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# A Moulding Haven? Competing Educational Discourses in an Australian Preparatory School of the Society of the Sacred Heart, 1944–65

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Educational historians emphasize *structure* over *behaviour*. If historians are to go beyond “the study of structure, macro-politics and economics and the lives of the élites,” argues Barbara Finkelstein, they “need to analyze education as something experienced as well as planned.”<sup>1</sup> Given the significance of context, educational history must go beyond a study of structure, policy, and authority figures to a systematic examination of practice. Analysis of school architecture and artefacts, combined with interviews with ordinary teachers and ex-students, provides a way to identify day-to-day practices in specific school settings. It is fallacious to suppose that study of experience leads to a discarding of education as something planned. Rather, everyday life forms the site of the operation of planning — of ideology.<sup>2</sup>

Two methodological approaches are helpful in applying this critique to school history. First, we can analyse educational buildings and associated artefacts as social constructs,<sup>3</sup> acknowledging individual meanings and intentions in the discourses of particular social systems. Such social systems are unstable. At any time there will be competing discourses, one gradually gaining ascendancy over another. Buildings and how they are used may thus be read as “narrative.”<sup>4</sup> Second, interviews with general teachers, ex-students, and ancillary staff allow the experiences of those not in positions of power to surface.<sup>5</sup> The following analysis

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<sup>1</sup>Barbara Finkelstein, ‘Educational Historians as Mythmakers,’ *Review of Research in Education*, 18 (1992), 288.

<sup>2</sup>See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, who defines ideology within the ego as “master (m’être) discourse whose goal is certainty and closure: ‘to be me.’ ” Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, “The sexual masquerade: a Lacanian theory of sexual difference,” in Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Mark Bracher, eds., *Lacan and the Subject of Language* (New York, Routledge, 1991), 71.

<sup>3</sup>In referring to ‘social constructs’ here I draw upon poststructuralist theory and Foucault’s notion of “discourse as practice,” that is, “a preconceptual, anonymous, socially sanctioned body of rules that govern one’s manner of perceiving, judging, imagining, and acting.” Thomas Flynn, “Foucault’s mapping of history,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993), 5.

<sup>5</sup>For further discussion regarding the need for writers of school histories to move beyond discourses of aspiration to include discourses of experience and practice, see

of an original school building, particularly the school vestibule, explores the intersection between discourses of aspiration and discourses of practice, drawing both upon texts which relate to the educational ideology of the school and on interviews with past students, teachers and ancillary staff.<sup>6</sup>

#### KEREVER PARK

Members of the Society of the Sacred Heart, a French order founded in 1800 by Madeleine Sophie Barat (a canonised saint),<sup>7</sup> arrived in Australia in 1882 to make their contribution to the development of a separate Catholic education system.<sup>8</sup> Bishops of the period considered education as synonymous with faith.<sup>9</sup> This belief fuelled a political struggle for state funding which lasted into the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Australian Catholics continue to have a separate, government funded, school system.

In 1944 a junior preparatory boarding school of Rose Bay Convent, an Australian Catholic secondary girls' boarding school conducted by the Society of

Christine Trimmingham Jack, "School History: Reconstructing the Lived Experience," *History of Education Review*, 26, 1 (1997), 42–54.

<sup>6</sup>Fourteen ex-students and religious were interviewed using an unstructured format. Two of the seven religious interviewed were former students at the school; a married couple employed at the school over most of the twenty-two years of its operation were also interviewed. For a full history of the school showing the impact of school experience on the discursive battle for subjectivity in childhood and adulthood, see Christine Trimmingham Jack, *Kerever Park: A history of the experience of teachers and children in a Catholic girls' preparatory boarding school, 1944–1965*, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1997.

<sup>7</sup>For broad discussions of the Society and its educational traditions, see Mary O'Leary, *Education with a Tradition: An Account of the Educational Work of the Society of the Sacred Heart* (London: University of London Press, 1936); Margaret Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart: History of a Spirit, 1800–1975* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978); Donald Cave, "The Pedagogical Traditions of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in France and Australia," in *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed. Imelda Palma (Melbourne, University of Melbourne Press, 1985), 28–73. The religious of the Sacred Heart are canonically nuns in that they took a vow of stability, similar to that taken by orders which were completely enclosed; however, it freed them to undertake teaching duties within the convent. Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, 44.

<sup>8</sup>Leila Barlow, *Living Stones: Convent of the Sacred Heart, Rose Bay 1882–1982*, (Sydney: Kincoppal-Rose Bay School, 1982) 11–14.

<sup>9</sup>Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1987), 34.

<sup>10</sup>For a detailed history of this battle, see Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia, 1806–1950* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975); Michael Hogan, *The Catholic Campaign for State Aid: A study of a pressure group campaign in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, 1950–1972* (Sydney: Catholic Theological Faculty, 1978).

the Sacred Heart, was opened at Burradoo in the Southern Highlands, south-west of Sydney.<sup>11</sup> This was the only such school established by the Society in Australia, and was a direct consequence of war-time evacuation of students from the vulnerable Sydney Harbour area into rural safety. When hostilities ceased, Mother Dorothy McGuinness, then superior general of the Society in Australia and New Zealand, decided that

so happy had they [the junior students] been in their peaceful country setting, with rosy cheeks and shining eyes telling of the benefits of fresh air and country food, that it seemed they should not be taken from their great out-of-doors.<sup>12</sup>

Local guesthouses were used during the evacuation period, but after the war a permanent property was located at Burradoo and re-named Kerever Park, after the previous superior general of the Society, Mother Alix de Keréver. The school continued on the premises as a boarding school, housing approximately sixty children, generally aged between five and twelve, annually from 1944 until the end of 1965.<sup>13</sup> 430 students attended the school over the twenty-two years. The school buildings now form a retreat centre run by the Society and often used by Catholic schools in the Sydney area. A recent addition is a retirement home for elderly members of the order.

#### SCHOOL AS HOME

Colin Symes has argued that the “symbolic climate” of a school is enshrined in the school vestibule and the artefacts displayed there. He describes the vestibule as a “threshold of space,” a place of “symbolic architecture” in which the school is “constituted” and given “summary formation.” The judgements which may be derived from these “appearance discourses” are “always efficacious and veracious.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>See G. Sherington, R.C. Petersen and I. Brice, *Learning to Lead: A history of girls' and boys' corporate secondary schools in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987).

<sup>12</sup>Author Anonymous, *The Establishment of Kerever Park* (Unpublished document, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney, no date).

<sup>13</sup>Interviews with ex-students show parents sent their children there after the war for the following reasons: to avoid large classes in post-war Catholic schools, to prevent their children mixing with local children of lower social status; to gain a Catholic education unavailable to many families in isolated rural settings; to continue a family tradition of children being educated by the Society; and as a solution to family difficulties, including large numbers of children. The School Register (hereafter “School Register”) indicates 40% came from rural properties, 12.6% from rural towns, and 5% were children of old girls. Kerever Park, School Register (Unpublished material, 1955–1965, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney).

