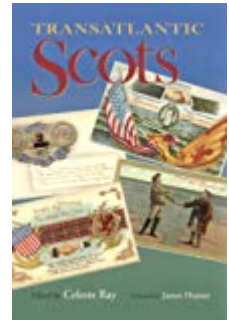


Celeste Ray, ed.. *Transatlantic Scots*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005.
xiii + 365 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8173-1473-6.



Reviewed by Amanda Epperson

Published on H-Atlantic (July, 2006)

Transatlantic Scots is a multidisciplinary exploration of Scottish heritage in North America edited by Celeste Ray, associate professor and chair of anthropology at the University of the South. The goal of this volume is to examine the ways in which contemporary North Americans conceptualize their Scottish ancestry as heritage. The authors do not ask whether what these individuals believe or do is historically accurate or valid. Instead, they ask what the actions and beliefs of contemporary hyphenated Scots say about the participants and how they use Scottishness to maintain a sense of community or identity, exhibit masculinity, gain or maintain social capital, or connect with their past.

This volume consists of thirteen specially commissioned essays written primarily by anthropologists and historians, but with contributions by scholars of literature, folklore, and film. The authors are also transatlantic, hailing from institutions in Britain, Canada, and the United States. This array of disciplines and origins allows for a deep and varied discussion and interpretation of the use of the past by Scottish descendants

in North America. Each author addresses, in his or her own way, the ways in which Scottish heritage or identity survives, because of different interpretations of the past.

The first article (by Ray) reviews current thought in ethnic studies (particularly on the topic of "white ethnics" and whether or not they exist) and how it relates to hyphenated Scots in North America. The second chapter (also by Ray) summarizes the well-established chronology of Scottish settlement in the American colonies in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, emigration post-1800 is relegated to a concluding paragraph, in spite of the fact that Scottish emigration to North America continued almost unabated until the Great Depression. The second purpose of this chapter is to summarize the establishment of clan societies, Scottish "clubs" and Highland Games in nineteenth-century United States. The third chapter (by Michael Vance) discusses the way in which Scottishness was organized in Canada, but does not provide a synopsis of Scottish settlement in British North America. We remain in Canada with next article (by Margaret Bennett). This chapter

provides a useful discussion on folklore and its relationship to cultural identity, the ways in which a Scottish identity was expressed and maintained in Quebec's Eastern Townships, and how the Quebecois have adopted the traditions of the region's vanishing Scottish presence in order to promote tourism. In the following chapter, Vance examines the use (or abuse) of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, where it has been given primacy in promotional and tourism literature over all other ethnic groups in the province.

The sixth essay (by Jonathan Dembling) investigates the interaction between two groups of Scottish descendants: musicians in Cape Breton and musicians in Scotland. The central point of the dialogue between the two groups is authenticity, whose music is more "Scottish." Many Cape Bretoners maintain that their emigrant ancestors "fossilized" Scottish music and technique, while that of native Scots has changed beyond recognition and is no longer "real" or "authentic." This debate provides an excellent example of the tension between recent and remote pasts in heritage movements.[1] A book on Scottish heritage would not be complete without an entry on the Highland Games (here, by Grant Jarvie). This essay investigates the Highland Games as a vehicle for social capital in modern Scottish-North American communities as well as their ability to create a transatlantic community through the importation of Scottish athletes. These last two essays investigate two items of symbolic ethnicity usually associated with Scotland--Highland Games and music--and reveal that these traditions are seen differently on either side of the Atlantic.

The next contribution (by Andrew Hook) discusses two negative uses of the Scottishness in the United States. The first trouble is the Scottish experience in colonial America. Even if Scots invented the modern world and everything in it, and were eventually seen as desirable and productive emigrants to the United States, eighteenth-century Americans were tremendously unappreciative,

believing "Scottish" and "Loyalist" to be synonymous adjectives. The second trouble is the way in which the Scottish past, romanticized through ideas of clans and lost causes, has been usurped for more nefarious purposes by the likes of Thomas Dixon in the nineteenth century and more recently by neo-Confederates in the American South. Ray's third contribution to the book argues that many men who participate in Scottish activities, particularly in the American South, do so to accentuate their masculinity. The next two articles (by John W. Sheets and Paul Basu, respectively) examine the importance of place and the related issue of "roots tourism." Sheets examines the importance of the real Colonsay (as opposed to an imagined one) to those who have stayed, those who left and those who have tried to retain the island's vitality. Basu explores the reactions of North Americans during visits to their ancestral homes in the Scottish Highlands. These hyphenated Scots, like many roots tourists, do not consider themselves tourists in the regular sense, but people who are returning home or are on a quest to find deeper meaning in the modern world. Basu also examines the intersection of the real and imagined Scotland in the minds of these pilgrims. The following article (by Edward J. Cowan) looks at the North American phenomenon of Tartan Day from the point of view of the Scots, many of whom find the notion of Tartan Day tedious in the extreme. The final article (by Colin McArthur) examines the impact of the "Scottish discursive unconsciousness," or the notion that all who encounter Scotland construct it from previously known images and narratives, most notably Tартanry, Highlandism and Kailyardism.

In spite of the quality of the individual contributions, I believe the volume would have benefited from a concluding chapter about what the various contributions say about Scottish heritage or the use of heritage in general. While heritage is the subject of each contribution, the larger idea of "heritage" is lost by the end of the book. A concluding chapter, which tied all the heritage strings

together with some of the theories regarding heritage, would have cemented the entire collection together and made the volume greater than the sum of its parts. One particular loose string that might have been dealt with in a conclusion is disagreement over what it means to be of Scottish descent in the United States, Canada, or Scotland and the related issue of the distress native Scots seem to have about North American definitions of Scottishness. While this issue is, perhaps, outside the scope of the present volume, this disconnect was mentioned in James Hunter's foreword and several other contributions. If heritage is about faith in a particular past and if it (as well as history), in reality, say more about present concerns than the past, then it is only to be expected that there would be a disconnect between what is seen as Scottish heritage within and without Scotland. Descendants of Scots on both sides of the Atlantic would be using their pasts, some of which is shared and some not, to create and explain very different presents.[2]

An important message of this collection is that historians should be less quick to condemn erroneous views of history held by members of the public, especially when expressed as heritage. While some incorrect visions might simply be due to misinformation, they might also serve an important purpose, positive or negative, to personal and community identity. This fact is evident in each contribution. A second import of the volume is its focus on how Scottish communities created and maintained their identity as Scots, as well as why many twentieth-century North Americans feel pulled to rediscover their Scottish ancestry. The former is particularly important, as it is frequently, but perhaps incorrectly, believed that British immigrants who arrived after 1781 assimilated rapidly to North America.

Transatlantic Scots is a welcome contribution to the fields of Scottish, ethnic, and heritage studies. As any good book ought, it raises as many questions as it answers and provides avenues for

future research. Overall, each contribution is well written and mostly aimed at a non-specialist audience. Even the final selection by Colin McArthur is approachable if one can get past the term "Scottish discursive unconscious." Each article is fully referenced, and conveniently all notes and bibliography are included at the end of each chapter as opposed to the end of the book. As each essay is a self-contained unit, they lend themselves easily to reading assignments or inclusion in coursepacks for courses that focus on American immigration, European emigration, cultural studies, heritage, and public history, as well as British history.

Notes

[1]. David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 191.

[2]. *Ibid.*, p. 121

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Citation: Amanda Epperson. Review of Ray, Celeste, ed. *Transatlantic Scots*. H-Atlantic, H-Net Reviews. July, 2006.

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