Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869-1967. Ellen Boucher. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9781107041387

In *Empire's Children*, Ellen Boucher tells the story of how Britain used children for imperial ends. Child welfare societies sent young, working-class children to the settler colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Rhodesia during the height and decline of the British imperial state, believing these programs would benefit both the children and the empire. These children, the policies assumed, would carry an identity of "Greater Britain" to the settler dominions (6). The children's movement would suffuse this British identity throughout the settler empire and would allow the children to realize their full potential as Brits. The policies promoting child emigration stemmed from the metropole's view of British identity as "an ethnic and spiritual core that required careful cultivation to achieve its full potential" (7). Children would cultivate their Britishness outside the metropole, in an imperial assumption that Britishness transcended the metropole and unified the empire.

Despite the ambitions of these policies, however, the actual practice of child emigration sometimes failed to live up to its promises to the empire and the children themselves. Colonial authorities refused the "conceptual framework" that viewed "all native-born Brits as indisputably 'White'" and therefore desirable members of their communities (14). In Australia and Rhodesia especially, colonial authorities created their own measurements for desirability, and they deliberately repatriated the children who did not measure up to their expectations for British Whiteness. Thus, Boucher argues, colonial immigration agents rejected the Greater British identity articulated in the metropole and created communities populated according to their own national vision (14). The agents' rejection of the metropole's identity offer Boucher an example

of how imperial ties frayed as collective identities nationalized. She further argues the children were not the empty containers that the emigration policies imagined. The children's identities remained imperial borders, with fraught identities and an uncertain sense of belonging. Their sense of dislocation, in turn, only intensified when the imperial age came to an end. The Greater British identity failed to export as the children and the empire had been promised, because colonies envisioned their own national characteristics.

Boucher's argument roots the abstractions of imperial policy in specific localities and lived experiences. She foregrounds settler colonies in relation to the metropole and transforms imperial policy into human experience. Her success at these feats stems in part from her clever use of sources. Oral histories from the people who emigrated add texture to the colonial and national archives that historians expect in Boucher's work. She begins each chapter with a narrative vignette spun from her oral histories that illuminates individuals' experiences in the imperial institutions that the archives rarely reveal. For instance, former emigrants describe the "excitement" of moving to a different land, only to experience the "shock" of different climates and cultures, and the tribulations of learning how to blend into "a new, and what at first felt like a foreign, dominion lifestyle" (92-94). The "emotional distance" and sometimes abuse of institution workers shaped childhoods beyond what colonial and institutional administrators' papers suggest (226). Oral histories literally give a voice to emigrants and offer specific contexts for abstract historical developments.

Meanwhile, oral histories allow Boucher to see the blurry boundaries between history and memory and to look at the political value of nostalgia. Some emigrants to Rhodesia, for example, recalled a fire that destroyed their personal records in the institution where they had lived. Their recollections disagreed on the year it happened, but spoke to the idea of an "event," a "historical

moment that … has taken on meanings that resonate powerfully in the lives of former migrants today" (240). In other words, the oral histories sometimes illuminated more about how memory works in the present than they did about how history happened in the past. In this way, oral histories give Boucher "a lens on some of the broader legacies of empire in the postimperial age" (19). Nostalgia too emerged through oral histories. Some emigrants to Rhodesia reminisced about the safe exploration of the African wilderness, a yearning for a past that, in Boucher's words, "can offer a platform for communicating a less easily expressed sense of mourning for the passing of White Rhodesia" (229). The experience of having been "empire's children" shapes the political choices and beliefs of these emigrants as adults. Through skillful storytelling, Boucher succeeds at being both sensitive and critical to these experiences of empire and offers a stunning example the value of oral histories for historical scholarship.

Boucher advances her argument through six roughly chronological chapters and a conclusion. Her first chapter shows the abject conditions that inspired the rise of child welfare reform in the nineteenth century. Reformers feared that children, raised in the conditions of poverty, could not reach their potential in the metropole and would be driven to immorality. Chapter 2 shows the first attempts at emigrating children to Canada for greater opportunity to realize their British potential. The Canadian project of placing children in private homes failed when reports reached Britain that many of these children were being abused. Learning from the Canadian experience, reformers turned their attention to institutions as the way to care for emigrating children. The third chapter studies the ways in which these institutions assured proper British-colonial hybrids in these children as racially White but "civilized imperial laborers" (123). Whiteness became a contested category in some of these colonies, as the next chapter shows. Colonial authorities in Australia and Rhodesia created criteria for defining Whiteness,

and as the Depression increased the numbers of needy children, officials increasingly repatriated native-born Brits who failed their racial criteria. Chapter 5 charts how two major developments led to the decline of child emigration programs in the 1950s and 1960s. Reformers came to question the wisdom of institutionalizing children as attachment theory gained traction among psychologists, and nationalism in the colonies eroded the imperial ties that underpinned emigration programs. The sixth chapter and conclusion contend with the postimperial age. Chapter 6 untangles the messy complexities of identity after the end of empire, while the conclusion analyzes nostalgia in the present. Thus the timeline of 1869 to 1967, defined in the book title, encapsulates only part of Boucher's ambitions.

Boucher makes a valuable contribution to understanding race in the late imperial age. As a part of articulating their nationalist characters, immigration officials in Australia and Rhodesia created criteria for excluding native-born British children from the communities. Australian immigration officials used eugenics and child psychology to scientifically measure a child's suitability for membership in their communities, in which Whiteness was based on supposedly objective measures of intelligence and mental health. In Rhodesia, authorities repatriated children who failed to follow the rules of Whiteness that they based on decorum and hard work. Whiteness could be scientifically measured in Australia and performed in Rhodesia, but importantly, Whiteness was not a biological given. Both of these settler colonies created delineations of Whiteness for the broader project of White supremacy over the Black natives who lived there. For White supremacist goals in these colonies, some Brits were, in Boucher's terms, "not quite White enough for empire" (154). Colonial authorities understood the stakes of nationhood differently than emigration advocates did in the metropole, undercutting the myth of unity in Greater Britain.

Boucher's work adds to the scholarship on the fluidity of race in the settler empire. White colonists felt the racial diversity of the colonies keenly and forged policies to advance their White supremacist goals. Boucher's analysis of Australian exclusion draws obvious connections to aboriginal removal. Australia removed native children from their homes for placement in White homes or institutions, creating a Stolen Generation of native people separated from their natal culture. Aboriginal removal happened at the same time as child emigration and ostensibly for the same purpose of child welfare. The parallels are interesting, but Boucher's analysis is limited on this issue. Aboriginal removal policies are beyond the scope of Boucher's main focus, but they may give texture to the racialist stakes in Australia. How did the policies co-exist? How similar were their developments? Did the policies influence or have an effect on each other? How did the institutions compare? Future historians could mine fertile ground on these questions.

Historians of race, empire, and social reform will benefit from Boucher's work. She connects child welfare to nationalist projects and imperial identity in an expertly crafted narrative. Empire becomes accessible, readable, and intimate. History and memory emerge as connected forces, as nostalgia shapes the present. Despite the slimness of the book, *Empire's Children* masterfully covers extensive terrain.

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