

The catalysts and outcomes of twentieth-century Scottish emigration

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A review of

Marjory Harper, *Scotland No More? The Scots who left Scotland in the Twentieth Century*

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Though it has been of some interest to scholars for several decades now, the Scottish diaspora has been the subject of increasingly detailed research in recent years, helped along no doubt by devolution and the forthcoming referendum for Scottish independence. While the romanticised portrayal of a predominately Highlands-originated community in exile may linger in some corners of the world, the work of scholars such as T. M. Devine, Paul Basu, Duncan Sim and Marjory Harper has challenged this description of the Scottish diaspora, throwing into greater relief the incredible diversity of motivations and outcomes of those Scots – from the Highlands, Lowlands and Islands alike – who have emigrated over the past several centuries. Harper's most recent book, *Scotland No More?* continues in the pursuit of providing a fuller picture of the diaspora, focussing specifically on the migration of Scots in the twentieth century. This era in the history of Scottish population movement has yet to be given the coverage that has been afforded the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries and as such *Scotland No More?* serves the dual purposes of addressing misapprehensions about the migrants of this period while also providing an overview of the underlying themes that facilitated the departure of millions to North America, the Antipodes and South Africa.

In focussing on the 'carrots' and 'sticks' motivators for emigrants, *Scotland No More?* dissects the common chronological approach to Scottish migration and provides a fuller understanding of the geographic and demographic diversity of the millions who departed. This is certainly not a new approach for Harper, who has a substantial track-record in publications on Scottish migration. Far from rehashing old material, however, *Scotland No More?* provides an overview of many of the better-known instances of twentieth-century emigration from Scotland, as well as introducing lesser-known stories and previously unpublished accounts of migration experiences. In doing so the text serves as both a sufficient account of the twentieth-century diaspora for those with a passing interest, as well as a sound introduction for those seeking a starting point for more detailed research.

Following a brief introduction in which Harper acknowledges the growing public interest in the Scottish diaspora and in family history, chapter one delves into cross-border emigration to England. It is clear from the outset that Harper's text trades comprehensive detail for a quick narrative pace, and she acknowledges that it would be impossible to describe all of the circumstances for Scottish migration to England - though there are several common threads. Geographical concentrations such as that documented in Yarmouth (East Anglia) prior to the First World War and in Corby (Northamptonshire) in the 1930s are included as evidence of the waves of Scots who followed specific employment opportunities south, while the some 100,000-110,000 Scots who have called London home

throughout the century are also acknowledged. It is in this first chapter that one of the overriding motivations of Harper's narrative becomes increasingly apparent – in order to do justice to the vast array of individual experiences of Scots migrants, it is necessary to acknowledge the hardships as well as the success stories, without dwelling too long on any one example.

The following four chapters continue in this vein, though they move away from the specific location of England to instead consider the different motivations for, and outcomes of, inter-war and post-Second World War emigration. Chapter two takes the 1920s and 1930s as its focus, and given that the chapter is predominately concerned with a period dominated by recovery from the First World War and the later Depression era it is of little surprise that the overall impression is one of desperation and discord. The process of emigrant recruitment, which is outlined in chapter two, carries over into chapter three, which looks more closely at sponsored settlement programs. The chapter pays particular attention to the settlement of orphaned children and disadvantaged youths through various charitable schemes. Harper notes that the experience of these young emigrants ranged from successful integration in their new country at one end of the spectrum to claims of exploitation and discrimination at the other. Chapter four, which focusses on the post-war period through to the 1970s, further reinforces this theme: regardless of whether the emigrants were war brides to North America or 'Ten Pound Poms' to Australia, the challenges of finding employment and suitable accommodation, and of renegotiating individual and community identities, resulted in a mixed-bag of triumphs and failures.

It is in the final two chapters of *Scotland No More?* that the overriding challenge of describing a diverse group of migrant experiences in a way that finds commonalities without compressing or discarding divergent voices is most convincingly met. Chapter five, which contemplates the dysfunctional elements of the twentieth-century diaspora, and chapter six, which incorporates excerpts from interviews undertaken in the 2005 University of Aberdeen 'Voices from the Scottish Diaspora' project, address themes such as the resistance to emigration within Scotland and the recipient countries, and incidences of return-migrants and 'transilients' (those migrants who were permanently mobile). These chapters highlight the shift in motivations to emigrate, from the chronic unemployment and industrial decline of the early decades of the century, through to the desire for better employment opportunities and quality of life in the 1960s and 1970s.

In seeking to provide an accurate picture of the twentieth-century migration of Scots, *Scotland No More?* walks a fine line between the necessary, but at times overwhelming, quantification of the exodus on one hand, and the prejudices inherent to accounts of individual migrants' experiences on the other. There are moments when the pace of Harper's narrative overtakes the provision of detail, though such brevity is established from the outset as a necessity given that the aim of the text is not to provide an exhaustive history but instead to contribute to the 'patchy tapestry' (p. 16) of the Scottish diaspora. This approach is ultimately successful, and *Scotland No More?* achieves an overriding impression of the cacophony of voices of millions of Scottish migrants now dispersed around the globe.

