

Chapter One: Project, Precedents and Process

The Question of Charism

During the last twenty-odd years, the Marist Brothers of the Schools, together with many of the other Catholic Teaching Orders committed to secondary education in Australia, have been involved in the process of handing over responsibility for the schools they operate to lay principals, lay teachers and the supervision of the various Catholic Diocesan Education Offices in which their schools are located. For the Marist Brothers, Sydney Province, with which the present project is principally concerned, this process had a late start: it was a numerous, relatively youthful, and vigorous organization until the mid nineteen-eighties and, even now, although numbers have declined and the average age has increased, it is by no means a spent force. For many other Teaching Congregations,¹ on the other hand, especially the women's Orders, the signs of ageing and shrinkage had been noticeable from the mid-seventies or earlier.² Social change has now caught up with the Sydney Marists as well and, in the past ten to fifteen years, they too have been expending more and more effort on the process of making an orderly, dignified and tradition-preserving transition to lay control.

Preserving tradition – therein lies the problem. Since the 1880s, in Australia, the effective guarantee of the Catholicity of a school - in the eyes of both the Catholic laity and clergy, has been its connection to one or other of the teaching congregations.³ As the number of Religious⁴ declined, and the number of lay teachers has increased, great efforts have been made to maintain a Religious 'presence' in the schools, with a sister or brother as Principal and as many as possible in other positions of responsibility and influence within the individual school staff. As the moment of complete transition to lay control approached – at least in secondary schools – even more strenuous efforts were made to ensure that the School Boards, the lay Principals and the continuing lay staff

¹ If one observed the niceties of pre-1980 Canon Law, only Religious Orders whose members took Solemn Vows could strictly be called 'Orders', others, whose members took Simple Vows, were referred to as Religious Congregations or Institutes. The Marist Brothers, for their first hundred years in Australia, were known, at least to their own members, and canon lawyers, as a Religious Institute. The distinction between Solemn and Simple Vows was abolished in the 1980s revision of The Code of Canon Law and, in the present text, the terms Order, Institute and Congregation are used interchangeably. Lower case will also be used, in the text, from this point onwards.

² In 1978 Sr Carmel Leavey OP, was commissioned by the Australian Major Superiors Conference to prepare some *Reflections* on the 1976 Statistical Survey of Religious Personnel to be considered at their meeting of that year. It did not really require someone with the acumen and sociological expertise of Sr Carmel to predict that all of the 120 congregations of sisters and the eight congregations of brothers were facing the inevitable prospect of declining recruitment and perseverance rates, an ageing workforce and, in some cases, local extinction. By the time of the '76 census, the major female orders involved in secondary education – the Mercy, Charity, Presentation, Brigidine and Dominican Sisters – were all well ahead of the major male teaching orders – the Christian, Marist and De La Salle Brothers - in experiencing this problem of an ageing workforce.

³ See, for instance: Sr Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: A Social History* (Melbourne, 1992), Especially Volume I, pp. 250-265.

⁴ When used with a capital 'R' in this text, the adjective becomes a noun and refers to a Religious sister, brother or priest.

were fully informed about, appreciative of and loyal to, the characteristic spirit, style and traditions of the order they were replacing. The word ‘charism’ was on everyone’s lips and the attempts to define the various congregations’ distinguishing charisms has given rise to a substantial body of literature and a still continuing wave of seminars, in-services and reflection days. As this chapter was being written, the Irish Christian Brothers were advertising in the national press for an Executive Officer ‘to assist a committee to develop structures for continuing the charism of Edmund Rice in their schools throughout Australia.’⁵

The word charism, of Greek origin, is a Christian theological term dating back to New Testament times and refers to a grace or gift of the Holy Spirit, which is bestowed on a particular individual for the good of the Church as a whole. Typically, these charismatically ‘gifted’ people attract to themselves a group of disciples and followers who are inspired by this gift, or vision, or insight and, in their turn, go on to share it with the Church communities to which they are either ‘called’ or ‘sent’. St Francis of Assisi is probably the most widely known recipient of a charism and his insight into the liberating power of voluntary poverty led to the foundation of the Franciscan Order and to a significant Christian revival in Europe’s High Middle Ages. But the founders of most of the teaching orders in Australia would also be considered, by the Church, to have had a particular charism and it is for the exercise of this ‘gift’ that the orders were ‘called’ to Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is this charism that the various congregations are now attempting to define and distill, so that it can be passed on to, preserved, and honoured by, succeeding lay generations of administrators, teachers and, of course, parents and students.

This quest to define an order’s charism is a relatively new phenomenon – the word was not widely used prior to the nineteen-sixties, for instance – but it did not re-surface just with the drastic decline in the available workforce of the teaching congregations. It began, rather, with the Second Vatican Council’s production of a document *On the Renewal of Religious Life*, also known by its Latin title *Perfectae Caritatis*.⁶ This document called on all religious orders to revisit their original inspiration in the New Testament and in the *Lives* of their Founders. The last session of Vatican II finished in 1965 and within the next five years every religious order, congregation or institute in the Catholic Church was required to hold one or more sessions of a General Chapter⁷ in which they were obliged to follow up the Council’s directive and to re-write their Constitutions and Common Rules. The whole Vatican Council exercise had been about re-orienting the contemporary Church’s engagement with the ‘modern world’ and religious orders, as well as looking back to the Gospels and their respective founders, were also required to look, more closely, at their contemporary social realities.

One of the inescapable social realities, for most of the orders, was that of a diminishing and ageing workforce, juxtaposed with an increasing demand for the schools, hospitals and other ‘apostolic works’, which they had been called upon to provide, staff

⁵ *Weekend Australian* 2 March 2002 Employment Section.

⁶ Austin Flannery O.P. (Ed.) *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dominican Publications, (Dublin, 1975).

⁷ The General Chapter of a Religious Order is a periodic – every five to ten years – meeting of elected, and *ex officio*, delegates from the various abbeys, provinces or parts of an order to elect a new Superior General and to consider changes to the Constitution, Rules or Apostolic Works of the order.

and administer. Recruitment of lay replacements – made financially possible in Australia by the the almost contemporaneous re-introduction of State Aid for schools – was an obvious solution. The quest to define and enshrine the charism of the various orders, therefore, assumed a new urgency and a somewhat different purpose. It was no longer aimed simply at re-inspiring the congregations’ ‘professed’ members but also at educating and inspiring their lay successors. As recently as October 1998, a National Symposium on the topic of charism was held in Queensland between the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (formerly known as the Major Superiors’ Conference), and the National Catholic Education Commission: the body which represents the various Diocesan Catholic Education Commissions (and Offices) to whose care the orders are committing their schools. In a journal report on this symposium, reference was made, in the one sentence, to the distinctive charisms of Mary McKillop, Edmund Rice, Catherine McAuley, Nano Nagle and Marcellin Champagnat, who were the founders of the Josephite Sisters, the Irish Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy, the Presentation Sisters and the Marist Brothers, respectively.⁸

This quest to define the charism of the various orders is by no means confined to Australia. In his review of the situation in British Catholic Schools, Gerald Grace refers to widespread efforts at ‘transmission of the charism’ and deploys the related term ‘spiritual capital’.⁹ While in one of the international Marist Brothers’ journals, which deals with the origins, archives, history and charism of the Institute, a contributor from one of the Mexican provinces, Br Aureliano Brambila, uses the phrase ‘spiritual patrimony’ as a sort of synonym for charism.¹⁰ But in a paper written, by Dr John Honner, a former Jesuit and a lecturer in theology, for the Melbourne Province of the Irish Christian Brothers, the author makes a deliberate and useful distinction between charism and spiritual patrimony. He understands charism very much as it has been described above and he sees patrimony too as ‘an inheritance, a gift passed on from one generation to the next’. But, he goes on: ‘Unlike charism, patrimony is something concrete: property, buildings, capital ... our schools are a patrimony.’¹¹

The usefulness of this distinction lies in the fact that it reminds us, very forcibly, that the communities to whom the Marist Brothers – and the other teaching orders – are seeking to bequeath their charisms are, with a few significant exceptions, school communities of teachers, students and parents. And along with that spiritual bequest, go the bricks and mortar, the clientele, the good name and the ‘goodwill’ of those various establishments. In much of the literature and, especially in some recent theses produced on the subject, to which I will shortly turn, there is a tendency to spiritualize and theologize the charism to a point where it may appear both inaccessible and irrecoverable to the average lay teacher in a contemporary Catholic School. I do not wish to overstate this tendency in these theses, nor to deny that the spiritual aspects, of the charism, are a vital part of the ‘goodwill’ of the school. Moreover, the majority of lay teachers in contemporary Australian Catholic Schools at least pay lip service to the idea that it is part of their role to respect and foster these spiritual qualities and traditions. But it is because of these lay teachers, who are the ultimate target of so much of this analysis, that the present project focuses on the pedagogical style or

⁸ *Catholic School Studies*. Melbourne. Vol. 72 No. 1 May 1999 pp. 20-23.

