

2019 Seminar Abstracts: Race: Comparative and Transnational Approaches
 Noémie Ndiaye, Carnegie Mellon University
 Emily Weissbourd, Lehigh University

Race-as-Slavery, After Plato

By Katharine Addis, New York University

In this paper I argue that the ancient classical figure of the slave imported into early modern culture from Plato and Aristotle already performs the work of race, operating on a race-as-slavery model. The Platonic slave is a category that absorbs and suppresses the humanity of those it claims, imposing a new set of traits upon them. The analogical structure of Platonic thought means that objects of structural and conceptual importance in his philosophy – including the slave - are aligned with each other and share traits across different theoretical levels. Plato's slave is intertwined with the concept of the body and of matter, for example. This means that early modern texts and artworks informed by Platonism - and these are spread across Europe during the sixteenth century – may be participating in the discourse of racial slavery in subtle ways even when they do not mention slavery at all. The central provocation of this paper is that no reference to slavery from Plato onwards can be excluded from the scope of race studies, least of all in the context of early modern Europe, with the institution of the transatlantic racial slave trade and the use of racialised slave labour in early plantation colonies.

The Erotics of Difference: Sex, Race, and the Indian Boy in the Early Modern Mediterranean Encounters

By Abdulhamit Arvas, University of California, Santa Barbara

My paper revisits the Indian boy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the early modern context of the global maritime economy of the abduction and conversion of boys. In a dialogue with the representations of eroticized *other* in the Ottoman materials as well as travel narratives that locate interracial romance in the larger Mediterranean space, *MND*, I argue, reveals the aesthetic, corporeal and erotic deployments of abducted boys in the Mediterranean, the circulation of whom casts them as subjects of servitude and conversion, as well as objects of desire in the cultural imaginary that informs cross-cultural encounters. The Indian boy, both a captive and beloved, embodies the tensions between the literary eroticism and the violent history of abductions and enslavements. Exploring the boy as the object of desire in this space, my paper evokes such larger questions as: what does the eroticization of the *other* tell us about early modern notions of social and cultural hierarchies? How does the Mediterranean context offer a challenge to our studies of eroticized hierarchies in Europe? Can intimate encounters in the Ottoman Mediterranean be an alternative lens to approach discourses regarding interracial and intergenerational desire and relations?

2019 Seminar Abstracts: Race: Comparative and Transnational Approaches
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Is Black So Base a Hue?
Connected Histories of Anti-Blackness in England and Morocco

By Matthieu Chapman, University of Houston

In 1562, Sir John Hawkins, with a blessing from Queen Elizabeth, embarked on the first triangle trade slaving mission. He would complete two more triangle trade voyage in 1565 and 1569. In 1570, Pope Pius V excommunicated Queen Elizabeth opening the doors for her to act outside the papal edicts forbidding Christian trade with Muslims and create commercial and political alliances with various Islamic states, including the Moroccan Sa'adian dynasty, the Ottoman Empire and the Shi'a Persian Empire. In 1589, the Moroccan ambassador Ahmed Bilqasim entered London in state, surrounded by Barbary Company merchants, proposing an Anglo-Moroccan military initiative against "the common enemy the King of Spain". England's involvement in the African slave trade and its evolution into chattel slavery in America has been positioned as the primary catalyst for studies of anti-blackness. Frank Wilderson states in *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structures of U.S. Antagonisms* that "Africans went into the ships and came out as black." While I do not wish to downplay the significance of these analyses to the field, I want to ask a question that seeks to expand the temporal and geographical frames of anti-blackness: What about those Africans that never went into the ships? Morocco has its own history with slavery dating back to the tenth century. Though scholarship has engaged with this history from many perspectives, most scholarship fails to engage with the intersections between slavery and blackness. This paper looks to analyze the potential role that anti-black psychic structures played in the burgeoning network of social, cultural, and political interactions between early modern England and Morocco, positioning the mutual recognition of their shared views of black inhumanity as the impetus for their emerging human relations.

