

well-connected with the powers of fur trade society and they had learned the arts of civilization at the academies of "Red River and elsewhere."

Canadian historians while appreciating the scope of Brown's study of fur trade family life will wonder why some historical perspectives are absent from *Strangers in Blood*. Brown does mention Scottish customary marriages as pertinent to fur trade alliances but ignores Scottish customs regarding the responsibility of the father for his illegitimate children. *Strangers in Blood* does not discuss French-Canadian law and customs regarding marriage and the family although they were of significance to the evolution of fur trade social patterns, including those of its British officials. Those schools at "Red River and elsewhere" where they educated their daughters were conducted by Roman Catholic French-Canadian nuns as well as Protestant British missionaries.

The most curious omission in *Strangers in Blood* occurs in Brown's treatment of the terminal decade of HBC dominance in the Northwest, the 1860's. She relies on McNaught's *Pelican History of Canada* for details of the transfer of Ruperts Land from the company to Canada and the role of Riel and other Red River residents in resisting the change. Yet W.L. Morton's edition of Alexander Begg's *Red River Journal* (1956) and F. Pannekoek's "The Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett and the Red River Civil War of 1869-70" (*Canadian Historical Review*, June 1976) were available in the libraries she consulted.

I would, however, recommend *Strangers in Blood* to Canadian historians researching women and the family. It is a fairly comprehensive work on fur trade society and will be the basis of future exploration of fur trade social history. In particular I hope Brown and

others will extend her study of fur trade company families further on in the nineteenth century. For example examination of the context and ramifications of the Connolly case of 1869, which established the legality of fur trade customary marriages, would further illuminate the background of the traders, patterns followed by their families, and the social power of the country wives.

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## LABOURING CHILDREN: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924.

JOY PARR.

*London-Montreal: Croom Helm/McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980. Pp. 181.*

"Mary needs a foster home in a large urban centre where facilities are available to deal with her handicap." "Joseph needs foster parents who will understand his desire to maintain a relationship with his mother." Not only recognition of needs but respect for them—this is the stuff of which modern Canadian adoption advertisements are made. Only those with unquestioning faith in the ability of social welfare to deliver on its promises assume that proclaimed recognition of needs necessarily leads to actual fulfillment of them. But vague and oft-violated as it may be, the concept of children's rights is enshrined in the philosophy of today's child welfare system. In *Labouring Children*, Joy Parr speaks of another era—a time when children's needs and rights may have been more firmly delineated but really only at the expense of the children. In the

special case she studies—that of British immigrant apprentices sent to Canada between 1869 and 1924, the so-called “home children”—provisions for the future of these children were indeed couched in phrases professing the needs of the child but always recognizing also the needs of the prospective foster home. This philosophy was openly admitted by participating officials:

We are not so young and unsophisticated as to imagine that the farmers take our boys for love . . . . The primary object of the farmer in taking a boy is that his services be useful to him.

(p. 82)

and understood on a popular level:

Doption, sir, is when folks gets [sic] a girl to work without wages.

(p. 82)

Therefore, added to the danger of official misconception of children’s needs was the admission that even these sometimes might have to be waived.

Who were these girls and boys and what was their work? Parr’s opening chapter describes the life of the urban working child in Britain. Put broadly, all working-class children laboured for the good of the family as soon as they were physically able, performing the tasks considered suitable to their sex. Girls, and some boys, were early channeled into domestic duties, notably that of caring for younger siblings. Boys went into the streets to fetch and carry and provide small services such as shoe-shining. Both sexes might help a mother at home with piece work. By the age of 12 or 14, children could leave school and take on full-time work, allowing them to move up in status from dependants bartering their labour for food and shelter to wage earners bringing home a packet to contribute to family income.

Children were an integral part of the family economy.

But what of the family economy which—for reasons of death, disease, unemployment or ill luck—faltered? What became of the individuals involved? In hard times parents might be forced to give their offspring over to facilities for the care of orphaned or deserted children. Parents giving over their children did so as an act of desperation; philanthropists receiving the children interpreted it as a final demonstration of incompetence, if not of indifference. If parents could not and would not provide a proper future for these children, then clearly the philanthropists must. At stake was not only the fate of the children but also the fate of Britain. In seeking a solution, philanthropists had to juggle a whole series of perceived needs. What the children needed was good honest work, preferably in a rural setting and under the supervision of surrogate parents. What Britain needed was a release valve for an over numerous generation of incipient trouble-makers. What the philanthropists needed was a cheap means of providing for the needs of the children and of Britain. What Canada needed, thank god, was agricultural and domestic labour—cheap labour and, if need be, child labour.

