

We want more Scots

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T. M. Devine *TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH* Scotland's global diaspora, 1750-2010 416pp. Allen Lane. £25.

978 0 713 99744 6 US: Smithsonian Books. \$32.95. 978 1 58834 317 8 Long-distance migration has transformed the world in the past 500 years, but historians have only

recently begun to take its measure. The new numbers are staggering. The Atlantic slave trade carried at least 12 million souls into bondage. More than 50 million migrants left Europe for the Americas in the century before the Second World War. In the same period, almost as many Asians travelled around the Pacific basin and as many again went from Russia, China and Korea into the steppes, Siberia and Manchuria. Such mass mobility turned whole countries inside out. There are now twice as many Lebanese in Brazil as in Lebanon. Melbourne is the world's third largest Greek city. And around 40 million people claim Scottish descent, even though only 5.2 million live in Scotland itself.

The Scottish diaspora has been hidden in plain sight for much of the twentieth century. Popular memory outside Scotland manufactured images of exiled Highlanders weeping into their whisky as they bewailed the depredations of evil landlords and the imperialist English. T. M. Devine's *To the Ends of the Earth* masterfully dispels such fictions with solid statistics, illuminating comparisons and rigorous analysis. His perspective is both long and wide as he draws on his earlier work, *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (2003), to show how modern movements followed paths set by medieval and early modern Scots who spread throughout Europe, the Atlantic world and the British Empire. These patterns were accelerated by Scotland's "Great Leap Forwards" in the 1750s and 1760s, financed in part by the profits from slave-grown sugar, tobacco and cotton, which soon made Scotland Europe's most rapidly urbanizing economy and its second to undergo industrialization.

The paradox of Scottish emigration, as Devine sees it, was that so much of it took place when the country was on its economic upswing. Most Scots moved to escape growing inequality and limited social mobility, not poverty or ethnic cleansing. They streamed out steadily for almost 250 years, propelled by industrial depressions and only temporarily stalled by two world wars. Meanwhile, immigrants flocked into Scotland: the Irish in the nineteenth century, relatively few from the New Commonwealth in the late twentieth century, but increasing numbers of Poles and English in the early twenty-first. Scotland may only now have reached something like a population equilibrium.

"We want more Scots. Give us Scots. Give us the whole population of Glasgow", the English historian J. A. Froude was told on a visit to Australia in 1885. Froude dismissed his informant as self-interested - "He was a Scotchman, I suppose" - but the boosterish mayor of Bendigo knew well what later generations would forget. The Scots, along with the Irish and the Norwegians, were among Europe's most mobile peoples; they were generally more skilled and better educated than other migrants; and, at least after the 1850s, they hailed from the urbanized Lowlands, not the impoverished Highlands. This is not to deny the harshness of the Highland Clearances, which Devine recounts in chilling detail. Yet it does scotch the broader story of emigration as tragedy peddled by what he calls witheringly the "Burns Supper School of Scottish History".

Far from being empire's victims, Scots were often its spearheads. In the eighteenth century they were disproportionately represented among West Indian planters, in the East India and Hudson's Bay Companies, and at the upper reaches of the British army and imperial administration. They were later unusually prominent as missionaries, educationalists and environmentalists, spawning David Livingstones, John Witherspoons and John Muirs across the globe. In the century before the Second World War, as Scottish capitalists sluiced "rivers of gold" into speculative ventures around the world, over 2.3 million Scots went to North America, Australasia, South Africa and Asia, while an estimated 600,000 took the road south to England. The human haemorrhage continued after the war with a net loss of some 825,000 people between 1951 and 2006. In the 1990s, this outflow became known as the Lowland Clearances as it siphoned off many of Scotland's brightest and best, most notoriously into Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's "Scottish Raj" at Westminster and in Whitehall.

Devine ruefully notes that scholarly attention to the Scottish diaspora is at its height while popular interest remains at a low ebb. This is not for want of trying. In 2010, the Scottish government set out a Diaspora Engagement Plan to develop "effective connections with our international family". The programme is market-driven - the better to "promote Scotland's world-leading role in, for example, life sciences, renewable energy and carbon capture" - and its efforts have been largely turned outwards. Yet, as Devine amply documents, engagement with the world shaped Scotland as much as Scotland shaped the world. Historians south of the border now appreciate that the same was true of England, but there is surprisingly little serious work on the English diaspora to compare with that on the Scots and the Irish. Diasporic histories are not written by the winners, but by those thought to have been the losers.

Imperial amnesia at home and ignorance abroad allowed myths about the Scottish diaspora to flourish. To the Ends of the Earth should help lay them to rest. The book has something to annoy participants in every pipe-band, Scottish country-dance group and Highland Games in the United States. The rest of us can welcome it as a compelling state-of-the-art report on Scottish history in global context by the undoubted doyen of the field.