

long and successful careers as children's writers, or that many of the extracts from Jacqueline Kent's *In the Half Light* are carefully edited extracts from oral history interviews (of which the originals do not survive), is central to the story that Lowe is trying to tell in *The Right Thing to Read*. As Lowe recognises, although women's autobiographies can offer insight into the lives of girl-readers, they are also entangled with contemporary concerns about how "women" – not "girls" – used their memories of reading (or not reading) to compose their girlhood identities.

When seeking to explore girls' experiences, historians such as Lowe need to be careful not to marginalise the girl-reader herself – and not just as a reader, but also as a writer. Contemporary girls' writings are essential to writing a history of girl-readers. Such records would have pointed to the role of politics and religion in defining "the right thing to read", as well as the popularity of adult literature, serial stories, fantasy and fairy tales, botanical writings, poetry (especially bush poetry) and play scripts. They would have exposed the prevailing influence of aunties, older cousins and sisters in determining what girls read as well as the lively efforts of young readers to make demands of authors and publishers. And, perhaps most importantly, they would also have revealed that Mary Grant Bruce and Ethel Turner were not only beloved children's authors, but that they also represented the feminine ideal for many Australian girls who aspired to the career of an "authoress". Wide and "subversive" reading habits might be a form of entertainment or a pedagogical imperative, but they could also be a girl's pathway to literary success and cultural status.

Like many historians before her, Lowe has struggled to locate children's voices in the archive. But by exploring the way girls' reading in Australia "became the locus of a range of adult concerns" in first half of the twentieth century, and the way women composed their memories of girlhood reading later in their lives, *The Right Thing to Read* deepens our understanding of how girls were bound up in broader social change and continuity (p. 162). It also, perhaps inadvertently, highlights how removed adults often were from girls' lives. We know through the work of Folklorists such as June Factor, Gwenda Davey, Wendy Lowenstein and Ian Turner that at the same time adults were trying to monitor and control girls' reading, girls themselves were finding ways to use their literary knowledge to their own advantage, contesting existing, often idealised, understandings of girlhood and creating new ones with the ink at the end of their pens.

Emily Gallagher

Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

Empathy and History: Historical Understanding in Re-enactment, Hermeneutics and Education

By Tyson Retz

Berghahn Books

New York, NY and Oxford

2018

xi+241pp.

ISBN: 978-1-78533-919-6 (hbk/ebook)

Review DOI 10.1108/HER-10-2018-063

Rising right-wing populism, climate change policy paralysis, anti-immigration sentiment, terrorism, drone strikes on civilians, abysmal disaster relief efforts; do these circumstances signal a crisis of human empathy? "If empathy cannot motivate us to cross a street [...]", Tyson Retz asks in the opening of this book, "[...] how can it inspire us to journey into a past full of characters who take work to understand?"

Empathy and History, Retz's first book, is a significant and timely contribution to the long-standing and divisive debate about the understanding and role of empathy in the human sciences. A much-maligned and elusive concept, empathy has been invoked in a multitude of diverse fields across myriad times and places, including in mid-twentieth century history education, eighteenth-century continental philosophy, nineteenth-century historical science and psychology, and, in contemporary education, all of which, and more, feature in Retz's analysis. This has resulted in a conception so disputed as to render it near-meaningless in current debates. Retz manages to both complicate and clarify this muddled picture in what is a highly detailed and systematic dual treatment of the educational history of empathy, as well as an intellectual history of its place in the discipline of history. In this impressive and ambitious undertaking, Retz manages to rescue a conception of empathy that is both conceptually clear, and relevant for history education today. He does all of this while impressing an ethical mandate upon the reader urging attentiveness to the unique particularity of historical contexts which, he argues, are the key to genuinely learning from the past.

To achieve this dual goal, Retz begins in Part I by situating the concept of empathy as it arose in educational debates about UK history education in the 1970s. Here, the concept became central in the project of preserving the autonomy of the school subject of history from the influence of integrated, social science approaches. In this endeavour, "new history" researchers drew on philosophies of history which distilled the *sui generis* characteristics of the discipline, of which empathy was a central feature. Retz details how this was buttressed by ideas in educational psychology and philosophy, represented chiefly by Jerome Bruner and Paul Hirst, asserting the benefits of learning the "basic structure" and distinct "forms of knowledge" which constitute the traditional disciplines and their school equivalents.

