CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Presentation Convent and Primary School, Waterford (1798-2005): history, voice and experience of former teaching sisters, lay teachers and pupils
Authors	Tobin, Angela
Publication date	2018
Original Citation	Tobin, A. 2018. Presentation Convent and Primary School, Waterford (1798-2005): history, voice and experience of former teaching sisters, lay teachers and pupils. PhD Thesis, University College Cork.
Type of publication	Doctoral thesis
Rights	© 2018, Angela Tobin. - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/
Download date	2026-11-06 19:59:24
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/7879

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Presentation Convent and Primary School, Waterford (1798-2005):

History, Voice and Experience of Former Teaching Sisters, Lay Teachers and Pupils

Angela Tobin

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Education, National University of Ireland, Cork.

Supervisors: Dr. Vanessa Rutherford and Dr. Maura Cunneen

Head of School: Dr. Fiachra Long

November 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....ix

ABSTRACT.....x

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....xii

DEDICATION.....xiv

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....xv

LIST OF TABLES.....xvii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION……...1

1.1 Introduction……1
1.2 Background to the study……2
1.3 Focus and Rationale of the study……...……...4
1.4 Research questions……5
1.5 Addressing the research questions…….……...6
1.6 Thesis overview……...8
1.7 Personal/Professional journey……10
1.8 Conclusion……11

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENTATION ORDER IN WATERFORD FROM 1798 to 2005…….……..14

2.1 Introduction…….....14

2.2 Nature and Purpose of the Institute as founded by Nano Nagle……..14
2.2.1 Cove Lane Roots……14
2.2.2 Presentation education in the Nineteenth Century: Curriculum and Methodologies…..15

2.3 Waterford in 1798.....20
2.3.1 The Economic Context.....20
2.3.2 The Political Context.....23
2.3.3 The Social Context.....25

2.4 Arrival of the Presentation Order to Waterford and Jenkins' Lane: 1798-1800.....26
2.4.1 First steps.....26
2.4.2 Jenkins' Lane.....33

2.5 The Hennessy's Road Convent.....37
2.5.1 The Early Members of the Hennessy's Road Community.....38
2.5.2 Financial Commitments.....39
2.5.3 The Community Grows.....41
2.5.4 The daily ritual.....44
2.5.5 The demands of community life.....45

2.6 Convent of the Holy Cross, Slievekeale Road: Moving House.....48

2.7 The Years in Holy Cross.....52
2.7.1 1861 to 1922: The Community…….....52
2.7.2 1861 to 1922: The Schools…….....54
2.7.3 1922 to the 1960s: The Community.....59
2.7.4 1922 to the 1960s: The Schools……..…61
2.7.5 1960s to 2005: The Community……..…63
2.7.6 1960s to 2005: The Schools……....65

2.8 Vatican II and Governance…….67

2.9 Resourcing and Expenditure……...70

2.10 Conclusion.....72

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW "SAVING SOULS": WOMEN'S HISTORY AND FEMALE PHILANTHROPY.....74

3.1 Introduction.....74

3.2 Women's History and Women Religious History: The Literature.....75
3.2.1 Characteristics and Criticisms.....75
3.2.2 International Literature on Women Religious.....78
3.2.3 Women Religious History in Ireland.....80
3.2.4 Women Religious History in Waterford.....83

3.3 Female Philanthropy.....84
3.3.1 Female Philanthropy in 19th century Ireland.....86
3.3.1.1 Nature of Female Philanthropy in the 19th century.....86
3.3.1.2 Philanthropy by non-Catholics in the 19th century……..87
3.3.1.3 The Political and Economic Context of the 19th century.....89
3.3.1.4 The Social Context of the 19th century.....94
3.3.1.5 Workhouses, Orphanages and Refuges……94
3.3.1.6 The Growth of Urbanisation in Dublin……96

3.3.1.7 The Growth of Urbanisation in Cork……...98
3.3.1.8 The Growth of Urbanisation in Waterford……...99
3.3.1.9 The Religious Context of the 19th century……101
3.3.1.10 The Role of Religion and Social Class……102

3.4 Education in 19th and 20th century Ireland……..……107
3.4.1 1798-1831……..……107
3.4.2 1831-1870……..…108
3.4.3 1870-1922……..109
3.4.4 1922-1967.....110
3.4.5 1967-2005.....111
3.4.6 Convent Education……112

3.5 Conclusion……...114

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACHES.....116

4.1 Introduction.....116

4.2 Ethical Considerations.....117

4.3 The Case Study Approach…..…….....119
4.3.1 Justification for Using the Case Study Approach……..……..……119
4.3.2 Philosophical Underpinnings……120
4.3.2.1 Constructivist Paradigm…….……120
4.3.2.2 Ontological Orientation…….……122
4.3.2.3 Epistemological Stance…….……122
4.3.2.4 General Principles…….……123
4.3.3 Unit of Analysis……124

4.4 The Key Research Questions/Propositions……..124
4.4.1 Background to the Key Research Questions……..……..124
4.4.2 Addressing the Key Research Questions……..……125

4.5 Research Design…….....126
4.5.1 Data Sources……..126
4.5.1.1 Historical and Archival Data Sources…….....126
4.5.1.2 Quantitative Data Sources……...127
4.5.1.3 Visual Illustrations.....……..……128
4.5.1.4 Articles, Journals, Newspapers, Letters, Reports and Theses…….....128

4.6 Research Methodology……..……129
4.6.1 Choice of Methodological Tool: The Oral History Interview……...129
4.6.1.1 Definition of Oral History……..129
4.6.1.2 Characteristics of Oral History.....130

4.6.1.3 Roles of Interviewer and Narrator.....132
4.6.1.4 Memory as a Lived Process.....133
4.6.2 Research Participants: Selection and Recruitment……135
4.6.3 The Guiding Questions……..140
4.6.4 Interview Locations……...141
4.6.5 Data Collection……..142
4.6.5.1 Data Collection and Storage……...142
4.6.5.2 The Pilot Study…….....142
4.6.5.3 Data Volume……..143
4.6.5.4 Conducting the Interviews……144
4.6.6 Data Analysis……144
4.6.6.1 Transcription of Interviews……145
4.6.6.2 Coding of Transcripts……146
4.6.6.2.1 Line by Line Coding……...147
4.6.6.2.2 Focused Coding……...148
4.6.6.2.3 Theoretical Coding……...149
4.6.6.2.4 Memo-Writing……150
4.6.6.2.5 Thematic Analysis……...151
4.6.7 Bourdieuian Perspectives……..152
4.6.7.1 The Role of Human Agency…….....152
4.6.7.2 Bourdieu: *Field* and *Habitus*……..…153
4.6.7.3 Bourdieu and Forms of *Capital*……..156
4.6.7.4 Identity Formation and Intersectionality……158
4.6.8 Foucauldian Perspectives……..159
4.6.8.1 The Great Confinement……..159
4.6.8.2 The Production of Docile Bodies……...160
4.6.8.3 Discipline and Distribution in Space……..162
4.6.8.4 The Control of Activity……..163
4.6.8.5 Surveillance and Supervision……164
4.6.9 Reporting of Data……..166
4.6.10 Validity and Trustworthiness……..167

4.7 Study Limitations……...168

4.8 Conclusion……...169

CHAPTER 5: IDENTITY AS MISSION.....171

5.1 Introduction.....171

5.2 Motivation for Entry.....172
5.2.1 Religious Impulse….....172
5.2.2 Vocation and Calling.....175

5.2.3 Participation in Mission.....176
5.2.4 Distance from Home….....183

5.3 Reactions and Responses.....185
5.3.1Parental Acceptance.....185
5.3.2 Parental Opposition.....187
5.3.3 Immediate and Extended Family Reactions.....188
5.3.4 Gendered Responses.....190
5.3.5 Women Religious and Agency.....191

5.4 Nature of Identity and Change over Time.....193
5.4.1 Identity before Vatican II.....194
5.4.2 Change following Vatican II.....195
5.4.3 Change following Reorganisation and Union.....200

5.5 Identity within the Convent.....202
5.5.1 The Role of *Habitus*.....202
5.5.1.1 Rite of Passage: Separation.....202
5.5.1.2 Rite of Passage: Transition (Liminality).....204
5.5.1.3 Rite of Passage: Incorporation.....206
5.5.1.4 Change over time……...208
5.5.2 The Religious Habit.....209
5.5.2.1 Covering the body.....209
5.5.2.2 Moving from Religious to Secular Dress.....215
5.5.3 The Role of *Field*.....216
5.5.4 The Role of *Capital*.....221
5.5.4.1 Cultural *Capital* and Teaching Sisters.....221
5.5.4.2 *Capital* and the Lay Sisters.....224

5.6 Identity Within the School.....225
5.6.1 The Nano Nagle Play of 1975.....226
5.6.2 The 1990 Amalgamation.....229
5.6.3 The “Tin Shed”.....232

5.7 Conclusion.....236

CHAPTER 6: POWER AS CONTROL AND SELF-REGULATION.....238

6.1 Introduction.....238

6.2 Power within the Convent Community.....239
6.2.1 Power Relations in the Novitiate.....239
6.2.1.1 Separation.....239

6.2.1.2 The Locus of Power....244
6.2.1.3 Daily Routine and Ritual: the Timetable....246
6.2.1.4 The Rule of Silence....249
6.2.1.5 Choice of Career....251
6.2.1.6 Change over Time....253
6.2.2 Choir vs Lay Sisters....255
6.2.2.1 Restrictions in Space....255
6.2.2.2 Differential in Status....259
6.2.2.3 Perceptions of Lay Sisters....260
6.2.2.4 Perceptions of Change in Status over Time....263

6.3 Power Within the School: Disciplinary Techniques....266
6.3.1 The use of corporal punishment....267
6.3.2 Foucauldian Techniques of Discipline....270

6.4 The Community within the Wider Church....271

6.5 Conclusion....275

CHAPTER 7: LEGACY AS CARE....276

7.1 Introduction....276

7.2 The Meaning of 'Care'....277

7.3 Convent Voices....278
7.3.1 Care of the Body....278
7.3.2 Care of the Elderly....279
7.3.3 Mentoring and Support during Induction....280
7.3.4 Care between Lay and Novices/Professed Sisters....281
7.3.5 Care after Religious Life....282
7.3.6 Pastoral Care to the Wider Community....283

7.4 Teacher Voices....285
7.4.1 First Impressions....285
7.4.2 Care of the Individual....288
7.4.3 Pedagogical Care....290
7.4.4 Care of Pupils....291
7.4.5 Teaching Methodologies and School Discipline....294

7.5 Pupil Voices....296
7.5.1 School Curriculum....296
7.5.2 Financial Care....299
7.5.3 Memories of Pastoral Care....300
7.5.4 Memories of Pedagogical Care....301

7.6 The Face of Care: Sr. Ellen.....303
7.6.1 Memories within the Community.....304
7.6.2 Memories within the School.....305

7.7 Conclusion.....309

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION……...311

8.1 Introduction……311

8.2 Background…….312

8.3 Summary of the Qualitative Study……...314

8.4 Answering the Research Questions……..315

8.5 Limitations of the Study……..……..323

8.6 Contribution of this Work to Research……..……..323

8.7 Suggestions for Future Research……...……...324

8.8 Conclusion……...325

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....327

APPENDICES.....351

Appendix 1: Social Research Ethics Committee Acceptance Letter….....351

Appendix 2: Information Letter.....352

Appendix 3: Consent Form.....354

Appendix 4: Short Biographies of Participants.....355

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol for Group 1 Participants.....360

Appendix 6: Interview Protocol for Group 2 Participants.....364

Appendix 7: Interview Protocol for Group 3 Participants.....368

Appendix 8: The Foundresses.....371

Appendix 9: A.W.N. Pugin, the Gothic Revival and the Presentation Convent, Waterford.....373

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution, and is, except where otherwise stated, the original work of the researcher.

Signed: _____

Angela Tobin

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

Background

In 1798 three women returned from Cork as professed Presentation Sisters to set up the first primary school for girls in Waterford City. This was the start of a tradition of female education in the city which lasted until 2005, when the convent premises was sold and the remaining nuns moved to nearby locations. Although a corpus of historical data has been gathered to date, there is one lacuna which this research aims to fill- that of the voice of the women themselves.

The study is therefore framed in two parts- the historical and an analysis of the qualitative data gathered from interviews with three participant groups. These are former teaching women religious, former lay teachers and former pupils in the adjoining primary school.

Research questions

Four research questions frame my study:

1. What is known of the history of the Presentation Order in Waterford from 1798 to 2005?
2. How was life lived and experienced in the convent setting at the heart of this study?
3. How was life experienced in the adjoining primary school, and to what extent did convent life impact on school life?
4. What legacy, if any, would participants consider present in the school today, in the wake of the physical departure of the women religious from active participation in everyday school life?

Methods

As suggested by Mertens,[1] I chose a mixed methods design for my study, complementing archival material with qualitative data collected from oral history interviews with three participant groups.

The principal source of archival data came from those created following the closure of the Waterford convent in 2005. At the time of research, they were stored in a locked room in Dungarvan, awaiting transfer to the South Presentation convent in Cork City. This was complemented by material from a number of public and private archives.

Using the case study approach, the qualitative data was collected from interviews with the three participant groups described above. The data was coded and analysed using grounded theory techniques as outlined by Glaser and Strauss,[2] and Charmaz.[3] The text was enhanced

---

[1] Donna M. Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, 3rd ed. (California: Sage Publications, 2010).

[2] Barney G. Glaser, and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).

[3] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London and California: Sage Publications, 2006).

by the inclusion of a number of visual illustrations, many taken from the archival sources above. From an analysis of the qualitative data, a number of themes emerged which formed the basis of the three findings chapters.

Main findings

(a) Despite many challenges such as the rule of enclosure, gender and status as Catholic women religious, over the extensive time period in question these women nonetheless succeeded in cultivating and retaining strong links with influential individuals outside the convent walls, enabling them to negotiate obstacles and thereby fulfil their educational mission.
(b) Women religious displayed a strong sense of identity and mission, although this could frequently lead to individual preferences and desires being sublimated to the community requirements.
(c) As an enclosed community, participants recalled Foucauldian techniques of power and self-regulation. These extended to the adjoining primary school in classroom practices.
(d) Despite the above, many adult participants recalled a sense of caring for the individual, although this was not a view shared by all former pupils.

Significant contribution of the work to research

The physical departure of the remaining nuns in 2005 marked the end of more than 200 years of the Presentation community's presence in Waterford City. As a teaching order, they contributed greatly to female education during this period. Nonetheless, little in-depth research has been conducted to date, a lacuna this research hopes to fill. By giving a voice to both providers and recipients of this education, it aims to contribute to the growing corpus of work in the history of women religious generally, and teaching women religious in particular. It should be of interest to any researchers with an interest in this area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey as part of the Cohort PhD has been an eventful, yet exciting and enjoyable one.

I would like to extend a special thank you to a number of people who made this journey possible. Firstly, to my supervisor Dr. Vanessa Rutherford, for her patience, thoroughness, and attention to detail. Her encouragement and support throughout this journey is greatly appreciated, and ensured I arrived safely at journey's end. To my second supervisor, Dr. Maura Cunneen, who also provided encouragement and valuable advice at various stages, thank you.

A huge thank you is also due to the staff of the Cohort PhD itself: Dr. Paul Conway, Professor Kathy Hall, Dr. Siobhán Dowling, Dr. Stephen O'Brien, Dr. Karl Kitching and Dr. Alicia Curtin. The various insights and perspectives you provided during both the weekend sessions and summer school modules guided and supported us all.

To all my fellow travellers on the Cohort PhD journey that I have come to know since we all set out together in September 2011- thank you from the bottom of my heart for your encouragement, wit and good humour. We began this journey together, shared each other's concerns and worries, and helped each other along the way.

Perhaps the most striking aspect I have learned throughout this journey has been the generosity of the wider research community. Their willingness to encourage novice researchers like myself, together with their generosity in sharing resources and advice, was humbling. I hope I will get the opportunity to do likewise in the future.

A word of thanks is also due to various groups who inadvertently assisted in many small ways: the staff of the Boole Library in UCC who were unfailingly polite and accommodating in terms of assistance and support, the staffs of the National Archives and National Library in Dublin who never failed to give every assistance in locating necessary research materials and resources, the congregational archivists in the South Presentation, Cork, and George's Hill, Dublin, and others too numerous to mention. For any small acts of kindness, I thank you all.

A special word of thanks is due to all the three participant groups who took part in the study. They opened their hearts and homes to facilitate this research, and without their willingness to take part, this study would not have been possible. I hope I have done you justice. A particular word of thanks must go to Sr. Assumpta O'Neill, PBVM, an example of untiring and unfailing expertise, who facilitated my research and proved a constant source of information and detail on a regular basis. A special word of acknowledgement and thanks is also due to Margaret O'Brien Moran for her generosity in allowing me to use her photographs as visual illustrations throughout the text.

I wish to thank my many friends and school colleagues who supported me throughout this journey, showing regular interest in the progress of the study and encouraging me to continue. I would especially like to acknowledge the contribution of Marie McKeon, whose technical expertise at vital points in the process was invaluable.

Finally I wish to thank my family: my mother Máiréad, my brothers, sister and extended family, for their patience, encouragement and support. For the many acts of kindness that made this all possible- thank you all.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, John (1925-1997) and Máiréad (1937-), for instilling in us a strong work ethic, the value of education and encouraging us always to follow our dreams.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 1821 Reissue of Richards and Scale's 1764 map of Waterford.....21

Fig. 2 Extract from Presentation annals detailing the start of the Waterford foundation.....27

Fig. 3 Plan of Hennessy's Road property.....30

Fig. 4 Grave of Sr. M. Jane de Chantal Power, Carrick-on-Suir……31

Fig. 5 Signature of Teresa Mullowney at 106 years of age……...32

Fig. 6 Extract from Presentation annals recording departure of Waterford ladies.....32

Fig. 7 The Seminary in Bowling-green Lane.....33

Fig. 8 Site of the first Presentation school in Jenkin's Lane.....34

Fig. 9 Plaque marking the site of the first Presentation school, Jenkin's Lane.....34

Fig. 10 Licence to teach, 1799.....36

Fig. 11 Photograph of chapel in Hennessy's Road convent.....38

Fig. 12 Extract from the will of Ellen Power, 1798.....39

Fig. 13 Hennessy's Road convent and chapel shortly before demolition, 1965.....42

Fig. 14 Interior of Hennessy's Road chapel before demolition, 1965.....43

Fig. 15 Drawing of Hennessy's Road Convent, Waterford, by Pádraic Reaney.....46

Fig. 16 Plaque on stone marking the site of the Hennessy's Road convent.....47

Fig. 17 Map of site for Convent of the Holy Cross.....49

Fig. 18 Presentation community with Dr. Cleary, 1873, 75th anniversary.....53

Fig. 19 Extract from book detailing grants in 1880 and 1881 from the Commissioners of National Education.....55

Fig. 20 Extracts from Holy Cross school estimate, 1848……..……...…66

Fig. 21 Frontispiece of the 1809 Rules and Constitutions of the Presentation Order.....68

Fig. 22 Extracts from convent accounts including signature of Edmund Rice.....70

Fig. 23 Digi-City Raster map of Waterford showing the three school locations……..……..71

Fig. 24 Frontispiece of the 1809 Rules and Constitutions of the Presentation Order……113

Fig. 25 Map of Holy Cross Convent and surrounding area, 1905……..178

Fig. 26 Map of Holy Cross Convent and surrounding area, 2005…….179

Fig. 27 A “White Veil”……...204

Fig. 28 Sr. Magdalen O’Brien on the day of her Final Profession…….207

Fig. 29 Profession in Presentation Convent chapel……208

Fig. 30 Newly professed group c. 1890s……210

Fig. 31 Lancet window……...218

Fig. 32 Cell corridor……...219

Fig. 33 Door leading to cloister garth…….220

Fig. 34 The “Redcoats” from the 1975 bicentenary Nano Nagle play……...226

Fig. 35 Characters from the Nano Nagle play of 1975……...227

Fig. 36 The 1898 school: Entrance from convent side……...233

Fig. 37 The Original 1898 school- the “Tin Shed” Front View…… ……234

Fig. 38 The “Tin Shed” side view……..235

Fig. 39 Convent Cellar……...249

Fig. 40 East Elevation and ‘Back Door’ to kitchen area……256

Fig. 41 Choir stalls in convent chapel……257

Fig. 42 Chapel showing organ loft and rood screen……...259

Fig. 43 A meal at the ‘back door’ c. 1980s…….....284

Fig. 44 Aerial view of convent, school and surrounding area, 1980s……288

Fig. 45 Sr. Ellen and teaching colleagues……..304

Fig. 46 Presentation Community, May 2003…….……326

Fig. 47 A. W. N. Pugin (1812-1852).....373

Fig. 48 Circular Stair Turret, Presentation Convent, Waterford.....381

Fig. 49 Altar in Presentation Convent chapel.....384

Fig. 50 Fireplace designed by Edward Welby Pugin.....385

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of participant details……...8

Table 2: List of nuns who died in Hennessy's Road convent.....48

Table 3: Details of Group 1 participants.....136

Table 4: Details of Group 2 participants.....137

Table 5: Details of Group 3 participants.....138

Table 6: Interview locations for Group 1 participants……...141

Table 7: Samples of coding.....150

Table 8: Legacy descriptors……...321

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"The incident was, in itself, very trifling, which led to the establishment of this Convent..."[4]

1.1 Introduction

1798 was a tumultuous year in Irish political history. It also marked the beginning of a history of female education in Waterford that would last for over two hundred years, when three women returned from Cork to found the first school for girls in September of that year. These women were part of a movement that had its roots in female philanthropy, and were motivated by a strong spiritual impulse and a belief in the power of education. As one of the five primary foundations that grew out of the original establishment in Cork City, the project was the first of its kind in Waterford City, and the women's formation was undertaken by women religious[5] who had lived and worked with the foundress of the Presentation Order, Nano Nagle[6] herself. As such, they imbued her values and ideals, and in turn brought these qualities to bear on the mission they undertook. This research gives a voice to their successors, their lives and their work.

---

4 Extract from the South Presentation annals, Cork City.

5 Strictly speaking, women religious who made simple vows were known as 'sisters' and formed part of a congregation engaged in active apostolates under the authority of the local bishop. Women religious who made solemn vows, on the other hand, were known as 'nuns', observed the rule of enclosure and were members of a religious order. During this research, the terms 'nun', 'sister' and 'woman religious' will be used interchangeably.

6 Honora (Nano) Nagle (1718-1784): born in Ballygriffin, Co. Cork, died in Cove Lane, Cork City, foundress of the Presentation Order in 1775.

1.2 Background to the Study

The study is taken against the backdrop of the ongoing debate surrounding changing models of school patronage. As the body tasked with developing "appropriate forms of primary school patronage for the diverse society of modern Ireland,"[7] an advisory group chaired by Professor John Coolahan[8] was convened to undertake a consultation process with the various stakeholders in education. Their findings were published in the final report in April 2012, and the media has regularly commented on progress made to date in the implementation of its recommendations. These included an acknowledgement of the changing face of Irish society, the demands for change within the existing body of primary schools throughout the state, and a wider and more diverse range of patronage arrangements into the future. For many years, the sight of a teaching woman religious was a familiar and recognisable image in the Irish educational landscape. With the passing of time, this image is fading from the memory of many pupils and parents. Nonetheless, in the history of Irish education, teaching religious orders made a significant contribution to generations of pupils' ability to access education at both primary and secondary level. This study attempts to capture this contribution through the voices of the women religious themselves and other stakeholder groups.

The thesis is comprised of two distinct parts. The first part, Chapter 2, summarises the growth and development of both convent and school over three locations and over a period of more than two hundred years. Its final and current location would prove to be the most

---

7 *The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum's Advisory Group* (Dublin: 2012), 3.

8 Professor John Coolahan is Professor Emeritus of Education from the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has lectured and published extensively on Irish education both in Ireland and internationally, has had numerous public service roles and has served on a range of both ministerial committees and educational and cultural bodies. He was also a founding member and President of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland and editor of the journal *Irish Educational Studies*.

durable, continuing uninterrupted until 2005 when the decision was taken to sell the Pugin[9]-designed convent. It creates a historical backdrop which both contexualises the study in time and place, and identifies the lacuna which the remaining chapters seek to fill. The second part, therefore, Chapters 4 to 7, gives a voice to those who inhabited this space- the women religious themselves, together with their lay colleagues and the pupils they taught.

Following the closure of the convent in 2005, archival material was transported to a location in the west of the county, pending removal to a central location at a later date. These archives became the starting-point of the journey now being undertaken in this doctoral study. An extensive examination of the catalogued and boxed material revealed many documents of interest, in the form of accounts, wills, letters, licences, among others, evidence of the attention to detail that characterised life at that time. They also detail the close connections between the Presentation community and notable historical and educational figures such as Edmund Rice (1762-1844).[10] Elsewhere, photograph albums, reading material and religious memorabilia give a glimpse into the nature of daily life within the convent itself. However, one clear omission from these archival sources quickly emerged- the voice and experiences of the women religious themselves. Oral histories enable me to expose the identity and character of female religious, and to explore the subjective experience within historical and social contexts. Accordingly, the oral history interview was considered the methodological tool of choice for this case study.

---

[9] Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852): born in London in 1812, he became one of the foremost architects of ecclesiastical buildings of his day and the chief proponent of the architectural style named the Gothic Revival. Among the Irish buildings he designed was the Presentation Convent, Waterford. For further details, see Appendix ???

[10] Edmund Rice (1762-1844): born in Callan, Co. Kilkenny, he moved to Waterford in 1779 to work in his uncle's thriving business, inheriting it on his uncle's death in 1795. He was actively involved in much philanthropic work in the city and assisted the Presentation community through his financial expertise and support. In 1802, he opened the first school for boys in the city and was later joined by other men who formed the nucleus of a lay congregation which ultimately led to the founding of what would become known as the Christian Brothers in 1808. The congregation's vows were first pronounced in the chapel of the Presentation Covent, Hennessy's Road.

1.3 Focus and Rationale of the study

In 1998, the Presentation community in Waterford celebrated the bicentenary of their arrival in Waterford City. Seven years later, in 2005, the convent was sold and its remaining occupants moved to other locations in neighbouring counties. This research aims to collate and explore the existing corpus of archival data pertinent to this site of human activity, and to engage in qualitative, biographical research, drawing on stories of women religious, to understand the individual life within its social, cultural, political and economic contexts.

In recent years, many publications, such as the RTE documentary *Dear Daughter*,[11] Mary Raftery's *States of Fear*[12] series, and the Ryan report[13] among others,[14] have led to severe criticism of the Catholic Church for its past treatment of vulnerable members of Irish society. However, as Maguire rightly points out, this has led to many religious orders being forced to bear the full brunt of public outrage, and has ignored the role of families and others within the wider society.[15] As a result, it has become fashionable in recent years to criticise

---

[11] Louis Lentin's documentary *Dear Daughter* was broadcast on RTE on the 22 February, 1996. It detailed the childhood experiences of Christine Buckley and others at the Goldenbridge orphanage in Dublin, and later led to the setting up of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in 2000.

[12] *States of Fear* was a three-part documentary series produced by Mary Raftery and broadcast on RTE between April and May 1999. It detailed abuse suffered by children between the 1930s and the 1970s in the state childcare system, primarily in the Reformatory and Industrial schools. The then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, subsequently apologised to all who had been in such institutions on behalf of the State, and announced the setting up of a commission to investigate the treatment received there.

[13] The initial commission above set up by the government was known as the Laffoy Commission, and was chaired by Judge Mary Laffoy. Judge Laffoy resigned in September, 2003, and was replaced by Mr. Justice Sean Ryan. The Commission's work started in 1999 and published its report in 2009. This report is commonly known as the Ryan report and made findings of severe neglect, physical and emotional abuse, with sexual abuse occurring in many institutions, particularly boys' institutions.

[14] See, for example, Jane Barnes, *Irish Industrial Schools, 1868-1908* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan, *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial Schools* (Dublin: New Island Books, 2009), James M. Smith, *Ireland's Magalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) and Frances Finnegan, *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[15] Moira J. Maguire, *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 10.

the Irish Catholic Church for all of its sins, both real and imagined.[16] While not negating the experiences of many Irish citizens in the various institutions, many of which were run by religious congregations, justice demands that their positive contributions also be acknowledged, particularly those in the educational field. At a time when state finances did not allow universal access to free education, notably at second level, the voluntary effort of many religious personnel enabled scores of Irish citizens to access educational opportunities and ultimately facilitate social mobility and progression. Neither would it be correct to assume that women religious were products of social constraints- on the contrary, as the participants in this study will show, they displayed agency at various levels and negotiated obstacles to achieve their goals. The study seeks to offer a complementary viewpoint to that of recent discourse, by giving a voice to these women, both as women religious and as teachers. Since education was their primary focus of activity, the perspectives of lay teacher colleagues and the pupils they taught were also included. The study therefore provides a template which could be used by other researchers with an interest in this area.

1.4 Research questions

Four main research questions were identified from the outset which formed the core of this research:

1. What is known of the history of the Presentation Order in Waterford from 1798 to 2005?
2. How was life experienced in the convent setting at the heart of this study?
3. How was life experienced in the adjoining primary school, and to what extent did convent life impact on school life?

---

16 *Ibid.,* 7.

4. What legacy, if any, would participants consider present in the school today, in the wake of the physical departure of the women religious from active participation in everyday school life?

These questions seek to capture both the known and the unknown of this social setting- the historical and archival material currently available to researchers, and the voices of the individuals who inhabited that space.

1.5 Addressing the Research Questions

To address the four research questions, a number of data sources were used, such as historical and archival material, and these were combined with qualitative data gathered from oral history interviews. The former was used primarily in Chapter 2, which presents a summary of the existing material available to researchers, tracing the presence of the Presentation order in Waterford City over a period of more than two hundred years. The chapter both addresses the first research question and provides the historical background to the study. It draws on the available material from a number of sources, both public and private. Chapter 4 outlines these sources in greater detail, together with the methods employed in conducting the qualitative research component.

The second question directly addresses an issue which has featured for many decades in women's history- that of women's voice in historical discourse. Overall, the voice of women religious in history is significantly underdeveloped. In 1972, Elizabeth Kolmer described this lacuna as the untold story within American research,[17] while in Ireland in 1995 Margaret MacCurtain called directly for the voice and experience of women religious

[17] Elizabeth Kolmer, "Catholic Women Religious and Women's History: A Survey of the Literature," *American Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (1978): 651.

themselves to be heard.[18] By 2017, Deirdre Raftery claimed that significant progress had been made in this area.[19] Nonetheless, little qualitative data analysis has been conducted on this particular social setting. This work seeks to remedy this flaw in Irish educational historiography: the absence of the voice of teaching women religious, through the analysis of rich data gathered from oral history interviews.

The study also uses these oral histories, which are concerned with contemporary voice, to address the third and fourth research questions. They offer windows into relationships and interactions, facilitating a greater understanding of the intricate ways that the relationships and identities of women religious shaped, and were shaped by, community values, priorities and interpersonal relationships. The experiences of lay teachers and students also provide significant glimpses into the lives and experiences of community and school life, in terms of approach, outlook and attitude.

For the qualitative research component, the case study approach as advocated by Yin[20] was adopted for the study, following Mertens' guidelines.[21] The research was approached from a constructivist paradigmatic perspective, which claims that reality is socially constructed.[22] The constructed reality at the core of the study is situated in the past, drawing on data collected in the present. The combination of archival and contemporary,

---

18 Margaret MacCurtain, "Late in the Field: Catholic Sisters in Twentieth-Century Ireland and the new Religious History," *Journal of Women's History* 6, no. 4 (1995): 49.

19 Deirdre Raftery, "The Third Wave is Digital: Researching Histories of Women Religious in the Twenty-First Century," *American Catholic Studies* 128, no. 2 (2017): 30.

20 Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California and London: Sage Publications, 2003).

21 Donna M. Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2010), 37.

22 *Ibid*., 16.

qualitative data, seeks to obtain as full a picture of convent and school life as possible, complementing the historical and archival material.

Semi-structured oral history interviews were conducted on three participant groups. 11 former teaching women religious participated, 2 of whom also formed the basis of the pilot study, together with 11 former lay teaching colleagues, and 9 former pupils. Table 1 gives a brief summary of the composition of each group. As the table illustrates, within the first and second groups, a number had also been former pupils. There has also been a long tradition of former pupils returning as teachers to the school, and indeed some participants were pupils, teachers and women religious. Accordingly, a degree of overlap exists among the three groups. The data from their interviews was collected, transcribed and analysed on a thematic basis, using grounded theory techniques.[23]

Table 1: Summary of participant details

No. of participants per group	Women Religious	Teachers/Lay teachers	Former pupils
Group 1	11	10	3 (primary level) 4 (post-primary)
Group 2	____	10	3 (primary level) 4 (post-primary)
Group 3	____	____	9

1.6 Thesis overview

As referenced above, the thesis is in two parts- a historical summary of available archival material and an analysis of oral history interviews from relevant participants. Chapter 1 introduces the work in broad detail, outlining the rationale for the study and giving a brief overview of the thesis structure. Chapter 2 summarises the history of the convent and

[23] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).

school over a period of more than two hundred years. Drawing on data from a number of sources, it outlines what is currently known of the presence of the Presentation order in Waterford city. The long chronology involved, more than two hundred years, presented particular challenges in terms of dealing with the volume of data generated by such an extensive time period. However, these dates represent specific moments in history, and the chapter also provides both the historical background and the justification for the qualitative study in the second part of the thesis. While acknowledging that the archival material is not contemporaneous with the interviews that follow, therefore, I feel that this chapter's length is justified on the grounds of both capturing the value of the material at my disposal, thereby contextualising and giving as full a background as possible to the study.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature around women's history, the history of women religious and teaching women religious in particular, both nationally and internationally. It also traces the growth of female philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland, in the context of the political, economic and social realities of the day. The influence of elements such as religion and social class, and developments in Irish education generally, are also explored, particularly those relevant to a primarily teaching religious congregation.

Chapter 4 outlines in detail the methodology that permitted an exploration of the lives and work of women religious in the Presentation convent, Presentation schools and community, within the context of the prevailing social and cultural reality. It also includes the key theoretical concepts that were employed as lenses through which to frame the findings, specifically the work of two French theorists, Pierre Bourdieu[24] and Michel Foucault.[25]

[24] Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002): Born in Denguin, southwestern France in 1930, Bourdieu was a sociologist and public intellectual. He was influenced by scholars such as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, together with other scholars from anthropology and philosophy. His interests included theorising on the link between education and culture, and the intersections between taste, class and education. His influential concepts include *habitus* (socially acquired dispositions), symbolic violence, *capital* and *field*. He died in Paris in 2002.

Chapter 5 considers the theme of identity, drawing specifically on Bourdieuian concepts of agency, *field*, *habitus* and forms of *capital*, in both the convent and school contexts. It also outlines the role of the formation process in identity formation, the significance of the religious habit and veil, and specific events that both typified and challenged this identity. Chapter 6 explores the nature of power relations at various levels through a Foucauldian lens, with particular reference to techniques designed to produce what he termed 'docile bodies' and self-regulating entities.

Chapter 7 draws on the theories of both Bourdieu and Foucault, particularly their emphasis on the productive nature of identity and power. As Sheehan noted, "…power is a creative force."[26] This dynamic quality is used to inform our understanding of a recurring theme in the interviews- care. The chapter explores the theme of care at three levels- within the convent, among the teachers and among the pupils in the adjoining school. It also draws on the theory of care espoused by Nel Noddings.[27] The final chapter, Chapter 8, summarises the preceding chapters, and synthesizes the results and findings of the research study. It concludes by outlining its limitations and suggesting avenues of further inquiry.

1.7 Personal/Professional Journey

Like Bourdieu and Foucault, my personal and professional journey has had a dynamic quality to it. As a former second-level pupil of this school myself, I can recall at a very early stage in my secondary school life being the recipient of the care recalled and echoed by many

---

25 Michel Foucault (1926-1984): Born in Poitiers, France, in 1926, Foucault was both a philosopher and historian, and one of the most influential and controversial scholars of the post-World War 2 period. He used historical research to illuminate changes in discourse over time, and the evolving relationships between discourse, knowledge, institutions and power. He died in Paris in 1984.

26 *Ibid*., 6.

27 Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2005). Also *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed. (California: University of California Press, 2013).

participants in this study, and this was experienced on a variety of levels- pastoral, pedagogical and personal. I would like to feel that the care I experienced as a pupil influenced the attitude I subsequently adopted as a teacher in later life. The majority of my professional life has been spent in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and I now find myself, since 2002, teaching in the very primary school at the heart of this study. It seems that the personal and professional lives have met and the circle is complete.

The Presentation Order was specifically devoted to "the instruction of poor girls,"[28] and many of their schools are still located today in what would generally be considered more challenging areas in socio-economic terms. Having experience at a professional level of schools in both disadvantaged and relatively more prosperous areas, I have always felt a particular affinity with the former, and I would like to think that my experience as a former Presentation pupil influenced this in some way. This personal journey, in terms of reaching this level of academic study, and its professional counterpart, in terms of enhancing my understanding of the nature of teaching itself in all its aspects, have run in tandem in many ways. I hope that this piece of academic work will do justice to all its contributors.

1.8 Conclusion

The arrival of three women in Waterford in 1798 to provide education for young girls, marked the beginning of the Presentation Order in the city, a presence which would last over two hundred years and over three locations. As the fourth foundation, the founders of the Waterford community were part of the first phase in the expansion of the Presentation Order, and the third foundation outside Cove Lane in Cork City.

---

[28] *A Directory for the Religious of the Presentation Order According to the Practices of the Parent House, Founded in 1775, By the Venerable Mother, Nano Nagle, in Douglas Street, Cork* (Cork: Wm. Hurley, 1850): 4. Hereafter this will be referred to as the *1850 Directory*.

This study seeks both to trace the growth and development of the primary school over the three locations, by summarising the available historical data, and to give a voice to those directly impacted by the Order's presence in the city. This will be achieved through an analysis of data gathered in oral history, semi-structured interviews, in order to assist our understanding of how life was lived and experienced from a variety of perspectives- women religious, lay teachers and pupils- in both the convent and school settings. The study takes place against one of the ongoing debates in Irish education in recent years, namely the changing models of school patronage, and the gradual disappearance of religious teaching congregations from the educational landscape. As this landscape adapts to meet changing needs and demands, it is timely to look back and consider the contribution made by this religious congregation to education in the past as we embrace the changes to come in the future. It should be of assistance to any future researchers who may wish to conduct research on other religious orders, particularly those engaged in teaching and education.

This introductory chapter has outlined the rationale behind the study and its focus, along with the research questions and approaches used to address them. It also gives a broad overview of the thesis itself, together with a personal rationale for conducting the research. The historical material gives us useful, but limited, insights into how life was lived and experienced in the enclosed setting of a teaching religious congregation, a deficit addressed in the qualitative element of the study. The combination of historical and archival data, with qualitative data gathered from the oral history interviews, provide a more complete understanding of life within this social setting.

The journey began when I was given access to archival material temporarily stored in a secured location in County Waterford following the closure of the Waterford foundation in 2005. An extensive examination of this material subsequently led to other relevant archives

throughout the country. The following chapter therefore summarises what is known from these sources.

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENTATION ORDER IN WATERFORD FROM 1798 TO 2005

"...a fit and proper person to teach females and keep a boarding-school for the education of females in the city of Waterford aforesaid..."[29]

2.1 Introduction

The period from 1798 to 2005 is an extensive one in chronological terms. However, these dates represent specific beginning and end points of the Presentation Order's presence in Waterford City, and are therefore justified for inclusion on this basis. As we will also see, much of the historical and archival data, on which this chapter is based, was concentrated on specific moments in time. The rich archival material also contextualises in many ways the work of Nano Nagle herself, without whom there would be no Presentation Order. As one of the primary foundations, Waterford occupies a special place in the order's history. The chapter therefore begins with a brief exposé of the nature and purpose of the Institute, contextualises the Waterford of 1798, and concludes with an outline of what is known about the convent and schools over three locations in the city.

2.2 Nature and Purpose of the Institute as founded by Nano Nagle

2.2.1 Cove Lane Roots

On Christmas Eve, 1775, Nano Nagle was joined by three other women in her house in Cove Lane, Cork City. This marked the beginning of the first native Irish congregation since Norman times, and was noted in the congregational annals as follows:

---

[29] *1799 Licence to Teach* (Presentation Archives: Dungarvan, Co. Waterford).

> 24 December 1775. On this day these four ardent and zealous followers of the humble and crucified Jesus commenced their novitiate, delivering themselves up unreservedly to the practice of the most severe monastic discipline and to all the privations and austerities to which their future poor, laborious and annihilated life was in every shape calculated and likely to lead them. To this pious congregation she (Nano Nagle) gave the title of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.[30]

The decision to found a new religious congregation was not one taken lightly. Despite the uncertain political climate of that time, Nano Nagle had already invited, and funded the costs associated with, a group of Ursuline sisters to Cork, a move she envisaged would ensure the continuation of her active apostolate in the education and visitation of the poor in their homes. However, the rule of enclosure, part of the Ursuline rule, made the latter aspect in particular impossible to implement, and she eventually decided to found a congregation which would reflect her own aims and vision.

The new institute was to devote itself exclusively to the poor, with a particular emphasis on education. Before her death, Nano Nagle had been considering suitable rules and constitutions for her fledgling community, and in correspondence with Teresa Mulally, a Dublin lady engaged in similar work in the *capital*, she outlined three primary considerations: the rules and constitutions had to be suitable for Irish conditions, a proper balance had to be struck between time spent in prayer and in active charity, and priority had to be given to the schools.[31] The importance attached to the latter consideration was a direct result of the education she had been providing for many years previously.

2.2.2 Presentation education in the Nineteenth Century: Curriculum and Methodologies

Although there were two aspects to her work, Nano Nagle considered education the more important: “I often think my schools will never bring me to heaven, as I only take

---

30 Annals of the South Presentation Convent, Cork City.

31 Sr. M. Raphael Consedine, P.B.V.M., *Listening Journey: A Study of the Spirit and Ideals of Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters* (Victoria: Port Phillip Press, 1983), 72.

delight and pleasure in them."[32] By 1775, she had already spent many years organising, funding and supervising seven schools in Cork City for both girls and boys. These were modelled on schools she had seen in France, namely the *petites écoles*, which were the ordinary means of education for poor children in the towns and cities of the day and which dated back to 1357. The curriculum was a combination of religious, secular and vocational education. Spelling was taught from a Latin text, and when progress was made, children read the catechism and other religious books. However, the greatest emphasis was placed on religious teaching and instruction. Every session began and ended with a prayer, and Nano Nagle herself insisted on personally preparing pupils for reception of the sacraments, since she considered it the most important aspect of the curriculum. This is evident in her surviving letters:

> At present I have two schools for boys and five for girls. The former learn to read, and when they have the Douai catechism by heart they learn to read and write and cipher. There are three schools where the girls learn to read, and when they have the catechism by heart they learn to work. They all hear Mass every day, say their morning and night prayers, say the Catechism in each school by question and answer all together. Every Saturday they all say the beads, the grown girls every evening. They go to Confession every month and to Communion when their Confessors think proper. The schools are opened at eight, at twelve the children go to dinner, at five o'clock they leave school. The workers do not begin their night prayers until six, after the beads.[33]

In the girls' classes, there was also an emphasis on needlework and other crafts, while elementary arithmetic was added later. Navigation for boys was taught in the city. The inclusion of practical skills would, it was hoped, provide pupils with the means to avoid poverty and earn an independent living.

Nano Nagle's vision of education centred on the quality of life, the quality of society and the relationship of people with God, and her schools formed the vehicle to service this

---

[32] Letter from Nano Nagle to Miss Fitzsimons, 17 July, 1769, Original in Ursuline Convent, Blackrock, Cork City.

[33] *Ibid*.

vision.[34] She personally supervised the religious education and moral instruction components of the daily programme, but employed lay teachers for the secular subjects. Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck's research provides an indication of the nature of a Presentation education in the nineteenth century.[35] The secular subjects at the heart of the curriculum reflected contemporary attitudes regarding appropriate education for girls. This was outlined in great detail in the *1850 Directory*, which set out the philosophy and practices to be followed in all Presentation schools:

> As the poor cannot receive a more precious inheritance, than a spirit of economy and industry, particular attention shall be paid to instil it into the minds of the children. That pernicious propensity to talk and idleness, should as much as possible, be banished from amongst them. Besides, therefore, the more serious and to them, less interesting studies of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, and Grammar, they should be carefully instructed in all sorts of needle-work, as being the means by which they may in after life, obtain more securely a decent livelihood. To the poor, this is certainly, the most essential acquirement which they can obtain; and it should therefore be to every Presentation Religious, one of the chief objects of her care and attention. To the young and less advanced children, knitting, will during the vacant moments of the day, prove a fruitful source of both amusement and industry.[36]

In terms of teaching methodologies, the Presentation schools at this time were influenced by the Lancastrian[37] method of teaching, which involved a teacher instructing a group of capable pupils who each in turn taught small groups of other pupils. With its emphasis on rote learning, mass results and mass economies, it was ideally suited for situations where large numbers of children were under the care of a small number of teachers.

---

34 Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, "The Presentation Order and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," in *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700*-2000, eds. Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 133.

35 *Ibid*., 135-141.

36 *1850 Directory*, 20.

37 The Lancastrian, or monitorial, method of teaching was devised by a London schoolmaster Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838) and involved the older or better students being taught by the teacher, who then transmitted their knowledge to the younger or weaker pupils. It became widely used in the nineteenth century due mainly to its low cost and efficiency.

However, they also absorbed some of the Ursuline[38] tradition, which followed the Jesuit[39] model, with its principle of shared responsibility between Superioress and Mistress General. Consedine points out that by the time the *1850 Directory* was published, more of the educational theory and practice of the Ursulines had been assimilated than was indicated.[40] All regulations and guidance regarding schools were set out in the Constitutions- opening times, subjects to be taught, administrative details and methods of instruction. Throughout, the importance of religious instruction and moral education is noticeable.

The *Directory* also detailed the methods to be employed in the teaching of these subjects, which is referenced in more detail by Nowlan-Roebuck.[41] Instruction in the various subject areas was based on a process of instruction, questioning and repetition.[42] The programmes also reflect the gendered nature of the primary education syllabus at the time, as laid down by the National System. Female philanthropists such as Mrs. Meredith (Susanna Lloyd) frequently complained of the lack of state training for Irish women workers, citing the lack of value attached to domestic labour.[43] The Presentation sisters made attempts to address this need by including skills such as needlework and knitting in the school programme. With many schools situated even today in economically deprived areas, the acquisition of such skills gave pupils some means of gaining a degree of financial independence in later life. The

---

38 The Ursuline order was founded by St. Angela Merici (1474- c.1540) in Brescia, Italy, in 1535, devoted to the education of girls and the care of the sick and the needy. Ursuline educational principles emphasise the fostering of a school community where gospel values are lived and taught.

39 The Jesuits, or the Society of Jesus, were founded in 1534 by St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), a Spanish knight, following a spiritual conversion. Their motto is 'Ad maiorem Dei gloriam' ('For the greater glory of God').

40 Consedine, *Listening Journey*, 219-222.

41 Nowlan-Roebuck, "The Presentation Order and National Education," 138-139.

42 *Ibid*., 139.

43 Mary Pierse, "From lace-making to social activism: the resourcefulness of campaigning women philanthropists," in *Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, eds. Laurence M. Geary and Oonagh Walsh (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015), 199.

socioeconomic environment from which pupils came provided a strong economic rationale for the inclusion of such skills.

A Presentation education in the mid nineteenth century prescribed that children were only to read books that instilled virtues of piety and devotion: the reading of books for amusement was forbidden. The teaching of writing began initially on slates with pupils later progressing to paper, once letter formation and pen grip had been mastered. Arithmetic, considered one of the most important branches of profane knowledge,[44] was viewed as an excellent way of strengthening the mind and preparing it for the acquisition of other knowledge.[45] Knowledge of tables and notations were deemed absolutely necessary to acquire arithmetical fluency.

While the secular curriculum conformed to generally accepted norms both inside and outside the National System, the programme of religious instruction was devised entirely by the Presentation Order. Based in turn on books such as the *Douai Catechism*, the *1850 Directory* outlined the object and content to be followed, and detailed instructions for their implementation. Half an hour daily was to be spent in the teaching of the Catechism, with more detailed and frequent preparation for the sacraments. Respect for all adults, submission, modesty and humility were emphasised.[46] Indeed, although a small part of the day, the *Directory* makes it clear that it was by no means to be considered as of minor importance:

> As the chief duty of Presentation Religious consists in the instruction of the poor children in piety and the practice of Christian virtue, they shall most devotedly employ themselves in this meritorious occupation, and shall make it their particular duty.[47]

---

44 *1850 Directory*, 45.

45 *Ibid*.

46 Nowlan-Roebuck, "Sisters as Teachers," 91.

47 *1850 Directory*, 29-30.

Finally, the day was punctuated by regular prayers, meditations and examinations of conscience.

In the years following Nano Nagle's death in 1784, the Cove Lane community struggled to survive. Factors such as the heavy and taxing workload, together with financial concerns, made it difficult to recruit and retain new members.[48] Like Nano herself had been, they were also conscious of operating under two sets of constraints- as female Catholics and as women religious. This left her successors unable to expand and thereby provide members to set up new foundations. However, it was possible to train new recruits in the Cork motherhouse, if suitable candidates were found. This would be the case for the fourth Presentation foundation- Waterford.

2.3 Waterford in 1798

Waterford City in 1798 was a city of contrasts. Its extensive quay frontage formed the basis of a thriving import and export trade with many areas around the globe, and the prosperity this brought was reflected in a city with a number of elegant buildings and a relatively tolerant political climate. Side by side with this prosperity, however, lay many areas of poverty and destitution, with few opportunities for social mobility and advancement. This was the context to which Eleanor Power, the first Presentation Sister, and her companions returned in September, 1798.

2.3.1 The Economic Context

Waterford in 1798 was a city with a population of between 30,000 and 40,000 inhabitants. From Elizabethan times, the economic centre of activity centred on the quay

---

[48] Louise O'Reilly, *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious: Case Study of the Union of Irish Presentation Sisters* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 12.

which stretched from Grattan to Adelphi Quay (see Figure 1), with ships able to unload and reload their cargoes directly adjoining the city centre.



Figure 1: Plan of the City and Suburbs of Waterford by Bernard Scale and William Richards, Land Surveyors.
(Originally issued in 1764, this ed. published by R. H. Laurie, London, 1821).
Source: Trinity College Library, Dublin.

A visitor during the eighteenth century, Charles Smith, described it as follows:

> The Quay is about half a mile in length and of considerable breadth, not inferior to but rather exceeds the most celebrated in Europe. To it the largest trading vessels may conveniently come up, both to load and to unload, and at a small distance opposite it may lie and constantly afloat. The Exchange, Custom House and other buildings, ranged along the quay are no small addition to its beauty, which together with a number of shipping afford an agreeable prospect. The whole is fronted with hewn stone, well paved and in some places it is forty feet broad. To it are built five moles or piers which stretch forward; at the pier heads ships of 500 tons may load and unload and lie afloat. In the road before the Quay the river is between four and five fathoms deep at low water where sixty sail of ship may ride conveniently, clear of each other in clean ground.[49]

[49] Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Waterford* (Dublin: 1746), cited by Daire Keogh, *Edmund Rice and the First Christian Brothers* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 53-54.

The extensive quay frontage increased economic activity, and as a result the eighteenth century Georgian period saw Waterford become the third largest port in Ireland. The agricultural boom in tillage and dairying also benefited the southeast in the second half of the century. A great deal of the agricultural surplus from its hinterland was shipped along the three rivers of the Suir, the Nore and the Barrow, to the quays in Waterford to be either exported or processed nearby.

The agricultural produce formed the basis of industries such as flour-milling, distilling, bacon-curing, tanning and soap-making.[50] The export market consisted of primarily processed agricultural products such as bacon, salted meat, cereal crops and dairy products.[51] Cattle were traded in large numbers in the market square outside the town in Ballybricken, while corn was milled along the Suir and floated down the river to the many warehouses situated along the quay. Cattle from throughout the country were sent for slaughter to Waterford, while fish, oil, rum, sugar and cotton were unloaded from the returning ships. Shipbuilding also thrived, and the city became a centre for glass making in 1783 when the Penrose family established a factory there. Largely due to its strong Spanish connections, the city exported fish, hides, salt meat and corn to Spain and the south of France, being supplied in turn with French and Spanish wines for the whole of Ireland.[52]

This continental trade diminished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but was replaced by a lucrative alternative- that of provisioning ships sailing mostly from Bristol in England. As a regular stop on the profitable trade routes between England and its North

---

50 Keogh, *Edmund Rice and the First Christian Brothers*, 53.

51 Des Cowman, "Trade and Society in Waterford City, 1800-1840," in *Waterford History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, eds. William Nolan and Thomas P. Power (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992), 428. See also Peter Solar, "The Agricultural Trade of the Port of Waterford, 1809-1909," in *Waterford History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, eds. William Nolan and Thomas P. Power (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992), 495-518.

52 Mark Girouard, "Three Centuries of Commerce: City of Waterford, Ireland-III," *Country Life*, December 22nd 1966, 1695.

American colonies, it provided ambitious and hardworking merchants the possibility of earning vast fortunes in supplying provisions to the West Indies and particularly Newfoundland. Other trade markets were England, Spain, France and Portugal. The trade with Newfoundland was particularly lucrative, and many young labourers availed of the ships plying their trade between England and its North American colonies to seek seasonal work in the fishing grounds off the Canadian coast. Many subsequently settled there, forming the basis of a substantial Irish colony whose accent today bears a remarkable similarity to that of their Waterford ancestors.

2.3.2 The Political Context

In political terms, late eighteenth century Ireland was dominated by the effects of the Penal Laws[53] and the political unrest abroad, most notably in France. The Penal Laws had been enacted to ensure that power remained in the hands of the minority Protestant elite in Ireland, particularly in the areas of religious practice, education, property and Catholic access to the sources of power, although the traditional view of repression by a minority on the majority population has been challenged. Historians such as Daire Keogh, for example, claim that the traditional historiography of this period has exaggerated the nature and duration of the Penal Laws, and that security considerations, rather than a specific attack on popery itself, inspired many of them.[54] In any event, by the late eighteenth century, many of the Penal Laws were either being repealed or falling into disuse, with many liberal Protestants regarding them as a sign of a more bigoted era. On a wider level, the Catholic Church was seen as a valuable ally in the struggle against French republicanism. By the end of the century, therefore, reforms had been enacted which effectively removed many of the

---

53 The Penal Laws were a series of laws restricting Catholic access to land ownership, the professions, religious freedom and education.

54 Keogh, *Edmund Rice and the First Christian Brothers*, 14. See also Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 203-211.

restrictions placed on Catholics in public life. The reforms of 1778,[55] 1782[56] and particularly those of 1793[57] gave Irish Catholics the vote and a far broader franchise than that enjoyed by their Protestant counterparts in England. Above all, however, and of particular relevance to this research, Catholics could now keep schools. This would legitimise the existing Presentation schools in Cork and the one soon to be founded in Waterford.

Politically at least, the situation in Waterford appears to have been less severe than in other parts of the country. Local historians claim that trade undoubtedly played a part in this, since it was one of the few avenues open to ambitious Catholics.[58] Catholic merchants had a long tradition of business acumen and extensive contacts on the European mainland, while their Protestant counterparts had political influence in both Britain and Ireland. Their mutual co-operation benefited both parties, and accordingly a new and significant Catholic middle class emerged during the course of the century, a fact acknowledged by Wall[59], among others. Edmund Rice's uncle was one of these, and it was his uncle's chandlery business that drew Edmund to Waterford and which was to provide the financial means to support his later work in education, including that of the Presentation foundation.

Despite this relatively tolerant atmosphere, periodic outbreaks of dissension and violence did occur. A bout of religious persecution by the Catholic Church in France produced a backlash in the 1760s which made life extremely difficult for the leading

---

55 The Catholic Relief Act of 1778 removed some of the laws concerning land ownership by Catholics.

56 The Constitution and the Catholic Relief Act of 1782 repealed many of the laws restricting the practice of the Catholic religion, and discriminatory practices in business and the professions.

57 The Relief Act of 1793 allowed Catholics to buy freehold land, to become grand jurors and barristers, to study at Trinity College, Dublin, and to vote if they held property with a rental value of at least £2 per year. These became known as the "forty-shilling freeholders."

58 Julian Walton, "Catholic Waterford in 1798 and 1998" (lecture, Waterford City Hall, Waterford, Ireland, September 11, 1998).

59 Maureen Wall, "The Rise of a Catholic Middle Class in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 11, no. 42 (1958): 115.

Catholics in Munster, culminating in the judicial murder of Fr. Sheehy[60] in Clonmel in 1766, while the impact of revolutionary ideals led to the hanging of Francis Hearn[61] in 1799. Caution was still thus the byword for many Catholics in the city. The political climate would also impact on the economic climate as the nineteenth century progressed: the Act of Union in 1800 and the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 sent the local economy into a spiral of decline.

2.3.3 The Social Context

The vibrant maritime and agricultural trade, combined with a relatively tolerant political atmosphere, created a prosperous city, whose wealth in turn was reflected in a number of buildings. The Exchange and Customs House dominated the quay area, but a number of graceful and elegant public buildings also reflected the city's prosperity, such as the Assembly Rooms (today's City Hall), the Morris Town House (the Chamber of Commerce building), the imposing Protestant Bishop's Palace, the city and county courthouse, and the two cathedrals.

Waterford was also a public-spirited place, with wealthy merchants from many religious persuasions funding the provision of a House of Industry and Lunatic Asylum which were completed in 1779, a dispensary providing free medicine opening in 1786, and a Fever Hospital opening its doors in 1799 following the efforts of individuals such as Dr. William Barker,[62] claiming to be the first of its kind in the country. These buildings and

---

60 Fr. Nicholas Sheehy (1728-1766): born in Co. Tipperary, he became a priest and a vocal opponent of the Penal Laws. He was arrested on a charge of accessory to murder and executed in Clonmel, a conviction that was widely regarded as a case of judicial murder by supporters of Irish rebellion.