<sup>14</sup>Colin Symes, *First Impressions: The Semiotics of School Vestibules* (Unpublished paper presented at the 26th annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand History of

Kerever Park was sited in a large Queen Anne style country house built in the 1890s. The vestibule was consequently small in comparison to those in conventional school buildings. The walls were papered in a homely flowered chintz design. A large "striking clock" stood on one side.<sup>15</sup> Although some small paintings, including a landscape, decorated the walls, two larger sacred symbols dominated it: a statue of Jesus as a child and a painting entitled *Sancta Magdalena Sophia*.<sup>16</sup> This painting was completed especially for Kerever Park by Margaret Nealis, a Canadian member of the order. The children<sup>17</sup> passed the picture whenever they left the dining room or went upstairs to the chapel.

A desire for Kerever Park to be a "home" may be inferred from the first entry in the House Journal.<sup>18</sup>

The wide hall and stairs, spacious kitchen and dependencies reveal the woman's touch. Knoyle [the original name of the property] has always been a 'home' and when we visited it we dreamed of a permanent 'Home' for the Sacred Heart in Burradoo from which our children would pass on to Rose Bay, founded in the elements of religion and knowledge suitable to their age.<sup>19</sup>

Mother McGuinness's desire for the junior students "not to be taken away" from a country life may have originated in the early deaths of both parents during her own childhood.<sup>20</sup> A country boarding school may have, in her mind, reduced dislocation for the many rural children who attended the school and provided a setting more homely than institutional.<sup>21</sup> However, reference in the House Journal

Education Society, *Childhood Citizenship Culture*, Brisbane, July 1996), 2–3. For further discussion of the "symbolic architecture" of education, see also John Synott and Colin Symes, "The Genealogy of the School: An Iconography of Badges and Mottoes," *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 16, 2 (1995), 139–52. For discussion of other aspects of the symbolic climate of the Society, see Christine Trimmingham Jack, "Sacred Symbols, School Ideology and the Construction of Subjectivity," *Paedagogica Historica*, 34, no. 3 (1998) (in press).

<sup>15</sup>Kerever Park, *House Journal* (Unpublished document, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney, 1944–1966), February 20, 1944 (hereafter "*House Journal*").

<sup>16</sup>See Author Anonymous, "At Home at Kerever Park," *Cor Unum: The chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart, Australia*, 6 (1949–50), 72. This article contains a picture of the front vestibule and indicates a few smaller pictures in the vestibule which I have not been able to identify, although a member of the Society who spent nine years at the school believes them to have been landscapes.

<sup>17</sup>Given that they were girls generally under twelve years of age, the students are referred to as "children" throughout.

<sup>18</sup>The House Journal was written by a religious (nun) who was a member of the convent at that time.

<sup>19</sup>House Journal, first entry, January 1944.

<sup>20</sup>M.D. September 25, 1995. Interview two. The initials of all those interviewed are pseudonyms.

<sup>21</sup>All children were boarders.

to “pass[ing] on to Rose Bay” indicates competing aspirations in preparing students for secondary school.

In the early years of establishment, a number of articles about the school appeared in *Cor Unum*, journal of the Australian schools of the Society. Early depictions employ two discourses: school as home; childhood as happy and innocent. Although the author of the first article is anonymous, it may be hypothesised that she was a member of the Society. A nostalgia has been incorporated which perhaps grows out of early aspirations for the school but also touches on illusions of the security of childhood and the safety of a past located in an English environment.

Find yourself in view of the house's home-like gables, its broad verandahs and the lovely English trees that shelter it. Stillness is all around, the stillness of the country . . . startlingly, therefore, come the patter of feet and joyous shout that answers the Mistress's invocation of the Holy Angels.<sup>22</sup>

An idealised description continues with the children finding only happiness and success. At night they receive “motherly” care: tucked into bed, bodily ailments attended to, and taught a simple French lesson in the process. At the heart of the descriptions is, as Madeleine Grumet expresses it, “the careful balance of order and disorder, the planned and the spontaneous”—the renaissance concept of *sprezzatura*, the art of presenting achievement without seeming effort—“embodied in the grace and ease of the happy childhood.”<sup>23</sup>

Similar articles follow. In 1946, a “letter” from the children refers to special feast days, farm animals, parents' day, and lessons, including music lessons: “we love our lessons with her” [the music teacher].<sup>24</sup> A third article, “At Home at Kerever Park,” includes pictures of the gardens, farm animals, children riding and a class photo. Again the school is cast as an ideal setting, yet beyond the rhetoric is revealed the potential of an intimate lifestyle made possible by such a small school in a country setting: the chance for close attention from the religious in small classes, riding lessons, and interaction with farm animals.<sup>25</sup>

A discourse of school as home seems central to the aspirations of those who established the school. Pictures which decorated classroom walls, apart from

<sup>22</sup>Author Anonymous, Kerever Park, Burradoo, *Cor Unum: The chronicle of the convents of the Sacred Heart, Australia*, 1 (1945–46), 89.

<sup>23</sup>Madeleine R. Grumet, “Curriculum and the Art of Daily Life,” in *Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry: Understanding Curriculum and Teaching Through the Arts*, eds. George Willis and William H. Schubert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) 82.

<sup>24</sup>Juniors of Kerever Park, “Kerever Park,” *Cor Unum: The Chronicle of the Convents of the Sacred Heart Australia*, 2 (1946), 93.

<sup>25</sup>The highest ratio of teaching religious to students was 1:12. Trimmingham Jack, Kerever Park, 362.

images of the Sacred Heart and Madeleine Sophie, included childhood themes: children and angels, Mary holding the infant Jesus.<sup>26</sup> The chapel was small and intimate.<sup>27</sup> A discourse of innocent childhood was incorporated into a series of “holy cards” (small cards given to the children on special occasions) painted by Margaret Nealis and used in Sacred Heart schools at the time.<sup>28</sup> The “home” was also in keeping with the upper middle class background of those who both attended and staffed the school. Since its inception the Society of the Sacred Heart had served the educational needs of the upper classes.<sup>29</sup> It was mainly the daughters of “graziers” (sheep or cattle farmers) and professional people who attended Kerever Park.<sup>30</sup>

The social order of the Society embodied class structure. The seventh point of the Constitutions states: “The Society is composed of two classes of person, those destined for teaching and those who are to be employed in household duties.”<sup>31</sup> When young women joined the Society (most ex-students),<sup>32</sup> they could become either choir nuns directly involved in the educational work of the Society, usually as teachers, or as coadjutrix (“helper”) sisters undertaking domestic duties. Although choir nuns had approximately two and a half years of training in the

<sup>26</sup>J.H. 1 June 1996.

<sup>27</sup>The chapel was part of the first extension to the original building, in keeping with the Queen-Anne style of the house. The iconography in the chapel—statues of Mary and Saint Joseph, and pictures of the events surrounding the death of Jesus (known as Stations of the Cross)—were also on a small scale, as were the carved pews, continuing the theme of childhood.

<sup>28</sup>For discussion of the work of Margaret Nealis see Elizabeth Schofield, *Soul Pictures of Mary Margaret Nealis*, PhD thesis, Concordia University, Montréal, 1993. One ex-student interviewed had a collection of these cards. M.M. April 18, 1996. The cards included depictions of Mary and Jesus as children, Jesus surrounded by children, and Mary with the infant Jesus, but these images were less formal than traditional religious images. Trimmingham Jack, Kerever Park, 155.

