Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles. By Chad Berry (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000. pp, xiii, 235. Cloth $44.95, Paper, 21.95.)

Between 1917 and 1970 millions of whites in the upland South left their homes and settled in the states of Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. At the time, sociologists and governmental officials studied their plight, but historians have not given the migration the attention it deserves. In *Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles,* Chad Berry begins to redress that neglect. He has mined the older studies and supplemented them with more than sixty interviews with migrants, most he conducted himself, including one with his grandparents who were part of the migration.

Primarily from these types of sources, Berry constructs a clear, concise overview of the migration. It began in World War I, when the end of European immigration opened jobs in the North for southerners. Over the next two decades, two million whites left the upland South in search of better economic opportunities in the Midwest. The Depression cost many of them their new jobs and forced them back to their homes. But the New Deal, by opening up the South, and the mobilization for World War II , spurred renewed northward migration. Between 1945 and 1970, a booming economy in the North and persistent poverty in the South led even more southerners to leave for the Midwest. Berry makes an important contribution simply in describing and explaining this "white great migration" (p. 103), but he also analyzes aspects of the southern migrants' experience in the North.

Berry seeks to refute stereotypes of the southern migrants as poor and shiftless. Relying on some qualitative evidence and census data compiled by James N. Gregory, Berry makes a convincing case that many southern migrants did quite well. Their incomes were much higher than southerners who remained at home and nearly as a high as that of native midwesterners. Some southern migrants had problems adjusting, of course, and Berry argues that their failures

"stemmed more from class and from migrating from a rural area than from ethnicity." (p. 177) When Berry writes of the positive aspects of the migrants' lives, however, he ignores the other factors to stress the role of ethnicity in shaping the migrants' behavior.

Berry contends that white southerners in the Midwest maintained their distinctiveness. They held to distinctively southern values – kinship, honor, toughness. They settled in the same neighborhoods and relied on family or other ties from home in finding employment. They drank in saloons that catered to southerners, worshipped in churches with regional ties, and listened primarily to country music. Berry's evidence on the spread of Southern Baptist churches in the Midwest and the popularity of country music among the migrants along with comments from his interviewees make a strong case for persistent cultural ties to the South. Other evidence, however, points to significant assimilation. For example, Berry found that southern migrants participated in unions and joined the American Legion and other veterans group. None of these associations were limited to southerners. As southerners achieved economic success, they abandoned their ethnic neighborhoods for the suburbs. Berry attributes that to southerners' "strong attraction to land and to rural life," (p. 199) but it may be better explained as behavior typical of the new, postwar middle class.

Berry's emphasis on the persistence of southern culture forms part of his primary theme, "the divided heart" (p. 7) of southern migrants. Berry has strong qualitative evidence that many migrants thought often and fondly of home; it comes primarily from his interviews but also from his interpretation of a few country music songs. Migrants not only longed for home, according to Berry, many of them actually moved back. The limited quantitative data available on reverse migration renders the case for leaving the North less compelling than that for longing for the South. Berry is certainly correct that southern migrants felt a tension between the old life in the South and the new in the Midwest, an ambivalence probably shared by many types of emigrants. But whether the tension between the love of home and the lure of economic opportunity was strong enough to

merit calling southerners in the Midwest "economic exiles" can be debated.

Berry's book is more compelling because it stimulates such debates. Its account of the white, upland South migration is an important story for anyone interested in the history of Illinois, the Midwest, and the South.

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