61 Francis Hearn (d. 1799): the nephew of Thomas Hearn, Vicar General and Dean of Waterford, and Francis, President of the Irish College, Louvain, and Parish Priest of St. Patrick's, Waterford. He was expelled from Maynooth College in 1798 for being a member of the United Irishmen. He was later arrested and sentenced to death for participating in the 1798 rebellion. He was hanged on the old Waterford bridge on 21 October 1799.

62 The Barkers were a prominent Protestant merchant family in Waterford who were part of the ruling Protestant dynasties of Georgian Waterford. However the family had also had a long tradition in the *field* of

institutions were frequently staffed by physicians and other professionals giving freely of their time. There would also appear to have been a considerable degree of ecumenism. Both Protestant and Catholic cathedrals were designed by the same architect, and Edmund Rice, too, was known to have had close relationships with many individuals of other faiths due to their common involvement in charitable organisations. A small number of "Romanists" were admitted as Freemen of the city.[63]

However, side by side with this prosperity was the majority of the city population, the vast proportion of whom did not share in this wealth. If a visitor to the city walked a short distance from the quays, they would find narrow lanes where the inhabitants lived in abject poverty. It was common for children to be found around the city, roaming the streets in search of food or work. This was the deficit to which the three women would return from Cork to address.

2.4 Arrival of the Presentation Order to Waterford and Jenkins' Lane: 1798-1800

2.4.1 First steps

The introduction of the Presentation Order into Waterford is described in the Presentation annals in Cork as follows (see Figure 2):

---

medicine. William Barker (1731-1788) ran an apothecary's business, and his son of the same name was both a surgeon and apothecary in the city. The latter's elder brother, Francis (1772-1859) was born around 1772, was educated in Trinity College, studied medicine in Edinburgh, and was a friend of Sir Walter Scott before returning to Waterford where he practised as a doctor for five years. During this time he founded what is thought to have been Ireland's first fever hospital. He subsequently moved to Dublin where he spent the rest of his long and distinguished medical career. He died in Dublin in 1859. See also Laurence M. Geary, "'The best relief the poor can receive is from themselves': the Society for Promoting the Comforts of the Poor," in *Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, eds. Laurence M. Geary and Oonagh Walsh (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015), 58.

63 Walton, "Catholic Waterford in 1798 and 1998."

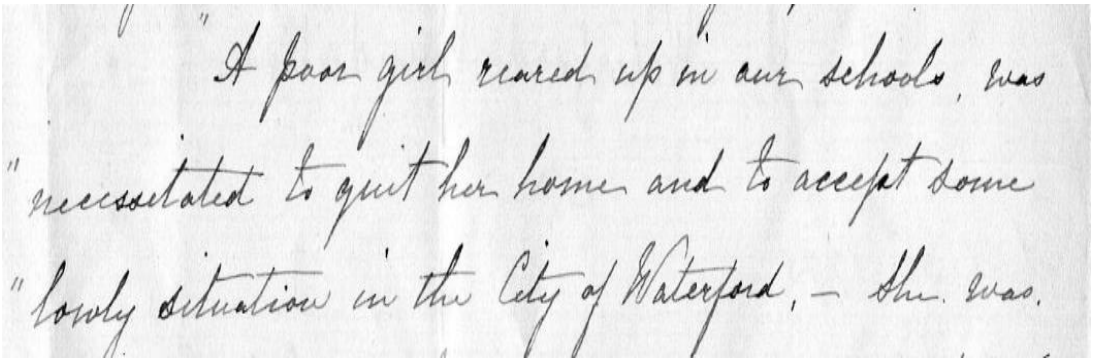

"A poor girl reared up in our schools, was
"necessitated to quit her home and to accept some
"lowly situation in the City of Waterford, — She was.

Figure 2: Extract from the Presentation annals detailing the start of the Waterford foundation.
Source: South Presentation Convent archives, Cork City.

> The incident was, in itself, very trifling, which led to the establishment of this Convent; and shows, the many wonderful, and often, in appearance, insignificant means which our merciful and all-wise God makes use of, to bring about His unfathomable designs of love and mercy, in regard to His worthless and ungrateful creatures. A poor girl, reared up in our school, was necessitated to quit her home, and to accept some lowly situation in the City of Waterford. She was indeed poor, as to this world's fleeting, and fast fading goods and pleasures; but, she was taught, early in youth, to lay in a store of virtue, the advantages of which, for her, would last for all eternity. Absence, from friends, who anxiously watched the movements of her inexperienced heart and mind, did not prove to be in her, any source of laxity in the observance of her accustomed pious exercises, and religious duties. She approached the Sacraments as frequently as ever; and, in her conduct, she was a model for those around her. Her Confessions were made with so much exactitude, and she seemed to be so thoroughly instructed in the necessary form or method of Confessing (a knowledge, at the time, confined to the better classes) that her Confessor in surprise and admiration, inquired of her, where she was from and how it had been that she was so very well versed in all that appertained to her duty of "serving God"? She said she was from Cork and that it was at the Convent, there, she had been taught her Catechism so well, and initiated in all the principles and practices of our holy Faith.[64]

The priest in question was 35 year old Fr. John Power, based in St. John's Parish, and who later became Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. On enquiring where she was from, he soon learned of the existence of the Presentation nuns and quickly realised the benefit of having such a group of women in his own city. Information regarding the rules, practices and obligations were soon obtained, and with both the permission and encouragement of his Bishop, Dr. William Egan, he lost no time in writing to Mother Angela Collins in Cork regarding the possibility of setting up a foundation in Waterford. Initial responses were

64 Extract from the annals of the South Presentation Convent, Cork City.

disappointing. Fr. Power was informed that the request was beyond the prevailing resources of the Cork community, but they were prepared to train women from Waterford for Waterford, if willing aspirants could be found.

Every possible Episcopal support was promised, and work was soon underway to find suitable candidates.

> This zealous and worthy Parish Priest heard, in this accidental manner, and for the first time, that their (sic) in this City, an Institute, so replete with Charity; and so calculated to impart Instruction and to infuse virtue and sanctity into the minds and hearts of our neglected, and despised, and necessitously ignorant fellow Mortals, the "Poor Irish." Having written here, and obtained satisfactorily all the information sought for, regarding our rules and practices, and obligation of instructing the ignorant poor, he expressed to his Bishop, Right Rev. Dr. Hussey, his great desire to establish in his parish a Convent of our "Charitable Congregation." His Lordship approved of the design; and not only permitted him to make all the necessary exertions for the accomplishment of his pious desire but promised also, that he would, on his part, lend every possible aid; and use his influence with others, to assist on, the good work.[65]

Eventually, three ladies, all natives of the county, were found who were prepared to undertake the new venture. A young widow, Mrs. Margaret Power, née Fanning, her sister Miss Fanning (whose first name we do not know), and her sister-in-law Eleanor (or Ellen) Power, volunteered themselves and their property to establish the charitable foundation:

> It was at this crisis, that Miss Ellen Power, and her Sister in law, Mrs. Margaret Power (a young widow, of great virtue and piety) offered to his Lordship, themselves and their property, as a commencement to the establishment of a mission, which they looked upon as so essential to the present and future happiness of their uninstructed fellow creatures, in, and around Waterford.[66]

Eleanor was thirty-six and Margaret was twenty-eight. It is generally thought that Eleanor was a cousin of Fr. Power. They duly left for Cork to begin their novitiate in April 1795: the fees for their expenses would be twenty pounds per annum. They had an income of £108 per

---

65 *Ibid*.

66 *Ibid*.

annum (the interest of their invested funds) and the fee for their expenses was twenty pounds per annum. As one of the earliest foundations to be established outside Cork, they trained and lived with some of those who had known Nano Nagle personally. The first few months were one of probation, where the ladies learned the essentials of religious life and school management. At the end of this period, they had to decide to continue with, or leave, religious life.

In July, 1796, while still in Cork, news reached the ladies that Bishop Egan had died unexpectedly in Clonmel. As he died intestate, huge uncertainty was created regarding the future funding of the religious establishments he had intended. However, despite this setback, the three ladies decided to become novices, and began their preparation for taking vows. They were subsequently received on 4 January, 1796, made simple vows in January 1798, and solemn vows on 15 August, 1806.

Back in Waterford, efforts were underway to obtain a suitable site on which to build a convent. Providing the nuns with his convent was for some time a huge problem for Fr. Power. However, a 35 year old merchant from Callan, Co. Kilkenny, Edmund Rice, was a friend of Fr. Power and was fully aware, and supportive, of the new scheme. He helped to initiate the enterprise by accepting the bulk of the responsibility attaching to the business part of the arrangement. Through his friends in the legal profession, he discovered a suitable plot of approximately one acre owned by the Wyse family, on a piece of ground in Hennessy's Road, just west of the old city wall, in the parish of St. John's (see Figure 3 below).

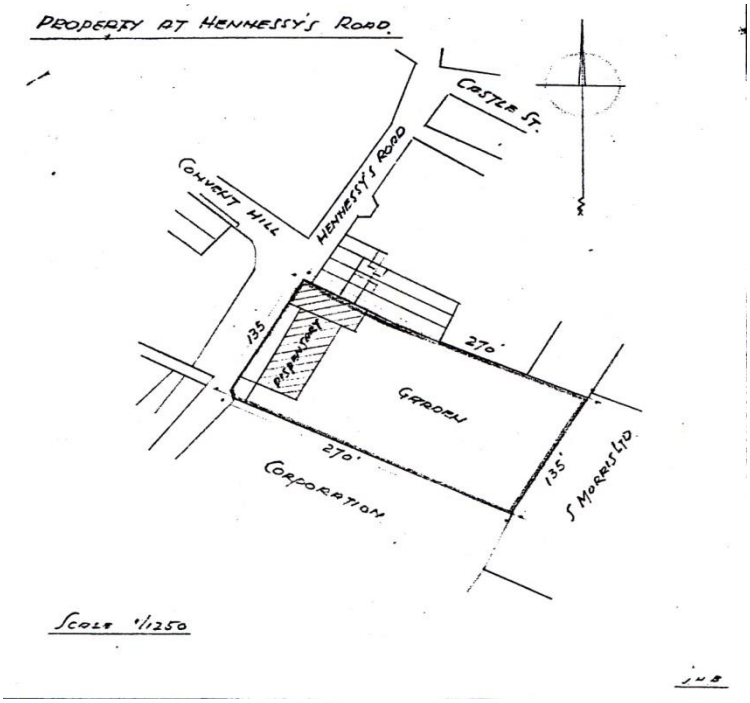


Figure 3: Plan of Hennessy's Road property. Courtesy of Waterford Corporation. Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

A lease was subsequently acquired by Francis Wyse for a period of ninety-one years at a yearly rent of £13, signed and dated 20 August, 1796, which confirmed Edmund Rice as a trustee of behalf of the nuns. Together with Fr. Power, the two men were to provide crucial support, both moral and financial, in the years ahead.

In Cork, another setback occurred when Sr. Magdalen Fanning's health was not equal to the demands required, and in January 1797, she said goodbye to her companions and returned home. The search began immediately for another candidate, since it was considered necessary to have at least three in the founding group. Another lady of about fifty years of age, Mary Mullowney of Ballybrack near Kilmacthomas, volunteered, and joined them in Cork on 7 April, 1797. Her probationary period was shortened sufficiently to enable her to be professed with the others in the summer of 1798. Miss Power took the name of Sr. Francis De Sales in religion, Mrs. Power that of Sr. Jane Francis de Chantal, and Miss Mullowney that of

Sr. M. Teresa.[67] Sr. De Sales was also appointed Superior of the new foundation. Sr. De Sales Power died in 1808, while Sr. Jane de Chantal Power was subsequently sent to establish the Carrick-on-Suir foundation in April 1813. She died there in January 1833 (see Figure 4).



Fig. 4: Grave of Sr. M. Jane de Chantal Power, Carrick-on-Suir
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Sr. Teresa Mullowney, on the other hand, was remarkable for her longevity, living long to enough to witness the move to both the Hennessy's Road and Holy Cross convents. As the only one of the original group to live in all three locations, she was therefore a living link between the origins of the community and those who came later. Having been personally acquainted with Mother Angela Collins and those who had known Nano Nagle personally, she was also a source of genuine information on her work and the spirit of the Institute. The Presentation archives contain this document signed by her at 106 years of age (Figure 5):

[67] For further details of the three foundresses, see Appendix 8.

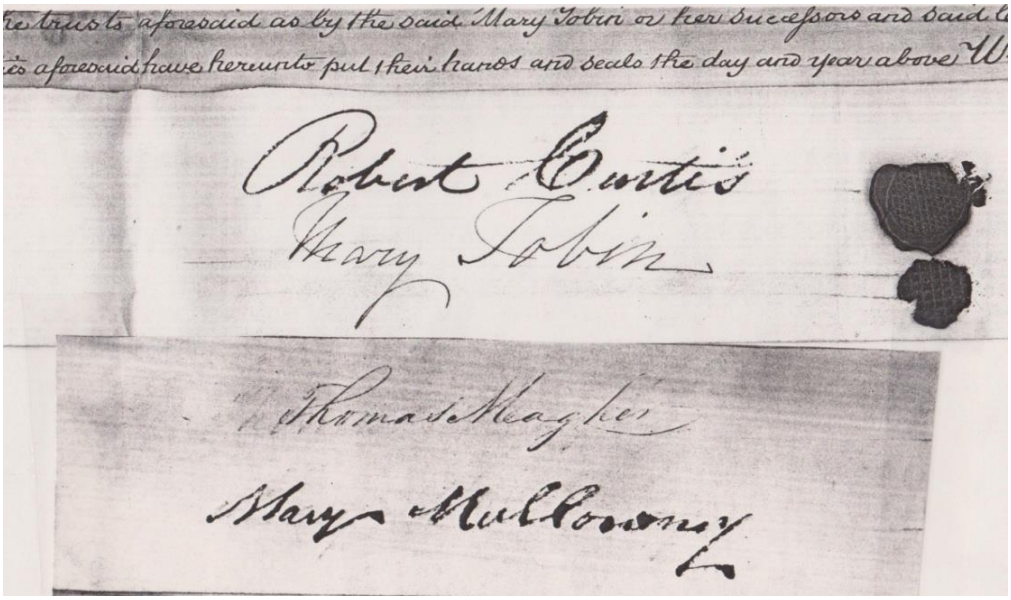


Figure 5: Signature of Teresa Mullowney at 106 years of age.
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

On the 3 September they said their goodbyes to the Cove Lane community, left Cork and set out by coach for Waterford. Their departure was noted by the community annalist (Figure 6):

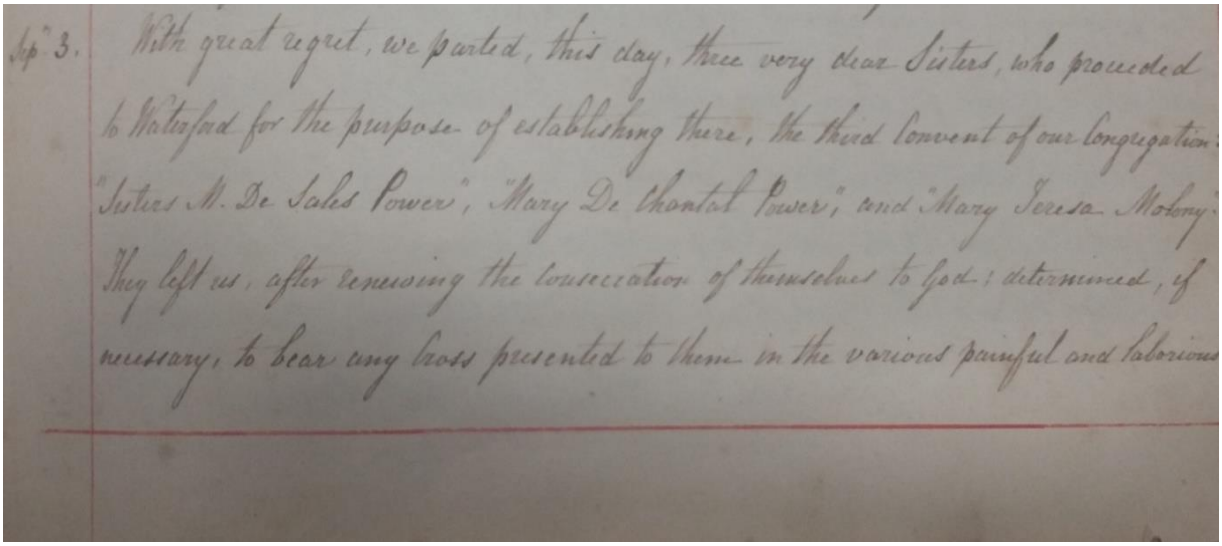


Figure 6: Extract from South Presentation annals recording the departure of the three Waterford ladies.
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

As they reached Kilmacthomas, they were warned that there was trouble on the Waterford road. A group of militia was apparently involved in a skirmish associated with the unrest of

1798, so they decided to stay overnight at Mary Mullowney's home nearby, and remained there until the 6 September, continuing on to Waterford.

2.4.2 Jenkins' Lane

On their arrival in Waterford, the three ladies were given temporary accommodation in 'the seminary in Bowling-green Lane,' the present Manor Street (see Figure 7).

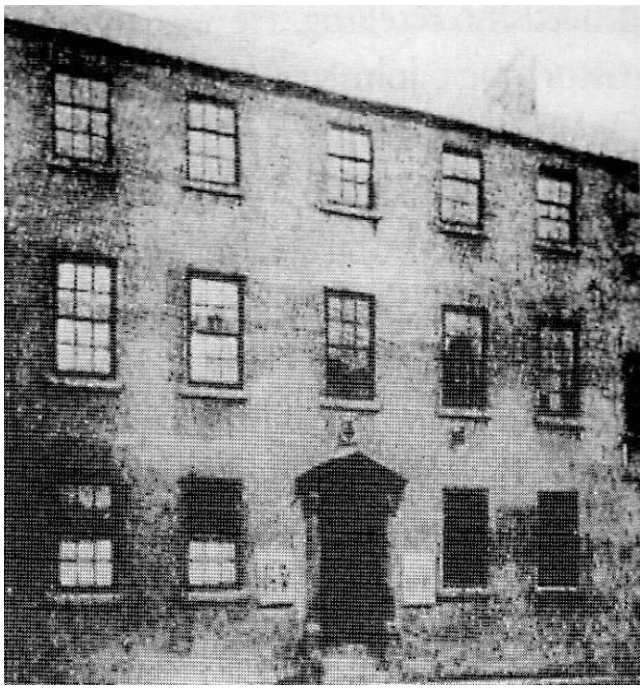


Figure 7: The Seminary in Bowling-green Lane, first home of the Waterford Presentation community.
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

Established by Dr. Egan about 1786, it remained standing until its demolition by Waterford Corporation in March 1976. The nuns stayed there for three weeks, when they were offered the parochial house attached to St. Patrick's Church, recently vacated by the Jesuits. Although intended as a temporary measure, pending the construction of the Hennessy's Road convent, they were to remain there for eighteen months, until March 1800. Taking up residence on the 29 September, 1798, they immediately began setting up a school in Chapel

Lane, a lane off George's Street (see Figures 8 and 9). Today it is known as Jenkins' Lane. It opened for the first time on the 6 November.



Figure 8: Site of first Presentation school in Jenkin's Lane.
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.



Figure 9: Plaque marking the site of the first Presentation school, Jenkin's Lane, Waterford City

Meanwhile, although the site in Hennessy's Road had been acquired two years previously, there was no sign of the new convent being built. Financial and perhaps political

considerations would seem to be the most likely reason for the delay. Although the political and religious climate was improving and Waterford had the name of being a very tolerant city, the political climate in particular was unpredictable and changeable, in common with the rest of the country. Caution was the byword for much Catholic action around this time, for fear of dashing the hopes of Catholic Emancipation, which many hoped and believed would immediately follow the Act of Union.

Despite these concerns, the foundation stone ceremony of the new convent took place on the 19 March, 1799. By now numbers in the school were increasing daily, and the three nuns were busily engaged in accommodating the growing demand and teaching the rudiments of religious and secular instruction. With the increase in pupil numbers, the school was becoming more visible to the authorities, and later that year Eleanor Power made an application to the Protestant Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Dr. Richard Marlay,[68] an uncle of Henry Grattan,[69] for a Licence to open a school. This was a legal requirement at the time, but it also served as a safeguard against possible action by Protestant neighhours, and as a window tax avoidance measure. It also reflects a degree of confidence in the increasingly tolerant political climate brought about by the gradual repeal of the Penal Laws, particularly those restricting Catholic access to education. Possession of this licence to teach was therefore both an acknowledgement both of municipal approval and of legitimacy in the eyes of the law. Sr. De Sales duly applied for, and was soon granted, the licence to teach, the text of which is reproduced below (see Figure 10):

---

[68] Richard Marlay was appointed the Church of Ireland bishop of Waterford and Lismore in 1795. His sister, Mary, was Henry Grattan's mother. He died in post in 1802.

[69] Henry Grattan (1746-1820): born in Dublin, he was a Protestant who became a member of the Irish House of Commons, a renowned orator and campaigner for Irish legislative freedom. He opposed the Act of Union in 1800 but later sat as a Member of Parliament in London.

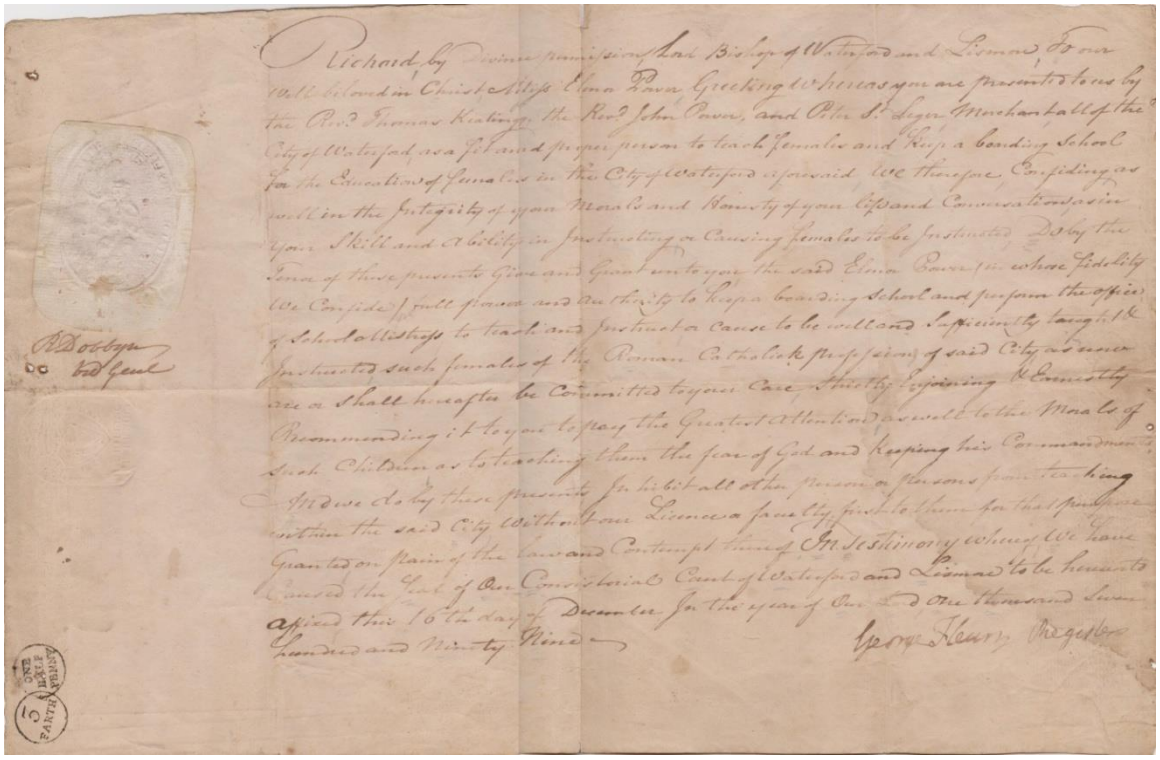


Figure 10: Licence to teach, 16 December, 1799
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Richard, by divine permission, Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, to our well-beloved in Christ, Eleanor Power, greetings. Whereas you are presented to us by the Rev. Thomas Keating, the Rev. John Power, and Peter St. Ledger, Merchant, all of the city of Waterford, as a fit and proper person to teach females and keep a boarding-school for the education of females in the city of Waterford aforesaid: we therefore, confiding as well in the integrity of your morals and honesty of your life and conversation as in your skill and ability in instructing and causing females to be instructed, do by the tenor of these presents give and grant to you, the said Eleanor Power in whose fidelity we confide, full power and authority to keep a boarding School and perform the office of school mistress to teach and instruct or cause to be well and sufficiently taught and instructed, such females of the Roman Catholic profession of said city as now are or shall hereafter be committed to your care, strictly enjoining and earnestly recommending it to you to pay the greatest attention, as well to the morals of such children, as to teaching them the fear of God and keeping His commandments. And we do by these presents inhibit all other persons from teaching within the said city, without our Licence or faculty first to them for the purpose granted, on pain of law and contempt thereof. In testimony whereof we have caused the Seal of our consistorial Court of Waterford and Lismore to be hereunto affixed this 16th day of December in the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety nine.[70]

[70] *1799 Licence to Teach*, Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Frs. Power and Keating, and Peter St. Ledger, merchant, were included as character witnesses. The latter's daughter later became a Presentation nun and died at Rahan, Co. Offaly, at the age of 29, and after his own death, Peter St. Ledger's widow also joined the Presentation Order.[71] A source of even greater joy to the fledgling community, however, must surely have been the departure of two new postulants to Cork for training, Mary Kirwan and Catherine Sullivan. The future was looking decidedly more promising.

2.5 The Hennessy's Road Convent

On the eve of the Feast of St. Joseph, 18 March, 1800, the three nuns left their house in Chapel Lane and moved into their new convent in Hennessy's Road, under the authority and patronage of the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Dr. Hussey. The following morning, Mass was celebrated there by Fr. Power and on Holy Thursday, the Blessed Sacrament was deposited by him in the convent chapel (Figure 11).

Until then, they had worn secular dress, but on 29 June they donned the religious habit. The event was noted with gratification by the Cork community, since they themselves had to wait some considerable time before doing so, for fear of drawing unwanted attention:

> Under the protection of the great Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul, our sisters in the Waterford convent courageously put on the holy habit and veil, determined that no tyranny exercised over religion or themselves will ever compel them to resume secular dress which they had been so long obliged (by the persecutors of our faith) to wear.[72]

---

71 Sr. Assumpta O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community: A Bicentenary Record 1798-1998* (Waterford, 1998), 11.

72 Extract from the annals of South Presentation Convent, Cork City.

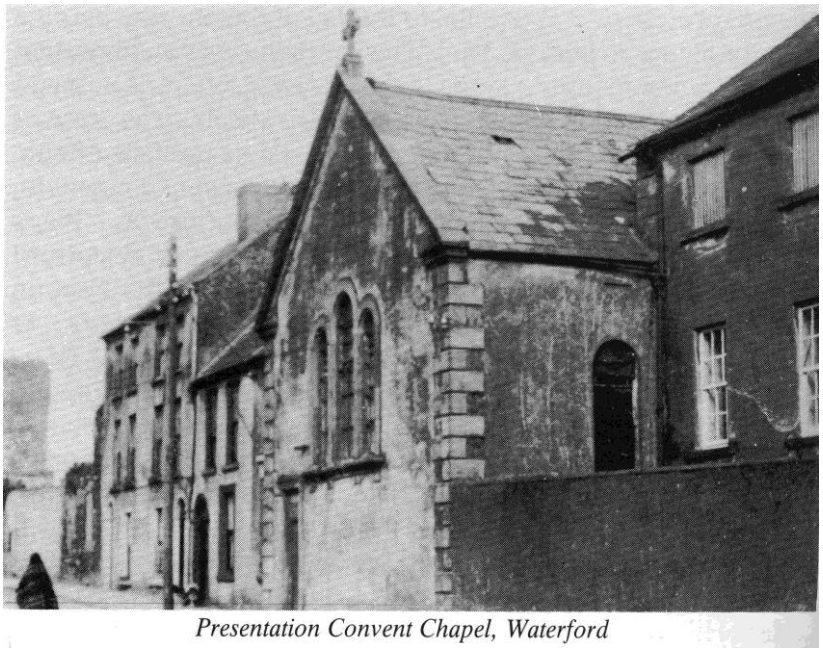


Figure 11: Phototgraph of chapel in Hennessy's Road convent
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

2.5.1 The early members of the Hennessy Road's community

In June of the following year, the number in the house was doubled by the return of the two sisters from Cork and the entry of another postulant, Lydia Hearn. As the first to be trained in Waterford, she marked the end of the practice of sending postulants to Cork. From then on, the Hennessy's Road convent received, trained and professed its own candidates for the religious life. Her extant will demonstrates the influence of Edmund Rice in outlining the financial commitments associated with religious life at the time.

The majority of the new members in the community came from Waterford city and county. In some cases, two came from the same family, such as Frances and Maria Keating. They were daughters of James Keating and his wife Eliza Shanahan from Waterford city. Maria died of tuberculosis in May 1812, aged 25, while Frances was one of a group who went on to establish a convent in Lismore in 1836, dying there of famine fever in 1847. The wills drawn up on entry provided for the bequest of property in the event of death. Hence, we find the family farm of Joanna and Bridget Power, the only daughters in the family of John

Power and Mary Walsh of Ballygegan in the parish of Dungarvan, bequeathed to the community, and remaining community property until 1885 when it was sold for £236.

In 1803, the house was still being completed, with a chapel and another school also under construction and by 1807 there were sixteen members in the community.[73] Over time, however, this would create the need for more space and ultimately a move to a new location.

2.5.2 Financial commitments

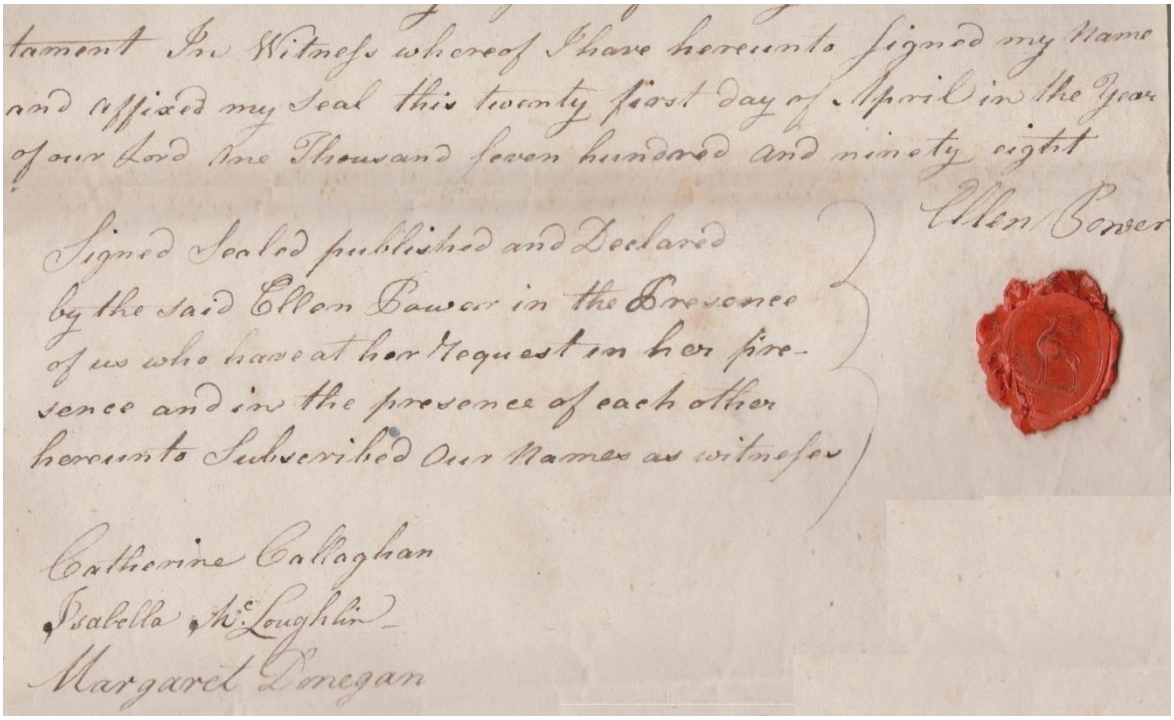

tament In Witness whereof I have hereunto signed my Name
and affixed my Seal this twenty first day of April in the Year
of our Lord One Thousand Seven hundred and ninety eight
Ellen Power
Signed Sealed published and Declared
by the said Ellen Power in the Presence
of us who have at her Request in her pre-
sence and in the presence of each other
hereunto Subscribed our Names as witnesses
Catherine Callaghan
Isabella Mc Loughlin
Margaret Donegan

Figure 12: Extract from the will of Ellen Power, 1798
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

With no income available from teaching, the community depended on each woman wishing to join being in a position to support herself out of her own resources. While she was still a novice, and therefore not yet having made a commitment to the Order, this meant in practical terms that she would have to pay a yearly fee for her board and lodging. Should she decide to take vows, a sufficient dowry was required that could earn an income from the

73 O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*, 12.

investment which would cover her annual maintenance. As a result, many of the early entrants were drawn from the merchant or upper social classes. Financial commitments were clearly outlined in the wills drawn up on entry (see Figure 12, for example). The economic necessity of the dowry requirement would later be discontinued, when grants and salaries were obtained from the state. Funding for the school, on the other hand, was kept separate from community finances.

In the case of the Waterford foundation, by 1801 the community of five had sufficient money between them to assure an income of approximately £108 per annum, if an interest rate of between 8% and 10% could be obtained. However, at this time the financial market was in a critical condition and three of the local banks had failed. Fr. Power and Edmund Rice both agreed that the money invested needed to assure the largest dividend possible with the minimum level of risk. The situation was finally resolved when Edmund Rice provided the nuns with annuities from his own personal property, thereby ensuring the fledgling community a secure source of income. On his birthday, 1 June, 1799, with Fr. Power as his witness, he executed a deed by which he granted an annuity of £42 per annum to Ellen Power, Mary Teresa Mullowney and a widow Margaret Power, in lieu of £420 to him assigned. Later, and with Fr. Power again as witness, he granted an annuity of £64 per annum to him assigned by Ellen Power, Mary Teresa Mullowney, Margaret Power, Catherine Sullivan and Mary Kirwan. Finally, out of his own funds, he granted a life annuity of £30 to the Lydia Hearn referred to above, the first postulant to be received in the Presentation Convent, Hennessy's Road. Extant wills testify to his financial acumen in this regard.

However, the dowry requirement was not always a straightforward matter. There were individual cases where members continued with their probationary period for two to three years, only to find that when the time of profession approached, the dowry was not forthcoming. This was the case with Elizabeth Ryan of Ballyneale, who entered in

Hennessy's Road in 1810, and spent three years there. With no dowry forthcoming at Profession, and no sponsor, she had no option but to leave. She later joined the convent in James's St. in Dublin, where a sponsor was found, and was subsequently professed there, the only countrywoman in an all-Dublin community.

2.5.3 The Community Grows

With the new convent came greater space to accommodate the increase in numbers it was hoped would enlarge and ensure the new community. They brought both personal and financial resources, since, as noted above, postulants were expected to fund their own costs and upkeep. These resources were supplemented by bequests and donations, such as one from Bishop Hussey, who died in July 1803 after an early morning swim in Dunmore. In his will he bequeathed money to the school:

> Right Rev. Doctor Hussey, Lord Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, departed this life on the 11th day of July 1803. His death was a sensible affliction to this infant Community which during the short period of his administration experienced the most unequivocal marks of paternal care, and disinterested attention. As a monument to his zeal and liberality he bequeathed the sum of three hundred pounds ster., the interest of which was to provide the poor children annually with books, paper, pens, etc.[74]

Another came from a rich Waterford widow, Mary Power née Merry, who died leaving the greater part of her large fortune to the various charities of the city. Among other bequests was the interest in perpetuity of two thousand pounds for the support and clothing of poor girls admitted to the nunnery school, and one hundred pounds for building a wall to the nunnery garden.[75] The garden wall was not the only building work underway at the convent. As evidence of growing pupil numbers, as early as 1803 the nuns were building a second school

---

74 Annals of the Presentation Convent, Waterford.

75 The money received from this charity was shared among three charities, of whom the Presentation community was one, and continued to be paid until the latter years of the last century when it was finally wound up.

and a chapel, as well as "...raising and finishing in a better manner the first house."[76] Financial support such as this was essential to fund the growing demands on the community. From 1806, the rule of enclosure meant that space was cramped and restricted. The addition in 1825 of two gardens, in excess of an acre, from an adjoining proprietor James Sheehan, was therefore welcomed by all concerned. Edmund Rice was active in finalising this arrangement also.



Figure 13: Hennessy's Road convent and chapel shortly before demolition, 1965. Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

On the 15 August, 1806, six nuns made their solemn vows, according to the Brief received from Pope Pius VII. On 9 April, 1805, he raised the Institute to the status of a religious congregation, thereby making canonical enclosure obligatory. Acceptance of enclosure was intended to ensure the continued survival of the Order. Besides the six professed that day, there were three novices and five postulants. They were a welcome boost to the community, since there had already been two deaths: Mary Kirwan had died in 1804 at the age of 26, while Joanna Power had just died the previous month, July 1806, at the age of 30.

---

[76] Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

In total the nuns spent over forty years in Hennessy's Road. It was a time of growth and development, and was marked by a number of memorable events. During the early years, Dr. Moylan visited the nuns more than once.[77] In one letter, he notes that the community had risen to sixteen.[78] These visits also reinforced the bond between the community and their foundress. Another memorable event was the pronouncement of vows in the convent chapel by Edmund Rice and his companions in 1808 (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Interior of Hennessy's Road chapel before demolition, 1965
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

They attended Mass there each morning, using a footpath linking the convent to nearby Mount Sion. The link with the Cove Lane community in Cork was reinforced further with the arrival of the Ursulines in 1816, the second convent in the city, while political figures were also known to visit, the most notable being Daniel O'Connell,[79] the Liberator. He came for

---

77 Letters from Dr. Power to Dr. Moylan, 26 June, 1804, Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, and 20 October, 1807, Cashel diocesan archives, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

78 Letter from Dr. Power to Dr. Moylan, 20 October, 1807.

79 Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847): born near Caherciveen, Co. Kerry on August 6th, 1775. He was sent to France to be educated and while there witnessed the horrors of the French Revolution, thereby giving him a

one of his working breakfasts with his guests on an October morning in 1840 during an election campaign, and the occasion was reported in "The Pilot" newspaper the following month, 2 November.[80]

2.5.4 The daily ritual

The daily ritual within the convent walls at this time seldom varied. It began with the Rising Bell at 5 a.m., the bell-ringer then calling at each cell door 'Benedicamus Domino' to which was answered 'Deo Gratias.' Morning prayer began at 5.15 a.m. and ended with the Angelus at 6 a.m. Mass was at 7 a.m., breakfast at 8 a.m., school at 9 a.m. Dinner was eaten in the afternoon after school, Vespers were at 5 p.m., tea at 6 p.m. while Meditation was at 7 p.m.. Night prayers were said at 9.15 p.m., followed by the Great Silence until after breakfast the following morning. Silence was also observed during mealtimes, except on special occasions such as feast days. Time was allocated to recreation between dinner and Vespers and again before Night Prayer. Activities included drawing or painting, playing music, singing, embroidery and tapestry, making and mending.

For eight days each summer, immediately before 15 August, and for the last three days of each year, there was a community retreat, detailed instructions for which were provided for in the *1850 Directory*.[81] There were also spiritual lectures, both public and private. Extant copies of literature in the archives show a particular fondness for French

---

lifelong detestation of violence. He qualified as a barrister and became famous as an orator and debater. He was elected M.P. for Clare in 1828 but refused to take the Oath of Allegiance. His campaign subsequently led to Catholic Emancipation a year later. He then turned his attention to the repeal of the Act of Union, by organising huge popular rallies. However, the "monster meeting" in Clontarf was banned by the government and O'Connell spent some time in prison as a result, damaging his reputation and adversely affecting his health. On a trip to Rome he died suddenly in Genoa in May 1847, and his funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery was among the largest ever seen in Ireland.

80 Presentation Convent archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

81 *1850 Directory*, 211-213.

spiritual writers such as St. Francis de Sales.[82] Whenever an individual was preparing for profession, the preceding eight days were spent on retreat. The duty of the Mistress of the Choir included drawing attention to faults in saying of Office, '…so that God might be served with reverence.' She did this by putting a billet on the fault to be corrected, and leaving it where all might see it. She also had to write a list of the Officiant, Chantresses and Versiculars every Saturday for the following week.

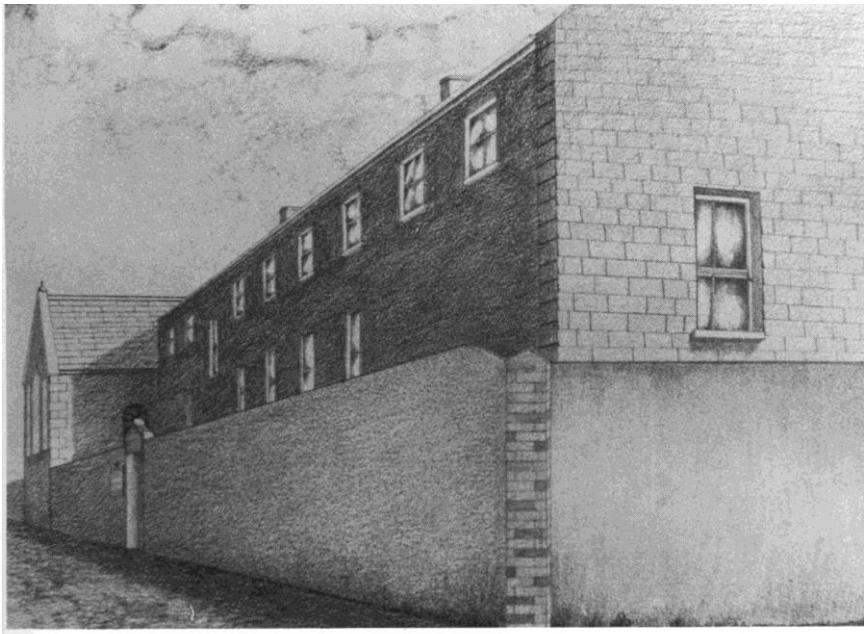
2.5.5 The demands of community life

The early years of the Hennessy Road convent paint a picture of relentless hard work, self-denial and frequent ill-health. Although more and more ladies were entering the convent, the demands being made on them were also increasing. Teaching in the school by day was followed by the instruction of adults and married women in the evenings. This work, coupled with the demands of religious life itself, took its toll on some members of the convent community. Between 1808 and 1828, twelve of those who entered left without taking vows. While in some cases they may have been considered unsuitable- the assessment of a candidate was decided by the entire community and was voted on by a system of white and black beads which was in general use at the time- some left of their own accord. The annals do not record the reasons for their departure, but ill-health may have played a part. There were serious fever epidemics in the city in both 1818 and 1822, together with the particularly severe Asiatic cholera outbreak of 1832. On the 2 July of that year, the first case was reported in Waterford, and in all 402 people were declared as having the disease, of whom 192 died. As noted by Patrick Power in his history of the city, this represented a mortality rate of 47%.[83]

---

82 Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

83 Patrick C. Power, *History of Waterford: City and County* (Dungarvan: De Paor Publishers, 1998), 132.



Presentation convent and chapel.

Figure 15: Drawing of Hennessy's Road Convent, Waterford, by Padraic Reaney. Reproduced by kind permission of Padraic Reaney.

Outbreaks of disease were a constant source of concern, especially as the convent was situated near some of the worst affected areas of the city.[84] Available statistics for this period show that the population of Waterford dropped from 28,821 in 1831 to 23,216 ten years later.[85] Tuberculosis was also particularly feared since it was generally incurable. Jones has noted that, while the disease was declining in the United States and Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century, mortality rates steadily rose in Ireland throughout the 1880s and 1890s, peaking in 1904.[86] With the proviso that statistical data collection was not either complete or accurate, the medical commissioner charged with collecting these figures concluded that the 1840 tuberculosis death rate to have been 199 per 100,000 of the

84 *Ibid*.

85 W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1871,* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1798), 34.

86 Greta Jones, *'Captain of All These Men of Death': The History of Tuberculosis in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Ireland* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2001), *2*.

population, the 1850, 293 and the 1860, 187.[87] Waterford would undoubtedly have formed part of this trend.

Although released from the strict rule of fast and abstinence because of their responsibility to relieve poverty and its symptoms, the inscriptions on headstones and annals entries reveal the extent to which this took its toll on the health of many recruits. As can be seen from Table 2 below, many of them died before reaching the age of thirty. Meanwhile, numbers attending the two schools were increasing each year. This brought with them demands for extra food, clothing and school requisites, which in turn impacted the financial resources at the nuns' disposal. The need for more space for both community and schools, in a healthier location, led to the possibility of moving again to be considered.



Figure 16: Plaque on stone marking the site of the Hennessy's Road Convent.

87 *Ibid*., 29-30.

No.	Name	Year of entry	Age on entry	Name in Religion	Year of death	Age on death
1.	Eleanor Power	1795	36	*Sr. M. Francis de Sales	1808	49
5.	Mary Kirwan	1799	21	*Sr. M. John Evangelist	1804	26
6.	Lydia Hearn	1801	23	*Sr. M. John Baptist	1827	49
7.	Johanna Power	1803	27	*Sr. M. Augustine	1806	30
9.	Bridget Power	1804	18	*Sr. M. John Evangelist	1817	31
10.	Frances Cashin	1804	18	*Sr. M. Catherine of Sienna	1814	28
11.	Maria Keating	1805	18	*Sr. M. Clare	1812	25
13.	Eliza Meagher	1806	45	*Sr. M. Joseph de Sales	1825	64
15.	Ellen Dwyer	1806	17	*Sr. M. Agnes	1812	23
16.	Margaret Roach	1806	24	*Sr. M. Bernard	1810	28
18.	Mary Linehan	1809	19	*Sr. M. Patrick	1817	27
20.	Frances Power	1809	25	Sr. M. Frances Xavier	1864	80
23.	Margaret Walsh	1811	27	*Sr. M. Bernard	1829	45
24.	Mary Wall	1814	33	Sr. M. Joseph	1829	47
25.	Eleanor Knox	1816	19	Sr. M. Francis de Sales	1877	80
26.	Margaret Walsh	1817	37	*Sr. M. Ignatius	1837	57
27.	Eliza Walsh	1817	18	Sr. M. John Evangelist	1872	73
28.	Mary Tobin	1818	21	Sr. M. Aloysius Gonzaga	1878	81
29.	Anastasia Knox	1820	20	*Sr. M. Augustine	1826	26
30.	Margaret Keeshan	1821	21	Sr. M. Patrick	1881	79
31.	Mary Nugent	1828	22	*Sr. M. Magdalene	1833	32
32.	Margaret Wall	1824	35	Sr. M. Clare	1879	90
33.	Eleanor Coffey	1824	42	*Sr. M. Teresa	1828	46
36.	Catharine Cahill	1827	21	Sr. M. John Baptist	1882	76
37.	Margaret Purcell	1834	19	Sr. M. Bernard	1891	76
38.	Catherine Kirwan	1838	21	*Sr. M. Francis of Assisium	1843	26
39.	Eleanor Bogan	1843	26	Sr. M. Helena	1858	41

Table 2: List of nuns who died in Hennessy's Road convent

*** These names appear on the plaque in the Holy Cross cemetery. It also includes Sr. M. Anastasia Meligan, a postulant, who died in 1826.**
Source: Annals of Presentation Convent, Waterford, George's Hill, Dublin.

2.6 Convent of the Holy Cross, Slievekeale Road: Moving house

By the late 1830s it was clear the Hennessy's Road site was no longer fit for purpose and work began to move to a new location. Whether the community was unanimously in favour of the move is unknown, but the greater distance of the new location would have had to be weighed up against the greater space and healthier environment. In any case, on 3

February, 1841, three prominent citizens of Waterford obtained from Thomas Wyse,[88] M.P., of the Roanmore family, a lease of five acres, two roods and eight perches in the townsland of Clowne in the parish of Trinity Without (see Figure 17 below).

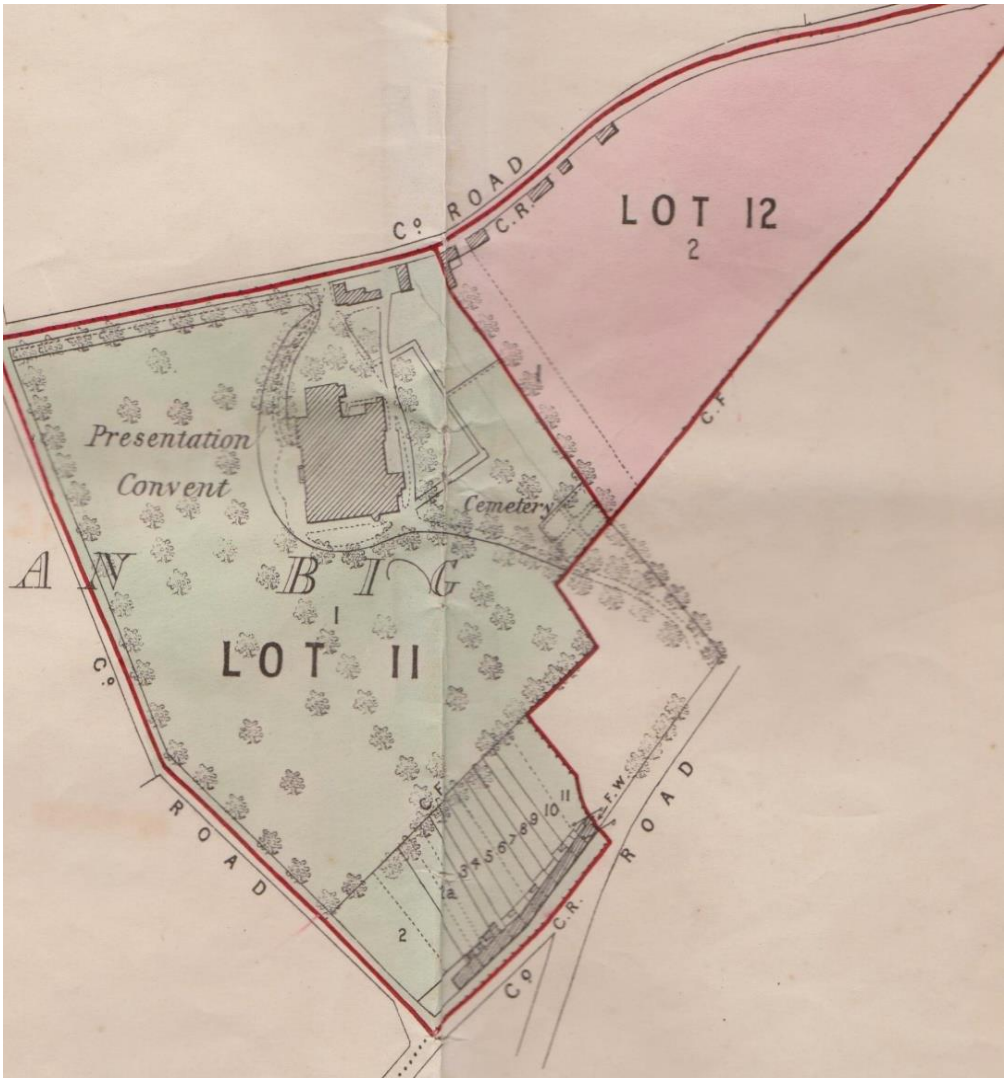


Figure 17: Map of site for Convent of the Holy Cross.
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

The three lessees, merchants Thomas Meagher (son of a Tipperary emigrant to Newfoundland and father of Thomas Francis of Young Ireland fame), Robert Curtis and John

[88] Thomas Wyse (1791-1862): born in Waterford to a Catholic family with a long involvement in local politics, he was educated in Stonyhurst College and Trinity College, Dublin. He married Letitia Bonaparte, niece of the French emperor in 1821. He was a strong supporter of Catholic Emancipation, and following the 1829 Catholic Relief Act, turned his attention to the issue of education. His vision for education was outlined in his main work *Education Reform*, published in 1836. He was M.P. for Tipperary and Waterford until 1847. He was later appointed British minister in Greece and died in Athens in 1862.

Kearney, agreed to have a convent "...built and erected thereon for the reception and residence of Nuns of the Presentation Society or of any other Religious Sisterhood or society that they... should think fit."[89] Thomas Wyse himself seems to have been anxious to have a religious establishment on the land, perhaps because the Wyse property had been Benedictine land for centuries. A tireless worker for the cause of Catholic Emancipation,[90] he had also had a lifelong interest in education. The lease was to run for a period of 999 years at the yearly rent of six pounds sterling per acre per annum for the first eight years, and eight pounds sterling per acre per annum for the remainder.

The dilemma of what to do with the Hennessy's Road convent was solved in 1847, when the community Superior received a letter from the Poor Law Guardians who were looking for suitable accommodation for the increasing numbers being driven to the poorhouse by the Famine conditions. This could in part explain why the nuns transferred to a convent far from complete, and where they noted the "...the distance from the city is a great disadvantage."[91] On 7 October, 1847, Mother Aloysius Tobin wrote to the Guardians:

> Gentlemen, I hereby propose to let you the House, Garden, and premises situated on Hennessy's Road (known as the Presentation Convent) for the space and term of 139 years from the 25th day of March 1848 at the yearly rate of £80 sterling per annum over and above all taxes, payable by two half yearly instalments, that is to say the first payment on the 29th of September 1848 and the next on the 25th March 1849 and so in rotation during the time and continuance of the above named term, and I further agree to give possession of the said premises within three calendar months from the date of the execution of the Leases made in accordance with this proposal...[92]

---

89 Licence of 3rd of February, 1841. (Dungarvan: Presentation Archives).

90 Catholic Emancipation was the process which reduced or removed many of the restrictions on Catholics introduced by various pieces of legislation such as the Penal Laws. It culminated in the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 which allowed Catholics to sit in the parliament in Westminster and occupy all but a small number of public offices.

91 Annals of the Presentation Convent, Waterford.

92 Presentation Convent archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

A delay caused by difficulties relating to establishing legal title to the property meant that it was not until March 1848 that the lease was finally signed, and the nuns had then to vacate the building within three months. 3 May, the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, was the date settled on, since it had been decided to dedicate the convent to the Holy Cross. Before his death, Br. Rice had acquired an authenticated relic of the True Cross for the community.

On 10 June, 1842, the foundation stone was laid by Dr. Foran,[93] Bishop of Waterford and Lismore: "All the clergy attended for the occasion,"[94] although the nuns were themselves absent, the rule of enclosure making it impossible. It is said that during the construction period, visiting relatives were asked to take a trip to Lisduggan and report back to the nuns in Hennessy's Road. The verdict on one occasion was said to have been, 'It's a house for Eternity.' Also present on that June day in 1842 was the architect chosen to design and direct the project, the most celebrated of his day, Augustus Welby Pugin. Tradition has it that Thomas Wyse (1791-1862), M.P. for Waterford and owner of the nearby estate of Manor St. John, on whose land the convent was built, was influential in the choice of Pugin as architect. The design incorporated all the spaces necessary for a monastic lifestyle- chapel, cloister, refectory, cells, infirmary and cellar- together with a large schoolroom and a large double doorway leading from the schoolroom to the chapel. An Adults' Room close to the schoolroom was included to facilitate adult classes. Finally, in accordance with the demands of Canon law, the novitiate was kept separate from the spaces reserved for the professed community members.

---

93 Nicholas Foran, bishop of Waterford and Lismore from 1837 to 1855. He was born in Butlerstown, Co. Waterford and went to Maynooth College to study for the priesthood. Ordained in 1808, he was appointed president of St. John's College, Waterford, the diocesan seminary six years later. He died on the 11May, 1855 in Dungarvan.

94 Presentation Convent archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

However, construction took place at a painful moment in Irish history, the Great Famine, and a lack of funds forced the community to abandon many of Pugin's original decorative designs. When they moved into the new building in May, 1848, it was neither finished nor furnished, and the situation was exacerbated by a protracted legal dispute with the Wyse family. At one point, there was neither money nor food in the house, and thirteen years after the move to Holy Cross, the chapel still had not been built. A public appeal for funds in 1861, led by the community chaplain who had recently joined the staff of the local seminary, was widely reported in the local newspapers, with the community's contribution to local education over the years emphasised strongly.[95] This co-operation also illustrates the benefits collaboration between clergy and religious communities could bring, creating the symbiotic relationship noted by Carmen Mangion,[96] among others.

2.7 The Years in Holy Cross

2.7.1 1861 to 1922: The Community

After an unsteady start, the community grew steadily in Holy Cross, as the 1901 and 1910 census figures show. The 1901 census shows, for example, that there were twenty-five nuns and one female servant present on census night.[97] A decade later, in 1911, this had increased slightly to twenty-six nuns and two female servants.[98] This was important not only for the long-term viability of the community itself, but also for the financial resources they brought with them to fund the adjoining school. The bigger grounds surrounding the convent

---

95 Newspaper cuttings from a photograph album in Waterford County Museum, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. They included the *Waterford Chronicle* and the *Catholic Intelligence* newspaper dated April 22nd, 1866.

96 Carmen M. Mangion, *Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 224.

97 1901 Census returns, National Archives, Dublin.

98 1911 Census returns, National Archives, Dublin.

also enabled the community to have a small farm, and to be self-sufficient in animal, fruit and vegetable produce. Any excess was sold to supplement the house income.



Fig. 18: Presentation community with Dr. Cleary, 1873, 75th anniversary
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

The years leading up to the founding of the Irish Free State were characterised by combining the demands of religious and teaching life. There were occasional disruptions to this rhythm, such as the 75th anniversary in 1873, at which Dr. James Vincent Cleary, who had organised a fundraising appeal in 1861, was present (see Figure 18), the annual *feis* in June, and the founding of organisations such as the Sodality of Our Lady,[99] more popularly known as the Children of Mary, in 1882. Religious instruction was given on Sunday mornings, and over time a library of various literary types was built up for use by Sodality members. By 1894, these numbered 130.[100] Events such as the May procession, the five-day Retreat and the Re-Union became highlights every year. Reflecting the turbulent political

99 The Sodality of Our Lady was a Jesuit organisation whose members were popularly known as the Children of Mary. The Presentation branch continued until the 1960s when it was disbanded.

