Mario Varricchio, ed.

Back to Caledonia: Scottish Return Migration from the Sixteenth Century to Present

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THE essays collected in this volume were originally presented at a symposium held under the auspices of the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies at the University of Edinburgh on 15 May, 2010. Following a foreword by T.M. Devine, in which he highlights the importance of the present collection as 'the first to focus exclusively on Scottish return migration' (p. xv), the book opens with an introductory chapter by the editor, Mario Varricchio. Varricchio provides essential background information which situates the contributions within broader historical contexts and the more recent research on British return migration. He also identifies a number of recurrent themes in these essays, though this might lead one to wonder why he has decided not to group the contributions into thematically-related sections. Indeed, while generally well-organised in terms of chronological and thematic sequence, the structure of the volume would have further benefited from brief introductory essays to each of the twelve essays as well as a conclusion. As a whole this essay collection, in the words of the editor, seeks 'to encourage students of Scottish migration to direct their energies towards a systematic analysis of a crucial theme of Scottish history' and 'to illuminate experiences of Scottish homecomings across many centuries and from a variety of geographical locations through the lens of different disciplines' (p. 22).

The first seven essays are historical studies and will be given greater consideration in this review. Unfortunately the remaining contribu-tions, exploring Scottish returns from anthropological, literary and sociological perspectives, had to be excluded because of space limitations and will not be reviewed here.

The opening chapter by Steve Murdoch focuses on the repatriation of migrants' capital. By examining seventeenth-century Dutch testaments and notarial documents, he discusses the ways in which Scottish communities abroad contributed to the social and cultural development of their homeland. What must immediately strike the reader here is that this essay does not consider return migration as such and so clashes with the aforementioned central focus of the collection, nor does it pay 'particular attention' to 'members of the middle and upper classes' as the editor claims in his introduction (p. 22). Nevertheless, Murdoch's survey represents a welcome contribution in that it highlights many of the areas relating to the subject of 'enrichment from abroad' where full-scale inquiries are needed.

Moving away from the repatriation of inheritances, Siobhan Talbott and Kathrin Zickermann remind us, in their respective essays, that patterns of settlement and the return movement of Scots in early-modern Europe were determined as much by the rate of social integration as by occupational and economic factors. Talbott, in her own contribution, explores the transient nature of Scottish merchant communities in seventeenth-century France and demonstrates how these groups were able to achieve a high level of organisation and cooperation with the indigenous population. She also provides an illuminating analysis of the interplay of commercial and kith and kin networks whereby merchant Scots gained access to mercantile activities, obtained institutional support in areas of significant expatriate presence, and retained strong connections with their homeland. Yet, by no means did the absence of organised exile communities in other European destinations discourage the newcomers from Scotland from pursuing commercial links or associating with members of the host communities. As Zickermann convincingly argues in an informative piece, although most Scottish merchants in northwest Germany intended to return home after completing their commercial tasks, many of them established important contacts with German traders despite the lack of institutional support available to them, successfully integrating into the civic and public life of the Elbe–Weser region. Both essays are presented within specific local contexts, and while they vary in terms of treatment of return migration, they succeed in illustrating the diversity of Scottish migrant experience.

These case studies are followed by a contribution from George McGilvary, which considers the repatriation of Scots employed by the East India Company in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Throughout the essay McGilvary repeatedly (and perhaps understandably) cites his existing publications on the subject, but sadly its scant reference to archival material does not provide sufficient grounds for an innovative analysis.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, he makes an intriguing point by noting that men who had made their fortunes in India were better received in Scotland than in England, where the return of such people tended to produce more negative reactions. It is to be hoped that McGilvary will explore this issue further in the future using a wider breadth of archival sources.

The reception of return migrants is a theme taken up by Graeme Morton who looks at the biographies of two nationalists, James Grant (1822-1887) and Theodore Napier (1845-1924). He points to several interesting similarities between the two men: both of them had grown up in the far-flung diaspora communities, were charismatic leaders who both played prominent roles in generating publicity for the nationalist cause, and both were advocates of Scotland's equality within the Union. Once in a position to command public attention, however, Grant and Napier both found themselves increasingly on the margins of Scotland's social and cultural life. By reflecting on the rise and fall of their respective public reputations, Morton offers some valuable, thought-provoking insights into the fortunes of the nascent nationalist movement.

Pursuing the theme of returns in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the succeeding chapters explore the conceptions of 'home' and 'belonging' within Scottish migrant communities. Cairns Craig focuses on North America, where philosophers, theologians and ministers maintained strong links and identifications with Scottish-based institutions. Particularly fascinating in this context is his discussion of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland and its immediate aftermath when a number of ministers in Canada left the Kirk to establish their own separate Free Church congregations, mirroring events in Scotland. Meanwhile the Established Church, lacking local candidates to serve in parishes abandoned by evangelical ministers, made an appeal for the return of ministers to North American missions. The resultant return migration of clergymen was indicative of their continuing commitment to the perceived spiritual homeland. Tanja Bueltmann follows with a well-researched and eloquently written study of a distinct form of Scottish returns. Drawing on newspaper reports and manuscript sources, she reviews travel accounts of early roots-tourists from New Zealand. Of significant merit is her reflection on the dynamics of identity and belonging. Bueltmann shows that roots-tourism allowed migrants and their descendants to manifest their Scottishness, though Scotland itself had ceased to be perceived as their true homeland.

As with any collection of this type, *Back to Caledonia* is at times uneven in quality, with some essays failing to address its organizing theme. However, it would be wrong to conclude that this volume falls short of its fundamental

purpose, which has been to provide a stimulus for further research into the subject of Scottish return migration. There are, indeed, several articulate and well-crafted contributions here which serve as an important point of departure for future work in the field.

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