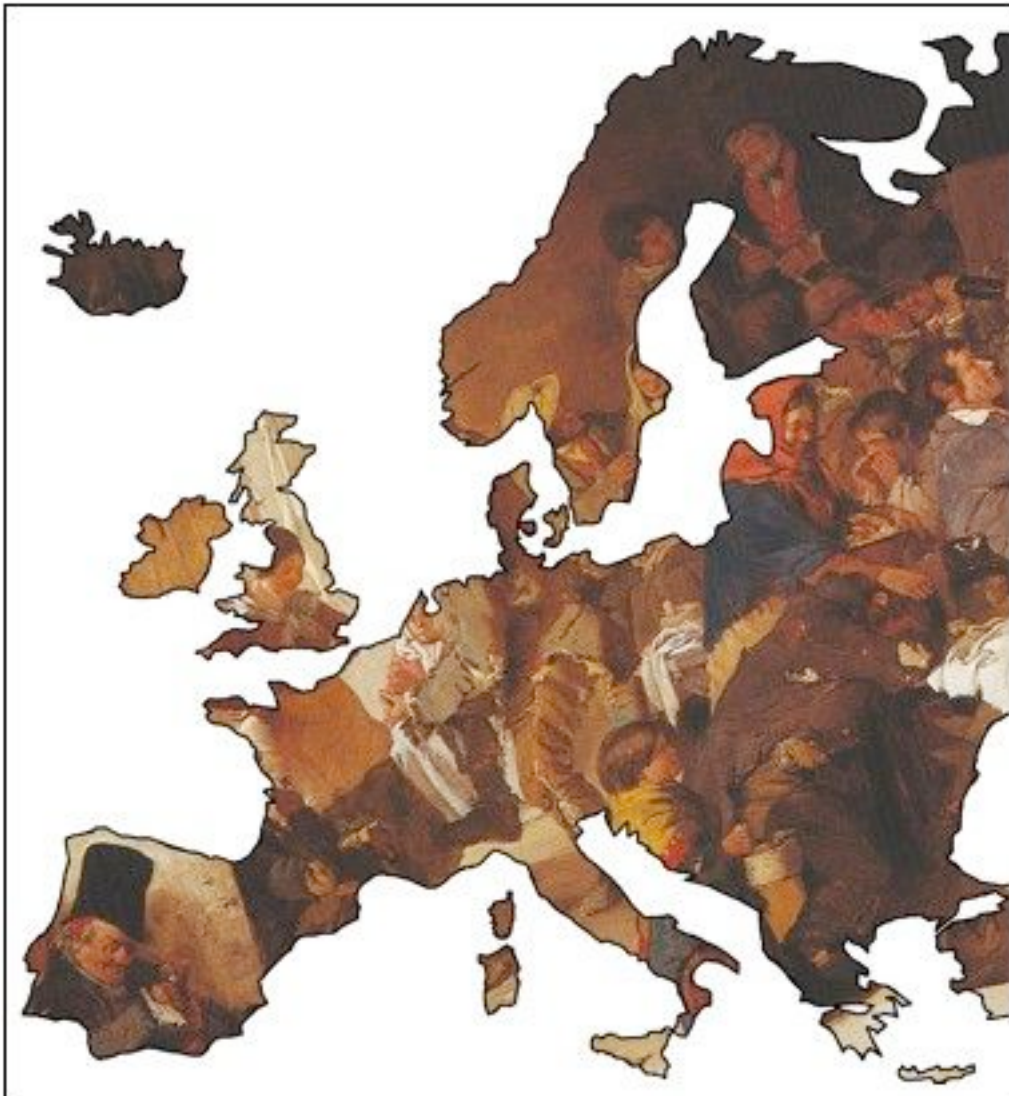


# From Folk Culture to National Culture

MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY RESEARCH CENTRE  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

11th – 12th April 2008



John Fell OUP Research Fund

'Towards a New Understanding of Community, Nation, and Empire in the Nineteenth Century

## Thursday 10th April 2008

Pitt Rivers Museum, South Parks Road (entrance via Robinson Close)

Drinks Reception      Generously supported by the Folklore Society  
17.30 – 19.00      Joint drinks with Museum Ethnographers' Group Conference delegates

