal the constituent minerals of soils and how these were assimilated by plants. My thesis unearths a shared interest in soils across literature and science of the period, augmenting the established conception of a psychological realism by revealing a novel form examining matter as well as mind. (Awarded by Cardiff University, July 2021)



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# RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Timothy A. Carey, Sara J. Tai, and Robert Griffiths. *Deconstructing Health Inequity: A Perceptual Control Theory Perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

This book offers a radically different perspective on the topic of health inequity. Carey, Tai, and Griffiths use Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) to deconstruct current approaches to understanding, investigating, and addressing problems of health inequity. In the book, the authors propose that health inequity is not a problem per se. Disrupted control, they argue, is the problem that needs to be addressed. From this perspective, research, policy, and health practices directed at addressing health inequity in isolation will offer only partial solutions to the problems created by disrupted control. Addressing problems of disrupted control directly, however, has the potential to entirely resolve issues that are created by health inequity. The authors have extensive clinical and research experience in a wide range of contexts, including: cross-cultural settings; rural, remote, and underserved communities; community mental health settings; prisons; schools; and psychiatric wards. Drawing on these diverse experiences, the authors describe how adopting a Perceptual Control Theory perspective might offer promising new directions for researchers and practitioners who have an interest in addressing issues of inequity and social justice. With a Foreword written by Professor Neil Gilbert, this book will provide fresh insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers in the fields of public health, psychology, social policy, and healthcare.

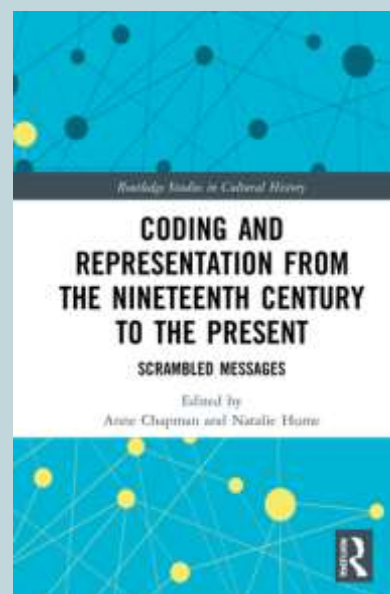


Anne Chapman and Natalie Hume, eds. *Coding and Representation from the Nineteenth Century to the Present: Scrambled Messages*. Routledge, 2021.

An exploration of trends and cultures connected to electrical telegraphy and recent digital communications, this collection emerges from the research project *Scrambled Messages: The Telegraphic Imaginary 1866–1900*, which investigated cultural phenomena relating to the 1866 transatlantic telegraph. It interrogates the ways in which society, politics, literature, and art are imbricated with changing communications technologies, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Contributors consider control, imperialism, and capital, as well as utopianism and hope, grappling with the ways in which human connections (and their messages) continue to be shaped by communications infrastructures.

Contributors: Manu Luksch & Mukul Patel, Duncan Bell, Grace Brockington, Nicola Kirkby, Kate Flint, Caroline Arscott & Clare Pettitt, Gail Day & Steve Edwards, and RANDOM INTERNATIONAL.

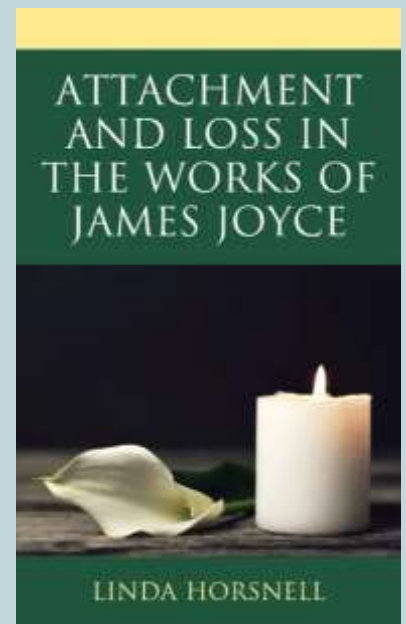
<https://www.routledge.com/Coding-and-Representation-from-the-Nineteenth-Century-to-the-Present-Scrambled/Chapman-Hume/p/book/9780367769673>



Note that the deadline for submissions of abstracts for our upcoming annual conference is a bit earlier than has been the case in previous years: **5 November**. See the call (later in this newsletter) for details.

