By proving the importance of proximity and similitude in the construction of national identity, Marjorie Rubright’s study of the English social and literary productions of ‘Dutchness’ in the early modern period challenges the narrative of oppositional discourse so prevalent in early modern scholarship. Surveys of European exploration of the New World, accounts of English interactions in the Mediterranean, and analyses of England’s confrontations with rivals France and Spain all subscribe, in one way or another, to ‘meaning through difference’. Bypassing this dominant model, Rubright takes as her object of study the Dutch — a group concurrently England’s political and military partner in Protestant solidarity and an assimilated migrant community actively participating in urban London life. Analyzing the varied manifestations of ‘Dutchness’ in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Rubright accounts for a range of texts that negotiate the resemblances between England and the Low Countries. Political and historical material such as immigration policies, travel accounts, world atlases, and urban architecture are read alongside the more ostensibly literary: dictionaries, philological tracts, rhetorical treatises, popular print, plays and pageants. She marks ‘a moment when knowledge of Anglo-Dutch linguistic proximity was actively produced in philological debates, in the performance and printed publication of London drama, and in bilingual and polyglot wordbooks’ (p. 160). Tracing this shift in the early seventeenth century, Rubright innovatively interprets English representations of social, economic, religious, political, and sexual identity by asking ‘in what ways real and imagined proximity to one’s neighbors — those who live just beyond
and within England — shaped constructions of ethnic, and sometimes racial, self definition’ (5). Indeed, Rubright proves that ‘variations by degree’ (p. 19) are far more powerful factors in identity formation than previously suggested.

Focusing on London city dramas, Rubright outlines the poetics of social stratification and the representations of cultural assimilation of Dutch immigrants. She alerts us to the complexities of ethnic distinctions when they are applied to Dutch characters on the English stage, emphasizing the linguistic paratexts that complicate expected expressions of xenophobia. *The Dutch Courtesan* and other city comedies depict what Rubright terms a ‘double vision analytic’; that is, Dutch accents, habits and tastes on the stage emerge as familiar and recognizable as English. She argues that the play ‘traffics in discursive operations that open up a palimpsestic perception: one that sees Dutchness within, beneath and overlayed onto Englishness’ (p. 55).

While establishing the nuances of Dutch influence on the English imagination, Rubright provides a sustained — indeed unprecedented — study of the shared lexicon of both cultures in her first three chapters. By scrutinizing the linguistic debates that underwrite concepts of cultural heritage, she reveals that the metaphor of the assimilated foreigner — the denizen — when applied to philological debates ‘expresses what the inkhorn disallows: the possibility of thinking in terms of transitioning along a continuum…in one instance an exemplar of cultural assimilation, in another an unwanted and deceptive stranger existing outside the laws of English grammar and the English realm’ (pp. 62, 65). This continuum shifts in the early seventeenth century, according to Rubright, to accommodate the nuances of English incorporation, and even emulation, of Dutch language as a model of simplicity and verisimilitude. Rubright’s analysis of Dutch speech on the Jacobean stage reveals the infusion of Dutch culture in commercial and domestic spheres by establishing the ways that Dutchness is doubly the analog, and the converse, of Englishness.

The printing of stage plays is the focus of chapter four and complicates the ‘double vision’ through which Rubright theorizes identity based on propinquity. Rubright illustrates how linguistic proximity drives printers’ efforts to distinguish between English and Dutch words. Printers, while attempting to clarify linguistic distinctions, actually reveal ‘the indeterminacy of the linguistic categories the plays themselves explore’ (p. 125). Surveying wordlists, grammar books, dictionaries — from which many pages are reprinted in the monograph — Rubright elaborates on one of her book’s many fascinating discoveries: that
the seemingly simple shifts in typography (roman type vs. black type for instance) significantly influenced Europe’s *lingua matrix* by representing ethnic differences — substantial and minute — within these polyglot publications.

In chapter two, Rubright introduces the importance of cartographic analysis, thereby establishing the ways in which the cultural and the geographical, the discursive and the material, converge. Details provided here of atlases depicting England’s proximity to the Low Countries anticipate the final two chapters’ emphasis on Anglo-Dutch global exchanges, particularly in the political and social forums of the Royal Exchange and the East Spice Islands. The Royal Exchange — as site of London pageantry and as symbol of Antwerp’s and London’s commercial cosmopolitanism — manifests the Dutch community as ‘a people built in to (and partially responsible for building) the economic, social, and material fabric of London life’ (p. 184). But this location within London is only one of the sites on which the cooperation and competition between the English and Dutch develop, and on which the problems of interchangeability that plague their efforts at global commerce emerge. Rubright traces this tension in Dryden’s *Amboyna* to show that the ‘most explosive rivalries between the English and Dutch in the Spice Islands was catalyzed not by the differences between the Dutch and English but by their apparent likeness’ (p. 192). Allied rivals, friendly competitors, strange neighbors — these paradoxes characterize the doppelganger syndrome in varied measure. But Rubright’s examination of the 1623 Amboyna Massacre, and the staging of Dutch cruelty in the Indonesian archipelago, reveal the limits of assimilation. Her analysis establishes Dryden’s play as not only a depiction of a historical event but also a rejection of the potent, albeit paradoxical, model of kinship annulled by the massacre.

Despite the productive and multivalent range of materials she consults, Rubright acknowledges that her sources are primarily texts produced by the English. In an early caveat, she explains ‘ideas about Dutchness in the English cultural imagination far exceeded any real or imagined presence of Dutch people on the streets or characters on the stage’ (p. 19). As such, the monograph is not a neutral account of the history of Anglo-Dutch relations in the early modern period. Rather, it presents a thorough investigation of the matrix of meanings generated by English projections of these relations at home and abroad. Her findings are of significant value for students and teachers of early modern drama, but Rubright’s methodology of parsing the intricacies of similitude and association should be heeded by all critics of identity formation in cultural productions.