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Nano Nagle: the life and the legacy, by Deirdre Raftery, Catriona Delaney and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck

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Maria Patricia Williams

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Philosophy is history because the universal inheres in the individual; history is philosophy because this universal is true only as realized in the individual. Philosophy is the ‘methodological moment’ during which predicate-concepts are thought out of the historical evidence in which they are contained. (p. 107)

The rise of analytical philosophy of history has paved the way for the rising of empathy, re-enactment, colligation and rational explanation. The history educationalists perceived that the concept of ‘empathy’ might lead to confusion but could nonetheless be meaningful if included in the teaching methods of history. Hence, empathy has emerged as a historical method for re-imagining the past. Consequently, Retz discusses the problem that faces history education today, as history educators employ the concept of empathy to identify the investigation of the historical context in their classrooms. He argues that history educators have not taught the precise meaning of empathy, and the proper usage of this knowledge in their classrooms needs professional training. He explains: ‘Rather than being the name for a way of knowing rooted in the very self-conception of the history discipline, empathy is most commonly associated with feeling for people who lived in the past’ (p. 218).

On one hand, the book has many good points. For instance, Retz suggests that empathetic inquiry in history is to be directed towards the context in which the past agents held their beliefs and should be interpreted in the light of the historical backgrounds. On the other hand, the book has a few limitations. The hermeneutical approach and the dual exploration of empathy that Retz proposes are complicated. Here, a certain degree of professional readership is needed to grasp the book’s framework comprehensively. However, Retz organised the book into three sections according to the chronological exploration of empathy so that it would be easier for the reader to start with any part of most interest.

Despite the fact that *Empathy and History* is Retz’s first book, it counts as a significant contribution to the literature on understanding the role of empathy in history education. He should be congratulated for providing a comprehensive view of human empathy and education through a historical lens. Overall, this book is recommended as a critical reference for scholars and anyone paying attention to history and education, and it might be a worthy, challenging read for students in this field.

Khalaf Mohamed Abdellatif
Cairo University, Giza, Egypt

Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan

✉ khalaf.mohamed@cu.edu.eg  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3446-4084>

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Nano Nagle: the life and the legacy, by Deirdre Raftery, Catriona Delaney and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, Newbridge, Irish Academic Press, 2019, xviii + 294 pp., €24.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-78-855057-4

Nano Nagle: The Life and the Legacy explores the extensive contribution of an Irish order of Catholic teaching sisters to the education of the poor from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It contributes substantially to both the history of education and Irish social history. By exploring the experience of migrant teachers and pupils in the Irish Diaspora, it also contributes to migration history. The book was completed in 2018, the tercentenary of the birth of Nano Nagle

(1718–1784), the first woman to found a religious order in Ireland since St Brigid in the fifth century. Nano was born into the Irish Catholic gentry. Penal Laws restricting the freedom of Catholics were in force throughout her life. They were repealed in 1791. Educated in a convent in continental Europe, she developed a deep faith in God. She demonstrated this practically, using her inheritance to establish two religious orders in Ireland. In 1771, she brought French Ursuline Sisters to provide the kind of education she had enjoyed. The focus of the book, however, is the order of which she was founding superior. Founded by Nano with three companions in Cork in 1775, and dedicated to the education of the poor, it became known as the Presentation Order. The official title is Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Nano's life is covered in a single chapter. Like most founders of Catholic teaching orders, she did not leave a treatise on education but rather a lived tradition of educational practice. This continues today. Eight chapters explore this legacy within the historical context of the period 1885–1965, showing how her spiritual daughters established a transnational network of convents, with schools attached. Responding to the needs of the times, they developed their teaching methods, trained teachers, and provided adult education and unofficial poor relief, the latter being particularly important during the Irish famine from 1845 to 1849. By 1866, 82 years after Nano's death, they had established houses in Newfoundland, England, India, the United States and Australia as well as Ireland.