<sup>29</sup>Cave, *The Pedagogical Traditions*, 28 and 34. Cave points out that educating the upper classes was not the sole concern of the Society. In Europe, “poor schools” were also opened alongside the “pensionnat” but, as Cave points out, while it was attempted to transplant this concept into Australia, “completely different social conditions doomed them to failure.”

<sup>30</sup>M.F. June 5, 1996. Of the group of nine ex-students interviewed, seven came from rural backgrounds and two were the daughters of professional men. It is recorded in the School Register that of the 430 students only eighteen fee reductions were made, twelve of these for students entering in 1946.

<sup>31</sup>Society of the Sacred Heart, *The Constitutions and Rules of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, (Rochampton, Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1928), 7.

<sup>32</sup>One out of the seven religious interviewed for this research was not an ex-student of Sacred Heart schools. Two of the religious had been at Kerever Park as children. Only one of the lay sisters who served at Kerever Park was still alive to be interviewed.

novitiate, the lay sisters began domestic work immediately, receiving little education in either the formative or subsequent years, at least until the tiered system ended in 1964.<sup>33</sup>

Margaret Williams, an American member of the Society and author of a history of the order, explains the function of the tiered arrangement in the nineteenth century as being “the desire to open religious life to all who felt called to it in an epoch when differences of education and social status would otherwise have been a barrier.” She concludes that, without such a distinction, many vocations from less educated women would have “been lost to the Society.”<sup>34</sup> Williams records no evidence of attempts to educate sisters who might have sought teaching as a career yet been barred from it by lack of education. In fact, the reference in the Constitutions of the Society to “those destined for teaching” suggests a deterministic view of such class distinctions.

Williams’ argument does not apply to all the sisters at Kerever Park. One was a qualified primary teacher before she entered the order in England; another had taught in parish schools in New Zealand.<sup>35</sup> We may conjecture that they were accepted as sisters for their own reasons, which may have included a desire for reparation: Williams refers to a young aristocratic French woman who became a lay sister to make “expiation” for the “scandals” of her family.<sup>36</sup>

The sisters’ work was physically hard. Under the direction of a choir nun, four sisters undertook, for, the cooking of all meals, laundry and ironing, cleaning, and nursing for at least seventy people. That the sisters were generally middle aged and older made their work even more physically challenging.<sup>37</sup> They also took their community recreation and spiritual reading time apart from the choir nuns, often joining them only for meals and for Sunday recreation. Consequently the sisters had little contact with the children, although they were “intensely” interested in them.<sup>38</sup>

Janet Erskine Stuart, an English member of the Society writing in 1923, considered lack of education as an advantage: it left the sisters with an “unburdened memory [which] is singularly tenacious of all good and beautiful things.”<sup>39</sup> A choir nun spoke similarly.<sup>40</sup> However, Erskine Stuart’s construction is not in

<sup>33</sup>P.R. October 3, 1995. Interview one; P.R. October 10, 1995. Interview two.

<sup>34</sup>Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, 43.

<sup>35</sup>P.R. October 10, 1995. Interview two.

<sup>36</sup>Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, 291. P.R. October 3, 1995. Interview one; P.R. October 10, 1995. Interview two.

<sup>37</sup>P.R. October 10, 1995. Interview two.

<sup>38</sup>P.R. October 3, 1995. Interview one.

<sup>39</sup>Janet Erskine Stuart, *The Society of the Sacred Heart* (Roehampton: Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1923), 27.

<sup>40</sup>S.B. November 3, 1995. Interview two.



keeping with interview material from others. For example, Charles and Enid Stevenson, employed to undertake domestic and farm work respectively, remembered one of the sisters reading the forbidden newspaper<sup>41</sup> in the henhouse. To guard against being found out, she bored a small peep hole in the wall from which she could spot unexpected visitors.<sup>42</sup> In her written "reminiscences," Evelyn Stewart, a coadjutrix sister, noted her private resistance to a choir nun's intervention on discovering her reading a story book to the children when the electric light system had failed. The choir nun book replaced the story book with the lives of saints. "Just too bad!" was the sister's view of the intrusion.<sup>43</sup>

The Stevensons' memories also testify to class divisions in the school. After Charles became the property manager in 1945, they lived in a small cottage on the school grounds. Charles reported that the school "was a real family" in that he "felt needed," was invited to special events at the school, handled the money for the religious on rare visits to town, and attended local funerals as their representative. But they too had little contact with the children. "I kept my place. If the girls spoke to me, I spoke to them," stated Charles. "The same with me," added Enid.<sup>44</sup> This "family" was hierarchical and in keeping with social relations between the upper and working classes. Although the Stevensons thought they were treated fairly and generously for hard work and loyalty to the "family" of Kerever Park, they were kept at a social distance, with Charles referred to neither as "Charlie" nor "Mister Stevenson," but as "Stevenson." The practice of enclosure by the Society at that time added to social and physical distance. The religious were not allowed to enter any private home, including the Stevensons', even though it lay within the convent grounds.

In the early days of the school's existence, the aspirational discourse of happy and innocent childhood, protected from the hardness of everyday life, took strong root. The genre of "happy childhood" is well entrenched in English culture. Parents, particularly mothers of the last century, were advised by Mrs Beeton in her well-consulted book on household management to make their children "feel that home is the happiest place in the world."<sup>45</sup> This discourse was given fresh currency in the post-war 1950s. Children became the repositories of hopes, desires, and fantasies for a world free from the forces of hatred and fear which had driven the war years. Democracy had won and in the new social order which

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<sup>41</sup>In this period only the superior of the convent could read the newspaper. She cut out small snippets for the other religious to read.

<sup>42</sup>E. and C. Stevenson. June 30, 1996.

<sup>43</sup>Sister Evelyn Stewart, *Reminiscences of KP for Sr L. McGee* (Unpublished document, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney, no date).

<sup>44</sup>C. and E. Stevenson. June 30, 1996.

<sup>45</sup>Priscilla Robertson, "The home as a nest," in *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd de Mause (London: Condor, 1974), 423.

would rise from the ashes of the war, children would be happy as well as innocent and safe from trauma. They would provide the building blocks of the continued victory of democracy.<sup>46</sup> Kerever Park's setting embodied these hopes.

In the early years, the country house provided a home-like quality: the children slept in normal bedrooms, played cricket in the front garden and celebrated birthdays on the front verandah.<sup>47</sup> The school was located down a small country lane and, except for holiday time, the children left the convent grounds only for occasional Sunday outings with relatives. They had no access to newspapers, radio, or (later) television. Instead there were riding lessons, with some keeping their own ponies. A working farm on the school property produced much of the food. Yet early aspirations for a close affinity to home-life could not maintain precedence when the economic need to extend school numbers led to larger dormitories and a study room to accommodate all the children. Extensions undertaken in 1947 provided more institutional buildings behind the original house.<sup>48</sup> A swap of fourteen acres of land with a neighbour in 1950<sup>49</sup> meant the children played at the back of the school rather than in the formal front gardens, and created a sharp distinction between the front public areas and the back children's areas.