The Singing "Monster" in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

By Mayra Cortes, University of California, San Diego

This paper is a study of the *The Tempest's* colonial soundscape that joins the voices of English lower-class characters with the voices of the Indigenes. In doing so, the play stages a transatlantic geopolitical engagement that connects metropole and colony and enables us to listen to the imaginative raised voices that speak to the material and historical conditions of early colonial English America. My study focuses on the songscape—the raised voices—of the colonized that challenges the hegemonic soundscape of the main colonizer, Prospero. The lower-class Europeans and Caliban introduce a colonial proletarian song—a song of revolt and intellectual freedom—that threatens the colonial and kingly hegemony of the island. By stealthily landing his

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European lower-class characters (Stephano and Trinculo) in an imaginatively colonial setting, Shakespeare ships, via the intoxicated singing revelry of the lower-class Europeans, the heightened voice of social unrest and lower-class rebellion into the island and joins that voice with the voice of Caliban. Such a move presents on the London stage the emergence of what Gary Tomlinson has termed “the singing of the New World.”

Re-locating race:
the dual setting in *Othello* and *El valiente negro en Flandes*

By Graham Keith Gregor, University of Murcia, Spain

“Always elsewhere,” wrote Julia Kristeva, “the foreigner belongs nowhere”. Testing this insight in the light of two early modern works, Shakespeare’s *Othello* and Claramonte’s *El valiente negro en Flandes*, I examine the process by which foreignness, here compounded by *racial* difference, is given a new and somewhat surprising twist. In the first case, the Moor’s outsider status in Venice—albeit mitigated by his usefulness to the state—spreads to all of the other characters when the action shifts to Cyprus, though arguably it is only Othello who, in terms of early-modern English logic, finds his ‘true’ non-European identity there. In the second play, significantly called the black man in Flanders, the dual setting (Spain and the Low Countries) asks similar questions of the foreigner’s right to belong, but this time the process is reversed: the farther away Juan is from his adoptive nation the more ‘Spanish’ he becomes. These different trajectories, though obviously following generic lines, obey a similar logic as regards race: in the first case, a looser, more ‘exotic’ notion of the “Moor”; in the second, a more ‘realist’ take that is no less encumbered with prejudice and stereotype. In both cases the dual setting enables, though ultimately curtails, a closer examination of the principles on which race was defined in early modern England and Spain, reminding the reader/audience of the irredeemable ‘foreignness’ of the protagonists.

“Cursed be ...”:
Comparative Religious Theories of Racial Origin Underlying Racism

By Robert Hornback, Oglethorpe University

In the spirit of this seminar’s encouragement of comparative approaches to the exploration of race in the early modern period, this paper examines a certain strand of religiously-inspired Renaissance beliefs about racial stereotypes derived from Judeo-Christian-Islamic scholarly traditions. To be considered here are several medieval and early modern religious authorities on race, ranging from Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095, thirteenth-century Persian geographer al-Qazwini, German theologian Martin Luther (1483-1546), sixteenth-century Roman Catholic Spanish prelate Juan

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Suarez de Peralta, and seventeenth-century Englishmen William Strachey to Puritan John Winthrop's ironically named lecture "A Model of Christian Charity" of 1630 and the sermons of Massachusetts Colony Puritan divine Cotton Mather (1663-1728). Such thinkers ultimately employ "race-belief" comprising a remarkably coherent ideology of quasi-metaphysical determinism. In particular, they derive their authority from scripture singling out myriad accursed biblical peoples, nations, or races. As a result, over many centuries, those stereotyped as "barbarous" races (Scythians, Moors/Africans, Turks, "Indians," Irish, etc.) would often be identified as the racially estranged descendants of the Canaanites, Jebusites, or Amalekites. Cursed/exiled biblical ancestors—Cain, Esau, Amalek, Ishmael, Ham or his son Canaan, Gog and Magog—were assigned, reassigned, and deployed first as the source of marginalized "monstrous races" and then as ancestors of marginalized non-Christian races. The accretion of metaphysically damning biblical associations conferred a generalizing and reifying, hence dehumanizing stereotypical portrait of accursed races that could be treated as anathema, irredeemable, impervious to conversion or grace, and even as the objects of pre-modern genocidal racist impulses. Ultimately, rather than simply being anachronistic, such proto-racist stereotyping continues on as some present-day religiously-inspired racists still invoke accursed origins like the Amalekites to justify their race-beliefs.

