

## Seminar

### **Cultural Mobility Around Shakespeare's Rome: Mapping Race, Ethnicity, and Nation through Performance**

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Theatre affords cultural mobility to performers, audience members, and authors. Cultural mobility encompasses figurative and physical transfer (literally, metaphor); acculturation, the process of cultural exchange and transformation; liminal space between flexibility and fixedness; and new analysis of a "sense of place" or lineage (Greenblatt 2009). By creating new worlds in real time through spontaneous community-creation, theatre enables potentially new or unworldly racial and national categories. Since "Rome" is for Shakespeare already an imaginary space in the distant past, a mythos rather than a history, the ancient worlds of the Roman plays (Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus) offer perfect loci for this kind of world-building and to investigate alternative ways of making or unmaking empire. Such imagined spaces can perhaps offer a way out of what seems like a global crisis of resurgent racialisms: nationalism in Europe, caste-prejudice in India, anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States, and so on.

This seminar asks participants to consider the implications of race, ethnicity, or nation on stage, on screen, and in installations, happenings, or other performance venues in Shakespeare's Roman plays and how such perceptions of identity shift in different venues, at different historical moments, and even from person to person. Seminarians could consider, for example, Gregory Doran's all-black Julius Caesar at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2012; the controversies surrounding Rob Melrose's self-styled "Obama" Julius Caesar in Chicago in 2012 and what Donald Trump, Jr. deemed a "Trump" Julius Caesar at the Public Theatre in New York in 2017; the imbrication of race and nation in *Cesare Deve Morire* (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 2012; Bassi 2016); and readings of local productions that investigate how race, nation, ethnicity, and the concept of "Rome" resonate in different "liminal localities," whether European, Asian, or North American (Matei-Chesnoiu 2009; Valls-Russell and Vienne-Guerrin 2017).

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