

## Response Page

The following response was posted on the H-France discussion list in response to Philippa Levine's review of Tracey Rizzo and Steven Gerontakis, *Intimate Empires: Body, Race, and Gender in the Modern World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

*H-France Review* Vol. 16 (December 2016) No. 292

The original review may be found on the H-France Review web site at:  
<http://www.h-france.net/vol16reviews/vol16no292levine.pdf>.

---

29 December 2016

Tracey Rizzo  
[trizzo@unca.edu](mailto:trizzo@unca.edu)

Many thanks to Philippa Levine for her thorough and thoughtful review of *Intimate Empires*. It is quite gratifying to have one of the foremost experts in this field publish the first review. We appreciate her acknowledgment that a book of this scope is needed and also nearly impossible to calibrate. We are quite pleased to have gotten most of it right and accept that some sections work better than others. We appreciate her conclusion: "Kudos to Rizzo and Gerontakis for tackling such a difficult project, for making it work quite a lot of the time, and for insisting that intimacy and the body, race and gender, are proper subjects for our classrooms." We also insist that the book is eminently teachable, in the right classroom with the right supports, including an electronic format; a website with digital timelines; companion books and articles; and student research projects.

The book is already available in an electronic format that enables instructors to assign the portions they like best or to rearrange the material in ways that suit them. Indeed, we had to write the sections so that they could be chunked. Second, readers will soon have access to a website with links to primary sources, films, images, scholarly articles, and student constructed digital timelines that I will introduce at the AHA in Denver on Saturday January 3rd from 3:30-5:00. We also recommend, depending on the course, supplementation with Oxford *Very Short Introductions*, Oxford's *Encyclopedia of the Modern World* and *Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, or with another textbook such as *Empires and Colonies in the Modern World* (OUP 2016). Just as Levine recommends the book as a reference work for teachers, it also provides leads to hundreds of sources for student research papers. Having taught the book four times, I can attest to the curiosity it stimulates in students who can answer for themselves many of the questions that Levine rightly raises.

Levine acknowledges some of the constraints we labored under due to the scope of the project. There were also the parameters of textbook publishing, with length being a paramount concern. The published text is 30% longer than contracted length and yet is 30% shorter than the draft manuscript. As such we had to strip away some of the context for the examples but trust that instructors, companion books or student researchers can provide it. We also had to level down the theory which for scholarly readers would have better explained our choices. For example we wanted some of the vignettes to take a fresh approach to familiar icons—students may not know that men on Cook’s crews described, if not participated in, homoerotic relations with native men. They may not ordinarily read Equiano’s comments on phenotype through the lens of disability studies. Locating them along a spectrum of masculine performances enabled us to convey the hegemonic proliferation of a particular archetype of the modern transnational man.

Similarly, theory helps explain the selection and arrangement of female case studies. Independent women such as Ruete and Djebbar feature in chapter three instead of chapter two because their independence was inextricably merged with their hybridity. Additionally, independent women such as Indian Muthulakshmi Reddi and Maori Victoria Bennett do feature in the feminism section of chapter two. In this case, and in others, it seems that some of the headings mislead, such as “children” where the focus is equally on servants in chapter two. On this point I would urge readers not to miss the forest for the trees. Chapter Five probably suffered the most from the stripping away of theory. It originally pivoted on “complex embodiment,” a theory term that captures the diversity of examples in the chapter—from body markings to gender variance—and is, incidentally, in the glossary of terms at the end of the book, a terrific resource for instructors.

We have all assigned textbooks in which some examples work better than others, some sections are lucid, some dense, some over level. But given that there is no competitor, we urge instructors to give *Intimate Empires* a try, availing themselves of the many resources which make this a readable, timely, and comprehensive book for advanced students in History and Women’s Studies.

Tracey Rizzo and Steven Gerontakis

--

Dr. Tracey Rizzo  
Professor and Chair of the History Department

---