



Dean's Seminar

# Moral Constitution: Elizabeth Carey's 'Tragedy of Mariam' and the Color of Blood

Professor Kimberly Anne Coles, School of Advanced Study Visiting Fellow, 2012/13

12 June 2013,  
18:00 - 19:30

Room 246  
South Block, Senate House  
Malet Street  
London WC1E 7HU



If *The Tragedy of Mariam* is “about” anything, it is about rank—and the privileges of moral courage and superiority that rank inherently bestows. Mariam’s whiteness against the blackness of the characters of Salome and of Herod does constitute the moral encoding of raced subjects—but the “race” in question is a difference in rank. In early modern England, the term “race” commonly referred to family lineage, or bloodline, and relied upon pervasive notions of what were believed to constitute the properties of blood. Carey’s *Mariam* posits moral differences that are literally a feature of the blood—or humoral disposition—and that are revealed in the external complexion of her characters.

For further information, email  
[sas.events@sas.ac.uk](mailto:sas.events@sas.ac.uk)

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Chair: Professor Roger Kain, CBE, FBA, Dean of the School of Advanced Study