⁹ Gerald Grace, *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality* (London, 2002), pp.236-38.

¹⁰ *Marist Notebooks*, Rome. N.2 (1991).

¹¹ *Champagnat: A Journal of Marist Education*. Melbourne Vol.3, No. 2 (2000) p. 30.

the teaching tradition of the Marist Brothers in Australia, rather than the more intangible charism – even though charism will be very much part of the discussion.

The first of these earlier theses, to which I wish to refer, was undertaken by Br John McMahon, a member of the Marist Brothers, Melbourne Province. He completed his doctoral dissertation on ‘Educational Vision: A Marist Perspective’ at London University in 1992. Br John uses Weber’s sociological concept of charismatic leadership as an analytical tool and sees the religious order, in this case, the Marist Brothers, as a safeguard against Weber’s ‘routinization’ of charisma.¹² He believes that well-trained Religious or, for that matter, a well-inducted lay teacher can keep alive the charism of Fr Champagnat in a contemporary Catholic school and fend off the dangers of routinization and lip service. He analyses the workings of three large, contemporary Marist High Schools – one each in Melbourne, Glasgow and New York – and proceeds by way of interviewing the principals, as well as selected staff members and students in each school. In only the New York example, Archbishop Molloy High School, was the number of brothers on the staff significant. In the Glasgow school, St Mungo’s Academy, there was only one, and he held the position of school counsellor. Nevertheless, Br John seems to conclude that if a group of brothers, even one brother, or a dedicated group of lay teachers, is sufficiently imbued with Fr Champagnat’s charism, then the result will be discernable in the school’s operation and it will be truly Marist.

One of the difficulties with this argument is that Br John appears to be defining the ‘Marist’, or ‘Fr Champagnat’s’, charism along lines similar to Jesuit educational philosophy and that, in the opinion of the present writer, at least, is a false analogy. The four hundred years old Jesuit tradition of education, with its commitment to the upper classes of society and to the place of the classics in education, to the principle of *pre-lectio*, and to an agreed liberal arts syllabus in the *Ratio Studiorum* has, at least on paper, a clearly enunciated approach which modern Jesuits or lay teachers in Jesuit schools may choose to follow, adapt, or ignore. Fr Champagnat and his early Marist followers, as we shall see in a later chapter, were much more pragmatic and instinctive in setting out to meet the needs for catechism and elementary education which they faced, in the small rural communes they served. There is nothing in the writings of Fr Champagnat or his early followers or, for that matter, in any of Br John’s interviewees’ responses that could be construed as a philosophy of education. In the latter case, there is familiarity with Fr Champagnat’s life and spirit and admiration for him as a zealous Christian and a humane and person-centred *formateur* of teachers; but there is little indication of commitment to him as an educational theorist or pedagogue.

Br Michael Green, a member of the Sydney Province, completed his doctoral dissertation on ‘The Charismatic Culture of Marist Secondary Schools’ at Sydney University in 1997. He uses the concept (or metaphor, as he describes it) of organizational culture and the literature of ‘school excellence’ to analyze five contemporary Marist High Schools in the

¹² It is perhaps worth pointing out at this stage, that the Marist Brothers, historically, were given a saint’s name at the time of their receiving the habit and this was how they were known to their confreres and pupils. This distinguished them from the Irish Christian Brothers who also took saints’ names but were referred to, by their pupils at least, by their family name – Br Bowler, Br Murphy etc. After Vatican II, the practice of taking saints’ names was discontinued, and many of the older generation reverted to their baptismal names; but Marist Brothers were still addressed by their first name, Br John, Br Patrick, rather than by their family names. Two exceptions, which occur later in this text, are Pierre Zind and Br Balko who are usually referred to as just cited.

Sydney Province (i.e. on the Australian eastern seaboard) and he too proceeds by way of structured interviews with principals, selected staff and students. Br Michael, however, has also reviewed some modern attempts, based on historical documents, produced by the early followers of Fr Champagnat, to define the Marist charism in pedagogical terms both in English-speaking and Spanish-speaking provinces; but he finds the results not entirely convincing. Instead, he settles for the somewhat more nebulous notions of school 'culture' and 'climate' and identifies some characteristics of this culture, which he believes reflect the historical, Marist charism of St Marcellin:

A synthesis of seven core values is proposed to underpin the charismatic culture of Marist schools: a spirit defined by a sense of family; simplicity; love of work; God consciousness; presence and good example; fondness for those most in need; and daring and confidence in a spirit of autonomous enterprise.¹³

As can be seen, these characteristics do not easily translate into conventional educational objectives and although some of Br Michael's conclusions found their way into a fairly recent international symposium on the Marist Charism, their difficulty in application is acknowledged in the final sentence of this introductory paragraph:

Many provinces have developed their own synthesis of what constitutes a Marist approach in education, but there is a felt need for a statement that is more unifying and universal at the level of foundational vision and principles. What we have produced has the richness of such universality, but also its limitations in terms of not being able to focus sharply on the urgent and priority questions arising in our different contexts. Further, in being a vision statement, (our work) does not pretend to be a pedagogical treatise or a manual of Marist spirituality.¹⁴

Moreover, unlike Br John McMahon, Br Michael acknowledges, in a more recent paper, a very real difficulty in preserving and developing this 'charismatic culture' in most contemporary Australian Catholic schools where there is, typically, a ten or fifteen percent staff turnover each year and a steady, though slower, rotation of staff at executive and school leadership levels:

A reality of Catholic schools today is that many members of staff come as mature adults to schools of particular traditions. Unlike the past, when many Religious literally grew up in their respective traditions, today most staff members have had their spiritual, psychological and professional development shaped outside the tradition. While such people can offer a great deal to a charism by their fresh response to it, there is also a deep risk of the charism's dilution and diffusion ... The question comes into particular focus in the selection of people for school leadership, especially the role of principal ... It is difficult to see how a principal could give authentic spiritual leadership to, for example, an Ignatian, Dominican or Lasallian culture, without a profound experience of it, an instinctive attraction to it, and a commitment to it. While the Principal may bring his or her own professional skills ... and may be

¹³ Br Michael Green, 'The Charismatic Culture of Marist Secondary Schools in the Province of Sydney.' Abstract p. ii.

¹⁴ International Marist Education Commission *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* (Sydney, 1998), pp. 13 -14.

able to develop reasonably quickly a knowledge-base of the tradition, these will not be sufficient. How does it seep into the bones? ... The language and the intuitions will be distinctive, its unstated cultural assumptions and its symbolic world will be subtle and complex, its experience of God will be unique. We are dealing here at the levels that resist quantification and measurement: the psycho-spiritual, the emotional, the cultural, but that is what incarnation is about.¹⁵

It is because the commitment to and appreciation of this charismatic culture is so resistant to quantification and measurement, even by modern and sophisticated sociological techniques, that the present project intends to proceed by historical rather than sociological or philosophical lines of inquiry. It is hoped that, by following through what the early Marist Brothers in Australia wrote about themselves and the Marist way of doing things and what their successors, and later generations of pupils, wrote about themselves that we may catch some oral or, at least, verbal impression of what the Australian Marist teaching tradition has been. This project therefore sets out to discover whether the pioneer Marist Brothers who came to Sydney and founded St Patrick's Boys' School in Harrington St, Church Hill, in 1872, were conscious bearers of a distinctive Marist style of education. Using the history of this original school as a narrative framework, it then proposes to examine whether the brothers made a conscious effort to pass on such a tradition and why, how and, to what extent, they might have modified it. Finally, as the original Marist Brothers' Province became Australia-wide and St Patrick's, itself, moved to a new location at Dundas and to a revived role as a demonstration school, for young Australian Marist Brothers, it asks whether anything of that distinctive tradition still remains or whether everything has been subsumed into the mainstream? Is it only the legend that remains?