Race-ing Claribel in *the Tempest*

By Stephen Kim, Cornell University

Much of the scholarship on race in the *Tempest* has focused on Caliban and to a lesser extent, Sycorax. This paper departs from those characters to focus instead on the race of Claribel, Alonso's daughter who never appears on and stage and who is married off to the King of Tunis. Specifically, I argue that the discussion of this marriage is a key moment of racialization in the play, one in which "European" and "African" identities are being articulated and hierarchized through metonymy. Furthermore, I also argue that in this passage, the female body becomes the site of both discipline and anxiety regarding the maintenance of racial purity in the *Tempest*. The Claribel passage not only asserts that gender is crucial to racialization but also provides a model for thinking through gender and race together in other moments of the play. While it is obvious today that analyses of race must include analyses of gender, what I ultimately want to articulate in this paper (or more realistically, future iterations of it) is how race and gender are imbricated in the *Tempest* and how that imbrication is represented rhetorically and formally. This articulation, in turn, will argue for the importance of rhetoric and literary form when thinking about early modern race.

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**Racializing Androgynes:
 Ballets of Nations**

By VK Preston, University of Toronto

My paper traces enslavement and economic crisis in early seventeenth-century dance sources. Studying ballet *livrets*, drawings, and objects' provenance, I engage ballets of nations and of the courts in performative relationships to pre-modern, global, material culture. Metonymic relationships of things and dances, fascination with masks and monstrosity, as well as metamorphoses, generated emblems of a changing world, I argue, turning to Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's conception of the "performative commons" (2015) to examine pinwheeling cartographies and signifiers. From Androgynes and Inca, to parrots, mirrors, feathers, and shackles, this talk examines costumed world-making, and in particular that traversing human and animal life, becoming short-hand for premodern race and foreignness in French ballets. Alchemical narratives, props, engravings, and material souvenirs dance the 'parts of the world,' I argue, instantiating global circulations of persons, practices, and things. By engaging with Africa, Asia, and the Americas alongside Europe, and engaging with epistemological and ontological destabilization, the works' animals and shackles, metallic inks and kinesthemes (Martin) approach premodern race and gender performatively, I argue, across metamorphic forms of mimicry, satire, and the staging of political crisis in baroque and burlesque ballets of the 1620s.

**"Stol'n from an Indian King":
 Asian Slavery and *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

By Rachana Sachdev, Susquehanna University

There were slaves from all over Asia in Europe during the sixteenth century. Amongst the Asians transported on Portuguese or Spanish ships were kidnapped children whose identities were deliberately erased for easier smuggling and sale, though the erasure of identity also happened across the board for slaves through forced baptisms and renaming. Reading the history of the Asian slave trade into *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can, I argue in this paper, give us a more nuanced understanding of both "stol'n" and "Indian." The argument proceeds through two layers—it posits that given the violent reduction of a rich cultural diversity into an amorphous "indio" or "chino" during the early modern era, we need to honor the unspecificity of the Indian boy's lineage; it also stipulates that in romanticizing the transfer of the boy from India to Titania's household and from there to the higher status of Oberon's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* attempts to legitimize the incorporation of "exotic" natives into prominent English households by displaying the privileges available to ex-slaves within the "pure" air of Elizabethan England.