## Friday 11th April 2008

History Faculty, Old Boy's School, George Street

09.15 – 09.40      Tea / Coffee & Registration  
09.45 – 09.55      Dr David Hopkin, 'Welcoming Remarks'

### Session 1      Professor Roy Foster (Chair)

10.00 – 10.25      Dr Clare O'Halloran, 'Irish Antiquarianism and the Discovery of 'the Folk', 1770-1830  
10.30 – 10.55      Professor Pertti Anttonen, 'Language Policy and Language Ideology in the Constitution of Relations between Folk Culture and National Culture in Nineteenth Century Finland'  
11.00 – 11.25      Dr Mary-Ann Constantine [read by David Hopkin], '*Nos frères du Pays de Galles*': Close Encounters in Nineteenth Century Breton-Welsh Relations'  
11.30 – 12.15      Discussion

### Lunch

### Session 2      Dr David Hopkin (Chair)

13.30 – 13.55      Professor Michael Perraudin, 'Heinrich Heine's Social-National Project'  
14.00 – 14.25      Dr Mina Gorji, 'Culture in Common: William Hone's Everyday Book' \*  
14.30 – 15.00      Discussion

### Tea / Coffee

### Session 3      Dr Jonathan Roper (Chair)

15.30 – 15.55      Dr Terry Gunnell, 'National Folklore, National Drama and The Creation of Visual National Identity and New Folk Festivals: The Case of Jón Árnason, Sigurður Guðmundsson and Indriði Einarsson in Iceland'  
16.00 – 16.25      Professor Dorothy Noyes, 'The Work of Redemption in the Age of Industrial Production: Folk Voice, Bourgeois Narrative, and the Myth of National Development'  
16.30 – 17.00      Discussion

Pitt Rivers Museum, South Parks Road

### Museum Visit

17.30 – 17.45      Mr Ollie Douglas, 'The Pitt Rivers Museum and Folk Culture: A Short Introduction'  
17.45 – 18.30      Opportunity to see the displays outside public opening hours

New College, Holywell Street

Workshop Dinner

- 19.00 – 19.45 Drinks, New College Bar  
 19.45 – 10.00 Dinner, The Undercroft Room

Saturday 12th April 2008

History Faculty, Old Boy's School, George Street

- 09.00 – 09.25 Tea / Coffee

Session 4

- Mr Ollie Douglas (Chair)  
 09.30 – 09.55 Professor Chris Gosden, 'Englishness, Material Culture and Museums'  
 10.00 – 10.25 Professor Anne Dymond, 'Museums, Resistance, and Regional Identity'  
 10.30 – 11.00 Discussion

Session 5

- Dr Julia Mannherz (Chair)  
 11.00 – 11.25 Professor Anne-Marie Thiesse, 'Folk Culture, National and Regional identities in Nineteenth Century France'  
 11.30 – 11.55 Professor Regina Bendix, 'A Crown Prince's Vision and the Reality of Encyclopaedic Production'  
 12.00 – 12.30 Discussion

Lunch

Session 6

- Professor Robert Evans (Chair)  
 13.30 – 13.55 Professor Joep Leerssen, 'Oral Epic: The Philological Mediation between Folklore and National Literature'  
 14.00 – 14.25 Dr Timothy Baycroft, 'Appropriation of Folklore for Nation-Building'  
 14.30 – 14.55 Dr Julia Mannherz, 'Folklore, Spiritualism and Russianness: From Folkloric Sprites to Mediumistic Spirits and National Heritage'  
 15.00 – 15.30 Discussion

Tea / Coffee

Session 7

- Dr David Hopkin (Chair)  
 16.00 – 17.00 Concluding Discussion

Brown's Restaurant, Woodstock Road

Informal Group Dinner

- 19.30 – 10.00 Exact arrangements TBC

## Workshop Participants / Contributors

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## Abstracts

### Session I

#### Dr Clare O'Halloran, 'Irish Antiquarianism and the Discovery of 'the Folk', 1770-1830'

The study of folklore in Ireland began among Protestant antiquaries in the late eighteenth century. This paper will examine the intersections between antiquarianism and folklore in the period between 1770 and 1830, focusing on Charles Vallancey, Thomas Campbell, Joseph Cooper Walker, and Thomas Crofton Croker. It will explore the impact of religious and class identities on the ways in which folklore was collected, categorised and analysed. Crofton Croker maintained that 'in the lower classes alone can national distinctions be traced' (*Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824)), but all collectors were acutely aware of the connection between the rural poor and agrarian secret society activity, which was endemic, in the south of Ireland especially, throughout this period. Dealing with this uncomfortable paradox was the challenge facing folklore collectors and antiquaries, and their varying responses will be explored in this paper.