The remainder of this chapter, then, proceeds by way of reviewing the literature of Australian History of Education and of Religion and then, in the light of this review, of defining more precisely the style of historical enquiry which it proposes to conduct.

Australian Historiography: Ecclesiastical and Educational

The decision to adopt a historical, rather than a sociological, approach to identifying a distinctive Marist teaching tradition is, on the one hand, to follow a well-trodden path and, on the other, not currently, a particularly fashionable or popular undertaking. History Departments and Arts Faculties in Australian and other English-language Universities are everywhere under pressure from the forces of economic rationalism.¹⁶ And in a recent article,¹⁷ Sherington and Campbell have drawn attention to the fact that the plight of the History of Education is even worse: it is no longer a core subject in undergraduate Education degrees; the number of history teaching positions in Education Faculties is declining; and history, itself, seems to have no explicit influence in the formation of public policy as it once did, for example, in the shaping of the NSW Wyndham Report. The state of Religious or Church History, within whose ambit this investigation also falls, is somewhat more flourishing, although the impact of this, other,

¹⁵ Br Michael Green, 'Charisms' in *Champagnat: A Marist Journal of Education*. Vol. 3 No. 2 Nov.2000 pp. 18 -19.

¹⁶ P. Axelrod, 'Challenges to Liberal Education in an Age of Uncertainty.' *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 10 Nos. 1 & 2 (1998). pp. 6-13.

¹⁷ 'Whatever happened to the History of Education?' *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Conference of ANZHEs*. Adelaide (2001).

sub-discipline on mainstream Australian History remains marginal. Relatively recent, separate articles by Hilary Carey¹⁸ and Tom Boland¹⁹ report that there is a lot of research and publishing activity in Church History and the only weak spot is that it tends to be based in, and aimed at, individual Christian denominations, rather than documenting and analyzing the Australian religious scene, generally.

If the History of Education is currently the weaker tine in this two-pronged approach, however, developments in the historiography of that sub-discipline do at least provide an appropriate chronological framework, within which to conduct the present literature review. In the Sherington and Campbell article, referred to earlier, the writers describe a three-stage evolution for the subject, a judgement to some extent foreshadowed in separate, earlier articles by Bob Bessant and Marjorie Theobald.²⁰ Once this three-phase timeline for the History of Education has been outlined, corresponding developments in Catholic Church historiography and in the writing of the history of church schools will be woven into the review narrative, as an integrated strand. As the style of Education History has evolved, so too has the style of Church History, though not always in response to the same pressures. The aim, at all times, will be to identify the interests, emphases, intentions and standpoints of the various generations of writers, with the intention of both sensitising and sharpening the focus of the subsequent historical investigation, proposed in this project.

The joint paper, then, locates the beginnings of the History of Education in the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the national or public elementary school systems that had been successfully established in Britain, North America and Australia, in the second half of the nineteenth century began to move into secondary education and to develop substantial high school networks. New teachers' colleges were founded to train the new breed of public school teachers and History of Education texts were written to support this new subject, which quickly became a core part of the curriculum for trainee teachers. The style of mainstream history then in vogue, is generally known as the "Whig Interpretation" and, in its educational version, the development of education was traced back to its alleged origins in classical Greece and Rome, with a very light treatment of the Medieval Cathedral and Monastic schools, before expanding into the Renaissance-Humanist, Post-Reformation and Enlightenment educators and schools and, thence, to the nineteenth century and the beginnings of public education. Writers such as Ellwood P. Cubberly in America, William Boyd in Britain and P.R. Cole in Australia produced textbook histories of this kind which were in use until as late as the mid 1960s.²¹ These books were evangelical, almost propagandist, in tone and had a very clear purpose in developing the *esprit d' corps* of the burgeoning ranks of public school teachers. '(They) provided heroes. (They) helped provide aspiring professional educators with a sense of being part of a socially progressive vanguard.'²²

¹⁸ 'Religious History' in G. Davison, J. Hirst & J. Macintyre, (eds) *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne, 1998) pp. 551-553.

¹⁹ 'Thirty Years On: The O'Farrell Era' in *The Australasian Catholic Record* Vol. LXXV No.2 (1998).

²⁰ ' "Progress" and Revision in the History of Education in the 1980s' by Bob Bessant in *Discourse* Vol.12 No.1(1991) pp. 67-84; and 'Educational History' by Marjorie Theobald, in Davison, Hirst & Macintyre (eds.) *op.cit.* pp. 206-208.

²¹ E.P. Cubberly, *The History of Education*, (London, 1920), W. Boyd, W. *The History of Western Education*, (London,1921), P.R. Cole, *A History of Educational Thought* (London, 1931).

²² Campbell & Sherington, *op.cit.* p. 46.

Cardinal Moran, more of a hagiographer than a historian, would almost certainly reject the “Whig” label for his foundational, 1896 *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*; but its purpose was similar to that served by the works of the early Whig historians of education. In his case, the *esprit d’corps* he was seeking to bolster was that of the emergent Irish-Australian middle class and the heroes he offered were the Irish bishops and priests who, he considered, had dragged the mainly Irish-descended Catholic laity from their previous condition of convict and lower working class destitution, to a status of near equality in Australian society. His *magnum opus* gives little credit to his English Benedictine predecessors in the Archdiocese of Sydney and is not highly regarded by modern Australian Catholic Church historians, lay, Religious or clerical.²³ But he was Australia’s first Cardinal, and apart, later, from the *Boree Log* poems of ‘John O’Brien,’ his ‘official’ version was all that Catholics had to sustain their morale during the sectarian storms of the World War I conscription debate, through till the Depression years. Dom Henry Birt OSB tried to reclaim recognition for the Benedictines in his 1912 book, *Pioneers*²⁴ and Dr Eris O’Brien restored some appreciation for the early Catholic laity and clergy in his *Life and Letters of Archpriest Thierry*,²⁵ published in Sydney in 1922. But these later works, and the Cardinal’s *History*, were the only three published Catholic sources that Br Urban Corrigan was able to name in the foreword to his pioneering 1925 monograph on *The History of Catholic Education in New South Wales*.²⁶

Br Urban, a Marist Brother and, in his day, an ardent student of Catholic education, might be considered a Whig historian in that he certainly provides his readers with heroes and heroines, in the persons of Archbishop Vaughan and the members of the teaching orders and places them in the tradition of ‘the ascetics and monks of the Early and Middle Ages’.²⁷ He is also eager to establish the legitimacy and efficiency of the Catholic educational effort, quoting the NSW Leaving Certificate and Exhibition results of the leading Catholic Schools for 1916-1923 in comparison with those of the leading Sydney Independent and State High Schools. Committed, though he was, to the contemporary Catholic education scene, however, he was a good deal more scholarly and balanced in his approach than Cardinal Moran had been. He had been trained as a historian at Sydney University. While acknowledging that Vaughan’s use of the phrase ‘seedplots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness’ in the Joint Pastoral of 1879, had provided Henry Parkes with the ‘trigger’ to pass the Public Education Act of 1880, he not only clarified the specific target of Vaughan’s criticisms – and, in so doing, moderated them - he also recognized that:

²³ Neither Patrick O’Farrell, Sr Naomi Turner nor Fr Tom Boland have much to say in favour of the Cardinal’s *History*. Professor O’Farrell refers to the book as ‘a mass of undigested material, gathered by the Cardinal by virtue of his predilection for borrowing and seldom returning, and omitting anything he did not like. History, like life, was for edification ... the scandalous, the unfortunate should be removed from view.’ *The Catholic Church & Community: An Australian History* (Sydney, 1992) pp. 287-88.

²⁴ H.N. Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, (London, 1911).

²⁵ Dr O’Brien also published *The Dawn of Catholicism in Australia* and *The Foundation of Australia*; but not until 1928 and 1937 respectively.