The religious of the Sacred Heart had a history of being effective educators with rigorous Plans of Study,<sup>50</sup> an approach in keeping with the conservative approach to education which was the hallmark of most Australian schools, Catholic and state, until the 1960s.<sup>51</sup> The Society's educational practice was not located in discourses of democracy or school as home but rather in educating their students in keeping with their class and gender, as well as for citizenship within the Catholic Church and, ultimately, for eternal life.

<sup>46</sup>Ester Faye, *Growing Up "Australian"* (Unpublished paper presented at the 26th annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Childhood Citizenship Culture, Brisbane, July 1996), 3–4.

<sup>47</sup>M.F. 5 June 1996.

<sup>48</sup>House Journal, 1947.

<sup>49</sup>John Fagan, "The Story of Mary's Meadow" (Unpublished material, August 22, 1982, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney).

<sup>50</sup>Nikola Baumgarten, "Education and Democracy in Frontier St. Louis: the Society of the Sacred Heart," *History of Education Quarterly*, 34, 2 (1994), 182.

<sup>51</sup>W.F. Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education, 1960–1985* (Hawthorn, Victoria: ACER, 1993), 48. Connell describes Australian educate in the 1960s as being managerial and somewhat meritocratic in organisation, academic in content and meliorist in purpose (p. 32).

## COMPETING EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

The *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting depicts the foundress speaking with three Kerever Park children. Incorporation of a childhood theme indicates a desire to adapt the school to suit young children. Other aspects of the painting convey clear messages about the educational work of Kerever Park—messages which sit in tension with early aspirations for the school. This tension is illustrated in the first entry of the House Journal. Here, apart from the desire for a “home” (with a lower case “h”), reference is made to a “permanent “Home” [upper case “H”]... from which our children would pass on to Rose Bay, founded in the elements of religion and knowledge.” The notion of preparing students at country boarding schools to take their place in private secondary schools is in the tradition of English preparatory schools.

Donald Leinster-Mackay lists three characteristics of such schools: “separation” of younger students from secondary students, “preparation” for academic life in larger public schools, and “rustication,” this preparation conducted in country settings.<sup>52</sup> Leinster-Mackay also notes that a healthy setting was an important characteristic of early preparatory schools.<sup>53</sup>

The essential nature of the “preparation” at Kerever Park is contained within the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting.<sup>54</sup> The foundress is robed in the traditional black habit worn by members of the Society until the 1960s. One hand holds the cross hanging from her neck, the other a book in which she shows to the children a picture of Mary (the mother of Jesus) known as *Mater Admirabilis*. The child nearest to her, wearing a pink sash around her uniform, has come forward to view the book and is pointing to the picture. The other two children hold closed books under their arms. A statue of the Sacred Heart (an image of Jesus) looks on from a shrine in the background. This painting thus incorporates all the key pedagogic discourses of Kerever Park: education in service of God (the Sacred Heart statue oversees all), education oriented to the traditional role of women (the children’s

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<sup>52</sup>Donald Leinster-Mackay, *The Rise of the English Preparatory School* (East Sussex: Falmer Press, 1984), 12.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 121. In comparison to England, preparatory schools were not common in Australia and tended to be day schools. G. Sherington, R.C. Petersen and I. Brice, *Learning to Lead: A history of girls' and boys' corporate secondary schools in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 99–100. For further discussion of boys' preparatory schools in Australian see, Donald Leinster-Mackay, “English, Australian and New Zealand Prep Schools: A study in degrees of replication” (Unpublished paper presented at the Twenty Second Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Melbourne, 1993).

<sup>54</sup>The School Register reveals that of the 430 children who attended the school, 69% went on to Rose Bay and 8% went on to other Sacred Heart Schools.

attention drawn to the Mater Admirabilis icon), aspiring to perfection (the child wearing the pink ribbon as a sign of merit),<sup>55</sup> and intellectual rigour (the books under the children's arms).

The educational philosophy and curriculum guidelines of Sacred Heart boarding schools were contained in their Plans of Study, the first of which (1805) was drawn up in the period after the French Revolution and the suppression of religious orders and associated schools. A significant goal in the development of the Society was to provide a counter force to the secular discourses of the time, through the education of girls who would be wives and mothers.<sup>56</sup> Pre- and post-revolutionary influences on the Society, in particular those arising from women's and men's religious orders, include the Jesuit<sup>57</sup> emphasis on intellectual development and memory work; the Christian Brothers' emphasis on silence and highly organised discipline; the spiritual and liturgical preoccupations of the Benedictines and Cistercians; and the Ursulines' detailed attention to teaching practices.<sup>58</sup> Also influential was Madame De Maintenon's Academy de Saint-Cyr, with its Fénelonain emphasis on producing wives and mothers who would renew society through utilitarian values and a commitment to duty.<sup>59</sup>

Most relevant to Kerever Park was the 1922 Plan (adapted to English in 1931).<sup>60</sup> In 1958, towards the end of the period in which Kerever Park operated, a new Plan was adopted by the Society. Unlike earlier versions, the 1958 Plan did not dictate curriculum but rather described the "spirit" of Sacred Heart schools, hence allowing for national differences in curricula.<sup>61</sup> Although the second plan

<sup>55</sup>The practice of assigning coloured ribbons as rewards for excellent work and conduct was practised across all schools of the Society. Cave notes that they were conferred by "votes of one's peers and ratified by the Religious." (Cave, *The Pedagogical Traditions*, 54.) There was no peer vote at Kerever Park; the ribbons were assigned by discussion between the mistress general and the teaching religious. E.B. and E.R. August 18, 1995. Joint interview.

<sup>56</sup>For further discussion of the founding motivations of the Society, see Margaret Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie: Her life and letters* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965).

<sup>57</sup>There have been strong and ongoing links between the Society and the Jesuits. See Cave, *The Pedagogical Traditions*, 38–42.

<sup>58</sup>O'Leary, *Education with a Tradition*, 16–45.

<sup>59</sup>Cave, *The Pedagogical Traditions*, 46–9. For further discussion of the relationship between Saint-Cyr and Fénelon see Carolyn C. Lougee, "Noblesse, Domesticity, and Social Reform: The education of girls by Fénelon and Saint-Cyr," *History of Education Quarterly*, XIV, I (1974), 87–111.

<sup>60</sup>Society of the Sacred Heart, *Plan of Studies of the Boarding Schools of the Society of the Sacred Heart*, translated from the French edition (Rochampton: Society of the Sacred Heart, 1931) (hereafter *Plan of Studies*).

<sup>61</sup>Society of the Sacred Heart, *Spirit and Plan of Studies in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* (Farnborough Hants: St Michael's Abbey Press, 1958).

may have allowed for changes to the educational practices of the school, there is little evidence from interviews of any significant change in the twenty-two years of the school's operation. This stability in practice may be explained by the fact that there was only one mistress general (principal) for the entire period.

