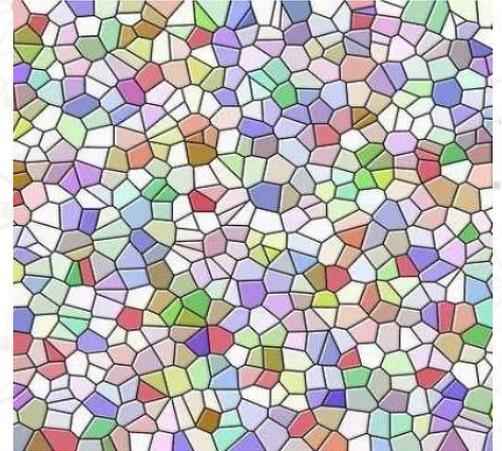
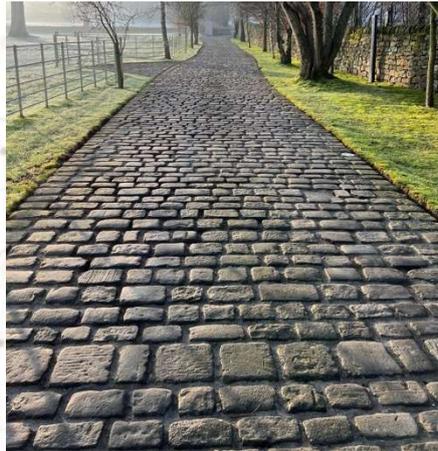


MESSY METHODS RESEARCH SEMINAR

Cobbling as Historiographic Practice: Towards Remaking the Record of Post-war English Theatre History



Guest Lecturer: Dr. Gemma Edwards

March 13, 11h

Aula 103b, Facultat de Filologia i Comunicació (UB)

Based on her book project which explores changing configurations of race, class, and the English nation in post-war theatre, and proposing a national analytic deliberately bounded and underpinned by devolutionary (Nairn 2000; Gardiner 2013) and anti-colonial (Gilroy 2013; Virdee and McGeever 2023) perspectives, we welcome Dr. Gemma Edwards (Leverhulme ECR Fellow, University of Manchester; Lecturer, Birmingham City University) for a discussion and interrogation of our own messy and complicated research methods.

Schedule:

11h – Welcome and introduction

11.10h – Presentation: Cobbling as Historiographic Practice

11.50h – Comfort break

12h – Q&A

12. 15h – Group discussion: how do we work against the grain?

Cobbling as Historiographic Practice: Towards Remaking the Record of Post-war English Theatre History

This paper critically reflects on the way that post-war English theatre history has been told to date, asking why we privilege certain ways of telling that history, and how we might be able to rearrange them. Here, I will describe and practice a methodological approach that I term ‘cobbling’ – a way of reading which cuts across chronologies, geographies and economies of theatre production. ‘Cobbling’ offers a tactile process of engagement, placing emphasis on the principles of play, rearrangement, and repair, and, as I explore in my paper, the term itself comes from the themes of my case studies which each depict the changing nature of life and work for working-class people in England. Taking the view that the story of post-war English theatre too often relies on the same white, London-centric cultural touchstones, my work aims to decentralise the post-war theatre canon by focusing on regional performance and placing Global Majority and working-class theatre makers at the heart of a revised English theatre record. By looking to radical work produced in villages, towns, and cities in England’s regions, then, I shift the frame of reference, turning to alternative geographies and economies of theatre production.

This session then opens up to invite a wider discussion on research methodologies, with emphasis on those that work against chronology and unsettle established ways of seeing the theatre record. In doing so, I would like to invite others to share their own experiences of working with messy methods, reflecting on the challenges of doing research in a way that goes against the grain.

Bio

Dr Gemma Edwards was a Leverhulme ECR Fellow at the University of Manchester, UK and is currently lecturer at Birmingham City University. She has published on class and race in non-metropolitan performance contexts in a number of journals and edited collections. Her interest in the politics and economies of regional theatre production is explored in her first monograph *Representing the Rural on the English Stage: Performance and Rurality in the Twenty-first Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023) and her co-authored book with Professor Jenny Hughes, Professor Helen Nicholson, and Dr Cara Gray, *Theatre and Towns* (London: Routledge, 2022). Gemma co-convenes the Performance Identity and Community Working Group at TaPRA (Theatre and Performance Research Association) and the international regional theatre network, *Playing in the Periphery*, with Andy Colpitts (Cornell University, US).