²⁶ The copy I have sighted is a bound, foolscap-sized typescript, autographed by the author and held in the Fisher Library Research collection. It may be an MA Thesis but there is no cover note to that effect. However, it was later published in two parts: *Catholic Education in New South Wales*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1930. And, later, *The Achievements of Catholic Education in Australia*. E.J. Dwyer, Sydney. 1937.

²⁷ Corrigan, *op.cit.* p. 99.

The greatness of the work which (Parkes) inaugurated, with the approval of the people, places him high as an educational legislator. (Only his) failure to provide for *all* the people precludes him from the highest rank.²⁸

The second sentence in this extract, of course, underlines the main theme of Br Urban's thesis: the injustice of imposing state control over education while denying government assistance to the educational efforts of the Catholic taxpayers.

If the historiography of Catholic education, as exemplified by Br Urban, was firmly entrenched in the equivalent of the Whig tradition in 1925, the public education situation was no more advanced. Bob Bessant²⁹ refers to a golden jubilee history of state education in Victoria, published in 1922 which speaks of 'Great progress ... and ... well-trained teachers working with vision and enthusiasm' and he goes on to remark that, fifty years later, the centenary history of Victorian public education, *Vision and Realization*, was still stuck in the same groove.³⁰ Even the first achievements of the academic history of Australian education, which Marjorie Theobald, attributes to the Melbourne University 'school' in the late 1950s through to the late 'sixties, were still, to some extent, in this 'visionary' vein. Writers such as A.G. Austin, Gwyneth Dow and, later, Dick Selleck did not trace and record the foundation of every state or public primary and secondary school, nor compare their exam results with those of the Independent and Catholic schools; but they did focus on the vision, the speeches, the writings and the policies of the founding politicians and directors of state education and concluded that: 'this system of public education represents a vindication of the belief [vision?] that every Australian child could be given an effective elementary education'.³¹ They were aware of shortcomings in public education but, on the whole, the early 'Melbourne School' writers were still presenting heroes whose idealism they took at face value and who legitimated the nineteenth century governments' entry into, and near monopoly of, mass education.

Br Ronald Fogarty, another Marist Brother and a painstaking student of Catholic Education, produced his history as a doctoral dissertation in the same Melbourne University Education Faculty and at the same time as Austen, Dow and the others.³² His book, too, is in the scholarly version of the Whig tradition and like Br Urban, before him, he argued that the Catholic Education 'system' - which at that time was educating twenty percent of the school-age children in Australia - had not only justified its existence, it also deserved - and would very soon need - government financial assistance. There are several interesting aspects to Br Ronald's account. Firstly, it is an instance of educational history arguably affecting public policy. It provided Dr Eris O'Brien, who had written the foreword to the published version of the thesis and who was then Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn, with a credible base from which to quietly lobby the Menzies government, successfully, for the re-introduction of state aid.³³ Secondly, unlike the work of most contemporary academic historians of education, it was Australia-wide rather than state-based in its coverage. Thirdly, and of particular relevance to the present project, although Br Ronald described Australian Catholic Education in great detail and

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 82.

²⁹ *op.cit.* pp. 67-68.

³⁰ L.Blake,(ed.) *Vision and Realization*, (Melbourne, 1973).

³¹ Quoted from A.G. Austin, in Theobald, *op.cit.*p. 206.

³² *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*, (Melbourne, 1959).

³³ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Melbourne, 1987), p.171.

was able to show how it carried out the catechetical mission of the Church and also complied with Vatican directives, he was unable to achieve - or obtain³⁴ – a definition of a specifically Catholic Pedagogy or Philosophy of Education:

In the matter of technique, for example, it has borrowed judiciously from the so-called secular pedagogy of the day, only to realize, in the end that it had been adopting methods that were traditionally its own. From the influence and competition of the state systems, moreover, especially in the matter of standards and organization, it has profited immensely.³⁵

Another contemporary strand of the historiography of Australian education which sat quite comfortably in the Whig tradition - and also in an Australia-wide survey, rather than a one-state treatment – was that of the Independent or Corporate schools associated with the Headmasters' Conference of Australia. Until World War II, these schools – apart from the few, usually selective, state high schools - had dominated secondary education and, more especially, university entrance, in most Australian states. With the rapid expansion of State and Catholic High Schools after the war, this dominance could have come into question and, in an effort, perhaps, to re-assert their importance, the members of HMCA commissioned C.E.W. Bean to write a historical review of their schools which was published in 1950 under the title, *Here, My Son*.³⁶ Since their ex-students had dominated the officer corps of the Australian armed forces in two World Wars and their commissioned author was Australia's official historian of the Great War, the HMCA was presumably looking for some 'playing fields of Eton' type rhetoric and Bean, whose father had been Classics and Sports Master at Sydney Grammar, did not disappoint them. His book set the tone for the trickle, then the flood, of commissioned, mainly independent, school histories which began to be published from the late 1960s through the 'seventies and on to the present day, as schools of this kind reached their sixtieth, seventy-fifth or centenary year.

Some of these commissioned histories were written by academic or professional historians, but they are mostly celebratory and non-critical in approach. As Bob Bessant, rather caustically, remarks:

School Councils pay to have these paeans of praise to their schools flung together ... They are invariably written around the comings and goings of the headmasters ... the machinations of the School Councils and the rorts of the Old Boys ... the main aim being to mention as many names as possible.³⁷

If a more scrupulous historian exceeded this prescribed brief, the offending work was either not published - as was the case with Gerard Windsor's history of Sydney's Riverview – or, in the case of Geoff Sherington's 'professionally competent and

³⁴ Interview with Br Ronald (7.11. 03) This failure was admitted in the original thesis, but softened, in the published version, to what is quoted above. All copies of the original thesis have apparently now been lost. Br Ronald assured the writer that he did attempt to obtain an authoritative definition of Catholic Education from several philosophers and theologians, including Fr Eric D'Arcy, then lecturing in philosophy at Melbourne University, later Bishop of Sale and Archbishop of Hobart; but without success.

³⁵ Fogarty, *op.cit.* Vol. 2 p. 477.

³⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *Here, My Son*. (Sydney, 1950).

³⁷ *op.cit.* p. 77.

informative' *Shore*, was followed up by a more celebratory 'light-hearted, personalised account'.³⁸ The rules for commissioned histories of girls' independent schools are somewhat more flexible, for reasons shortly to be mentioned, but for boys' schools, the Whig tradition is still firmly in the saddle. As recently as 1997, the Marist Brothers (Melbourne Province) commissioned two professional historians to produce a traditional centenary history of their big boarding school, Sacred Heart College, in Adelaide, and were given what they requested: a bland and repetitive record of events.³⁹

The appetite for a more analytical and critical style of historiography, hinted at in the previous paragraph, was a phenomenon of the 1960s, in America and Britain, which reached Australia in the 1970s. Disturbed by the complacency of the American liberal tradition in the face of the Civil Rights Movement and the Viet Nam debate, Michael Katz and later revisionist historians began to ask why the U.S. public education systems, which had begun with such noble ideals of equality and access in the nineteenth century, had, in effect, maintained and preserved the obvious social inequalities into the twentieth. More explicitly Marxist, British historians of education, such as Brian Simon and Richard Johnson, construed their state system not as the bequest of a benevolent liberal democracy but, rather, as the structured mechanism through which the bourgeois power-brokers of early industrial capitalism aspired to exercise social control over the urbanised masses. These revisionist ideas came to Australia with Ian Davey, who had done his doctorate with Katz in Canada and who attracted a group of like-minded researchers to Adelaide University, which then began to challenge Melbourne University as the leading centre for Australian History of Education.

In Church History, it was Vatican II's *aggiornamento*, rather than American revisionism or British Marxism which inspired Patrick O'Farrell, who came to the sub-discipline from a background in Irish immigration and labor history. It is generally agreed that the serious, academic, history of Australian Catholicism begins with O'Farrell's *Short History* in 1968.⁴⁰ And he himself maintained that apart from some thematic or fragmentary efforts by Eris O'Brien, Tim Suttor, Ronald Fogarty and Tony Cahill, he had the field to himself, so it was certainly not a literal exercise in revisionism.⁴¹ Given the Irish immigrant ancestry that O'Farrell shared with the overwhelming majority of Australia's pre-World War II Catholics, and the central place of the celibate male priesthood in Catholicism, the *Short History* is, unavoidably Irish and male-dominated; but if it is not, strictly, revisionist neither is it an exercise in Whig-style apologetics. From his other background in labor history, O'Farrell was also well attuned to the currents of nationalism, factionalism and power politics swirling beneath the surface of Catholic piety and solidarity and he had no hesitation in discussing these frankly in his narrative. In the later, much expanded, editions of his original work, re-launched as *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, he attempted to redress the masculine and clerical imbalance of the original but, despite the assistance of female

³⁸ Bessant, *op.cit.* p. 77.