Linda Horsnell. *Attachment and Loss in the Works of James Joyce*. Lexington Books, 2021.

Using John Bowlby's Attachment Theory as a frame of reference, *Attachment and Loss in the Works of James Joyce* critically analyses Joyce's representation of grief. Based on cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements, Attachment Theory allows for new and innovative readings to emerge, which differ from those offered by Freudian, Lacanian, and Jungian paradigms. Acknowledging the importance of the Theory of Mind and Reader Response, this book uses the concept of internal working models to elucidate how the childhood experiences with which Joyce has endowed his protagonists ultimately lead to how they respond to loss. The texts of *Dubliners*, *Portrait of the Artist*, and *Ulysses* show how central separation and loss were to Joyce's work. They provide examples of such experiences in different age groups, under differing circumstances, and at different stages in the grief process. Attachment Theory highlights the complexity of human relationships throughout the life cycle, not only how they can affect the grief process but how grief affect them.



Daisy Butcher and Janette Leaf (eds). *Crawling Horror: Creeping Tales of the Insect Weird*. British Library Publishing, 2021.

Cultural Entomologist and BSLS Member Janette Leaf co-edited a bug-based anthology along with fellow Gothist Daisy Butcher. *Crawling Horror: Creeping Tales of the Insect Weird* was released in June 2021 by British Library Publishing. The title proved an irresistible wordplay on creepy crawlies for this short story collection, although the weird insects do not just crawl, they also flutter, fly, burrow, swim, and in some cases ride on the backs of other animals like cavaliers. Spiders are deliberately excluded on the grounds that they have very different associations from their six-legged arthropod cousins and frequently overshadow them in the popular imagination. This anthology provides an environment for insects which is exclusively their own, allowing their peculiarities to come to the fore. These literary insects are natural, unnatural, and supernatural. Several appear in brilliant hues. Sizes range from miniscule to gigantic. Some are menacing, some innocent, and some even comic, but all partake of an unsettling quality. Much that is discomfiting about insects derives from negative associations, a portion of which are primal fears and others culturally constructed. Naturally, this collection embraces these tropes but also counters them by including stories where insect weirdness takes positive form and where encounters between species are beneficial to humans. The anthology has created quite a buzz and is already flying off the shelves!



Laurence Talairach. *Animals, Museum Culture and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Curious Beasties*. Palgrave, 2021.

*Animals, Museum Culture and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Curious Beasties* explores the relationship between the zoological and palaeontological specimens brought back from around the world in the long nineteenth century—be they alive, stuffed, or fossilised—and the development of children's literature at this time. Children's literature emerged as dizzying numbers of new species flooded into Britain with scientific expeditions, from giraffes and hippopotami to kangaroos, wombats, platypuses or sloths. As the book argues, late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian children's writers took part in the urge for mass education and presented the world and its curious creatures to children, often borrowing from their museum culture and its objects to map out that world. This original exploration illuminates how children's literature dealt with the new ordering of the world, offering a unique viewpoint on the construction of science in the long nineteenth century.