100 O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*, 31.

times outside the convent walls, however, the Sodality annals record that there was no retreat in 1922 'due to the disturbed state of the country.'[101]

2.7.2 1861 to 1922: The Schools

The National System of Education was introduced following the Stanley Letter[102] in 1831. For many years it remained unacceptable to the existing system of religious schools, principally because of the strictures imposed on the teaching of religion, and they therefore refused to join. The Presentation school in Waterford was one of these, with funding coming from a variety of sources, such as dowries, bequests and donations. However, over the years, many changes were introduced, to the extent that a compromise was reached which allowed religious schools to join the system and apply for the available grants, without compromising their ethos. Files in the National Archives show that the Waterford Convent school made their initial application to join on the 17 November, 1879,[103] and they also contain details of the preliminary inspection made prior to the approval of the application. These included the size of the buildings, the materials used in their construction, ventilation, etc. Following the approval from the Commissioners of National Education, the first grants were paid the following year. Figure 19 shows a copy of the grants paid in November 1880 and July 1881.[104]

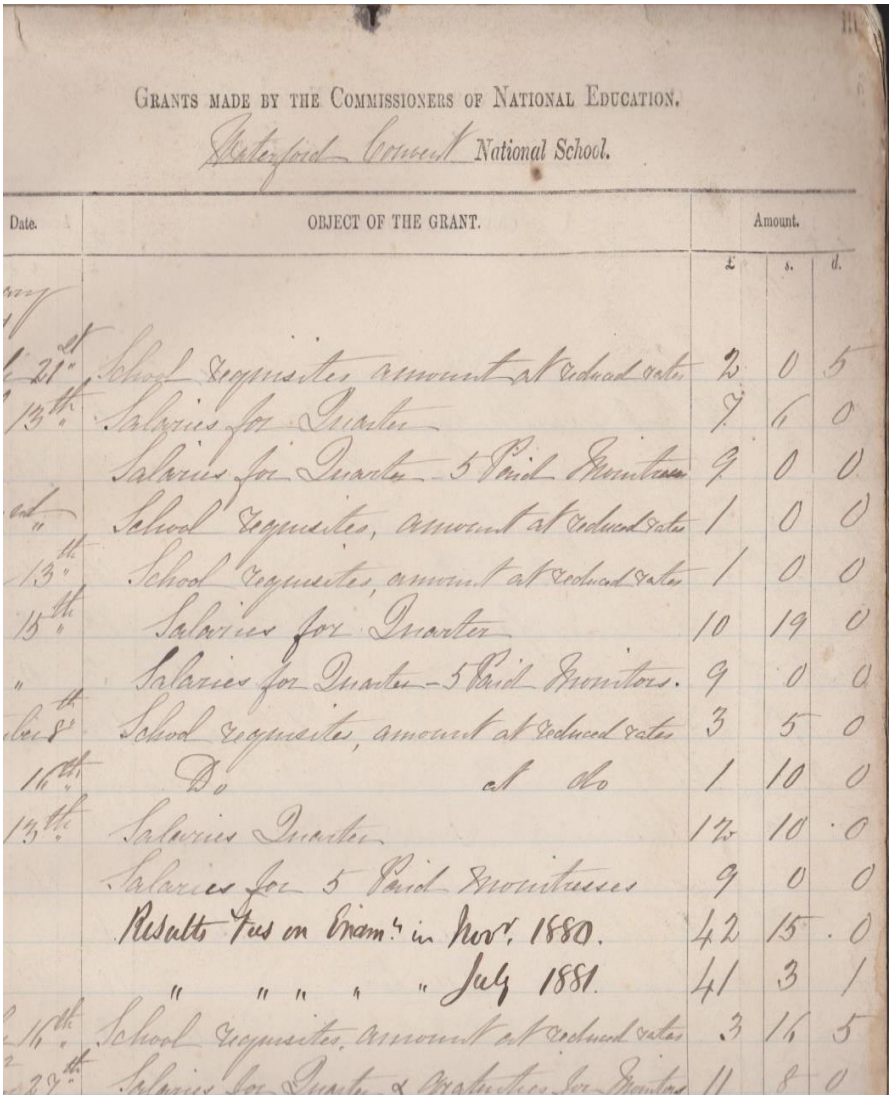
---

101 *Ibid*.

102 The Stanley Letter was the name given to the letter written by Lord Edward Stanley (1799-1869), then Chief Secretary of Ireland, to the Duke of Leinster (1791-1864) outlining his broad vision for a secular, non-denominational system of national education in Ireland and how it should operate. For the text, see *Irish Educational Documents*, eds. Áine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, vol. 1 (Dublin: C.I.C.E., 1987), 98-103.

103 File NAI ED1/88 no. 94, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin. This confirms that the initial application was made on 17 November, 1879, that the school was visited by an inspector on 1 December of that year and his report was registered on the following 18 December. On the day of the visit, there were only 100 in attendance although there were 500 on rolls, the reason given was that it was fair day in Waterford.

104 Extract from the grant book detailing the grants paid by the National Commissioners of Education, 1881. Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.



GRANTS MADE BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION.

Waterford Convent National School.

Date.	OBJECT OF THE GRANT.	Amount. £	s.	d.
	School Requisites, amount at reduced rates	2	0	5
	Salaries for Quarter	9	6	0
	Salaries for Quarter — 5 Paid Monitresses	9	0	0
	School Requisites, amount at reduced rates	1	0	0
	School Requisites, amount at reduced rates	1	0	0
	Salaries for Quarter	10	19	0
	Salaries for Quarter — 5 Paid Monitors.	9	0	0
	School Requisites, amount at reduced rates	3	5	0
	Do at do	1	10	0
	Salaries Quarter	17	10	0
	Salaries for 5 Paid Monitresses	9	0	0
	Results Fees on Exam.ns in Nov.r 1880.	42	15	0
	" " " " " July 1881.	41	3	1
	School Requisites, amount at reduced rates	3	16	5
	Salaries for Quarter & Gratuities for Monitors	11	8	0

Figure 19: Extract from book detailing grants in 1880 and 1881 from the Commissioners of National Education
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

In 1850, when the Order was seventy-five years in existence, a Directory was issued from the original foundation in Cork City, setting out in detail the philosophy and practices to be followed in all Presentation schools. They included adopting a child-centred approach to discipline, fostering good staff relations, avoiding the use of corporal punishment, communicating regularly with parents or guardians, and cultivating values such as respect, affection and charity.[105] It is likely that the Waterford foundation implemented many of these.

105 *1850 Directory*, 10-12.

It is unclear whether the nuns employed lay teachers in their schools, as Nano Nagle did. Given the community's financial constraints for many years, together with the financing of two major building projects in a relatively short time, it is unlikely. From about 1814, in common with most schools at that time, the Lancastrian method was adopted. One of the few indications we have of the nature of education provided at this time comes in report from the Royal Commission on Irish Education in 1825. When they visited Waterford that year, at which time the schools had 630 pupils, they reported of the entire fifteen Presentation schools visited:

> We have visited these schools and found them well conducted with great order and regularity and the children are well supplied with books and every school requisite. The Nuns are the teachers and devote themselves to the duty of instruction with the most unwearied assiduity and attention. We were much impressed with the appearance of affection and respect on the part of the pupils towards their teachers which characterises these institutions to a remarkable degree.[106]

These remarks imply respect and care, qualities which are interesting in the context of nineteenth-century education, and which will feature later in participant responses.

The Reports of the National Commissioners after 1879 also give an interesting snapshot of educational provision at this time. As the first convent school in Waterford, the official name was given as "Waterford Convent" or "Clochar Phortláirge." Statistics for attendance varied widely between numbers on rolls and average attendance. In 1870 the number of pupils in Waterford is given as 318. However, this was in fact the average daily attendance, which was running typically at 50% throughout the country as a whole. An attendance of 318 would approximate to 600 pupils on roll. There were therefore over 300 children daily in St. Mary's.

Joining the National System also entailed regular inspection by the educational authorities. The inspection reports which exist from this period would indicate a general level

---

106 *First Report of the Royal Commission on Irish Education with appendix*, H.C. vol. xii (1825), 88.

of satisfaction with the work being done in the school. Comments such as "satisfactorily instructed in most subjects"[107] and "the proficiency of the pupils is in most subjects satisfactory"[108] are to be found at regular intervals. In light of the new building that would soon be constructed, it is interesting to note that the two reports above also remark on the poor lighting in the school at that time.

By 1898, the centenary year, Corporation housing nearby, combined with obligations on parents following the introduction of the Compulsory Education Act,[109] led to the need for additional schoolrooms. Accordingly, a new infant school was built and opened that year. It had a big room, a small room and a cloakroom.[110] Although intended as a temporary measure, it was to last for nearly a hundred years, having served as schoolroom, concert hall, music room, Guides' meeting room and Youth club premises. For the participants in this study it was better known as the 'tin shed' and many recalled having been in school there. Further details on this location will appear in Chapter 5. The new building led to major expense and debts for the community. Mindful of a successful appeal forty years earlier, a Centenary Bazaar was organised in 1901 by a committee led by Bishop Richard Sheehan[111] on the 25 and 26 June of that year to defray the costs incurred. As with the 1861 appeal, there was extensive coverage of the event in the local newspapers, and the bazaar would appear to have been an unqualified success, since the nuns were able to pay the outstanding sums to the

---

107 *Report of a Results Examination*, October 4, 1893.

108 *Report of a Results Examination*, October 8, 1895.

109 The Irish Education Act of 1892 introduced compulsory education for a minimum of 75 days for children between the ages of 6 and 14 in urban areas.

110 O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*, 34.

111 Richard Alphonsus Sheehan (1845-1915): Born in Bantry, Co. Cork in 1845, he was ordained a priest for the diocese of Cork and Ross in 1868, before being appointed Bishop of Waterford and Lismore in 1892. He died in office in 1915.

builders.[112] This would also indicate both the extensive contacts that existed between the convent and wider community, and the mutually beneficial benefits such a relationship could bring.

Following the opening of the 1898 school, the infant classes occupied the new building, while the other classes continued as usual in St. Mary's next door. By January, 1905, in the report of an inspection conducted the previous month, the verdict was that the general condition of the school was "very good" and that it was "in many respects very efficiently conducted."[113] On the negative side, there were frequent complaints about the standards in Arithmetic, particularly in the senior classes. The Inspector's report of the 1901 annual visit, for example, describes proficiency in the subject as "middling."[114] Judith Harford and Deirdre Raftery noted that this was a frequent criticism of pupils in convent schools.[115]

In the light of memories recalled by many participants in their interviews, it is interesting to note that there were consistently favourable comments for the standard of singing and music generally: "Vocal music is very good on the whole"[116] or again "the culture in Singing, Drawing, and Drill are very satisfactory."[117] The 1902 report on the annual visit described proficiency in singing as "excellent."[118] It would appear from these

---

112 O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*, 38.

113 Extract from *Inspection report of visit on 5th and 6th December, 1904*, January 27, 1905.

114 Extract from *Inspection report of visit on 21st, 22nd and 23rd October, 1901*, December 3, 1901.

115 Judith Harford and Deirdre Raftery, "The Education of Girls Within the National System," in *Female Education in Ireland, 1700-1900: Minerva or Madonna*, eds. Deirdre Raftery and Susan M. Parkes (Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 52.

116 Extract from *General Report of visit on 15th and 16th December, 1908*, February 3, 1909.

117 Extract from *General Report of visit dated 26th and 27th November, 1906*, February 6, 1907.

118 Extract from *General Report of visit dated 20th, 21st and 22nd October, 1902*, November 22, 1902.

consistently favourable remarks that music was an important part of everyday school life, with frequent references in local newspapers to participation by pupils in local *feiseanna* and other musical events. Perhaps the most notable of these occasions was the annual *feis* in June 1913, in which Pádraig Pearse, both opened the event and was one of the adjudicators.[119] Indeed, one of the participants in this study, Agnes, recalls being told later in secondary school that he had opened the Feis that year. Clearly, therefore, the school was influenced by the prevailing interest in the Gaelic revival movement which characterised much of the cultural activity of the early twentieth century.[120]

Many of the political events which occurred during this period, such as the 1916 Rising,[121] impacted the community only insofar as Pádraig Pearse[122] had adjudicated at the *feis* a number of years earlier. By contrast, events such as World War I and the War of Independence appear to have had little impact.

2.7.3 1922 to the 1960s: The Community

The years following the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 in many respects were a continuation of those which had preceded it. The rule of enclosure shielded the

---

119 Nicholas Whittle, *The Gentle County: A Saga of the Decies People* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1959), 71-72.

120 The Gaelic Revival was the term used to describe the national revival of interest in Irish language and culture (folklore, sports, music, arts) which occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. It led to the establishments of such organisations as *Conradh na Gaeilge* (the Gaelic League) and the Gaelic Athletic Association.

121 The 1916 Rising, or the Easter Rebellion, was an armed insurrection in Ireland during Easter week that year. It was launched by Irish republicans to end British rule and establish an independent republic in its place. It was concentrated mainly in Dublin, although isolated attacks occurred in other parts of the country. Severe damage was caused to Dublin city centre before the rebels surrendered on April 29th, five days after proclaiming an Irish republic from the steps of the General Post Office.

122 Patrick Henry Pearse (1879-1916): born in Dublin, he was an Irish teacher, barrister, poet, writer, nationalist and political activist. He was editor of the Gaelic League newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis*, opened a bilingual school for boys in Rathfarnham, St. Enda's, helped found the Irish Volunteers and was instrumental in drafting the 1916 Proclamation of Irish freedom. He was the first president of the Provisional government of the Irish Republic that was proclaimed on 24 April, 1916, on the steps of the General Post Office in Dublin, and was also Commander-in-Chief of the Irish forces who fought that week. He surrendered to the British forces on 29 April and, following a court martial, was shot by firing squad on 3 May.

community from many of the social upheavals which took place during this time, such as the Civil War[123] and the Second World War.[124] The most immediate change following 1922 was felt within the school, with the new emphasis on the revival of the Irish language. However, new legislation introduced by Rome in the early 1900s, and adopted by the Maynooth synods of 1900 and 1927, signalled a desire for structural change within the Presentation congregation in the form of amalgamating communities at diocesan level. This, as Louise O'Reilly has documented in detail, was primarily to ensure their place in the educational sphere.[125] It heralded the beginning of fundamental change to the nature and practice of religious life which would culminate four decades later with the changes introduced following the Second Vatican Council.[126]

Like most houses of the Presentation Order, the Waterford foundation was an independent unit for many years. In the 1930s, the Bishop of Waterford proposed the amalgamation of the five convents within the diocese into one unit, but there was no desire among those present for such a move, and accordingly the matter was shelved. The changes introduced to religious life by Vatican II, however, changed everything. Louise O'Reilly has documented the administrative and structural change to the entire congregation in the form of union, a process in which the Waterford community participated. These new governance structures will be discussed in more detail later. Amalgamation was therefore once again

---

123 The Irish Civil War lasted from June 1922 and May 1923. It followed terms of the Treaty establishing the Free State earlier in 1922 after the War of Independence and the establishment of the Irish Free State earlier in 1922. The war was fought between nationalists who accepted the partitioning of the country and republicans who refused. The war was subsequently won by the nationalist side.

124 The Second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945. It involved two major alliances- the Allies, including Britain, France and the United States, and the Axis, including Germany, Italy and Japan, with Russia aligned with both sides at various times. It was the deadliest conflict in history, marked by 50 to 85 million fatalities.

125 Louise O'Reilly, *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious: Case Study of the Union of Irish Presentation Sisters* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 17.

126 The Second Vatican Council (hereafter known as Vatican II) was the 21st ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. It was convened by Pope John XXIII in 1959 and met between 1962 and 1965. It introduced major reforms to all aspects of Catholic life, for both religious and the laity.

proposed in 1971 and, this time, it became a reality. On Presentation Day of that year, 21 November, one unit was formed from the existing houses, part of the trans-national structure known today as the "Union of Presentation Sisters."

2.7.4 1922 to the 1960s: The Schools

Following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, school life continued in many ways as usual for the Waterford schools. However, one of the immediate changes to school life, clearly visible in the inspection reports, was the emphasis placed on the revival of the Irish language. This has been extensively documented and interpreted by historians and writers such as Donald H. Akenson[127] and Séamus Ó Buachalla,[128] the latter who describes the new emphasis in terms of the political influence of the Gaelic League[129] on the political and educational spheres. Inspection reports reflect this importance, with Irish now placed at the beginning of each report and all subjects assessed through Irish. One of the first of these reports after 1922 describes the classification of the school as 'éifeachtach' (efficient).[130] The general comments noted pre-1922 continued to be made regarding proficiency levels in the secular subjects, with singing singled out for particular praise. The general report dated the 6 December, 1926, perhaps reflecting the revival effort, was noteworthy for its favourable comments on the standard of oral Irish, and criticism of the standard of both written Irish and

---

127 Donald H. Akenson, *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975).

128 Séamus Ó Buachalla, "Educational Policy and the Role of the Irish Language,"*European Journal of Education* 19, no. 1 (1984): 75-91.

129 The Gaelic League (*Conradh na Gaeilge*) was a social and cultural organisation founded in 1893 by Eoin MacNeill, Eugene O'Growney, Douglas Hyde and others. It became the leading institution promoting the revival of Irish language and culture. Although intended to be apolitical and included members across the religious divide (Douglas Hyde, its first president, for example, was the son of a Church of Ireland rector), it attracted many Irish nationalists of different persuasions. Many of these nationalists went on to become actively involved in politics, such as most of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation. The League's decision to commit to the nationalist movement in 1915 caused the resignation of Hyde, who felt that culture and language should be above politics.

130 Extract from *General Report of visit dated 2 and 5 June, 1924*, June 28, 1924.

Arithmetic.[131] No reference was made to the standard of English, which would undoubtedly have been the first language of the pupils at this time.

The first report written in Irish, for which a copy survives, dates from March, 1930. In it, apart from a complaint regarding the standard of numeracy, there is a general dissatisfaction with the level of written and oral Irish.[132] Again, no reference is made to the standard of English. However, the following year's report is more favourable, with the greater effort and progress noted, although a suggestion that more subjects be taught through the medium of Irish is included towards the end of the report.[133] Inspectors were clearly reflecting official policy of reviving the Irish language, with little understanding of, or allowance made for, the socio-economic background from where the pupils came. Following on the tradition begun before the founding of the new state in 1922, there are frequent references to the general standard of singing and music. A report of 1940 rated the standard of music as 'very good,' noting that a favourable start had been made with a percussion band.[134] Ten months later, the same rating was achieved by the same teacher, with the additional approval of the range of songs pupils were able to sing well.[135]

The 1898 building was only intended as a temporary measure, and it was soon decided to build a new stone building as a more permanent structure. In 1923 the new building was opened, its architecture complementing the adjoining convent. It also had a protected playshelter for rainy days and a stone slab over the entrance door read 'National School 1923.' However, within a number of years, the expansion of the city westwards soon

---

131 Extract from *General Report of visit dated 11 and 12 Samhain, 1926*, December 6, 1926.

132 Extract from *Annual Voucher dated 19adh Márta, 1930,* May 7, 1930.

133 Extract from *Annual Voucher dated 9adh Samhain, '31*, November 26, 1931.

134 Extract from *General inspection of visit dated 11/1/1940*, February 9, 1940.

135 Extract from *General Report of visit date 20/11/1940*, December 12, 1940.

meant that this, too, was unable to cater for the increasing demand. Having previously purchased an adjoining site in 1928, and with the assistance of government grants, a new infant building, *Scoil an Linbh Íosa*, was officially opened in 1956. Files in the National Archives document the extensive correspondence between the school Principal and the Department of Education to obtain approval of cookery facilities necessary to run cookery classes for the older pupils. The establishment of an industrial estate, extensive building development and exponential population growth in the surrounding area led to the construction and opening of the current building in 1963. It was named *Scoil Mháthair Dé*. The new school was linked to an Assembly hall, which provided a dedicated performance area for school concerts and other musical activities.

As the city expanded westwards, the convent and school gradually became the outer extremity of the city limits. Local authority housing increased during this period, too, leading to an increased demand for school places. This trend would continue in the decades that followed.

2.7.5 1960s to 2005: The Community

The 1960s mark the beginning of fundamental changes introduced following Vatican II to both the nature and structure of religious life, and were to have a far-reaching and long-lasting impact. Maryanne Confoy[136] has detailed the challenges they brought to religious life generally, while Louise O'Reilly has documented the implementation of the changes in the case of the Presentation Order in particular. The ending of the rule of enclosure, the return to the original congregational charism as envisaged by the foundress, the wearing of the religious habit, administrative and other changes, all combined to alter completely the taken

---

136 Maryanne Confoy, "Religious Life in the Vatican II Era: 'State of Perfection' or Living Charism?" *Theological Studies* no. 74 (2013): 321-346.

for granted nature of religious life. The ability to visit other convents in the city or diocese, to attend liturgies in the local parish church, or the ability to visit birth families, were all major changes and developments for those concerned. On the other hand, the annual seaside holiday, which for so long was a symbol of a break from enclosure, lost part of its attraction. The transfer of women religious within community houses on the basis of need also impacted on the identity which had built up over many years, a point remembered by Mary, one of the participants in this study who was among the first to experience this at first hand.

One change which would have an immediate impact on the Waterford foundation was the requirement to return to the original charism of the congregation. Confoy has noted that religious in their own contexts worked to understand what this might mean for their own situations.[137] For the Presentation Sisters in all houses, this entailed a return to what Nano Nagle had intended- a religious congregation actively involved in the local community.[138] With Episcopal encouragement, three women religious from the Waterford house moved into a nearby social housing unit in 1958, forming a new Presentation community which is still in existence today. This trend later extended internationally, with women religious from the community going to various houses around the world for a number of years.

The major expansion of the city westwards during this period was accompanied by the building of a number of large housing estates, both public and private. The convent and school grounds were soon absorbed into the extending city limits, no longer marking the city boundary as before. The significant upsurge in pupil numbers created further demands for school places, and a new building was duly opened in 1963. The financial demands this project brought would have repercussions on the community itself, since long overdue

---

137 *Ibid*., 330.

138 O'Reilly, *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious*, 171.

renovations on the Victorian convent building were regularly postponed to fund the cost of the schools.[139]

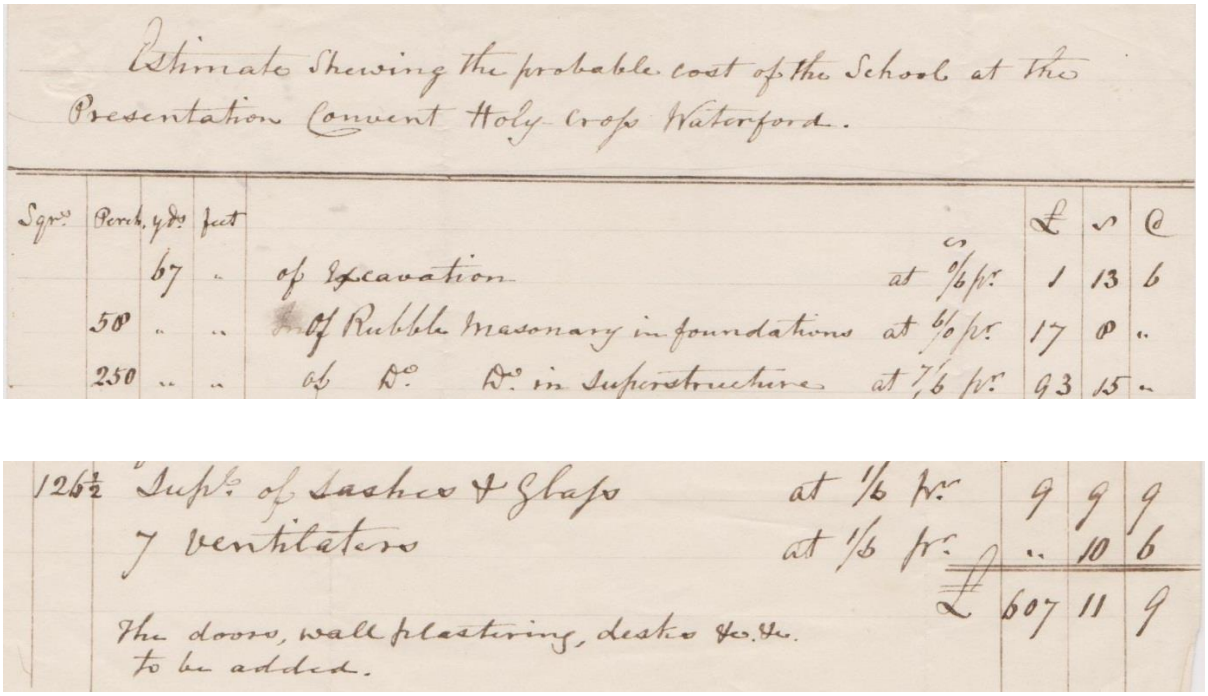
2.7.6 1960s to 2005: The Schools

The construction of the Senior school, known as *Scoil Mháthair Dé*, in 1963 marked the end of major building work. School enrolments peaked in the years that followed, with many participants in this research recalling up to 1,300 at their height. The decline in pupil numbers was further exacerbated by other educational demands in the locality. Until the 1960s, the school also accepted boys in the infant classes, from where they frequently transferred to Mount Sion, Edmund Rice's first school. However, the expansion of social housing provision in the neighbourhood led to the building of a new boys' school in the parish. In an effort to increase attendance in the new school, school management in the Presentation was requested not to accept boys in the future, which duly took place. In 1990, the infant and senior schools amalgamated to form the present school, Presentation Primary School, Waterford. As remarks in future chapters will show, the event was traumatic for many concerned, and relationships were strained for a period afterwards. Recent years have seen the addition of two special classes for those with speech and language needs, and a playschool to cater for early childhood educational needs.

Reflecting the growing demands for secondary education during this period, existing buildings were used to accommodate the increased numbers of pupils. In his designs for Holy Cross convent, Pugin had included a large schoolroom, and adults' room close by, with a large double doorway leading from the schoolroom to the chapel. A surviving estimate for the cost of the schoolroom estimates this at approximately £607-11s-9d (see Figure 20). This

139 O'Neill, *Waterford Presentation Community*, 40.

school was to become known as St. Mary's, and would later become the first secondary school.



Estimate Shewing the probable cost of the School at the Presentation Convent Holy Cross Waterford.

Sqrs	Perch. yds	feet			£	s	d
	67	"	of Excavation	at 6/ pr.	1	13	6
50	"	"	of Rubble Masonary in foundations	at 6/ prs	17	0	"
250	"	"	of Do Do in Superstructure	at 7/6 prs	93	15	"
126½			Supls of Sashes & Glass	at 1/6 pr.	9	9	9
			7 ventilators	at 1/6 pr.	"	10	6
				£	607	11	9

The doors, wall plastering, desks &c. &c. to be added.

Figure 20: Extracts from Holy Cross school estimate, 1848
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Meanwhile, in the mid-1930s, it was decided to convert the old schoolroom in the convent building into a second-level building, an Intermediate school, where pupils were prepared to sit for the state examinations. The former adults' room was reserved for the Seniors. It opened in 1938, and the first lay graduate, Frances O'Donnell, was employed. Partitions divided the schoolroom and all subjects were taught through Irish. With the increase in pupil numbers during the 1960s, space was insufficient in St. Mary's and it was eventually vacated in 1964. The secondary school moved into the Stone Building just vacated by the primary school and the old schoolroom was absorbed back into the convent area.

In tandem with these demographic trends, vocations to religious life were also falling. The number of active teaching women religious gradually declined accordingly, and in 2003 the last teaching woman religious within the school retired from service in the school,

followed two years later by the closure of the convent itself. 2003 therefore completes the presence of active teaching women religious in the Waterford Presentation schools which had begun over two hundred years earlier.

2.8 Vatican II and Governance

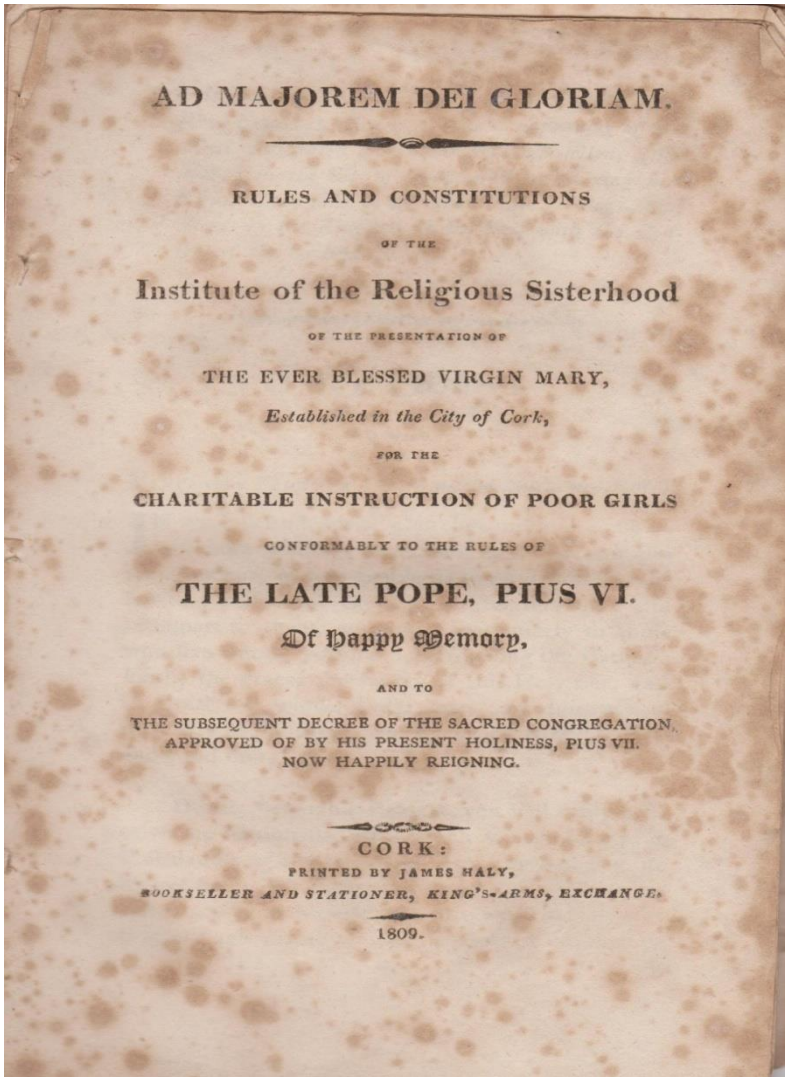
In common with all other Presentation houses since the Order's inception in 1775, the Waterford foundation was an independent, autonomous unit. As one of the five primary foundations, it initially had a close link with the South Presentation Convent, which was considered the mother house of the Institute, and the congregational annals in Cork testify to the interest shown by the community there in the progress of the new foundation in the years following 1798. However, with the expansion of the congregation, this link became more tenuous, particularly from the moment the Waterford house began to train and form its own novices. As the years progressed, the Waterford community became more autonomous and independent, running and managing its own affairs in both the religious and teaching domains. The 1790 Constitution outlined the internal and external government of each house (Figure 21). The four key positions of authority- mother superior, assistant, bursar and mistress of novices- were elected positions, and their incumbents were responsible for the administration, decision-making and future of the community members.[140]

This system of governance remained largely unchanged until Vatican II, when legislation from Rome, in particular *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Ecclesiae Sanctae,*[141] introduced fundamental change in governance structures.

---

140 O'Reilly, *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious*, 9.

141 The decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, the up-to-date renewal of religious life, was promulgated on 28 October 1966 and proposed to set down general principles for effective renewal. *Ecclesiae Sanctae* was



AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM.

RULES AND CONSTITUTIONS

OF THE

Institute of the Religious Sisterhood

OF THE PRESENTATION OF

THE EVER BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,

Established in the City of Cork,

FOR THE

CHARITABLE INSTRUCTION OF POOR GIRLS

CONFORMABLY TO THE RULES OF

THE LATE POPE, PIUS VI.

Of happy Memory,

AND TO

THE SUBSEQUENT DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION,
APPROVED OF BY HIS PRESENT HOLINESS, PIUS VII.
NOW HAPPILY REIGNING.

CORK:

PRINTED BY JAMES HALY,

BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER, KING'S-ARMS, EXCHANGE.

1809.

Fig. 21: Frontispiece of the 1809 Rules and Constitutions of the Presentation Order
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Two requirements were immediately evident: the adaptation of religious congregations to the demands of modern life and the renewal of religious life itself according to the charism of the foundress. At the beginning of the twentieth century, suggestions that houses should amalgamate had been rejected by the majority of Presentation convents, including Waterford. By 1968, however, the various houses in the diocese of Waterford and Lismore had

promulgated on 6 August 1966, to guide religious in the process of renewal and adaptation to modern needs. For a detailed account of how this was achieved in the case of the Presentation Sisters, see Louise O'Reilly's book above.

federated, a move approved of and encouraged by the local bishop.[142] Although each house remained independent, mutual support was given in areas such as filling positions, formation and work. Full Union, in the form of one united congregation under the inspiration of Nano Nagle, would not be achieved until the 1970s.

Union entailed a new form of governance for houses. Prior to its introduction, ultimate power and authority was vested in the four individuals above. Following Union, however, a greater degree of democracy was introduced, whereby all professed members of each house had a say in how the community was run and managed. Communication and input from members was encouraged and sought, through the use of questionnaires and surveys, which led in turn to a change in the relationship between superior and subject.

The Vatican II changes also coincided with other, and more profound, changes within the community itself. The decline in the number of new recruits to religious life, the financial demands of running a large and historic building, and an ageing population within the core community, indicative of the majority of religious congregations, gradually made the Waterford foundation one of those considered no longer financially viable within the congregation. In the early years of the new millennium, therefore, the house became a victim of congregational consolidation in the form of Union, and in 2005, the convent was sold to a private individual. The remaining community members were relocated to other communities within the locality and region, and today the convent building has been transformed into a health park and primary health centre. As a protected structure, much of the Pugin-designed façade and features have been retained, as have many of the chapel fittings.

---

142 O'Reilly, *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious*, 42.

2.9 Resourcing and Expenditure

The Presentation congregational mission was devoted to education, particularly education of the poor, for many years defined as those who could not afford to pay for it. Funding for the schools therefore had to come, in the early years at least, from internal sources. These came initially from the interest obtained from the nuns' invested dowries. Edmund Rice was an influential figure in assuring the optimum financial gain for these funds, and was also closely involved in the financial affairs of the community itself, as his signature in account books illustrates (see Figure 22).

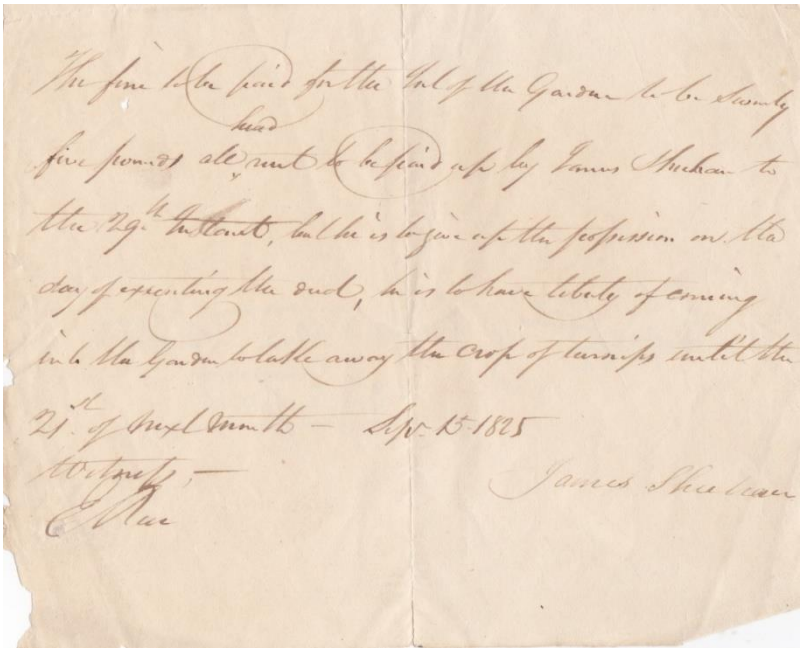


Fig 22: Extract from convent accounts including signature of Edmund Rice. Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Later funds included a combination of charitable donations and bequests, either living or dead, and financial contributions from relatives of the nuns themselves. Community numbers therefore had a direct impact on the resources available for school funding. When these sources were insufficient to defray expenses such as building costs, as we have seen earlier, a number of fundraising events such as bazaars were also organised to clear the debts.

The first school was opened in Chapel Lane on the 6 November, 1798 (today known as Jenkins' Lane), moved to Hennessy's Road in March 1800, and finally to their present location nearly fifty years later (see Figure 23).

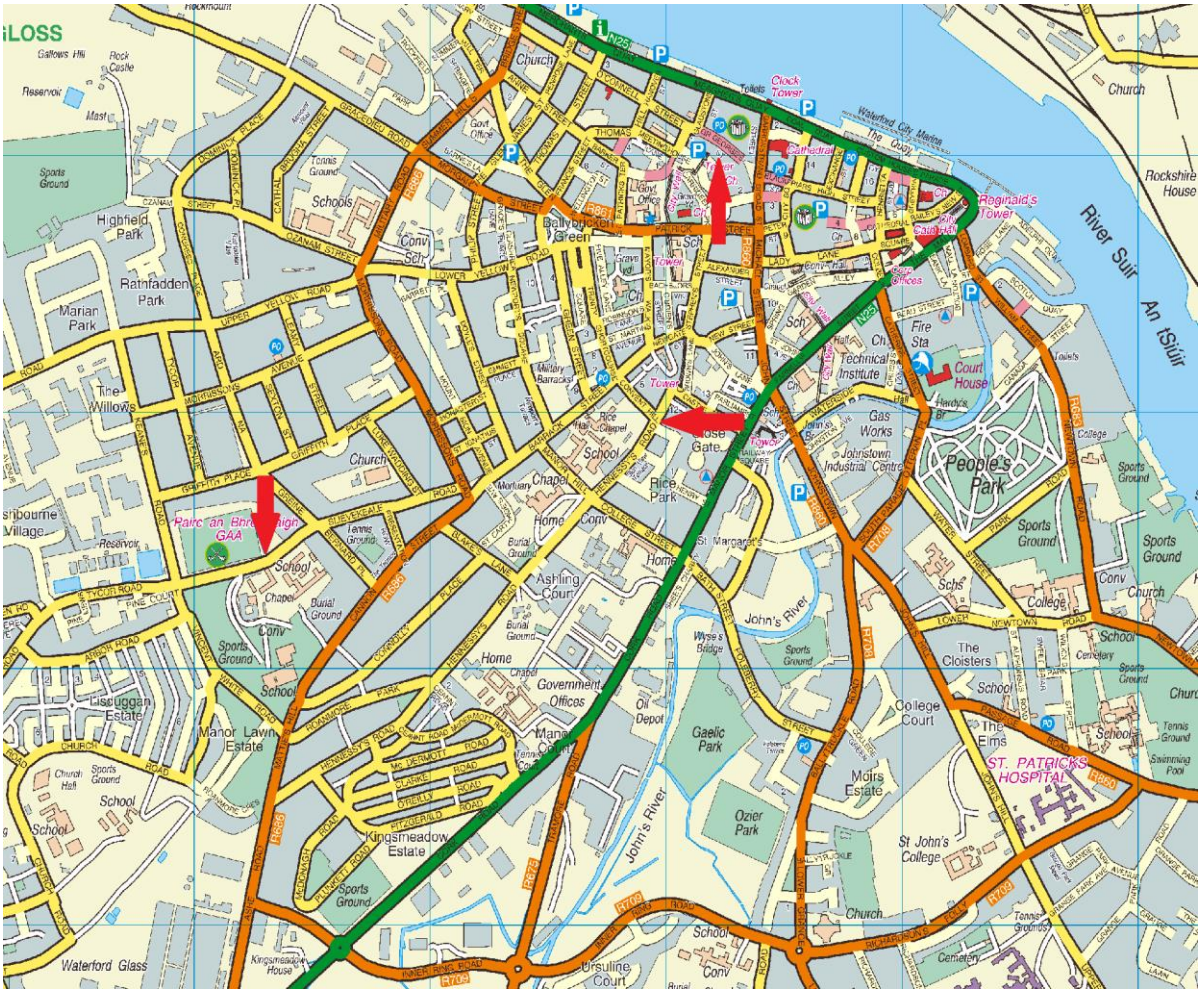


Fig. 23: Digi-City Raster Map of Waterford showing the three school locations, (OS, 1: 15,000, 1993).

From the beginning, the nuns kept account books that were separate to those of the convent itself. They reflect the economic and social conditions of the time, when it was common for only one child in a family to attend school, frequently due to a lack of sufficient clothing. One of the nuns' first tasks, therefore, was to provide families with clothing. As a result, there are frequent references in the account books to large quantities of dowlas,[143]

143 A coarse woollen material.

baffity[144] and flannel. All materials would have been used to make gowns and cloaks. Needles and thread were also bought, and school materials such as slates, pencils, quills, paper, catechisms, prayer books, Reading Lessons and Spelling Lessons are also mentioned. Shoes, which appear rarely in the beginning, are more frequently mentioned from 1839 onwards. However, pupils were also fed in the school, as evidenced by the purchase of oatmeal. By 1835, more money could be spared for 'material for fancy work.' This particular account book finishes in 1873, by which time over £2,762 had been spent on the children of one of the two schools. By the end of the 1873 account book, a change in language can also be noticed: cloaks and gowns have become coats and frocks, while instead of oatmeal, we read of cakes and oranges for the children.

2.10 Conclusion

The arrival in Waterford City in 1798 of three professed women religious was part of the first phase of the expansion of the Presentation congregation, being the fourth of the five primary foundations. Over the next two hundred years, and over three locations, these women and their successors contributed greatly to female education in the city before the closure of the Pugin-designed convent in 2005. The archival material compiled following this event shows the various means by which these women successfully negotiated the restrictions of religious life, such as the rule of enclosure, in order to fulfill their educational mission. They drew on extensive contacts with influential individuals, both lay and religious, to support and facilitate the development of their schools. This development also mirrored many significant events and individuals in Irish social and political history during the period. Although they initially declined to participate in the National System of Education, the decision to join in

144 A cheap cotton material more correctly known as baffeta.

1879 was an indication that the conditions and demands required were sufficiently flexible not to compromise their own goals and ethos. The impact and practical expression of this ethos was frequently visible in inspection reports.

One of the characteristics of nineteenth century Ireland was the exponential growth in religious congregations, particularly female teaching congregations. Many had their roots in female philanthropy. The following chapter will look at the origins of this phenomenon-women's history, the history of women religious and their place in the history of Irish education.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

"SAVING SOULS": WOMEN'S HISTORY AND FEMALE PHILANTHROPY

"At the same time as their (women religious) numbers and public presence are shrinking in North America and Europe, scholarly interest in them is increasing."[145]

"We need to hear the voices of women religious, the self which is no longer chronicler but the subject of the testimony."[146]

3.1 Introduction

The quotes above give a flavour of the frequent calls to scholarship in the area of women's history generally, and the history of teaching women religious in particular. This research seeks to make a contribution to this field, through a combination of data gathered from archival research, and data from oral history interviews, which explore the work and lives of women religious in the Waterford Presentation convent, schools and community. It will contribute to the history of women religious in the spheres of gender, religion, education, and social and cultural change in Ireland from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twenty-first century. An in-depth research of private and public archival material will be combined later with oral histories from a variety of participants.

As the first native religious congregation to have been founded in Ireland since Norman times, the Presentation Order was a key player in the role exercised by female

---

145 Elizabeth M. Smyth, "Continuity and Change within the Toronto Convent Academies of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Loretto Sisters, 1847-1950," in *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, eds. Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 44.

146 MacCurtain, "Late in the *Field*," 58.

religious congregations which developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, having been established as a response to social problems of the day, particularly that of access to education. The three women returning to Waterford from Cork in September 1798 were part of the expansion of this effort. However, they also represented a step in the evolution of female philanthropic activity which continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This research seeks to fill the lacunae identified by many in the research community regarding, in particular, the absence of women's voices generally, and those of women religious in particular, from historical discourse.

The purpose of the literature review which follows is, as Mertens points out, to outline what is known about the topic in question and provide a rationale for the study.[147] It will also, at appropriate points, outline critical gaps in the literature which it is hoped the study will fill. The chapter will briefly discuss the nature of women's and women religious history at home and abroad during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, trace the evolution of female philanthropy by both lay and religious women in Ireland in the social and educational contexts of the time, explore the history of women religious in teaching, and the experiences of both teachers and pupils in their schools. Finally, it will outline what is known to researchers on the history of women religious in Waterford, with a particular emphasis on the Presentation presence in the city.

3.2 Women's History and Women Religious History: The Literature

3.2.1 Characteristics and Criticisms

Women's history first began to emerge as a worthwhile area of study in its own right in the second half of the twentieth century. In the introduction to their 1991 work, and noting

147 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 91.

its close alignment with feminist research, Karen Offen *et al.* observed: "Once suppressed or simply ignored, the study of women's history has emerged during the last twenty years as an exciting, indeed ebullient, scholarly endeavour in many parts of the world."[148] However, a number of characteristics and criticisms have regularly been noted by researchers in this area over the years. Roughly summarised, they can be stated as follows- a lack of critical analysis and an absence of women's voices themselves. Offen *et al.* called for the inclusion of women's voice and experience wherever these can be recovered.[149] In North America, as far back as 1978, Elizabeth Kolmer noted that the role of women religious within women's history was an area that remained largely an untold one within American research at the time and suggested many avenues of enquiry, including that into the lives and experiences of women religious.[150] This was echoed by historians such as Harold Silver, who drew attention to the need to bring the religious experience into the field of educational experience,[151] and F. Michael Perko who also advocated research into the lived experience of religious who worked in the field of education.[152] Similar observations were made in Australia by researchers such as Tom O'Donoghue and Anthony Potts, with particular regard to the history of teachers.[153]

In the European context, the lack of critical analysis was still being identified as recently as 2009 by Hellinckx *et al.*, who claimed that much of the available literature was

---

148 Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall, *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1991), xix.

149 *Ibid*., xxxi.

150 Kolmer, "Catholic Women Religious and Women's History," 651.

151 Harold Silver, "Knowing and Not Knowing in the History of Education," *History of Education* 21, no. 1 (1992): 97-108.

152 F. Michael Perko, "Religious Schooling in America: An Historiographic Reflection," *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2000): 321.

153 O'Donoghue and Potts, "Researching the lives of Catholic teachers who were Members of Religious Orders: Historiographical Considerations," *History of Education* 33, no. 4 (2004): 470.

generally confined to the history and development of educational establishments or biographies of individuals and founders of religious congregations.[154] Such literature tended, in the main, to be descriptive and hagiographical in nature, frequently lauding their achievements in the face of adversity and difficulties. They noted, for example, that they could only find three articles containing historiographical information on teaching women religious,[155] while Deirdre Raftery and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck[156] noted the limited use for scholars of much hagiographical published material.[157] In 2012, Deirdre Raftery contended that research into the work of teaching religious orders had still tended to focus on the histories of either congregations or schools, rather than exploring the experiences of religious as educators.[158]

Recent years have seen many of these areas addressed, resulting in a large corpus of literature available to researchers, a fact noted by Raftery in a recent article on the subject.[159] Nonetheless, there would still appear to be a need for research into the contribution of nuns to education. This study aims to contribute to this topic, by focusing on the voice and experiences of a group of teaching sisters, both as religious and as teachers, in an urban setting in the south-east of Ireland, complemented by perspectives from their lay teaching colleagues and the pupils in their care. However, before doing so, it is appropriate to consider

---

154 Bart Hellinckx, Frank Simon and Marc Depaepe, *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching Sisters: A Historiographical Essay on the Educational Work of Catholic Women Religious in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 24.

155 *Ibid*., 9.

156 Deirdre Raftery and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, "Convent Schools and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Negotiating a Place within a Non-denominational System," *History of Education* 36, no. 3 (2007): 354.

157 Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O'Dowd and Maria Luddy, "An Agenda for Women's History in Ireland, 1500-1900," *Irish Historical Studies* 28, no. 109 (1992): 22-23.

158 Deirdre Raftery, "The 'Mission' of Nuns in Female Education in Ireland, c. 1850-1950," *Paedagogica Historica* 48, no. 2 (2012): 299-300.

159 Deirdre Raftery, "The Third Wave is Digital," 30.

the extent to which existing research literature can contribute to our current understanding of the topic of teaching women religious itself.

3.2.2 International Literature on Women Religious

Recent years have seen an increase in the research literature in this area, particularly in the English-speaking world. Elizabeth M. Smyth[160] has been to the forefront in historical research into the contribution of nuns in Canada, particularly her work on religious orders in the Toronto area. Marta Danylewycz used archival and historical sources as the basis for her work on two religious congregations in Quebec and a number of similarities can be found with the Irish context.[161] Christine Gervais and Amanda Watson have taken a parallel path, considering women religious through a Foucauldian lens.[162] In the United States, Jo Ann McNamara's work looked at the experience of women religious in gaining recognition for their contributions,[163] while Suellen Hoy traced the migration pattern of young Irish women who went to the New World at various stages of religious life.[164] In more recent times, researchers such as Margaret Susan Thompson have examined themes such as the role of teaching sisters in reconciling faith and national identity.[165] Meanwhile, in Australia and New

---

160 See, for example, Elizabeth M. Smyth, *Changing Habits: Women's Religious Orders in Canada* (Montreal: Novalis, 2007). See also Elizabeth M. Smyth and Linda F. Wicks (eds.), *Wisdom Raises her Voice: The Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto Celebrate 150 Years: An Oral History* (Toronto: Transcontinental Press, 2001), and Elizabeth M. Smyth, "Continuity and Change within the Toronto Convent Academies." (op. cit.)

161 Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

162 Christine Gervais and Amanda Watson, "Discipline, Resistance, Solace and the Body: Catholic Women Religious' Convent Experiences from the Late 1930s to the Late 1960s," *Religions*, no. 5 (2014): 277-303.

163 Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

164 Suellen Hoy, "The Journey Out: The Recruitment and Emigration of Irish Religious Women to the United States, 1812-1914," *Journal of Women's History* 6, no. 4/7, no. 1 (1995): 64-98.

165 Margaret Susan Thompson, "Adaptation and Professionalisation: Challenges for teaching sisters in a pluralistic nineteenth-century America," *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 4 (2013): 454-470.

Zealand, researchers such as Jenny Collins have conducted extensive research on the contribution of Irish-born Dominican sisters to the New Zealand education system.[166]

In the European context, Rebecca Rogers has documented the contribution of nuns to female education in France,[167] prompting Hellinckx *et al.* to ponder on the reasons behind the neglect of the topic in countries such as France and Spain, given their historically strong Catholic tradition.[168] In their 2009 historiographical essay, they noted: "Our literature review confirms that the educational contribution of women religious has received only limited scholarly attention so far."[169] General histories of religion, history and education generally made passing reference to the role of women religious, and when referred to tended to treat them by individual orders and in descriptive terms.[170] Echoing the points made above, they noted that the vast majority of publications of women religious in education were histories of either individual teaching orders or educational establishments conducted by them, while congregation histories were of a more general nature.[171] Indeed, where studies of female teachers did exist, they tend to focus on the lay teacher,[172] while congregation histories in particular were often inward looking, anecdotal, hagiographic and triumphalist, and therefore

---

166 Jenny Collins, "Hidden Lives: The Teaching and Religious Lives of Eight Dominican Sisters, 1931-1961" (master's thesis, Massey University, 2001). See also "'To the very antipodes': Nineteenth-century Dominican Sister-teachers in Ireland and New Zealand," *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 4 (2013): 494-512, and "'Have your children got leave to speak?': The teacher training of New Zealand Dominican Sisters, 1871-1965," in *Education, Identity and Women Religious: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, eds. Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 117-134.

167 Rebecca Rogers, "Reconsidering the Role of Religious Orders in Modern French Education," *Vitae Scholasticae* 10, nos. 1-2 (1992): 43-51. See also "Retrograde or Modern? Unveiling the Teaching Nun in Nineteenth-Century France," *Social History* 23, no. 2 (1998): 146-164.

168 Hellinckx et al., *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching Sisters*, 16.

169 *Ibid*., 13.

170 Kolmer, "Catholic Women Religious and Women's History," 640.

171 Hellinckx *et al.*, *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching* Sisters, 24.

172 *Ibid*., 14.

of questionable historical value, since they lacked a critical approach.[173] They too called for further and more critical research into the voices and experiences of women religious, particularly teaching women religious.

3.2.3 Women Religious History in Ireland

Elizabeth Kolmer's call was made some years later here on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The years since 1978 have seen a growing awareness of the need for research into the entire area of women's history and women religious history in particular. In 1992, Maria Luddy called for further and more critical research into the entire area of women's history and, of particular relevance to this project, research into female religious congregations,[174] while three years later, Margaret MacCurtain claimed that the emergence of women's history had been the most significant development in the field of history and echoed the call for the voice and experience of women religious themselves to be heard.[175] She too noted this lacuna in existing literature, together with its descriptive nature.

For many years, the existing corpus of literature consisted in the main of a number of biographies of founders, congregations and establishments. Such works have in the past been criticised for their descriptive nature and lack of criticism, outlining the achievements of individuals in the face of adversity and difficulties. In the case of the Presentation Order, for example, numerous biographies of Nano Nagle have been written since the late nineteenth century, the most recent launched in 2016.[176] These have been complemented by histories of

---

173 *Ibid*., 25.

174 MacCurtain *et al*., "An Agenda for Women's History," 23.

175 MacCurtain, "Late in the *Field*", 49. See also Tom O'Donoghue, *Come Follow Me and Forsake Temptation: Catholic Schooling and the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers for Religious Teaching Orders, 1922-1965* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 22.

176 In the case of Nano Nagle, for example, see William Hutch, *Nano Nagle: Her Life, Her Labours and Their Fruits* (Dublin: McGlashan and Gill, 1875), Walsh *Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters*, and Noela Fox *A Dream Unfolds: The Story of Nano Nagle* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2016). For histories of the

schools and other educational institutions founded by the Order, frequently to mark commemorative events.[177] In the wider Irish context, the work of Caitríona Clear and Tony Fahey focuses on the establishment, growth and development of religious congregations in Ireland from the end of the eighteenth century.[178] Mary Peckham Magray's work illustrated the pivotal role played by religious congregations in the cultural transformation of Irish life and society in the nineteenth century, the period that witnessed exponential growth in both the number and activity of convents in Ireland, and in the process gained powerful positions through their work.[179] Maria Luddy[180] and Rosemary Raughter[181] have written extensively on the role played by female religious congregations within the context of the broader philanthropic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while researchers such as Deirdre Raftery[182] have sought to shed light on the concepts of mission and perceived identity

---

Presentation Order from within the congregation itself, see Consedine, *Listening Journey: A Study of the Spirit and Ideals of Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters*, Sr. Mary Pius O'Farrell, *Nano Nagle: Woman of the Gospel* (Cork: Cork Publishing, 1996), and Sr. Mary Pius O'Farrell, *Breaking of Morn: Nano Nagle (1718-1784) and Francis Moylan (1735-1815). A Book of Documents* (Cork: Cork Publishing, 2001).

177 See, for example, O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*.

178 Caitríona Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), and "Walls Within Walls-Nuns in 19th Century Ireland," in *Gender in Irish Society*, eds. Chris Curtin, Pauline Jackson and Barbara O'Connor (Galway: Galway University Press, 1987), 134-151. Tony Fahey, "Nuns in the Catholic Church in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century," in *Girls Don't Do Honours*, ed. Mary Cullen (Dublin: Argus Press, 1987), 7-30.

179 Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750-1900* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

180 See, for example, Maria Luddy, "Women and Charitable Organisations in Nineteenth Century Ireland," *Women's Studies International Forum* 11, no. 4 (1988): 301-305, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and "Religion, Philanthropy and the State in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Ireland," in *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to 1850*, eds. Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998, 148-167.

181 See, for example, Rosemary Raughter, "A Discreet Benevolence: Female Philanthropy and the Catholic Resurgence in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Women's History Review* 6, no. 4 (1997): 465-487, "A Natural Tenderness: The Ideal and the Reality of Eighteenth-Century Female Philanthropy," in *Women and Irish History*, eds. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1997), 71-88, and "Pious Occupations: Female Activism and the Catholic Revival in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *Religious Women and Their History: Breaking the Silence*, ed. Rosemary Raughter (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 25-49.

182 Raftery, "The 'mission' of nuns," op. cit. Also "'Je suis d'aucune Nation': the recruitment and identity of Irish women religious in the international mission *field*, c. 1840-1940," *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 4

of women religious, complementing the varied aspects of women religious history referred to above in other parts of the English-speaking world.

Of particular interest to this study, however, have been the efforts to address the issue of the voice of women religious themselves. Writers such as Yvonne McKenna[183] and Tom O'Donoghue[184] have contributed to this growing area of scholarly interest in recent times. McKenna's work *Made Holy*, a study of thirty women religious who had spent time either in Ireland or abroad, provided a useful template for others to follow, while Tom O'Donoghue's and Judith Harford's[185] study of fifteen Dublin-based women religious focused on themes of identity and motivation among them as both religious and as teachers. Notable in this latter article, however, was the absence of any Presentation woman religious. This omission has been addressed in part during recent times by Deirdre Raftery and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck,[186] who have conducted a number of studies on the order, either separately or together.

(2013): 513-530, and Deirdre Raftery, Judith Harford and Susan M. Parkes, "Mapping the terrain of female education in Ireland, 1830-1910," *Gender and Education* 22, no. 5 (2010): 565-578.

