


**David Holland. *Imperial Heartland: Immigration, Working-class Culture and Everyday Tolerance, 1917–1947*. Modern British Histories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. 350. \$125.00 (cloth).**

Panikos Panayi 

De Montfort University  
Email: [ppanayi@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:ppanayi@dmu.ac.uk)

In *Imperial Heartland: Immigration, Working-class Culture and Everyday Tolerance, 1917–1947*, David Holland promises to reshape thinking of the way in which scholars approach the history of immigration to Britain by focusing upon the history of a handful of individuals who settled in Sheffield between 1917 and 1947. Its core claims consist of the following. First, the north of England before the Second World War demonstrates far more ethnic diversity than previously accepted, as the example of Sheffield indicates. Second, the working classes displayed far more tolerance, especially in the north of England, than previous, unnamed researchers have acknowledged, indicated especially by the fact that the South Asians, particularly Pashtuns, who settled in Sheffield in the period under consideration, married local white women.

Holland deserves credit for writing an innovative and interesting book. One of the main innovations is actually methodological. In order to discuss the life stories of the people who form the core of the volume, both the immigrants and their wives, Holland has utilized sources such as census records, marriage certificates, and electoral registers, which provide basic information but could not have sustained the development of a narrative of this length. The author therefore supplements this information in three ways. First, by utilizing interviews with the descendants of the mixed heritage marriages, which support the argument about Sheffield tolerance. Second, by entering the names of the newcomers into the British Newspaper Archive, which provides additional information on the individuals considered. Third, by providing extraordinary amounts of contextualization in the following ways. First, by extending the chronology, mostly forward to the postwar period. Second, by examining other mostly northern cities, especially Liverpool (bizarrely at one stage described as superdiverse, in a phrase coined by Steve Vertovec to describe the truly superdiverse city of twenty-first-century London). Third, by looking at the experiences of Black people. Therefore, while Sheffield has a chapter of its own in order to provide the geographical context, the author too frequently strays into other geographical locations.

The strongest parts of the book deal with the reasons for migration and the working lives of the settlers. Holland takes a network-based approach and his methodology allows him to demonstrate the ways in which those lascars who stayed in Britain at the end of the First World War (hence the rather odd start date of 1917) helped to facilitate the movement of other, mostly Pashtuns, into the interwar years. The chapter on working lives needs particular praise for a series of reasons. First, it describes the employment histories of the individuals who formed the core subjects of the book, that is, the everyday tasks they undertook, perhaps an old-fashioned approach, but absolutely essential in writing working class history. Except (perhaps the most important contribution of this book) the South Asians who settled in Sheffield and other parts of the north of England did not simply carry out manual labor. Many of them, with experiences of working as stokers on British ships, did similar work in Sheffield steel mills. But this often proved a short-term employment as many of the migrants demonstrated an element of social mobility. Holland spends much time on the migrants as pedlars. He therefore demonstrates (perhaps the key contribution of this book) that the migrants became active players in their employment histories. Holland therefore rejects the classic Marxist sociological perspective of Stephen Castles and

Godula Kosack about immigrants as a reserve labor force, put forward in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only did the South Asians in Sheffield carry out the same jobs as the rest of the population, they managed to escape manual labor, while others did not carry it out at all, arriving as doctors and entertainers, for example.

The issue of working-class tolerance proves problematic. Holland wishes to move away from the race relations paradigm which focuses upon conflicting groups in British society. He mainly demonstrates this by focusing upon the mixed marriages and relationships which existed but never fully explains this tolerance. He briefly tackles the small numbers of migrants in the city and the deaths of over five thousand white Sheffield men during the First World War, which surely act as the key factors involved in facilitating these relationships. Even when he tackles anti-immigrant rioting in Sheffield, Holland seems to forgive those who participated, explaining their activities away by blaming economics or the actions of a small number of individuals. He dismisses scholars who have focused on working class racism, especially rioting, without naming them. In reality, all classes in British society have demonstrated a variety of responses to immigrants, ranging from love to murder. Multicultural racism sums up Britain's attitudes toward migrants and Holland should have engaged with this concept, as well as with key works on the immigration history of Britain, which he ignores: for example, the pioneering Colin Holmes, who held a chair at the University of Sheffield, and wrote the seminal work on the history of immigrants in Britain, does not achieve a single citation, although thanked in the acknowledgments. Holland engages with Laura Tabili, while his other main reference points consist of a few works on postwar South Asian migration, especially Roger Ballard and Muhammad Anwar, books on the history of the British working classes and on Sheffield, and some references to the South Asian history of Britain, including Rozina Visram.

The book fills a gap in the history of South Asian settlement in the north of England, acting as a pre-history to those volumes focusing upon the transformative impact that people from Pakistan had on various northern locations, excluding Sheffield, after the Second World War. The narrative of tolerance is cleverly constructed, especially through the methodology of life stories, but Holland never fully engages with the demographic reasons for this tolerance in Sheffield. All migrants experience discrimination in Britain, except, perhaps, in contemporary London where no ethnic majority exists, and it is important that scholars accept this, as well as also moving away from the paradigm of racism determining every aspect of migrant lives. The truth lies between these two approaches.

doi:10.1017/jbr.2024.97

## **Michael Ledger-Lomas. *Queen Victoria: This Thorny Crown***

**Spiritual Lives. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. 368. \$41.99 (cloth).**

Petros Spanou 

University of Oxford

Email: [petros.spanou@sjc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:petros.spanou@sjc.ox.ac.uk)

In the spring and summer months of 1855, as Victorians grappled with the administrative incompetence and logistical failures the Crimean War exposed, another debate was reaching