For some time, the study of migration has searched for a new methodological approach, new research questions, and even new forms of evidence. Thus the publication of Marjory Harper’s study within the exciting *Studies in Imperialism* series, is one that whets the appetite for something new and innovative. In this respect, readers will be both delighted and disappointed. They will take delight from the fact that Harper has meticulously researched her topic both in imperial and colonial archives, at the macro-level of policy formation and at the micro-level of individual and family strategies. Further, readers interested in the Scottish context from which emigration occurred, will embrace Harper’s geographic awareness of both the Highlands and the Lowlands, the rural and the urban, the inland and the coast. Indeed, Harper shows how complex the historical geography of migration certainly
was. Besides movement out of Scotland, there was movement within. Harper goes into much valuable detail regarding the push and pull factors at work in these movements, how they were perceived through the press, and the individual and familial experiences involved with them.

Yet readers interested in the importance of this inter-war migration as a component of Empire and imperialism will be disappointed by the unwillingness of Harper to pursue new forms of analysis by asking new questions of her massive data base.

For example, the book offers a number of illustrations in the centre of the text that are not incorporated into the analysis. The photographs of the storefront window of the Canadian immigration office and of the two farmer boys, carefully dressed, posing with a sample of the harvest, would have benefited from explicit attention and analysis. Within the context of Empire, what messages did such photographs send? How were they to work as selling points to prospective emigrants?

As Harper points out repeatedly, the propaganda of emigration was the source of debate amongst opponents, and emigrants themselves recalled the impressions made by these materials. Yet, Harper simply points to this as “proof” that there was a tremendous gap between rhetoric and reality, and that contemporaries were aware of it.

The decision to migrate was often based upon an imagined future, and there is little doubt that such
a process was impacted by the cultural productions (posters, advertisements, photographs, storefront displays, literature) that were being used to sell emigration. Harper misses an opportunity to tell us what images were being used in these cultural products, how they sought to communicate to their consumers, and how the consumers reproduced these products in their own imperial imaginations of the colonies. Indeed, the links between emigration and Empire exceeded the demographic profiles of Scots who migrated and the economic changes that acted as a stimulus to migration.

As a strategy of Empire, emigration was predicated on, and represented through, a complex cultural matrix. We need to therefore explore and better understand the meanings embedded in the demographic, political, and economic links of Empire and emigration, and how these meanings were tied to questions of power, identity, and experience. Such a study must, like Harper, pursue these meanings at both the macro- and micro-levels. Yet unlike Harper, such a study must venture into new forms of interpretation and pursue more systematically new forms of evidence.

Readers will learn much from Marjory Harper’s text about the structures and networks through which emigration as a historical process unfolded in Scotland. Indeed this is a model study for that type of analysis. However, for readers interested in the cultural connections between Empire and emigration, in population management as a tactic
of state formation and Empire-building, and in expressions of imperial power through colonization, these readers will have to look elsewhere within the Series of Imperialism.

*John Walsh*
*Tri-University Doctoral Program*
*University of Guelph*