183 Yvonne McKenna, "Embodied Ideals and Realities: Irish Nuns and Irish Womanhood, 1930s-1960s," *Eire-Ireland* 42, no. 1/2 (2006), 40-63. Also *Made Holy: Irish Women Religious at Home and Abroad* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006) and "Entering Religious Life, Claiming Subjectivity: Irish Nuns, 1930s-1960s," *Women's History Review* 15, no. 2 (2006): 189-211.

184 See, for example, O'Donoghue, *Come Follow Me and Forsake Temptation*, op. cit. Also Tom O'Donoghue and Judith Harford, "The Conception, Construction, and Maintenance of Identity of Roman Catholic Female Religious Teachers: a Historical Case Study from Ireland," *Teachers and Teaching* 20, no. 4 (2014): 410-426.

185 Judith Harford and Tom O'Donoghue, "Continuity and Change in the perspectives of women religious in Ireland as themselves both as religious and as teachers in the years immediately prior to, and following, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)," *Paedgogica Historica* 47, no. 3 (2011): 399-413.

186 Raftery and Nowlan-Roebuck, "Convent Schools and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," 353-365. See also Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, "The Presentation Order and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," in *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700-2000*, eds. Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 124-145, and "Sisters as Teachers in Nineteenth-century Ireland: the Presentation Order," in *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, eds. Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 77-98.

Despite being one of the earliest foundations outside Cork City, the Presentation community in Waterford rarely figures in the above works. Available literature also lacks a critical lens, tending to be descriptive and hagiographical, and crucially lacking the voice of women religious themselves. While contributing to our understanding of how foundations were initiated and developed, therefore, the existing corpus can only provide a limited insight into life in a religious community. This research seeks to address this deficit: its interdisciplinary nature will draw on public and private archival material, complemented by qualitative data from interviews and personal testimonies.

3.2.4 Women Religious History in Waterford

While a certain corpus of literature exists on the historical, political, economic and social context of late eighteenth and nineteenth century Waterford, little is available on the history of women religious in the city. A short history of the Mercy Order[187] published in 2000 is due to be followed shortly by a forthcoming publication on the history of the Ursulines. However, given that they were the first religious congregation to open a school in Waterford, little research has been conducted on the Presentation Order. One notable exception is an historical publication marking the bicentenary in 1998 by Sr. Assumpta O'Neill, herself a Presentation sister with a keen interest in local history and for many years the archivist in the Waterford Presentation Convent. To mark two hundred years of their presence in the city, she published a brief history of the convent, primary school and secondary school.[188] For many years it has been the most informative publication, since it draws on original archival sources and congregation annals. As an architecturally significant building, the convent has also been the focus of some research, in the form of a Master's

---

187 Eugene Broderick, *Waterford's Mercy Schools, 1900-2000: A Centenary Record* (Waterford: Mercy Centenary Committee, 2000).

188 O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*, op. cit.

thesis in 2004.[189] However, available material is predominantly descriptive and hagiographical in nature. More importantly it lacks the voice of women religious and how life was experienced within the convent walls. It is this aspect in particular which it is hoped the current research will address.

The founding, growth and development of female religious congregations was one of the notable developments in nineteenth-century Ireland. It occurred at a time when female roles were more circumscribed than today. Independent female activity was the preserve of the few, frequently those with financial independence. Nonetheless, one area of activity that was socially acceptable for females of all religious persuasions was that of charitable endeavour and philanthropy, a point acknowledged by writers such as Luddy and Raughter. Philanthropy provided a means whereby females were enabled to exercise agentic power and influence, and was one eagerly embraced by many women of all classes and creeds. The work they undertook, primarily in the social and educational spheres, coincided with an insistence by the Catholic hierarchy that collective women's philanthropic work be organised through religious congregations.[190] The next section will detail the roots and development of this movement which would ultimately lead to the establishment of the Waterford foundation, among others.

3.3 Female Philanthropy

One of the notable features of eighteenth century life for women was the involvement of women from all denominations in charitable activity. As Raughter has noted, it allowed

---

189 Margaret O'Brien Moran, "Designing for Religious Life: A. W. N. Pugin and the Presentation Convent, Waterford" (M.A. Thesis in History of Art and Design, University of Limerick, 2004).

190 Maria Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations* 7, no. 4 (1996): 354.

their influence within the domestic sphere to be extended into a more public arena.[191] Drawing on their humanitarian instincts and strong religious convictions, women engaged in practical work to better the lives of their fellow human beings, initially as private individuals, later moving into the public sphere, with a general focus on the poor and needy of their own sex and children.[192] Nano Nagle (1718-1784),[193] Teresa Mulally (1728-1803), Catherine McAuley (1777-1841),[194] Mary Aikenhead (1787-1858), Frances Ball (1794-1861)[195] and Margaret Aylward (1810-1889)[196] all engaged in establishing schools and visiting the poor and sick in their homes. As female Catholics, they were restricted by the constraints of the Penal Laws, but on the other hand enjoyed a degree of freedom by virtue of their financial independence, a freedom their successors would not enjoy.

Philanthropists approached their work in a spirit of maternalism as it was generally assumed that women would give to the needy the same care and affection she extended to her own family. This was consistent with the conventional eighteenth-century moral idea of womanhood, which considered the female temperament as that best suited to such work. Women were seen as exerting a wholesome influence through their personal relationships,[197] and playing a key role in the moral regeneration of society, particularly in the case of those from its perceived lower orders. This empathy was frequently drawn on when appealing for financial assistance. The eighteenth century therefore saw the beginning of a tradition of

---

191 Raughter, "A Natural Tenderness," 78.

192 Raughter, "A Discreet Benevolence," 468.

193 See *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 6: 848-849.

194 See *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 5: 721-722.

195 See *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 1: 250-251.

196 See *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 1: 206-207.

197 Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, 30.

voluntary female philanthropy which consisted of public and private benevolence.[198] A number of voluntary charitable associations gradually became organised on a broader scale by women, in the process developing into a feature of the Irish social landscape, although Raughter has noted that these women often faced greater criticism from within their own community than from the administrative authorities.[199] At the same time, the gradual relaxation of the Penal Laws was accompanied by a gradual insistence from an increasingly assertive hierarchy that female philanthropic activity be organised through religious congregations, and thereby more subject to clerical control.[200] By the end of the century, therefore, many Catholic lay men and women had handed over their enterprises and women in particular found themselves relegated to the subsidiary role of fundraisers.

3.3.1 Female Philanthropy in 19th century Ireland

3.3.1.1 Nature of Female Philanthropy in the 19th century

Female philanthropy in the eighteenth century moved from the private to the public sphere, a trend which would continue in the nineteenth century, with a proliferation of activity to meet the growing social need that emerged during this period. Women were active in many areas of social life, their sphere of activity ranging from schools to hospitals, orphanages to penitent asylums and prison visitations. This growth in activity would reach its zenith during the years before and after the tragedy that was the Great Famine. However, it was also accompanied by a development along increasingly denominational lines and corresponding levels of distrust and suspicion. Female Catholic philanthropy became increasingly the preserve of religious congregations, principally at the insistence of the institutional church, but also from the founders themselves who were anxious to ensure the

198 Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," 352.

199 Raughter, "A Discreet Benevolence," 477.

200 Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," 354.

continuity of their efforts. By the end of the century, the latter had become the dominant providers of education, social care and healthcare in Ireland. Maria Luddy and Rosemary Raughter have both written extensively on the nature of nineteenth-century female philanthropy and noted both the wide variety of projects and areas of activity engaged in by women of all persuasions, and the gradual trend of Catholic female philanthropy becoming the preserve of religious congregations.

3.3.1.2 Philanthropy by non-Catholics in the 19th century

For Protestants, the century also saw a continued growth in philanthropic activity. The tragedy that unfolded during and after the Great Famine years, for instance, led to a myriad of charitable initiatives, although the majority was discontinued when the tragedy was past. Lay women engaged in work ranging from workhouse and prison visits, to the founding of schools and refuges. Others, while not directly involved in philanthropic work itself, became patrons and fundraisers for the various societies concerned. In her study of Protestant female philanthropy in Dublin during the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Oonagh Walsh describes as 'startling' the scale of Protestant female involvement in charity work in Dublin alone.[201] Maria Luddy has noted the "bewildering array of philanthropic organizations managed and run by women,"[202] but also that the majority of enterprises would appear to have been small in scale and localised, catering for specific needs and with limited objectives. Both women, however, concur that social class was a key element in both the provision and nature of charitable activity by women.

---

201 *Ibid*.

202 Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, 176.

According to Walsh, female Protestants played a major role in the invigorated philanthropic movement, both as administrators and recipients.[203] Like Luddy, she also notes the many similarities in terms of religious impulse and areas of activity between women of both denominations, most notably their concern for poor women and children and their competence in the management and day to day running of the various projects. However, Luddy would contend that lay Protestant females were far more heavily involved on a day-to-day basis than their Catholic counterparts. They would also appear to have operated with a greater degree of freedom, and with apparently less interference from their clerical authorities. In more recent times, Margaret Preston quotes the discourse surrounding the Mary Matthews case[204] involving Margaret Aylward and St. Brigid's Orphanage to illustrate the distrust and suspicion that came to characterise philanthropic activity principally between the two major denominations.[205]

For Quakers,[206] philanthropy had always been an intrinsic part of their belief system. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there was a high level of Quaker involvement in all areas of charitable activity throughout this period. This included the provision of refuges, schools and crèches, and they will be especially remembered for their work to relieve distress during the

---

203 Oonagh Walsh, "Protestant Female Philanthropy in Dublin in the Early 20th century," *History Ireland* 5, no. 2 (1997): 27.

204 Mary Matthews was a four-year-old daughter of a mixed marriage, whose Catholic father had asked in 1858 for her to be placed in Margaret Aylward's St. Bridget's orphanage before he died, declaring he did not wish his children to be given to their Protestant mother who was working in the West Indies. The child was subsequently sent to live with a nurse in the country, but later disappeared from there. When Margaret Aylward was asked to produce the child in court she could not do so. Two years later she was found guilty of contempt of court and sentenced to six months in the Grangegorman prison for women.

205 Margaret Preston, "'Souper, Souper, Go to Hell!': Women, Sectarianism, and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Dublin," in *Women, Reform, and Resistance in Ireland, 1850-1950*, eds. Christina S. Brophy and Cara Delay (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 9-30.

206 The Quakers are members of a Christian group of religious movements formally known as the Religious Society of Friends. The first Quakers lived in mid-seventeenth century England, following a break from the established Church of England. In the past, they were known for such movements as their refusal to participate in war, their opposition to slavery, teetotalism and philanthropic efforts.

Famine years. The Quaker tradition also promoted issues such as gender equality and Maria Luddy contends that a concern with social issues, and the strong support they received from both their families and communities led them to engage in political movements such as anti-slavery societies, women's suffrage and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.[207]

3.3.1.3 The Political and Economic Context of the 19th Century

If the eighteenth century was dominated by the Penal Laws, the nineteenth was overshadowed by two major events which effectively divided the century in two- the Act of Union[208] and the Great Famine. Historians, including Foster and Lyons,[209] have written extensively on the history of this period. By the end of the eighteenth century, the repeal of the Penal Laws was well underway, paving the way for the open practice of religion, the right to own property and the right to education. However, the United Irishmen's rebellion in 1798, allied to the ongoing Napoleonic wars on the continental mainland, made the powers in Westminster realise that the Irish parliament was unable to govern itself satisfactorily. Accordingly, in early 1800, the Act of Union was passed in Dublin uniting Ireland with Britain, with the implicit promise of Catholic Emancipation to follow shortly afterwards. However, the refusal of George III (1738-1820) to agree to the measure, in one moment, threw away the loyalty of Ireland's middle class. This failure, in Hegarty's opinion, breathed

---

207 In 1864, the Westminster parliament passed the first of three statutes permitting compulsory inspection of prostitutes for venereal disease in certain military camps in both England and Ireland to combat the spread among soldiers, the others being passed in 1866 and 1869. If a woman was inspected and declared infected she faced compulsory detention in a designated hospital for up to nine months. There was no similar inspection of men.

208 The Act of Union came into force on the 1st of January 1801, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, thereby ending the Irish parliament in College Green.

209 Francis Stewart Leland Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, vols. 1-2 (London: Fontana Books, 2009).

new life into the notion that the English simply could not be trusted in their dealings with Ireland.[210]

The sense of betrayal by the propertied and middle-class Catholics was seized on by Daniel O'Connell,[211] a barrister and renowned orator, who mobilised the forces of both Catholic church and the general population in a popular mass movement for Catholic Emancipation[212] and reform. O'Connell himself took an active part in election campaigns to unseat Protestant ascendancy members of parliament: he is known to have had breakfast in the Hennessy's Road convent during the 1826 Waterford campaign to elect Henry Villiers Stuart (1803-1874), for example. He subsequently and successfully stood for election himself in Clare, achieving Catholic Emancipation in 1829. Although later unsuccessful in his attempts to repeal the Act of Union, he inspired many other movements such as the Young Irelanders[213] and the Fenians,[214] particularly in the use of mobilising the masses of the general population and financing political campaigns.

---

210 Neil Hegarty, *Modern Ireland: In Search of a New National Memory* (London: BBC Books, 2011), 180.

211 Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847): Born in Co. Kerry and educated in France, he was popularly known as "the Liberator." He witnessed some of the atrocities which left him with a lifelong horror of violence. Called to the Bar in 1798, he became known as a powerful orator and advocate for political change. He founded the Catholic Association in 1823 to achieve Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Union. He was elected MP for Clare in 1828, and Catholic Emancipation was granted the following year. He then tried to achieve repeal of the Act of Union and organized a number of mass rallies to gather popular support. However, the cancellation of a large meeting in Clontarf in 1843 led to his imprisonment and ultimately took its toll on his health. He set off on a pilgrimage to Rome in February 1847, and died at Genoa.

212 Catholic Emancipation was the name given to the movement that attempted to remove the discrimination and civil disabilities that applied to Catholics in both Britain and Ireland. The 1829 Act admitted Catholics to parliament and to all but a handful of public offices.

213 The Young Irelanders was the name given to a political, cultural and social movement of the 19th century. It began as part of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association but the leaders such as Charles Gavan Duffy, John Blake Dillon, and Thomas Davis, who was also the editor of their newspaper *The Nation*, eventually broke away to form the Young Ireland movement which did not share O'Connell's pacifist principles. They organised an abortive uprising in 1848, part of a Europe-wide movement that year.

214 The Fenians were an Irish republican organization that was founded in 1858 in the United States by John O'Mahony, James Stephens and Michael Doheny. The name came from the Fianna, the legendary band of warriors led by Fionn MacCumhail. They raised money from subscriptions from Irish immigrants in the USA which was used to buy arms for an eventual insurrection in Ireland. However, other nationalist organisations and the Catholic church did not support the Fenians, and an attempted uprising in 1867 was a failure.

O'Connell died at the height of a tragedy that was to define the entire century: the Great Famine (1845-1849). While famines had been a periodic feature of life for many decades, the failure of the potato crop between 1845 and 1849 was notable both for the numbers involved- it has been estimated that up to two million people either died or emigrated- and the legacy of bitterness carried by emigrants and their descendants in their attitudes to Britain, both of which were to reverberate for many years. It also resulted in a greater consolidation of landholdings, the virtual elimination of plot subdivision, and the vesting of land ownership in a smaller number of individuals. The Famine profoundly altered the nature of Irish society, since the disaster had disproportionately affected the poorest layer of society: the population of the country would continue to decline inexorably for another hundred years.

For those who remained in Ireland, political movement in the second half of the nineteenth century centred around the issue of land tenure and property rights. The founding of the Land League[215] in 1879 and the subsequent campaign for land reform was paralleled by the growth of a number of secret societies dedicated to the overthrow of British rule, by violent means if necessary. The Young Irelanders had already attempted an insurrection in 1848, but the 1867 Fenian rebellion caused the greatest concern, since its leaders employed new methods of funding and recruitment, drawing on the legacy of Famine memories from emigrants in America. The growth of such secret societies alarmed not only the authorities in Dublin Castle, seat of the British administration in Ireland: it also alarmed the Catholic church, which had grown increasingly assertive as the century unfolded. Under its most determined reformer, Paul Cullen, [216]Archbishop of Dublin and later Cardinal of Ireland, the

---

[215] The Land League was a political organisation founded by Michael Davitt in Mayo in 1879 to campaign for the right of tenant farmers to buy the land they worked on.

[216] Paul Cullen (1803-1878): Born in Co. Kildare and educated in Ballitore, Carlow College and Rome. He was ordained in 1829 and, following a period as Rector of the Irish College in that city, was appointed Archbishop of Armagh from 1849-1852, during which time he convened the first synod of the Irish Catholic

Church strongly condemned societies such as the Fenians. Cullen's vision was a Catholic Ireland devoted not to the political revolution as promoted by the Fenians, but to a devotional revolution of prayer and adherence to church practice controlled and directed by the clergy.

Economically, the century can in many ways also be divided in two, separated and defined by the tragedy of the Famine. The legislative control exercised by the London parliament in matters of trade during the eighteenth century has been noted by O'Brien earlier, and this was to continue and increase following the Act of Union. While England continued at war, prospects remained favourable for Irish agriculture. However, the ending of these wars was followed by years of steadily increasing political repression and social unrest, as the impact of European conflicts, the requirements of a war economy and the economic depression that followed the final defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo took their toll on the Irish economy. A disastrous collapse in agricultural prices, combined with the failure of the potato crop in 1822, led to social distress, agrarian crime and an increase in want and hunger. Tension between landlords and tenant farmers became commonplace.[217]

Mary E. Daly has written extensively on the economic history of Ireland during this period. Economically, the country remained primarily an agricultural one, with the majority of the population heavily dependent on the potato crop for sustenance. This dependence brought with it the risks of food shortages and famine should the crop fail. Duffy has noted that this occurred, either partially or totally, in 14 out of the 27 seasons between 1816 and 1842.[218] However, the Great Famine of 1845-1849 resulted not only in the loss of two million people through either death or emigration, but a consolidation of landholdings. It also

---

clergy to be held since the 12th century in Thurles in 1850. Appointed Archbishop of Dublin in 1852, he reorganised the Irish church, ushering in what has been described as the 'devotional revolution.' He became the first Irishman to be named Cardinal in 1866.

217 Hegarty, *Story of Ireland*, 187.

218 Seán Duffy, *The Concise History of Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2000), 157.

virtually eliminated the poorest section of rural society, the landless labourers and small tenant farmers, since they were those hardest hit by both the failure of the potato crop and disease. Tillage was replaced by livestock on farms, requiring substantially fewer workers at harvest time, thereby creating fewer employment opportunities. Economic depression and persistent disaffection at the tenant-landlord relationship were also to be a recurring feature of the years after the Famine, leading ultimately to the founding of the Land League in 1879 and the consequent campaign for land reform.

Legislative change also impacted on the Irish economy. The legislation of 1824[219] which created in effect a free trade area within the United Kingdom resulted in the sudden failure of many of Irish industries, while the Free Trade Act signed between Britain and France in 1860[220] symbolised a wider acceptance of the principles of *laissez-faire* economics.[221] O'Malley has documented the varying opinions on the reasons behind Ireland's lack of economic progress at this time,[222] while Daly has summarised the changes in terms of political industrial developments.[223] What is undeniable is the fact that the century saw the end of domestic industry as a means of gainful employment, the growing importance of the north-east of the country around Belfast, and an increased movement of people from rural areas to urban centres of population.

---

219 The President of the Board of Trade, William Huskisson (1770-1830) was instrumental in framing the 1823 Reciprocity of Duties Act and the 1824 Navigation Acts legislation, which admitted other nations to a full equality and reciprocity of shipping duties, the repeal of the labour laws and quarantine duties, the introduction of a new sinking fund, and a reduction on duties on manufactures and on the importation of foreign goods. This in effect created a United Kingdom-wide free trade area.

220 The Cobden-Chevalier Treaty of 1860 was an Anglo-French free trade agreement named after the main British and French originators- Richard Cobden, MP and Michel Chevalier. It reduced French duties on most British manufactured goods to levels not above 30%, and reduced British duties on French wines and brandy. Within a few years exports of British goods to France had more than doubled, with a similar increase in French wines to Britain.

221 Hegarty, *Story of Ireland*, 206.

222 O'Malley, "The Decline of Irish Industry in the Nineteenth Century," 24-26.

223 Daly, *Social and Economic History of Ireland since 1800*, 62.

3.3.1.4 The Social Context of the 19th century

Similar to the political and economic context outlined above, the nineteenth century was to witness profound social change either side of the Famine. Daly has already noted the growing prosperity evident at the start of the century, while historians such as Foster have documented the acceleration caused in emigration levels which would continue for many decades to follow. He also noted the disproportionate impact of the tragedy in terms of class: "What was important after the Famine was the dramatic readjustment of population in terms of class as well as numbers."[224]The demographic adjustment caused by both the Famine and subsequent emigration, in the form of the virtual disappearance of the poor, labouring classes, was also to have social implications in the years ahead: the decline of the Irish language was accelerated, for example, since many emigrants came from Irish-speaking areas, while those who remained showed little inclination to preserve it. The consolidation of land holdings led to increased migration to urban centres of population in search of work and employment. The increased demand for scarce resources led to a parallel increase in the urban poor, which in turn impacted on healthcare and medical provision. In Dublin, this led to the creation of some of the most deprived slums in Europe, which have been documented in detail by many authors, such as Jacinta Prunty.[225]

3.3.1.5 Workhouses, Orphanages and Refuges

The hospitals, orphanages, refuges and other institutions that grew up in this period responded to a growing need for care of the poor and needy in society, with writers such as Siobhan Nelson expressing much of this work as part of a wider movement of actively

---

224 Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 340.

225 Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums, 1800-1925: A Study in Urban Geography* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998).

governing the poor.[226] She also notes the enormous pressures on the available services throughout the century, the inability of Poor Law relief to cope with the Famine conditions, and argues that the emergence of the professional nurse was an extension of a religious form of life into the wider or secular domain.[227] Indeed, the factors of urban growth, the development of public health along sanitarian principles, the expansion of hospitals and the growth of scientific medicine which ultimately led to the growth of the 'expert,' were all current in the Western world, as Nelson has also noted. The degree to which these trends were accommodated and developed was usually influenced by prevailing historical conditions such as colonial policy, and historical events such as the Famine.

Charitable work generally allowed women, and especially single women, the opportunity to engage in fields of activity with which they would normally never have contact. The field of rescue work, such as the rehabilitation of prostitutes and unmarried mothers, was primarily left to women. For Catholics, the bulk of this work was left to religious congregations. Walsh has documented the active lay female involvement in the management and organisation of Protestant-run charities, such as the Magdalen Asylum, the Asylum for Pentitent Females, the Prison Gate Mission, the Dublin Female Penitentiary, the Dublin by Lamplight Mission, and the Dublin Midnight Mission and Female Home.[228] Middle-class women actively sought out women on the streets or those due for release from prison, to encourage them to come to the homes, where religious instruction was provided as part of the rehabilitation process.

---

226 Siobhan Nelson, "Pastoral Care and Moral Government: Early Nineteenth Century Nursing and Solutions to the Irish Question," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 26, no. 1 (1997): 7.

227 *Ibid*.

228 Walsh, "Protestant Female Philanthropy in Dublin in the Early 20th Century," 28. See also by the same author *Anglican Women in Dublin: Philanthropy, Politics and Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press: 2005).

Middle-class attitudes to relief of distress are also evident in the running and management of these institutions. The notion of apportioning relief to the 'deserving and undeserving poor' reflected prevailing ideologies of self-help and hard work. Many female philanthropists were concerned that relief be channelled to the 'deserving poor', for example, and the values espoused by their founders frequently shaped and influenced the nature of the relief provided. Hence we find inmates in some institutions working for their keep, which not only proved their 'worthiness' but assisted in keeping the charity on a sound financial footing. Boards of guardians in the Poor Law unions were virtually all composed of the local landed gentry. Concerned that they should not be considered a place of first resort for the poor and destitute, workhouse conditions were therefore made as unattractive as possible, in order to deter all but the most desperate from seeking help. The separation of men from women, and children from their parents, was also part of this regime. For destitute children in either orphanages or refuges, there was an emphasis on becoming a useful member of society, through the provision of vocational and moral training. Inculcating habits of cleanliness, sobriety and industry, together with basic literacy and religious instruction, appeared in institutional prospectuses, reflecting middle-class values and preoccupations. Girls were to be prepared for life in domestic service, before assuming the ultimate roles of wife and mother. No alteration in the social and class system for the poor was advocated; the social boundaries were to be retained. Writers such as Raughter, Luddy and Walsh give us insights into the extent of this work, while Moira Maguire[229] has traced its consequences in terms into the twentieth century in the context of the history of childhood.

3.3.1.6 The Growth of Urbanisation in Dublin

The economic prosperity of the late eighteenth century had seen many towns grow steadily in Ireland, in turn the result of better communications, particularly roads, and an

[229] Moira J. Maguire, *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

increase in the volume of trade. By 1800, she had a reasonably developed structure of towns, with Dublin the second largest city of the British Empire with a population of around 200,000.[230] During the first half of the nineteenth century, population in the capital increased in line with the country as a whole. Where there was a rise in urban population, however, the increased numbers were frequently composed of beggars or unemployed farm labourers in search of food or work, and the building of workhouses and the famine added greatly to the numbers of poor in the 1840s and early 1850s.[231] The decline in agricultural incomes added to the numbers migrating to the larger urban centres such as Dublin. Combined with the demographic changes caused by emigration, the capital's population was more a reflection of a shift from the rural to the urban. Emigration in the years following the famine in particular would prove to be a constant reality for many of the younger population.

The gradual move of the more affluent groups in Dublin society from the city centre to the suburbs also left large numbers of vacant dwellings which were occupied by families in search of housing close to the areas of employment. In time these houses became overcrowded with multiple families sharing single rooms and basic sanitary facilities, ultimately creating the urban slums that would come to characterise the capital by the end of the century. Mary E. Daly and Jacinta Prunty have both documented the increase in urbanisation and the gradual deterioration in social conditions as time passed.[232]

Relative to other cities in the British Empire, the nineteenth century saw Dublin unable to keep pace with economic growth and expansion. As a result, as Daly has documented, while English cities were doubling or trebling in size, post-famine Ireland saw Dublin lose her position as the second city of the Empire. The only city on the island to

---

230 Daly, *Social and Economic History of Ireland*, 100.

231 *Ibid*.

232 See, for example, Mary Daly's *Social and Economic History of Ireland since 1800* above, also Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums, 1800-1925: A Study in Urban Geography* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998).

witness dramatic expansion was Belfast, reflecting its industrial and manufacturing importance. Despite the reality of continued emigration, most Irish towns and cities still harboured a substantial proportion of underemployed labourers. The lack of wealth created by native industrialisation impacted on the quality of housing conditions, with tenements in Dublin or small two or three-roomed cottages the typical dwelling places for poor families in the other main urban areas.[233]

3.3.1.7 The Growth of Urbanisation in Cork

The ending of the Napoleonic wars in the early years of the nineteenth century saw a marked decline in the economic fortunes of Cork City, similar to that experienced by its neighbour, Waterford. The slump in agricultural prices by up to one third, the drop in the number of Royal Navy ships and the return to the gold standard had a devastating effect on the local economy. The subsequent contraction in credit and collapse of many banks was further exacerbated by increased competition from the more developed British economy, competition from which it had been largely protected since the Act of Union in 1800. The textile industry and provisions trades were particularly affected by these developments and unemployment levels soon rose to very high levels. On the other hand, industries such as shipbuilding, brewing, distilling, tanning and butter-making escaped relatively unscathed, and some even flourished. Cork Harbour also remained an important port for trans-Atlantic trade.

Perhaps surprisingly, the population of the city itself did not decline during this period. Indeed, it actually increased during the period of the Great Famine. This was due principally to the large influx of migrants from economically depressed rural areas coming in search of employment. However, the relative prosperity of the above industries did not make a major impact on the high levels of unemployment, and this in turn served to depress wages and contribute to poor living conditions of those seeking work. These migrants settled in the

233 *Ibid*., 102.

main in the inner city areas near the river, which soon became centres of dense population. The outbreak of cholera in 1832, part of a European-wide pandemic, disproportionately affected these areas, due in no small part to the living conditions which facilitated the rapid spread of the disease.

It would appear that infectious and contagious diseases were endemic in nineteenth century Cork.[234] The inner city, where housing conditions were poorest, suffered particularly badly during periods of crisis. In the warren of lanes off Barrack Street and Shandon Street, housing conditions were abysmal, with overcrowded dwellings, primitive sanitation, limited access to clean drinking water, and filthy streets with visible human waste. This created ideal conditions for diseases such as cholera, typhus and dysentery to flourish. Attempts to alleviate this situation have been documented by local historians in more detail.[235]

3.3.1.8 The Growth of Urbanisation in Waterford

The social conditions in neighbouring Waterford mirrored those of Cork in many ways: the economic effects of the ending of the Napoleonic wars, the gradual decline of agricultural produce and the social conditions of many inhabitants adjoining the centre of economic activity. Edmund Rice in particular witnessed these conditions at first hand, along with many others engaged in the alleviation of poverty at this time.

While living conditions for many were undoubtedly poor, municipal authorities in some towns and cities made attempts to address this deficit. Waterford was the first city to have social housing provided by the Corporation and the local newspapers of the day recount the proceedings of meetings dealing with the issue. The *Waterford News and General Advertiser*, for instance, reported discussions on the progress of the construction of seventeen

234 http://www.corkcity.ie/aboutcork/historyofcork/19thcenturycork/.
235 *Ibid*.

labourers' cottages, designed for "first-class artisans"[236] in the Ballybricken area of the city, who would otherwise be unable to purchase a home. Aside from the predictable references to cost and expenditure, these discussions also extended to details of the superior type of timber and other materials used.[237] In the same article, a Mr. Fisher congratulated the committee which oversaw the project, claiming they "had got cottages built which were a credit to their city,"[238] echoing a comment made the previous month by a Mr. Moran: "the labourers' cottages were a credit to the Corporation."[239]

The municipal authorities in question obviously felt it was a success, since the edition of 6 February, 1880, reported the proposition that the committee be re-appointed. It was noted by a Mr. Kelly that:

> there could not be any doubt as to the necessity for such cottages for they had it, on certified returns, that thousands of families were obliged to live in one room, each family numbering over five or six.[240]

A Mr. McGrath agreed that there was a great want of proper homes for the working classes in the country, while Alderman Scott, J.P., "held it to be the duty of the Corporation to look after the amelioration of the condition of the working classes."[241] Four months later, in the 4 June edition, the Labourers' Cottages Committee recommended leasing a plot in Green's Lane, on which it was intended to erect other cottages.[242] In Waterford, therefore, as in other urban centres, the influx of rural labourers in search of limited employment opportunities led in turn to economic and social disadvantage which was frequently addressed initially by

---

236 *Waterford News and General Advertiser*, August 9, 1878.

237 *Ibid*.

238 *Ibid*.

239 *Waterford News and General Advertiser*, July 5, 1878.

240 *Waterford News and General Advertiser*, February 6, 1880.

241 *Ibid*.

242 *Waterford News and General Advertiser*, June 4, 1880.

concerned individuals, but became increasingly organised on a national basis as the nineteenth century progressed.

3.3.1.9 The Religious Context of the 19th century

The gradual relaxation of the Penal Laws which had begun in the latter decades of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of a prolonged period of consolidation and expansion by the Catholic church in the nineteenth century. This was evidenced by an extensive programme of church-building and other infrastructure, of which the Pugin-designed Presentation Convent was part. The nineteenth century was also marked by an exponential increase in the number and variety of religious congregations. Some were native foundations, such as the Sisters of Charity[243] and the Sisters of Mercy[244] in the pre-Famine years, and the Sisters of the Holy Faith[245] post-Famine. They were complemented by the arrival of others such as the Sisters of the Good Shepherd,[246] the Poor Servants of the Mother of God,[247] the Faithful Companions of Jesus[248] and the Little Sisters of the Poor[249] from England and the continent, all devoted to addressing various social needs. Luddy and Clear have documented this effort in detail, together with the extent to which religious congregations generally held a virtual monopoly on Catholic philanthropic activity, education, health care and social care by the end of the century.

---

243 The Irish Sisters of Charity were founded in 1815 by Mary Aikenhead.

244 The Irish Sisters of Mercy were founded in 1831 by Catherine McAuley.

245 The Sisters of the Holy Faith were founded in 1867 by Margaret Aylward.

246 The Good Shepherd Sisters were founded in France in 1835 by Marie-Euphrasie Pelletier. They arrived in Limerick in 1848 to take over the running of an existing Magdalen Asylum.

247 The Poor Servants of the Mother of God were founded in England by Frances Taylor in 1872.

248 The Faithful Companions of Jesus came to Ireland in 1842. The Order was founded in France by Marie Madeleine d'Houët.

249 The Little Sisters of the Poor were founded in France by Jeanne Jugan in 1839. They came to Ireland in 1868.

This period was also characterised by the gradual formalisation of religious practices and rituals in churches, and a proliferation of religious societies, sodalities and confraternities. This movement has commonly been known as the 'devotional revolution', in the Irish context part of the reform of the church led by Cardinal Paul Cullen. However, writers such as Sean Connolly and Roy Foster have challenged this view. The latter, for instance, claims that this process had already been underway before the Famine, and the increased attendance was rather a reflection of the inadequacy of places of worship.[250] He also cited movements such as temperance reform led by Father Theobald Matthew[251] as evidence that modernising tendencies were present before the advent of the devotional revolution. Mary Peckham Magray has also challenged the centrality of Cullen to the process of transformation.[252] In her work *Taking the Veil*, Marta Danylewycz draws many points of comparison and similarity between the Irish and Quebec experiences, noting the social aspect of many of these practices, but equally linking them with minority cultural and linguistic identity.[253] She also contended that the devotional revolution in Quebec popularised religion, making it accessible to rich and poor alike.[254]

3.3.1.10 The Role of Religion and Social Class

Raughter and Luddy have both remarked on the important role played by religion as a motivating factor in much charitable activity during both the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Strong religious convictions impelled women of all denominations to engage in

---

250 Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 339.

251 Theobald Matthew (1790- 1856): born in Tipperary, he was ordained a Capuchin priest in 1814. Working for the welfare of the poor in Cork, he was induced by Protestant friends in 1838 to pledge himself to temperance reform. This subsequently became a national movement, extending to America in 1849-51. He worked tirelessly in Famine relief and declined a bishopric, having fallen into ill health, in 1851. He died in 1856.

252 Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*, 4-5.

253 Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil*, 33-46.

254 *Ibid*., 38.

socially useful work, moving from the private to the public domain of activity. The later growth and expansion of religious congregations was a development of this impulse, since the majority, if not all, of the founders had, prior to establishing their foundations, previously been involved in charitable work. Nano Nagle, Mary Aikenhead, Frances Ball, Catherine McAuley and Margaret Aylward had all been heavily involved in charitable work before they founded their religious congregations and all, with the exception of Catherine McAuley, had considered entering communal religious life at various times. Many had even entered and left congregations for a period of time before eventually founding their own, frequently retaining close contact with religious figures and communities when engaged in their work.

The importance of religion was not confined to lay female Catholics: it was also a prime motivating factor for Theodosia Blachford,[255] for instance, who was active in Methodist circles in Dublin, while Ellen Smyly[256] was heavily involved in Protestant philanthropy. From their letters, it is clear that religion played a key factor in their decision to devote themselves to the alleviation of distress. They looked on their work as an expression of their Christian duty of care to their fellow human beings, and considered philanthropic activity as an active response to a humanitarian need, or means of self-fulfillment.[257] Annual

---

255 Theodosia Blachford (1744-1817?), the daughter of William Tighe, landowner and Member of Parliament, was born in 1744 in Co. Wicklow. She received a conventional Church of Ireland upbringing, and married a clergyman, Rev. William Blachford, only to be widowed three years later, leaving her with two young children to support. Resolving to devote herself to the upbringing of her children and to good works, she later converted to Methodism and was described by John Wesley as 'one of our jewels'. She read widely on religious matters and was influenced by writers such as Jeanne de Chantal, founder of the Visitation Order, and William Law, the religious mystic and author. In her search for spiritual fulfilment, she gave away much of her surplus income to charity. She played a leading role in the establishment of the Female Orphan House and the House of Refuge in Baggot St., Dublin, founded to assist homeless and unemployed young women. She survived both her children, dying shortly after her son's death in 1817.

256 Ellen Smyly (1815-1901): Ellen Franks was born on the 14th of November, 1815. At the age of nineteen she married the Dublin surgeon Josiah Smyly. She became a prominent philanthropist, fundraising and setting up residential homes and schools for the poor and for destitute children. She was also involved in establishing bible schools. She or her daughters frequently sat on the boards of the various institutions. She was closely associated with the Rev. Alexander Dallas and the Irish Church Mission, and her homes are believed to have influenced Dr. Thomas John Barnardo. She died on the 16th of May, 1901, and is buried in Mount Jerome cemetery, Dublin.

257 Walsh, "Protestant Female Philanthropy in Dublin," 27-28.

reports published by the societies they founded also contain references to their motivations and purpose, which were frequently expressed in religious terms.

This motivation, however, also extended into the very nature of the philanthropic enterprises they founded. Common to women of all denominations was a belief in the importance of a moral and spiritual education. Addressing the physical and material needs of food, clothing and shelter was only beginning. Of far more importance was the provision of education, specifically moral and spiritual education. Through education, they sought to inculcate a certain moral, spiritual and social outlook in their charges, allied to skills and training that would enable them to earn a living when they left the institutions. For the majority of these female philanthropists, religion, social action and education were interlinked. Religion in particular had a redemptive quality and, allied to education, was considered the most effective means of addressing social deprivation and distress.

For Nano Nagle, for example, philanthropy was primarily an expression of her religious faith. During her visits to the neighbouring areas of her family estate, she was horrified by the levels of ignorance and poverty she witnessed. She believed that the material conditions of the poor had to be addressed in conjunction with what she considered their spiritual deprivation. Her schools therefore placed a heavy emphasis on religious education and practice, alongside literacy and numeracy. However, the spiritual element was one she supervised herself, as she considered it the most important. She saw her work as having a missionary function, one she refers to in one of her letters: “My schools are beginning to be of service to a great many parts of the world.. If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would willingly do all in my power.”[258]

---

258 Letter from Nano Nagle to Eleanor Fitzsimons, 17 July, 1769.

For female philanthropists of all denominations, religion was to impact strongly on the nature of support provided in their establishments- schools, hospitals, orphanages, homes and refuges. It has already been noted that Nano Nagle took personal responsibility for religious instruction in her own schools, employing lay mistresses for the secular subjects. Religious education was considered the most important subject of the school timetable, with religion suffusing all aspects of the school day. This was to become the hallmark of much of the educational provision in Ireland as the century progressed. Indeed, the reluctance of many religious congregations to join the National System after 1831 was due in large part to their rejection of the notion of separate secular and moral instruction, documented in detail by both Akenson and Coolahan. This was equally true of the other denominations such as the Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland. Religion also played a motivating force in healthcare provision.[259]

If religion was a prime motivating and determining factor in philanthropic activity, social class was equally so, both in terms of the personal wealth that financed the various projects, the connections that could be drawn on for fundraising, and the nature of relief provided, echoing once more the notion of the 'deserving' poor. Early philanthropy was essentially one of middle-class women dispensing relief to the lower classes, with early female philanthropists generally drawn from the monied and propertied classes. They belonged to the middle to upper ranks of society, and drew on family traditions of responsibility to the less fortunate of their day. Such women frequently had access to personal funds and family connections that could be drawn on to support their philanthropic activities. Nano Nagle, Catherine McAuley, Margaret Aylward and Teresa Mulally all began

[259] St. Vincent's Hospital was the first Catholic hospital in Dublin when it was founded in 1834 by Mary Aikenhead. Congregations such as the Good Shepherd Sisters from France were also invited to take over the management of other institutions such as orphanages and refuges. By the end of the century, religious congregations had a virtual monopoly in the area of healthcare and social care.

their benevolent projects using personal fortunes, with appeals for financial support usually being made to wealthy donors, many of them frequently female. Many of these donors later contributed substantial sums to the foundation and maintenance of convents and religious communities. Indeed, some women, often widows, later joined such communities. Maria Luddy,[260] Mary Peckham Magray and Rosemary Raughter outline the importance of religion in detail.

According to Luddy and Raughter, social class also determined the nature of the relief provided, particularly in the concept of the 'deserving poor,' the term used to describe those willing but unable to work. Middle-class values of self-help, thrift and sobriety were encouraged in recipients, part of what Luddy has described as conducting a "moral mission in public."[261] When religious communities began to expand later in the century, social distinctions were also replicated within convents, in the form of the choir and lay sister system. The perpetuation of the class divide, while no doubt reflecting the need for social compatibility, nonetheless led to a class-based system of authority within the convent walls.[262]

Recipients of this charity were equally conscious of the social mores expected of them. Many rescue homes reflected class attitudes towards issues such as unmarried motherhood by obliging inmates to engage in hard physical labour. This was both a source of revenue for the institution concerned, and also served as a form of 'penance' for the perceived sins of inmates. It was also a reflection of prevailing attitudes to, and ideologies of, morality and purity. However, this emphasis on hard manual work was not applied in all

---

260 Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, Rosemary Raughter, "A Discreet Benevolence," and Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*.

261 Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," 352.

262 See, for example, Caitriona Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, and Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*.

cases. In her article on Protestant female philanthropy in Dublin, Walsh notes that in the Rescue Mission home, founded in 1875, inmates were employed at 'plain and fancy needlework,' tasks considered suitable for young ladies.[263] She also points out that inmates were frequently segregated according to class within the charitable institutions themselves, reflecting management's thinking that well-educated girls would have a beneficial effect on the other residents.[264] Thus, the experience of life within such institutions would appear to have been more nuanced in class terms than generally acknowledged.

3.4 Education in 19th and 20th century Ireland

3.4.1 1798-1831

Much of the philanthropic work conducted in the years between 1798 and 1831, however, included educational provision, particularly at primary level, from a variety of voluntary agencies, the majority on a denominational basis. The history of Irish education, particularly at primary level, has been well documented by writers and historians such as Donald H. Akenson and Dr. John Coolahan, while Susan Parkes'[265] work on the Kildare Place Society has provided the Church of Ireland perspective. Many of these organisations were already in receipt of government funding, but concerns in the aftermath of insurrections, the gradual repeal of the Penal Laws and subsequent Catholic Emancipation, and inter-denominational distrust of suspected proselytism, led to the creation of a state-funded National System of education in 1831.

---

263 Walsh, "Protestant Female Philanthropy in Dublin," 30.

264 Ibid.

265 Susan M. Parkes, *Kildare Place: The History of the Church of Ireland Training College and College of Education 1811-2010* (Dublin: CICE Publications, 2011).

It was originally conceived as non-denominational, where children of all faiths would receive common secular instruction and separate religious instruction. However, for schools run by religious congregations in particular, this latter condition was unacceptable, since they considered secular and religious instruction as intertwined throughout the school day. As a result, many did not join the National System. The Presentation school in Waterford was one of these. In an attempt to maximise the financial benefits in the form of state grants, as the century progressed, each denomination strove to shape the system towards its denominational requirements.[266]

3.4.2 1831-1870

The early years of the National System saw an impressive increase in the number of schools which joined the National System.[267] Efforts to expand the academic curriculum during this period included administering a scheme designed to promote agricultural education, in the form of model agricultural schools and schools with farms and gardens attached. However, the denominational struggles also increased, with the Catholic Church led by the assertive Cardinal Paul Cullen. His dominant and influential role in the interactions between church and state, particularly in the field of education, were to impact the formulation of educational policy for many years after his death. As Ó Buachalla observed, his major achievement was "…to confer a new status on the education question as a public issue."[268] These struggles extended into efforts to provide third level education in the form of the Queen's Colleges.[269] For the British government, the increased financial demands on the

---

266 Coolahan, *Irish Education: History and Structure*, 5.

267 *Ibid.*, 19.

268 *Ibid*., 39.

269 The Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork and Galway were established in 1845 to offer a university education to members of all religious denominations in Ireland.

exchequer led to concerns regarding value for money, and the lack of local funding contributions led to the establishment of the Powis Commission[270] in 1868. Its 1870 report recommendations included the introduction of a payments by results system, where teachers were paid a fixed salary combined with extra remuneration from examination results.

3.4.3 1870-1922

The Powis Commission's recommendations were implemented gradually over time. The payments by results system lasted until its abolition in 1899, and compulsory education for children in urban areas between the ages of six and fourteen was introduced in 1892. However, there was a growing level of dissatisfaction with the nature of educational provision during this period, including the lack of practical subjects, the lack of recognition afforded to the Irish language, particularly in Gaeltacht areas, and teacher education. The recognition of denominational teacher training colleges in 1883, the introduction of new subjects such as elementary science, drawing and manual training, the revised programme for National schools in 1900, and the 1905 bilingual programme, went some way to addressing these concerns.

For many years, the education provided in the schools gave scant recognition to either Irish language or culture. Consequently the National System was perceived as attempting to produce culturally ameliorated, useful working-class subjects of the British Empire.[271] The recognition of the Irish language within schools echoed the prevailing interest in, and enthusiasm for, the cultural nationalism movement led by the Gaelic League. Interest in

---

270 The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education, otherwise known as the Powis Commission, was tasked with inquiring into the state of the Irish education system. It began its work in 1868 and published its report in 1870.

271 Vanessa Rutherford, "Technologies of Power: School Discourse in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland," in *The Child Savage, 1890-2010: From Comics to Games*, ed. Elisabeth Wesseling (Abingdon and New York: Ashgate, 2016), 24.

cultural and artistic activities through Irish, such as *feiseanna*, became a regular feature in many schools. Participants in this study recall many of these events.

While much may not be known about the quality of the education received, high attendance levels and a priority attached to the value of education ensured that the system did lead to improved literacy levels in the general population.[272] By this time, the educational system at all levels was denominational in all but name. Compromises and concessions with the National Board allowed religious congregations in particular to join eventually without compromising their religious ethos. The Presentation school in Waterford accordingly made its application in 1879, receiving its first grants the following year.

3.4.4 1922-1967

The early years of the Irish Free State saw a continuation of many administrative features of the previous regime, with centralised control transferred to a Minister and Department of Education in 1924. The new emphasis for educators centered on the revival of the Irish language. New programmes, such as that of 1922, raised Irish to an obligatory subject for at least one hour per day, and where possible other subjects were to be taught through the medium of Irish also. Preparatory training colleges, summer courses and classes were established to address proficiency difficulties. The emphasis on language revival is clearly evident in school reports for this period, some of which form part of the archival material in this study.

Other initiatives during this period include the introduction of the Primary Certificate examination. Initially an optional examination in 1929, it was made compulsory in 1943, although it was criticised for its narrow range and emphasis on written work, and eventually

---

272 Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 341.

abolished in 1967.[273] Some participants in this study recall sitting this examination, since it frequently determined their transition to secondary school.

3.4.5 1967-2005

The 1960s saw a dramatic increase in both governmental and public interest in education, with the state adopting a far more active role in educational planning. The 1958 White Paper on Economic Expansion led to the first economic programme and the country began to plan for economic development. The attitudinal change saw economists now emphasising education as an economic investment rather than a consumer service.[274] Expanding links with international bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development also provided added insights into future planning needs and comparative indices to evaluate the Irish education system.

One of the major policy initiatives to result from this activity was the introduction of free second-level education in 1967. This provided a gateway for social progression through education for many. State investment increased greatly to accommodate these new demands. The greatly increased number of teachers needed to cater for the expanded number of pupils also led to a decline in the number of religious in the overall teaching body.[275] This period coincided with the changes following Vatican II and the decline in vocations. Parental involvement was also enhanced following the establishment of management boards in 1975.

The latter decades of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century have also seen major change and expansion in the educational landscape. The perception of education as an economic investment has continued, and there has been greater

---

273 Coolahan, *Irish Education: History and Structure*, 43.

274 *Ibid.*, 131.

275 *Ibid.*, 137.

evidence of long-term planning for future educational needs, such as the 1994 National Education Convention Report.[276] Reflecting the more diverse nature of Irish society, recent years have seen a continuation of active state involvement in education, and moves to promote greater models of diversity in school patronage. This coincides with the gradual disappearance of teaching religious congregations from active management of their schools. The Presentation schools in Waterford reflect this trend, and this process was completed when the convent building itself was sold in 2005.

3.4.6 Convent education

For the founders of Irish religious congregations such as Nano Nagle, education was the central plank of their philanthropy, a commitment reinforced by church teaching to propagate the Gospel in their work.[277] In tandem with the construction of convent buildings, therefore, was the building of schools- initially a primary school and later, a secondary school. For the Presentation Order, a school tended to open as soon as was practically possible, even on a temporary basis. In some cases, they took over the management of an existing school, while in others such as Waterford, they opened new enterprises.[278] The *Constitutions* also decreed that schools be built as close to the convent as possible.[279]

Drawing on the reports of the Commissioners of National Education, Fahey has observed that convent schools received regular positive evaluations from inspectors during the nineteenth century.[280] As their numbers increased, convent schools, and by extension

---

276 *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education*, 1994.

277 Fahey, "Nuns in the Catholic Church," 17.

278 Nowlan-Roebuck, "Sisters as Teachers," 85.

279 Consedine, *Listening Journey*, 407.

280 Fahey, "Nuns in the Catholic Church," 20-23.

teaching nuns, gradually obtained an image of themselves as cornerstones of popular education in Ireland. They were frequently better equipped and of architecturally better quality than the normal parish building, reflecting the greater level of voluntary aid for their day-to-day running costs. Nuns' financial vitality was matched by their social and cultural solidity.[281] Thus we find frequent references in inspection reports to the various accomplishments of the nuns themselves, and to their own education, modesty and manners, which were no doubt an attraction to parents seeking an appropriate education for their daughters. Of particular note were subjects such as French, drawing, painting and music. Such comments reflect the value attached by both school authorities and society at large to these accomplishments, which in turn is a reflection of prevailing ideologies of class and gender.

Inspectors were favourably impressed both by the nuns' level of educational attainment and their moralising influence on the lower classes, not only in their contribution to mass literacy but also to the moral instruction of the poor and unruly. Fahey concludes that, by the time of the Powis Commission, there was an unspoken acknowledgement of the superiority of convent schools over national schools.[282] At the same time, this was expressed in financial terms, value for money, and in moral terms, because of their 'civilising 'work among the unruly. Nuns were admired for their submission and hard work, but they posed no threat to the system as a whole. They did not challenge authority or adopt nationalist leanings, unlike the Christian Brothers, for instance. Neither did they challenge the underlying causes of the social problems they encountered, nor promote the cause of female education beyond primary level. Finally, the convent curriculum reflected the narrow range of subjects considered suitable for females at the time, with an emphasis on literacy, the arts

281 *Ibid*., 20.

282 *Ibid.,* 23.

and a certain number of vocational subjects that reflected prevailing conceptions of women's role in society and prevailing ideologies of gender and class.

3.5 Conclusion

In social, economic and political terms, eighteenth century Ireland was a country dominated by the effects of the Penal Laws. Restrictions on education and access to the professions for non-Anglicans, combined with an institutionally weak Catholic Church, led to significant levels of poverty and distress among the Catholic majority of the population. Motivated by a strong religious impulse and possessing the financial resources to address these needs, philanthropists across all denominations engaged in charitable activities, and women were particularly involved in setting up, managing and funding associations across a wide range of areas. Their efforts reflected prevailing notions of religion, gender and social class, and some of these women went on to found religious congregations of their own.

This work continued and developed into the nineteenth century. Political events such as the Act of Union, the gradual repeal of the Penal Laws and Catholic Emancipation were positive developments, and an affluent Catholic middle-class soon developed. For the majority of the population, however, life as a tenant was insecure and there was a heavy reliance on the potato as the staple food crop. The tragedy of the Great Famine highlighted this dependence, with the poorer labouring classes being most impacted. The subsequent rise in urbanisation, with large numbers migrating to the major cities and towns in search of work, ultimately led to the creation of slums, and this in turn increased the demands on philanthropic efforts to alleviate distress and need.

The nineteenth century also saw Catholic philanthropic work in particular become the preserve of religious congregations. This reflected a hierarchical Church that became more organised, self-confident and assertive as the century progressed, and lay female philanthropists were encouraged to hand over the management of their enterprises to religious congregations. In pragmatic terms, it also made sense- they had the personnel and resources to ensure their continuation into the future. By the end of the century, female religious congregations had a virtual monopoly of the major areas of social care. By comparison, their non-Catholic sisters appear to have enjoyed greater freedom of action.

As one of those involved in this wider philanthropic effort, Nano Nagle founded the Presentation Order in 1775, the first native religious congregation established since Norman times and one devoted primarily to female education. The expansion of Presentation schools during the nineteenth century followed many of the trends above, and the Waterford foundation was one of the first houses to be established outside of Cork City. Its history reflects much of Irish educational history, during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and typified convent education during this period. With the fall in vocations to religious life, the community decreased steadily in number, and in 2005 the convent building was sold, marking the end of the physical presence of the Presentation community in the city. To date, there has been little qualitative research conducted on this site of human activity. Available archival material echoes many of the criticisms expressed at the beginning of this chapter, being primarily descriptive and hagiographical. The second part of the thesis seeks to address this deficit, by giving voice to those with an intimate knowledge of life both as women religious and as teachers, together with those who taught with, and were taught by, them.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACHES

"How people remember their past is always grounded in their experience, but how they frame their remembrances often depends on the social context."[283]

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was a convent and adjoining primary school in the southeast of Ireland. When the convent closed in 2005, it marked the end of a Presentation presence in Waterford which had begun in 1798. The material gathered following the closure was archived in a secure location elsewhere in the county pending removal to a permanent location in southern Ireland. An examination of this material, together with material from other private and public archives, has been summarised in Chapter 2. However, it also revealed that the voices and experiences of those who had lived, worked, taught and been taught there were notably absent. The second part of this work will focus on addressing this deficit, in the form of contemporary oral histories and memories, to bring these voices to life. This chapter outlines in detail why the case study approach was considered the most appropriate research strategy, and how it was conducted. It is comprised of five sections- the justification for using the case study approach, the background to the key research questions, the research design and methodology used to address them, and the limitations of the study itself. Since it relies heavily on the recall of memories, however, one important issue will be addressed first- ethical considerations.

---

283 Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3rd ed., (Maryland and London: Rowman and Littl*efield*, 2015), 64.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

Brenner has correctly noted that protection of those involved in an interview study was a paramount responsibility of the researcher,[284] and this includes anticipating possible ethical dilemmas during the research design. Mertens agrees- ethics should be an intergral part of the research planning and implementation process and not viewed as an afterthought or burden.[285] She outlined general ethical considerations for researchers, which included the need to respect privacy, receive informed consent and both minimise harm and maximise beneficence.[286] However, the constructivist paradigm also included the need to give a balanced representation of views and ontological authenticity.[287] As a study which essentially depended on participant willingness to recall and interpret memories over a long period of time, a number of possible ethical issues were identified early in the process. These included the consequences of placing knowledge of private lives in the public arena, challenges posed by conducting research in a familiar environment, potential participant distress in reliving memories, and finally a concern alluded to by Kvale and Brinkmann: the tension between the pursuit of knowledge and ethics.[288]

Birch *et al.*[289] have noted the consequences of placing private knowledge in the public arena, while Susan Malone's article[290] on conducting research in the home environment also

---

284 Mary E. Brenner, "Interviewing in Educational Research," in *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, eds. Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli, and Patricia. B. Elmore (New York: Routledge, 2006), 361.

285 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 12.

286 *Ibid.*, 11.

287 *Ibid.*, 18.

288 Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews*, 16.

289 Maxine Birch, Tina Miller, Melanie Mauthner, and Julie Jessop, *Ethics in Qualitative Research* (California: Sage Publications, 2002): 1.

brought home the possibility of unintended consequences occurring which could impact on future relations with either colleagues or participants long after the research project was complete. This was especially true in a study relying heavily on recall of past memories and experiences. Many of the participants were known to me personally and professionally, which facilitated a generally high participation rate. The information sheet and personal contacts assisted greatly in assuaging the reluctance expressed from some participants. The issue of possible participant distress was addressed by including contact details for agencies who offer support in this area, while that of the tension between knowledge and ethics was addressed by keeping maximisation of beneficence in mind during the interview process. At certain points, therefore, a decision to omit sensitive disclosures was made. This is indicated at relevant points in the transcripts. Finally, each participant was provided with a copy of the interview after transcription to amend as appropriate, with silence taken as consent. On the other hand, they did not have the right to amend any interpretations in the study.

The research study followed and adhered to the ethical guidelines and protocols as laid down by University College, Cork (SREC). These included ensuring anonymity and confidentiality for all participants, anticipating and providing for possible challenges, the possibility to withdraw at any point, allowing time to reflect, and obtaining informed consent. It also complies with Brenner's assertions of informants' right to make an informed decision to take part, to receive considerate treatment throughout the process and to ensure anonymity and confidentiality throughout.[291] The British Educational Research Association (BERA) issued revised ethical guidelines in 2011,[292] which also emphasise the importance of

---

290 Susan Malone, "Ethics at Home: Informed Consent in Your Own Backyard," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16, no. 6 (2003): 797-815.

291 Brenner, "Interviewing in Educational Research," 361.

292 British Educational Research Association, *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (London: BERA, 2011), 1-11.

principles such as: voluntary informed consent, openness and disclosure, the right to withdraw at any stage, anonymity and confidentiality, and protections in the event of any possible or anticipated detriment during the course of the research.

Submission for ethical approval included an information letter and consent form to be sent to each participant, followed by a period of reflection on whether they wished to participate. Assurances were also given on anonymity and the ability to withdraw at any point in the interview process. In some cases, it entailed a follow-up phone call or visit from either one of the women religious or myself. This had some long-term benefits- a small number of participants expressed initial reluctance but agreed to participate at a later date. Ethical approval was granted in May 2013. A copy of the ethical approval letter, information letter and consent form can be viewed in Appendices 1-3.

