


Research on the Scottish diaspora has grown significantly in the past several decades, and the scholars featured in this review lead the way. The experiences of migrants, their most popular destinations, and what their lives may have looked like once they arrived have all been fairly well established by scholars, particularly by many of the authors included in this review, and also T.M. Devine, Stephen Constantine, John M. Mackenzie, and James Hunter, amongst others. Each of the three books under review approach the wider topic of Scottish diaspora from innovative angles and with new perspectives, in order to fill some gaps in the current literature. This, however, is where their similarities end. Each concentrates on a different time period, focuses on slightly different aspects of the diaspora, and is written in a diverse style: a single author monograph, a multiple author textbook, and an edited volume. This review examines these books individually, before considering the effect of each volume on the field of Scottish diaspora as a whole.

Tanjia Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson and Graeme Morton’s *The Scottish Diaspora* covers the largest chronology of any of the three books. Since it explores the diaspora from the seventeenth century to 1945, it also has the earliest focus. The contributors consider not only the locations to which Scots emigrated, “but also
the Scots as agents in diaspora, their diasporic experiences and interactions with different host societies, and the impact of diaspora upon Scotland” (p. 1). Ultimately, the book illustrates how “the Scots’ diasporic actions, although clearly informed by an orientation to the homeland and the wish to maintain ethnic boundaries, often transcended both” (p. 253).

The authors take a comparative approach to demonstrate the adaptability of Scottish migrants. Given the temporal and geographical scale of the work, it is also quite expansive. It is divided into fourteen chapters with an epilogue. The first two chapters are introductory and the second chapter, “Diaspora: Defining a Concept,” is particularly informative regarding the definition and application of “diaspora” as a concept. “Diaspora” is often used as a buzzword, and therefore is liable to lose some of its power and meaning. Here, the authors highlight the two main uses of diaspora, “as a noun, a description of people; then as a verb, a description of actions” (p. 16). This distinction is a useful reminder to anyone interested in diaspora studies, but particularly to students who are new to working with the term. The remainder of the chapters are separated into two sections: themes and geographies. Chapters that explore ‘themes’ consider why migrants originally left Scotland, patterns of emigrations, encounters with indigenous peoples, ethnic associations and ‘imagined communities’, and return migration. This partly represents the highs and lows of emigration, and how various factors influenced the experiences of emigrants over time. This thematic approach is effective as the volume has a large temporal scale; therefore it is more significant and useful to follow these changing themes. The chapters that look at geography are split into physical regions that include Britain and Ireland, the United States, Canada, Africa, Asia, and the Antipodes. The chapter on Canada challenges previously held historiographical positions that the Scots held an unproportioned amount of political power. Examples cited in the chapter include Pierre Berton’s *The National Dream: The Great Railway 1871-1881*, and the recent trend in popular histories to claim that the Scots “invented” Canada (p. 188). The chapter on how slavery affected southern Africa and Scotland is also noteworthy as it complements a growing collection of literature on the Scottish diaspora and slavery.
The main strength of this book lies in its broad approach to geography and time. This allows the reader to see wider trends and patterns within the Scottish diaspora. The book’s use as a textbook makes this approach particularly useful because it provides an excellent overview of various factors relating to the diaspora, such as reasons for emigration, patterns, return migration, and differing geographical experiences. However, its breadth is also occasionally its weakness. Given the vast period discussed, the detail and individual emigrant stories is occasionally lost in an attempt to construct the bigger picture. Overall, this book is a must-read for anyone with even a passing interest in the Scottish diaspora. It illustrates broader patterns, provides a good introduction to some of the major themes and issues at play in the study of diaspora, and establishes the key locations where the presence of Scots is still felt today.

Marjory Harper’s *Scotland No More? The Scots who left Scotland in the Twentieth Century* has a smaller remit than *The Scottish Diaspora*, and is concerned with a later time period. Harper argues that less attention has been given to twentieth-century emigration history, thus it is the focus for her latest monograph. Her central argument revolves around the importance of looking at individual stories and voices in migration history. Harper states studies on Scottish diaspora should be about the “timeless human drama of mobility” (p. 230), rather than the “quantifiable but dry demographic narrative” (p. 230).