#### EDUCATION IN SERVICE OF GOD

Madeleine Sophie, in keeping with the goals of other religious teaching orders, was intransigent about putting the spiritual end of education first. Life after death was the ultimate goal of any education.<sup>62</sup> Erskine Stuart encouraged the same aim in her 1911 treatise on *The Education of Catholic Girls*, especially in the education of young children.<sup>63</sup> The similar focus of the 1922 Plan leaves little room for notions of school as home.

Strong studies in accordance with the spirit of our Plan; sustained effort on the part of the Mistresses and children; seriousness, which develops the mind: sure and deep principles to direct the will and keep the heart for God—these are the things we need for the education of our children, who are all too prone to take prettiness for beauty, and the interesting for the true.<sup>64</sup>

The “spiritual end” of education also takes priority in the 1958 Plan.<sup>65</sup>

The scope of religious instruction included Church dogma and history, scripture and liturgy.<sup>66</sup> In most Australian Catholic schools of the period, basic Church tenets were imparted through the Green Catechism which took a question and answer format:

Q. Who made the world?

A. God made the world.

Q. Who is God?

A. God is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things and the Supreme Lord of all.<sup>67</sup>

In his history of growing up Catholic in Australia, Edmund Campion argues that “the certain certainties of the catechism helped create the unquestioning docility of mind” which has, in the past, characterised Australian Catholicism.

The importance of reading spiritual books was stressed in a 1948 document on school regulations for Australian Sacred Heart schools.<sup>68</sup> Kerever Park children

<sup>62</sup>Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, 464.

<sup>63</sup>Janet Erskine Stuart, *The Education of Catholic Girls* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 11.

<sup>64</sup>*Plan of Studies*, v.

<sup>65</sup>Society of the Sacred Heart, *Spirit and Plan of Studies*, 12.

<sup>66</sup>*Plan of Studies*, 3–31.

<sup>67</sup>Edmund Campion, *Rockchoppers: Growing up Catholic in Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1982), 70.

<sup>68</sup>Society of the Sacred Heart, “Meetings Concerning School Regulations,” (Unpub-

read lives of the saints on Sunday mornings before they went out with visitors. They learned a section of scripture by heart each week. Children received extensive preparation for Holy Communion, Confession, and Confirmation in times beyond the normal daily religion class. Mass, then said in Latin, was attended at least three times a week, confession on Saturday afternoon, Benediction on Sunday, and public prayers each day.

Spiritual groups, called "congregations," were organized. These date back to the first congregation (Children of Mary) established in 1832 "to help young girls and women in the world to persevere in faith, in piety, in charity, in modesty; to encourage them to accomplish the duties of their state in life; and to bring them spiritual help in difficulties."<sup>69</sup> At Kerever Park, membership in a congregation was recorded in the School Register.<sup>70</sup> Fostering of religious vocations was important, as in all orders, if their numbers were to be maintained. The 1948 School Regulations document stated that children in junior schools might be encouraged to begin practices leading to vocations. Emphasis on prayer in congregations was noted as a way of encouraging such development.<sup>71</sup>

Prayers were said throughout the day and visits to the chapel were encouraged. The great feasts of the Church, such as the Assumption of Mary and Easter, were celebrated as holidays together with as the annual feasts days of the Sacred Heart and Saint Madeleine Sophie. Although Mother McGuinness may have intended Kerever Park to provide a home for the young children, emphasis was on socialization into an obedient member of the family of the Society and the Church and on being preparing for the ultimate home—heaven. The School Rules document admonishes the children to "never leave Jesus and Mary but ... [to] be a delight to them for ever."<sup>72</sup>

School mottoes serve "to join one generation of learners to another," as well as acting as a "linguistic beacon, signalling the school's intention."<sup>73</sup> *Cor Unum*, "one heart," was and continues to be the motto for all Sacred Heart schools and for the international alumnae association, as well as the title of the Australian journal of the Society's schools.<sup>74</sup> It signals a desire for a sense of family across the

lished document, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney, December 29, 1947–January 5, 1948), 18 (hereafter "School Regulations").

<sup>69</sup>Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, 77–78.

<sup>70</sup>School Register. The meetings were taken up mainly with prayers and talks by the mistress general. G.D. July 9, 1996. Interview 1; D.G. April 1, 1996.

<sup>71</sup>School Regulations, 44.

<sup>72</sup>Kerever Park, Rule of the School (Unpublished document, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney, no date), 1 (hereafter Rule of the School).

<sup>73</sup>Synott and Symes, *The Genealogy*, 139 and 145.

<sup>74</sup>Founded in 1960. The goals of the association are: social justice; international collaboration; active cooperation with the undertakings of the Society; representation in inter-

schools and also generations of students. School documents and the narratives of the religious and ex-students provide clear evidence that individuality was to be suppressed in service of the "family." One religious stated that emphasis on obedience was intended to "curb" the children and "bring them into line" to prevent them being "disruptive of the group."<sup>75</sup> The 1948 School Regulations document refers to characteristics which, as Campion suggests, would produce obedient and docile citizens of the Church.

We must give rise to and develop in them the Christian ideas of authority and of respect; of duty and of obedience; of responsibility and of influence; of the sense of moral principle and of loyalty; of effort and of sacrifice; of the service and the duty we owe to God and to other people.<sup>76</sup>

This document also places emphasis on the notion of the Society as family.<sup>77</sup> But not all children fitted into the family. Comments beside the names of twelve children in the School Register, such as "asked to leave" because of "unsatisfactory conduct," indicate that not all children conformed sufficiently.<sup>78</sup>

#### EDUCATION FOR THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN

Although children were prepared for membership in the family of the Church, their education was located in the educational epistemology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They were to be, as Noeline Kyle expresses it, "handmaidens of the Church in both their religious and their private lives" prepared for "domesticity, motherhood, community service, voluntarism, modesty, and faith."<sup>79</sup> The 1922 Plan indicates that this role was considered biologically determined.<sup>80</sup> The Kerever Park curriculum was reminiscent of the female accomplishments tradition of the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on middle class women being educated "to the highest degree but in a manner which suited their female character."<sup>81</sup>

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national organisations. Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, 263.

<sup>75</sup>M.D. 25 September 1995. Interview two.

<sup>76</sup>School Regulations, 39–40.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>78</sup>School Register. Although some children were asked to leave, interviews with those who stayed indicates that there was also a degree of private and, although less common, public resistance amongst other students. Trimmingham Jack, Kerever Park, 264–322. Two ex-students interviewed were expelled during their time at Rose Bay when, it seems, their ongoing resistance finally became unacceptable. G.D. July 9, 1996. Interview one; J.H. June 1, 1996.

<sup>79</sup>Noeline Kyle, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales*, (Sydney: NSW University Press, 1986), 69–70.

<sup>80</sup>*Plan of Studies*, iv.

