



# **The Foreignness of Foreigners: Cultural Representations of the Other in the British Isles (17th-20th Centuries)**

*Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding and Claire Dubois*

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This collection of essays examines the various encounters between Britain and the Other, from a cultural, racial, ethnic, artistic and social perspective. It investigates the constructions of various figures of the foreigner in the British Isles through representations and discourses in the political and literary fields, as well as in the visual arts from the 17th century to the contemporary period. This volume presents a diverse selection of contributions which offer some common concerns about the forging of the image of the Other and the writing of the Self. The authors of this book look at various representations of Otherness in literature, history and the arts, and investigate the ways the Other was imagined, fabricated and used. The chapters explore the question of Otherness in its multifarious dimensions, such as the image of immigrants in the United Kingdom, the relationship between Ireland and Britain, the figure of the Orient and the Far East, the perception of continental Europe in Britain, and the consequences of encounters between Britons and indigenous peoples in America, Canada or Africa. Following the theories of, among others, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, some of the essays discuss Orientalism and the construction of stereotypes. They emphasize how foreignness and selfhood were staged and performed through visual practices and discourses, with their possible effects of distortions and stereotyping. The encounters with various Others could indeed be confrontational or lead to imitation, appropriation, cultural syncretism and complex processes of identity-building. The topics addressed in this book propose an interdisciplinary approach in cultural studies, and analyse the theme in fields such as colonial, imperial and post-colonial histories, literature, art history, sociology and politics. Through different case studies, the fluctuating and oftentimes highly ambivalent perceptions of foreignness reveal how crucial a role Otherness played in fashioning Britain's national, religious, cultural and social identity.

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