³⁹ P. Donovan, & B. O'Neill, *In the Marist Tradition* (Adelaide, 1997).

⁴⁰ See: Tom Boland, 'Thirty Years On: The O'Farrell Era', *Australasian Catholic Record* Vol LXXV No.2 (1998). Also: H.M. Carey, 'Religious History' in Davison, Hirst & MacIntyre, *op.cit.* p. 552.

⁴¹ 'Writing the 1968 Catholic Church' in *The Australasian Catholic Record* Vol.LXXV No. 2 (1998), pp. 142-143

research assistants and doctoral candidates, he professed himself unable to alter the intractable, historical reality.⁴²

Professor O'Farrell's *Short History* and, indeed, Vatican II itself came too late to have much impact on the next work of Church and Educational History which has a direct bearing on the present project: Br Alban Doyle's centenary history, *The Story of the Marist Brothers in Australia 1872-1972*.⁴³ Br Alban, too, was a university-trained historian, an archivist and, for a time, editor of the Brothers' in-house newsletter, *The Marist Monthly* and he worked on the *Story* for at least ten years prior to its publication. He made exemplary use of the considerable archival material available and also the memories of the old brothers whose eye-witness accounts of events - as far back as the turn of the century - he was able to tap. If he did not have Patrick Farrell's work to guide him - at least until very late in the piece - he did have those of his confreres, Br Urban and Br Ronald, and he also made considerable use of Alan Barcan's *Short History of Education in New South Wales*;⁴⁴ but what he produced was a family history or a chronicle, rather than an analytic or thematic treatment of the brothers' first hundred years in Australia. Br Alban was certainly no revisionist - he was even somewhat skeptical about the new attitudes of Vatican II - but neither was he an exponent of the Whig tradition except insofar as he honoured some of the heroes of the Order: the founding Australian leaders, Brothers Ludovic Laboureyras and John Dullea and a great Australian Marist Provincial, Br Andrew Power.

If the radical analysis of the revisionists was having little effect on the way the history of education was being written in New South Wales in the 1970s and early 1980s,⁴⁵ it was having much more of an impact on education historiography in South Australia and Victoria. Ian Davey was joined by sociologist Pavla Miller and other feminist writers, who focussed their attention on the public education system of South Australia. Alison McKinnon, for instance, was able to show that state secondary education for girls in Adelaide, at least prior to World War II, had been as much about consolidating their domestic role as wives and mothers as about creating pathways for them into the lower-paid, 'caring' professions and public life.⁴⁶ And, adding feminist analysis and social history to the socialist perspective of the original revisionists, Pavla Miller demonstrated that in its selectivity and its segregation of boys from girls, the government system was acting out of patriarchal, as well as capitalist principles.⁴⁷ As Marjorie Theobald remarked, it was somewhat ironic that the Public Education system should have become the focus of revisionist attention, in South Australia, when the private school network would have presented a much more obvious and vulnerable target.⁴⁸

⁴² Preface to the 1977 Edition p. x and to the 1984 Edition p. vii.

⁴³ Sydney, 1972.

⁴⁴ Sydney, 1965.

⁴⁵ Apart from Br Alban's effort, two of Clifford Turney's series: *Pioneers of Australian Education*, were published by Sydney University in 1972 and 1983; and, according to Bob Bessant, (*op.cit*) a particularly egregious example of the Whig-style, 'commissioned history' was published by The King's School in 1981.

⁴⁶ *One Foot on the Ladder: Origins and Outcomes of Girls' Secondary Schooling Australia in South*, (Brisbane, 1984).

⁴⁷ *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society* (Adelaide, 1986).

⁴⁸ *op.cit.* p. 207.

The private schools of Victoria suffered no such benign neglect, with most of the published history of education then being written, in that state, taking the form of commissioned school histories. In 1971, Ian Hansen contributed 'a first sample' - a historical sketch and sociological survey - of the six original Associated Public (Boys') Schools in Melbourne,⁴⁹ albeit from a straight sociological, rather than a revisionist perspective. One of Hansen's comments:

The governing bodies of certain independent schools are often deficient, influential members being businessmen of managerial or directorial temper, whose grasp of educational issues is at best tenuous and at worst non-existent. A danger facing new and rising independent schools is a class of educational hobbyists whose affluent social status gives them a place on school councils⁵⁰

must have given joy to Bob Bessant. When Hansen went on, later, to write a commissioned history of a second-tier Melbourne independent school, Camberwell Grammar, in 1986, Bessant gave the work one of his highest accolades:

It was very different from the standard school history ... The book aimed to be and was essentially impressionistic, in many places more like a novel than a history. But in this the author captured the spirit of the school and the essence of many of the leading and lesser characters. He ... tried to capture the beliefs, motivations and emotions of the people involved while placing them firmly in their historical context.⁵¹

Thus, good, analytical history of education could evidently be written, even within the constraints of the commissioned history 'rules'.

Another 'different' Victorian independent boys' school history, published in 1978, was *Xavier: A Centenary Portrait*, though this, too, was hardly a typical revisionist exercise. The author, Greg Dening was an ex-Jesuit and an anthropologist, as well as a historian, by training and he had some encouragement from the Old Xaverian Association, which commissioned the work, to avoid a bland 'institutional history'. Instead, eschewing a continuous narrative, he set out to 'find' the school and, being an anthropologist, he:

thought to find it in its environment, in the buildings and grounds which, in their shapes and sizes and in their very being, embody values, perceptions and memories. I thought to find the school in the rituals of every day and of every year ... I thought to find the school in the rhetoric of small as well as grand occasions ... The rhetoric's exhortations make a metaphor in which everything is expressed and made real.⁵²

The result, however, is as socially and politically analytical as a mainstream revisionist could well wish. And, although he does not address the gender issues which feminist

⁴⁹ I.V.Hansen, *Nor Free Nor Secular*, (Melbourne, 1971).

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 283.

⁵¹ Bessant, *op.cit.* p. 78.

⁵² Greg Dening, *Xavier: A Centenary Portrait* (Melbourne, 1978) Preface (unpaginated).

historians would, presumably, have targeted, Denning does make abundantly clear the minimalising effect on the ideal of a 'Jesuit Education', which the school's policy of following the Victorian Universities and Schools Examination Board system involved. This straight-jacket of state examinations was to have a similar 'pasteurising' effect on the considerably less articulated 'Marist Tradition of Education' which is the topic of this thesis.

Centenary histories of the Victorian independent girls' schools written around this time show more consciousness of the revisionist and feminist agenda and Janet McCalman's *Journeyings* took 'as its central theme the economic and cultural meanings of attendance at independent schools for a generation of Australian men and women.'⁵³ While Ailsa Zainu'ddin's centenary history of Methodist Ladies College, Kew⁵⁴ brought a heightened awareness of the religious influences to her account - a blind spot in the revisionist critique, to which Pavla Miller had begun to draw attention.⁵⁵ As Marjorie Theobald, again, remarks:

If histories of girls' schools tend to be gutsier than those of boys' schools it is because the girls' schools, under challenge from a co-educational resurgence, have been delighted to find themselves placed within a feminist framework of analysis. The mirror image of this analysis – that boys' 'public' schools produce ruling-class masculinities – is not welcomed in commissioned histories.⁵⁶

Her own commissioned centenary account of yet another Melbourne Independent (Girls') School, the 1978 *Ruyton Remembers*, is a fine example of this 'gutsier', re-visited history: still narrative in style, but critical and evaluative, without being negative or hostile in tone.⁵⁷

A history of Independent Schools which did cross state-boundaries and adopted something of a revisionist, certainly a critical and, perhaps, even a hostile attitude to its subject was Sherington, Petersen and Brice's *Learning to Lead: A history of girls' and boys' corporate secondary schools in Australia*.⁵⁸ For reasons, not altogether clear, Bob Bessant found this book unsatisfactory, claiming that the only courageous and critical thing about it was the decision to use the adjective 'corporate' rather than the schools' own preferred title of 'Independent'. To the writer, however, *Learning to Lead* seemed to expose quite uncompromisingly these schools' assumption of superiority, their 'manifest destiny' to produce the country's power elite and to promote a style of masculinity that goes with such a role. It also analysed the 'machinery' by which these schools set about shaping that masculinity: an emphasis on sports facilities and team sports; a school uniform, badge and motto; a magazine in which the school presents itself to its clientele

⁵³ Theobald, *op.cit.* p. 207.