4.3 The Case Study Approach

4.3.1 Justification for Using the Case Study Approach

The case study approach, specifically the exploratory case study advocated by Robert K. Yin, was chosen as the most appropriate means of exploring phenomena within the convent and school contexts which lie at the heart of this study. For Yin, its strength lies in its ability to examine, in-depth, a 'case' within a 'real-life' context.[293] It is particularly appropriate when addressing 'how' and 'why' questions, since case studies "... deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidences."[294] It is also preferred when examining contemporary events, when behaviours cannot be manipulated, and for contexts where the boundaries are not clear between

---

293 Robert K. Yin, "Case Study Methods," in *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, eds. Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli, and Patricia. B. Elmore (New York: Routledge, 2006), 111.

294 Yin, *Case Study Research*, 6.

phenomenon and context.[295] It is also consistent with the constructivist paradigm and Grounded Theory principles. Finally, it allows multiple sources of evidence to be used, including interviews of individuals involved in the events.[296] Case study methodology thus facilitates the exploration of phenomena within a given setting, and in the process reveals the complexity of life and experience from a variety of viewpoints, the contextual conditions in which they operate, and the fluid boundaries that may exist between individuals, material culture and contexts.

In this research, the key research questions centre around issues such as how life was experienced within both convent and school settings, how women religious viewed their identity and mission, and why participants chose this form of life. As such, the contextual conditions are highly pertinent to the phenomenon of study.[297] Three participant groups were identified to provide a variety of perspectives, direct actors of past events. Yin also claims that the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence,[298] and this therefore permits the incorporation of the historical and archival material outlined in Chapter 2.

4.3.2 Philosophical Underpinnings

4.3.2.1 Constructivist Paradigm

Donna Mertens states that a paradigm is a way of looking at the world.[299] The constructivist paradigm emphasises that reality is socially constructed, truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective, all meaning is essentially interpretive and therefore multiple

---

295 Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 4 (2008): 545.

296 Yin, *Case Study Research*, 8.

297 *Ibid.*, 13.

298 *Ibid.*, 8.

299 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 7.

realities can exist in the minds of participants. Advocates of the case study approach also adhere to this paradigmatic stance.[300] For Kvale and Brinkmann, the research interview is an inter-view,[301] where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between interviewer and interviewee, or an interchange between two people conducting a conversation on a subject of mutual interest. Differing realities can be constructed and interpreted among participants. As Richardson and St. Pierre observed: "Experience and memory are, thus, open to contradictory interpretations governed by social interests and prevailing discourses."[302] It is also consistent with social constructivist principles which emphasise the involvement of agents within a social context, and the inevitable multiple constructions of meaning this entails.[303] While each participant's recollections will be respected as a genuine reflection of their lived experience, the research acknowledges from the outset that these interpretations could contradict each other.

These multiple constructions of reality are not the preserve of social agents. Mertens has also noted that constructivism extends equally to historians interpreting historical documents, attempting to understand meaning in the social, cultural and historical context of the time.[304] Although it entails dealing with a large volume of data, the blend of archival and qualitative material allows for a variety of perspectives which lies at the heart of this research project. Being fortunate to have had access to archival material allows this duality of data

---

300 Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 545.

301 Steiner Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed., (California: Sage Publications, 2009), 2.

302 Richardson and Adams St. Pierre, "Writing: A Method of Inquiry," 961-962.

303 Anthony G. Tuckett, "Applying Thematic Analysis Theory to Practice: A Researcher's Experience," *Contemporary Nurse* 19, no. 1-2 (2005): 76.

304 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and* Psychology, 16.

collection, generating both oral and written data. This in turn facilitates a degree of triangulation in support of the realities as constructed by participants.

4.3.2.2 Ontological Orientation

Ontologically, constructivism emphasises reality as a social construct.[305] As a continually active process, both researcher and participant are engaged in an ongoing, ever-changing exercise of meaning-making. Indeed, Mertens has alluded to the possibility that perceptions of reality can change over the course of the study.[306] Mertens also contends that important concepts should be allowed to emerge from the realities as constructed by the participants themselves.[307] The core interview group in this study consisted of the former women religious: many of the emerging themes, concepts and claims were either confirmed, reinterpreted or on occasions contradicted by the other two participant groups. As a case study which relied heavily on memory and recall of participants' lived experience, the realities being described in this project sought to capture one individual social setting, and multiple interpretations of reality were therefore possible. The case study approach emphasises the use of a variety of data sources which may assist in resolving such contradictions.

4.3.2.3 Epistemological Stance

Epistemology refers to the relationship between participant and researcher, or as Mertens has described it, the knower and would-be known.[308] As an interactive process, engaged in a mutual effort of reality construction, both parties influence each other in their

---

305 *Ibid.*, 18.

306 *Ibid.*

307 *Ibid.*

308 *Ibid.*, 11.

interactions. Epistemologically, therefore, I have taken a constructivist approach in seeking a more personal method of data collection in an effort to confirm these realities. During the interviews, every effort was made both to put participants at ease, and to encourage a relationship of equals. The participant voice was at all times considered the most important element of the exercise, and to that end, while conscious of the interactive nature of the process, participants were encouraged to speak freely, with as little intervention as possible from the researcher. The use of grounded theory methods of data analysis facilitated the emergence of themes from the data itself. Consistent with the principles underlying the case study approach, a variety of data sources was used to establish trustworthiness and confirmability. This material was then used either to support or challenge. The quotations from multiple participants within a specific group, together with quotations from participants in other groups, add an additional element of triangulation.

4.3.2.4 General Principles

As a case study rooted in one physical location, this research sought to ascertain how life was experienced by a group of former teaching women religious, former lay colleagues and former pupils bounded in one urban convent and school setting, and to determine if there were features and claims common to all accounts. As such, findings emerging from this study were specific only to this social space, and were not necessarily replicated in other similar institutions. Thus, there is no claim that the findings are generalisable beyond the case study in question.

Conscious of the constructivist paradigmatic stance being adopted in the research, each participant was also acknowledged as having constructed their own reality at a given moment in time, which was therefore accorded its own intrinsic value. The totality of these realities gave a more nuanced understanding of how both school and convent life were

perceived and experienced by participants. By its very nature, memory and reminiscence impose conflicting interpretations of the same experience. My interpretation of these experiences as recounted during the interviews, therefore, took into account the recognition that they were particular interpretations of a past reality at a specific moment in time, and specific to each individual.

4.3.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the convent and adjoining school. It is bound by time since its closure in 2005, and bound by place over its three locations since 1798. However, it is also bound by context- the thesis seeks to understand the phenomenon of how life was experienced in this setting by those directly placed to address the 'how' and 'why' questions which lie at the heart of this process. Finally, it is bound by activities, the nature of which can also assist our understanding of how life was experienced and why this might be so.

4.4 The Key Research Questions/Propositions

4.4.1 Background to the Key Research Questions

The initial starting point for the study was the archival material to which I had access following the closure of the Presentation Convent in Waterford in 2005. It quickly emerged that it was quite descriptive, factual and historiographical in nature. The material was rich, yet gave little or no indication of how life was lived and experienced by those directly impacted by the convent and school settings. Following an examination of this material, a number of research questions soon emerged which formed the core purpose of the study. Briefly they can be summarised as follows:

1. What is known of the history of the Presentation Order in Waterford from 1798 to 2005?

2. How was life lived and experienced in this convent setting?
3. How did convent life and mission impact, if at all, on life as experienced in the adjoining primary school?
4. Is it possible to identify a legacy now that these women are no longer physically present?

These questions have a clear and distinct purpose and focus. They seek to collate existing historical and archival data, to understand convent life as lived by those with direct experience of an enclosed community and its influence on the congregational teaching mission, and to identify a residual legacy from the viewpoint of participants. The first question was addressed in Chapter 2. The remaining three questions ultimately guided the instrument designs, data collection and analysis procedures, and formed the foundation for the conceptual framework which follows.

4.4.2 Addressing the Key Research Questions

To address these questions, participants with direct experience of this social setting were asked to recount memories and recollections of their lives and experiences in the form of an oral history interview using a digital recording device. Yow points out that in-depth interviews enable researchers to give their subjects leeway to answer or not as they choose, attribute meanings to experiences, and to interject topics as required.[309] One group of participants were clearly best placed to address these questions- women religious who had either lived or worked in the convent and adjoining school. Two other participant groups were subsequently identified who had direct and everyday contact with these women religious- former lay teaching colleagues and former pupils. These groups not only widened the population sample but also provided additional perspectives on how life was lived and

309 Yow, *Recording Oral* History, 5.

experienced in the social setting. The qualitative data generated from contemporary oral history interviews, together with material gathered from a variety of archival sources, provided a lens to view convent and school life, to reveal the complexity of life and experience within this social setting.

Having outlined the ethical considerations, the key research questions and research philosophy, the next section will outline the research design.

4.5 Research Design

4.5.1 Data Sources

4.5.1.1 Archival Data Sources

The case study approach is characterised by the use of a variety of data sources, which not only provides a greater corpus of data but also enhances data credibility.[310] Chapter 2 summarised the archival material, to which I had access following the closure of the Presentation Convent in Waterford in 2005. Other sources include the *1850 Directory for the Presentation Order* which, although written many years after her death, reflects many of Nano Nagle's principles of education, together with prescribing in detail the rules and regulations intended for religious life. It is used at various points throughout the analysis chapters for illustrative purposes. Within the school itself, copies of inspectors' reports from the Commissioners of National Education and, after 1922 the Department of Education, detail assessments of school performance, attendance and teacher effectiveness. Together with the observations and recollections of participants, they facilitated one of the principal sources of triangulation referred to earlier. They also provide useful insights into the prevailing political imperatives of their time. They are particularly relevant when addressing the third big research question, that of legacy, which will be dealt with in a later chapter.

---

310 Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 554.

Archives consulted included the Presentation archives in George's Hill, Dublin, those in the South Presentation centre in Cork City, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Irish Architectural Archive, also in Dublin. Material from the George's Hill archives included the annals of the Waterford convent and the Reception and Profession register dating back to 1798, which contained entry and profession details, together with the family backgrounds of all those associated with the Waterford foundation. The South Presentation annals contained details of the early years of the Waterford foundation, and the interest shown by the Cork community in its progress and development. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London holds Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin's diaries in its archives, and these show his remarkable attention to detail, while the architectural archive contained much useful architectural information on Pugin himself, and the Waterford building.

Finally, historical and archival material was sourced from both the National Library and the National Archives in Dublin, in the form of correspondence between the National Board of Education and school authorities, accounts of grants paid, school attendance and compliance with regulations. This material is documented in more detail in the bibliography.

4.5.1.2 Quantitative Data Sources

The archival material was complemented by a small corpus of quantitative material sourced from census records and account books. Primarily statistical, it nonetheless provides a useful guide to such aspects as tracing the growth of the convent in terms of numbers in the community, or evaluating the financial needs of running and managing an enclosed community and school. Mertens has observed that such data sources can be used by historians to provide a general context for a period in history.[311] The quantitative data also

311 *Ibid.*, 271.

provides a source of credibility and trustworthiness which are key features of the case study approach.

4.5.1.3 Visual Illustrations

Prosser noted that we use images not only as representations of the objective world in the form of material culture, but also to communicate our deepest feelings. Taken cumulatively, they are 'signifiers of a culture.'[312] Complementing, and interspersed throughout the written text are a number of visual illustrations, in the form of maps, photographs, and photographic copies of important documents. They illustrate, and give a visual aspect to, the written text, thereby enhancing the aesthetic nature of the thesis. They are also consistent with the case study approach, where they assist the researcher in describing and understanding the context of the phenomenon being studied.[313] Becker claimed that photographs, like all cultural objects, get meaning from their context.[314] Accordingly, a number have been used for symbolic and interpretive purposes, such as the communal areas within the convent. The visual images of the convent chapel, for instance, illustrate the segregated spaces allocated to individuals, and their distribution within them. This in turn assists our understanding of how life was lived and experienced within the convent environment.

4.5.1.4 Articles, Journals, Newspapers, Letters, Reports and Theses

Other qualitative data sources used in this research included an extensive number of scholarly articles from educational and historical journals. Many were used as part of the

---

312 Jon Prosser, *Image-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 1.

313 Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 554.

314 Howard S. Becker, "Visual Sociology, Documentary Photography, and Photojournalism: It's (Almost) All a Matter of Context," in *Image-Based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*, ed. Jon Prosser (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 88.

historical background and literature review processes. They were supplemented by references in contemporary local newspapers from Waterford, and reports from educational authorities following school visits and inspections.

However, to address fully the three key research questions or propositions at the centre of this study, the voices of relevant participants needed to be heard. For some, the requirement of enclosure had made this virtually impossible for many years. This study sought to give these women, and other participants, an opportunity for their voice and experience to be heard, and in the process bring this reality to life. The oral history interview was chosen as the most appropriate methodological tool to address this deficit.

4.6 Research Methodology

4.6.1 Choice of Methodological Tool: The Oral History Interview

4.6.1.1 Definition of Oral History

Oral history complements the historical and archival research noted in Chapter 2. What is oral history? As a working definition, I propose to use that suggested by Valerie Raleigh Yow: "Oral history is the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form with purposes beyond the recording itself."[315] Essentially it is, to quote Stacey, cultural construction, both of the self and the other,[316] while Linda Shopes emphasises the collecting and interpreting of human memories to foster knowledge and human dignity.[317] Bearing in mind the ethical aspects of these definitions, I propose to define oral history as simply the

---

315 *Ibid.*, 4.

316 *Ibid.*, 1.

317 Linda Shopes, "Oral History," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (California: Sage Publications, 2011), 451.

digital recording of a one-to-one interview to address the three key questions which form the qualitative core of the study.

Having decided on methodology, the researcher is immediately confronted with the issue of subjectivity and bias, both from the questions posed and the responses received. From the outset, it is acknowledged that, since it will be the researcher who poses the questions and areas to be considered for discussion, there will inevitably be a certain degree of bias in the setting of the questions. Yow has noted that much historical data, such as documents, letters and written accounts, are themselves frequently written from a certain degree of subjective bias, while census data and other quantitative sources can often be suspect.[318] A critical eye also needs to be kept on the responses we receive. Because we are studying human behaviour, we cannot be certain of the conclusions we make. We begin, therefore, from a point where a certain number of admissions are made in advance. It is stated from the outset that the guiding questions at the heart of the oral history interview contain a certain degree of subjectivity and bias, but measured in terms of addressing the questions that require to be answered. The qualitative data from these interviews was analysed and interpreted to reflect the views and opinions of respondents as fully and as accurately as possible. The final document is thus a product of these subjectivities between interviewer and interviewee.

4.6.1.2 Characteristics of Oral History

The oral history interview enables us to see the topic of research in terms of actual experience.[319] As such, it is essentially inductive, with a series of variables being considered as interrelated and interwoven in the tapestry of the life context. The oral history interview

---

318 Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 5-6.

319 *Ibid.*, 10.

facilitates the probing of motivations behind factual data. It enables the researcher to give the participant space and time to describe events, to attribute meanings to experiences, and introduce new topics as they see fit. Thus it has a flexibility and freedom that can frequently lead to new areas of interest and discussion, which can in turn lead to new and potentially fruitful avenues of inquiry.

It provides those not usually asked questions an opportunity to speak, describing daily life at home and at work, thereby enriching our understanding of the lives of all groups in society. It is a means of understanding informants' lives and lived experience, as noted by Guba and Lincoln,[320] which in turn echo Brenner's contention that the open-ended interview has as its intent understanding informants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their lives and experiences.[321] It is, to quote Casey,[322] an attempt to understand how humans make meanings through language. It is also an attempt to understand power relationships, how things got to be the way they are, or in this case, how they were. The emphasis is therefore very much on the past. However, since it also includes interviews with living people, there is equally a sense of the present in terms of assisting our understanding of the past. This additional element of human agency is one that was noted by Casey in the latter decades of the last century, since it allows ordinary people to create free spaces in a new and current world.[323] Perhaps most importantly, the life stories themselves reveal a group's collective memory and indicate embedded values in that culture.[324]

---

320 E. G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," in *The SAGE Book of Qualitative Research*, eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2005).

321 Mary E. Brenner, "Interviewing in Educational Research," in *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, eds. Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 357.

322 Kathleen Casey, "The New Narrative Research in Education," *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 21 (1995-1996): 212.

323 *Ibid.*, 214.

In many ways oral history is close to the basic principle of grounded theory, with its emphasis on thick description from as large a number of testimonies as possible. Oral historians, however, place greater emphasis on the formation of questions that guide the research, and also differ from some proponents of grounded theory who insist on approaching the research without preconceptions or hypotheses.[325] Indeed, it is arguable to what degree these can be observed rigidly. Following consultation with potential participants themselves, this research proposes to adopt the approach that a certain number of guiding questions would be provided in advance, but that the resulting interview itself would be as open-ended as possible.

4.6.1.3 Roles of Interviewer and Narrator

In his 1991 work *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, Alessandro Portelli observes that in oral history, the interviewer should always remember that they are interviewing not 'oral sources' but people,[326] and of course every culture has a strong narrative tradition. Indeed, telling and storytelling have for centuries been a constant human impulse for people of every race and creed. Oral history therefore places the interviewee/narrator at the centre of the interview process. As the person who knows most about their life stories and communities, the interviewee has an in-depth knowledge of their circumstances unknown to many others. The interviewer is therefore in a sense the ignorant party attempting to understand and make sense of the life history the interviewee is agreeing to share, arguably placing the latter in a superior position of power.

---

324 Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 15.

325 *Ibid.*, 8.

326 Dr. Sean *Field*, "Oral History Methodology," (SEPHIS Workshops in Vietnam and Philippines, University of Cape Town, South Africa, 2007): 1.

Nonetheless, it is not a completely unequal relationship since, to quote Portelli again, the oral historian is both a detective and psychoanalyst on one hand and literary critic and historian on the other.[327] The object of this interaction is to create what Michael Frisch has defined as a "shared authority,"[328] with the two parties actively engaged in the construction and creation of a worthwhile document. In turn, these documents will serve as a direct testimony of what life was like at a specific time period in our history and of use to future generations who may have an interest in this area.

4.6.1.4 Memory as a Lived Process

For oral historians, memory is a vital concern. The narrator is asked to remember, reflect, explain and convey details of times past, constructing narratives while we as interviewer listen, probe and interpret. Memory here is considered as a lived process, where participants make sense of time and their experience of it. For the participants in this study, memory is used to illuminate everyday life both in the convent and school, and is determined by their own conceptualisation of what they remember. In the process, they reflect and evaluate on the past, and endow this work with meaningful insights into a way of life that is rapidly disappearing. While not all memories are positive- negative memories can engender as much emotion as the happy ones- nevertheless, it is memory that helps us construct the narrative of the individual concerned, the construction of an identity of self. It is part of our very being since childhood and formed in the multiple interactions of daily life over many decades.

In a study relying heavily on memory, and aside from the ethical considerations outlined earlier, one of the prime concerns was the degree of reliability and selectivity of the

---

327 Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 2.

328 *Ibid.*, 2.

memory process. As the source of information in the past, memory produces the oral testimony that is the basis of oral historian's work.[329] It is therefore of prime importance that oral history evidence is both reliable and trustworthy. Yow contends that, if the oral history document is approached critically, memory is both fallible and trustworthy.[330] The brain encodes what it is meaningful and affective, which can induce either positive or negative emotions. However, she also notes that, while details of events may be missing or contain errors, the overall account remains accurate over time.[331] Events in which narrators participate themselves will also be recalled with greater detail, as will events in which there were high levels of mental activity and emotional involvement.[332] Feelings are usually consistent within an individual's testimony, as are the meanings we attribute to memories over decades of a life.

Memory can also be influenced by mood or emotional state. Yow shows that when people were feeling happy, they tended to recall good-feeling memories.[333] In this study, a small number of participants recalled overall negative school experiences. Gender, too, can impact what is remembered, since researchers have found that women's memories of feelings around events tend to be articulated in greater detail than men's.[334] Remembering in an in-depth interview takes place in a retrieval context, and therefore it is important to create an easy relationship between interviewer and narrator. This in turn leads to a positive relationship and a productive retrieval environment.

---

329 *Ibid.*, 42.

330 *Ibid.*, 42.

331 *Ibid.*, 48.

332 *Ibid.*, 57.

333 *Ibid.*, 51.

334 *Ibid.*, 56.

The case study was guided by the three key research questions outlined above, and these ultimately guided the instrument design, data collection and analysis. As Lauckner remarks at the beginning of her study, they acted as points of departure rather than predetermined destinations.[335] They also provided the foundation for the conceptual framework. This section will detail how participants were selected and recruited, indicate the questions which guided each interview group, and where interviews took place.

4.6.2 Research Participants: Selection and Recruitment

Three participant groups were identified who were best placed to address the big research questions at the heart of this project: former teaching women religious,[336] former lay teaching colleagues and former pupils. In order to give a voice to both teaching and non-teaching sisters within the convent, participation from both groups was preferable and desirable. However, this was not possible, since there were no surviving lay sisters for a number of years prior to designing the study. Only former teaching women religious were therefore in a position to participate. In collaboration with a former congregational archivist and the last teaching woman religious in the school, a list of prospective participants, i.e. teaching women religious who had spent time in both the convent and school, was compiled. Not all participants within this cohort entered in Waterford, since the reorganisation of communities in the latter decades of the twentieth century had led to women religious moving between houses in the administrative provinces. Table 3 below indicates the participants to whom this proviso applies. In 2005, the convent was sold and the remaining nuns relocated to other parts of the region. In addition, in common with the majority of religious orders, the age

---

335 Heidi Lauckner, Margo Paterson, and Terry Krupa, "Using Constructivist Case Study Methodology to Understand Community Development Processes: Proposed Methodological Questions to Guide the Research Process," *The Qualitative Report* 17, no. 13 (2012): 8.

336 All those in Group 1 had been both women religious and teachers. However, at the time of interview, none were currently teaching, being either retired or engaged in other work. For this reason, they are referred to as 'former teaching women religious.'

profile of participants was relatively high. The combination of these factors meant that the pool of prospective participants was limited.

Table 3: Details of Group 1 participants

Interviewee Pseudonym and Year of Birth	Location of entry	Years spent in Waterford convent	Length of interview
Annemarie (1931)	Waterford	1948-1977 and 1983-1996	1:28:22 and 45:41
Caroline (1950)	*Wexford	1979-1990	41:56 and 1:09:07
Pauline (1932)	Waterford	1950-2005	44:08
Carmel (1931)	Waterford	1949-2005	1:00:41
Mary (1938)	*Thurles	1976-1977 and 1991-1999	1:07:51
Annabel (1948)	Waterford	1973-1983	1:13:43
Monica (1946)	Waterford	1963-1994/5	47:52
Isobel (1944)	Waterford	1957-1983[337]	50:58
Rachel (1933)	Waterford	1960-1972	1:13:45
Valerie (1949)	*Dungarvan	1968-1969 and 1973-1974	40:04
Brenda (1934)	Waterford	1956-2005	1: 14: 29
*did not enter in Waterford			Total: 12:57:33

Prospective participants were subsequently approached on an individual basis, either in person or by telephone, personally or by one of the two women religious above. In the latter cases, where an approach was made by either of the two women religious, contact details were obtained which I subsequently followed up on an individual basis. One participant was personally known to a former lay teaching colleague, who approached her in person. The project was explained and time was given to each person to reflect. The vast

337 These dates represent the years spent both as a pupil and as a woman religious.

majority readily agreed to take part, with only two declining. Many participants even suggested other possible participants. The personal approach by fellow women religious certainly made a difference to participant numbers. In total, 11 participants were interviewed. Table 3 gives details of participants from Group 1.

The second group of participants were both more straightforward and more numerous in terms of selection.

Table 4: Details of Group 2 participants

Interviewee Pseudonym and Year of birth	Former pupil Y/N	Year of arrival in Presentation P.S. as teacher	Number of years spent in school	Length of interview
Eleanor (1945)	Yes	1966	3 (pupil) 41 (teacher)	58:31
Ena (1945)	No	1995	13	38:35
Irene (1955)	No	1979	35	47:31
Josephine (1959)	No	1978	36	53:06
Marion (1952)	No	1971	39	1:31:22
Pamela (1951)	No	1972	36	37:13
Orla (1953)	Yes	1972	8 (pupil) 36 (teacher)	1:35:23
Agnes (1950)	Yes	1974	27	1:58:15
Lorna (1950)	No	1970	35	47:59
Karen (1952)	Yes	1972	8 (pupil) 9 (teacher)	1:42:11
Harriet (1956)	No	1977	37	1:02:04
				Total: 12:32:10

There has been a long tradition of teachers spending their entire teaching career in the school, and this has resulted in a considerable corpus of lay teachers with an intimate knowledge of how life was experienced alongside their religious colleagues. Indeed, some

had experienced life in the school as both pupil and later as teacher. At the time of interview, three of this group of participants had retired within the previous six months. Beginning with the most senior teachers, a number were approached personally and the project explained to them, with a view to taking part. The response rate was high, with all agreeing to participate. Eleven interviews were conducted with this group. Table 4 gives a breakdown of Group 2 participants.

The third and final group entailed former pupils of the school, with clearly the largest number of possible participants. The essential criterion was that participants would have been taught at some stage in their primary education cycle by women religious.

Table 5: Details of Group 3 participants

Interviewee Pseudonym	Year of Birth	Years in school	Length of interview
Alana	1964	1968-1976	45:02 and 1:10
Alison	1964	1968-1976	1:03:16
Carol	1966	1970-1978	30:17
*Pascal	1946	1950-1953	22:12
Barbara	1944	1948-1956	38:54
*Michael	1944	1948 (September to December)	36:04
Kirsty	1950	1954-1962	59:07
Margaret	1939	1947-1951	43:57
Sinéad	1940	1947-1951	58:03

*Male participants Total: 6:38:02

However, the number of women religious teaching in the school decreased substantially in the latter years of the twentieth century. A decision was therefore taken to limit participation to those attending school prior to 1980, since this was approximately the period when a

sufficiently large corpus of teaching nuns taught in either the Infant or the Senior school to enable quality data to be collected. Participants were approached who fulfilled these criteria and on the basis of personal recommendation. Prior to the 1970s, the school also accepted boys in the infant classes, but this practice was discontinued following a request from the Department of Education. To enable perceptions of gender to be considered, two former male pupils were included. These are indicated by the asterisk in Table 5 above. A total of nine participants agreed to take part, although since a number of the previous two groups were also former pupils, the actual total is higher. Table 5 therefore gives details of those former pupils who did not subsequently teach in the school.

In total, therefore, thirty-one interviews were conducted, a number Adler and Adler consider a medium size subject pool,[338] generating over thirty-two hours of qualitative material. The issue of an adequate number of interviews for this level of research was one considered in depth. Cognisant of Mertens' recommendations on sample size for grounded theory research,[339] and Adler and Adler's recommendation for a sample of approximately thirty,[340] I considered the thirty-one interviews as appropriate for the study. It provided approximately equal numbers of participants in each group, but more importantly little new data was being generated towards the end of the process, particularly in the case of the third group of participants.

---

338 Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, "The Epistemology of Numbers," in *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research*. National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper, 2012: 9.

339 Kvale and Brinkmann, InterViews, 332.

340 Adler and Adler, "The Epistemology of Numbers," 10.

4.6.3 The Guiding Questions

For all groups, the interview began with a number of general questions, which had as their objective that of putting the participant at ease, and to create what Brenner described as a funnel shape.[341] To that end, therefore, the initial questions tended to be of a general nature: participant background and experiences, early life, etc. It equally gave both interviewer and interviewee the opportunity to relax into the interview process and become less conscious of the digital recorder. Progressing from general to more specific questions also facilitated clarifying responses and probing details if and when this became necessary.

Guiding questions for the first participant group centred on the motivation for joining religious life, the formation process and the rituals of daily life in both convent and school. For the second group, questions included the circumstances surrounding their choice of school, daily school life and experiences, and their memories of working with and for teaching women religious. They were also asked to recall memorable events, discipline within the school and how they described the school atmosphere. Of particular interest with this group were assessments of how they perceived the mission and purpose of both the order and the school, their role in the project, women religious colleagues they would have admired and why, and what they considered to be the essential characteristics of the educational endeavour in which they were engaged.

Guiding questions for the third group of participants included prior knowledge, if any, of the school and congregation, memories of daily school routines, prevailing socioeconomic conditions and how they were addressed, school discipline and memories of women religious as teachers. Finally, both the second and third groups were asked to summarise what they considered the school stood for in a given number of words. This was a specific attempt to

341 Brenner, "Interviewing in Educational Research," 362.

address the fourth, and final, big research question: to establish in concrete terms what legacy, if any, remains in the school today as primary education in Ireland embarks on a new, uncharted journey of changing forms of school patronage. The interview protocols contained in Appendix 5 outline these questions in greater detail.

4.6.4 Interview Locations

In 2005, the convent building was sold and its remaining occupants relocated to other houses and convents. The core group of interviews, those with the former teaching women religious, were therefore conducted in their new locations in various parts of southeast Ireland. Each participant was asked to name a place of her choosing, with the majority opting for their current home or place of residence. These locations ranged from County Waterford to South Tipperary, Kilkenny and Dublin. One participant was interviewed in the school during a visit from Dublin, while another was interviewed during one of her trips home from a European capital city, where she is now based. Table 6 summarises these locations.

Table 6: Interview locations for Group 1 participants

Name of participant(s)	**Interview Location**
Annemarie, Pauline and Carmel	Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
Brenda, Mary	Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
Isobel, Valerie	Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary
Caroline	Waterford City
Annabel	Dublin
Monica	Presentation P. S., Waterford City
Rachel	Kilkenny City

The locations for the second group of participants were generally centred in various parts of Waterford city and county. As the majority were retired at the time of interview, their preferred location was their own home, but others were agreeable to conduct the interview in school itself, as it proved a mutually convenient location. The majority of the third group of interviewees also expressed a preference for their own home, although a greater number within this group preferred a neutral location, such as a guesthouse or their place of work.

4.6.5 Data Collection

4.6.5.1 Data Collection and Storage

Interviews were conducted using two digital voice recorders, simultaneously recording. This ensured that, in the event of one device failing, a back-up was provided for. The initial degree of self-consciousness when using the digital recorder generally disappeared as the interview progressed. Some interviews had to be temporarily paused due to outside interruptions, and this was indicated in the transcripts. The data collected was copied onto my personal computer with a password protection and simultaneously saved to Dropbox, as an additional backup. As provided for under the university ethical guidelines, these recordings will be destroyed after the requisite period of time has passed.

4.6.5.2 The Pilot Study

As a novice interviewer, the pilot study was an invaluable tool in setting out on the qualitative research journey. It gave the opportunity to make the optimum number of errors with the minimum of consequences. Mertens has stated that the purpose of a pilot study is to help provide a framework and research questions.[342] For me, however, it provided a 'trial run' in which I could acclimatise to the presence of a digital recorder and evaluate the interviewing technique employed. Since the core group of interviews were going to be those of the former teaching women religious in the school, I therefore decided to conduct the pilot

342 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Educational Psychology*, 455.

study on two participants from this group. This was done during the month of June 2013. Each interview was carried out at a location of the participant's choosing. It was explained to both women that, following an evaluation of the initial effort, the interview could possibly be repeated, which indeed proved to be the case. I was conscious of the need to balance participant voice with the need to ask clarifying or probing questions at appropriate points in the process. Accordingly, the pilot study was repeated, with the consent of both participants, but no significant changes in approach appeared necessary.

Conscious of Mertens' description of an interactive process between interviewer and narrator,[343] conducting the pilot study was useful in a number of respects. It enabled me to get comfortable with the open-ended, semi-structured interview format, together with the operation of a digital recorder. It also enabled me to become comfortable with the questions in the interview protocol itself and evaluate their appropriateness for the targeted interviewees.[344] Finally, it helped me become more sensitive to judging moments which required intervention compared to moments where it was considered preferable to allow participants the freedom to express themselves freely. In summary, the reflective nature of the exercise was, I felt, very beneficial in terms of self-awareness and self-criticism.

4.6.5.3 Data Volume

The volume of data collected from the interviews is described in Tables 4-6 above. There was a wide disparity in interview length. Some lasted for approximately half an hour, while others lasted up to two hours. Generally, however, they tended to last on average between forty-five and sixty minutes. This was, of course, reflective of the degree and nature of memory and recall, and perhaps also of the character of the individuals concerned.

---

343 *Ibid.*, 19.

344 Brenner, "Interviewing in Educational Research," 366.

4.6.5.4 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted at a time and location of the participant's choosing, with the format as unstructured as possible.[345] While the guiding questions were given in advance to participants, it was emphasised at that outset that they were to be considered as guiding prompts, thought-provoking in nature rather than a series to be followed rigidly. To that end, and echoing Brenner, every effort was made to ensure that the participant spoke more than the interviewer.[346] Each interview opened with what would be described as a grand tour or descriptive question, designed both to put the participant at ease by describing the familiar, and to elicit something of the life experience and background of each individual. Conscious again of Brenner's admonition in the use of closed questions,[347] these were kept to a minimum, with interventions generally made to extend and clarify responses given. Occasionally, this led to directions being taken which were not initially envisaged.

4.6.6 Data Analysis

Consistent with the case study approach, data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently. This is also consistent with grounded theory techniques, as outlined in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss,[348] and subsequently adapted and modified by researchers such as Kathy Charmaz. However, having read some preliminary literature on what this entailed on a practical level, it soon became clear that some adaptation to that envisaged by Glaser and Strauss was necessary. An entirely open-ended interview as envisaged by Glaser and Strauss was not considered suitable for this study. This was reinforced by the response of

---

345 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 370.

346 Brenner, "Interviewing in Educational Research," 363.

347 *Ibid.*, 364.

348 Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.

potential participants themselves. The majority were more positive in their willingness to take part should they be provided with some guiding questions in advance. Hence a schedule was drawn up for each group which, while not consistently followed sequentially, nevertheless addressed in broad terms the big questions at the heart of this study. This fact is noted at this point to outline the caveat attached to the approach taken to data analysis, and in the interests of openness and transparency. At all times the key research questions were to the forefront, specifically how daily life was lived and experienced in both the convent and school settings. The issue of legacy was one I felt would be best addressed at the latter stages of the research. The following sections outline in greater detail how the analysis of qualitative data was therefore approached and conducted.

4.6.6.1 Transcription of Interviews

The first step in the data analysis process was interview transcription. This was done personally and by hand and involved many hours of painstaking work. Conscious of Duranti's assertion that transcripts have a temporal-historical dimension, in that they are both oriented to the past and forward to the future,[349] it was important that they reflect the interview as closely as possible, but in a manner which is useful to help us understand the expressed reality. This, as Duranti points out, may and usually must, involve some degree of selectivity. Striking the balance between accurate reflection and a usable text was therefore to the forefront when embarking on this process.

A principal concern was that of balancing the need to give as accurate an account as possible of the narrator's story with that of utility in recording every single utterance. A restart, for example, could indicate that the narrator was troubled in some way, or

[349] Alessandro Duranti, "Transcripts, Like Shadows on a Wall," *Mind, Culture and Activity* 13, no. 4 (2006): 302.

alternatively was merely rephrasing a thought or recalled event. Yow notes in her advice regarding transcription that sufficient information should be provided to indicate speech patterns, but not so much that the reader becomes exhausted.[350] As a result, I made the decision to include some examples of normal speech patterns early in the interview, but omit them later since I felt they were irrelevant. On the other hand, if there was a degree of doubt or uncertainty, they were included. Transcripts therefore include many examples of an ellipsis, indicating a trailing off or irrelevant utterances, while emphasised words were indicated in bold lettering, particularly if they added meaning and significance to the text. The final text is a balance between the need to reproduce every utterance and the need to produce a readable text. As Kvale and Brinkmann noted, the multiple dimensions of the oral conversations were of less interest than having a readable public story.[351]

Participants were subsequently furnished with a copy of each transcript to amend or approve as they deemed appropriate. It was also explained that, in the absence of any corrections or amendments, silence was taken as consent.

4.6.6.2 Coding of Transcripts

Following transcription, the next step in data analysis was the coding of transcripts. Coding can be defined as asking analytic questions of the data we have gathered,[352] categorising segments of data with a short name that both summarises and accounts for each piece of data.[353] It is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent

350 Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 357.

351 Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews*, 181.

352 Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 42.

353 *Ibid.*, 43.

theory to explain these data. In their 1967 work *The Discovery of Grounded* Theory,[354] Glaser and Strauss emphasised the importance of coding to the analytic process and its dynamic character within that process:

> Joint collection, coding, and analysis of data is the underlying operation. The generation of theory, coupled with the notion of theory as process, requires that all three operations be done together as much as possible. They should blur and intertwine continually, from the beginning of an investigation to its end.[355]

This centrality of simultaneous collection, transcription and coding has been continued and re-emphasised by many of their later followers such as Kathy Charmaz, who reiterates the important role it plays in sticking close to the data.[356] Charmaz also highlights the crucial role this plays in raising an awareness of emerging themes and categories. For those engaged in grounded theory methods, therefore, the process of simultaneous transcription and coding is both dynamic and analytic, and is woven through by another key theoretical element- the constant comparative method. Accordingly, the process of simultaneous transcribing and coding of interview data was adhered to throughout. This is also consistent with the case study approach which emphasises the importance of data convergence to illuminate the case and its context.[357] The various stages within the coding process are outlined below.

4.6.6.2.1 Line by Line Coding

Initial coding was conducted on transcripts using the line-by-line method.[358] As its name suggests, a line or part of a line of written data is given a name or associated idea. Charmaz has noted that it can be particularly useful in outlining ideas that may escape

354 Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, op. cit.

355 *Ibid.*, 43.

356 Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 47.

357 Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 556.

358 Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 50.

attention when reading for a general thematic analysis.[359] Simultaneously, the constant comparative method was used, one of the key concepts of Glaser and Strauss' 1967 theory. Data was compared with data for similarities and differences between individuals or events. This first step in the coding process has as its prime purpose to move towards establishing fit and relevance- the construction of codes and categories that accurately describe participants' lived experience, and the construction of an appropriate analytical framework that describes what is happening and sheds light on the relationships that are at work there.[360]

As an example of how this process was approached, the first research question addressed how convent life was lived and experienced. During transcription, therefore, the line by line descriptions of strict timetables were coded as 'daily life.' To address the second question, the impact of convent life in the adjoining school, lay teachers also recalled timetables of activity, and these were coded likewise. Each transcript was initially coded in this fashion, and Table 7 gives further examples of this first stage in the coding process from the first participant group.

4.6.6.2.2 Focused coding

The second phase in the process was focused coding. These codes tend to be more directed, selective and conceptual,[361] where large amounts of data are sifted and the most frequent earlier codes used. They are developed by comparing data to data, which in turn are compared to the data again, creating conceptual categories. In this way, their adequacy is established and determined. It also allows for movement across interviews and compare and contrast participants' experiences, actions and interpretations.

---

359 *Ibid.*

360 *Ibid.*, 54.

361 *Ibid.*, 57.

A number of participants from the first group, when asked to recall the nature of life within an enclosed community, referred to the rule of silence at meals and the awareness of the position during mealtimes of the convent authorities at the top of the dining-room. In line-by-line coding, this was described as 'awareness of authority structures/of one's place in the community.' In focused coding, however, this was categorised as 'surveillance, checking that silence was being observed.' Other quotations supported this category, such as one where an individual was reprimanded for wanting to speak to lay sisters in the kitchen, even though no one saw her do so. Table 8 gives further examples of this form of coding.

Using focused codes made it possible to synthesise multiple experiences of motivation for joining religious life, how daily life was lived in both convent and school, and how life was experienced. The varying data could in turn be compared to the focused codes for verification of fit and relevance.

4.6.6.2.3 Theoretical coding

The third and final phase of coding is theoretical coding. For Charmaz, this is a sophisticated level of coding that follows the codes selected during focused coding with Glaser defining theoretical codes as specifying possible relationships between categories developed in the focused coding phase.[362] As such, they are integrative, and lead the analysis in a theoretical direction. Although Glaser identified 18 theoretical coding families,[363] those that derive from concepts such as identity, self and culture spoke directly to this research. For example, when ascertaining how convent life was lived and experienced, participants recall being told to go down a particular path during recreation. In line-by-line coding this was described as 'route for novices'. In focused coding this became 'separation of novices from

362 *Ibid.*, 63.

363 *Ibid.*

community,' and in theoretical coding this was linked to forms of power and control. Other codes were gathered to support this theoretical coding family, and this subsequently led the analysis in a theoretical direction. Table 7 gives a sample of the three types of coding from the first group of participants.

Table 7: Samples of coding

Quote	Line by line coding	Focused coding	Theoretical coding
They were facing us down so they could miss nothing. Four of them	Awareness of authority structures/ of one's place in the community	Surveillance, checking that silence being observed	Power- control, panoptic gaze.
The children then were so poor…that awful kind of pallor that goes with undernourishment..	Visual evidence of socioeconomic deprivation	Struggle of daily life in the face of economic disadvantage	Identity- mission, ethos
Our walk was up and down to the cemetery	Route for novices	Separation of novices from community, space	Power- restrictions in space, distribution of individuals in space
The mission of the community, if you like, was made up of the work of each individual, like, combined into the community effort.	Co-operation, communal effort	Purpose of community- communal greater than individual	Identity- mission, ethos
(They were) always looking out for something that would encourage them, that would kind of be within their scope, and would maybe give them some kind of a lift.	Searching, working from where child was	Boosting self-esteem, enabling, improvement, purpose of education	Care of individual

4.6.6.2.4 Memo-Writing

Memos were written at particular moments during the data collection and data analysis stages. These were used to summarise key ideas, as potential questions to follow up

or ideas that required either clarification or further exploration. One such moment was the reaction of a participant who was recalling her memories of school discipline as a pupil. While recalling the hurt she felt at what considered a belittling comment, she nevertheless followed the remark by a comment that seemed to dismiss its importance, which from her body language was clearly not the case. Yet she repeated a moment later that her overriding memory of that occasion was the humiliation she felt at having the comment made about her. The memo written on that occasion questioned why the spoken utterances did not seem to reflect the emotional hurt she could still recall many years later. Such apparent contradictory remarks made me wonder which reaction was a true reflection of her feelings on this memory- hurt or dismissal of its importance.

4.6.6.2.5 Thematic Analysis

The use of thematic analysis opens up our understanding of what is happening in the qualitative data to hand. Thematic analysis can be described as a commonly used qualitative method to identify, report, and analyse data for the meanings produced in and by people, situations, and events.[364] It functions as a way of seeing, as a way of making sense of data, as a way of analysing qualitative information, as a way of systematically observing a person, interaction, group or culture, and as a way of converting qualitative information into quantitative data.[365] However, the significance of a theme lies not in its frequency but in the consistency of themes across and within participants in the study, and, which is particularly relevant to this study, when findings deepen our understanding of extant knowledge of the subject at the centre of the study.[366] Thematic analysis often relies on the constant

---

364 Jerry Floersch, Jeffrey L. Longhofer, Derrick Kranke and Lisa Townsend, "Integrating Thematic, Grounded Theory and Narrative Analysis: A Case Study of Adolescent Psychotropic Treatment," *Qualitative Social Work* 9, no. 3 (2010): 408.

365 *Ibid.*

366 *Ibid.*

comparative method, which lies at the centre of grounded theory methodology, to establish this consistency.

Themes in this research are used to describe the object of inquiry. Therefore, as noted by Floersch et al., although philosophical paradigms cannot be mixed, data analytical techniques can.[367] From the coding process and thematic analysis, three key analytic themes were soon identified which address the key research questions and which formed the theoretical frame: identity, power and care. Concepts addressed by two relevant theorists, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, will now be outlined in more detail.

4.6.7 Bourdieuian Perspectives

4.6.7.1 The Role of Human Agency

As one of the preeminent sociologists of his day, Pierre Bourdieu sought to understand and explain human behaviour, particularly the relationship between social structures and everyday practices, and this contributed to the debate between subjectivist and objectivist approaches. Subjectivism can be roughly understood as social reality produced through the thoughts, decisions and actions of individual agents, while objectivism can be understood as people's actions being determined by objective social structures such as gender, class and language. Bourdieu's rejection of the subjectivist approach to the explanation of human behaviour was chiefly due to its inability to account for the influence of variables such as objectivist cultural structures. This subjectivist-objectivist split, and Bourdieu's creation of notions such as *field* and *habitus*, were his method of going beyond this dilemma in order to account for individual acts of agency.

---

367 *Ibid.*, 421.

The theme of human agency is one that strongly emerged from the qualitative interviews in this research study. Many of the participants who chose religious life in this study did so in the face of considerable opposition from family members and friends, which in some cases entailed a permanent geographical uprooting, and in others negotiating various obstacles to fulfilling personal goals and ambitions. The determination to overcome such difficulties says much for what must have been the attraction of this way of life. Bourdieu's notions of *field*, *habitus*, *capital* and identity formation may help us to understand why this was so.

4.6.7.2 Bourdieu: *Field* and *Habitus*

Bourdieu's notion of *field* can be loosely understood as a locus of social activity. Within the *field*, certain discourses and activities are produced and authorised as a result of an objective hierarchy of institutions, rules, rituals and titles.[368] This, therefore, makes the *field* a site of power relations and struggles, where individuals seek to maintain or alter the distribution of resources specific to it.[369] In his work *The State Nobility* Bourdieu himself defined the term as follows:

> The *field* of power is a *field* of forces structurally determined by the state of the relations of power among forms of power, or different forms of *capital*. It is also, and inseparably, a *field* of power struggles among the holders of different forms of power, a gaming space in which those agents and institutions possessing enough specific *capital* (economic or cultural *capital* in particular) to be able to occupy the dominant positions within their respective *fields* confront each other using strategies aimed at preserving or transforming these relations of power.[370]

In an interview with Loïc Wacquant published in 1989, he defined it in another way:

---

368 Jen Webb, Tony Schirato and Geoff Danaher, *Understanding Bourdieu* (London and California: Sage Publications, 2002), 21.

369 John B. Thompson, introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Pierre Bourdieu (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 14.

370 Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Lauretta C. Clough, (1989; repr., Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 264.

> I define a *field* as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or *capital*) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the *field*...Each *field* presupposes, and generates by its very functioning, the belief in the value of the stakes it offers.[371]

Despite these struggles for the various forms of power or *capital*, however, all individuals share in common fundamental beliefs and assumptions, representing the value of what is at stake. Communication within the *field* takes place in the form of utterances, linguistic exchanges, which for Bourdieu were also economic exchanges, and represented a symbolic relation of power between a producer and consumer. In other words, "…utterances are not only…signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed."[372]

Habitus, on the other hand, refers to a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in specific ways. They are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable, reflecting the social conditions within which they were acquired.[373] Bourdieu defined the term as follows:

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes...[374]

In providing individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in daily life, *habitus* gives a sense of what is appropriate and what is not. The body becomes the repository of these

---

371 Loïc J. D. Wacquant, "Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 39.

372 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991): 66.

373 Thompson, introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, 12.

374 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.

dispositions, a site of incorporated history, and the source of practices and perceptions which reproduce this history.[375] In the sense of the way we understand our world or cultural context, therefore, knowledge is constructed through *habitus*, it is partly unconscious and it can naturalise cultural rules and values on a class basis. It is indicated in the bearing of the body, '*hexis*', and in deeply ingrained habits of behaviour, feeling and thought.[376]

Bourdieu regarded the world as a multi-dimensional space, differentiated into various autonomous *fields*, within which individuals occupied positions determined by the various quantities of *capital* they possessed. Considered in this light, the *field* at the centre of this study was an enclosed space of social activity, within which religious and educational activities were produced and performed, but also where individuals competed for access to resources and influence. The *field* in question also had mechanisms and regulations specific to it. These were set out clearly in the *1850 Directory*, linguistic utterances in written form, and regulated all aspects of daily life as a woman religious. They included detailed instructions on the wearing of the religious habit, developing a form of bodily *hexis* that was instantly recognisable to outsiders. The agents operating within the *field* brought varying forms and quantities of *capital* to it, and through this lens we can see that the lay sisters, for example, occupied an inferior status within the *field* by virtue of their inferior quantity of both economic and cultural *capital* in the form of educational qualifications, for example. Despite these discrepancies, all agents shared common dispositions and beliefs in the form of a desire to contribute to the community mission. As they moved through the *field* and the formation process, agents absorbed and incorporated the *habitus* which reflected their position within the community. This *habitus* was gendered in nature, developed, inculcated and sedimented over many decades. Enclosure both reinforced the creation of this *habitus*

375 Thompson, introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, 13.

376 Terry Lovell, "Thinking feminism with and against Bourdieu," *Feminist Theory* 1, no. 1 (2000): 12.

and circumscribed it, since it restricted the physical space available to the agents who operated within the *field*.

Lois McNay has noted the predominance of the *field* over *habitus*: "Whereas *habitus* may adapt to the objective demands of the *field*, there is no sense of the countervailing alteration of the *field* by *habitus*."[377] The enclosed nature of the *field* at the centre of this study facilitated this induction, ensuring that outside influences were restricted and controlled, and individuals became inscribed with knowledge and power relations as they moved across the new social context.

4.6.7.3 Bourdieu and Forms of *Capital*

Bourdieu defined *capital* as: "...accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e. exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor."[378] It can be defined as resources, values or attributes that are significant to a particular *field* which then act as a currency within it:

> …the definition of *capital* is very wide for Bourdieu and includes material things (which can have a symbolic value), as well as 'untouchable' but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status and authority.. along with cultural *capital*.. For Bourdieu, *capital* acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended 'to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation.'[379]

Webb *et al.* contend that there is a positive correlation between the amount of power held by a person within a *field*, their position and the amount of *capital* they possess, noting also that

---

377 Lois McNay, "Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation," in *Feminism After Bourdieu*, eds. Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 180.

378 Bourdieu, "The Forms of *Capital*," 81.

379 Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes, *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 1.

positions of power also have the advantage of being able to designate what is considered 'authentic' *capital*.[380]

Bourdieu himself identified three forms of *capital*- economic, social and cultural.[381] For the purposes of this research, particular attention will be paid to economic and cultural *capital*- the monetary resources needed to sustain the convent, and the educational and other cultural resources required to fulfil the educational and pastoral mission that was at the heart of the congregation. However, another, and equally significant, form of *capital* bound these women together- spiritual *capital*, which formed the bedrock of all aspects of religious life. Nonetheless, while spiritual *capital* may have bound them together, the varying quantities of economic and social *capital* were frequently determining factors in one's position within the community.

The history of the early years of the convent at the heart of this study clearly illustrate the importance economic *capital* played in financing the running of both convent and school. With no state funding at their disposal for many years, those who entered religious life had, of necessity, to have sufficient financial resources to be self-supporting and contribute to the expenses involved in the educational mission. As time progressed, women with less economic *capital* were accepted; however, they occupied a lower status and position, reflected in the Rules and regulations for religious life as laid down in the Constitutions. For those women religious who were interviewed for this study, the economic imperative of a dowry had all but disappeared and, as a result, other forms of *capital* became more important, notably educational and cultural *capital*.

---

380 Webb et al., *Understanding Bourdieu*, 23.

381 Bourdieu, "The Forms of *Capital*," 82.

Cultural *capital* includes educational qualifications, and this played a key role in determining whether women proceeded to train as teachers, or be accepted as lay sisters. Many with particular talents, such as music, crafts or drama, recall the interest expressed in these forms of cultural *capital* by Convent superiors, leading to them being encouraged and developed. The reproduction of this form of *capital* within the school was also held in high regard, with inspectoral reports making frequent favourable comments on the high standards of singing, and evidence of strong emphasis placed on performance and participation in many cultural events in both the city and country as a whole.

4.6.7.4 Identity Formation and Intersectionality

The *field* of human activity at the heart of this research study is a convent community, for many years a site of hierarchical and class-based power relations but equally one where dynamic and productive activity could take place. Established principles and practices, developed and adapted over many years, ensured the creation of a gendered, but nonetheless distinctive, *habitus*. Individuals brought varying amounts and forms of *capital* to the *field*, and the intersectionality of the *habitus* with variables such as class, race and age of participant actors combined to create a specific social identity. Shields has noted that identities instantiate social reproduction,[382] although she also claims that these intersections create both oppression and opportunity. Bürkner notes that the intersectionality approach employs an image of humanity with emancipatory potential.[383] This dynamic quality is one which will be drawn on in the chapters to follow, where it will be argued that the space at the centre of this intersection had a productive capacity for agents and actors who operated within it.

---

382 Stephanie A. Shields, "Gender: An Intersectionality Perspective," *Sex Roles* 59, no. 5 (2008): 302.

383 Hans-Joachim Bürkner, "Intersectionality: How Gender Studies Might Inspire the Analysis of Social Inequality among Migrants," *Population, Space and Place* 18, no. 2 (2012): 192.

4.6.8 Foucauldian Perspectives

This section focuses on Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) concepts of technologies of power, the production of docile bodies and the inscription of power in settings confined in both space and time. If we accept Foucault's basic premise that knowledge is never found without power, or power without knowledge, it would seem logical to examine the means by which these are reproduced in particular social settings.

4.6.8.1 The Great Confinement

In his works *Madness and Civilization*[384] and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*,[385] Foucault traced the transformation of medical and penal practices over time: the removal of those deemed mad or insane to an institution named the asylum, and the disappearance of physical punishment as a public spectacle. For the purposes of this research, it is proposed to consider both the convent and school as locations where individuals are separated from public view, and in that sense, comparable to both institutions studied by Foucault above. Both books speak to this notion of separation and being hidden from view; however, Foucault makes clear that this is not necessarily negative or punitive in character. On the contrary- referring to penal practices he asserts:

> …we must show that punitive measures are not simply 'negative' mechanisms that make it possible to repress, to prevent, to exclude, to eliminate; but that they are linked to a whole series of positive and useful effects which it is their task to support...[386]

Likewise, referring to the changes in the treatment of madness and the insane, while acknowledging the physical limitations of individual freedom in the asylum, he contends:

---

384 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, op. cit.

385 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, op. cit.

386 *Ibid*., 24.

> Instead of submitting to a simple negative operation that loosened bonds and delivered one's deepest nature from madness, it must be recognized that one was in the grip of a positive operation that confined madness in a system of rewards and punishments, and included it in the movement of moral consciousness.[387]

This notion of positivity and productivity within a confined space is relevant to the present area of research for the analysis chapters.

Confinement, therefore, whether in a prison or other institution such as an asylum, convent or school, was now a site which facilitated corrective measures and reform of the individual. Ultimately, and in its most perfect form, individuals would in fact monitor and police their own behaviour. In his genealogical study of houses of confinement in eighteenth century France, Foucault emphasised not only the practice of confinement itself, but also the insistence on work. According to Foucault, this was not only an economic imperative but also a moral one:

> …indiscipline and a certain moral 'abeyance' were the essential problem and that labour constituted an appropriate practice through which moral reform and constraint might be realized.[388]

The similarity between the prison or asylum setting as described by Foucault and the convent which is at the heart of this research is quite obvious: a confined space in which the body can be moulded and on which values can be inscribed, and a space which is further facilitated by the rule of enclosure. However, Foucault also emphasises that this is not necessarily negative in nature, but can be productive and dynamic.

4.6.8.2 The Production of Docile Bodies

Discipline and Punish opens with an account of the punishment inflicted on the regicide Damiens' body in 1757, followed by a timetable of activities for those confined in a House of Correction in Paris some eighty years later. This was to illustrate the transformation

---

387 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 237.

388 Barry Smart, *Michel Foucault*, rev. ed. (1985; repr. London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 21.

in penal practices in the intervening period, notably the disappearance of execution as a public spectacle and what Foucault termed 'a slackening of the hold on the body,' or what Smart terms a shift from the body to the 'soul' or 'psyche' as the primary target of punishment.[389] Nonetheless, the body was still subject to the penal process. As Foucault himself puts it: "It is always the body that is at issue- the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission."[390]

Foucault also argued that the classical age discovered the body as both object and target of power.[391] This body was inscribed by rules and regulations, its movements controlled and directed. At the same time, however, it had to be useful and intelligible, hence the binary of economic utility and political obedience. Referring to this binary, Foucault notes:

> These two registers (the anatomico-metaphysical and technico-political) are quite distinct, since it was a question, on the one hand, of submission and use and, on the other, of functioning and explanation: there was a useful body and an intelligible body...(La Mettrie's Man the Machine) is both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of *dressage*, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility', which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.[392]

The techniques introduced during the eighteenth century were remarkable for their scale of control, the object of the control and their modality. Great detail was to be paid to gestures and attitudes, there was an emphasis on economy and efficiency of movements, and constant supervision of the processes of activity were designed to ensure a balance between docility and utility: "The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it

---

389 *Ibid*., 74.

390 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.

391 *Ibid*., 136.

392 *Ibid*.

down and rearranges it...Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies."[393]

Foucault contended that the production of docile bodies entailed the exercise of techniques in minute detail: "Discipline is a political anatomy of detail."[394] This emphasis on detail is reflected in the *1850 Directory*, for instance, which outlined in great detail all aspects of convent and school life for those who comprised the religious community- its technico-political register. Furthermore, an examination of the formation process for new recruits to religious life reflect many aspects described above- the development of gestures of meekness and modesty, attitudes of respect and humility, regulations regarding the religious habit. From the moment of entry, initiates were rearranged and inscribed with the movements and values of their new family.

Alongside this process of producing docility was equally that of utility. New members had a strict timetable to regulate their day- the emphasis was on being productively employed at all times. Again, the *1850 Directory* gave detailed instructions regarding how the day in a religious community was to be organised. Supervision by significant individuals such as the Mistress of Novices ensured that these regulations were followed and respected. The entire process took place in a confined space, further facilitated by the fact that the community functioned in an enclosed setting.

4.6.8.3 Discipline and Distribution in Space

Foucault contended that, in the first instance, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space. This could include enclosure, but in itself is not sufficient. Individuals also need to be located in space, what he termed partitioning: "Each individual has his own

---

393 *Ibid*., 138.

