

Good colonisers? The impacts of Irish and Scottish diaspora at home and abroad.
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A review of

Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton, *The Scottish Diaspora*.
(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). ISBN 978-0-748-6489 -4, paperback, 298pp; £24.99.

Graeme Morton and David A. Wilson, eds., *Irish and Scottish Encounters with Indigenous Peoples: Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia*.
(Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013). ISBN 978-0-7735-4151-1, paperback, 400pp; £22.99.

Despite the surge of publications in recent years dealing with many facets of Irish and Scottish emigration, scant attention has been given to return migration, to immigration to the less-usual destinations for these migrants, or the impact of these migrants upon indigenous people in the various lands they settled. It is in picking up these threads that these two volumes hold their greatest value. *The Scottish Diaspora* is based on a wealth of secondary literature and primary source research, slimmed down to a very useful introductory volume. *Irish and Scottish Encounters with Indigenous Peoples: Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia* provides a collection of first forays into new avenues of research. Both have wonderfully self-contained chapters and I have no doubt university students across the globe will be introduced to sections of both of them for years to come.

The introduction of *The Scottish Diaspora*, rather refreshingly, gets straight to the point. What is 'diaspora'? What makes a Scot? Regarding diaspora, the authors offer 'an alternative definition', capturing 'diasporic actions and consciousness', seeing migrants as agents of the diaspora and examining the impact of the diaspora on Scotland itself (p.1). The authors favour ethno-cultural identity in their definition of Scots, crucial because it was 'through their own actions [and] the ascriptions of others' that Scots maintained their ethnic markers and enabled them to be identified as a distinct diaspora group (p. 3). Chapter two offers a clear and concise summary of concepts and ideas regarding diaspora (vital in a book carrying 'diaspora' in the title given the controversy over that word in recent years) that undoubtedly will be very widely used as a text in migration-centred courses everywhere, not only those focussing on the Scots. It is a thorough definition, going back as far as the epistemological origins of the word, and following it through its various permutations of meaning since.

From there the volume is split in two parts, 'Themes' and 'Geographies'.

All told, the first section of the book mostly offers an overview of the themes that often recur in volumes concerned with Scottish migration – why did they leave?, in what numbers?, and how did they get on? – but it is a neater summary than is usually offered, and has a considerably more in-depth examination of interactions with indigenous people and return migration.

Chapter six, 'Encounters with indigenous peoples', is one of the longest chapters and, in terms of adding the most to the wider historiography, the most important chapter in the book. Until relatively recently this interaction of migrants with indigenous peoples has not been very well documented in the secondary literature. The chapter offers good case studies about Scots interactions with indigenous peoples in North America and New Zealand but very little on Australia – likely due to reliance in this volume on secondary literature. Given the implications settling the land had on indigenous people, the 1.5 pages dedicated to this topic is perhaps a little short, even in an introductory text such as this one, though this is marginally rectified later in the chapter when the authors note that the Scots, even Highland Scots, were taking part in the forced removal of indigenous people.

In chapter eight the slippery topic of return migration is examined, providing 'insights into the diverse reasons for which Scots ventured home' (p. 133). Rather than looking only at permanent return migration the chapter includes 'returning in mind but not body, the temporary return, and early roots-tourism' (p. 133), tying back into the authors definition of diaspora at the beginning of the volume, and focussing this discussion of return migration on 'the orientation of a diaspora towards the homeland'. Taking this full and nuanced approach to the topic of return migration the authors have progressed the discussion, despite the location of this chapter in an introductory volume; the chapter is a very worthy addition to the small selection of secondary literature on the subject.

In section B, 'Geographies', the volume offers an excellent introduction to the Scots in each of the geographic regions described, beginning with the often forgotten migrants to the British and Irish Isles. While several previous volumes and chapters have noted the numbers of migrants moving within the UK and Ireland, very few go into any detail about how these Scots got on once there. Chapter nine does a good job of this.

While the chapters on the usual destinations – the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – offer solid introductions to these areas of migration, they go beyond the usual narrative too. On

Scots in the United States, for example, it is rather refreshing to have the impact of the Scots and of Scottish thinkers outlined, rather than simply being offered the broad story of Scots in America. Scottish influences on politics, business, education, literature, science, theology and social thought are emphasised with many specific examples given.

Because much of the literature on Scots movements tends to be about migrants, Africa and Asia are often left out of the discussion. The focus of this volume being on the *diaspora* rather than migration means the thorough chapters on Scots in Africa and in Asia, of involvement in the slave trade and missionary activity in Africa, and of business sojourners in Asia, is not out of place here. The authors are careful to note that while many Scots, and Scottish historians, emphasise that many Scots were involved in the abolition movement, and Scottish enlightenment thinkers were against slavery, others were complicit in the trade.