⁵⁴ *They Dreamt of a School: A Centenary History of M.L.C. Kew 1882-1982*. (Melbourne, 1982).

⁵⁵ Bessant, *op.cit.* p. 72.

⁵⁶ *op.cit.* p. 207. In passing, it might be noted that the publication of histories of the various female Catholic teaching orders in Australia, such as Sr M. Rosa McGinley's *Roads to Sion: Presentation Sisters in Australia 1886-1980* (Brisbane, 1983) and Morna Sturrock's *Women of Strength, Women of Gentleness: Brigidine Sisters, Melbourne Province*. (Melbourne, 1995) have also benefited from an empathetic feminist orientation on the part of the writers.

⁵⁷ Marjorie Theobald, *Ruyton Remembers 1878-1978* (Melbourne, 1978).

⁵⁸ G. Sherington, R. Petersen, and I. Brice, *Learning to Lead* (Sydney, 1987).

in the way it wishes to be seen; a prefect system ‘to extend the hegemony’ of the headmaster; and a house system.⁵⁹

Another ‘revisionist’ article which Professor Sherington co-authored with a graduate student, Mark Conellan, applied this ‘machinery’ analysis to the Marist Brothers’ most prominent school in Sydney, St Joseph’s College, Hunter’s Hill.⁶⁰ As a result of their analysis, they conclude that the Irish–Australian brothers who effectively led and staffed the college from 1890 onwards, abandoned the French Marist traditions enshrined in the order’s own *School Guide* and adopted many aspects of the post-Arnoldian English Public School model, notably the cult of athleticism, the nationalism and militarism of the school cadet unit and the persuasive powers of the school magazine.⁶¹ The brothers did this, the writers argue, partly under pressure from their pupils, ex-students and, to a lesser extent, the parents and, partly, in a spirit of imitation and competition with other GPS schools in Sydney, such as Newington, Shore and Sydney Grammar. They even go so far as to assert that this assimilation, which started in imitation, ended by being internalized in the value system of the school, especially through the influence of significant sports coaches and lay-masters.⁶² The argument is strong and persuasive, but the present writer will take issue with some aspects of their case in a later chapter. It is enough to remark, for the moment, that although the Marist Brothers were certainly founded by a Frenchman, there was almost nothing of a nationalist or political nature in his inspiration and example. To confuse the French brothers’ nationalist sensitivities with their Marist loyalties, therefore, is to do less than justice to the character of the Marist teaching tradition.

An interesting feature of Sherington and Conellan’s thesis is that although much of their material comes from the school magazines and the Sydney popular press, they also rely quite heavily on St Joseph’s official school history - *A Century of Striving* - written by Br Michael Naughtin, in which the differences of opinion between the French and Irish-Australian Marist Brothers are thoroughly discussed. Br Michael, himself, had set out to write ‘a straightforward and factual narrative, popular rather than academic’⁶³ and while he has provided all the raw materials necessary for a more critical work, it was this popular account, accessible to ex-teachers, ex-students and parents, rather than a thematic, analytical and evaluative history that he actually produced. It is, perhaps, another example, like the Shore and Camberwell Grammar examples, mentioned earlier, of how a very respectable and useful history can be written within the traditional limitations of the commissioned or centenary school history. A decade later, the present writer, working on the centenary history of another Australian Marist boarding school,⁶⁴ was able to deploy some revisionist social history insights which may not have been pleasing the more traditionalist Old Boys or to some older brothers, but which was published and allowed to stand, nevertheless.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 33.

⁶⁰ ‘Socialisation, imperialism and war: ideology and ethnicity in Australian corporate schools 1880-1918’ pp. 132-150 in J.A. Mangan (ed.) *‘Benefits Bestowed’? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988).

⁶¹ *ibid* pp. 140-144.

⁶² *ibid.* p. 145.

⁶³ Br Michael Naughtin, *A Century of Striving: St Joseph’s College, Hunter’s Hill 1881-1981*. (Sydney, 1981) p.vii.

⁶⁴ Br Valerian Braniff, *The Quest for Higher Things* (Kilmore, 1992).

By the middle-to-late 1980s therefore, revisionism had begun to affect, though hardly dominate, the way in which academic history of education was being written in Australia. As is usually the case, however, no sooner had a new orthodoxy begun to establish itself, than a new contender arose to challenge its hegemony. For Sherington and Campbell, the third and most recent phase in the historiography of Australian education is the post-revisionist or post-modernist stage and they locate its starting point with the emergence of articles and longer works which show the influence of the French critical theorist, Michel Foucault.⁶⁵ One of the earliest articles they cite is a discussion of one of the great nineteenth century ‘heroes’ of education, William Wilkins, written by Bruce Smith in 1990.⁶⁶ Smith uses Foucault’s description of the liberal classroom as an ‘apparatus’:

A thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic, moral and philanthropic propositions.⁶⁷

With this he ‘deconstructs’ the behavior of Wilkins and other nineteenth century apostles of public education whose evangelical enthusiasm for establishing the ‘liberal classroom’ led to the setting up of highly centralised education systems and the dis-enfranchisement of local patrons and parents. Oddly enough, for an acknowledged disciple of Foucault - the expositor of the relationship between knowledge, power and the urge to control - Smith reaches much the same conclusion about the nineteenth century Church/State battle over education as the academic historians of the earlier ‘Melbourne school’:

Denominationalism was positioned as educationally inferior in a way that it could hardly deny to itself. The superiority of state education in mid-nineteenth century Australia was a matter of commonsense.⁶⁸

A more recent, and very relevant, example of this post-structuralist approach to the history of education is Christine Trimmingham-Jack’s doctoral thesis on the brief history of the junior country boarding school adjunct to Sydney’s Rose Bay Convent, which she completed in 1997.⁶⁹ Using the post-modernist categories of discourses and subjectivities and deconstructing the iconography as well as the architecture of the campus, Dr Trimmingham-Jack focused on education as an experience appropriated and interpreted by the student as much as a structured curriculum, lifestyle and timetable imposed by the Reverend Mother and the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the order which ran the school. So, although she did not shirk the archival research into the educational ideas of the RSCJs – as the order is known – the main material for her analysis was a series of structured interviews with a number of ex-students and ex-staff members of the school, some of the latter being also ex-Religious as well as former teachers. And being, herself, an ex-student of the school during its brief history, she was able to overtly ‘position’ herself both in relation to the physical ‘architecture’ of the school and to the

⁶⁵ *op.cit.* p. 53.

⁶⁶ ‘William Wilkins’s Saddlebags’ in Theobald and Selleck (eds.) *Family, School & State in Australian History* (Sydney, 1990).

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 71.

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 85.

⁶⁹ ‘Kerever Park 1944-1965’ PhD Thesis, Sydney University, 1997.

experiences of her interviewees. The result is a perceptive but still personally conditioned account of what ‘education’ was like in that school, at that time.

If the post-structuralist approach has some critical lessons and cautionary considerations for the present project, however, the Kerever Park example also has some shortcomings as an appropriate model. While the approach to education as something experienced from below as well as programmed from above is important and an awareness of the ‘position’ of the narrator vis à vis the competing ‘discourses’ is also a vital consideration, the minimalist gesture at a narrative account is inappropriate for the present undertaking. Foucault and the critical theorists are skeptical about the objectivity or even the validity of narrative as a technique. In the Kerever Park history, where the school only existed for twenty-odd years and at a time when educational and ecclesiastical developments were almost in stasis, this minimalist ‘position’ as regards narrative is tenable. However this very small school - and the RSCJs nationally - were dealing with less than one percent of the Catholic female population available. In the proposed historical analysis of the Marist Brothers, who were working with, on average, perhaps thirty-five percent of the available Catholic male population in New South Wales, and who have been operating in Australia for one hundred and thirty years, within an evolving social, educational and religious context, such a posture as regards narrative is, I believe, untenable. The heavy reliance on de-constructed interviews with surviving ex-students and ex-teachers is similarly inappropriate.

