

*Alien Albion: Literature and Immigration in Early Modern England.*

Scott Oldenburg.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 290 pp. \$65.

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From his opening consideration of Sir Philip Sidney's well-known defense of strangers in *An Apology for Poetry* (1595), Scott Oldenburg is carefully attuned to attitudes about immigrants in early modern English life and literature. Attending to a varied body of early modern works that engage immigration-related issues, *Alien Albion* centralizes the topic of immigration and challenges critical perspectives that, more often than not, focus on hostilities surrounding stranger-host relations. Oldenburg departs from literary scholars who underscore the profound impact of xenophobia on early modern English identity and instead offers a keen study of "early English texts imagining a community that might accommodate the presence of immigrants in England" (5).

The three sections of *Alien Albion* explore various modes of multicultural communities that the English sought to foster, and the first section, "Sectarian Inclusivity," focuses on communities organized around religious beliefs. Emphasizing the positive role of Protestantism in cultivating a society inclusive of strangers, the two chapters in this section examine the negotiation of anti-immigrant sentiments in mid-Tudor and Elizabethan England. These chapters scrutinize the realities of a multicultural society through varied events and texts — some of which include *An Interlude of Wealth and Health*, Anne Dowriche's *The French History*, Christopher Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, and the "Dutch Church Libel" — and consider how shared faith, and not nationality, encouraged immigrant inclusion.

"Provincial Globalism" is the organizing topic of the next section, and here Oldenburg addresses the interdependence among immigrants and the native English, with particular attention to economic systems that demanded collaboration between the two groups. In these two chapters, Oldenburg offers a nuanced reading of the way that cultural and linguistic differences were often set aside to organize communities centered on shared labor. When focusing on the life and writing of Thomas Deloney, a likely descendant of strangers, the author sedulously considers the concurrent pressures and advantages of assimilation for immigrants. Preserving "local norms meant that inclusion of immigrants came with a number of demands designed to minimize the economic and social impact of immigration" (89). Predictably, these demands put immigrants at an unfair disadvantage, but allowed for a relatively peaceful coexistence.

The final section, "Worldly Domesticity," shifts attention to the domestic sphere to shed light on the roles of private hospitality and marriage in multicultural communities.

Here, Oldenburg examines two city comedies and, in a separate chapter, William Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and his contribution to *Sir Thomas More*. The city comedies, he suggests, highlight a desire for economic interdependence between "status-seeking strangers and money-seeking gentry," which leads to a domestic union where ethnic and cultural borders blend (136). In this light, Oldenburg argues, the xenophobic rhetoric often aimed at immigrants has less to do with patent disdain for strangers and more to do with the English desire to connect with them. However, even as Oldenburg presents a shrewd reading of *Sir Thomas More* — one that looks beyond general anti-alien motivations so as to uncover the specific circumstances surrounding the 1517 Ill May Day Riots — he seems to privilege positive views of a multicultural England over sustained critical attention to the dangerous nature of any and all anti-immigrant vitriol. Perhaps more importantly, while the study points to an array of texts and situations where multicultural communities flourished, it fails to take into account the black population in England, a population that Imtiaz Habib has impressively documented in *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677* (2008). The tensions that race relations provoke are significant to any understanding of a multicultural society, and yet early modern England's black population remains largely invisible in *Alien Albion*.

To be clear, Oldenburg sets out to consider the day-to-day cross-cultural encounters that the native English would have experienced, and in this vein *Alien Albion* not only tenders a thoughtful and engaging study of the various paradigms surrounding multicultural communities, but it also offers a timely and important contribution to studies of immigration in early modern literature. Oldenburg's fresh approach to questioning the influence of xenophobia on constructions of national identity opens the door to reimagining immigrant relations in early modern England and its literature.

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