394 *Ibid*., 139.

place; and each place its individual."[395] In this way, individuals could be located, but more importantly, supervised and controlled. The rule of functional sites enabled the designation of specific spaces for specific functions. Finally, discipline is an art of rank, since it "…individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations."[396]

Although he was referring in the main to penal institutions, factories and workshops, many of these concepts can be related directly to the convent model. The separation of the novitiate from the main building, for example, distributed new entrants in a partitioned space. Likewise, the specific functions attributed to areas such as the kitchen and garden created a distance between choir and lay sisters, but also permitted the supervision of contacts, what Foucault called "a meeting-place for forbidden circulations."[397] Thus we find one participant recalling being reprimanded by her Mistress of Novices. She had been reported for having gone into the kitchen area to greet the lay sisters.

4.6.8.4 The Control of Activity

Foucault identified the use of the timetable as one of the principal methods of controlling activity, noting that religious orders had in the past been masters of discipline, specialists of time and the great technicians of rhythm and regular activities.[398] Although allocated in minute detail, covering every aspect of daily life, in itself the timetable was not sufficient. There was also an emphasis on its quality- time had to be useful, the individual had to be productive. To this end, constant supervision was required to ensure that any distraction or disturbance was eliminated: "a time of good quality, throughout which the body is

395 *Ibid*., 143.

396 *Ibid*., 146.

397 *Ibid*., 144.

398 *Ibid*., 150.

constantly applied to its exercise."[399] The correlation of the body and the gesture was also important in this regard: "A disciplined body is the prerequisite of an efficient gesture."[400] At the same time, Foucault distinguished between the negative connotation of the timetable, designed not to waste time, and that of discipline which was essentially productive. The body is therefore subjected to disciplinary techniques and in the process a new object is formed.

For novices in a convent setting, separation in space was part of the reality of their lives. Not only was the novitiate itself separated from the main building, but novices had prescribed spaces within both the convent and its grounds when outside. Many recall vividly the structured timetable which regulated daily life, a timetable that was clearly outlined in the *1850 Directory*. An emphasis on constant activity and the productive use of time characterised this timetable, and many could still recall it in vivid detail many years later. Arguably, therefore, one of the purposes of the formation process was the production of docile bodies within the convent setting- a process overseen and supervised by figures of authority and influence.

4.6.8.5 Surveillance and Supervision

In considering spaces of exclusion and separation, be they from fear of contamination of plagues or diseases such as leprosy, Foucault noted the techniques of supervision and surveillance that developed in parallel with the separated: "the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague give rise."[401] In his analysis of supervision and surveillance Foucault was particularly influenced by, and drew heavily on, Bentham's model of the panopticon, a disciplinary technique developed for use in

399 *Ibid*., 151.

400 *Ibid*., 152.

401 *Ibid*., 199.

prisons during the eighteenth century which consisted of a manned central tower capable of monitoring inmates, but designed in such a manner that they never knew if this was the case. Its major effect was "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."[402] Over time, it was argued, inmates would monitor their behaviour according to desired standards, ultimately negating the need for surveillance: "the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary."[403]

The panopticon relied for its effectiveness on inmates never knowing if they were under surveillance by prison authorities. Power over inmates shifted from the corporal to the non-corporal and, Foucault argued, the greater this shift, the more permanent its effects: "the more it approaches this limit (the non-corporal), the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects."[404] The individual thus becomes inscribed with power relations, often unwittingly, and participates in the process of producing the docile body: "he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."[405]

Unsurprisingly, the panoptic model has been used over the years to illustrate and explain methods of self-surveillance and supervision, not only in prisons but also in schools, factories and hospitals. However, a case can also be made for its inclusion as a surveillance technique in the convent setting. Bentham's model involved an institution closed in upon itself, a laboratory to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals.[406] The convent's enclosed nature facilitated the model of surveillance at the heart

---

402 *Ibid*., 201.

403 *Ibid*., 201.

404 *Ibid*., 203.

405 *Ibid*., 202-203.

406 *Ibid*., 203.

of panopticism, with power not necessarily needing to be vested in one individual. Individuals were inscribed with the principles and practices of the institutional Church and religious congregation, reproducing the power relations that existed during the period in question. Hence, we find participants in this study referring to a conscious awareness of being observed by superiors during mealtimes, and being reprimanded for transgressions by authority figures who were not present during the events in question.

Foucault's insights on power, its nature and reproduction, have been widely used over the years to assist our understanding of social relations in many areas of human activity. The need to watch and control populations was essential to keeping them healthy, active, safe and productive. The techniques designed to produce these docile bodies with the ultimate aim of self-regulation can equally be applied to the social setting at the heart of this research.

4.6.9 Reporting of Data

Baxter and Jack suggest a number of ways of reporting a case study which include telling a story, providing a chronological report, or addressing each proposition or research question.[407] This study proposes to adopt aspects of all three, but with a particular focus on addressing the issues which are contained in the research questions. Chapter 2 outlines the history of the Waterford foundation in chronological form, from its inception in 1798 to the sale and closure of the convent in 2005. The analysis of data from the oral history interviews addresses the remaining three key research questions which formed the core of the case study in the form of thematic analysis. This data will be combined and compared with data from other sources.

---

407 Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 555.

4.6.10 Validity and Trustworthiness

Mertens states that quality indicators for qualitative research are dependent on the approach and purpose of the study,[408] and suggests a number of criteria for judging its quality and validity. Citing Guba and Lincoln, she suggests those of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. This is expanded on by Lauckner who states that for a study to be trustworthy, the findings should accurately describe the phenomenon being studied (credibility), be able to account for variability over time (dependability), give a clear account of data collection and conclusions reached (confirmability) and indicate the likelihood that findings have meaning in other situations (transferability).[409] Baxter and Jack have also outlined a number of basic key elements which can be integrated to enhance overall study quality or trustworthiness. These include providing sufficient detail for readers to assess the credibility of the piece of work, a clear outline of propositions, purposeful sampling strategies, and systematic data collection and analysis.[410]

This study draws on multiple data sources and multiple perspectives, which strengthens the study's credibility, dependability and confirmability. By giving voice to multiple participants, a range of responses is obtained. Collecting and comparing the data allows for convergence of ideas and the confirmation of findings. In the early stages of the data analysis process, transcripts were discussed and reviewed in small group settings during weekend seminars. This afforded me the chance to discuss emerging issues and themes in a supportive environment with experienced and fellow researchers. This triangulation was additional to that of comparing qualitative data from the interviews to existing material from the archival

---

408 Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 255.

409 Lauckner *et al.,* "Using Constructivist Case Study Methodology," 14.

410 Baxter and Jack, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology," 556.

sources. The final strategy employed was ongoing researcher reflection throughout the process.

By contrast, no claims are made in this research regarding transferability. The study centred on one social setting bounded in time and place. It was of intrinsic interest in itself and therefore no claims are made of its transferability to another similar setting.

4.7 Study Limitations

A number of limitations to this study are acknowledged here. The chief limitation was the small pool of possible participants for the core group of interviews. Since the closure and sale of the convent in 2005, the number of women religious who spent time there has been decreasing steadily. This is a function of the reality that each passing year increases the likelihood of fewer women religious being in a position to participate in a study such as this. I was fortunate in the generally positive response to those still in a position to recall these events, but this does not take from the fact that there was a restricted number of possible participants.

Another notable limitation of the study was the lack of input from the other key component group within the convent: the lay sisters. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this research, all surviving lay sisters were deceased before the study began. Their voice cannot and has not been heard, therefore we can only rely on the assertions of their choir sister colleagues and outside observers. Consequently, it has not been possible to either confirm or contradict the data collected during the interviews. As noted from the transcripts, there was little consistency in the accounts given by participants, which, although unsatisfactory from a research viewpoint, was the optimum that can be achieved in the circumstances.

The population from which to draw former lay teaching colleagues and former pupils is also decreasing, although to a lesser degree. The last teaching woman religious retired in 2003, and the majority of teachers who taught at various stages in their teaching careers with religious colleagues, have now retired themselves. With the teaching sister so long a regular and accepted part of the educational landscape, this memory too is fading, and with it the number of teachers who remember what it was like to work in a school managed by a teaching religious order. This also applies, by extension, to the number of former pupils.

Finally, this research focuses on one case study, limited in its claim to reflect the lived experiences of religious and school life of other convents within the same order. It is also limited in time and space, since the reflections of all participants are unable to be contested by others, given that the premises today no longer serves as a convent. Despite these limitations, I hope the study goes some way to providing an accurate reflection of how life was lived in these settings, and a way of life that will soon be no more.

4.8 Conclusion

Arising from an examination of material gathered from public and private archival sources, the voice and experience of relevant social actors in this study was clearly absent. The use of the case study approach, specifically the exploratory case study, was the appropriate tool to address this deficit for a number of reasons. It facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources, addressing the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions which lie at the heart of this research. The oral history interview, conducted with three participant groups, was the methodological tool chosen for this purpose. In a study that relied heavily on memory and recall of past events, ethical safeguards were put in place to minimise harm to all participants. These included informed consent, confidentiality and

anonymity, and the ability to withdraw at any time. Interviews were also conducted at a location of each participant's choosing.

Consistent with case study principles, which also reflect those of grounded theory, data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously. The coding process also followed grounded theory principles, creating data convergence. Strategies for validity include the use of multiple data sources, the involvement of a variety of participants, and a clear outline of the process and its conclusions. There is little likelihood that findings have meaning in other situations, hence there is no claim of transferability. Finally, the limitations of the study itself are outlined and acknowledged.

Following these steps, a number of themes emerged from the analysis of data, specifically identity, power and care. The chapters which follow will discuss these themes in greater detail.

CHAPTER 5: IDENTITY AS MISSION

"The idea that the mission of the community, if you like, was made up of the work of each individual, like, combined into the community effort..."[411]

5.1 Introduction

Identity has been defined as "…a particular form of social representation that mediates the relationship between the individual and the social world…"[412] and that its functions are, among others, to inscribe the person in the social environment and establish relationships with others.[413] By actively participating in the social world, individuals construct a reality about the world and themselves: their identity. Identity formation is itself profoundly embodied. It inhabits the landscape of Bourdieuian *habitus*, and is a product of doing, imitation and correction. The discourses of forms of *capital* used in everyday practices construct individual identities and their positions.

For the women religious participants in this study, theirs was a conscious decision to enter religious life, a way of life at the time which implied the renunciation of most contact with the outside world, and the acceptance of a new way of life governed by rules and practices sedimented over many decades. Many displayed personal agency in their determination to fulfil this ambition, with the agentic self viewed as the subject in charge of her own destiny. They acquired the dress, posture and habits of their new life simply by immersing themselves in the social activity that they were assigned, through the

411 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

412 Xenia Chryssochoou, "Studying identity in social psychology," *Journal of Language and Politics* 2, no. 2 (2003): 225.

413 *Ibid*.

uninterrupted flow of everyday life. As new recruits to a teaching order, the congregational mission of teaching and education was a key component of their new identity. Drawing on Bourdieuian concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*, this chapter explores how the women articulated this attraction to religious life, the formation process itself with particular reference to its outward symbol of the religious habit, and identity within the adjoining school. Finally, significant events in the life of the school will be considered through a Bourdieuian lens.

5.2 Motivation for Entry

For the women religious participants in this study, the rule of enclosure was still in force at the moment of entry. The decision to join a religious community was therefore one which entailed leaving friends, family and their previous identities behind, for an enclosed life governed by practices that had been shaped and reproduced over many decades. The women's decision was one taken with an acceptance that religious life entailed profound change and, for many, total renunciation of family and friends. By denying an attachment to the local *field*, their agency demonstrates a conscious wish to become different from what they were, to distance the selves from where they belonged, and finally to make specific choices. Their expressed motivations for taking this decision were varied, ranging from a strong religious impulse to a desire to participate in the educational mission of the congregation. Nonetheless, they also manifest a strong sense of agency and determination to fulfil their ambitions, frequently in the face of parental or familial opposition.

5.2.1 Religious Impulse

The participants in this study grew up in Ireland when Catholicism was an integral part of Irish family life. Unsurprisingly, therefore, this was a hugely motivating factor in participants' decision to enter religious life. Many recalled the important role played by

religious practice in their homes as children and young women, particularly the rituals of daily Mass, prayer and respect for the clergy, themselves products of prevailing social and historical practices, rituals frequently influenced and inculcated by mothers. From a young age, therefore, they absorbed large amounts of spiritual *capital* from the home, a form of what Bourdieu termed cultural *capital*. This form of *capital*, essential to a religious community, was one which soon combined with the specific *habitus* that were convent practices and rituals. This pre-conscious socialisation was later followed by explicit social, personal, cognitive and affective socialisation.[414]

Mary and Caroline were typical of many respondents in their recollections of the importance religion played in daily life during their youth. Mary spoke of the importance of keeping the fast and regular Mass and confession, while Caroline described her home as traditionally Catholic with the daily recital of the Rosary and other observances, which in turn led her to begin attending daily Mass when she was considering entering:

> Mary: I suppose I came from a very religious family. My mother and father were very religious and I suppose we were reared up very much, you know, you went to Mass and you kept the fast and you went to Confession.[415]
>
> Caroline: Our own background at home, we were brought up Catholic, fairly traditional I suppose, you know, traditionally, we had the Rosary and everything...But I did start going to Mass every day nearly.[416]

Both women in these remarks display an awareness of their pre-existing store of cultural *capital*. The unconscious absorption of this *habitus* was itself the product of practices within the home that pre-disposed them to the requirements of religious life: "The *habitus*, a product

---

414 Lois McNay, "Gender, *Habitus* and the *Field*: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity," *Theory, Culture and Society* 16, no. 1 (1999): 102-103.

415 Interview with Mary.

416 Interview 1 with Caroline.

of history, produces individual and collective practices- more history- in accordance with the schemes generated by history."[417]

By considering her family as 'traditional', Caroline also implies a connection between Catholicism and national identity, one echoed by McKenna in her work with women religious who had worked both at home and abroad.[418] Caroline presents her family's practice of religion in the context of a homogeneous society, where the time-specific practices and rituals gave a regular rhythm to their lives. In terms of the gendered roles, these practices were generally learned from their mothers, but the passing on of the faith was recalled by many participants as also being important to their fathers. Identity and gender were thus a lived social relation, encoded from birth. For both women, these memories formed part of the transmission and reproduction of specific forms of cultural *capital*. Essentially gendered through doing, they formed a gendered *habitus*.

In participant responses, there was no sense of their faith being a burden or a chore. They willingly absorbed the spiritual *capital* they received in the home and, for many, later in school. The totality of these influences shaped their religious identity, and, to some degree at least, predisposed them favourably to considering religious life as a serious and worthwhile life choice. They saw themselves surrounded by friends and neighbours engaged in the same process in the same way. For them, this was a natural, yet organic culture, as natural to them as the environment in which they lived and worked. For the women in this study, the convent environment offered the space within which their specific forms of cultural and social *capital* could be brought, reproduced, and later distributed in both convent and school settings.

---

417 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54.

418 McKenna, *Made Holy*, 46.

5.2.2 Vocation and Calling

Some participants described their motivation to join religious life in terms of a response to a call. Vocations to the religious life at this time were understood as calls from God, to work for God.[419] Responding to this call entailed a conscious decision on the part of each individual. However, for some participants, the response was initially one of resistance. Valerie, for instance, expresses her decision in these terms: "

> I suppose I felt it at the back, when I did my Leaving Cert I went on to the Civil Service and this was at the back of my mind, like, to be, to join, I really didn't want to hear it...But I went up and I went to Dublin...I was up there a week or two and this thing was...annoying me, haunting me. It just wouldn't go out of my head. I kept trying to put it out of my head and I couldn't.[420]

Caroline's recollection, on the other hand, describes her decision as religious life responding to her own spiritual call: "...for a woman religious to deepen my relationship with God. That was one part of it."[421] Bourdieu noted that group dispositions can persist in ways that can be the source of revolt as well as resignation, and while Valerie overcame her initial sense of revolt, Caroline's reaction indicates a greater degree of acceptance and resignation.

Both Valerie and Caroline above express this sense of a personal relationship with God, an individual call that required an answer. This vertical relationship between the individual and God was simultaneously balanced by the desire to participate in a horizontal relationship: the teaching mission of the order. Participants viewed themselves as agents in this mission, possessing the requisite dispositions in terms of *capital* to fulfil it. Their identity is therefore implicit and encoded, with individuals conscious of their decisions and motivations.

---

419 O'Donoghue and Harford, "The conception, construction, and the maintenance of the identity of Roman Catholic female religious teachers," 414.

420 Interview with Valerie.

421 Interview 1 with Caroline.

5.2.3 Participation in Mission

From its inception, the Presentation order was primarily focused on education. Many of the participants in this study had themselves been educated in Presentation schools, and cited the example of teaching women religious as part of their own motivation in joining, together with a desire to be part of this educational endeavour. Although a former pupil who lived quite near the school, Monica's decision was strongly influenced by her wish to teach, while Mary considered the two as synonymous:

> Monica: I suppose I always wanted to teach, that would have been to the forefront of my mind.. I think the example of the Sisters and their dedication, their commitment, would certainly have influenced me.[422]
>
> Mary: I wanted to be a teacher, I wanted to be a Presentation.[423]

From their time as pupils, both Monica and Mary saw the spiritual and vocational aspects of religious life as interlinked and inseparable. They clearly identified with the spiritual and cultural *capital* they had experienced, and expressed a desire to invest their store in the community mission. By virtue of having passed their Leaving Certificate examination, they possessed superior cultural and symbolic *capital* to others within the community, notably the lay sisters. Possession of this certificate, a token of 'social magic', distinguished holders from others within the community and was valued and sought after in a social grouping devoted to teaching and education. It was an emblem that qualified certain positions in their lived worlds.

For Rachel, who had spent a number of years as a lay teacher in the school, her religious vocation was a natural progression from her professional life as a teacher. She identified with the ethos of the order that she witnessed on a daily basis:

---

422 Interview with Monica.

423 Interview with Mary.

> I had been in touch with two other congregations but what I saw in Waterford, I thought it would suit me more...I felt it was a poor place, you know, they were doing what Nano wanted her to do, to teach the poor.[424]

Clearly the professional identity of being a teacher was insufficient for Rachel, and she felt that becoming a professed woman religious would provide the fulfilment that she required. Rachel was in effect reflecting consciously on her own identity, repressing her 'authentic self'. Her exercise of agency is combined here with a sense of admiration for what she witnessed on a daily basis. For Caroline, the professional opportunities offered by religious life, particularly in education, held a distinct appeal when she was deciding which congregation to choose: "Another part, I suppose, to continue the mission of the congregation which was teaching mainly."[425]

Annemarie, however, was the only participant to speak openly of the order's mission and her potential contribution to it:

> The mission of the community, if you like, was made up of the work of each individual, like, combined into the community effort.[426]

Implicit in the above remark is the wish to be an active participant in this community and its communal enterprise. Coming through these accounts and memories is a distinct desire to be part of the mission of the Presentation Sisters, an admiration for the teachers who had taught them as pupils, and a wish to become part of this life and community. There was clearly something that resonated with these women and adds a different aspect of identity, one which suggests dispositions outside the channels of consciousness that extend into corporeal dispositions. A spiritual template was cast over the everyday, and it was this spiritual voice

---

424 Interview with Rachel.

425 Interview 1 with Caroline.

426 Interview 2 with Annemarie.

which motivated this life-changing action. Over time, the spiritual became fossilised in everyday, mundane life.

Close family members often had a greater difficulty in accepting the decision to move from life in the family home to that of a cloistered environment. As a teaching order with a mission to teach and care for the poor, their convents were also frequently found in the less affluent parts of towns and cities, intentionally or otherwise attempting to identify with the area of their school community. Waterford was no exception, and many participants spoke with warmth and admiration of older nuns they would have lived and worked with who directed their efforts to fulfilling the mission of their foundress. The warmest reminiscences were often reserved for those who took a special interest and care in the poor of the surrounding area, which increased exponentially as the city expanded westwards (see Figures 25 and 26).

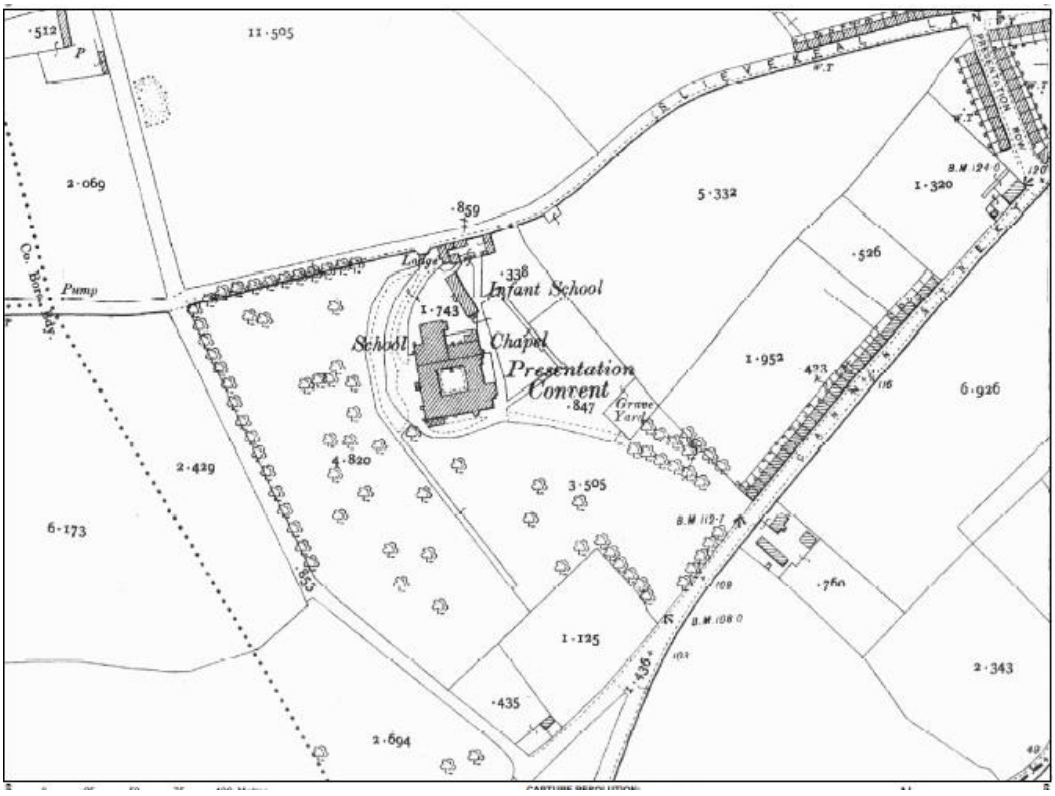


Figure 25: Map of Holy Cross Convent and surrounding area, 1905 (OS, 25 inch Raster, 1:2,500, Waterford, WD009-15, 1905).



Figure 26: Map of Holy Cross convent and surrounding area, 2005 (OS, 2005 Ortho, 1: 5,000, Waterford, 0658610, 2005).

Comments such as "very good to the poor,"[427] "a dedicated woman,"[428] "she looked after everybody,"[429] together with regular references to Nano Nagle herself, attest to the centrality of the founding ethos in everyday convent life.

For many participants, motivation for entry came from a more visible, tangible source- admiration for those who taught them in their everyday lives in school. All the participants in this study had either been educated at some point by women religious and/or subsequently became women religious themselves. As such, they were therefore products of a history and conditionings, products of the *habitus*, an embodied history encompassing cultural and symbolic *capital*. The acquisition of these dispositions marked a particular

427 *Ibid*.

428 Interview with Monica.

429 Interview with Rachel.

gendered identity, but occurred without awareness. The history associated with this community was thus arguably one of second nature for many. As a building constructed over a century earlier, the convent and adjoining school was a landmark in the area. Despite the restrictions of enclosure, the women religious who lived there were a familiar sight in the rituals of daily life. Annemarie's response is typical of this sense of the familiar:

> When I went to school at the Presentation, you would see individual nuns, but you also see the group...And there was something about the fact that they seemed to be so, they seemed to be always very happy. They were also very kind, and they had a great relationship with the pupils...the Presentation nuns, they were, you **saw** them in action, you saw them day by day.[430]

For Annemarie, the positive interaction between agents in the twin *field*s of school and convent grounds had an appealing quality, both at the individual and group levels. For Annabel, too, the familiar seemed to rule out the consideration of any other order: "I suppose you're influenced by what you see or what you know of religious life, and...really they were the only nuns I knew."[431] Valerie also commented on the comfort and security of the familiar: "I suppose these were the nuns I knew or something."[432]

Caroline, having moved as a pupil from a small country school into an urban all-girls' school in an adjoining county, found the initial transition somewhat challenging, but her overall memories were positive: "I suppose we were well cared for, kind of. I felt they had a good relationship with us...it was the commitment and the dedication of the Sisters kind of struck me as well."[433] Carmel had also been taught by the Presentation Sisters in both Waterford and Cork. She recalled the familiarity of this fact when asked about her reason for joining: "That was the only experience I had...of Presentation...that was the greatest

---

430 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

431 Interview with Annabel.

432 Interview with Valerie.

433 Interview 1 with Caroline.

influence, I suppose."[434] As another former pupil with happy memories of her time in school, and following some discussion with a priest during a parish Mission, Isobel appeared to come to the decision herself: "I had decided it would be Presentation,"[435] demonstrating active agency in her ability to make a specific choice of congregation.

School experiences as pupils themselves were not positive for all participants. Brenda found school life difficult as a pupil, and did not have particularly fond memories of her own women religious teachers. Despite this, she did recognise their commitment to their work and mission: "Not on the whole, I didn't. I found it (school) very hard...I found the nuns hard...but they were good teachers, now."[436] She consciously chose to become a woman religious in the face of her own negative experiences in school. Making the distinction between the interpersonal and professional characteristics of women religious was a complex attempt by Brenda to create her own binary.

For both Caroline and Annabel, their motivation came from emotional bonding with the people around them and their real life experiences, what Ball and Vincent term 'hot' knowledge.[437] The appeal of a variety of possibilities in particular resonated with Caroline:

> Caroline: The commitment and the dedication of the Sisters kind of struck me as well, you know, and for a woman religious to deepen my relationship with God. That was one part of it. Another part, I suppose, to continue the mission of the congregation which was teaching mainly...But then there were options to do other things if you wanted, you know? Some people wanted nursing and whatever, you know, maybe family visitation or whatever, parish work, you know? [438]

---

434 Interview with Carmel.

435 Interview with Isobel.

436 Interview with Brenda.

437 Stephen J. Ball and Carol Vincent, "'I Heard it on the Grapevine': 'hot' knowledge and school choice," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* `9, no. 3 (1998): 380.

438 Interview 1 with Caroline.

> Annabel: I would honestly say that it was, I had some sense of God...that I was really loved by God and I had to respond to it some way...the image of it to me, with what was going on in me, was what I was seeing in front of me, people, the image, the symbols were- this is how you give your life totally to God, if that makes sense...and the images and the symbols were strong.[439]

A strong sense of admiration pervades the varying accounts from participants for the care and diligence they witnessed as pupils themselves from their own school experiences, and by extension, a wish to share in the teaching mission of the order. This is, in effect, emotional bonding, but, as Hodkinson and Sparkes have observed, it is neither rational nor systematic.[440] These sentiments of identity expressed in terms of mission echo the findings of a similar study conducted by Harford and O'Donoghue in 2011.[441] Participants in that study were heavily influenced by, and conscious of, a desire to emulate teachers who had taught them while at school themselves, together with a strong spiritual element fostered at home. Participants thus shared common forms of *capital* which enabled them to identify with known and familiar agents sharing the common *field*. In this, they echo Lortie's concept of the 'apprenticeship of observation,'[442] where former teachers' behaviours are imitated intuitively, since they have spent many hours observing and evaluating them in action. These prior occupants embodied existing practices and routines which in turn were embedded in past experiences and history, becoming in the process accepted and legitimated possessors of recognised forms of *capital*. Spiritual *capital* in particular is a product of inculcation and assimilation. It takes the form of embodiment, and necessitates personal, affective investment, together with an abstinence of other satisfactions.

---

439 Interview with Annabel.

440 Phil Hodkinson and Andrew C. Sparkes, "Careership: a sociological theory of career decision making," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 18, no. 1 (1997): 33.

441 Harford and O'Donoghue, "Continuity and Change in the Perspectives of Women Religious in Ireland," op. cit.

442 Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

Teaching women religious were not the only individuals who participated in this mission. Lay sisters occupied their own *field*, developed their own *habitus* and possessed particular forms of *capital*, too. However, they appeared less visible than their teaching counterparts and, for certain participants at least, also appeared to occupy an inferior status. When asked who he remembered with particular fondness, a former pupil Michael recalled: "Sr. Brendan would really be number one but she was only a nun in the kitchen. Sr. Brenda was a teaching nun...They were more important. They were."[443] Clearly the lay sister's forms of *capital* were positioned differently to those of the teaching sister. As an entitled nun, the teaching sister carried out privileged activities appropriate to the situation of the activity and their position within it. In the process they made claims to be entitled. The social relationship between the lay and teaching sister was reconstituted by discursive practices. By virtue of her 'social magic', her teaching qualifications, the teaching nun was conferred with a positional identity different to that of the lay sister. The teaching women religious were thus the visible agents of the educational mission, and their social position becomes disposition.

5.2.4 Distance from Home

One of the more unexpected responses from participants was the number who made a conscious decision to enter a convent far from home and family. With enclosure an accepted reality at that time, a complete break with their home environment would appear to have been preferable to the daily reminders of all they had sacrificed by their decision to choose religious life. This can be sensed in both Brenda's and Mary's explanation for their decision not to enter the convents closer to them.

> Brenda: But I said, "Where will I go? I couldn't enter here," I said, "Now, not too near home. I don't want to be too near home.[444]

---

443 Interview with Michael.

444 Interview with Brenda.

> Mary: At that stage I wanted to join a convent that **couldn't** go home. It was all or nothing with me! The fact of going home didn't appeal to me at all. I wanted to make this big step. Complete (break). All or nothing.[445]

While Brenda and Mary demonstrate a conscious desire to remove themselves completely from familiar surroundings, Annabel's experience perhaps illustrates the same concept in reverse.

> Annabel: I do remember also the summer evening, kind of thing, this going to bed kind of early while it would be still bright, you know. It was still September, like, and I can remember, I could see out, kind of, I could see the Tramore Road and I used to be thinking, 'I should be going out to the dance in Tramore!'[446]

Monica was also conscious of her proximity to family and friends after she entered, particularly when, like Annabel, she could encounter younger siblings during the course of the school day:

> Monica: We were enclosed, so even though I just lived down the road there, there was no possibility of going home...My sister was in the school here at the time as well, well two of them of course...That was difficult, but I mean, I suppose we didn't question it at the time.[447]

For all the above participants, therefore, there is a distinct sense of distance from home and loved ones- either physical for those who deliberately chose to enter far from home, or emotional for local girls who, despite being physically close to home, were emotionally distant, and removed, from their family. These were the direct consequences of the choice to adopt their new identity. This distance also facilitated the adoption and assimilation of new rituals, practices and dispositions: "The *habitus* is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body's readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social…" [448]

---

445 Interview with Mary.

446 Interview with Mary.

447 Interview with Monica.

448 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 57.

5.3 Reactions and Responses

At the time the majority of participants in this study decided to enter religious life, the status of Catholicism was regarded well in Ireland, and having a family member part of a religious congregation was considered to confer status on the family as a whole. A high value was attached to having a religious family member, either male or female or both. The reproduction and distribution of the various forms of *capital*- economic, cultural and social- conferred strength, power and profit on the holder, and by extension, on the family also. Nonetheless, from the participant responses in this study, familial responses varied widely, and ranged from acceptance to active opposition.

5.3.1 Parental Acceptance

When announcing their decision to enter religious life, many participants in this study recall a general sense of acceptance by their parents. Many expressed this in terms of expressions such as "if that was what I wanted, that was alright." Indicating a pre-disposition to existing *habitus*, Isobel felt that it came as little surprise to her parents, given that her mother had had a keen interest in Nano Nagle: "I suppose in a way they were sort of gradually being prepared for it...There was never any resentment shown to it."[449] Nevertheless, she did feel that, when the Reverend Mother asked her after her First Profession, in the presence of her parents, if she was going to make her Final Profession, it was only then her mother realised her daughter was not returning home. Rachel's parents were generally supportive of her decision: she had spoken previously to her father about entering, while her mother accepted her daughter's choice of life, if that was her wish.

Carmel also recalls her parents' acceptance, although she humorously couches it in terms of having one less child to worry about: "I think they were happy. And that was another

[449] Interview with Isobel.

one off their hands, maybe!"[450] Annabel, on the other hand, only came to realise how her parents must have felt as an adult, since the period between her announcement and entry was a matter of between three and four weeks:

> I mean it was only much later that I began thinking, My God, they must have been...I actually came home that night, I'd say, told my mother and I entered about three weeks after that, four weeks.[451]

Despite this, she always felt she could return home at any time if she later felt religious life was not for her: "There would certainly have been no...pressure, absolutely. I could have gone home tomorrow without any..."[452] Brenda, like Pauline also from the west of Ireland, remembered both her father's unhappiness and her mother's delight: "My father didn't want me to go at all...My mother said, 'Thanks be to God. You'll be safe there because...you're so wild."[453] Brenda's mother's delight was expressed in terms of the convent being a place of safety from the perceived dangers of the outside world. Within the convent her daughter would be kept safe and protected.

Parental reactions such as acceptance or relief can also be considered in terms of a common or shared cultural *capital* and *habitus*. There was domestic transmission of many forms of *capital*- cultural, social, material and spiritual. They were transmitted from the home in the first instance, and later reproduced and increased in the convent setting. Cultural *capital* in particular was a valued form of *capital*- both in terms of spiritual *capital* and in educational qualifications, which determined an individual's ability to contribute to the community mission, a key element of the congregation's identity. Brenda's mother

---

450 Interview with Carmel.

451 Interview with Annabel.

452 *Ibid*.

453 Interview with Brenda.

considered the convent a *field* characterised by safety and security, within which her daughter could use the prevailing resources to good effect, both for herself and for the community.

5.3.2 Parental Opposition

Many others, however, recall a sense of outright shock and opposition from close family members, particularly their parents. Caroline, for example, experienced considerable opposition to her wish to enter religious life. Indeed, she recalls not discussing her decision for quite a while, conscious of her mother's likely reaction: "I was thinking about it for a while and I said, I knew my mother wouldn't be overly, I kind of, instinctively I felt that she wouldn't be overly excited about it."[454] For this reason she decided to work in Dublin for two years. When she finally told her mother of her decision to enter, she felt sufficiently confident having lived independently to remain firm in her resolve, even when her mother asked to re-consider for another year. Mary also met with opposition from her mother, principally because of the congregation her daughter had chosen:

> She didn't like the Presentations because she felt they were too strict and they didn't get home. So she begged me to go to the Mercy, because the Mercys went home."[455]

Mary had been educated by the order she wished to enter, but to please her mother she agreed to spend a day with the order preferred by her. However, this experiment did not have the desired effect:

> They were all very nice to me and I stayed there for the day, and they showed me around, and I just couldn't, just couldn't think of it at all.[456]

---

454 Interview 1 with Caroline.

455 Interview with Mary.

456 *Ibid*.

The following day she went alone to the local novitiate, and knew immediately that she had made the right decision:

> The minute I stood on the hall in Thurles I knew that that was where I wanted to be. I just knew. And I could still get that feeling that this is where I want to be.[457]

In this recollection, Mary illustrated her ability to negotiate obstacles in the form of clear maternal disapproval in order to achieve her desired objective of joining the religious congregation of her choice, and also displayed a corporeal pre-disposition to the social *field* she wished to inhabit. She consciously exercised agency to fulfil her ambition, and considered this justified when she went to the novitiate of her choice, where she experienced a sense of rightness and identification. Conscious also of the embodied cultural and spiritual *capital* her mother possessed, she drew on this store as a means both of appropriation and of negotiating her mother's disapproval:

> My mother still wasn't resigned and I remember I used to have my rosary beads and I used to go off down the fields and I used to be saying rosary after rosary that she'd let me go!...And I remember one morning coming back, I was off down the fields and we had a picture of the Sacred Heart in the kitchen, and she was kneeling in front of the picture of the Sacred Heart and she turned to me and said, 'I've got the grace, you can go now.'[458]

By taking active ownership of the path her future life would take her, Mary consciously appropriated her own cultural and spiritual *capital*.

5.3.3 Immediate and Extended Family Reactions

Reactions from parents and extended family members in this study ranged from outright resistance disapproval to acceptance, and included reactions such as ambivalence and disappointment. In deciding to enter religious life, parents were keenly aware that they were losing their daughter to a new family, as they would have lost her to marriage or emigration.

---

457 *Ibid*.

458 *Ibid*.

The implications of enclosure were such that, for many they would rarely see their daughter again. Practical consequences would not have been lost on them either- financial support for younger siblings, companionship, the prospect of grandchildren, among others.

For other participants, opposition also came from siblings and extended family members. Pauline, for instance, was from a large town in the northwest of Ireland. By entering in Waterford at that time, transport links and the consequences of enclosure meant that they would rarely see her again. By the time she decided to enter, both her parents had died, and she distinctly recalled her older siblings being very unhappy about her decision and made a concerted effort to get her to change her mind. She was sent to a nun in the town for advice: "That's why she sent me over to Sr. Saint Adrienne to have a chat with her."[459] To a lesser degree, Rachel also met opposition from family members, though not her parents. She remembers two sisters being quite shocked when she heard the news: "My younger sister, the sister next to me, was very shocked. My older sister, too."[460] Annemarie, on the other hand, recalls strong opposition, not from her mother who merely asked her to wait a year, but from a cousin who also travelled quite a distance to her home in an effort to get her to have a change of heart:

> The only one that objected strongly was a first cousin, who was a lot older now than I was…and he did his utmost to persuade me...He came down specially to talk me out of it.[461]

Valerie, as the only girl in the family, recalls her parents' sense of shock when she told them of her decision. While stating that they took it badly at first, her principal recollection centred around her father's reaction in particular:

---

459 Interview with Pauline.

460 Interview with Rachel.

461 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

> My father went into a silence, couldn't talk about it at all for a while. He had to get used to it.[462]

The change in attitude of significant others over time is one remarked on by both Valerie and Mary. These objections did not deter them, however, and many participants demonstrated a high degree of agency in their desire to fulfil their desires and objectives. As Cordula van Whye claimed: "The early nun has to be viewed as an active agent rather than a passive receptor of social dictates and ecclesiastical wishes."[463]

5.3.4 Gendered Responses

Family responses in some cases were divided along gendered lines. Certain participants experienced a similar reaction from both parents, while others many recalled a negative response from one parent being counteracted by a positive response from the other. While seeking her mother's blessing to enter the congregation of her choice, and conscious of her mother's negativity, Mary recalls her father's support: "And my father used to say 'Ah, let her go! Let her off!"[464] Caroline also, aware of her mother's lack of enthusiasm for her decision to enter, found her father more supportive: "He was quite happy about it."[465] Rachel had intimated her feelings to her father before announcing her decision to enter; as a result it would have come as little surprise to him. Indeed, he encouraged her: "My father wasn't too surprised because I had mentioned it to him, maybe early on, that I was thinking about it, and he advised me to do it, not to be thinking it. He had a sister a nun, in England, and he thought…it would suit me or something."[466] For Rachel's father, the religious *field* of a

---

462 Interview with Valerie.

463 Cordula van Whye, "Introduction," in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, ed. Cordula van Whye (Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008): 7.

464 Interview with Mary.

465 Interview 2 with Caroline.

466 Interview with Rachel.

convent setting was a familiar one to the family, since his sister was already a woman religious in England, and hence his lack of surprise when Rachel announced her intention to enter. This intersection of class and *capital* was therefore more likely to smooth her transition to religious life, the acquisition of the *habitus* associated with it, and enable her to navigate and move smoothly through the formation process.

For others, their father's reaction was distinctly more negative than their mother's. Brenda's mother reacted with relief to the news that her only daughter was entering a convent far from home, while her father was quite the opposite: "My father didn't want me to go at all."[467] No doubt the emotional loss of his daughter to an enclosed life in a convent far from home was of far greater import than the prospect of ensuring her moral virtue. It was only on gaining his daughter's promise that she would return if she was unhappy that eventually made him agree. Monica could only surmise her father's feelings, for he didn't vocalise his reaction. Nevertheless, she was of the opinion that he felt the loss more keenly than her mother: "I think my father took it worse...No, I'd say he was looking forward to grandchildren, maybe, in the future. He was probably taken aback. My mother was ok."[468]

5.3.5 Women Religious and Agency

As referenced above, many of the women who participated in this study withstood family disapproval and opposition when they announced their decision to enter religious life, becoming in the process active agents in their futures and destinies. Their motivations were varied, but certainly included a conscious desire to contribute to the teaching mission of the order. They saw themselves possessing valued forms of cultural *capital*, and with the potential to add to the community mission that had inspired them to enter. They were not

---

467 Interview with Brenda.

468 Interview with Monica.

passive participants in this endeavour, but active shapers of their own destinies. These agentic forms of reflection were bound up in habitual practices, and this reflection brought about transformation in life choices, evading traces of local, familiar classification.

As active subjects, the women were looking and hoping for some kind of specific identities. This meant giving up a sense of a clear 'normal biography'.[469]A large number of participants recalled having to overcome obstacles and resistance from friends and close family members following their decision to enter religious life. As one of the younger members of her family, Pauline was encouraged to seek the advice of an outside intermediary by her siblings in order to dissuade her from entering: "My sister advised me to go up and have a chat with her before I'd go, because they didn't want me to go, you know, my sisters and brothers…"[470] while, to please her mother who was not particularly well-disposed to the congregation itself, Mary spent a day with another order. She had to wait for a period of time to elapse before her mother would give her grudging blessing.

Annemarie's mother asked her to postpone her decision to enter by a period of twelve months, while a cousin travelled over forty miles to try and change her mind. Both Valerie and Monica recalled their parents' surprise and shock. However, of all participants, Caroline would seem to have experienced the greatest degree of resistance. Sensing her mother would not be very receptive to her decision to enter, Caroline postponed telling her for quite a while, taking up paid employment in Dublin and enjoying a period of independent life. However, even when she subsequently entered, she could feel her mother was not happy with her decision, especially when confronted with the visible evidence of her daughter's new life and identity:

---

469 Manuela Du Bois-Reymond, "'I Don't Want to Commit Myself Yet': Young People's Life Concepts," *Journal of Youth Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 66.

470 Interview with Pauline.

> But I remember when I went home in the beginning with the veil, my mother was, kind of, I don't think she was very happy about it...she asked me did I have to wear the veil all the time.. She was ok about wearing it to church and all the rest, but initially she didn't seem to want me to wear it around.[471]

This contrasted sharply with her father's reaction: "But my father was the opposite. He'd say, 'Are you bringing the veil with you?'"[472] Brenda, on the other hand, remembered her mother's relief that she'd be safe in the convent, and her father's reaction, who didn't want her to "...go at all."[473] Brenda's mother's reaction indicates that life within a cloistered community equated to one of safety from the temptations of the life outside.

5.4 Nature of Identity and Change over Time

The life which these women had chosen was very different to that which they had known prior to the moment of entry. As an enclosed setting, it was a unique *field* of social activity, with a distinctive *habitus* developed over many years, yet within which women exercised agency, negotiated power relations and in the process achieved both personal and community goals. The changes introduced following the Second Vatican Council impacted greatly on all religious congregations, challenging agents to adapt to the new circumstances. For the Presentation community in Waterford, as with all religious congregations, the call to renewal of religious life and the return to the original charism as envisaged by Nano Nagle, was central to this process.

---

471 Interview 2 with Caroline.

472 *Ibid*.

473 Interview with Brenda.

5.4.1 Identity before Vatican II

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the order of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was obliged to adopt the rule of enclosure. This had far reaching consequences in terms of fulfilling its founding mission and purpose, and it also placed religious communities firmly under Episcopal control. The degree to which this power was exercised varied according to the local incumbent; nonetheless there is little doubt that it impacted hugely on the development of the order's identity as originally intended by Nano Nagle, who had founded a congregation of religious women engaged both in teaching and in the visitation of the poor in their own homes.

In this study, the vast majority of participants entered before the years of the Second Vatican Council. For them, enclosure was the accepted way of life they had chosen- part of the package, as many described it. They expected to live out the rest of their lives in one place, and entered the convent never expecting to see the outside of the convent walls again. For most, therefore, it was a price that had to be paid as part of their decision to enter religious life. Mary, however, welcomed and embraced it as a sign of her total commitment to her new life: "I wanted to join a convent that **couldn't** go home. It was all or nothing with me! The fact of going home didn't appeal to me at all. I wanted to make this big step.[474]

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that those inside the convent were totally accepting of their situation- there were examples of resistance evident in the interviews. As the eldest participant, Annemarie entered shortly after the Second World War, yet she can recall older nuns at that time questioning enclosure: "There were old nuns there when I was a young nun, and they used to say 'This is not what Nano Nagle wanted at all. We shouldn't be

474 Interview with Mary.

enclosed like this. This was never Nano Nagle's intention.'"[475] For these women, who had already spent the majority of their adult years in an enclosed setting, they clearly questioned whether enclosure was compatible with the founding purpose of the order itself, the original charism, and that this impacted negatively on the collective identity. As Bourdieu also noted, economic and social conditions can be the source of revolt as well as resignation in the production of group practices and dispositions.[476]

Looking back today, many years later and with the benefit of hindsight, Annemarie concluded that there were distinct benefits to enclosure, again expressed in terms of mission and identity:

> For the people who were coming to us, it had a great advantage because they'd never come to the convent and say 'I want to see the Principal, the school Principal' and be told 'Sorry, she's in Dublin today, there's a meeting' or 'she's on her holidays down in Kerry' or 'she's gone to Lourdes' or something. She was there and that was it. So she was, and the same with everybody else, like. We were available from after, I'd say after breakfast in the morning, nearly, until nearly bedtime. They could come anytime.[477]

Being available when needed by the outside community was clearly something they felt was important, and enclosure facilitated this in a special way.

5.4.2 Change following Vatican II

Since the majority of participants in this study entered religious life before the Second Vatican Council was convened, they would have accepted enclosure and other restrictions as part of the reality of religious life. They would also have been aware, as McKenna has remarked, that religious life was all about the process of 'becoming' a nun, through a process of formation that entailed the shedding of one's birth identity and the adoption of a new one

---

475 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

476 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 62.

477 Interview 2 with Annemarie.

based on rules, penance and labour.[478] It was a process freely chosen and, as referenced earlier, entered into despite many obstacles and objections.

The changes brought about by Vatican II were to bring enormous changes to this way of life which impacted not only on community life but also the lives of each individual within that community. For the first time, women religious were able to go outside the convent walls, for so long a physical barrier between themselves and the outside world. They could wear secular dress if they wished and revert to their baptismal name. Simple tasks such as posting a letter became so much easier: for many from the locality the sight of a nun waiting for a passer-by to put a letter into the nearby postbox was no more. In fact, this simple act was recalled by so many as symbolic of enclosure itself:

> Michael: They'd send down for me...to post letters for them because they weren't allowed out, and they used be up on top of the school, Slievekeale. There was a letter box in the wall and they were trying to reach their hand...They'd just wait till somebody passed and say, "Excuse me. Would you put that in the wall box?"[479]
>
> Barbara: I remember this, she standing on that gate for someone to come along to post a letter.[480]
>
> Agnes: (Sr. Tina) she'd come as far as that with me and she'd give me the post, and there was a post box just, say, down there, and I'd have to go around and post...[481]

For Annemarie, being able to leave the convent grounds also had particular advantages for the teaching women religious. She quoted a religious teaching colleague who herself had noted the drawbacks of educating pupils on city landmarks she herself had neither seen nor visited: "'If I was teaching them about Reginald's Tower,' she said, 'for all I knew, Reginald's Tower wasn't any bigger than the salt cellar. I didn't know anything about it.'"[482]

---

478 McKenna, *Made Holy*, 77.

479 Interview with Michael.

480 Interview with Barbara.

481 Interview with Agnes.

482 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

This lack of understanding of distance from the city centre and life outside the convent walls is also expressed by Monica:

> I do remember people, you know, Sisters, now, who wouldn't have been too aware of the town and the size of it and the distance and so on, when you'd go down for a message, "Would you ever run down again?" They had no idea how far down it was... In those days you were walking down, you know, or cycling down. You weren't bussing it.[483]

Community and spatial identity, for so long delineated by the stone walls of the convent, was now extended to encompass the wider world. As they moved through new and different social contexts, contacts and scenarios, agents were obliged to modify and reconstruct dispositions and practices to accommodate the new demands of the *field*. In moments of profound change or crisis, the sedimented *habitus* were suspended for a period of time at least, giving way to alternative and innovative forms of praxis.[484] As Bourdieu noted: "…the practices they (*habitus*) generate are mutually intelligible and immediately adjusted to the structures…"[485]

One immediate consequence of moving outside the convent walls was the impact on the nature and identity of community life itself. Isobel noted that community cohesion became more fluid and elastic, with the new emphasis on personal responsibility:

> You had each individual within the community, whereas in the earlier days that was so structured. You knew where you should be at a particular time. You knew what you should be doing. I don't mean it as strictly as that, now, whereas in latter, "I didn't see so-and-so today. Is she around?" (laugh) You know? And then they'd say, "Oh, I forgot, she was doing such a thing" or something.[486]

---

483 Interview with Monica.

484 Nick Crossley, "From Reproduction to Transformation: Social Movement *Field*s and the Radical *Habitus*," *Theory, Culture and Society* 20, no. 6 (2003): 48.

485 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 58.

486 Interview with Isobel.

This change in community cohesion was also echoed by Caroline, particularly in the trend to developing smaller groups of women religious living in local communities, another change introduced following Vatican II:

> I just feel now there's a lack of community…in the smaller groups where the Sisters are living now... in twos and threes. There's so few in the groups that it's difficult…to have a community.[487]

While Isobel was able to absorb and adapt to the change in identity practices and dispositions, Caroline found the transition more challenging. She expresses the impact of these changes in terms of community and identity disruption, but equally the changing face of both the *field* and the agents who occupy its space.

In terms of the fulfilment of the order's mission, Annemarie could observe the limitations placed on members by enclosure: "We never visited the sick, visited their homes."[488] Since the ability to make home visitations was a crucial element in the order's original *raison d'être*, it seems only logical that the adoption of enclosure would have impacted greatly on its identity. For Annabel, therefore, the effect of Vatican II changes was, in effect, a restoration of the original status quo:

> There was the whole question of religious getting back to the, kind of, *initio*, original charism of their founder, which for us was to be apostolic religious, which is, like, we are here out in the community as Nano Nagle had wanted.[489]

The reality of daily life and the implementation of the ecclesiastical directives would also appear to be more nuanced, since many of the older participants recall an Episcopal directive to begin home visitations before enclosure was ended.

---

487 Interview 2 with Caroline.

488 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

489 Interview with Annabel.

Although Annabel entered when the Vatican II changes were beginning, it is clear that she and many others felt a sense of satisfaction at both the community and the personal levels. In her case, the consequences were felt in the formation process, when she recalls the freedom of going with postulants and novices from other orders to lectures, within certain strictures. She also recalls a sense of rightness about them, particularly when doing home visitations in the growing housing estates and new communities that were beginning to surround the convent around this time, as the city expanded westwards:

> We met with the Mercy, the Ursulines, Ferrybank.. Twice a week, in the evening, I think it was 4 to 6 or something like that, for lectures and scripture and theology and liturgy and all that kind of thing, and we'd have had people from St. John's College and that...but it was straight down and back, like. You know, that was it, like...I knew it was right and I knew it fitted...(A new curate) was sent out to live out in Lismore Park. So he then, kind of, with the nuns, kind of, began to draw them out to help him... when I came back from college... he had made out lists for us all to visit, houses... I can remember having my list and going off after school in the evening... once a week or something to get to know the people. [490]

For those such as Isobel, the changes came gradually, but were experienced in a manner she recalls in terms of a more relaxed timetabled structure:

> It was only, I think, about maybe 1964 we began to go out for walks and then gradually it widened and widened until there was no enclosure...You had each individual within the community, whereas in the earlier days that was so structured. You knew where you should be at a particular time. You knew what you should be doing. I don't mean it as strictly as that, now, whereas in latter, "I didn't see so-and-so today. Is she around?" (laugh) You know? And then they'd say, 'Oh, I forgot, she was doing such a thing' or something.[491]

For other participants, however, the transition brought with it a combination of excitement, fear and nervousness. On one of her first occasions to leave the convent grounds, Brenda recalls:

---

490 *Ibid*.

491 Interview with Isobel.

> (Sr. Pamela) and myself decided we'd go up to our left. We went for a walk. So I said, "Pamela, we can still go to our left...We'll go around the corner here." We ended up down on the Quay. Now, we hadn't a cat's notion how we were going to get back...hadn't a notion of it, in the world, and how we were going to say if we were late for Evening prayer, where we were...[492]

The excitement of moving to the outside world, in the form of the city centre, is accompanied by a concern as to how they were going to explain their lack of punctuality, should they be late for an important community occasion. The changes obliged the women religious to adapt existing *habitus* to the new circumstances in which they found themselves.

5.4.3 Change following Reorganisation and Union

Another consequence of the changes brought about by Vatican II, and one also subsequently a result of declining entrants to religious life, was the reorganisation of the order into provincial administrative units. Each house was no longer an autonomous unit, but was now one of a number within an administrative area. This resulted in women religious moving between different houses as needs demanded. For those concerned, it was a huge upheaval in what they had considered their home and locus of identity for so many years. Leaving the house which had formed their spiritual and religious identity and moving to a new and unfamiliar one was akin to beginning the identity formation process anew. As one of the first to be asked to embark on this project, Mary was very sensitive to entering a new *field* of activity the evening she arrived. She compared it to being inducted into a new culture: "I found that very hard. I thought I was gone into another culture when I went down to Waterford at that stage."[493] She was also very conscious of the fact that the change from individual to provincial houses had implications for the identity of each: "You see, it's amazing, even though we were all Presentation, we had our own identity in our different houses, you know?" Mary was suddenly conscious not only of having to adapt to a new *field*

---

492 Interview with Brenda.

493 Interview with Mary.

of social activity, but simultaneously become familiar with the new *habitus* associated with that *field*.

The reaction in Waterford itself is one she recalls vividly. A number of women religious were also moving from there to other houses, and it happened that many of them had been very good singers. One of those remaining commented on this, and recalled:

> I remember standing in the cloister, and A. said, 'Oh, the pillars of the house are gone. And they were such wonderful singers!' And I can still feel myself standing there and I hadn't a note in my head, and I was saying, 'Oh, my God! The pillars are gone and here I am coming in...to replace (those that were leaving)!'...I remember feeling so inadequate, you know, you'd feel so vulnerable.[494]

Mary was clearly upset by this remark at the time. She described it as 'nasty,' although both parties later came to understand the other's point of view: "They only thought about what they were losing themselves and that they had no thought of what the person coming in was feeling."[495] This process of identity disruption was obviously traumatic for all concerned in its initial stages (Mary herself used the term 'devastated'). However, time eased many of these worries and the later return of some of those who had left also helped smooth the transition. She herself was affirmed by their parting remarks when she had to move for a second time some months later:

> I got a taster and then I was moved, and I remember the Sisters saying, 'Oh, we're just getting to know you now, and you have to go,' you know. And they were, I grew to like the place and they were genuinely sorry to see me go.[496]

The adjustment process, while initially challenging for all concerned, took longer to accomplish than originally envisaged. The new agents struggled with existing agents to adjust

---

494 *Ibid*.

495 *Ibid*.

496 *Ibid*.

to the *field* and its *habitus*, but when this process was completed, affirming relationships were finally established.

5.5 Identity within the Convent

5.5.1 The Role of *Habitus*

The convent at the heart of this research study was constructed in the 1840s, at a time when the rule of enclosure was a prime requisite for religious life. In making this choice, the initiate was adopting a new identity, for the majority of entrants one characterised by an enclosed environment, becoming part of a new family and adopting new practices and habits. These were absorbed both consciously and unconsciously as initiates moved through the formation process. In the shedding of the old and the creating of this new identity, the training and formation process was crucial. This will now be looked at in greater detail.

5.5.1.1 Rite of Passage: Separation

All participants were able to recall with great accuracy the moment of entry to the convent itself. They were keenly aware that this was the beginning of a period of formation and induction into religious life. In many ways, this process could be likened to what Arnold Van Gennep would have described as a rite of passage, with its three phases of separation, transition and incorporation.[497] The moment of entry, as represented by the reception of the prospective postulant into the convent, was described by participants as a moment whereby they were keenly aware of being separated from their birth family. Recollections of this moment ranged from the emotional to the ambivalent to the physicality of the postulant's dress. Annemarie, for instance, recalls the loneliness of the occasion: "It was awfully lonely

[497] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, op. cit.

really...it's a very big separation and we were enclosed,"[498] while Annabel's predominant recollection is the distinct feeling of immediate separation from her family: "I remember obviously being brought upstairs. My parents were brought into the parlour, you know, it was all very formal. When I look back on it now, you didn't eat even with your family."[499] For Monica, who had been born quite near the convent, there was a feeling of crossing a point of no return: "I remember saying goodbye to the neighbours, saying goodbye to my parents, well they came with me, and then saying goodbye to them in the parlour.[500] Such examples correspond directly to Van Gennep's phase of separation or a preliminal rite,[501] a separation from the exterior world of the profane and induction to the new and sacred world.

For the first twelve months the initiate was called a postulant. During this period they were kept hidden from the outside world and separate from the professed community in the convent. However, they did not wear the veil and in later years were allowed to wear their own clothes. This period of seclusion can be interpreted as a preparation for the formation period to follow during the novitiate, a period when the postulant is removed totally from her earthly, what Van Gennep would describe as profane, former world and prepared for her new sacred world within the convent setting, her new world as a bride of Christ. Together with induction into daily life in the convent in terms of daily chores, etc., initiates participated in the prayer life of the convent, although obviously not to the extent of the fully-incorporated members. It was a period supervised by a community elder, the Mistress of Novices, and many participants in this research remarked on the important role played by this postholder. She was frequently a person who exerted great influence on postulants' subsequent decision

---

498 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

499 Interview with Annabel.

500 Interview with Monica.

501 Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

to proceed or leave the convent, since there was at this stage of the process no obligation on either side to commit further than they had already done.