Another *caveat*, which the Kerever Park example provides, is that of the historian as participant observer. In several instances of the ‘revisionist’ histories referred to earlier⁷⁰ as well as in that of Dr Trimmingham-Jack, the author has been an ex-student, ex-teacher and/or an ex-member of the Religious Order running the school in question. This is particularly relevant in the present instance because the writer is an ex-student, ex-teacher, and ex-member of the Marist Brothers – a former school principal and a writer of three Marist school histories, besides.⁷¹ None of the authors, previously mentioned, went into any detail about the hypothetical strengths and weaknesses that this ex-insider status lent to their respective histories, and I do not propose to hypothesize in that direction, either. Except to proffer the information that I departed from the Marist Brothers of my own volition, on good terms and by due process. I have the brothers’ authorisation to undertake this research project and their permission for access to the relevant archives and interviewees. I also still consider myself to be a committed, albeit a post-Vatican II, Catholic. How this ‘positions’ me in relation to the competing ‘discourses’ that emerge in the subsequent narrative must be for the reader to judge.

The preceding paragraph should not lightly be dismissed as either a personal, pre-emptive exculpation or as a digression from the literature review in progress. In the concluding paragraph of her account of the recent Australian historiography of education, referred to earlier, Marjorie Theobald includes Br Barry Coldrey’s *The Scheme: The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia*, as part of the ‘social history’ development which overtook the revisionist and feminist streams in the mid to late nineteen 1980s. As she remarks, it is ‘a distressing account of brutality and sexual

⁷⁰ Greg Dening’s *Xavier*, Ailsa Zai’nuddin’s *MLC*, Marjorie Theobald’s *Ruyton*, Geoff Sherington’s *Shore*.

⁷¹ St Ildephonsus’ College 1913-1964, New Norcia, W.A.; Assumption College 1892-1992 Kilmore, Victoria; St Patrick’s Marist College 1872-2000, Dundas, NSW.

abuse'⁷² and it has earned Br Coldrey a great deal of criticism - as well as credit - for his courage and frankness, from members both of his own Congregation and of the wider Catholic Church. While the Sydney Marist Brothers have not been implicated in these problems to quite the same extent as the Christian Brothers in Western Australia, their reputation is not entirely without spot and the onus is, therefore, on the writer to deal with such instances both honestly and sensitively.

The Irish Christian Brothers also undergo a less sensational, but more general, educational critique in Professor Tom O'Donoghue's recently published *Upholding the Faith*.⁷³ Reviewing the literature, some interviews, and the orders' own documentation for the period 1922-1965, O'Donoghue shows that Catholic Education, in that era, and as exemplified by the Christian Brothers and the Mercy, Josephite and Brigidine Sisters, was characterised by an authoritarian style, a Religious Education focus which was pietistic and passive-compliant, a gender-construction which was conservative and patriarchal, and a very strong tinge of Irish nationalism. The Marist Brothers are not included in O'Donoghue's study, but, with some nuances and degrees of emphasis they could, almost certainly, plead guilty to the first three of these charges. On the fourth, though, that of a pre-occupation with any sort of Irish nationalism, the Marists may be excused. Their French origins, and the fact that, from 1900 onwards, all of their recruitment was Australian-born, albeit of second or third generation Irish-Australians, meant that, despite a few prominent individuals, the Australian branch of the Marist Brothers was never particularly Irish in sympathy.⁷⁴

Professor O'Donoghue's review ends in 1965, on the eve of the changes in the Catholic Church brought about by the Second Vatican Council. Returning to our concurrent review of Australian Catholic Church historiography, therefore, it may be recalled that, Professor O'Farrell, even in the later editions of his work professed himself 'unmoved by suggestions that the contemporary role of the laity should be read back into the past'⁷⁵ and, in the post-Vatican II years, it was left to Fr Edmund Campion and Sr Naomi Turner to tease out more of the laity's interpretation of the Australian Catholic experience. Fr Campion's *Australian Catholics*,⁷⁶ drawing from the popular press and religious magazines and pamphlets rather than diocesan archives, is certainly a sustained attempt at writing history 'from below.' But his general tone is almost relentlessly optimistic and benign, lacking the skeptical coolness of the true revisionist. Sr Naomi, on the other hand, proclaims the seriousness of her intent by the very title of her substantial, two-volume book: *Catholics in Australia: A Social History*⁷⁷. Indeed, in her preface and introduction, she not only defends eschewing a continuous narrative and her revisionist agenda, she uses language which sounds remarkably close to the position of Foucault and the post-modernists:

⁷² *op.cit.* p. 208.

⁷³ Thomas A. O'Doghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922-1965* (New York, 2001).

⁷⁴ In writing the history of St Ildephonsus' College, New Norcia (WA), the present writer came across the story of Br Sebastian Hayden, (1872-1948) a New Zealander, who spent most of his working life in Australia, and in the boarding schools at Hunter's Hill, New Norcia, and Kilmore. He was a gifted public speaker and very popular with Old Boys. One of his favourite topics was 'The Irish Question'.

⁷⁵ *op.cit.* p. x.

⁷⁶ Melbourne. 1987.

⁷⁷ Melbourne. 1992.

The old clerical vision [dominant discourse?] of what being a lay person meant is today rapidly fading as lay people assert the right to contribute their understanding of their position in the Church and, simultaneously and inevitably, a new interpretation of 'Church' is being learnt. This is not to deny the validity of the past. *Indeed, to remain true to the past, a new understanding of truth must always evolve from the flux of human history and each individual's experience contributes to the re-shaping of what at any one time is recognized as the truth.*⁷⁸

Fr Tom Boland, a Brisbane Church Historian and former seminary rector, in his 1998 review of Catholic Church historiography refers to 'Campion and Turner show(ing) a touch of the *Annales* school (of history writing)', a school which Paul Ricoeur discusses in his *Time and Narrative*,⁷⁹ and which Boland characterises as 'attempting to get into the skin of the past, dreaming before a document and recreating the life it records.'⁸⁰ Boland also says the *Annales* style is appropriate for biography and, since he has published the biographies of two Australian Catholic Archbishops, this probably indicates that he associates himself with this school of historiography also. At any rate, as a practising historian and reviewer of historiography, he was obviously aware of the options and possibilities open to contemporary historians – ecclesiastical and educational – and he opted for the traditional narrative style in the centenary histories of the two big Christian Brothers' Colleges in Brisbane, Nudgee and Terrace, which he has published in the last ten years.⁸¹ And it is this narrative model that the present writer proposes to use in this historical analysis of the Marist teaching tradition.

Coming, as it does, at the end of this review of recent Australian church and educational historiography, it is to be hoped that this decision to follow the narrative tradition is seen as neither naive, nor reactionary, much less faint-hearted. The writer is aware of – and accepts - Hayden White's characterization of narrative as a literary and rhetorical activity which seeks to interpret the past rather than re-present it and the product of which is itself open to tropological and deconstructive interpretation.⁸² He is conscious of Foucault's 'approach to history as the study of discourse and the analysis of the relations between systems of ideas, paradigms, or discourse, and knowledge and power.'⁸³ He is even vaguely aware of the long intellectual and ideological debate between those who are critical of narrative as a mode of thought, such as Barthes and Derrida, and those who would defend it such as Paul Ricoeur and some of the re-formed *Annalists*.⁸⁴ The decision, therefore, is not made in ignorance either of modern developments in historiographical method or of the vulnerability of narrative, as a technique, to the analysis of critical theory. Rather, it is made in the belief that narrative provides a coherent context within which critical analysis can be legitimately exercised. That decision having been made and explained, all that remains is to outline the structure of the proposed narrative and indicate the resources on which it will be based.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* Vol.1 p. xi. The square-bracketed question and italics, indicate the present writer's emphasis.

⁷⁹ Hayden White, *Figural Realism* (Baltimore, 1999) p. 10.

⁸⁰ *op.cit.* p. 146.