In Part II, Retz turns exclusively to an intellectual history of empathy. In Chapters 4–6, he traces the emergence and development of empathy in nineteenth-century German historicism which, reactive to Enlightenment universalism, sought to establish the autonomy and veracity of the historical sciences. The next three chapters focus on Collingwood's philosophy of history and theories of empathetic understanding, in dialogue with continental approaches (Chapter 6), Collingwood's twin theories of question-and-answer and absolute presuppositions (Chapter 7) and finally, Gadamer's hermeneutics (Chapter 8).

Finally, in Part III, Retz returns to the educational sphere, tracing the fate of empathy in recent educational debates from the 1980s to the present day. Two chapters here outline the development of empathy in the national curriculum for England and Wales in the 1980s (Chapter 9), and the influential Canadian "historical thinking" model for history education, which features prominently in educational research and curriculum design today.

What this book is not is an easy journey for the reader. Retz's methodological choices (a dual intellectual and educational history of an idea) require the reader to follow him through complex and sometimes onerous explications of manifold intellectual contexts and ideas. However, the structure of the book, designated in three parts "Education, Origins and Consequences", alleviates some of this concern by encouraging the reader to choose the sections most interesting and relevant to her. In this way, readers interested in the vexed place of empathy in educational history can focus on Part I, while those most concerned with the intellectual history of empathy can direct their attentions to Part II, or, if attracted to empathy's contemporary relevance, readers can attend to Part III. This is not to dissuade interested readers from tackling the book in its entirety, as this too is a thoroughly worthwhile endeavour. Although admittedly this might only suit readers most ardent and well-acquainted with the fields of intellectual history and history education, or perhaps, the most assiduous general reader.

In an era characterised by rising nationalism fuelled by an increasing intolerance for difference, Retz's careful treatment of empathy and its crucial place in the human and historical sciences is a timely contribution, both in its centring of empathy as a crucial

concept for human inquiry with and across difference, but also in his method, which itself demonstrates a meticulous care in the treatment of historical subject matter. Retz's claim that cultivating empathy for subjects in the past by methodically reconstructing their historical contexts might represent a slow and difficult process, less appealing than the emotive appeal to others' experiences, but Retz has convinced this reader at least, that this slower and more precise process is more necessary than ever.

Matilda Keynes

Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

The Color of Mind: Why the Origins of the Achievement Gap Matter for Justice

Edited by Derrick Darby and John L. Rury

University of Chicago Press

Chicago, IL

2018

202pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-52535-8 (paper)

Keywords Achievement gap, Justice, Racism, Educational leadership

Review DOI 10.1108/HER-10-2018-062

Philosopher Derrick Darby and Educational Historian John L. Rury offer an interdisciplinary examination of reasons for and potential redress of the academic achievement gap between black and white students in the USA. Their guiding question is: "Why [do] the origins of the black-white achievement gap matter for understanding the operation of dignitary injustice in schools" (p. 3)? Principally, their response lies in what they call *Color of Mind*, a "flawed foundation of both racially unequal achievement outcomes and racially unequal opportunity" (p. 11). Dignitary injustice, which they characterize as the failure to "recognize the equal dignity of all persons, as happens when schools prevent blacks and whites from relating as equals," is central to their main claim that *Color of Mind* largely accounts for these misdeeds (p. 3). Thus, they aim to explicate how "dignitary injustice results when laws, practices, or social arrangements constitute an affront to our equal status" (p. 4).

After laying out the central aims of their monograph in the introduction chapter, Darby and Rury spend the next four of the ten chapters that comprise this book tracing an intellectual genealogy of the *Color of Mind* throughout US history. To do so, the authors primarily engage secondary source material. Their evidence and methodology "combine history and philosophy to uncover the racist origins of the black-white achievement gap to argue that this relationship is a problem of justice, and to explain what must be done to address it" (pp. 4-5). Three fairly distinct stages concomitant with the development of race and racism in the USA outline *Color of Mind*'s conceptual base: black people's innate lack of intelligence, their cultural depravity and society's legacy of discrimination, most visible, they argue, in the legal practice of school segregation. The remaining chapters are a directed discussion of pressing educational issues in which the authors identify, explain and critique manifestations of *Color of Mind* in US schools today. Specifically, the authors explore poverty, inequality, sorting practices, discipline techniques and special education tactics that disproportionately harm black students and create the achievement gap. Recognizing the complicated political contexts in which most principals work and the conventional paradigms justifying widespread use of these inequitable strategies, Darby and Rury illustrate the damage done to black students in employing these methods and promote renewed, more critical thinking around requirements for black student success. In this, the authors grant an insightful discussion, but this approach offers little new information to