

JOHN A. BURNETT. *The Making of the Modern Scottish Highlands, 1939–1965: Withstanding the “Colossus of Advancing Materialism.”* Ulster and Scotland series. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. Pp. 312. \$70.00 (cloth).
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The Scottish Highlands, and the Highlanders who inhabit the region, conjure up several different images in the minds of many observers. Many of these stereotypes are contradictory. They range from the Highlands being a place apart, an austere, almost primordial landscape, yet home to some of the most loyal and British peoples of the United Kingdom; a land filled with “simple” people simultaneously considered victims of industrialization yet unwilling or unable to accommodate modernity; a populace whose supposedly innate military prowess made them both fearless soldiers in war and feared rebels during times of distress; a folk both championed for their rich cultural past and derided for clinging to it; and a region seen as quintessentially Scottish yet also as a problem that was and may always be unsolvable. These paradoxes are at the center of historian John A. Burnett’s analysis of the Highlands in the twentieth century. Many historians of the region focus on the nineteenth century, arguing that the modern Highlands started with the passage of the 1886 Crofters Holdings Act (Scotland) that provided land reform following the unrest known as the Crofters’ War. Professor Burnett argues instead that the key transformations in the economic, political, and cultural relationships between the Highlands and the rest of Britain occurred far later, with the arrival of modernity (broadly defined) to the region following World War II. According to Burnett, the years between 1939 and 1965 marked “the critical juncture over which the residents of the region witnessed and engaged with the final onslaught on that much favoured but elusive phenomena, the ‘traditional way of life’ of the Highlands and Islands” (15).

Before he does this, however, Burnett spends two chapters discussing the history of the Highlands up to 1939. In line with his avowed purpose of dedicating equal space to perceptions of the Highlanders from both outside and within, the first chapter is a conventional narrative of the development of the standard themes of Highland history between 1745 and 1939. It is framed with loss and defeat, whether it be economically with increased poverty, physically because of “the Clearances” and emigration, or culturally with the marginalization of the Gaelic language and civilization. This is followed by a more nuanced chapter on Highland culture, in particular the rise of the contradictory image of the “noble savage” (58) and the invention of what the author deems “Balmorality” and “Celtic twilightism,” which simultaneously celebrated its timelessness and premodern ways but also doomed attempts at reform.

The second part of the book moves the story into the twentieth century. Chapter 4 concerns the change in government attitudes toward the region in the 1940s, from one of relative *laissez-faire* neglect (except in times of crisis) to one where the state actively promoted and directed the economic development of the Highlands. Burnett notes that, while the heavy-handedness and “one size fits all” approach toward the Highlands had its share of problems, at least now there was an official recognition that “[the] Highlanders are ordinary Scottish people entitled as much as the rest of us to a full, free and happy life” (95). The following chapter charts the history of the various government panels and commissions established to improve the material lives of the Highlanders, whose responsibilities ranged from new housing to improved transportation to providing cheap electricity to land reform. Following this intense focus on economics and politics, the last two chapters analyze the impact of these changes on the Highlanders, and their responses to “modernity”—what the author deems “the view from within” (184). In chapter 6, Burnett examines the views of those Highlanders who participated in the new official bodies chronicled in chapter 4 and the frustrations they felt when the central government rebuffed their suggestions to develop the region using local efforts and institutions. Chapter 7 focuses on the Highlanders’ view of their economic and cultural “modernization,” as measured through articles in the magazine *An Gaedheal*. Many

Highlanders now defended their use of Gaelic and the retention of their indigenous culture, with mixed results. While Gaelic culture did not disappear, largely as a result of these advocates, its presence in everyday Highlanders' lives continued to recede.

This book succeeds in chronicling an era of the history of the Highlands long overlooked by historians, who focus on the more tumultuous eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Burnett also does well in the chapters in which he analyzes the agency of the Highlanders themselves. Less overtly, the author also succinctly stresses the paradoxical nature of the Highlands and the Highlanders themselves, and its role in the region's development. While this theme is not new (see Krisztina Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy, and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances during the Famine Years, 1845–1885* [2000]), Burnett argues that these inconsistencies persisted well into the twentieth century, and he explains how this view continued even as the region advanced economically and socially. His success in this, however, undermines a central argument of the book—that the postwar period marks a significant rupture with the past. While certainly the material well-being of the Highlanders improved (though some statistics to quantify this would be helpful), and the region as a whole became more integrated with the rest of Britain, eroding some of its separateness, little else seems to have changed. Burnett himself points this out in concluding that throughout this period “the ambiguity surrounding what the government meant by the ‘Highland way of life’ was unfortunate” and “hindered progress in the region’s economic and social development” (273). Tellingly, he argues that “the measures introduced by the state to tackle the ‘Highland Problem’ actually contributed to out-migration” (258), a problem that had plagued the region for centuries. Although Burnett provides ample evidence to show that intentions toward the region, its inhabitants, and its way of life grew more favorable (though public works projects inaugurated by the British government in the region in the 1920s are absent in this work), the same paternalism or dismissiveness shown to the Highlands continued unabated in the postwar period, leading to continued cultural loss and dependence on state aid. Burnett’s attitude toward the British government’s involvement in the Highlands is equally paradoxical. The state—or more correctly Labour governments, for the author blasts Tory administrations for being too *laissez-faire*—is sometimes celebrated for improving the material lives of its residents, and at others it is critiqued for being insensitive to the Highland’s “distinctive lifestyle” (217). The argument that the postwar years represented a turning point might be bolstered with a conclusion/epilogue that continues the story to the present. It is then when many of the recommendations made to improve the region that Burnett mentions, such as the creation of a local university, the public promotion of Gaelic, and improved tourist facilities, were realized, and a discussion of their impact would substantiate his arguments. These observations aside, Professor Burnett has made an important contribution to the historiography of the Scottish Highlands, in particular in his analysis of an often-overlooked era of Scottish national development from both a “British” and an indigenous perspective.

Timothy S. Forest, University of Cincinnati–Blue Ash

T. M. DEVINE. *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland’s Global Diaspora, 1750–2010*. London: Allen Lane, 2011. Pp. 397. \$32.95 (cloth).

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Given Scotland’s entrenched social structures, traditional business habits, and the lack of available or affordable land, the decision taken by so many Scots over the last 260 years to leave and look for new opportunities abroad is completely understandable. For the ambitious and enterprising, Scotland could not meet their needs. T. M. Devine’s *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland’s*