<sup>81</sup>Marjorie R. Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of women's education in nineteenth-century*

In Sacred Heart schools, Mary was a central symbol in the form of the *Mater Admirabilis* icon.<sup>82</sup> (In the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting, Madeleine Sophie draws the children's attention to the icon.) The hegemonic practices of Kerever Park aimed to lead children to a life of prayer, encouraging them to model themselves on the obedience of Mary, to act in service, and to become keepers of the virtue of others through their own behaviour. These ideals were expressed in the School Rule which encouraged the children to pray to and visit Jesus in the chapel, to take Mary as their "model in obedience" and to be kind and helpful to others, especially by being a "good example."<sup>83</sup>

In her 1936 history of the Society's educational work, Mary O'Leary links religious practices to manners and behaviours considered appropriate amongst upper class girls. Both the children and the religious were led to believe in such behaviour as ordained by God rather than constructed by human consciousness. Their manners, speech, and tone of voice, the silence and self-control demanded of them, their curtsies to Superiors, their gentleness and self-respect in dress and carriage all expressed a definite and high ideal of womanhood, part of the tradition which moulded their lives.<sup>84</sup>

Certain practices associated with the school were usually restricted to private schools. In the English tradition of the great public schools, all the children boarded. They wore expensive weekday and Sunday uniforms, coats, hats and gloves. Although speech classes and music were optional, ballet was taught to everyone. They curtsied to the reverend mother, the mistress general and visitors alike. Recreational "dancing or quiet games" were encouraged indoors and "ugly expressions" penalised.<sup>85</sup> They wrote thank you letters for social occasions and for gifts, including those from their parents.<sup>86</sup> Yet it was not to be a frivolous education. The children were taught to embroider, knit, sew and especially to darn.

An annual prize was given for darning. The following extract from the narrative of an ex-student illustrates the intersection between a serious approach to teaching and the gendered curriculum:

GD: Preparation for learning went on so long. She [the teacher] promised us we would all learn to darn. She glued hessian to brown paper. And she showed us the brown paper. "See this. This is going to be the backing." We had a month of

*Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11. Unlike this tradition, the Society did include the study of philosophy in its Plans which was taught in secondary schools but not at Kerever Park.

<sup>82</sup>Trimingham Jack, *Sacred Symbols*.

<sup>83</sup>Rule of the School, 1.

<sup>84</sup>O'Leary, *Education with a Tradition*, 65. Two ex-students discussed the middle class background of the children. M.F. June 5, 1996; G.D. July 9, 1996. Interview one.

<sup>85</sup>"School Regulations," 14.

<sup>86</sup>Rule of the School, 3; M.F. June 5, 1996.



looking at the backing . . . If you want to teach anyone something, first, tell them how good it is, take three years preparing them and no wonder I learnt to darn.<sup>87</sup>

The children were taught austerity in material possessions. They were given one exercise book, rubber, ruler, pencil, and set of coloured pencils at a time, all to be marked clearly, not shared and not lost. Any fancy pens, pencils cases, etc., brought back from holidays were soon confiscated. This emphasis on simplicity has its origins in the days of Madeleine Sophie and in particular in the writings of Fénelon,<sup>88</sup> and was in keeping with the life of poverty to which the religious aspired.<sup>89</sup> The religious were directed: "To encourage Christian self-denial at every stage of their education" in preparation for the "painful sacrifices which conscience will require" in adulthood.<sup>90</sup> The children were also encouraged to make donations to those less fortunate.<sup>91</sup>

The religious were to "safe-guard" the children's "modesty."<sup>92</sup> Once a year, the children processed to Our Lady's Grotto in the school grounds where they placed lilies, reciting: "Oh Mary I give you the lily of my heart, be thou its guardian forever."<sup>93</sup> Mary, the mother of Jesus, provided the model of obedience, respectfulness, politeness, purity—and tidiness. In the School Rule the children were asked: "Should Our Lady visit your desk during the day, what would she find?" A tidy desk was to be the response.<sup>94</sup>

As envisioned in post-revolutionary France, Sacred Heart education was about the winning back of the family to religion.<sup>95</sup> The 1922 Plan continues the tradition: the "kingdom" would grow "by means of these children who will be the women, the wives and mothers of tomorrow."<sup>96</sup> The tenacity of this discourse is illustrated by the reference of one religious interviewed to the "power" of a "good woman" to "influence a whole nation . . . through the family."<sup>97</sup>

#### ASPIRING TO PERFECTION

In the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting, a child wearing a pink sash (a sign of merit) stands before the group of three, pointing to the picture of Mater Admirabilis.

<sup>87</sup>G.D. July 9, 1996. Interview one.

<sup>88</sup>O'Leary, *Education with a Tradition*, 129.

<sup>89</sup>S.B. October 25, 1995. Interview one.

<sup>90</sup>"School Regulations," 41.

<sup>91</sup>M.M. April 18, 1996.

<sup>92</sup>"School Regulations," 5.

<sup>93</sup>E.B. August 18, 1995. Interview two.

<sup>94</sup>Rule of the School, 3.

<sup>95</sup>Baumgarten, *Education and Democracy*, 190.

<sup>96</sup>*Plan of Studies*, vii.

<sup>97</sup>E.R. August 18, 1995. Interview one.

The role of the religious was to prepare them as “perfectly as may be” so that they might come to learn “the excellence of self-restraint and the loveliness of perfect service.”<sup>98</sup> Perfection was located in the practice of self-control and obedience arising out of discourses associated with the ideal spiritual woman, other- rather than self-oriented.

Three main rules of the school advised students: to pray to Jesus, to take Mary as their model in obedience, and to be helpful to others and to do what is right, with the final summary that “you will be very happy if you follow these three rules, and Jesus and His Blessed Mother will be very happy too.”<sup>99</sup> The embedded message that these behaviours are what God wishes and are the way to goodness/happiness illustrates the link between practices of social control and ordinance from God.

The narratives of the religious reflect an over-riding concern on the part of those in authority, notably the mistress general of the school, that they should both control the children and control themselves. Instances of the religious stepping out of line were severely reprimanded and inefficiencies in control of the children were viewed as failures. Perfection for both the children and the religious was located in absolute obedience which the religious were expected to extract from the children.<sup>100</sup>

Children’s behaviour was carefully monitored in all spaces. Additions to the original building—dormitories, the study room and confined play areas at the back of the house—facilitated the process. The religious carried small books with them in which they noted various behaviours, and these records were drawn upon in the formal ritual known as Weekly Notes which classified the children, honouring some and punishing others. The “notes” were hierarchical, moving from Very Good, Good, Fair to Unsatisfactory. The criterion for all levels was obedience. Where initiative is referred to in the School Regulations document it is immediately limited and linked to service and God’s will. Merit ribbons were earned by receiving three “Very Goods” in a row. To foster a sense of duty, those awarded a ribbon took on additional responsibility for certain charges.<sup>101</sup>

Formal presentation of the notes and ribbons generally took place on Sunday morning. Chairs were set up in the front parlour, with the religious sitting in hierarchical order, based on position of authority and year of profession as a religious, in front of the children (the lay sisters usually did not attend). Notes would be read out class by class and the children would come forward to receive them. In such a setting, as Michel Foucault argues, the ceremony combining

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<sup>98</sup>*Plan of Studies*, iv.

<sup>99</sup>Rule of the School, 2.

<sup>100</sup>E.B. August 9, 1995. Interview one.