#### Professor Pertti Anttonen, 'Language Policy and Language Ideology in the Constitution of Relations between Folk Culture and National Culture in Nineteenth Century Finland'

According to the conventional view in Finnish folklore studies, nineteenth century Finnish nation making followed Herder's ideas of nationalism and especially the notion that national cultures are manifested in the oral traditions of the lower classes, the 'folk'. Such traditions were regarded as conveying the history of the nation and speaking for its innate unity. They thus provided the basis for constructing a historical narrative in which the nation is built upon the culture of the 'folk'.

The story of Finland is, however, more complex than this. The making of the Finnish nation meant the constitution of a geopolitical entity which set out, first, to politically integrate the Swedish speakers and the Finnish speakers, and second, to create ethnic solidarity across class boundaries within the two linguistic groups. The first aspect entailed the adoption of Finnish as a state language and the symbolic – and highly selective – use of the 'people's culture' or 'folk tradition' in the construction of national identity and national heritage. This included glorious visions of an ancient past far beyond the country's historical time. It also included an idea of the Fennoman nationalist elites being 'culturally one with the people', and the perception of peasants as 'us'. In the discourse on the national in the imagined national community, 'their' oral culture and folklore became 'our' traditions and heritage. In other words, the Swedish-speaking elite created a symbolic image of themselves as if originating from the Finnish-speaking people, and claimed ownership in the people's culture that they had raised to a central position in national symbolism. This had important consequences to the conception of citizenship, which became intimately related to that of nationality.

The second aspect had to do with the ideological role of language in nation-making. Fennoman nationalism did not merely contribute to the changing of the state language from Swedish to Finnish, but accompanied this with a change in the ideological position of language in the nation-state. The use of selected representations of folk tradition to argue for the suitability of Finnish for education, civilization and modern artistic expression both modernized and antiquated the Finnish language – or more precisely, modernized it by antiquating it. While the Finnish language was lexically developed to meet the requirements of a state language as well as the requirements of communication in modern industry, trade and education, it was at the same time embedded with

myths about its origins and its antiquity, as well as the origins and antiquity of its speakers. The mythologization of the Finnish language enhanced the making of the Finnish speakers the 'core nation' within the nation-state, undermining the role of the Swedish speakers that had set the nation-making process in motion.

Dr Mary-Ann Constantine [read by David Hopkin], “‘Nos frères du Pays de Galles’”: close encounters in nineteenth-century Breton-Welsh relations’

The period c.1820-c.1840 witnessed the rise of a new sense of 'relatedness' between the various Celtic-speaking peoples. One can even perceive the outlines of a 'folk' identity which transcends geographical, political, religious and indeed even linguistic boundaries. At the same time one can observe fault-lines emerging in the process of creating a modern 'Celtic' identity. This paper looks at two contributors to this process: Reverend Thomas Price, the Welsh historian and linguist, who made a tour through Brittany in 1829, and the Breton aristocrat and collector/editor of Breton ballads, Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué, who made a triumphant visit to the Abergavenny Eisteddfod in 1838. Price was the more sceptical of the two travellers about a common Breton-Briton culture and identity, La Villemarqué, a Romantic to the core, more enthusiastic, finding in Wales the social harmony between nobles and folk that would shape his infamous collection of ballads, the *Barzaz-Breiz*. However, even La Villemarqué was sensitive to some tensions between his idealised fraternity and the reality he experienced in Wales, some of which, such as the religious divide, could not easily be transcended.

## Session 2

Professor Michael Perraudin, 'Heinrich Heine's Social-National Project'

The paper will begin by addressing the acute ambiguity of the notion 'Volk' in German, torn between a social and a national meaning and privileging one or the other, according to the observer's political orientation. It will then survey cultural projects, which drew on the concept, from Herder to the period of German unification. Finally, it will focus on the key German-Jewish, Utopian socialist thinker and pseudo-folk poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), who anticipated, hoped for and feared a revolution in Germany, which would be simultaneously social and national. The paper will trace Heine's attempt at helping to bring about a salutary and productive fusion of these impulses, which he undertook in a number of prominent literary texts through an interpretive reevaluation and redirection of German folk-cultural artefacts – song, folk-tale, and myth.