Compared to years of support in an institution in Britain, one-way passage to Canada was a bargain for the philanthropists. Once there, the children could be dispersed rapidly among households which could afford to keep them, and in the case of older children, pay the wages towards a stake for their future as adults in the new land. In theory, the child migration movement was to offer everyone the best of all possible worlds. In practice, parents lost their children, children found themselves members of households rather than members of families, Canadian employers were irritated

by the untrained and often underdeveloped young foreign help and, in the long run, the philanthropic organizations were unable to defend themselves against accusations on the one hand that they were taking children from parents whose only sin was poverty and on the other that they were undermining the very type of society they extolled by foisting upon rural Canada the dregs of British slums. The end to the child migration schemes came in 1925 when Canada ruled that no child under 14 would be admitted to the country unless accompanied by parents. This legislation had a great deal to do with feelings of dissatisfaction with the labour provided by these children and with changes in Canadian economic conditions. But it had also to do with antagonism to philanthropic abduction.

Parr uses the term philanthropic abduction to refer to the specific practice of forcible removal—that is, cases in which children were migrated without the consent or even over the objections of their families. She estimates that the largest of the organizations involved, Barnardo's Homes, resorted to philanthropic abduction among 15 per cent of its girl emigrants and 9 per cent of its boys. (p. 67) However, one of the recurrent themes of the book is that, parental consent or no, the entire philanthropic scheme of child migration amounted to abduction. British children were torn from home, family and custom and, with a minimum of supervision and follow-up, set adrift among strangers. The homes that the children were sent to could never be their homes; the families that they lived alongside would never be their families; and because of their foreignness—their accent, their physical appearance and their mien—they would have trouble even gaining access to customary community life.

Surely loneliness and isolation are the lot of

all immigrants, but what makes Parr's subjects special cases are the facts of their age, their inability to control their destinies, and the belief, verging on the hypocritical, that failure to profit from this beneficial system must be laid at the doorstep of the child's own inabilities and inadequacies. It was a system from which a child could come away feeling not so much cheated as incapable, not so much resentful as guilty. For despite sporadic attempts on the part of the homes to see that apprentices were well-treated by their employers and despite indications of personal concern for individual children on the part of individual home employees, the homes were in large part unable to fulfill guarantees of fair treatment, kindly care and promising future. The children themselves had little recourse: by and large they fulfilled their apprenticeships, moving from household to household until they found one they suited or simply until their allotted tenure was served. When they reached the age of independence, a few of the boys moved into the new farm lands of the prairies to take advantage of the training that the homes had touted so highly, a few of the girls remained in the domestic service that the homes had considered their lot and a very few children found their way back to Britain, but by far the majority headed for the society most closely approaching that which they had known as young children. Along with the Canadian-born of similar age, they entered the cities.

In her introduction, Parr notes that: "Women and men who came to Canada through the child emigration homes later insisted that theirs was not a 'pitiful tale.'" (p. 11) She herself expresses agreement with their insistence. Still, there is no getting around the fact that *Labouring Children* tells a melancholy story. The portrayal of children as being at the mercy of a social system over which they have no control, which they do not comprehend and

which, despite its insistence, does not militate in favor of their own best interests, has its literary roots in the fiction of Charles Dickens (whose *Oliver Twist* Parr cites in the bibliography) rather than in that of Lucy Maud Montgomery (whose *Anne of Green Gables* she also cites). It is a book that ends rather than concludes. At the risk of being accused of asking for one of those up-beat endings usually insisted upon by editors of women's magazines, I would have liked a conclusion comparing the lives of these children with those of their Canadian contemporaries and with the lives they might have expected to live had they remained in Britain. Parr does, in her first chapter, give an outline of the type of life working class British urban children would live assuming that their families held together; she does not expand on what type of life they might have led had this not been the case, had there been no homes of refuge to take them in and had their been no child migration movement.

*Labouring Children* is a good read. It is also meticulously researched (from documentary and quantitative data) and intelligently written. Unfortunately the wide readership which such a description might imply is likely to be limited by the price of the volume—an appalling \$25.95 for a neat, nicely illustrated package of 181 pages. Although hard-core academics have brought themselves around to paying these prices to get useful information onto their shelves, it is not something that is likely to go over with the reading public. Nor is it something that can be asked of students. Fortunately, Parr has produced a practical solution to this last problem in the form of “The British Child Migration Movement,” volume 33 of the National Museum/National Film Board series, *Canada's Visual History*. Although, because of limitations of medium, not as rich as *Labouring Children*, this set of slides and its accompanying text offer a

satisfactory way of getting the material to the students. Screening it for your undergraduates, however, does not constitute a valid excuse for skipping the book yourself.

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### COMRADE AND LOVER: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches.

Edited and translated by ELZBIETA ETTINGER.

*Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1979.*

*Comrade and Lover* gives a spontaneous inside glimpse into Rosa Luxemburg, a woman of impressive public accomplishments. She climbed to a position of international leadership in the European socialist movement, reached thousands of people with her articles, speeches and brochures, and is still, sixty years after her death, to be found on most Marxist bookshelves. She fought for her beliefs with courage. She stood up in a world of men and outshone them. Her letters show the strength, clarity and tenacity which put her in that position. They also reveal a woman divided by internal conflict, doubt and low self-esteem.

Rosa Luxemburg was born in 1870 in Poland. She grew up at a time when her country was going through a process of rapid industrialization under Russian domination. She saw the desperate poverty of the working class, the new wealth of the leisure class, and the brutality of the Czarist police as they put down strikes and nationalist demonstrations. By the