The book ends with a transcript of what seems to be a Burns night 'immortal memory' speech given by someone at the St Andrews Society of Illinois in around 1920. This is an interesting note to finish on, and a good wrap up of the book as a whole, as it happens, but it does mean that the volume ends quite abruptly. Given the rest of the volume is written in such a way that novices to the subject receive a thorough grounding in it, it would have been nice to see a stronger conclusion to the volume as a whole, or some final word on the goals of the book regarding diaspora as set up in the introduction. Another thing that is notably absent, given it is an introductory text, are maps of any of the areas in question. All told, this is an introductory text that will be widely used by teachers and students, no doubt, and that I would recommend to anyone just starting out with their own exploration of this topic.

David A. Wilson's introduction to *Irish and Scottish Encounters with Indigenous Peoples* does a very excellent job of summarising the individual chapters of the book, so this review need not do so in any depth. Both his introduction and the chapters that follow it implicitly and explicitly ask 'were Irish and Scots migrants 'good colonists' because they too were 'colonised' peoples?'

The strongest chapter in the volume is without a doubt that by Donald H. Akenson. Stimulating and deliberately provocative, in chapter one Akenson essentially calls for a rethink from migration scholars, his main point being 'that Indigenous depopulation and African-derived forced migration at minimum have to be explicit starting points for any discussion of the Great European Migration' (p.45). Beginning with an outline of 'the standard narrative' of European migration, he reminds us that this

story is unsatisfactory because it assumes that the land the settlers went to came at nearly no cost, going on to admonish historians who have looked for and found comforting patterns in the migration that has made the whole process seem normal. 'In reality,' he says 'it was anything but. Far from being normal, the Great European Migration was one of the truly freak-phenomena in human history.' Noting that 'imperialism' has 'lost its power to engage most scholars' he states that the period 1815-1914 was 'the greatest single period of land theft, cultural pillage, and casual genocide in world history' (p.25). While Akenson states that 'at some distant time, the disjuncture in each nation's history between the pain so many migrants experienced at home and the pain they inflicted in their new land will be joined into a single narrative. For the present, recognizing the dissonance between these two portions of the story is the best we can do', the chapters that follow make at least a solid first step towards reconciling this disjuncture into single narratives.

Given this volume is the first to attempt a survey of the impact of these migrants on indigenous peoples, much can be excused. Were the historiography sufficiently progressed, for example, the inclusion of just 4 chapters out of 13 with a focus outside of Canada would be odd indeed. Likewise the fairly tentative conclusions of some of the chapters would be inexcusable if much more had been done in this area. As a first foray, however, the chapters provide excellent micro-histories that create a coherent, if somewhat biased towards the Canadian experience, whole, adding significantly to our knowledge of this dark page in the story of the age of migration.

As well as the volume being essentially a first foray into this area of study, another reason for these issues, and in particular for the disproportionate focus on interactions with indigenous peoples in Canada, is due to the origins of the volume – a conference of the same name held in Ontario in 2010. Why this point is left out of Wilson's introduction is puzzling, especially as it gives much needed context regarding why the chapters are not particularly strong on firm statements that are applicable to all Irish and Scots, or even large groups of them, but very strong on pointing to work that needs to be done and how it should be done when it is.

Although light on the indigenous side of the story (a weakness in the analysis she acknowledges herself), Marjory Harper's chapter on Scots who were in the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) in the mid-twentieth century is one of the more thorough and original offerings in the volume. Because her sources are interviews with men who were in the HBC in the mid-twentieth century, the chapter is

naturally more about the experiences of these Scots than about encounters with indigenous peoples as such, but there are snippets of these encounters seen through the lens of the Scots.

Michael Newton makes an important note in his chapter that rings true for the volume as a whole. Referring to a particular Gaelic song he notes 'it would be unwise to use it to generalize Gaelic perceptions of First Nations' (p. 246). Likewise, given the case-study nature of most of the chapters, it would be unwise to use them to make generalisations about Irish and Scottish encounters with indigenous people. Although privileging these ethnic backgrounds as this volume does has the effect of suggesting that their interactions were unique among migrants, examining settler interactions with indigenous people is an important area of scholarship that has been sadly neglected to date, and looking at this through the lens of Irish and Scottish migrants in order to narrow the subject down is useful.

The primary weakness of both of these volumes, that they are lacking the level of detail the reader might desire, has much more to do with the nature of the volumes they are – one an introductory, textbook, style volume and one a collection of essays based on conference papers – than with any actual weakness in the volumes. That they both leave the reader wanting a bit more was perhaps not a conscious aim of either volume, but a feature that such introductory/preliminary volumes should arguably aspire to, and they both certainly achieve that.