Dr Mina Gorji, 'Culture in Common: William Hone's Everyday Book' \*

In the 1820's the radical publisher and parodist William Hone established a cheap weekly magazine that contributed to a re-evaluation of folk culture in nineteenth century Britain. Part almanac, part antiquarian miscellany, part anthology, 'The Everyday Book' recorded "the manners and customs of ancient and modern times, with descriptive accounts of the several seasons of popular pastime". Unlike antiquarians such as Brand, Bourne and Ellis, however, Hone did not present popular culture through the lens and apparatus of genteel scholarship: we get no sense, as we do in Brand's *Observations*, for example, of two nations - the vulgar and the polite: Hone's was a work of popular antiquarianism, and one that described the peoples' culture from within. Indeed, its pages included letters and firsthand descriptions of customs and traditions sent in by all ranks of readers from across the country, including the self-taught poet John Clare. This paper examines how 'the

culture of the common man' was collected and presented in 'The Everyday Book' and considers Hone's contribution to a re-imagining of national identity in common terms.

### Session 3

Dr Terry Gunnell, 'National Folklore, National Drama and The Creation of Visual National Identity and New Folk Festivals: The Case of Jón Árnason, Sigurður Guðmundsson and Indriði Einarsson in Iceland'

As is well known, National Romanticism in many countries in northern Europe did not only involve the collection of folklore and the writing (rewriting) of national history, but also the establishment of "national literature". This applied in particular to the emphasis that was placed on establishing "national theatres" that presented "national" works for the new nations, works that not only attracted a wide (ideally popular) audience but also worked on various semiotic levels, from text to backdrops, costumes, songs and the creation of national types. In many countries, budding authors in this new field were actively encouraged to use not only Shakespeare and Schiller as models, but also to take the most "national" material as sources - i.e. the new folk tales and legends, which were reinterpreted for their new audiences, simultaneously moving them from the performance field of the oral/ aural/ imaginative to the visual and active. The examples of Ibsen's early works in Norway (such as *Vikingene på Helgeland* and *Per Gynt*) and those of Yeats and Lady Gregory in Ireland are well known. Here I mean to examine the case of how the artist Sigurður Guðmundsson (the "guru" on national image and national culture in Iceland) actively encouraged Iceland's first playwrights to use the new folklore collections to create a new national drama - and how the young playwright Indriði Einarsson took up the challenge with a highly popular work called *Nýársnótt* (New Year's Night). As I will show, this work not only reinvented the image of Icelandic elves, but also brought about a whole range of new national festivals.

Professor Dorothy Noyes, 'The Work of Redemption in the Age of Industrial Production: Folk Voice, Bourgeois Narrative, and the Myth of National Development'

<i>Cantant, cantant nasqué la infamia,</i>	<i>Singing, singing, infamy was born,</i>
<i>i descantant, la redempció:</i>	<i>and descanting, redemption.</i>
<i>el comte l'Arnau tenia l'ànima</i>	<i>Count Arnau had his soul</i>
<i>a la mercè d'una cançó.</i>	<i>at the mercy of a song.</i>

(Joan Maragall, *La fi del comte Arnau*, 1911)

This quatrain marks the culmination of a nineteenth century bourgeois myth of capitalist aggression redeemed by repetitive feminine labor. In this myth, folksong is the channel of communication between the gendered classes as well as the medium of mutual accommodation. The folk ballad, which originally denounced abuse, is made to rework the image of the capitalist adventurer: in the mouths of women, the song both seduces the singer and reassures its subject of his identity.

We must speak of myth at two levels. The first is narrative deliberately shaped in order to legitimate and mystify a given social order. Throughout the nineteenth century, folk materials were reshaped by intellectuals and re-diffused among the people to energize consent to new social and political formations. Narrative ballads were one medium in which literati attempted to reform class and gender as well as national identities so that the folk itself might be induced to re-voice them in paternalist performances.