<sup>101</sup>School Regulations, 20–8.

power and examination makes manifest those who are the “observing hierarchy,” who have the power to “qualify, to classify and to punish,” and those who are subjected.<sup>102</sup>

Children who received a high merit at Weekly Notes could not rest assured that they had attained perfection. For example, joining a congregation required asking the mistress general for admittance, and the student was normally denied admission at her first request. Ex-students recalling this experience emphasized this initial knock-back more than gaining admittance.<sup>103</sup> Children were not to assume they were acceptable, but rather that they had always to aspire to a higher degree of goodness.

A separate set of rules governed recreation time, beginning with an exhortation to join in with organised games and to “play your best.” At the core of these rules was self-monitoring, illustrating Foucault’s thesis of the individual who becomes subject not only to others but also to herself.<sup>104</sup>

When recreations are on the concrete, all should play on the concrete, on the gravel, or on the Study Room verandah. It is not allowed to play beyond these limits . . . you can always judge them by saying . . . can the Mistress who is standing on the concrete see us here? If she could not then you should not be where you are.<sup>105</sup>

Just as the children were to conform to the rules as closely as possible, so too were they expected to adopt such behaviour in their work. For example, a major task each year was to produce Feast Books for the feast days of the mistress general, the superior of the religious, and for Parents’ Day. These books had to be presented perfectly: no mistakes in maths, writing as perfect as possible, and without obvious corrections.<sup>106</sup>

A perfect child was one able to follow the rules—who gained merit, as in the *Sancta Magdalena Sophia* painting. She was closest to the model of *Mater Admirabilis*, the ideal woman, respectful towards authority, focused on others, and obedient. Such behaviour was ordained by God. Even though the children’s efforts to be obedient were acknowledged by the Weekly Notes, one ex-student said, “Good meant I never quite made it.”<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Michel Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 197.

<sup>103</sup>D.G. April 1, 1996; G.D. July 9, 1996. Interview two.

<sup>104</sup>Rabinow, “Introduction,” in *The Foucault Reader*, 21.

<sup>105</sup>Rule of the School, 4.

<sup>106</sup>Francis T, Feast Books (Unpublished documents, held by ex-student Francis T., 1950–1952).

<sup>107</sup>G.D. July 9, 1996. Interview one.

## INTELLECTUAL RIGOUR

Rebecca Rogers argues that the post-revolutionary France state valued girls' secondary education as a way of rejuvenating the nation, whereas religious orders saw it as a means of re-Christianizing society. Both systems were based on a vision of women achieving these goals within the family, not in public life. As a result, education was, in Rogers' terms, "serious but non-vocational."<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the goal of the Society established in this period was "to inspire in young girls social values founded on the morals of Jesus Christ, to let them know the duties they will have in the family."<sup>109</sup> The introduction to the 1922 Plan includes a quotation from Mother Digby, superior general of the Society from 1895 to 1911, stressing the need for Sacred Heart education to be *serious* in aspiring to develop the minds of the children and their talents for use in service to God. The goal was women who were "humble, intelligent and devoted helpers in the service of the Church and her works."<sup>110</sup>

Exposition and memory work dominated educational practice, seen as transmission of knowledge "from the mind of the Mistress to that of the child."<sup>111</sup> The mistress must obtain from the child:

1. An intelligent response or reaction to the matter presented to her.
2. The retention in the memory of that which had been understood.
3. Some personal use of this knowledge just obtained, to be shown in such processes as comparison, judgement, reasoning, etc.

Junior class mistresses were to employ the inductive method using question and answer, to use concrete materials, to infer rules from examples, and to develop the children's powers of observation through pictures, illustrations on the blackboard, wall maps, and so on.<sup>112</sup> The religious were expected to provide the mistress general with detailed weekly lesson plans as well as term plans.<sup>113</sup>

The narratives of the religious indicate that the model offered in the 1922 Plan was followed with a particular emphasis on subjects which would train the minds of the children especially through memorisation. English was the next most important subject after religion. Early classes concentrated on learning to read, write and spell. Higher classes introduced grammar, with concentration on parsing and analysis, together with memory work in spelling and poetry. Memorisation of

<sup>108</sup>Rebecca Rogers, "Competing Visions of Girls' Secondary Education in Post-Revolutionary France," *History of Educational Quarterly*, 34, 2 (1994), 147–70.

<sup>109</sup>Advertisement for a Sacred Heart boarding school in the United States, Cited in Rogers, 167.

<sup>110</sup>*Plan of Studies*, vii.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 13 and 15.

<sup>113</sup>C.K. March 18, 1996.

the gospels was included in English, so that by the time a teacher had heard each child's memory work each day there was little time left for imaginative composition. This was particularly frustrating for one religious who arrived in 1955 after training in child-centred approaches at the Society's training college, Loreto Hall, in New Zealand. Her attempts to incorporate progressive methods based on discovery rather than exposition were rejected by the mistress general at Kerever Park.<sup>114</sup>

Writing practice, especially in the form of a weekly letter home, focused on presentation. Early classes copied the letter from the blackboard, while older children wrote a first draft in homework time to be corrected by the class mistress, handed back to be copied out onto good paper, corrected again, and finally sent when there were no mistakes.<sup>115</sup> Another form of presentation was theatrical performances, especially for Parents' Day. Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were very popular despite the enormous amount of rehearsal time. They were viewed as a unifying force in the school.<sup>116</sup>

Mathematics consisted of basic algorithms, memorisation of tables, and mental and written problems. Geography concentrated on learning by heart the main countries of the world and their capitals, as well as climates and the formation of river systems. History was largely English history, with an emphasis on the monarchy. Science took the form of nature study whose objective was to view creation as "the work of God."<sup>117</sup>

All classes were taught by the nuns, with a few significant exceptions. In this period, Australian members of the Society were not encouraged to develop their talents in the area of art and music, a practice they associated with the vow of poverty and a discourse of reparation—giving up all one's talents for God.<sup>118</sup> Physical education, dancing and music were accordingly taken by teachers who came in once a week.

<sup>114</sup>S.B. October 25, 1995. Interview one.

<sup>115</sup>M.M. April 18, 1996.

<sup>116</sup>C.K. March 18, 1996.

<sup>117</sup>*Plan of Studies*, 95.

<sup>118</sup>S.B. November 3, 1995. Interview two. A similar suppression for the same reasons also existed in the Mercy sisters in Australia. Madeleine Sophie McGrath, *These Women? Women Religious in the History of Australia: The sisters of Mercy Parramatta, 1888–1988* (Kensington, Sydney: NSW University Press, 1988), 135. There is evidence that outside Australia artistic talent was valued in the Society, although it was tied to religious themes. For example, the original Mater Admirabilis work was completed as a fresco at the Roman convent of Trinità dei Montini in 1844 by a young French woman, Pauline Perdrau, who had just joined the community. See O'Leary, *Education with a Tradition*, 315–16 and Williams, *Saint Madeleine Sophie*, 361. The artistic works completed by Margaret Nealis also evidence differences outside Australia.