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**Early Modern Islam and the West:
 Some Pedagogical Challenges in the US Graduate Seminar**

By Jyotsna G. Singh, Michigan State University

My contribution to this seminar will be to share 4 syllabi of workshops (Newberry Library) and Graduate Seminars (Michigan State), all of which draw on the growing scholarly engagement with English (and European)-Muslim relations from the 16th and 17th centuries, as racialized figures variously labeled as “Mahometans,” “Muslims,” “Moors,” “infidels,” “heathens,” and “blackamoors,” began to proliferate in the global imaginings of England (and Europe): on the English Renaissance stage, in travel narratives, visual images, and popular polemical texts on Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. In varying foci, my courses examined how European (specifically English, Protestant) Christendom cast both a skeptical and fascinated eye on the Islamic world on its peripheries. Moving beyond European perspectives on the cross-pollinations of cultures as well as ethno-religious stereotypes about Islam, we also explored (with varying emphases), the Muslim culture, religion, literacy, aesthetics, and gender/sexuality practices and arrangements in Mughal India (16th-17th centuries). To that end, students were required to approach 16th and 17th century Anglo-Muslim encounters through both intercultural and intracultural contexts: via English travel writings and as well as through Mughal biographies and cultural treatises in translation. Focusing more fully on one particular graduate seminar, “Early Modern Islam and the West,” in this paper, I examine the promise and unexpected challenges of comparative work that extends beyond western boundaries. The larger question to which we returned repeatedly in class was simply, “what are the intellectual, political, and cultural stakes of comparative work on race, racial difference, and racial struggles in early modern studies?” In this paper, I hope to look afresh at recent syllabi and address this question in more detail.

**Transnational Networks of “English” Renaissance Music:
 Jew’s Harps and Arabian Lutes**

By Jennifer Linhart Wood, Folger Shakespeare Library

This paper will discuss two instruments—one probably familiar to modern ears and the other likely not so easily identifiable—and their racial resonances in the early modern period. The lute—an instrument that is today considered exemplary in producing the sounds of the “English Renaissance”—was an instrument of Arabic origin, and was recognized as such in early modern England. Even the lute’s name echoes a trace of its Arabic past: the word “lute” is an English approximation of the name *al ūd*, meaning “the Wood.” Around the same time as the lute was gaining prominence in England, in the

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Occidental hemisphere English travelers to Jamestown brought musical instruments with them to the so-called “New World”: archaeological evidence demonstrates that Jew’s Harps were extremely popular instruments in Jamestown, and their sounds signaled English otherness to native listeners. As Christopher Marsh observes, the Jew’s Harp—another instrument that was imported to England from the East—was so popular that its tones “may well have been one of England’s most familiar musical sounds” in the early modern period (Marsh 3). Like the lute, the appellation of the Jew’s Harp declares the instrument’s religious, cultural, and racialized otherness. While many modern approaches to English Renaissance music perceive it as insular and characterized by a supposedly racially identifiable “Englishness,” this paper addresses the wider influence of sounds of otherness on “English” sound. One aim of this paper is to unsettle contemporary scholarship’s received knowledge about the racial tonalities palimpsested onto the sounds of certain instruments by situating these instruments in broader global networks of otherness. This fact is crucial to reconceptualizing scholarly approaches to the racial significance and meanings of “English” Renaissance music.

Palimpsestic Alterity:
Transcultural Criss-Crossings on the London Stage

By Corinne Zeman, By Corinne Zeman, Washington University in St. Louis

The intertextuality of the repertory theater produced palimpsestic characters. Through citations and sendups, characters stitched together multiple ethnicities and religions. These characterological blurrings could trouble nationalist firewalls. They smudged distinctions between identity groups, resulting in newly thinkable alliances as well as cross-cultural embodiments. In this paper, I tie the creative bricolage of the theater to the contingencies of identity formation—that is, the ways that early moderns lived, contested, or appropriated their ethnic or confessional selves. I zero in on the intertextual resonances in John Tatham’s *Knavery in All Trades, or, The Coffee-House*. This early Restoration comedy stars a nationally indeterminate barista. Tatham’s Mahoone is a theatrical composite who mingles performance tropes associated with French, Turkish, and Jewish characters. He embodies the hodgepodge cultural mixture so characteristic of the London coffeehouse. Commercial dramas like *Knavery in All Trades* functioned as a testbed for the burgeoning cosmopolitanism of the seventeenth-century metropole.