The scale and intensity of the period's invention of tradition gave rise to myth in the deeper sense: a core narrative pattern with a long history and a wide distribution, moving across particular social and ideological locations, and localized and redundant in its manifestations. Myth of this kind achieves its power by addressing rather than repressing the complexities of central social formations. In this case, the second myth offers an ambivalent meta-commentary on the first process of mythmaking. In a complex corpus of literary and operatic reworkings—and notably in hybrid poetic dramas such as Goethe's *Faust* (1832), Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer* (1843), Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1867) and Joan Maragall's *La fi del Comte Arnau* (1911)—the bourgeoisie recognizes the impact of its mystifications upon the folk asked to perform them. The appropriation of oral tradition, and by extension of labor in general, is equated with violent sexual possession. The subsequent fidelity of women and workers is nonetheless demanded as the foundation of the stability of households, industries, and nation-states. At the same time, the myth acknowledges oral tradition's power to vary and reshape, the need for folk performance to provide what the bourgeois text cannot accomplish. The working classes cannot be passive reflectors of ideology: their active voicing and recreation is called for. Their cultural labor is as vital as their material labor to national development.

## Session 4

### Professor Chris Gosden, 'Englishness, Material Culture and Museums'

Rather surprisingly for an institution which has a reputation for world ethnography and archaeology, the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford has some 40,000 objects from England. These were collected between the founding of the Museum in 1884 and the present day, representing the largest number of objects from a single nation within the Museum's collections. Englishness is a recurrent issue within the identity politics of the British Isles, being generally framed as a problem, not a solution; a question rather than an answer. Debates about the definition of Englishness have come to the fore again recently, making it an ideal time for us to reconsider the history of the concept over the last century. The nineteenth century construction of English identity was enacted and transformed through a range of publications, and the creation of university positions and other institutions designed to explore and propagate what it meant to be English. Quite a number were collected in the later nineteenth century at a time when issues of Englishness were prominent, as they have become again today in quite a different context of political devolution within Britain. We shall argue that the collections of the PRM were involved in attempts to define what it meant to be English in a manner that took a material form. Much of the change through the nineteenth century, which put identity at risk, concerned the material world, through the production of mass-produced goods, the rise of consumer society and an empirical science. It should come as no surprise that thoughts about local identity should take the form of collecting craft products, items concerned with witchcraft and magic or the making of folk music. The links between material culture and Englishness have been little studied. The English collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum offer a rich set of possibilities, allowing us to look both at the objects, but also the people who collected them, who were in many cases involved more broadly in setting up the Folklore Society or the Folk-Song Society. The English collections will provide a unique insight into the construction of the concept, but also an excellent starting point for looking at the mix of intellectual, biographical and social motives for collection, allowing us to set these within a wider context through the analysis of relevant archives and published sources. The result will be an ethnography not of the English, but of the construction of Englishness in the past and its continuing resonances today. The Pitt Rivers

Museum is running a three-year project, funded by the ESRC, on the English collections and the main researchers are Chris Wingfield and Alison Petch. This paper will provide a brief introduction to the project and some of the results to date. Benedict Anderson famously argued that nations are imagined communities. But they are also realised through material culture, which gives them no more ontological status, but does provide rich possibilities for analysis of the links between the material and the imaginary that are so far almost untapped.

#### Professor Anne Dymond, 'Museums, Resistance, and Regional Identity'

This paper situates Frédéric Mistral's late nineteenth century creation of the Museon Arlaten (Museum of Arles) within the discourse concerning France's national museum system and the right to control the nation's patrimoine. The proliferation of local museums at the end of the nineteenth century exposes their potency as institutional sites where the negotiation of nation and region was particularly contested. Desire for increased control at the national level over the nation's heritage was resisted in a variety of ways at the local level. In Provence—a 'region' now of cultural, not administrative, construction—the nationally funded Musée des Beaux-Arts de Marseille attempted to placate both sides by telling both national and Provençal narratives. This attempted negotiation of identities was largely unsatisfactory to regionalists who developed, in substantial numbers, their own independent museums, most notably Mistral's Museon Arlaten. Thus the national (official) museum discourse was contested by local elites who themselves both collected and invented 'regional' traditions, in what was construed as a form of resistance to hegemonic French identity, but that simultaneously supported the national hierarchy.

