

# ESSE 10

University of Turin  
24-28 August 2010

## PLENARY LECTURES

Catherine BELSEY (Research Professor in English, Swansea University, UK)  
“Gendered Revenants”

Dead wives may return in the guise of saints but sometimes they come back larger and more malevolent than they were in life. In either case, from *The Winter's Tale* to *Rebecca* and beyond, cultures that restrict the place of women generate phantoms which claim another, more powerful, identity. In most epochs ghost stories constitute an unofficial genre, barely recognized by orthodoxy. Tales of female revenants circulate widely, however, in popular culture, perhaps bringing to light desires and anxieties repressed in societies where authority is unequally distributed. Is the thrill of the supernatural compounded in such narratives by the release of energies unacknowledged in the daytime?



Photo by  
Stephanie Nickel

**Maurizio GOTTI (Professor of English Language and Translation, Università di Bergamo, IT)**  
**“Building and Breaking Discursive Conventions in Academic Writing”**

This lecture explores the complex, dynamic relationship that links disciplinary norms and individual traits in academic writing. In particular it seeks to account for the interaction between discursive practices and their contextual constraints and localisations, focusing on the linguistic and rhetorical devices employed in the achievement of specific communicative goals. I will therefore investigate the wider setting from which certain discursive practices originate, their links with the research requirements of specific parent communities of practice, and the reasons that prompt stylistic innovations among individual members of these communities. The analysis is of a diachronic nature, as it compares the argumentative style of authors belonging to different stages in the development of English scientific and economic discourse. By exploring authorial identity as an aspect of discursive identity in the publications of two highly successful scholars (Robert Boyle and Maynard Keynes) I seek to show how leading academics in the disciplines manage the tension between shared norms and individual preferences, thus contributing to the authority of the former or asserting their own creativity through innovative textual practices.



**Professor Timothy WEBB (Emeritus Professor of English, University of Bristol, UK)**  
**“The Surprises of ‘Hunting’: Editing Leigh Hunt’s *Autobiography*”**

Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* has long been regarded as a crucial document of the 'Romantic' period and has been drawn on trustingly by biographers of Shelley, Byron, Keats, Lamb and others, as well as by annalists of theatre, opera and periodicals, and by social and political historians. It is particularly well known for its accounts of Hunt's own imprisonment and Shelley's life and dramatic cremation on the beach at Viareggio. Yet, in spite of its reputation, editing this large and apparently reliable book has produced a series of surprises which have demonstrated the highly subjective nature of autobiography (and of 'memoirs' and historical records) and the instability of even so seemingly solid a document.

Research has uncovered several unprinted essays and numerous unpublished letters (many to Byron); unravelled Hunt's complicated American ancestry; illuminated court and prison procedures, the painful experience of travelling by sea and the rigours of Tuscan censorship; and revealed an unsuspected range of textual variations. It has also identified many of Hunt's contemporaries at Christ's Hospital and (for the first time) the Governor of the Bank of England whom Hunt regularly visited when he was at school.

