

*Multitude* is also filled with short anecdotes intended to illustrate the authors' quite grand arguments. These anecdotes sometimes fall short in that regard, coming off as trite rather than illustrative. Finally, certain of the authors' propositions are inadequately thought through. Discussing the possibility of a global representative body, or global parliament, Hardt and Negri suggest that such a body might be constituted via either Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or in terms of 'civilizations' (as opposed to simple population counts, which India and China would dominate). These ideas are not explored, however, leaving it unclear how multitude might organize itself at the level of institutionalized democracy. Finally, Hardt and Negri end *Multitude* with the assertion that love, in fact, should be the ultimate, guiding principle of multitude. As they define it, love is the joy brought by "expansive encounters and continuous collaborations" (351). Perhaps, but this definition lacks the power of theses concerning politics, desire and economics developed by, e.g., Deleuze and Guattari. Here, the power of capital is to produce desire. This desire is then taken as psychological, at which point it becomes understood as unavoidable and demanding political and social management. Discourses concerning 'collaboration' and 'encounters' seem a bit weak in the knees by comparison.

To concentrate on such points, however, is to miss the ultimate value of *Multitude*. This value is the text's synthesis of a set of broad-based concerns with social justice and contemporary geo-politics apprehended through theoretical matrices encapsulating large swaths of Marxist, post-Marxist, and postmodern theory. In this sense, *Multitude*—which should be read in conjunction with *Empire*—represents a work that goes a long way toward defining an early-twenty-first century *Zeitgeist*. Its claims are contestable. As an attempt to develop a thesis concerning the "general state of things" in our times, however, *Multitude* is nothing less than indispensable.

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**Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003).**

*Prostitution, Race, and Politics* covers the advent and elaboration of contagious diseases legislation in four British colonies—India, the Straits Settlements (Singapore), Hong Kong, and Queensland (Australia). The attempt to police sexual relations in these key colonial sites centred on the regulation of prostitution—the registration of prostituted women, their inspection for venereal disease, and their sanitary detention if found to be in a contagious state. Pioneered in the early-nineteenth century, this way of managing sexual relations across the gender, class, and/or racial divides was by the second half of the century a systematic and characteristic feature of British imperial rule. Modern medical science was accompanied not only by the inevitable authoritarianism, but also by the ideology of racial

and cultural supremacy—notably by pitting European modernity against the backwardness of native peoples, cultures and environments. Sex thus became a racial and imperial issue, prostitution a phenomenon simultaneously stimulated, denounced, and regulated in the service of empire. This collusive and contradictory sexual system was attacked and partially dismantled by liberal and feminist ‘repealers’, themselves not immune to racial arrogance or imperial sentiment, but colonial contagious diseases legislation remained stubbornly in place well into the twentieth century. Briefly reinvigorated by the crisis of the First World War, they met their end only in the era of penicillin, the League of Nations, and British imperial decline.

This is a history that has hitherto only been partially told, its constituent elements being dispersed in the various subfields of imperial, feminist, social, and military history. We are perhaps only now able to combine archival analysis and theoretical sophistication in such a way as to do justice to the significance of this imperial sexual system. No one, in this regard, is more qualified to tell this story than Professor Levine. What is particularly valuable in her work is the fact that these four sites are contextualised within an overview of the imperial system. Levine shows how colonial practice both contrasts to and acts as a constituent of domestic regimes of sexuality. Even in the heyday of the Contagious Diseases or CD Acts (1864-1886), there could be no equivalent for the far-reaching regulation of sexuality found in the colonies, particularly where questions of race and colonial authority were concerned; but at the same time it was this very opposition that constructed the metropolis as a distinct legal and moral space. Professor Levine’s comparative methodology is aligned here with the new imperial history’s transcendence of the nation, its rejection of the separation of metropolitan and colonial histories, and its commitment to thinking through the range of colonial/imperial sites and spaces within the same conceptual framework. For the record, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics* is a tremendous account of the sexual politics of the later British Empire, meticulously researched and at the same time theoretically and methodologically convincing. Invitingly interdisciplinary, it deserves to be a more or less permanent fixture on reading lists for all historians of colonialism and imperialism, gender, race and sexuality; and it will have about as long a shelf life as anyone would sensibly care to predict.

All this has been said, however. *Prostitution, Race, and Politics* has been widely and favourably reviewed, and the paperback edition comes pre-garlanded with praise; it hardly needs any further recommendation. This very belated review does offer though an opportunity to consolidate assessment, particularly in the context of the more timely responses. One thing to note in this respect—and this is the first element of a properly critical appreciation of a brilliant book—is that it is simply not correct to portray Levine’s coverage, as some reviewers have done, as systematic, comprehensive, definitive even. Levine’s focus on explicit contagious diseases legislation leads her for instance to downplay some colonial regimes in

which prostitution regulation was practised but not made explicit; whilst Levine notes the fuzziness of regulationism's legal basis, she treats law as perhaps too abstractly solid, if that is not a contradiction in terms. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it is disappointing that Ireland's example, of a colonial site within the metropolitan orbit, is again virtually ignored; this in turn points up the problematic basis of the colonial/metropolitan distinction that Levine otherwise makes abundantly clear. One more thing: as one reviewer has rightly noted, the absence of contagious diseases legislation in some, perhaps the majority, of British colonies is a question that Levine's selection of sites prevents her from properly acknowledging and theorising. The conclusion should be, I think, without taking anything away from Levine's achievement, that the new imperial history must be taken even further in its redrawing of the map of empire. There remains the need for historians of sexuality to consider the empire as an interconnected whole.

The related question of geography and spatial analysis is a second area that has divided reviewers and which remains ambiguous. Professor Levine would be the first to admit that the concluding chapter on the imagination and institutionalisation of geographies of sexuality is indicative rather than conclusive. At the empirical level, much more could be said about the materialisation of sexual and racial ideology. To give but one example, the racial segregation which has entered into the very definition of the colonial city, is straightforwardly acknowledged, as in the discussion of Hong Kong's racially separated brothel districts. But this sexual landscape was the outcome of more convoluted colonial negotiation than Levine indicates. At a larger scale, too, Levine does not really describe the complex and multi-scalar geography of sexuality politics within the British imperial network. These are professional, parochial, and self-serving objections, but there is nevertheless the danger of confirming, despite Levine's best intentions, the analytical divide between metropolis and colonies. Levine is right to point to the impossibility of taking either race or empire in a unitary way, but her selection of colonial sites, and comparative methodology, may serve, at least for the casual and inattentive reader, to reify colonial analysis. It will be a shame if the wealth of detail in *Prostitution, Race and Politics* is reduced to simplistic appropriations and generalisations. It is a book that deserves by contrast close reading, re-reading and constant critical engagement with its methodology and analysis. Levine has produced the fullest and most coherent account of the British colonial regulation of sexuality, and *Prostitution, Race and Politics* will continue for very many years to reward scholars willing to give it this kind of attention.

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**Zwia Lipkin, *Useless to the State: "Social Problems" and Social Engineering in Nationalist Nanjing, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).**