5.5.1.2 Rite of Passage: Transition (Liminality)

After the twelve months had elapsed, and should both parties be willing, the initiate could proceed to the next phase- the novitiate. In Van Gennep's terms, this marked the period of transition or liminality.[502] Although not yet a fully-fledged member of the community, the postulant is sufficiently committed to her future that she warrants a visible sign of her commitment- the white veil (see Figure 27).



Figure 27: A "White Veil"
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

502 *Ibid*., 21.

As another sign of this transitional phase, the novice's family was allowed to witness this ceremony, whereas all subsequent ceremonies were private, as recalled by Brenda.[503] Families were allowed to visit after the event, but not be present for the Final Profession and Reception themselves, which symbolised the initiate's incorporation into her new family. Rachel's memory of this event is her older sister's reaction, giving a sense of finality to the occasion: "And my sister Bridget was crying, you know, she was very upset, that I was gone, kind of, forever.[504]

The First Profession ceremony also marked an intermediate stage in the formation of Bourdieuian *habitus*, and, from the responses of some participants at least, they were conscious of the implications this stage in identity formation involved. Annemarie's comment about her memory of this period, for instance, reflects an awareness that she was approaching a seminal point: "We were in at the deep end at that stage."[505] The novitiate period was also characterised by induction into the teaching mission of the order, usually as a teaching assistant- "when we were white veil we were put in"[506]- and spiritual formation, all still supervised by the Mistress of Novices. Participants were also inducted into the rules and regulations governing community life, together with academic study for those studying for examinations. However, in a further reminder of the liminal nature of this period, novices had their own seating area in the dining-room, although they did get their meals before the lay sisters, and they were placed between the choir and lay sisters in the convent chapel. Identity formation was therefore a combination of the conscious, in the form of rules and regulations,

503 Interview with Brenda.

504 Interview with Rachel.

505 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

506 Interview with Brenda.

but also the unconscious, in the form of adopting the *habitus* of religious life, as they moved fluidly from one stage to the next.

5.5.1.3 Rite of Passage: Incorporation

The final phase of incorporation was marked by the reception ceremony, one resonating with symbolism and significance. Entering in their novice's habit, they took this off and put on that of their new family, a new bride of Christ. They received a ring, symbolising their new 'marriage', a new name in religion, and a new veil (see Figures 28 and 29). The changing of the habit, the veiling and symbols such as the ring are all redolent of imagery whereby the newly-professed had separated totally from the profane world and incorporated into the holy world by a marriage with Jesus Christ.[507]

Other interpretations of this ceremony also exist, however. Canon law required the novitiate to be separate from the main convent building: "To be valid, a novitiate must be made in a house properly designated for this purpose."[508] The taking of a name in religion, as noted elsewhere, also equated with the conversion of Saul who became Paul, or Simon who became Peter. The radical following of Christ involved in religious profession was akin to a call to a new way of life.[509] The semi-seclusion of the novitiate was replaced by the complete seclusion of cloistered life, and from now on the woman religious was totally consecrated to her new life and that of the community. For Bourdieu, the ceremony represented a display of material and symbolic strength: "…the exhibition of symbolic *capital*… is one of the mechanisms which…make *capital* go to *capital*."[510]

---

507 Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 99-100.

508 *Code of Canon Law*, Chapter 3, Art. 2 "The Novitiate and Formation of Novices," Canon 647.

509 O'Neill, *Nuns and Monks at Hennessy's Road*, 82-83.

510 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 120.



Figure 28: Sr. Magdalen O'Brien on the day of her Final Profession
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Nonetheless, Annemarie vividly recalls the ritual of this ceremony with fondness:

> There was a great routine about it all, you know. You knew, kind of, what the procedure was, and there was an eight-day retreat before your profession, a silent retreat, and the ceremony was beautiful. You see, we had Gregorian chant, it was really lovely.[511]

The incorporation of the newly-consecrated woman religious was now complete. For the foreseeable future, her world would be bounded by her new family, prayer, participation in the mission of the order and, for the majority of interviewees, the convent walls. It also marked the incorporation of the community *habitus* by the newly-professed woman religious. However, the changes introduced in the wake of the Second Vatican Council demanded

511 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

extensive adjustment to this *habitus*, and the degree of successful adaptation varied among participants.



Figure 29: Profession in Presentation Convent chapel
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

5.5.1.4 Change over Time

The degree to which the changes were experienced by women religious appeared in large measure to depend on perception. While the women religious participants generally claim to have adapted well, their lay colleagues, some of whom had themselves been educated by them, estimate that many found the transition difficult. Karen was one such pupil. She recalls speaking to some women religious she knew as both pupil and later as teaching colleague on this subject:

> They found being out in the world very strange, they did, they really did. And then they found the change of uniform, you know when it got softer, quite a number of the older nuns didn't change...they found the change hard. They did. I think reality bites.[512]

Karen appears to suggest that younger community members adapted more easily and quickly to the changed circumstances and *habitus*. Community and social identity itself was transformed, too, since members were now operating in an expanded area of social activity. Nonetheless, while undoubtedly great change was brought about following Vatican II, the responses of the women religious themselves do not reflect the degree of upheaval as perceived by Karen. Indeed, many welcomed and embraced the newly experienced freedoms it brought. For both women religious and the outside community, and as noted in Karen's observation above, one of the most immediately noticeable changes was that of the visual proof of their religious commitment- the religious habit.

5.5.2 The Religious Habit

5.5.2.1 Covering the Body

Central to the new life, and a visible exterior symbol of this new life, was the religious habit. Until the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, women religious were immediately identifiable by their habit. This was an outward symbol of their membership of, and commitment to, their religious community. Susan Michelman remarked that their social identities were more outwardly visible than their personal ones, and contended that their individuality was relinquished for a symbol of Church conformity.[513] On the other hand,

---

512 Interview with Karen.

513 Susan Michelman, "Breaking Habits: Fashion and Identity of Women Religious," *Fashion Theory* 2, no. 2 (1998): 165-166.

however, Kuhns has noted that the habit also had a positive symbolism. It could represent holiness, and create fellowship, trust and empower its wearer.[514]



Figure 30: Newly professed group c. 1890s

Back row (L to R): Sr. M. de Sales Haier (Co. Clare), Sr. M. Columba Byrne (Avoca, Co. Wicklow), Sr. M. Baptist Barry (Cork).

Front row (L to R): Sr. M. Peter Stone (Killenaule, Co. Tipperary), Sr. M. Paul Walsh (Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny), Sr. M. Philomena Bergin (Roscrea, Co. Tipperary).

Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Many participants commented on the habit in their interviews, as did many of the observers and onlookers. Among the women religious themselves, early memories were often vivid. Annemarie's first encounter with the visible religious habit was as a pupil beginning secondary school: "I distinctly remember it and I often told it. The first nun that we saw, they were all wearing big…you know…black habits and fairly close fitting head gear. So when she spoke to us she pushed back the veil."[515] The degree of fascination evident in this

514 Elizabeth Kuhns, *The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*, (New York and London: Doubleday, 2003), 1-2.

515 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

comment obviously did not deter her unduly, since she found herself one of that group a short number of years later, and was one of the few participants to consciously choose to wear the veil when given the choice not to.

For others, memories of initially receiving the habit are quite vivid. Amy, for example, recalls the evening she entered the convent: "So I was brought up, I suppose, and dressed up, because we...immediately wore, as you know, a little, you know, full length black...and a little black cap with a little lace veil on it. And white cuffs. I can remember the feel of it, like, and a white collar."[516] Her recall of the sensory in this quotation, many years later, reflects the strangeness of the outfit that she understood at the time to be her clothing from that time forward. Monica's memory of that time is very similar: "It was postulant's dress, really, it wasn't the full habit, you know, just a long black dress with a little kind of a net veil, I suppose you could say."[517]

Although Mary entered in another convent in Munster, her memories are similar in terms of the clothing itself, but she seems to associate the donning of the habit with the beginning of the life she wanted and had worked hard to achieve:

> We put on a nice black dress and a collar and a little veil, but our hair was out, you know? And I think we had white cuffs here, so it was quite neat, actually. But I loved it, I was very happy, all that time I was very happy.[518]

Pauline did not directly describe the habit itself but recalls the visual effect seeing her wearing it had on her family members: "When I went up and put on the...and the thing for the

---

516 Interview with Amy.

517 Interview with Monica.

518 Interview with Mary.

postulants, you know, and that killed her."[519] Caroline vividly recalls the differing effect the wearing of the habit had on her parents:

> I remember when I went home in the beginning with the veil, my mother was, kind of, I don't think she was very happy about it. It's like as if you had a scarf on your head, and someone is ready to go out the door if they have a scarf on their head, so... she asked me did I have to wear the veil all the time...But my father was the opposite. He'd say, "Are you bringing the veil with you?"...My mother wasn't...I don't know whether she wasn't happy. She was ok about wearing it to church and all the rest, but initially she didn't seem to want me to wear it around.[520]

There is a distinct commonality in these references to the wearing of both habit and veil- that of dividing or classifying the wearer, in Bourdieuian terms an effect of 'social magic', whereby the cultural act traces a line that in turn produces a separate, delimited space,[521] a visible mark of distinction for its wearer.

Of all participants, Rachel freely admitted that one of the biggest difficulties she encountered on entering the convent was sacrificing her love of fashion. Her memory of the Profession in particular is of the physical discomfort and practical difficulties she met in working with the habit:

> I loved clothes. It was one of the things I didn't like in the convent!...When it came to Profession, you know, you had to put on something on your head, and the veil... something coming down there, you know, and it was terribly tight, and you couldn't work, really, with it, you know, this big thing then in front. It was very difficult to work with it.[522]

Indeed, the obvious discomfort of the veil in particular was something remarked upon by the pupils, too. Barbara recalls the physical evidence of this discomfort:

---

519 Interview with Pauline.

520 Interview 2 with Caroline.

521 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 210.

522 Interview with Rachel.

> I remember during the summer, and I remember other days even, Sr. P again, I specifically remember, every now and again she'd have to lift it and her face, her forehead would be marked...You can imagine having something like that on your head all the time...I remember in the summer again, like that, you'd know that they were roasting going around, you know, and...whatever they had under the big loose sleeves, they had something like a tight black, kind of a tight black sleeve would be under this...When they'd be teaching, on the blackboard or whatever, they'd be pulling back the, folding back over the sleeve...I'd see her now and she'd pull up this to kind of give her a bit of relief, and like that, then, the mark would be on her forehead.[523]

According to Michael, a pupil for a brief period as a young boy but whose family knew the community well, some of his classmates interpreted the sight of the habit, and particularly the belt, in terms of physical chastisement:

> One or two other little fellows would be looking and staring, whereas I was used to the clothes they wore and the black belt around them...Probably some young fellows thought that was for to hit them, but I knew it was their rig out, kind of a thing, so used to rambling around.[524]

By the time Valerie joined the community, the rule of enclosure had relaxed sufficiently for her to be allowed to go out from time to time. However, this came with restrictions: "I had to put a black veil on me then going out because you wouldn't be allowed out in the white veil."[525] This stricture appears to imply that wearing the black veil equated more closely to an authentic woman religious than the white one.

For former pupils, therefore, the habit represented the visual embodiment of the woman religious, with the potential to inspire emotions that ranged from fear, as recalled by Michael above, to that of considering nuns as sexless beings. Margaret, a former pupil, recalled that it created a barrier between teacher and pupil: "The barrier was there."[526] The woman religious in her habit was the embodiment of religious life and identity, the product of

---

523 Interview with Barbara.

524 Interview with Michael.

525 Interview with Valerie.

526 Interview with Margaret.

the gendered *habitus*.[527] For her sister Sinéad, the habit had the effect of drawing attention to the face itself: "You could certainly see the nuns who were pretty and the ones who weren't."[528] The habit in this case acted as a token of 'social magic', serving to distinguish one group of women from others. By covering the body, the collective identity became stronger than the individual identities, the facial features being the only indication of difference.

Differentiation in terms of perceived levels of physical attractiveness is one also shared by Karen: "I remember everyone speaking of her when she was...with the white veil. They said she was stunning...My mother and those would speak of her as being like a film star, absolutely stunning."[529] The visual image of only seeing the face is one also recalled by Kirsty, although she spoke in sympathetic terms of the physical discomfort the habit must have caused them and the excitement of seeing a nun for the first time without her veil: "You'd pity them, now, wouldn't you? ...The white thing, and the veil covering them...First time I ever saw the nun without the veil, you all got excited!"[530] Kuhns has noted the ambivalent attitude expressed by women religious themselves- the barrier created between the religious and laity, and the belief that the individual identity of the wearer had been absorbed into a collective whole,[531] a community of shared, homogenous dispositions.

Removing the veil was visibly not part of the repertoire of permitted actions, which reinforced the collective nature of practice and *habitus*, and the networks of influence that

---

527 Gendered *habitus* is understood here as the set of dispositions characteristic of a specific *field* of social activity inhabited by women, and a function of subjective dispositions and the objective structure of the *field*.

528 Interview with Sinéad.

529 Interview with Karen.

530 Interview with Kirsty.

531 Kuhns, *The Habit*, 8.

existed within them. As Lahire has noted, the individual has developed a broad array of dispositions, and the degree to which these disposition influences behaviour depends on the specific context in which social agents interact with one another.[532] Nonetheless, for many the habit remains the visible symbol of religious identity, a symbol of participation in a collective endeavour, with its associated practices, obligations and dispositions, with the latter in particular a product of the interaction between internal and external forces.[533]

5.5.2.2 Moving from Religious to Secular Dress

One of the many changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council was the choice to retain or replace the religious habit. The requirement to wear the veil was no longer mandatory, and women religious were now free to make their own choice in the matter. For many participants in this study, it was an opportunity to demonstrate their individuality and identify with the laity and local community, while others preferred to retain existing practices. When interviewed for this project, the majority wore secular dress. Some still wore the veil, with others wearing what could loosely be described as a compromise in shades of blue. Rachel alone, the self-avowed follower of fashion before entry, remarked on the length of time it took her to remove the veil completely, when she was permitted to do so: "Some people adapted fairly quickly, you know. I remember I didn't take the veil off my head for a long time."[534] Clearly, the process of incorporation had been a success in this case, since a considerable length of time elapsed before Rachel ceased wearing the veil. Others, however, consciously opted to retain it. One of the latter, for instance, Annemarie, when asked, felt that the veil was a visible sign of her calling as a woman religious, and in her experience,

---

532 Bernard Lahire, "From the *habitus* to an individual heritage of dispositions. Towards a sociology at the level of the individual," *Poetics* 31, nos. 5-6 (2003): 353.

533 *Ibid*.

534 Interview with Rachel.

particularly on public transport, it drew people to her, looking to talk and discuss various matters of personal concern.

5.5.3 The Role of *Field*

The physical locus for this research, the central *field* of social activity, was a convent and adjoining primary school in an urban setting in the southeast of Ireland. When originally built, it was on the very boundary of the city limits, and is remembered by older participants as being surrounded by the green fields of the surrounding countryside:

> Barbara: It stopped here. The first house here was the last house. After that then there was a field...At the end of the road here, when you went out to the right...there was one house and a farm...You were in the country again, because...we used to go out for a walk...We were at the edge of the city...(The nuns) were in the country at that time...There was the wall of the convent and then there was just the width of the road and then there was a ditch and there was fields then all after that.[535]

> Michael: This (primary school) was only a big field...all Lisduggan then, Paddy Brown's, only all a big field...If you went down the middle of Mattie's Hill...that was miles out the country, from there, no lights, you know. But all around here was only all fields...We used to remember going fishing out Paddy Brown's Road, in a stream down the middle.[536]

> Sinéad: (The) Presentation which was in the suburbs of the city at the time... Lisduggan hadn't even been thought of, or Lismore Park...It was on the edge of the country.[537]

> Margaret: There were fields all along here. Once you came to Slievekeale, where the school was, from there out you were in the heart of the country.[538]

Indeed, some of the younger participants also remember the contrast between the natural and man-made environment:

> Alice: I loved the wall around the outside. I loved the trees on the other side, and the grass and the expanse of even the field that was behind the wall.[539]

---

535 Interview with Barbara.

536 Interview with Michael.

537 Interview with Sinéad.

538 Interview with Margaret.

For Alice, however, who had grandparents either side of the convent, and was therefore frequently passing by, the wall and school railings induced both a sense of fear and of safety: "Actually you would be safe coming from town up Slievekeale when you got to the wall. But between the railings and the wall there were three gates...(After the third gate) there was something about **that** patch that was a little bit scary when you walked past it."[540]

As a young teacher coming to see the school for the first time, Rachel also clearly remembers the positive physical impact the buildings had on her:

> I saw these houses first...It was different, of course, when I went in there, you know, it was a lovely building and that, and as I say there was fields above and beyond it, you know. It was lovely.[541]

As a former pupil who later entered the convent, Annabel recalled the monastic imagery that the regular sight of the community evoked in her on a daily basis: "At special times of the years, like Presentation Day, they passed through our place with their white cloaks on them, so a bit like Glencairn or something."[542] For her, religious life was essentially based on a monastic model and was encapsulated by the narrow windows (see Figure 31):

> The thinking behind it was, you see it was all on a monastic model. Like, I go down to Glencairn and there was a lovely programme recently on it...They would have the same. That's what the monastic life was, you know, that's how ours was...It was the same, yes.[543]

---

539 Interview with Alice.

540 *Ibid*.

541 Interview with Rachel.

542 Interview with Annabel.

543 *Ibid.*

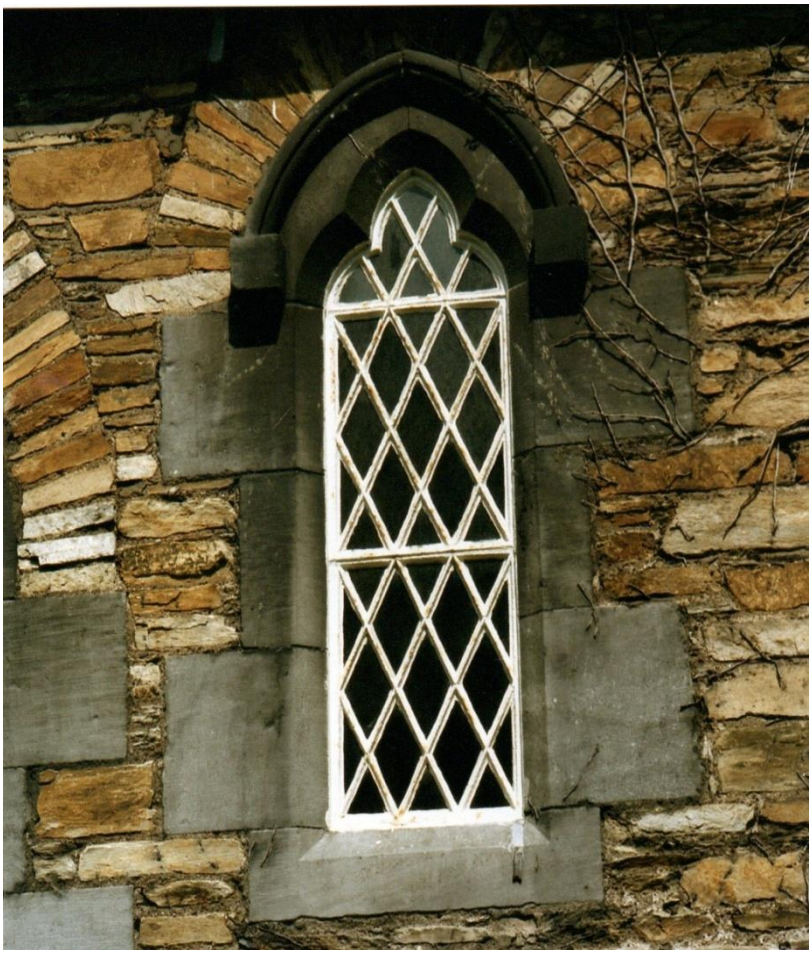


Figure 31: Lancet Window
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran.

This monastic imagery is also echoed in Caroline's initial impression of the sight of the convent itself at the beginning of her novitiate (See Figures 32 and 33):

> It was much more monastic in style...The cloister didn't bother me...I thought the cloister was beautiful. **Absolutely**. I thought it was beautiful, the lovely windows and everything...But I suppose it appeared to be darker than W, now, you know, and the cells, as they called them there, they were very much monastic kind of cells, in smaller little rooms.[544]

544 Interview 2 with Caroline.

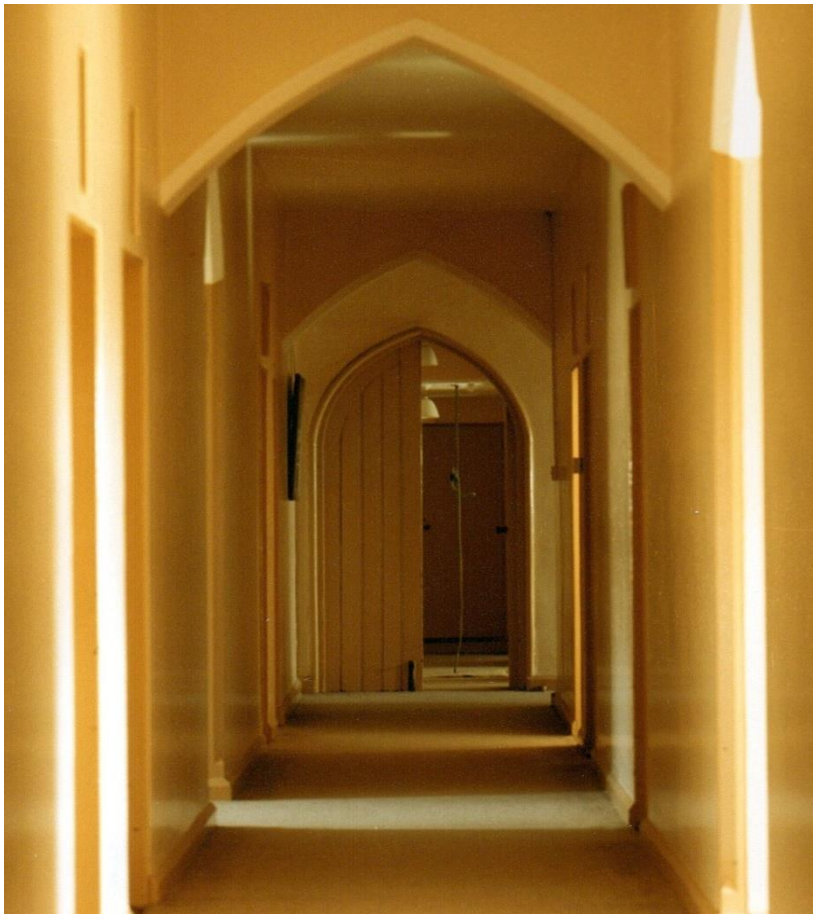


Figure 32: Cell Corridor
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran

Her impression of the monastic style, as conceived by Pugin, had a different effect on the Novice Mistress who accompanied her: "I remember the Novice Mistress who brought us down. She was saying, "Oh, my God," she said, 'this building!' She was nearly crying leaving us, actually she was, I think, crying, leaving us."[545]

Annemarie, the oldest of the participants, remarked on the amount of physical space enjoyed by occupants, which she felt facilitated smooth interpersonal relations:

> The whole grounds in, the convent itself, the school and the grounds were quite extensive now, compared with other convents that I didn't realise at the time, but when I visited other convents afterwards and I saw a little space they had, I found, I'd say, I said to myself 'I'd find enclosure very difficult here.' But in Waterford there

545 *Ibid.*

was big acreage really that, you know, you had plenty of space and we actually didn't notice it very much.[546]



Figure 33: Door leading to cloister garth
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran.

This comment was echoed by Brenda: "We had big grounds in Waterford and if you went over, down in the playground in the Naí Scoil, you'd always see people, you know, or there was always people coming in and out."[547] From the above comments, the reader gets a sense of threshold concept and of liminality in geographic location. It stood not only at the boundary between the urban and rural environment, but also the boundary between the man-made and natural environment, the familiar and unknown.

5.5.4 The Role of *Capital*

546 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

547 Interview with Brenda.

5.5.4.1 Cultural *Capital* and Teaching Sisters

Since its inception, community members brought various forms of *capital* to the *field* of activity when they entered religious life: economic, cultural, spiritual and social. As a self-financing enclosed religious congregation, in the early years economic *capital*, along with spiritual *capital*, were necessary pre-requisites to sustain religious life for the years ahead. Following the decision to join the National System of Education at the end of the nineteenth century, the receipt of salaries from state sources lessened the necessity for economic *capital*. However, as a congregation whose primary mission was that of female education, cultural *capital*, particularly in the form of educational qualifications, was also important. Participants in this study were conscious of their own store of cultural *capital*, but also testify to the assistance and support given to those who may not have possessed the requisite amount needed to attend training college, in the form of mentoring from other women religious or practical teaching experience in the classroom. Each member of the community, whether choir or lay sister, brought various forms and degrees of *capital* with her on entry, which both contributed to sustaining the community itself and to the fulfilment of the teaching mission of the congregation. The women religious participants in this study had all been teaching sisters during enclosure, and envisioned themselves as teachers before entry, although they recognised that the decision as to whether they were destined for first or second level teaching was ultimately one determined by the community authorities.

For Annemarie, completion of the Leaving Certificate examination was considered the minimum in order to be considered for teaching: "You'd have to have certain examinations, for example you would have to do, have your Leaving Cert done before you went into the convent."[548] This proof of educational competence was not only a necessity to become a teaching woman religious but was also an effect of social magic, distinguishing the

548 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

teaching from the non-teaching sisters within the convent. Practical teaching experience prior to attending training college, she felt, gave her and others like her a distinct advantage over those who attended training college immediately after their Leaving Certificate, while Valerie recalled being exposed to such activities as Elocution, Drama and Music during her formation period in the novitiate.[549] Annemarie's early induction into teaching, and Valerie's experience of a variety of cultural activities, was a means of both adding to their own store of cultural *capital*, and at the same time contributing to that of the community in general. They both display a conscious awareness of community identity and its valued dispositions, and an unconscious absorption of these dispositions as they move through the *field*. The embodied dispositions extending back over many decades facilitated the mobilisation of groups of agents into the various collectivities within the community- school, kitchen- with their own forms of accountability.

Annabel originally thought she was destined for primary teaching but later found out that she would be going to the secondary school. However, she lacked the Latin requirement at the time, and had to fulfil it before she went to university: "I thought I was going to do primary teaching...And then at some point, I hadn't done Latin. I had to do a Matric(ulation examination), you see...so I remember I had to do Latin."[550] Annabel was conscious of a lacuna in a specific form of recognised cultural *capital* or competence, and this had to be provided from within the community before she was able to proceed to university. Monica, on the other hand, would have preferred to teach at primary level: "I was looking forward to teaching in the primary school. Never got there, though! So I ended up at second level."[551] She subsequently specialised in subjects that would not have been her preferred option for her

549 Interview with Valerie.

550 Interview with Annabel.

551 Interview with Monica.

degree. Since she was considered to possess sufficient cultural *capital* in the form of educational qualifications, her personal preferences were sublimated to the community's teaching requirements.

Brenda's particular talent was that of music and she understood that she was to continue her studies in that sphere. However, this was not to be:

> I was supposed to continue my music, and Mother Imelda said no. She said it'd be a good idea if you repeated your Leaving Cert and went to training, so that's what I did, and I ended up in training.[552]

The holder of cultural *capital* gets a place in the structure of distribution of that *capital*, and the place occupied reflects the community's needs and requirements. Within her own perceived sphere of competence in the *field*, Brenda also encountered competition in the form of an incumbent: "Sr. Betty was the music teacher at the time, and she was playing the organ, so I'd have had no hope, like. She wouldn't allow you to touch the organ or the piano or wouldn't allow you to go near it."[553] Carmel, on the other hand, by virtue of her competence in examination results, was conscious of her store and took it for granted that her future lay as a teacher:

> I think when I was entering, I just took it for granted. I mean, I had the qualifications, I had my, finished my Leaving Cert. I had done Matric even, you know, in fifth year. I just had the qualifications and I took it for granted that's what I'd be doing, that I would be teaching. There was no, kind of, question about, that I wouldn't.[554]

Carmel's confidence in her personal store of cultural *capital* influenced her vision of where her future lay within the community, a confidence that was ultimately justified.

---

552 Interview with Brenda.

553 *Ibid*.

554 Interview with Carmel.

Rachel was unique among participants in that she was already a qualified teacher before entry. As such the investment in terms of cultural *capital* required from the community was less than those who entered after their Leaving Certificate. Nonetheless, at that point she had already experienced a sharing of existing talents and strengths from her women religious teaching colleagues. Speaking of the Principal, she recalls: "Although she had a class, you know...she'd come around to see us all and that...A was nice, too. She used to teach the singing for my class, mostly."[555] The investment of social and cultural *capital*, in the form of concern for the teaching staff and a sharing of talents, appears to have influenced Rachel's subsequent decision to join the community.

5.5.4.2 *Capital* and the Lay Sisters

During the nineteenth century, and earlier, those wishing to enter religious life were required to bring a dowry to provide for their maintenance. These women took solemn, life-long vows and were known as choir sisters. However, entrants were also accepted who did not have the financial means to support themselves, but took non-binding vows and were known as lay sisters. Magray has noted that these women typically came from farming or poor urban backgrounds and took responsibility for the domestic duties of the convent community.[556] In Bourdieuian terms, however, this distinction can also be interpreted in terms of varying amounts of *capital*. Lay sisters possessed inferior quantities of economic *capital* and therefore occupied a different status to that of their choir colleagues.

Nonetheless, Magray also points out that the system provided opportunities for poorer women in the nineteenth century in particular, and that it was not necessarily seen as a disagreeable option, and offered opportunities for advancement not available in the world

---

555 Interview with Rachel.

556 Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*, 42.

outside the convent walls.[557] Participant responses in this research indicate that efforts were made to add to the lay sisters' economic and cultural *capital*, in the form of training. Brenda recalls lay sisters being sent on cookery training courses: "Breda went to that cookery place in, somewhere in Kilkenny or Wexford…Vera went to that one (in Carrick-on-Suir)…The convent sent them there to be trained…"[558] While undoubtedly the direct beneficiaries of such investment were the community members themselves, nonetheless it also added to the lay sisters' own personal economic *capital* had they ever chosen to leave the convent. Dispositional identities of individuals were therefore mobilised for the benefit of the wider community, in the process generating a sense of groupness.

5.6 Identity Within the School

The Presentation Order was founded primarily as a teaching order. As a result, school life played an important role in identity formation. We have already seen that many women religious described the example of women religious teachers they had experienced as pupils as a major factor in their own decision to enter religious life, while many former pupils later became teachers themselves, returning in some cases to spend their entire teaching career in the school. This store of personal, educational and cultural *capital* ensured in no small measure the continuity, reproduction and sedimentation of school *habitus* and practice. However, significant events could either solidify or threaten these practices. A play marking the bicentenary of the foundation of the Presentation Order in 1975 was not only a visible display of a valued form of cultural *capital*, but was considered to have forged a common identity among religious and lay staff members. In contrast, the amalgamation of the junior

557 *Ibid*., 42-43.

558 Interview with Brenda.

and senior schools fifteen years later was felt to have created irreparable damage to what the staff of the smaller entity felt was their distinctive identity. Finally, and illustrating Bourdieuian characteristics of resistance and struggle within a *field*, participants recall a distinctive micro-*field* which was considered as operating with an unusual degree of independence.

5.6.1 The Nano Nagle Play of 1975

There was general agreement among all participant groups that a strong emphasis was always placed on non-academic activities in the school, particularly music and the arts, a specific form of cultural *capital*. For many lay teachers in particular, one memorable occasion they remember in a special way was a musical play written and produced by the then Principal of the primary school.



Fig. 34: The "Redcoats" from the 1975 bicentenary Nano Nagle play.
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

This play was produced and performed to commemorate the bicentenary of the founding of the Presentation Order in 1975. It was a musical of the life and times of Nano

Nagle, with both staff and some pupils participating. A professional producer was engaged for the project and period costumes were hired for all performances, all supervised by the Principal herself (see Figures 34 and 35). Many participants recall this event as one of the most memorable of their teaching career in the school: the rehearsals, the camaraderie, the costumes, wigs and make-up, and the general infectious air of excitement leading up to the performances themselves. At this time, many of the lay teachers were mothers of young children, yet participants claim in their interviews that such was the esteem in which the Principal was held. no-one considered refusing. The final result was an occasion that is still spoken of fondly, and as an unforgettable memory in which those who took part consider themselves privileged to have been present at the time.



Fig. 33: Characters from the Nano Nagle play of 1975
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

One lay teacher felt that its lasting legacy was to bond religious and lay staff together, thereby forging a common purpose and identity: “There were nuns in it and there were nuns

helping and, you know, so like, it was a whole team effort...But I'd say it was that that really cemented..."[559] This is also echoed by Marion:

> We got to know them as, kind of, human beings and real people at that time...Yes, we certainly knew them better, and I suppose things were beginning to change after that stage then...That kind of cemented...the school community, all the staff together. There was great camaraderie. We all certainly got to know one another a lot more that time.[560]

As a pupil at that time, Alice was in the chorus, and recalls the sense of excitement and of being part of something special: "

> We did that for a couple of nights in the Presentation, and we went to Cork to do it...some place in Cork, which was very exciting... was just a sense of, again a sense of being special and being involved.[561]

Participation in the play, therefore, had repercussions that lasted long after the play itself had ended. For those above, it bonded lay and religious members of staff in a common purpose and identity. For others such as Karen, however, while she certainly subscribes to the views expressed above ("I would say the makings of that staff was the Nano Nagle play...of gelling the staff...all elements of that staff..."), it also brought meaning to the life story of Nano Nagle that had always been part of the school tradition and identity: "But to me, it was the Nano Nagle production...that really put her as a person in our lives."[562] For those participants, and others, cultural *capital*, in the form of these performances, not only reproduced valued forms of that *capital* but strengthened school identity among staff members, religious and non-religious alike.

---

559 Interview with Eleanor.

560 Interview with Marion.

561 Interview with Alice.

562 Interview with Karen.

5.6.2 The 1990 Amalgamation

By contrast, the amalgamation of 1990 was as event that caused a high degree of disruption to *habitus* for all staff members, both lay and religious, but particularly those in the smaller school. For some of the impacted participants, it brought an awareness of identity suddenly to the surface. Prior to 1990, and principally due to the sudden increase in pupil numbers resulting from the building of new housing estates in the school catchment area, two separate entities existed: a Junior school (*Scoil an Linbh Íosa*) and a Senior school (*Scoil Mháthair Dé*). By 1990, however, enrolment was declining and it was decided to amalgamate both schools, creating the school as it exists today. Since the Junior school[563] constituted the two Infant levels only, it was the smaller of the two, and had, since its inception in 1954/55, developed what the teachers who taught there felt was its own distinctive identity. In many ways, what developed illustrates classic Bourdieuian themes of division (Infant vs Senior schools) and competition within the *field* (a search to retain identity in a new social *field*).

When the prospect of amalgamation was suggested to both staffs, it came as a surprise and shock to everyone. Initially, the response was negative, even hostile: neither the Junior nor Senior school members felt the necessity for the move. Of participants who were impacted by the decision to proceed, those from the Junior school expressed a greater degree of emotional impact, and much of this was in terms of a loss of identity. Orla was the first lay member of the teaching staff in the Infant school. Here are some of her recollections at the time:

563 *Scoil an Linbh Íosa* was the Junior school prior to the amalgamation of 1990. It opened in 1956 and was an independent entity, accepting male and female pupils up to the end of 1st class for many years. Female pupils then progressed to the Senior school, *Scoil Mháthair Dé*, up to the end of 6th class. With the increase in pupil numbers in the 1960s, male pupils were accepted up to the end of Senior Infants. The policy of accepting boys in the infant classes was eventually discontinued in the late 1960s.

> I suppose that was the most traumatic thing. The amalgamation was awful...First of all, we didn't want it, you know, and the biggest problem was there was no discussion...It was imposed, and it just came like a bolt out of the blue. Now, the numbers were ok at the time. Now, there was a good few lay teachers and at that stage there weren't very many nuns there, at **that** stage, you know. There was a lay Principal there at the time, and it was just a bolt out of the blue...We were going to have to move out of our own building, and that was the biggest problem. We were happy where we were.[564]

For Orla, the greatest impact of the proposed amalgamation was the sudden removal from a familiar *field* of activity. It had its own authorised discourses and activities, accepted by all those who occupied it. For Orla and others, the lack of perceived need for change came as a shock.

The impact of the decision was also shared by participants who worked in the Senior school: "When we amalgamated, I'll never forget that! Maybe less said, the better..."[565] As the most senior lay teacher at the time of amalgamation, Eleanor recalls the very separate nature of both schools, and, despite being on the same grounds, there seemed to be very little communication between them: "They were two completely separate schools, and the little bit I knew I wouldn't have known if I hadn't children in there myself. Otherwise the teachers wouldn't know what was going on in the Infant school."[566] Because of this, she sympathised with what she knew was the unhappiness of the teachers there:

> I was on a course day, so therefore this meeting wasn't thought up beforehand...I suppose it was probably harder on the Infant school teachers insofar as it kind of was their school that was being a bit disbanded, you know, so it was nearly harder on them, you know. Our school was continuing on, like, you know...An identity. Yes. There were some who really wanted to hold onto it for a long time.[567]

---

564 Interview with Orla.

565 Interview with Irene.

566 Interview with Eleanor.

567 *Ibid*.

Eleanor recognised the distinctive, albeit independent, identity of the Junior school, and empathised with the staff's sense of loss.

On the other hand, some staff members took a more relaxed view of the decision. As one of the last teaching women religious in the smaller entity, Brenda couldn't understand why the whole affair caused such emotions: "When we joined up, amalgamation, I don't know why there was such a hullabaloo about it, you know?" While acknowledging the lack of consultation and how the change had been implemented, she had taught in both schools and was therefore more accepting of the proposed changes. Agnes, too, while conscious of the unhappiness of the Junior school staff ("the Infant school didn't want to come over with us at all. They were very resentful"[568]), she herself was quite at ease with the decision: "We didn't, I didn't mind it particularly."

During the interviews, the impact of amalgamation in negative terms was recalled more vividly by participants who had taught in the Junior school, and many of the comments were expressed in terms of a loss of identity. When it was finally implemented, it had far reaching effects for some of these staff members. Orla recalled:

> I remember one of the teachers, she was the Vice-Principal there at the time, and she was distraught...And when we moved, the relationships, now, weren't great. They were strained, and I remember that particular lady who was upset, she sat in the car every day at lunchtime. She went out and sat in her car... She didn't go to the staffroom for years, yes, she just couldn't cope with it. And when we did go down, then, we stayed teaching at the lower end of the school. It took a long time for that integration, where we wanted to move. All the infant teachers sat together in the Senior school.[569]

The sudden disruption in *habitus* within the *field* was equated by some to the loss of a perceived distinctive identity. Some participants were unable, or felt unable, to create new *habitus* within the newly-formed *field*, and expressed this by removing themselves

---

568 Interview with Agnes.

569 Interview with Orla.

completely from it, while the passage of time assisted the adjustment process for others. Many participants in this study considered the lack of communication and consultation to be the main cause of disruption and resentment. This in turn affected school atmosphere and identity within the newly-formed *field*, for some time afterwards. Events such as this bring to light in a vivid way the importance of managing change in ways that are sensitive to the feelings of those directly impacted by it.

This would not be the case with another distinctive *field* recalled by many participants, however. In this case, the individual used her personal store of *capital* to create a space where she operated independently of convent and school authorities, in the process displaying both agency and resistance.

5.6.3 "The Tin Shed"

In an interview with Loïc Wacquant, Pierre Bourdieu defined *field* as "...a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation..."[570] As a social arena, therefore, where struggles occur between actors for resources or access to them, *field* is a locus of struggle and power. Since the *field* in this study has a dual dimension- convent and school- and with actors bringing varying degrees of cultural, economic and religious *capital*, occupants of the *field* occasionally competed for power and influence. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area colloquially known as "the tin shed."

The "tin shed" is the name given to a specific locus of activity within the *field* of this study. Originally the site of the 1898 school building, it was of tin construction, divided into

---

570 Wacquant, "Towards a Reflexive Sociology," 39.

two sections and served variously as a classroom, impromptu performance area, Guide hall, cattery and music room for secondary school pupils (see Figures 36-38). For most of its life, however, it was fondly known as the 'tin shed' and was associated with one woman religious, Sr. Tina. Known principally for her love of cats, as a classroom it was considered her domain. Participants have described it as a place apart:

> Orla: She seemed to have her own, my memories of it, that she had her own independent, democratic republic over there...[571]
>
> Agnes: She was a long time on her own. She had her little kingdom on her own there.[572]



Figure 36: The 1898 school: Entrance from convent side
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

---

571 Interview with Orla.

572 Interview with Agnes.

As a pupil, Agnes's mother had known Sr. Tina as a novice, or a "white veil", as they were commonly known, so by the time Agnes herself had her as a teacher, she would have been considered one of the senior women religious in terms of length of time spent in the convent. In any case, she seems to have taken the young Agnes somewhat under her wing, since she credits her with teaching her the piano and giving her a love of music that lasts to the present day.



Figure 37: The Original 1898 school- the "Tin Shed" Front View
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

However, she clearly considered the tin shed as her own personal domain, for according to Agnes, she acted as gatekeeper to the tin shed on Saturdays when Agnes wanted to practise the piano, and in later years, when the unpleasant odour from the cats became something of a health hazard, she ignored remonstrations from her convent superiors:

> The smell used to come through, yes. It was a health hazard, really, but...they couldn't, she was a law unto herself…The Reverend Mother couldn't do anything with her...On a Saturday I used to go up at 3 o'clock and she used to leave the door open for me and I'd go in and...I'd play away on the piano.[573]

Agnes also recalled that Sr. Tina's father had owned a jeweller's shop in Cork. Sr. Tina may have considered she possessed superior amounts of *capital* in her *field* of activity- economic, social and cultural- to enable her to ignore her superiors' requests. For Agnes, and others, she gave the impression that she had created her own micro-*field* within the larger setting, controlled and managed by herself.



Figure 38: The "Tin Shed" side view
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

573 *Ibid.*

Clearly, therefore, as a *field* within a *field*, the 'tin shed' was an arena with a distinct *habitus*, generated in the first instance by the woman religious who taught there for many years. Coming from an affluent family, her social class and background pre-disposed her to activities such as music and drama, activities that came to be associated for many years with the *field* of social activity itself. She brought her extensive cultural and social *capital* to this *field*, and a socialised subjectivity was developed by her and those who followed.

5.7 Conclusion

For the majority of participants who entered religious life, the rule of enclosure facilitated the development of a distinctive, gendered *habitus* in a *field* of social activity that extended to the adjoining primary schools. The actors in these dual settings brought a variety of forms of *capital* to these settings- cultural, symbolic, social and spiritual- which were replicated and reproduced through the rituals of daily life. The motivations for entry were varied, but many were intrinsically linked to the educational mission for which the Order was initially founded. The formation process undergone by all participants created a gendered *habitus*, but also intersected with factors such as class and age, illustrating the dynamic nature of these *field*s. Participants also exercised a remarkable degree of human agency, illustrating their ability to negotiate challenges and obstacles, and in the process reach mutually fulfilling goals.

As a primarily teaching congregation, school life was an extension of convent life. The varied forms of *capital* were displayed in school, none more so than in the varied musical activities that many participants recalled as one of their most vivid memories. One particular play, however, which commemorated the bicentenary of the Order in 1975, was recalled as bonding the lay and religious staff members in a common identity. By contrast,

the amalgamation of both the Junior and Senior schools a number of years later was considered as impacting disproportionately the perceived identity of the smaller entity. Finally, the micro-*field* colloquially known as the "tin shed," run and managed by a woman religious, was recalled as a specific *field* of resistance to the prevailing *habitus*.

CHAPTER 6: POWER

"An attempt is also made to assure the quality of the time used: constant supervision...it is a question of constituting a totally useful time."[574]

6.1 Introduction

The religious community in Waterford was typical of its time. As an enclosed community stretching back over two hundred years, its mission centred on female education combined with a spiritual life lived and experienced within the strictures of enclosure. Life was also governed by rules and regulations drawn up and developed in the early years of the nineteenth century. They covered all aspects of everyday life and established practices that were reproduced with each succeeding generation of women religious. However, they also established clear lines of power and authority, both at an administrative level within the community, and among the occupants of the convent space. Drawing on the concepts of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), this chapter will consider the nature and impact of these practices on a number of levels- within the convent itself, within the adjoining primary school, and at the broader macro level of ecclesiastical structures. Techniques such as the distribution of individuals in space, the control of activity and classification according to rank were key components in the process of establishing clear power structures and producing what Foucault termed 'docile bodies.' They had as their ultimate aim self-regulation by individuals, with supervision and surveillance carried out by those in positions of power and influence.

---

574 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 150.

6.2 Power within the Convent Community

As referenced in a previous chapter, the community at the centre of this study was a long-established one, which had therefore long-established practices dating back over two hundred years. Many of these practices were documented in written form, such as the *Rules and Constitutions* and the *1850 Directory*. Foucault has noted the importance of detail in Christian education, scholastic or military pedagogy, and ultimately many areas of life as characteristic of the classical age, "...not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wishes to seize it."[575] Many of the practices employed at various levels within the convent setting can therefore be viewed through a Foucauldian lens, whose objective was to produce self-regulating 'docile bodies' which were in many ways essential to the harmonious functioning of an enclosed community.

6.2.1 Power Relations in the Novitiate

6.2.1.1 Separation

Reference has already been made in a previous chapter to the three phases of a rite of passage, namely separation, liminality and incorporation. Separation began from the moment of entry, the initial stage of the formation process. The initiate was separated from the old world before the process of incorporation into the new was to begin- both from their birth family and from the professed community. This moment of separation was clearly recalled by all participants, as these recollections demonstrate:

> Annabel: I remember obviously being brought upstairs. My parents were brought into the parlour, you know, it was all very formal. When I look back on it now, you didn't eat even with your family...Isn't that strange? They'd be given tea, like, but you sat and waited and watched them.[576]

---

575 *Ibid.,* 140.

576 Interview with Annabel.

> Monica: I remember saying goodbye to the neighbours, saying goodbye to my parents, well they came with me, and then saying goodbye to them in the parlour... We said goodbye and that was it, and then we found ourselves in a different environment.[577]
>
> Pauline: All I can see is Odette (sister) crying, you know.[578]

Even for Rachel, who had been a lay teacher in the school before deciding to enter, she was not allowed to speak to her former teaching women religious colleagues during her novitiate; her new sacred life was now completely separate from the old profane life.

For Foucault, enclosure provided a dedicated space which facilitated disciplinary techniques: "Discipline sometimes requires *enclosure*, the specification of a space heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony."[579] He was also of the view that it held a particular value within Catholicism: "For the Catholic Church, as in the Protestant countries, confinement represents, in the form of an authoritarian model, the myth of social happiness...There is, in these institutions, an attempt of a kind to demonstrate that order may be adequate to virtue."[580] Entering religious life, and particularly enclosed religious life, was accepting this sense of being apart and separate from the outside world, but equally marked the beginning of the process whereby the individual was distributed in space for disciplinary purposes. The enclosed and confined nature of religious life was also analogous to the establishment of medical centres in seventeenth century France: "...a sort of semijudicial structure...an instance of order..."[581] Segregation and separation were essential elements to this process.

---

577 Interview with Monica.

578 Interview with Pauline.

579 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.

580 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 59.

581 *Ibid.*, 37.

The sense of separation thus continued with the physical location of the novitiate itself. Located in a separate wing of the convent, there was a clear delineation in terms of space and freedom of movement:

> Annabel: When I entered, as novices, there were four of us in a kind of a, that's my memory, a kind of a dormitory-style, curtained off place, quite a big room but there were four of us in it...Now of course, as novices we weren't meant to be communicating with any of the (non-teaching Sisters).[582]
>
> Mary: In the early days, we didn't mix with the community at all, even, you know? We didn't, we were apart, we had our novitiate and we stayed in a separate section of the convent.[583]
>
> Rachel: We were in a...dormitory, exactly. There was four of us together in one room, but we had curtains between us...the novitiate was meant to be apart, away from the convent.[584]

Isobel, on the other hand, while recalling the separation between the professed and non-professed Sisters, also noted the advantages to such an arrangement:

> Novices were separate in so many ways, for training, for everything...We wouldn't have direct communication with the Sisters. **Neither** did we run away from one another, you know...I suppose then, you have always a difference between students and professors, students and teachers. We were only testing the ground for ourselves, and they were only testing it on us as well, I suppose. I think it would be quite normal...although mixing is probably good as well.[585]

Under Canon law, the novitiate had to be kept separate from the community. However, for Foucault, such measures were frequently employed to exercise discipline or therapeutic interventions on the body: "the need to distribute and partition off space in a rigorous manner."[586] Although Foucault was writing in a medical context, the similarity in terms of supervision and control of individuals is clear.

---

582 Interview with Annabel.

583 Interview with Mary.

584 Interview with Rachel.

585 Interview with Isobel.

586 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 144.

Novices and other non-professed women religious were also separated physically in the dining room. Not only did they serve the professed Sisters their meals before they had their own, novices had a designated table where they had all meals. As Rachel recalled: "And we were sitting together at a little short table in the dining-room...the novices...[587] This recollection is echoed by Pauline: "We didn't communicate with them, as novices. We were in the house, and we dined together and prayed together, but we weren't talking."[588] Caroline had similar memories: "We actually had our meals in the community, in there in the refectory with the others but we didn't actually sit with them."[589] She also noted the difference in treatment between her initial stay in the convent as a novice and her return later as a professed nun:

> I suppose now I was mixing with the community in Waterford. Before that the community Sisters didn't speak to the novices at all, at all, at all. We served the dinners and we served their meals and everything, but we had no contact with the, we weren't, they weren't meant to talk to us, either. They were asked not to speak to us.[590]

She explained this separation between the two groups in terms of attempting to form a community among novices themselves. This sense of strangeness was equally recalled by Monica, since she had known many of her new community in a previous life as a pupil and now, as a novice, was not permitted to speak to them:

> We were (kept separate), yes...which was a bit strange because we knew some of them as teachers, you know, so it was different to be relating to them in a different scenario, but we weren't supposed to be mixing with them...We were supposed to be on our own, but of course you'd see them and pass them and eat with them as well although at a separate table...Plenty of the jobs were left to us as well, of course![591]

---

587 Interview with Rachel.

588 Interview with Pauline.

589 Interview 1 with Caroline.

590 Interview 2 with Caroline.

591 Interview with Monica.

In Foucauldian terms, the dining-room was a functional site, a space left at the disposal of several uses but which facilitated supervision and the breaking of dangerous communications, while yet retaining its characteristic useful space.[592] Novices were therefore clearly aware that they were spatially distinct from their professed sisters, but equally the arrangement meant that communications between novices and lay sisters could be monitored.

The distribution and partitioning off space also extended to the exterior areas, since novices were restricted spatially in their movements outside the convent building. Rachel recalls in particular that, as a novice, there were designated areas and paths in the grounds for their use during afternoon recreation, and by implication, others that were only for the use of professed Sisters. She would therefore have been conscious of what was and was not permissible during this part of their daily exercise routine:

> Our walk was up and down to the cemetery...You went down and said your De Profundis down there. (As novices)...that was where you went, down...You couldn't go in the front of the house at all...Maybe the nuns could, alright. There was a walk down that way, too, but in the novitiate you couldn't do that.[593]

This strict regimentation and control was a visible sign that the convent grounds were divided according to rank and hierarchy within the community. For Brenda, who loved music and would have loved to have been able to contribute to the musical life of both convent and school, an existing incumbent made it clear that specific spaces within the convent interior were forbidden to her: "She wouldn't allow you to touch the organ or the piano or wouldn't allow you to go near it...Oh no, oh no, no way. You weren't allowed, and that was it."[594] Annabel, on the other hand, entered at the point where the changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council were beginning to be implemented. As a novice, she was therefore at liberty

---

592 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 143-144.

593 Interview with Rachel.

594 Interview with Brenda.

to leave the convent grounds in order to attend lectures and talks with other novices from different orders. Nevertheless, while power and control were sufficiently relaxed to enable her attend these lectures, it was limited in its application:

> So we walked down, so this was the big thing...That was twice a week. So that was very early on, that much, but it was straight down and back, like. You know, that was it, like.[595]

6.2.1.2 The Locus of Power

Working in tandem with the physical delineation of space was that of rank, what Foucault defines as the place one occupies in a classification.[596] Rank conferred power and authority, individualising, distributing and circulating bodies in a network of power relations.[597] For novices, power was vested in a small number of significant individuals, but was fulfilled in the main by the Mistress of Novices, who supervised and controlled all areas of life in the novitiate, and the community superior. The majority of participants do not recall the postholders of this position as having been unduly assertive in the enforcement of their obligations. Carmel felt that, compared to other convents, the regime in Waterford was quite relaxed, and attributed the attitude displayed by the Mistress of Novices as a key element:

> We were never terribly strict, like, in Waterford. You know the way you hear some of them saying they had strict rules...The novice mistress, I suppose, had a lot to do with it at the time, too.[598]

This view would also be shared by Pauline:

> We had a very fair novice mistress...You'd hear awful things about others, you know, how tough it was. In some places they had a very tough time, I'd say, but we didn't.[599]

---

595 Interview with Annabel.

596 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 145.

597 *Ibid.*, 146.

598 Interview with Carmel.

599 Interview with Pauline.

Nonetheless, they were quite conscious that she was a figure of considerable authority. Brenda recalls the requirement for permission to be sought after evening prayers by novices when they left the chapel when it was time to retire for the night:

> If you wanted to go to bed...When you'd come out of the chapel at quarter past 8 after night prayer, you'd stand around in a circle, and when the Superior or the Mistress of Novices came out you'd bow your head, you know...that was looking for permission to go. You wouldn't speak, like, you'd just bow your head.[600]

The insistence on bodily movements as opposed to the spoken word was obviously related to the rule of silence, but for Foucault this correlation of body and gesture was also a key technique of discipline, in this case a discipline of the body: "Discipline is a political anatomy of detail."[601]

Participants were clearly aware of the influence wielded by the significant authority figures. While the community at large voted on the candidate's suitability for progression through the various stages of the novitiate, the occupants of these positions also had a large input into the process. Rachel recalls that not everyone was successful:

> But I was looking at a book here lately, and I saw, like, so and so entered such a time and when it came to Reception she went home or something like that, or she wasn't accepted. 'Not accepted' was written down, you know...They decided whether you (were successful)...[602]

Although theoretically the novice was free to leave the convent, Rachel appears keenly aware that significant others played a large role in the successful negotiation of her passage through religious life.

Nonetheless, while invested with considerable power and influence, these authority figures were also capable of discretion in the decisions they made. Brenda recalls the reaction

---

600 Interview with Brenda.

601 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 139.

602 Interview with Rachel.

of her Mistress of Novices when she was reported for having gone into the kitchen area to greet the lay sisters:

> You couldn't go into the kitchen to talk to them...I went in there one day and I was reprimanded afterwards...I only went in and said hello to them, like, and when Mother I said it to me, "Well," I said, "Mother I., I did go in because I had never met them and I wanted to just say hello." She said that's alright, you know, she wasn't bad about it.[603]

Finally, power was exercised in the control of access to initiates. As part of the rite of passage as outlined in the previous chapter, separation from the birth family inevitably implied minimal contact with outside visitors. Many participants recalled the prohibition on outside visits for the first year of formation. This had the dual purpose of breaking the link with the old family and controlling the transition process towards the new. Until the changes brought about in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, this was also facilitated by the rule of enclosure. Few visits were permitted during the first year of formation, although family members were allowed to be present for First Profession ceremony. However, they were not allowed to witness the Final Profession, nor the Reception, although they could visit the newly-professed afterwards. The Foucauldian technique of separation would be clearly established at that point.

6.2.1.3 Daily Routine and Ritual: the Timetable

For Foucault, the timetable was the oldest and most effective means of controlling activity, with religious orders in particular the masters of discipline: "they were the specialists of time, the great technicians of rhythm and regular activities."[604] It partitioned time into useful segments, leaving little opportunity for distraction or idleness. Work also had a moral imperative: "the obligation to work assumes its meaning as both ethical exercise and moral

---

604 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 150.

guarantee."[605] O'Donoghue and Harford have termed the timetable one of the 'rituals of intensification,'[606] which also included regular examination of conscience in order to become self-regulating 'docile bodies' and minds. For the participants in this study, no mention was made of the latter. However, recollections of their early initiation into the practices of religious life were characterised by a high degree of regulated activity and their daily ritual closely followed that of their professed counterparts. As the oldest participant, Annemarie's recollection would be quite typical of that of the general cohort:

> The typical day was: bell rang at 6 a.m. If you were the bell ringer for the week, you got up in time to make your way downstairs with a lighted candle, cos the lights didn't come on till 6, and you went down and you stood by the bell until the clock struck 6. And then you tolled a bell to wake up everybody else, and then the lights came on and you blew out the candle. And at half past 6 everybody was in the chapel for a half hour meditation. At 7 o'clock, then, we said morning psalms, and that took quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, and then mass was at 7.30, and breakfast at 8, and after breakfast then, back to the chapel again for another quarter of an hour. And after that you'd go upstairs and tidy your place, make your bed and generally, you know, prepare for the day. And then spiritual reading for quarter of an hour, then get your things ready, together, whatever you'd be bringing out to school, you'd have it ready I suppose. We had little lockers downstairs near the back door, and then before school, we went out for a little fresh air if the day was fine, and then over to school for, I suppose, 9...And that was it, then, for the day. You came in then and had your midday meal, back out to school again. Then in the evening, you came in then from school and there was community recreation for an hour, from 4 to 5, and then prayers at 5 o'clock till about half past 5, or 20 past anyway, then you prepared your schoolwork until 6 and then that was supper at 6. Then after supper, out to the school and close all the windows, lock the doors and do anything that needed to be done around the school and, er, come into the chapel for a quarter to 8, or- no, 20 past 7, yeah 20 past 7 actually into the chapel, and then you'd be in the chapel until about a quarter past 8. And then there was recreation again until 9 and back to the chapel for night prayers and then after that go away and get ready to go to bed.[607]

Even the weekends, when there was no school to attend, had their own timetable:

---

605 Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 55.

