



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA

British Literature and Culture Seminar

***Thematic Itineraries
in Nineteenth-Century British Literature***

Aula Magna del Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere
Viale San Michele, 9 - Parma

Abstracts degli incontri

Mercoledì 26 gennaio 2011 h. 15,30-17,00

Prof. Diego Saglia

**Monstrous Depths: Writing the Unconscious from
Romanticism to the *Fin de siècle***

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a variety of ideas about the deepest recesses of the human soul and psyche – those dark areas which, near the end of the century, psychoanalysis would define and categorize as the ‘unconscious’. In this process, literature (and prose fiction in particular) played a crucial role, as it contributed to an examination of these unknown territories populated by monstrous instincts and desires. Between Romanticism and the *Fin de siècle*, ideas of the self changed in such radical ways that they would never be the same again. Considering a range of works from *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*, this lecture focuses on how nineteenth-century literature began to produce maps of the deeper levels of the psyche which anticipated, and indeed paved the way for, twentieth-century explorations of the unconscious.

Giovedì 3 febbraio 2011 h. 15,30-17,00

Dott.ssa Chiara Rolli

**At Home with the Imperial World: Metropolitan Culture
and the Empire**

Far from being seen as dated and irrelevant, the history of the Empire now seems to be intensely significant not only for understanding the historical evolution and present state of countries once subjected to British imperial rule, but to the comprehension of Britain itself. As a matter of fact, over the nineteenth century, the interconnections between the metropolitan and the imperial grew tighter. Was it possible to be 'at Home' with an empire and with the effects of imperial power or was there something dangerous and damaging about such an entanglement? Through the analysis of some major works set in the Victorian age, namely *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, this lecture aims to interpret the deep impact that the Empire and imperialism had on nineteenth-century British culture and literature and, by extension, their uninterrupted relevance to our own post-imperial and post-colonial reality.

Mercoledì 9 febbraio 2011 h. 15,30-17,00

Prof.ssa Gioia Angeletti

**Urban Landscapes, Urban Wastelands: Figurations of the
City from Blake to Dickens**

Urban scenarios are a recurrent presence in nineteenth-century British literature. They are 'translations' of both external and internal visions in a world subject to continuous change and transformation. When authors employ them to depict the traumatic impact of social metamorphoses on Victorian life, people and landscape, they may either choose to focus on the more visible and realistic aspects of the newly formed modern city, as in Dickens's novels, or turn it into an allegory of their individual angst facing the most disturbing effects of the modern industrial world, as in the half-real, half-surreal representation in James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*. On the other hand, authors may resort to city imagery to translate different subjective moods – a fleeting moment of joy, or a temporary vision of vivacity, as in some London pictures by Mary Robinson and Wordsworth. The aim of this lecture is to provide examples of city figurations from works by, among others, Blake, Wordsworth, Thomson and Dickens that show how the Romantic- and Victorian-period response to the new urban reality wavered between attraction and repulsion, beauty and horror.