⁸¹ T.P. Boland, *Nudgee 1891-1991* (Brisbane, 1991) and *Gentlemen of Terrace* (Brisbane, 2000).

⁸² White, *op.cit.* especially the essay 'Literary Theory and Historical Writing' p. 2 and *passim*.

⁸³ Sol Cohen, 'The Triumph of the Therapeutic' in *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 30 No. 3 (1990). p. 373.

⁸⁴ White, *op.cit.* pp. 19-22.

Outline of the Narrative

The first chapter of the narrative – the second chapter of this dissertation – begins with the invitation to the Marist Brothers, by Archbishop Polding, in 1868, to send brothers to found a school and a teacher-training institution in Sydney and uses this invitation as an opportunity to describe the social, religious and educational situation the brothers would encounter there. This area was quite thoroughly covered by Br Alban Doyle in his centenary history and there is quite a lot of archival material available, as well as a growing body of secondary material. It is because of the secondary material, much of it published since Br Alban's time, that this social context is worth revisiting. Some of the issues, such as the displacement of lay teachers in Catholic Denominational Schools, which arise out of this later material, were not much considered in earlier versions of the story; but they have loomed larger now that the reverse process is in full swing.

Chapter Three goes back to the origins of the Marist Brothers in Restoration France and to the motivation and educational ideas of the founder, Fr (now Saint) Marcellin Champagnat, and those of his early disciples. The founder died in 1840 but three key documents – *The Common Rules* of the order, *The Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat*, and *The Teacher's Guide* – were all published by 1856 and served as the basic inspiration for the pioneer brothers in Australia. However, the *Rules* and the *Teacher's Guide* have been revised several times, since then, and the *Life* has been annotated, re-translated and re-issued. All three have been subjected to a great deal of re-visioning and de-constructing in the last twenty-five years. A *Collected Letters* of Fr Champagnat was published in 1991-92 and a modern, critical-historical life of the founder – *Achievement from the Depths* – was published in Australia by Br Stephen Farrell in 1984, developed from a Master's thesis he researched and wrote, under the auspices of the University of New England. Since 1990, an annual collection called, in its English version, *Marist Notebooks*, has been publishing the writings of contemporary Marist and Champagnat scholars from around the world. From all of these, it should be possible to discern, if not how the Marist teaching tradition is understood today then, at least, how it was understood by the pioneer brothers, when they first arrived in Sydney.

The next chapter will deal with the brothers' first four years in Australia (1872-75) when they discovered, more clearly, what the Catholic community of Sydney expected of them and, at the same time, the local community and clergy began to understand what they could expect of the Marist Brothers. It was, in many ways, a struggle to win acceptance for the Marist 'idea'. Br Alban covered the subject in some detail, using as his main source, the diary of the French-born Br Ludovic Laboureyras, the superior of the first group of brothers; but further work has been done on that era and more material has become available – from the Marist Fathers, for instance, and from the archaeology of The Rocks area, where the first school, St Patrick's, Harrington Street, was located. The 'dominant discourse' of Br Ludovic's *Annals of the Australian Mission* prevails and that is, as we shall see, a flawed document. Nevertheless, he and the Scotsman, Br Augustine McDonald, were the only two of the original party of four to survive the foundation period. Within three years, the other two members of the first group had left the order and their places were taken by local recruits who were under the spiritual direction of Br Ludovic and the pedagogical tutelage of Br Augustine. Between

the former's initiative and energy in recruiting local 'vocations' and his skill in nurturing them, as Marist Religious, it is difficult to over-estimate the importance of Br Ludovic in successfully establishing the Marist Brothers in Australia.

Chapter Five will consider the period up until 1893. During this time, the number of Marist Brothers teaching in Sydney grew, from the original four, to almost fifty, more than half of whom were locals, rather than reinforcements from Europe. They won the confidence of the new Archbishop, Roger Bede Vaughan, and his successor, Cardinal Moran and, at these prelates' urging, accepted responsibility for a network of inner city boys' parish schools, as well as one at Parramatta, St Joseph's College, at Hunter's Hill, and the High School next to St Mary's Cathedral. In 1876, a Provincial Superior, an Irishman named Br John Dullea arrived to take charge of this expanding mission. For this period, his *Letters from Oceania* become the major source, and a very useful one, for this particular project. Br John took a great deal more interest in classroom practicalities than had Br Ludovic. He also made a very conscious effort to imbue the Australian recruits with the spirit of the Founder. Until 1881, when the Boarding School was opened at Hunter's Hill, St Patrick's was the largest community of brothers and, in effect, the Provincial House. After 1887, when the High School classes moved from Harrington St. to the Cathedral site, St Patrick's became just one of half a dozen parish primary schools run by the Marist Brothers in Sydney. In 1879, the Jesuits opened a boys' secondary school in Woolloomooloo; in 1886 the Patrician Brothers opened a school in Redfern; and, in 1887, the Irish Christian Brothers opened one in Balmain. The Marist foundation era, and their monopoly on Catholic boys' education in Sydney, had come to an end.

Chapter Six steps out of the narrative mode to analyse, in more detail, the character of Marist Education, as it had developed in Australia to this point. It will contend that there were, in fact, two styles or types of Marist Education in Sydney at that time. There was the parochial school model - largely primary education - that was practiced in St Patrick's and the other parish schools established in Sydney, up until World War I. And there was the collegiate or secondary education model which began at St Patrick's but was soon transferred to St Joseph's, Hunter's Hill and to the High School at Darlinghurst. This latter version, though influenced, locally, by the English Public School, or the Arnoldian, model was also responding to a shift in emphasis in the Marist junior secondary schools in France, and it became the template for Marist Education when it came to be established in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and, eventually, Queensland. It was, therefore, highly significant in shaping what the Catholic parent community - and the brothers, themselves - believed Marist Education to be. Nor was it totally separate or distinct from the earlier, primary model. The formation and career of a man like Br Andrew Power, who trained under both models, moved between the two and then, as Provincial of Australia, supervised this dual system will, it is hoped, help us to understand and appreciate these two strands of Australian Marist Education.

In the light of the decline in the centrality of St Patrick's, it may seem strange that the remaining chapters in this narrative will follow the successive stages in St Patrick's development, with only side-ways glances at the broader Australian picture. The reasons for this are both practical and theoretical. At a practical level, the growth of the Marist Brothers in Australia was so continuous and widespread that to simply chart that growth, as Br Alban attempted to do, becomes confusing and repetitive. At a theoretical level,

the evolution of St Patrick's is, historically, more typical of Marist Brothers' schools in Australia than the big boarding colleges like St Joseph's, Hunter's Hill. Moreover, the Marist Brothers' teaching style - when allowance has been made for the distinction between primary and secondary - was reasonably uniform across most of their schools. And although St Patrick's has changed its function quite significantly over the years, it has changed in response to social and educational pressures which were affecting all Australian Marist Brothers' Schools. At one stage, from about 1962 to 1976, after it had moved from Harrington Street, in central Sydney, to outer suburban Dundas, it became the demonstration school for the Marist Brothers' teachers college, for the whole of Australia. The decision to follow St Patrick's is, therefore, somewhat like a zoologist's tagging one animal from a herd in order to follow the movements of the herd as a whole.

Although Chapter Six departs, to some extent, from the narrative mode, it does conclude on the eve of the education reforms of the first decade of the twentieth century. The three subsequent, chronological, chapters divide the remainder of the twentieth century into approximately thirty year periods. The tenth, and concluding, chapter will then review the developments and transitions in the Marist teaching tradition covered in the narrative and attempt to discern whether it is possible, in current Marist educational praxis, to affirm the existence of a continuity with and fidelity to the founding inspiration; to decide whether anything of the distinctive tradition has been preserved; or whether it has all been subsumed into the Australian educational mainstream. As the semiotician Umberto Eco declaimed in his most famous novel:

*Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus.*⁸⁵

This dissertation, therefore, seeks to determine whether there was, and still is, a distinctive and characteristic Marist style of pedagogy or, whether, all that remains, in contemporary Australia, is the 'Name of the Rose'? Only the 'names' and the legend of St Marcellin Champagnat and of his followers, the Marist Brothers of the Schools?

⁸⁵ The actual rose of antiquity survives by its name, only; we cling to the bare names (of the thing). (My translation).