

identity when it is unmarked would contribute greatly to teaching students about history and history-making. Overall, this anthology is a remarkable accomplishment sure to establish itself and remain at the centre of teaching in this field.

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Keith Crawford

Arthur Mee: A Biography

Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2016. 199 pp.

Keith Crawford, an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, has long had an interest in resources used in schools, particularly textbooks and their social constructions of national identity. His books *What Shall We Tell the Children: International Perspectives on School History Textbooks* (2006) and *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks* (2007), both co-edited with Stuart J. Foster, are widely cited. In 2013, his research interests moved beyond textbooks to early-twentieth-century children's magazines. This would explain his interest in Arthur Mee, who was a household name in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century, and who was described at his 1943 funeral as someone whose "name will stand for ever [sic] as the greatest writer for children of our day and generation" (155).

Crawford's biography is intended to reach both academic and non-academic audiences. He uses three sets of primary sources: 700 letters written by Mee and members of his editorial staff to his lifelong friend, mentor, and collaborator John Derry (1905–36); letters between Mee and his employer Alfred Harmsworth (1904–10); and Mee's publications across forty years. Crawford also refers to two previous biographies, although he calls one "more hagiography than anything else" (xiii). This thoroughly documented work is supported by extensive endnotes, a bibliography, and an index.

Mee is best known as the creator of *The Children's Encyclopaedia* (1909–10), its later iterations (1910–33), and *The Children's Newspaper* (1919–64) (a publication to which Princess Elizabeth subscribed, although Crawford does not mention this). His work was hugely successful on a financial level. *The Children's Encyclopaedia* (the fortnightly issues having been compiled and revised) sold 1.5 million sets, with its American edition, *The Book of Knowledge*, selling another 5.5 million. Sales of *The Children's Newspaper* reached 500,000 copies weekly across the British Empire during the 1920s and 1930s. *My Magazine*, one of the later iterations of *The Children's Encyclopaedia*, was described in *The Daily Mirror* as "the most loved monthly in the British Empire" (46). (Crawford does not point out that *The Daily Mirror* was owned by Alfred Harmsworth, Mee's publisher.)

Mee was born into a "respectable working class" (1) family in the Nottinghamshire

town of Stapleford. His childhood was somewhat unconventional, in that the family was part of a nonconformist congregation defined by “a willingness to oppose injustice” (3). Mee left school at fourteen to take a job reading newspaper copy aloud while the proofreader checked it. He moved on to work as a newspaper reporter and then joined the staff of The Amalgamated Press under Harmsworth in 1903. There he initially developed a populist magazine called *The Harmsworth Self-Educator: A Golden Key to Success in Life*.

Crawford provides a revealing analysis of Mee’s motives. Mee began writing in the period when progressive notions of education and a focus on childhood came to the fore. (John Dewey’s *The Child and the Curriculum* was published in 1902.) Crawford effectively situates Mee’s work in the context of prevalent philosophical, pedagogical, and psychological literature, as well as fictional works for and about children by writers such as J.M. Barrie (*Peter Pan*), Frances Hodgson Burnett (*The Secret Garden*), Kenneth Grahame (*Wind in the Willows*), and E. Nesbit (*The Railway Children*). “His aim was to colonise progressive ideas about education by promoting the idea that learning could be stimulating and fun” (40–1). This new focus on childhood presented opportunities for Mee, although he professed to “know nothing about children” (xiv). Crawford points out that Mee “worked within a highly competitive business environment in which the ability to market products that would sell to a mass audience was essential” (24). He calls him a “consummate publicist” (41). According to Crawford, “the phenomenal success of virtually all that Mee wrote and edited was a consequence of his imagination, determination and ambition, coupled with the sophisticated branding of him as a product” (56). Mee and Harmsworth encouraged readers to feel a personal connection to the former. Crawford says: “The audience who bought Mee’s publications believed they knew him personally and he encouraged the perception that he was a welcome and much anticipated friend who arrived fortnightly in hundreds of thousands of homes” (xv). The publications were marketed as being indispensable to any parents who wanted to offer their child opportunities beyond those available in the schoolroom. They recognized that, at a time of rising levels of literacy, middle-class parents would want their children to read nonfiction in order to become better informed in the short term and to increase their job prospects in the long term. Crawford tells the reader that Mee’s publications were intended to “break the distinction between an education that took place within the classroom and one that took place within the home” (41). Mee quickly became very wealthy, successfully combining benevolent and financial goals.

Mee’s professional work was supported by his wife, Amelia Mee; his wife’s sister, Lena Fratson, who worked as his private secretary and lived with them for fifty years; and his unmarried daughter, Marjorie Mee. Unfortunately, the lack of extant private journals or other personal records has meant that these women “emerge only fleetingly” (120), although they do appear in occasional photographs found in the book. (The book is usefully sprinkled with family photographs and illustrations from Mee’s various publications.) Crawford has the most to say about Marjorie. Mee credited her incessant questions about the world as a child as the inspiration for *The Children’s Encyclopaedia*.

This is an even-handed account of Mee which takes care to situate him in the milieu of his time and place. He was a eugenicist and an imperialist, who viewed the British Empire as a force for universal good, but he was also a practicing Christian and idealist who strove for a world where children would be offered equal opportunities and where poverty would be eradicated. Above all, he was a proud Englishman. But, all of this does not add up to sufficient reason for Crawford to devote time to writing a biography; or, for that matter, for others to read it. Mee warrants a biography because he was a cultural *tour de force*. He was a prolific writer and editor who produced popular publications intended for child readers that reflected the values and standards of the period and place. Contemporary Canadian readers may not be familiar with the man or the publications, but this biography provides fascinating insights into the ideals of middle-class Edwardian England through the writings of a man whose life epitomized those ideals and whose work had an impact on several generations of children.

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Pamela Grundy

Color and Character: West Charlotte High and the American Struggle over Educational Equality

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 236 pp.

With the exception of a few broad synthetic works, much of what historians know about school desegregation comes from case studies of individual school districts—usually cities, sometimes rural or suburban districts. Some scholars have zoomed in even closer, on a single school. Vanessa Siddle Walker's *Their Highest Potential* (1994) was the most influential in taking this approach, opening up the strong educational traditions of one school during segregation and thus shifting the questions we ask about what desegregation meant. Pamela Grundy's *Color and Character* shares that single-school focus, and the commitment to understand desegregation in its longer historical trajectory—as a moment poised between long decades of segregation and the present reality of resegregation in many US school systems.

Grundy describes a “dramatic story of triumph and struggle” (51) at Charlotte, North Carolina's West Charlotte High School, and then traces both of those realities over time. The school opened in 1938 as a segregated black institution built for African Americans moving to new suburban homes nearby. A class-diverse population of students benefited from highly skilled and committed teaching staff and strong school leadership in the decades before the US Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and the end of legal school segregation. The city's initial desegregation efforts in the late 1950s did not reach West Charlotte, and as direct-action civil rights protests began, students felt themselves pulled into the effort, but