### Session 5

#### Professor Anne-Marie Thiesse, 'Folk-Culture, National and Regional Identities in Nineteenth Century France'

Two forms of national building took place in France in the nineteenth century. The main one considered the French territory as the cradle of a unique nation, already constituted as a whole in the times preceding the Roman conquest. But the spreading of the nationalistic movements in Europe also initiated the conception that the use of languages, which were different from French in several areas, proved the existence of other nations. Those oppressed nations then had to become aware of their existence and claim for their rights. This was particularly true in Brittany or in Provence where nationalistic associations undertook the task of "creating" national cultures that were supposed to be completely apart from the French one. Of course folk culture was one of the main bases used for the creation of Breton or Provençal modern culture. Yet, the creation of the French national culture and the creation of such "non French" national cultures were more intertwined than independent. Except in the linguistic field, the same components of folk culture were highlighted as masterpieces of the national heritage. In one case they were considered as evidence of a specific national culture, in the other case as valuable elements of a regional culture which was itself supposed to be a part of the national culture.

#### Professor Regina Bendix, 'A Crown Prince's Vision and the Reality of Encyclopaedic Production'

In the early 1880s, Crown Prince Rudolf of Habsburg thought he had found the ideal means to bring about harmony and understanding in the complex "multi people" state, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. He wanted to enlist the field of ethnography to undertake folk cultural documentation

in "word and image" and harness it in an encyclopaedic format. "The work", as it was soon referred to by those involved in its complex production, was meant to demonstrate at once the uniqueness and the complementarity of each component crown land. Drawing both on the content of this twenty four volume encyclopaedia (published between 1885 and 1902) and on the archival evidence concerning its planning and production, the paper will illustrate the role of formats of knowledge production in the use and representation of folk cultures in politics.

## Session 6

### Professor Joep Leerssen, 'Oral Epic: The Philological Mediation between Folklore and National Literature'

This paper will address how oral literature from Finland or Serbia was seen as the raw material of primitive national-foundational epics like the Iliad or the Nibelungenlied. It will look at some correspondents of Jacob Grimm (La Villemarqué in Brittany, Lönnrot in Finland, Vuk Karadzic) to see how this concept took hold (down to Parry & Lord), spread in a network of philologists/folklorists, and provided a hyphenation between the primitivism of ethnological interest and the national investment of folk culture. It will also cut across an all-too-facile distinction between popular culture and canonical literature.

### Dr Timothy Baycroft, 'Appropriation of Folklore for Nation-building'

This paper will first of all explore the ways in which certain elements from folklore become appropriated by nationalist movements in such a way as to confer 'national' meaning onto 'popular' culture. It will particularly look at examples of folk culture that cross borders or which come from very specific regions, but become associated with a particular nation. The aim of the investigation will be to gain a better understanding of how and more importantly why certain types of political nationalism used folklore, while others did not, in their attempts to build national mythologies. The examples will be drawn primarily from post-revolutionary France, but will also cross-borders where appropriate.

### Dr Julia Mannherz, 'Folklore, Spiritualism and Russianness: From folkloric sprites to mediumistic spirits and national heritage'

Throughout the nineteenth century, the folkloric sprites that according to peasant belief populated the Russian countryside fascinated many educated observers. Ethnographers, Slavophiles and intellectuals with mystical inclinations ventured into remote corners of the tsarist empire in order to ask rural dwellers about their encounters with house goblins, water nymphs, or forest spirits. Yet the reactions of these explorers to the supernatural population of the countryside were ambivalent. While some Slavophiles claimed enthusiastically that pre-Christian Russian religiosity had been conserved in these rural beliefs, others saw in the alleged existence of such spirits a sign of Russian backwardness. Spiritualists initially attempted to interpret folkloric sprites in the light of Western mediumism and felt slightly embarrassed about the tenacity of peasant beliefs, before taking pride in their national heritage and stressing the vitality of Russian spirituality in letters to Western European mystics. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the domovoi and his fellow sprites became emblems of Russianness who had moved from the villages into short stories, the theatre and wider urban culture.

\* Mina Gorji was unfortunately unable to attend the workshop on the day. Jonathan Roper kindly stepped in at the last minute and contributed a paper on William John Thoms and his unachieved 'Folk-Lore of England'.

\*\* Mary-Ann Constantine could not attend in person but was able to contribute a paper in absentia, as read on her behalf by David Hopkin.