## FUTURE BSLS CONFERENCES

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

BSLS 17, MANCHESTER, 7-9 APRIL 2022

BSLS 18, EDINBURGH NAPIER, 6-8 APRIL 2023

## CALLS

### **CARDIFF SCIENCE HUMANITIES COVID NARRATIVES PROJECT A CALL FOR NARRATIVES**

Many of us will have been involved in speculating on what our society, and our world, will look like after the coronavirus pandemic has come to an end. We will all have read, seen and heard many others do the same across multiple media. What is the value of imagining the future in this context? Can we draw any insights from this exercise of the imagination? Do we gain in other ways by doing so? Our Covid Narratives research project examines narratives across a range of genres produced during the course of the coronavirus pandemic which focus on imagining a post-pandemic future. We are asking for people to send us such narratives that they may have come across over the course of the last eighteen months. These can be from a wide range of media: newspaper and magazine articles; academic writing; fiction; radio and podcasts; policy reports; video and film; illustrations and images; social media. We would be very grateful if you could send these via email to Jim Scown – [scownj@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:scownj@cardiff.ac.uk).

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# BRITISH SOCIETY FOR LITERATURE AND SCIENCE CONFERENCE 2022

**FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, MANCHESTER, UK  
7 – 9 APRIL 2022**

We are delighted to announce that the seventeenth annual conference will take place at Friends' Meeting House, Manchester, UK, from Thursday 7 April until Saturday 9 April 2022. This event is organised as a partnership between the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University.

**Plenaries:** [Susan M. Gaines](#) (University of Bremen); [Shital Pravinchandra](#) (Queen Mary, University of London); [Leah Knight](#) (Brock University)



Friends' Meeting House

## Call for papers

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers, panels of three papers, or special roundtables on subjects within the field of literature (broadly defined to include theatre, film, and television) and science (including medicine and technology). To propose a paper please submit a 200-word abstract with a short biographical note by **5 November 2021** to [BSLS2022Manchester@gmail.com](mailto:BSLS2022Manchester@gmail.com). Panel and roundtable submissions should consist of a 1200-word outline of the session's purpose and the contributions of each speaker, sent by **5 November 2021** to [BSLS2022Manchester@gmail.com](mailto:BSLS2022Manchester@gmail.com).

The conference programme will be confirmed in December to allow you to plan your travel early. Registration will take place between December and February.

## About the conference

All talks and plenaries are to take place in person in the Friends' Meeting House, with extra activities at Manchester Central Library and the International Anthony Burgess Centre. We will observe any social distancing advice in place at the time of the conference.

There will be two free reception events and a conference banquet (for an extra fee). Cost will be around £120 for unwaged, around £200 for waged. Vegetarian and vegan food will be standard and other dietary requirements can be accommodated.

There will be an online package consisting of access to the plenaries and limited other content for delegates who are unable to travel, at a reduced cost, but the conference is designed to be in-person and we hope to



welcome as many delegates to Manchester as possible. If you would like to discuss contributing without attendance, please contact us directly on the above email. We may move the conference online with several months' notice if the pandemic situation dictates it.

The conference fee will be waived for two graduate students in exchange for written reports on the conference, to be published in the BSLS Newsletter. If you are interested in being selected for one of these awards, please mention this when sending in your proposal. To qualify you will need to be registered for a postgraduate degree at the time of the conference.

### **BSLS membership**

Conference delegates will need to register/renew as members of the BSLS (annual membership: £25 waged / £10 unwaged).

### **About the venue**

Friends' Meeting House is a Quaker space that dates from 1795; a wall on the site is the only fragment of building left that was standing during the Peterloo massacre, which took place in this area of central Manchester, <https://meetinghousemanchester.co.uk/>.

### **About accommodation**

Manchester has a number of hotels, B&Bs and Airbnb accommodation suited to every budget. We will be circulating a list of hotels close to the central location.

### **About access**

Each venue has good access, and we will circulate details closer to the conference date.

### **Local organising committee**

Jerome de Groot, Amy Chambers, James Sumner, Noelle Gallagher

<https://www.bsls.ac.uk/>

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#BSLS2022

[BSLS2022Manchester@gmail.com](mailto:BSLS2022Manchester@gmail.com)

The BSLS Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November, with submissions deadlines typically the last Friday of the preceding month.

Editor: Jenni Halpin