The religious reported they mainly employed memorisation in their teaching, resulting often in learning without understanding. However, one religious who started in 1959 encouraged her children to write to the author of a book they were reading, incorporated some dramatic representations of historical scenes, and undertook some thematic teaching. She succeeded in controlling the children in a manner acceptable to those in authority, unlike the religious who had earlier attempted to introduce some progressive ideas, and the close bond she formed with the mistress general presumably contributed to acceptance of her innovations. In her narrative she reflected on the beauty of the environment and on the uncomplicated nature of the young children, whom she described as “unquestioning” and “receptive.” Yet even she soon moved beyond this construction, admitting that the children were generally taught by rote, discouraged from questioning, and expected to be totally obedient. She slipped from a discourse of Kerever Park as a haven for free, safe and innocent children into admitting that a discourse of social control, arising from the way in which the religious community operated, was the day to day reality.<sup>119</sup>

A majority of the ex-students interviewed found most of the lessons tedious and boring due to the strong emphasis on memorisation, although, as in most schools, there was diversity in the staff's ability to teach and in the support given for innovations. Some teachers were thus able to motivate the children despite of the rigidity of the curriculum.<sup>120</sup>

## CLOSURE

As a preparatory boarding school for girls Kerever Park was unique in the history of the Society and highly unusual in the general Australian educational setting, where most preparatory schools were boys' day schools.<sup>121</sup>

It closed in 1965, the year of the conclusion of the Vatican Two convocation of Catholic Church hierarchy in Rome, 1962-65, which brought sweeping changes to the Church and to religious orders. The Society abolished the distinction between choir and lay nuns and their enclosed way of life, becoming more actively involved in social justice.<sup>122</sup> For example, the Australian province of the Society founded two junior day schools in working class areas.

Other factors in the closure of the school were the capital outlay judged necessary to upgrade its facilities and the opening of a junior day school at Rose

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<sup>119</sup>C.K. March 18, 1996.

<sup>120</sup>M.M. April 18, 1996.

<sup>121</sup>Petersen, Sherington and Brice, *Learning to Lead*, 99. Tudor House, Anglican in denomination and located not far from Kerever Park in the Southern Highlands, is one of the few surviving preparatory boys' boarding schools in Australia.

<sup>122</sup>Williams, *The Society of the Sacred Heart*, 273.

Bay Convent in Sydney.<sup>123</sup> The Society had come to realise that the boarding experience tended to isolate the children from their families and that the pedagogic practices at Kerever Park needed to change.<sup>124</sup> The decision to leave one mistress general at the school for the entire twenty-two years of its operation had, according to interviews with members of the Society,<sup>125</sup> resulted in few educational innovations. The 1960s brought significant changes in Australian education, including emphasis on process and recognition of the interrelatedness of content, teaching procedures and classroom climate.<sup>126</sup> This shift, resisted at Kerever Park, was taken up in the new junior school at Rose Bay.<sup>127</sup>

A 1994 reunion marked fifty years since the opening of Kerever Park.<sup>128</sup> One ex-student wrote the following about her experience there:

It's only in looking back after experiencing life that I truly appreciated the moulding haven that was Kerever Park. Where in our present world could young girls be absorbed in such a way by revered women dedicated to turning out the gracious, disciplined, educated lady?<sup>129</sup>

The term "moulding haven" is a "split reference" which takes on a metaphoric force.<sup>130</sup> Combining the two words suggests a tension between two ways of describing it. The school cannot be thought of entirely either as "refuge" or as "an instrument of shaping." The two words rub up against each other, giving witness to what the experience was like and yet not like.

Although the original motivation to establish Kerever Park was a desire for an educational setting more homely than institutional, the long-standing educational discourses of the Society ultimately took precedence. A period of consolidation, reflected in the changing architecture with the original home at the front and institutional school buildings behind, soon made the discourse of school as home more façade than reality.

The hegemonic practices of the school were not about replicating the children's home-life. Rather, the children were being prepared for the family of the Church. Membership in the school family was based on obedience, docility

<sup>123</sup>Barlow, *Living Stones*, 109.

<sup>124</sup>M.D. September 7, 1995. Interview one. E.B. August 9, 1995.

<sup>125</sup>S.B. October 25, 1995. Interview one; M.D. September 7, 1995. Interview one.

<sup>126</sup>Connell, *Reshaping Australian Education*, 35–6.

<sup>127</sup>E.B. August 9, 1995. Interview one.

<sup>128</sup>There is no alumnae association of the school as such, although there are alumnae associations of the senior schools, such as Rose Bay, as well as an international organisation.

<sup>129</sup>Carolyn Lyons (McAlary), *Kerever Park: Past Pupils Remember* (Flier put out to celebrate fifty years, Rose Bay Convent Archives, Sydney, 1994).

<sup>130</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning and Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 21.

and unquestioning acceptance of what was taught, as in the general Catholic population. Merit was given to those who followed the rules. The model of womanhood was Mary as represented in the Mater Admirabilis icon. Children were to be prayerful, respectful, gentle, kind, devoted, silent, and obedient. Perhaps, for some students, the price of the “secure haven” was the “absorbing” of themselves as young girls into conventionally gendered beings.

A central core of Sacred Heart education, evident since its foundation, has been a high level of intellectual development amongst upper-class women which they would take into their roles as wives and mothers. In keeping with this agenda, the discourses outlined in this paper, that is, education in service of God, in the traditional role of women, aspiring to perfection and intellectual rigour, seem to have been a significant part of Sacred Heart education in its boarding schools.<sup>131</sup> However, context is important in determining day-to-day practice. For example, a St Louis Sacred Heart school of the 1830s enrolled a large number of non-Catholic girls as well as students from all social and cultural backgrounds. Their inclusion was due to lack of alternative schools and accepted by the local community in keeping with Republican goals of universal education.<sup>132</sup> By contrast, poorer Catholics in Australia were catered for in their education by Mary MacKillop’s Sisters of St Joseph and other orders.<sup>133</sup> Girls from different religious denominations were catered for by their own schools.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, the sectarianism of Australian society until after the second World War led to a strong demarcation between Catholics and other denominations.<sup>135</sup> Students from non-Catholic backgrounds were rare at Kerever Park.

Although a common philosophy may lie at the heart of such centralized systems as Sacred Heart education, that philosophy is best understood in context. Culture is “a process of absorption and adaptation, of change rather than eternity.”<sup>136</sup> War-time evacuation resulted in the establishment of a country preparatory boarding school with associated aspirations for a home-like setting. Where early aspirations, practices, and the setting itself initially fostered a discourse of “school as home,” stability of leadership combined with the long-standing educational discourses of the Society gave the preparatory function of the school ascendancy. The story of Kerever Park demonstrates that what may be fostered in one setting of a system may be dismissed in another— as progressivism was at Kerever Park.

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<sup>131</sup>O’Leary, *Education with a Tradition*; Barlow, *Living Stones*; Cave, *The Pedagogical Traditions*; Baumgarten, *Education and Democracy*.

<sup>132</sup>Baumgarten, *Education and Democracy*, 191.

<sup>133</sup>Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia*.

<sup>134</sup>Sherington, Petersen and Brice, *Learning to Lead*.

<sup>135</sup>Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: A social history, vol. 1*. (North Blackburn, Victoria: Collins Dove, 1992), 241–98.

<sup>136</sup>Peter Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes: Culture, theory and the visual in the work of Bernard Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 34.