The book is meticulously researched. The first chapter explains the practicalities of researching Catholic teaching sisters. There is also a glossary explaining specialist terms such as 'questing' or recruitment. This would be very helpful to the non-specialist and to any scholar embarking on research in the field. The authors refer to a wide range of sources from archives in Ireland, Newfoundland, England and the United States. These relate to 59 of the Presentation foundations, providing valuable details of the agency of the sisters and their educational practice, making this work much more than a biography or standard institutional history. The book also contains a selection of photographs that illustrate the materiality of schooling including buildings, gardens, school uniform and the dress of sisters at various stages of religious life.

The authors cover both the scale of Nano's legacy and the process by which this was achieved between 1785 and 1965. Three annotated maps, several tables and simple statistics make clear the global impact of the legacy. For example, by the mid-nineteenth century Presentation convents constituted half of all convents in Ireland; 7649 pupils were enrolled in their schools in Newfoundland by 1864; 15 houses were established in India by 1919; and after slow beginnings in England in the nineteenth century, the period between 1919 and 1958 saw 15 new foundations there. The sisters received invitations from network contacts among the clergy and hierarchy, often recruiting in Ireland to meet the needs of dioceses in the Irish Diaspora. New houses were founded by existing foundations but independent of them. Small groups, usually consisting of four sisters like Nano's first community, were sent to establish new foundations. Individual Catholic sisters often remain anonymous in the literature. Here, however, they are presented to the reader by name.

The Presentation lived tradition of education is the central feature of the legacy. This provides a unifying thread to the work and articulates the 'charism', or spirit of the Order. 'Charism', an abstract concept, can appear distant from everyday reality. The authors, however, show how commitment to the poor, zeal, courage, self-sacrifice and perseverance were evident in the life and work of Nano, as she established the tradition. These were the lived reality of the charism, embodied in the lives and work of Presentation Sisters who continued the tradition. Nano faced significant challenges in establishing convent schools in penal times. Whilst her financial independence and social position may have given her access to the Catholic hierarchy, it was her commitment to the poor which inspired the courage and

self-sacrifice that enabled her to persevere with the project and take practical steps to provide for their needs in the first school in Cork.

The work highlights the agency of the sisters, referring to details of the negotiations with bishops regarding new foundations. They chose which invitations to accept. Founding communities were led by a sister superior but the local bishop had authority, as the 'first superior'. The sisters, however, were shown to be skilled at bargaining over their requirements, such as suitable properties and the option of returning if they were not satisfied with the conditions. The commitment of the sisters to the poor, however, meant that they usually persevered, existing on a meagre diet with minimal resources. In Tralee, for example they lived in a dilapidated house with little furniture for the first three years. The authors have found ample evidence in the sources to demonstrate the skill and zeal of the sisters, which resulted in their opening schools in weeks or even days after their arrival – for example, in less than a fortnight in Galway in 1815 and over a weekend in Buxton in England in 1898. A study of convent accounts has provided details of capital and revenue funding and of the sisters' entrepreneurial skills. Sometimes, a cow was donated to provide milk for sisters and pupils. Sources of revenue included bazaars and prize draws. In Liverpool in 1919 they established a knitting industry to fund the novitiate for India. They made successful applications for public funding as it became available.

A chapter is devoted to pupils and pedagogy in the nineteenth century. Poor girls gained more opportunities for work with the initial basic curriculum of literacy, numeracy, religious studies and sewing. The book shows how the sisters increased these opportunities over time. Another chapter explores secondary provision. They were among the first to offer girls free, second-level education in Ireland, extending the curriculum and entering pupils for public examinations. The sisters benefited from professionalisation of teaching, attending formal training and providing teacher training. They obtained degrees and adopted innovative approaches including the Montessori Method.

The book prompts further research. It provides the context for in-depth local case studies of Presentation educational practice and life histories of individual sisters. It also provides a model that may be helpful in the study of other transnational educational organisations.

Maria Patricia Williams
ICHRE, UCL Institute of Education
 maria.williams.14@alumni.ucl.ac.uk

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