Harper offers the reader both a chronological and thematic view of twentieth-century Scottish diaspora, and chapters alternate between these two themes. Throughout, she focuses on a variety of voices and, in particular, compares the “profile of participants, sponsors, opponents and administrators” (p. 15). The book includes an introduction and six chapters. The three chapters that address chronology examine how the changes, or lack thereof, in new technologies and job markets affected emigration in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as how emigration became less collective and more personal in the thirty years following the Second World War. The more thematic chapters include one focused on England and the areas where Scots made a noticeable impression. Here, the author highlights both government and institutional sponsoring of
immigrants, adverse perceptions of migration, the negative realities many faced, and finally anecdotal accounts from the ongoing oral history project “Voices from the Scottish Diaspora.” The book also features an appendix entitled “Scottish Diaspora: Some Useful Sources.” This short literature review introduces some of the key texts in Scottish diaspora studies, separated into various topics including geography, time period, influences by other subjects such as anthropology, and survey books versus those with a specific focus. This is a comprehensive and valuable resource for anyone new to diaspora studies, or looking to expand their reading list.

The focus on individual and familial experiences is the main strength of this monograph. The personal connections illustrated by the specific stories bring the wider issues to life, and help to demonstrate the changing nature of experiences across the century, but also around the diaspora, which is one of the central goals of the book. The oral histories near the end of the work add a particularly authentic and valuable perspective because the reader learns about migration experiences first-hand. The most apparent weakness is a general lack of focus on the last few decades of the twentieth century compared with the period before 1980. Since the experiences from this time are not as evident in the volume, it is harder to draw conclusions about the entirety of the twentieth century. It may be the case that not enough time has passed for these experiences to be viewed within their historical context, therefore they are not the focus. That being said, the readability and personal stories do set this book apart. It will be beneficial to anyone with an interest in twentieth-century migration, and the list of useful sources will be especially pertinent to students of the diaspora.

Murray Stewart Leith and Duncan Sim’s edited volume The Modern Scottish Diaspora: Contemporary Debates and Perspectives is the most modern of the three works in terms of the period covered. It also speculates what roles the Scottish diaspora may play in the future. The work aims to fill some of the gaps in current scholarship, in order to “explore a fuller range of perspectives on the Scottish diaspora and make it available for a wider audience” (p. 12). Notably, many of the contributors are
trained in disciplines outside of history, which presents unique perspectives within the existing scholarship.

The volume consists of an introduction and conclusion by the authors, along with twelve chapters by a variety of contributors. In the introduction, the authors identify four main sub-sections to the volume. The first four chapters are primarily historical, and deal with the stages of Scottish emigration, relations with indigenous peoples, the role of the Empire, and the place of clubs and societies. The second section explores more recent business and government influences, including the business rationale for embracing diaspora, and how it has and may further affect Scottish politics. The third section looks at more specific locations as case studies: Scots in England, diasporic identity in Europe, and the Gaelic diaspora in North America. The final section considers how Scotland is represented within the diaspora, through family history and roots tourism, the popularity of historical romances set in Scotland, influences from the media, and identity in sport. As was the intention of the editors, the volume covers a wide range of topics and many of them are unique within the current scholarship. For example, many of the chapters approach the Scottish diaspora through new topics, such as sport, the media, and romance fiction. The editors also state clearly in the introduction their intent to illustrate how the study of the Scottish diaspora can benefit a wider audience: “The aim of this edited work is to explore a fuller range of perspectives on the Scottish diaspora and make it available for a wider audience” (p. 12).

The strength of the volume lies in its explicit links with issues facing Scotland and the diaspora today. The relevance of many chapters is evident, such as Jenny Blain’s “Ancestral ‘Scottishness’ and Heritage Tourism” and Andrew Mycock’s “Invisible and Inaudible? England’s Scottish Diaspora and the Politics of the Union.” The volume also benefits from not being strictly historical, and therefore some of the central issues to the study of diaspora are viewed in a different light. A weakness is that sometimes these varying perspectives are not clearly connected to one another, which makes identifying an overall goal for the volume difficult. The diverse subject matter makes this collection appealing to a wide audience. Anyone who wishes to better
understand how the diaspora continues to affect Scotland today, and how Scotland continues to affect the diaspora, will find use in this volume.

On the surface, these three books differ from each other in some significant ways: they all focus on slightly different periods of time and they all use diverse sources. For example Harper concentrates on personal stories and newer oral histories, while several of the chapters of Leith and Sim’s volume are based on evidence from government records. As discussed above, each book also takes a different form, with a monograph, a multi-author textbook, and an edited volume all being represented. Yet, the three books have several things in common: they all look at the effects of the diaspora on individuals and families, communities, host countries, and Scotland, they all seek to fill some gaps in the current available scholarship, and they all readily accomplish this goal by providing important insights and research to those with little knowledge of diaspora studies and to established academics already immersed within the field. All three books are a benefit to the study of Scottish diaspora, and they illustrate the exciting and innovative places toward which current research is moving.

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