606 O'Donoghue and Harford, "The conception, construction and maintenance of the identity of Roman Catholic female religious teachers," 420.

607 Interview 2 with Annemarie.

> If you weren't in school then you were sweeping and polishing and, not just your own place, but the community room, the cloister, the parlours, the library, the dining-room, the chapel, the novitiate, all those common areas had to be cleaned. They were all cleaned on Saturdays. So all the able-bodied had brushes and mops and dusters and polishers.. on Sunday we had extra prayers because we had half an hour's prayers for the dead on Sundays.[608]

As novices, they were also expected to help the lay sisters with many household tasks. For many years, the convent was virtually self-sufficient in dairy products and vegetables, due principally to the use of part of the grounds as a farm. However, this entailed an extra degree of manual labour in such activities as butter making and, of course, the laundry and care necessary to cater for the needs of a large community. Annabel recalls the division of labour that existed in her early years in the convent:

> Oh we were kept busy. We weren't lolling around, doing nothing. Yes, we all had jobs to do, like, in terms of the convent.. and we would also have had, you know, as younger ones we would have helped with the older people, you know. I can remember Sr. Molly, washing Sr. Molly's feet and we used to have great chats. Yes, we'd be bringing up trays to people who might be in bed or, so we were kind of looking after the older people as well.. and doing things and we were...helping (in) the laundry...I can remember as a novice being down there breaking up butter for the tables.[609]

This view is supported by Carmel:

> The laundry was all done together and some one of us would help to fold it...I know I helped out in the dairy once, making butter...We had a dairy down in Waterford, down in the basement.[610] (See Figure 39)

While there was undoubtedly a high degree of regulated activity, typifying Foucault's notion of a "totally useful time,"[611] the reality would appear to be slightly more nuanced than at first sight. Carmel asserts, for example, that novices in the Waterford convent experienced more freedom to pursue personal interests than comparable novices elsewhere:

---

608 *Ibid.*

609 Interview with Annabel.

610 Interview with Carmel.

611 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 150.

> We had a fair bit of freedom, yes. We were unlike, I'd say, lots of others that we used to hear about...They were very rigid, but we didn't have that experience...I definitely would say it was positive. It gave us time to develop our own, you know, qualities.[612]

This would certainly accord with Foucault's contention that power and discipline was not necessarily negative in nature; rather it had the potential to be productive and useful.



Figure 39: Convent Cellar
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran

6.2.1.4 The Rule of Silence

Another 'ritual of intensification' or disciplinary technique was that of the rule of silence. As an enclosed community, it had been observed for many decades, but it was also one that posed challenges for some participants in this study. Although a number of exceptions were permitted, it would appear to have been enforced quite rigidly, particularly at mealtimes, which were overseen by the four principal authority figures, or experts, within the convent who sat at the top table overseeing the rest of the community.

---

612 *Ibid.*

> Brenda: And then there was strict silence at dinner and strict silence in the morning and strict silence at tea. The only time you could speak was of a feast day or Christmas and Easter. They were the only times...The Mother Superior, the other was the Assistant, the other was the Mistress of Novices, and...the Bursar...They were the four principal people...They were up at the top in our place. They were facing us down so they could miss nothing. Four of them.[613]

> Carmel: We had our breakfast, in silence...you'd be dying to say something, you know, pass some remark or something, and 'twas kind of, 'twould kind of inhibit you a little bit.[614]

> Isobel: We had silence at meals for a lot of the time, same as retreat times now.. We'd be playing music and we had reading at lunchtime, dinner time.[615]

> Annemarie: We didn't speak at meals. We took our meals in silence...We had reading during the meal. There was somebody reading. Now I know in some convents they read through the whole meal, but we had a very short reading and then the reader sat down and had her dinner.[616]

Foucault's incorporation of Bentham's Panopticon[617] is particularly apparent in the first quotation above, with its implication of surveillance and normalising judgment of those being observed. It can equally be interpreted as one of the techniques of self-regulating docile bodies, which was the ultimate objective of the Panopticon. Nonetheless, from participant responses, it did not always meet with success. Annabel's interpretation of the rule of silence was couched in terms of its relationship to the monastic model:

> Yes, there was, there was silence at meals, and the thinking behind it was, you see it was all on a monastic model... That's what the monastic life was, you know, that's how ours was...It was the same, yes.[618]

At the same time, she recalled the deviance of some within her own cohort, citing memories of giggling and laughing: "We used be laughing and giggling and, do you know, all sorts...get

---

613 Interview with Brenda.

614 Interview with Carmel.

615 Interview with Isobel.

616 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

617 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228.

618 Interview with Annabel.

a fit of laughing or something."[619] These social agents showed themselves capable of autonomous action, but as McNay points out, the fact that the social system is not straightforwardly reproduced "…is not a guarantee of the inherently resistant nature of their actions."[620]

For novices in particular, silence also extended past mealtimes and would appear to have been both monitored and admonished accordingly. Having eventually received permission to visit her father before he died, Rachel recalls the evening she returned to the convent:

> There were all rooms there together and they wanted to hear, you know, and I suppose I was telling them what happened and all that kind of thing, you know, about the funeral and whatever else, but anyway I was corrected next day for all the noise I made...Breaking the silence. There was silence, you see, from nine o'clock.[621]

Having no idea how her transgression was reported to the convent authorities, Rachel was made aware of the panoptic gaze in operation.

6.2.1.5 Choice of Career

Finally, the subjugation of personal wishes to the community good entailed a certain exercise of power. Many participants had expressed a strong desire to participate in the community message of teaching as part of their motivation for entering religious life. However, their personal preferences- either at subject or grade level- did not always correspond with the community needs in the adjoining schools. This was in addition to the existing distinction on entry between the teaching and the lay sisters within the convent, itself a function of economic, educational and class differentials. Mary's motivation in entering

---

619 *Ibid.*

620 McNay, "Gender, *Habitus* and the *Field*," 105.

621 Interview with Rachel.

religious life was clearly linked with a desire to participate in the teaching mission of the order. She declared that she was totally unaware until entry that a distinction existed within the convent between lay and teaching Sisters. Nonetheless, she was conscious at an early stage of the gulf between her future and that of the lay sisters simply because she was given the opportunity to reproduce more educational *capital* for the community enterprise: "We went on and we went to college so there was that difference all the time, you know."[622]

For those destined for teaching, however, the choice between the primary and secondary levels was not one made by novices themselves. Rather, it seems to have been one made by the convent authorities, and the majority of participants, should they have had other personal preferences, spoke of their acceptance in terms of the vow of obedience and community needs, albeit with a certain underlying implicit regret for unfulfilled wishes and preferences. As outlined in the previous chapter, many had chosen to enter the Presentation Order because of their wish to continue the teaching mission for which it had been founded. It was only natural, therefore, that one of the first decisions to be taken after entry was where each individual would be placed.

Of all participants, Monica seems to have had the greatest regrets that her personal preference was not to be: "I was looking forward to teaching in the primary school. Never got there, though! So I ended up at second level."[623] She had also hoped to study her favourite subjects, but this was not to be either: "...or even in the choice of subjects. I remember I was dying to do Irish...I thought I was kind of good at Irish. It was arranged that I would do Irish, but when I got to college, there was a clash in the timetable."[624] Annabel also thought initially that she was destined for primary teaching: "Actually, I thought I was going to do primary

622 Interview with Mary.

623 Interview with Monica.

624 *Ibid.*

teaching, because they were getting me ready for it...At some point then it changed and I was asked to do Latin quickly in Leaving Cert."[625] She also subsequently became a secondary school teacher. One senses in Monica's account, in particular, a sense of regret for unfulfilled ambitions and lost opportunities.

Both concluded that their destiny was determined in terms of the needs of the school at any given time: "You were more or less told where you were going and what you were doing, what the needs were, I suppose, what they felt they needed."[626] It was also expressed in terms of the vow of obedience: "Yes, you took it that...you were told where to go."[627] Whatever the reason, it was clear that they had no input into the final decision, it being firmly in the hands of either the Reverend Mother or Mistress of Novices or both: "The Reverend Mother (and the Mistress of Novices) probably might have had some input into it, yes."[628] This exercise of power could clearly be said to overrule personal preferences in favour of the needs of the community and its mission. Annabel remarked during her interview that subsequent entrants had a greater input into their career paths within the order. However, by removing the individual from the decision-making process, it enabled influential others within the community to exercise a greater degree of power and control over entrants, thereby reducing those concerned to passive, accepting participants.

6.2.1.6 Change over Time

One of the immediate consequences wrought by the Vatican II changes was the ability to leave the convent and visit birth families and relatives. For Mary, who had met with

---

625 Interview with Annabel.

626 *Ibid.*

627 *Ibid.*

628 *Ibid.*

determined opposition from her mother when she announced her decision to enter religious life, and embraced the complete break from her former life, the removal of enclosure, when it happened, was embraced equally enthusiastically. The possibility of renewing contact with her parents was a source of joy and pleasure:

> I was about ten years entered then when enclosure was...taken away, and didn't I enjoy going home. I loved it. Once we got it, I loved it. My parents were still alive. I was delighted to be able to go home.[629]

From her mother's perspective, the opportunity to see her daughter again, combined with the passage of time, made the event an occasion worth marking in a special way:

> My first day we got two nights at home, three days and two nights, so it was a big excitement when I was going home. So for breakfast next morning she wore a white apron on her and she got the breakfast ready in the parlour. (laugh)[630]

Although this event was not repeated, the sense of pleasure in resuming normal family relations was clear: "So that was only once. But it was great to get home. It was wonderful."[631] This pleasure was also noted by a former pupil whose family had long had close connections with the Waterford community: "When they were left out, then...it was a new world for them, kind of...They didn't go **mad**, but they liked to be able to get home or go to Tramore."[632] The symbolic destruction of the Foucauldian prison walls obliged the social actors to adapt to previously taken for granted structures of power and control.

However, while the removal of the rule of enclosure undoubtedly impacted positively on previous relationships outside the convent, it had other far-reaching consequences. Isobel, for instance, noted the visible impact within community life itself:

---

629 Interview with Mary.

630 *Ibid.*

631 *Ibid.*

632 Interview with Michael.

> You know, you had each individual within the community, whereas in the earlier days that was so structured. You knew where you should be at a particular time. You knew what you should be doing. I don't mean it as strictly as that, now, whereas in latter, "I didn't see so-and-so today. Is she around?" (laugh) You know? And then they'd say, "Oh, I forgot, she was doing such a thing" or something.[633]

The change in emphasis from a rigid, structured timetable to one which encouraged a return to the original charism and the assumption of personal responsibility, was one which impacted hugely on all religious communities, but which posed new challenges to community cohesion, particularly in terms of community cohesion.

6.2.2 Choir vs Lay Sisters

6.2.2.1 Restrictions in Space

By far the most visible sign of power relations within the convent, however, was the position of the lay sisters. Magray has noted that these women were primarily drawn from farming or poor urban backgrounds, and had responsibility for the domestic chores of the convent.[634] The *1850 Directory* outlined their duties and distinct features of their position within the community, such as not taking the fourth vow of Instruction.[635] For Bourdieu, their position was a reflection of the various forms of *capital* they brought to their *field*, particularly their economic, cultural, social and educational *capital*. As agents with a lower volume of valued forms of *capital*, they were distributed within the distinct social space of the kitchen area.[636] From their moment of entry, therefore, their status was different to that of their teaching sister colleagues. For the purposes of this section, the emphasis will centre on their designated spaces within the convent building.

---

633 Interview with Isobel.

634 Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*, 42.

635 *1850 Directory*, 167-177.

636 Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 17.



Figure 40: East Elevation and 'Back Door' to kitchen area
Source: Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran

The convent area can be compared to a geographic space divided up into regions- kitchen, novitiate, chapel, dining-room, etc.- and occupied by social groups within the community as a whole. The closer the agents or groups situated within this space, the more common the properties they have.[637] Other agents within the general social space can encounter one another occasionally. However, their interactions mask the structures that are realised and reproduced in them. This created conditions in which certain interactions were avoided, but within which agents also created their own social group, what Goffman calls the "sense of one's place."[638] Others were kept at a distance, to maintain their rank and not get

637 *Ibid.*

638 *Ibid.*

familiar.[639] While such strategies may be unconscious, the social distances they represent are inscribed in the bodies, language, space and time.

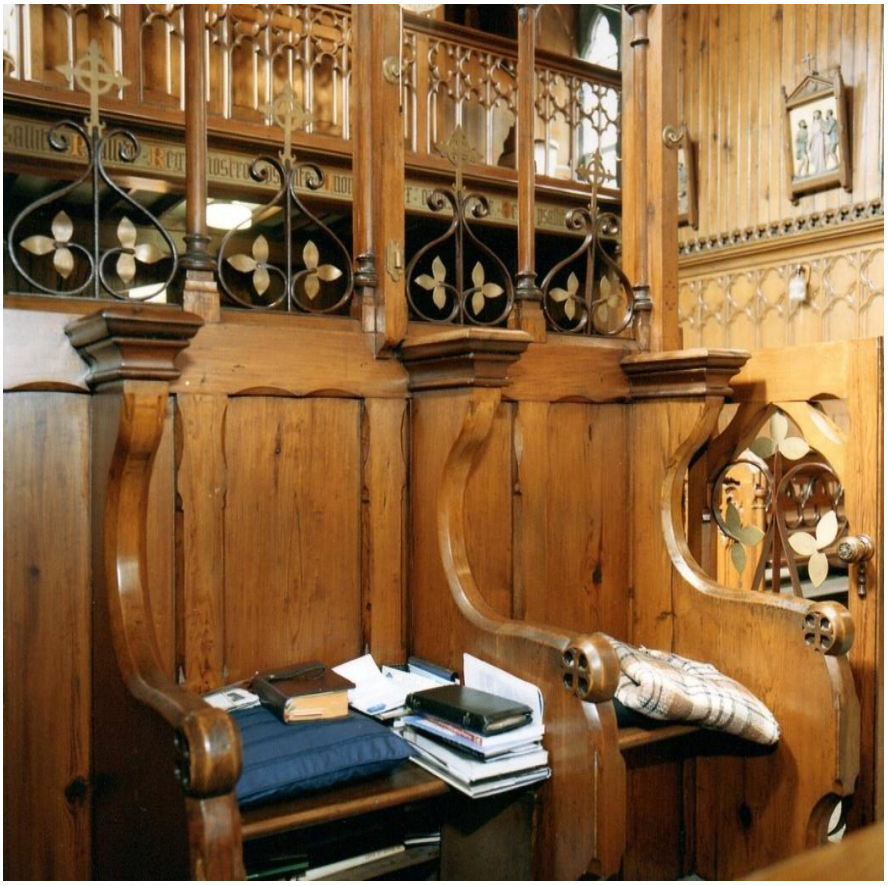


Figure 41: Choir stalls in convent chapel
Source: Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran.

While the lay sisters' space centred around the kitchen area (Figure 40 above), there were other distinct spaces within the convent building, too, such as the chapel and dining-room:

> Brenda: Even in the church they had their own places.[640]
>
> Rachel: They were at the back of the chapel, too, which wasn't that nice, you know.[641]

639 *Ibid.*

640 Interview with Brenda.

641 Interview with Rachel.

> Brenda: Even at recreation they'd be in a place of their own, you know, at a table or somewhere, they wouldn't mix...when you went into our refectory, they were over by the wall on their own.[642]

Although a novice herself, Rachel was conscious of the distinct places reserved for community members in the chapel space (Figure 41): "They weren't up where we were...Remember those back seats there."[643] This is a comment echoed by Mary: "Now they came with us to prayers, but they were behind us, you know, they were at the back...There was a visible distinction, yes."[644] The rood screen, a distinctive feature of Pugin architecture (Figure 42), was originally designed to separate the community from the general public. However, for Foucault, it also served as a means of classifying according to rank. Equally, while the separate space in the dining-room fulfilled the regulations laid down in the *1850 Directory,*[645] it also classified occupants who inhabited that space.

Although no lay sister participated in this research, we do have rich observations that reflect personal experiences by those who knew these women as evidence. For example, Mary remembers vividly the sense of discomfort she experienced when she first encountered the separate spaces within the convent building:

> Now, when I entered…we had a big dining-room and outside that dining-room there was another dining-room. And for the first time in my life I discovered that there was a distinction. We went into one dining-room, what we were called the, I supposed you'd call us the teaching sisters and, now we weren't lay sisters, but the lay sisters had a special dining-room. I remember…we had to pass out through their dining-room and they wouldn't still be finished because they would have served us, and they'd have cooked the meals and they'd be late having their…dinner or supper, and I remember well they'd all stop eating when we'd pass out… I remember getting such a shock to discover that there was two divisions in the convent, and I remember it was the first time I thought, 'Oh God, I wonder will I go home.'[646]

---

642 Interview with Brenda.

643 *Ibid.*

644 Interview with Mary.

645 *1850 Directory*, 172.

646 Interview with Mary.



Figure 42: Chapel showing organ loft and rood screen
Source: Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran

One of the core tasks required of all religious communities by Vatican II was a complete revision of constitutions, and the practices to emerge from this process would change the nature of community life for every member.

6.2.2.2 Differential in status

The *1850 Directory* laid down detailed regulations for lay sisters, which established a difference in status within the convent. While the teaching Sisters could make solemn vows and look forward to a memorable ceremony celebrated by the entire community, lay sisters were only entitled to make simple vows. Neither did they have voting rights in the election of positions of authority such as convent superior, bursar, etc. Even the status of novices was

higher: at mealtimes, novices would have their meal before the lay sisters, and also occupy a higher position in the convent chapel. Their positional identity and perception by others was greatly different to their more visible choir sister colleagues. One of the male participants, Michael, reflects this invisible presence: "You had nuns for the kitchen. People forget them. There were nuns in the kitchen."[647] They became in many ways what Clarke describes as "implicated actors," silenced or only discursively present in situations.[648] While physically present, they were made invisible by those having greater power within the community.

Strangely, many of the women religious themselves interviewed as part of this research seemed unaware of the reasons why their lay sister colleagues never rose above the position of domestic tasks. Brenda thought it was a combination of personal choice and educational attainment on entry: "I think that was their own choice, in one way, and maybe it was, too, that they hadn't their Leaving Cert."[649] This is a view also echoed by Mary:

> A lot of them may not have done their Leaving Cert, you know, and they wouldn't be qualified to go on for training. Now, some of them by choice would have said they wanted housework.[650]

6.2.2.3 Perceptions of Lay Sisters

The perception of lay sisters by significant others could, and did, vary enormously. The perspective of the teaching women religious participants was generally that the lay sisters were not treated in a noticeably inferior way within the convent structure. Annemarie, the oldest participant, recalled being somewhat envious of them:

---

647 Interview with Michael.

648 Adele E. Clarke, Carrie Friese and Rachel Washburn, *Situational Analysis in Practice: Mapping Research with Grounded Theory* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2015), 16.

649 Interview with Brenda.

650 Interview with Mary.

> I think as a teaching nun, we thought the non-teaching nuns had a great time...They had an interesting life, you see. They met all the visitors, they sort of knew everything that was going on.[651]

However, others took different perspectives:

> Brenda: They were priceless...They'd be over there (by the wall on their own) and they wouldn't get their dinner until we'd be served. Even novices would get their dinner before them. Oh it was tough going, I may tell you, now...I'd say they felt it, because I'd say some of them had a chip on their shoulder afterwards, especially I think Sr. Vera might have felt it, because they were completely on their own, even at recreation they'd be in a place of their own, you know, at a table or somewhere, they wouldn't mix.[652]
>
> Isobel: I don't know, really...I'd have heard in other places where they certainly did (consider themselves second class citizens), and I think it would depend very much on personalities.[653]
>
> Monica: I suppose we wouldn't initially have been aware that there were lay sisters. Certainly I didn't know, as a pupil, like, we just thought, well, these were teaching and those were doing something else, you know. We wouldn't have distinguished between them.[654]

Pauline and Annabel, though not of the same age, both recall that close friendships could, and often did, exist between the professed and lay sisters, friendships often fostered in the early years of convent life as a novice:

> Pauline: We were always very friendly with them, actually, as white veils. We used to help down where they were doing, the laundry was done for everyone together.[655]
>
> Annabel: I know now when I look at friendships within the community. Like, Vera was a very good friend of Annemarie's...Bella was a very good friend of Penny (C) who is now in Clonmel...who would have been in school...while Breda would have been in the kitchen, Vera would have been in the kitchen, Annemarie would have been in school...They had different functions but I had no sense of them not being different.[656]

---

651 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

652 Interview with Brenda.

653 Interview with Isobel.

654 Interview with Monica.

655 Interview with Pauline.

656 Interview with Annabel.

Differences between lay and choir sisters were frequently explained in terms of the division of labour necessary to the smooth functioning of the convent and adjoining schools. This was obviously considered an important element in the community enterprise. Nonetheless, from the comments above, the exercise of power did not necessarily exclude relationships forming between individuals in delineated spaces within the community.

For those outside the community, however, the perception could be, and often was, very different. Orla was both a pupil and later a teacher in the primary school. Her recollections, informed also by conversations she would have had with certain women religious within the convent, are very different:

> Orla: I suppose, as a child, you were always aware of the hierarchy in the convent, and that was something that always kind of, I suppose I'd use the word irritated me to an extent. You knew there were kitchen nuns and they were referred to as the kitchen nuns, because obviously they weren't intelligent enough to teach, but if you didn't have the kitchen nuns, how was the convent going to run, do you know? Yes, yes, (we had the impression) that they were kind of second-class citizens. They were probably third-class citizens, actually.[657]

Agnes was also a pupil and her early memories of the lay sisters are expressed in terms of the assigning of work and their spatial distribution in the spiritual centre of the convent:

> Agnes: There was Sr. Bella and Sr. Angela. They were lovely and there was another nun, a lovely nun…They were the kitchen nuns. They were the cooks. You'd get a gorgeous smell of tarts and cakes and brown bread, a beautiful smell always...I wouldn't think they would have been particularly happy. I think they were put upon, and they were there...You see, they wouldn't have dowries...I wouldn't have thought they were particularly happy. No, not the kitchen nuns. I think they had a lot of work to do. They were the dogsbodies, I think, for everybody else. They were really on a different scale...But there was a big division, yes, there definitely was a division. I don't even think they sat in the same stalls as the other nuns.[658]

Participant responses would suggest that many former pupils indeed had fond associations with the lay sisters, contact with whom was usually when visiting the 'back

---

657 Interview with Orla.

658 Interview with Agnes.

door.' This was indeed the back door of the convent but was for generations of children and adults alike the locus of first aid, pastoral care in the form of lunches and food, and general family support within the wider community. Many former pupils remember those who answered the door with considerable fondness. Typical of this group were Margaret and her sister, Sinéad. Margaret associated the back door with the welcome given by one particular lay sister there: "Oh, (we) met Sr. Breda, time out of number and she always had a lovely smile."[659] Her sister, Sinéad, on the other hand, was firmly of the opinion that the lay sisters had an inferior status within the convent, but yet she retained fond memories of two in particular:

> Sr. Vera was lovely. She was streets above the hard-nosed ones...She never seemed to have the same status, but she rose above it all with a smile. And I think I remember a Sr. Bella. Bella was nice...She was lovely, oh, she was lovely.[660]

When asked to explain this comment in more detail, she remarked: "It was something about the way she was spoken to and spoken of...(When) they were speaking to Vera...there was a difference, there was, and I don't know why. But it was just accepted. 'Ah, she's in the kitchen.'"[661] To her, this contrasted sharply with the way the teaching nuns spoke to each other: "When the (teaching) nuns were speaking to each other, they were very (much) on the same level."[662]

6.2.2.4 Perceptions of Change in Status over Time

The initial regulations laid out in the *1850 Directory* are interesting from a historical perspective of how lay sisters were initially intended to be admitted into the congregation.

---

659 Interview with Margaret.

660 Interview with Sinéad.

661 *Ibid.*

662 *Ibid.*

Destined for "the service of the Monastery,"[663] after an initial probationary period and with the consent of the community, they could begin a six month Postulantship, spend two years as a white veil, and remain under the direction of the Mistress of Novices for four years after Profession. Like the novices, they were to spend eight days in retreat both before Reception and Profession, and differed from their vows only in not taking the fourth, that of instruction, renewable on a yearly basis.

A number of distinctions set them apart from the rest of the community, however. They were not to participate in morning and evening prayers, for example: "They shall say every day the five decade beads, as a substitute for Matins and Lauds..."[664] and they were to have dedicated places in the chapel: "They shall assist at Mass daily, kneeling in the place destined for them."[665] However, when receiving Communion, their status was superior to that of the novices: "The professed Lay Sisters shall communicate before the unprofessed Novices."[666] Respect, obedience and diligence to duty were considered essential attributes: "They shall be most docile in attending to all her (M. Assistant or Superior) orders, remembering that blind and prompt obedience is the most meritorious virtue of their state."[667] The gulf in status between a teaching and non-teaching woman religious was also noticeable: "If they be appointed to assist any Religious in an employment, they shall treat her with great deference and respect, although she be even younger than themselves- obeying her directions in every particular."[668] Of particular interest is the stipulation pertaining to mealtimes: "They

---

663 *1850 Directory*, 167.

664 *Ibid.*,169.

665 *Ibid.*

666 *Ibid.*, 170.

667 *Ibid*., 171.

668 *Ibid.*

take their repasts in the Refectory with the Religious at the end of one (of) the tables, or a place prepared for themselves, if there be not sufficient room."[669] Following Vatican II, one of the core tasks of all religious communities was a complete revision of constitutions, a process in which the Waterford community actively participated. The changes introduced according to the requirements laid down in the documents *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Ecclesiae Sanctae* subsequently removed these distinctions and created a more democratic form of governance in all religious communities.

Foucault envisaged the distribution of individuals in space, the enclosed monastic model, the functional sites, the useful spaces and rank or classification as essential components in disciplinary techniques, since they facilitated the control and supervision of individuals and thereby the production of docile bodies. The clear delineation, in both regulations and space, between the choir and lay sisters, clearly reflected these notions. Supervision and surveillance, as noted by participants such as Brenda, would suggest that such techniques were successfully achieved. However, participant responses would appear to recall a greater degree of segregation than that originally envisaged in the *1850 Directory*. The changes introduced in the wake of Vatican II would, among others, break the distinction between both groups of women religious.

The transition from a segregated to more integrated social setting was one that occurred gradually, but was nonetheless generally embraced by female religious communities. As one of the limitations of this study, it was not possible to hear the voice and experience of lay sisters themselves. The reader is therefore left with only the views and perceptions of others. The participants in this study, teaching women religious, appear to suggest that the lay sisters found this transition difficult:

669 *Ibid.*, 172.

> Pauline: Now, at that time, they used to have their own recreation, separate, you know, and it was afterwards when they were brought in to the whole community, there was a change. They didn't like it a bit, because they had their own way (routine).[670]
>
> Mary: There weren't that many in Waterford...they were a little group on their own... Now I'd say the lay sisters still found it hard, because they were separated for so long. I'd say they found it hard enough to integrate. They were nearly happier to stay on their own.[671]
>
> Brenda: They had more freedom the other way. Well, that's what they said to me, anyway.[672]

Caroline, who subsequently returned to the community as a professed woman religious, noted the changes in terms of the new seating arrangements: "They sat with the community then. But I think in years gone by they didn't sit with the community. They sat behind the rest of the community."[673] Foucault's dedicated, segregated spaces were gone, with those who now occupied them having experienced some difficulty in adapting to the new configurations.

6.3 Power Within the School: Disciplinary Techniques

In his book *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault opens with a graphic account of the punishment inflicted on the body of 'Damiens the regicide' in 1757, followed by a bland listing of the rules and regulations governing the 'House of young prisoners in Paris' eighty years later. This was to illustrate the change in penal practices in that period, particularly the change from physical punishment as a public spectacle to one more hidden or private in nature, but of greater importance, the shift from punishment of the 'body' to that of the 'soul' or 'psyche'. These changes can be seen clearly in the school and classroom setting. Foucault himself noted the use of the timetable in the control of activity and the examination as a

---

670 Interview with Pauline.

671 Interview with Mary.

672 Interview with Pauline.

673 Interview 1 with Caroline.

technique of observing hierarchy and normalising judgment. To this is added the spatial arrangement of the classroom itself- in rows or ranks- and the move from physical punishment to more subtle disciplinary techniques.

6.3.1 The Use of Corporal Punishment

For many participants in this study, whether religious or lay, power within school life was characterised by the use of physical chastisement in the form of corporal punishment. In this respect, the responses to memories of the use and degree of corporal punishment proved extremely interesting indeed. Participants in the first group, the former teaching women religious, had little or no recollection of it being used. For those in the second, former lay teachers, memories varied but would generally tend towards being remembered as being used extremely rarely and memorable for its rarity. For the third group, however, former pupils, there was a remarkable degree of unanimity on its widespread use, both by the lay and religious staff members. All participants would have been either pupils and/or teachers during the period prior to its abolition in the early 1980s.

Historically, of course, corporal punishment had been a regular feature of Irish schooling and education. In her book *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland*, Moira J. Maguire noted that documentary and biographical sources from the period "all reveal a sustained pattern of violence that was striking in its regularity and in its acceptance."[674] This was pervasive in the home, the school and the wider community. She concluded that available evidence supported the claim that corporal punishment was commonplace and that parents themselves generally supported a teacher's right to punish their children.[675]

---

674 Maguire, *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland*, 150.

675 *Ibid.*, 159.

In the *1850 Directory*, however, the instructions in this area for all teaching Presentation nuns were clear:

> They must never, through impatience, nor otherwise, strike or hurt them; should chastisement of this kind be found necessary, it must only be inflicted on them at home, and by their parents or guardians; for to them, it properly belongs to give manual correction.[676]

The perspective of former pupils is noteworthy. With virtual unanimity, they would all recall the widespread and frequent use of corporal punishment, by both religious and lay teachers alike. For Sinéad, its use constituted the most vivid memory of school life, to the point of overshadowing many other aspects. She made frequent reference to both the forms it took and the reasons for which it was used. Yet, while using the word "vicious" a number of times, she remarked at the same time that punishment was rarely exercised for not doing homework; rather it was used for not knowing some element of class work.[677] This would seem to suggest that some degree of understanding existed regarding possible difficulties in doing homework for certain pupils. Her sister, Margaret, who was in the same class, had equally vivid memories, particularly for incidents of perceived insolence: "Wrong answer. Hands! "Hold out your hands."...That was harsh. The stick would go up...intention to hurt."[678] Nonetheless, it did not seem to have the same impact on her, since her references were fewer and she balanced these memories with other, kinder ones. Some former pupils who later became teachers themselves did not expressly recall the same level of physical chastisement.

Nearly thirty years later, one of the youngest participants, Alana, could recall its widespread use for misdemeanours such as not doing homework or misbehaviour in class. Nonetheless, she equally relates it to the prevailing societal attitudes and did not consider there was a sadistic element to its use:

---

676 *1850 Directory*, 10.

677 Interview with Sinéad.

678 Interview with Margaret.

> The nun I had for five years, she had a cane, and she used it on your hand, both hands actually. She did use it, yes. Now I don't think, she done it, but to me it wasn't as if she was vicious about it. You got it because you didn't do your homework or you didn't do what you were being told to do.[679]

Former lay teachers, on the other hand, many of whom would have been teaching both before and after its abolition, were more ambivalent in their recollection. For Marion, one of the first lay teachers to be appointed to the staff, behaviour was seldom an issue, with the emphasis generally one of encouragement and positivity. She could only recall one incident which involved corporal punishment and was memorable for its rarity:

> The children were well behaved. There was no...corporal punishment at that time. I never saw anybody...There was only one occasion…The children went down the stairs. They were supposed to be going out at 11, and a few of mine decided they would go down through the hall and they were playing around the curtains, running in and out, having hide and seek, you know...swinging out of the curtains or something, and one of the nuns saw them and complained them. She gave them two or three slaps each with a **cane**. I had never seen a cane being administered. I don't know where it came out of, but I was horrified. I was really upset about it...It was only the one incident, and I didn't think it warranted (corporal punishment).[680]

Marion's horrified reaction to the sight of a cane for the infliction of physical punishment may result from her claim that it was the only occasion she witnessed its use. However, the recollections of former pupils would indicate that its use was more widespread than she remembered.

Like Marion, Irene had no previous connection with the Presentation order either in Waterford or elsewhere, and her recollection is also that it was rarely used: "I'm one of the ones who remembers corporal punishment, not that we used it very often."[681] She also remembers the general standard of behaviour as being very good, hence negating the need to resort to physical chastisement. Recalling that it was abolished soon after she began her

---

679 Interview with Alana.

680 Interview with Marion.

681 Interview with Irene.

teaching career, she also expressed her dislike of corporal punishment in terms of her own experiences as a pupil:

> We never used a lot of corporal punishment in this school. I never used it. But then I was at the tail end of it, anyway. I certainly suffered it in my day as a pupil, and I think I suffered it so badly that I sort of said to myself "I'm not going to use it" and I didn't.[682]

The variety of comments above illustrates the infliction of punishment on the body, albeit in terms less cruel than those described in the opening paragraphs of *Discipline and Punish*.

6.3.2 Foucauldian Techniques of Discipline

Foucault considered the school or classroom as a prime social setting for the implementation of disciplinary techniques, making frequent reference to French educators such as Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in *Discipline and Punish*, in particular. His notions of distribution of individuals in space, classroom arrangement and surveillance techniques are all echoed in the responses of participants in this study. Former pupils in particular remember the large classes necessitating rows of desks, frequently occupied by more than two children. Here is a sample of those memories:

> Alice: There were three of us in a desk...We were in the first seat inside the door, and I got moved after that...I'd say there were over forty (pupils) altogether. 42 is in my head but I don't know if that's imagined or not.[683]
>
> Alana: The classes were over forty at the time...It was all rows, all desks, all rows, yes, and there wasn't a lot of space, and the teacher's desk was at the top of the class...Sometimes three (to a desk).[684]
>
> Barbara: Between forty-five and fifty, I'd say, in the class...I think there were two to a desk in our classrooms...I don't remember being overcrowded or anything.[685]

---

682 *Ibid.*

683 Interview with Alice.

684 Interview with Alana.

685 Interview with Barbara.

> Kirsty: It was a normal sized room, with big desks and there were two to each desk... About forty (pupils), thirty to forty, easy.[686]
>
> Pascal: The furniture in the classroom. It was in desks, two to a desk, and I can recall it vividly because they were in rows, three or four rows in the classroom. There was a narrow passage between each row of desks, and that's the way it was. It was very formal in those times.[687]

The formal arrangement of school desks, while no doubt necessitated by the large class numbers, also facilitated the panoptic gaze of the teacher, one of Foucault's technologies of power.

6.4 The Community within the Wider Church

As an enclosed order of women religious, the community at the centre of this research was subject to the supervision and control of the local Bishop. In former times, this entailed submitting annual financial accounts, a yearly visit to the convent and an interview with each woman religious. The degree to which this impacted on their daily lives and work was in direct proportion to the discretion exercised by him. In effect, this was a form of surveillance operated to ensure compliance with ecclesiastical practices and protocols, and one frequently the cause of disagreement between Bishops and convent superiors who resented the perceived attack on their independence. Both Caitríona Clear and Mary Peckham Magray have documented the various strategies employed in attempts to exert control and influence.

In the case of the Waterford convent, there seems to have been a relatively harmonious relationship between the community and the Bishop, as recalled by participants, and this began from the outset in 1798. The instigator, and a firm supporter, of the Presentation Sisters coming to Waterford, Fr. John Power, later Bishop of the diocese, left

---

686 Interview with Kirsty.

687 Interview with Pascal.

money in his will to support their work in education, and this would seem to have set the tone of the relationship that followed. Indeed, Brenda stated in her interview that she never met a Bishop for many years until the final two incumbents.[688] Louise O'Reilly has also noted that the Waterford community was actively engaged from an early stage in the reform and renewal process instigated by the Vatican II documents *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Ecclesiae Sanctae* which ultimately led to the Union of Irish Presentation Sisters.[689] While, according to Mary Peckham Magray, many religious orders found themselves subject to interference from reforming Bishops, and therefore subject to increasing control from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards,[690] the Waterford community seems to have retained more of the relationship that existed prior to this period, where individual Bishops and clergymen were more interested in assisting and supporting the women who ran these orders than in controlling them.[691] It would appear that the Waterford foundation was one of the beneficiaries of this policy.

While ecclesiastical control entailed the annual visit from either the Bishop in person or his representative, the recollection of many is of this visit being one of ensuring that the community was functioning as a harmonious unit. The community, after all, was dependent on local clergy to minister to their spiritual needs, especially in ensuring there was a priest available to say daily mass in the convent chapel. Many participants recalled the various priests of the parish who fulfilled this duty. Monica's recollection of the annual Episcopal visit was expressed in terms of the concerns outlined above, albeit suffused with a mixture of apprehension, confusion and bewilderment:

---

688 Interview with Brenda.

689 O'Reilly, *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious*, 42.

690 Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns*, 108.

691 *Ibid.*

> Well, the local clergy in the Holy Family, or Ballybricken as it was way back, would have come for Mass to the convent in the early days, and the Bishop would call every couple of years on Visitation, as it was called...would meet every Sister individually.. or if he didn't come, his Vicar could come...a bit of an ordeal. You didn't know what you were going to be asked. I suppose he was just ascertaining that everything was going ok, people were happy and so on.[692]

As one of the youngest women religious who participated in this research, Annabel would have been among the last to be subject to such visits. She implies that, while interference and control may have existed in the past, her experience would have been more positive in nature.

> I think before my time there may have been, like, I would hear, you know, I don't know...You wouldn't have heard that much, now, but I think there was this one about the Bishop used to visit the convent once a year and, kind of, check-up...But in my time there was a Vicar for, well there still would be in all dioceses, a Vicar for religious, and in Waterford it was (Fr. Shea) who's still alive, he was Vicar for it, and I would have remembered him...would have had a lot of contact with the convent, but... I wouldn't have seen any big...he'd have had an interest...he would have been consulted, I'd say, on things, you know...I didn't experience it.[693]

Although unsure if each woman religious had an individual meeting with him, she also recalled visits, and her recollection is supported by Carmel: "We got on very well with the Bishop...They were very, I'd say, on very good terms."[694] Isobel recalled the Bishop's insistence on a fortnight's holiday by the seaside for the nuns, one of the events they all looked forward to:

> But at the same time, the Bishop or Bishops that were in Waterford and Lismore, they probably insisted we, Waterford always (went) on holidays, to the seaside...I would say they recommended it. I would say it was more than approval. I think it was recommended, and that probably helped as well. That was a regular fortnight.. a bit more by the sea, which was fantastic, really.[695]

---

692 Interview with Monica.

693 Interview with Annabel.

694 Interview with Carmel.

695 Interview with Isobel.

O'Donoghue and Harford have described this annual holiday as one of the 'rituals of revitilization'[696] engaged by teaching women religious in particular, to avoid physical and mental exhaustion in their teaching duties. From Foucault's perspective, they form evidence of power, techniques and practices for keeping the convent population healthy and productive.

The exercise of power could be felt in other ways, most notably during the annual school diocesan visit and religious examination. From the perspective of pupils, there was a clear sense that of the two likely school inspections- from the Department of Education inspector and the annual Diocesan Examiner- far greater importance was attached to the latter. Sinéad and Margaret were both certain which was the more important:

> Sinéad: We'd be preparing for this and preparing for this...Oh my God, your life depended on it...We'd be preparing for this practically from one end of the year to the other. But there was **huge** prestige attached to that exam, oh absolutely, and you could see the nuns would be on cloud nine, it would go on for a week now, they'd be on cloud nine when it would be over.[697]
>
> Margaret: We'd be preparing for weeks. (We knew it was important) because of the preparation for Fr. Holland's visit...They'd like us to make an impression and to know our catechism...and answer all his questions.[698]

The vivid recollection, many years later, of this event, is a clear example of the importance of the examination, one of Foucault's key disciplinary technologies of power. As he noted in *Discipline and Punish*: "The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgment."[699] The pupils quoted above were clearly aware of this normalising judgment, not only from their teachers but also from the religious examiner. They were also aware that the religious examination carried infinitely greater weight and

---

696 O'Donoghue and Harford, "The conception, construction and maintenance of the identity of Roman Catholic female religious teachers," 420.

697 Interview with Sinéad.

698 Interview with Margaret.

699 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 184.

prestige than its secular counterpart. For their women religious teachers, on the other hand, it represented the centrality and interconnectedness of religious education to the congregational ethos: "The supernatural basis of Roman Catholic education formed an integral part of the ethos in the schools of the Presentation Sisters."[700]

6.5 Conclusion

As a self-supporting enclosed social setting, life in a religious community was characterised by a high degree of regulated activity and practice. Clear lines of power and authority were laid down, established and reproduced over many years. Social agents were inducted into this way of life from the moment of entry, notably during the formation process. Foucauldian techniques of supervision, surveillance and self-regulation were evident in daily rituals and practices, such as the use of the timetable, the separation and distribution of individuals in space, a normalising judgment and Panopticism. These techniques had as their objective the production of self-regulating docile bodies, and were also evident in daily school life in the adjoining primary school. Other instruments in the school context included the examination. Nonetheless, agents operating within this space could, and frequently did, resist these practices, crossing boundaries to establish and maintain new relationships. Changes from either external forces, such as those introduced following Vatican II, or internal forces, such as the administrative reorganisation of foundations and houses, created a the need for adaptation and adjustment from the social actors which in turn impacted on practices and relationships within the community as a whole.

---

700 Nowlan-Roebuck, "The Presentation Order and National Schooling," 133.

CHAPTER 7: LEGACY AS CARE

"(A visitor) said to me, one time.. 'I don't know what ye have in this school, but I wish we could bottle the atmosphere inside this school.'"[701]

7.1 Introduction

The fourth research question centres on the issue of legacy. For many of the participants in this study, school legacy was expressed in terms of a caring environment. Former women religious recalled various forms of care witnessed within the convent, while former lay teaching colleagues recalled the personal interest shown in them as newly arrived teachers, together with ongoing support throughout their teaching career. Some former pupils recalled the interest shown in their potential and resources extended to them in various forms, inspiring them to become teachers themselves, and modelling in their turn what they considered to be the caring ethos of the congregational foundress. For others, however, this care was not felt.

This chapter will address the final research question- that of a residual legacy. It will detail memories of care at two levels- within the convent and within the school, from both the teacher and pupil perspectives. The extent to which this care was experienced differed widely. In their interviews, many former teachers used terms such as 'caring,' 'solicitude' or 'kindness' to describe their memory of the school they taught in. Former pupils who did not become teachers, on the other hand, did not use these descriptors with the same frequency. Drawing on Bourdieuian and Foucauldian concepts discussed in the previous chapters, and

701 Interview with Eleanor.

Nel Noddings' concept of a 'caring relation'[702] in particular, the chapter will outline how this care was not always felt or experienced by all participants.

7.2 The Meaning of 'Care'

As Nel Noddings noted in her 1984 book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, dictionary definitions of care include the alleviation of distress, worries or burdens, or being charged with the protection and welfare of someone or something.[703] In the student-teacher relationship, Wentzel found that student responses to caring behaviours can be coded along dimensions of modelling, expectations based on individual differences, democratic interactions, and nurturance.[704]

For Noddings herself, care went much further than either of the above. It involved two individuals in a caring relation. This implied engrossment and motivational displacement on the part of the one-carer and acknowledgement or reciprocity on the part of the cared-for. She defined this as follows in her 2005 book *The Challenge to Care in Schools*:

> A *caring relation* is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings- a carer and recipient of care, or cared-for. In order for the relation to be properly called caring, both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways. A failure on the part of either carer or cared-for blocks completion of caring and, although there may still be a relation... it is not a *caring* relation.[705]

Reciprocity from the cared-for implies an acknowledgement of the care extended. Care must be seen and felt to be acknowledged. Thus, the lack of a 'caring relation' can assist our

---

[702] Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005), xv.

[703] Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984), 9.

[704] Kathryn Wentzel, "Student Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Perceived Pedagogical Caring," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 89, no. 3 (1997): 417.

[705] Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 15.

understanding of why two individuals in the same social setting can experience care in different ways.

7.3 Convent Voices

When Nano Nagle founded the Presentation Order in 1775, it consisted of a small group of women living in one house, sharing similar goals and aspirations. The early communities were therefore more akin to family groups, with many members coming from similar social and economic backgrounds. As the Order grew and expanded, the dowry requirement in particular led to the development of the lay and choir sister configuration within these communities. Traditionally the former came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with the latter directly involved in the teaching mission of the Order. Given the differential in economic and cultural *capital* that aspirants possessed on entry, it might be supposed that this would have impacted on the level of care they received. With the acknowledged limitation that no lay sister survives to confirm or deny these observations, nonetheless there is some evidence to suggest that care was given and experienced to all who lived within the convent walls.

7.3.1 Care of the Body

As in any family grouping, care at its most fundamental level included ensuring the individual had sufficient food, clothing, heat, light and other necessities to be comfortable and healthy. Many participants in this study recalled the insistence on fresh air during recreation periods, for example:

> Isobel: There was always actually a great emphasis in the community of walks, fresh air, and we had to walk before we went to school in the morning, and we'd often have it as part of recreation in the afternoon, and we'd be recommended again to have it in the night time before night prayer...I'd say straightforward health...Meet others, maybe, talk away there, or just general...good practice.[706]

> Annemarie: We had the community recreation from 4 to 5, and if the weather was fine, the second half of that was outdoors. First half was indoors in the community room, and everybody, nearly, I'd say everybody, had some kind of needlework, embroidery, knitting, crochet, patching or doing something, you know, occupying your hands, and then we put that away and we went out for a walk.[707]

The extensive grounds and space surrounding the convent facilitated this physical care. For Foucault, it represented a form of power, designed to keep populations healthy and productive. For Isobel, however, it was "good practice," while Rachel, who had been brought up in the countryside, found the prohibition of getting fresh air and exercise during bad weather puzzling:

> I would encourage, encouraged myself, too, to take it! But if it was raining you weren't supposed to go out, and I couldn't understand that, because, like, in the world you went out and you got wet, but you weren't to go out if it was raining.[708]

From their remarks above, however, Rachel and Isobel appeared to have found these regulations normal and understandable to ensure good physical and mental well-being. They considered them as a form of care for the individual.

7.3.2 Care of the Elderly

As in any family, the older members of the community had to be cared for by the younger members, and this modelling of care as part of religious life began from the moment of entry. Many participants recalled either caring for, or seeing the lay sisters caring for, the elderly nuns in their rooms upstairs during their early years:

---

706 Interview with Isobel.

707 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

708 Interview with Rachel.

> Annemarie: They looked after the sick, which was a big, big thing, because I mean there was no such thing as a sick nun going into a nursing home.[709]
>
> Annabel: As younger ones we would have helped with the older people, you know. I can remember Sr. Marcia, washing Sr. Marcia's feet and we used to have great chats. Yes, we'd be bringing up trays to people who might be in bed or, so we were kind of looking after the older people as well.[710]
>
> Brenda: Sometimes I had to bring up a tray to Claire. She was nearly 100 at the time... I used to bring it up to her. She was very good to me, now.[711]

For some participants at least, these duties helped to develop positive relationships with the elderly nuns, which in turn helped to ease the transition into the demands of religious life. Brenda, for instance, recalls the kindness shown to her by the elderly nun to whom she brought food on a tray. When asked who she remembered with particular fondness, she recalled:

> It might have been Claire because she was (a) very kind and generous, and she was a nice person. If she saw you sick she'd look after you, and she'd bring you up fruit, and you mightn't even want to touch fruit, like, but she'd bring it to you.[712]

The caring relation established between Brenda and this elderly nun became mutual and reciprocal. The roles of carer and cared-for changed according to circumstance.

7.3.3 Mentoring and Support during Induction

Above all, education was the *raison d'être* of the Order. Accordingly, close attention was paid to those destined for teaching and the classroom, which in turn fed into the community mission of optimising educational outcomes. Most participants recall being inducted into school life at an early stage after entry. This induction was accompanied by a system of mentoring from experienced women religious. Isobel, who recalls being sent over

---

709 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

710 Interview with Annabel.

711 Interview with Brenda.

712 *Ibid*.

to the school early as a postulant, recalled the pedagogical support she received from both school management and teaching colleagues:

> There'd no way you'd be left, no. There'd be no question of it. The Mistress of Novices we had, Mother Imelda, would help if Mother Ellen didn't, you know, but she would...There'd be great help. There'd be no problem that way. And then () was next door. She'd have helped out to see that everything was...they weren't going out of hand or anything. And I wouldn't have had responsibility for the subject I'd have. She'd have told me what bit to do... Ah no, there wasn't a problem with it that way.[713]

This view is echoed by Monica, who recalled mentoring support from other teaching nuns when she first embarked on her teaching career:

> They (older nuns) would, course, yes, people who would have had a parallel class would certainly have said, you know, 'We're doing, this is Spring now so...this is what we normally do.' So we'd have picked up ideas certainly. I suppose it was a bit like teaching practice without the theory...without the supervisor...(laugh)[714]

In its most basic form this professional care and support represents a sharing and reproduction of talents and resources, where the various amounts and forms of *capital* were invested for future use for the congregation. However, it also represents a form of care whereby new entrants to the teaching profession were mentored and supported. It also provided a form of scaffolding and modelling for others into the future. As Goldstein has noted, "It is by being the cared-for that he will learn to be the one-caring."[715]

7.3.4 Care between Lay and Novices/Professed Sisters

Chapter 6 referred to the differential in power relations between the lay and the choir sisters within the convent community. While many participants referred to the micro-community they formed within the building, there is some evidence to indicate that care also extended to this group, particularly in the investment of time and resources in their talents. In

---

713 Interview with Isobel.

714 Interview with Monica.

715 Lisa S. Goldstein, "The Relational Zone: The Role of Caring Relationships in the Co-Construction of Mind," *American Educational Research Journal* 36, no. 3 (1999): 666.

the previous chapter, for instance, Brenda pointed to the time and expense that were expended on sending two sisters responsible for cooking duties for specific training. This investment was of direct and immediate benefit to the community as a whole, but it can equally be argued that it also provided recipients with the means to earn an independent living should they have ever decided to leave the convent. Brenda fondly recalls benefiting from these culinary endeavours:

> Vera was a genius at the baking, and cakes. She used to make our Reception cakes and our Profession cakes and they were only gorgeous, oh yes, and very well finished, like...She was the cook for the baking. Tarts. Often she gave us a tart as we were novices, and she'd say, "Put that under your big sleeve." Do you remember the big sleeve? "Put it under your big sleeve, now, and bring it upstairs, Brenda. You can divide it when you go up." I said, "I have no knife, no fork, nothing," and she'd give me a fork and a few serviettes. "Off you go now. Have it eaten before the others come in," she'd say...because we wouldn't see a tart as novices.[716]

In the previous chapter we also noted the occasional blurring of spatial power relations. Despite the clear delineation, the caring act between this lay sister and novice was indicative of a caring relationship between them.

7.3.5 Care after Religious Life

Annemarie claimed that for those who decided either before or after the formation period to leave religious life, care was taken to smooth the transition to life outside the convent walls. She recalled one case in particular where efforts were made to ensure that the woman concerned had the means to earn a livelihood:

> I can think of another person who left, after she had been trained and professed and everything. There was a bit of paperwork to be done, but like, the big anxiety with her was to make sure she had a job when she'd go, so, and, I mean, she was doing that before she went, like, securing a job for herself. We were all anxious for her to get a job.[717]

---

716 *Ibid*.

717 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

The above comment would suggest that the community effort, while undoubtedly made up of the collective efforts of all its members, would not have totally neglected the care needed to sustain this effort at the expense of the individuals concerned. If so, it indicates that the space within which these actors operated was sufficiently sensitive to need as to ensure that appropriate remedies were put in place, in terms of economic *capital* and other resources, to address the various needs of the individual in light of the changed circumstances in which she found herself.

7.3.6 Pastoral care to the wider community

Since its inception, and in keeping with its philanthropic origins, the convent community had provided pastoral assistance to the local community. The locus of this form of care was the rear door of the convent, colloquially known as the 'back door' (see Figure 43). Participants from all groups recalled the regular sight of many individuals receiving practical forms of assistance:

> Irene: They (children) used go over after school in the evening, and they were going over to the back door of the convent, and the nuns were giving them food, because many's the child who would head off with a carrier bag or two carrier bags full of stuff from the kitchen, and it took me a while to cop on to the fact that it was food they were getting...Parents would go to the back door. I used to see some parents going to the back door of the convent.[718]

> Josephine: A lot of the people who needed a little bit of extra help, they'd be kind of told in a nice way..."Go up to the convent such a time...bread would be baked."...I know that they used to be given things as they needed them, or they would be brought down to their homes, if they weren't able to come up...There were a lot of older men, who used to travel a bit, and they were fed right through the years, outside the convent... The back door. They used have a little place there, table and chairs, and they would come and they would know the place. The same people used come back, maybe every so many months, and they were fed there.[719]

---

718 Interview with Irene.

719 Interview with Josephine.



Figure 43: A meal at the 'back door' c. 1980s
Source: Presentation Archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

> Michael: They'd cook for them and...bring up people and give them their dinner. Always tell them to come to the back door and they had a table and six chairs there...They'd open the door...The three of them would come out. They'd give them their dinner, their tea and dessert, and some might come for their breakfast...Every day, seven days a week.[720]

This form of pastoral care was part of the charitable and philanthropic effort that characterised many religious congregations since their inception. Nonetheless, the fact that it took place at the rear entrance to the convent, not the front, was one remarked on by several participants, such as Alice, for instance: "You'd go to the **back** door... But never to the front."[721] Alice's remark gives little indication of a reciprocity and attentiveness that Noddings would consider essential to a caring relation. As we shall also see later in this chapter, recipients' perspectives reflect this ambivalence.

---

720 Interview with Michael.

721 Interview with Alice.

However, some evidence that care was reciprocated came from a former male pupil, Michael. He remembered the varied tasks that the local population performed for the community, particularly in later years:

> Do you know the avenue coming from the top gate down to the end gate? My uncles built that for the nuns, put that in...they built that for the nuns, and the little path around the graveyard...The people in Roanmore, my mother and all the elderly people, gave the nuns half of their garden to make the playground bigger...(Those) gardens are big enough...They were going back three quarters back, and they all gave it to the nuns, where they could have a proper playground for the kids...We were down cutting timber, bringing in blocks to them, coal, and I'd go up in the morning at 7 o'clock and I'd light the fire for them...and I'd go up in the night time. Even when I was working here, I used to go up in the night time and make sure they were alright in the winter nights with the fire.[722]

Such tasks represent an acknowledgement of the support given over the years, but also a more equal caring relationship between the convent and local communities, and the mutually beneficial dynamic and productive capacity of this relationship. The former one-caring had become the cared-for.

7.4 Teacher Voices

7.4.1 First Impressions

The lay teachers who agreed to participate in this study were varied in their backgrounds. Some had been pupils in the school, others had been educated in Presentation schools elsewhere, while others still had no direct experience of Presentation school life. For the latter in particular, the impact of first impressions can frequently be very powerful and of particular interest.

Harriet's first contact with the Presentation began when she was brought to the convent at the end of August, following the death of her parents within a short period of time, to be enrolled for secondary school. She recalls this visit as follows:

---

722 *Ibid*.

> So up we went and I just remember being in the parlour, in the convent, and Sr. Anna and she so welcoming and so nice, and our names were put down for school and she gave us a box of chocolates when we were leaving. I'm sure somebody had given it to her for a present, but she gave it to us going off, and I'll never forget it. It was my first memory of meeting a Presentation Sister…I couldn't have had a better, I suppose, introduction to the Presentation ethos as that.[723]

As a pupil, she also felt cared for and encouraged, and considered this as typifying the congregational ethos:

> We were certainly looked after, my sister and I, to the nth degree by the Presentation, and I'd say they looked upon us as…the two orphans who came down from Cork, so they would have looked after us in that way, like I've already outlined, making sure we would succeed and giving us every opportunity to do it and bringing us along…and I'm sure it was the same for any other children with any other need.[724]

Harriet implies both a sense of positive surveillance and an investment in the self to enable her to achieve her potential, possibilities that were available to all pupils. From her first contact with the Presentation community, she entered what she considered a caring and nurturing environment throughout her entire educational life, an environment she framed in terms of the founding ethos:

> A lot of the Presentation nuns...had the Nano Nagle ethos, I suppose you could say... They were very caring, caring...I've already mentioned to you there...all those nuns that were looking out for me in ways that I probably don't even realise, do you know, because they nurtured me, and my sister. They saw when we came that we were academically able, I suppose you would call it, and they made sure we succeeded, because I certainly...hadn't that concept of my own self.[725]

In her remarks, Harriet expresses care both in terms of a personal interest and an encouragement to succeed, framed within the ethos of Nano Nagle. Her acknowledgement of this care came later in her life, since she implies she was unaware of it during her time as a pupil.

---

723 Interview with Harriet.

724 *Ibid*.

725 *Ibid*.

As an adult, initial impressions of school authorities could also be striking in their impact. Marion's memory of Sr. Ellen, for example, was one of warmth and an interest in her personal well-being:

> I met her in the yard over in the secondary school, and I came all dressed up in my suit and my handbag and gloves, ready for an interview. So we walked around the yard and she asked me about home and the lads and all of the rest...When she came over to me she shook hands and then we walked around the yard and after about 2 minutes she put her arm in around, she was linking me around, you know, and she was terribly nice and really friendly, very human and homely person and really made me at ease and was saying 'You'll like this now' and 'I'll show you what to do and you needn't be worried about anything, we'll help you out, if there's anything you don't know I'll help you out...' She was really, I thought, a lovely person...She was such a nice person, and I really felt at home, I have to say, from the word go.[726]

Lorna echoes this recollection: "I thought she was very nice, now, I have to say, a very friendly, warm kind of a woman, yes. I was impressed with her."[727] For Irene, who came from the west of Ireland for interview, she was struck by the consideration shown by arranging for her overnight accommodation: "They even arranged for me for somewhere for me to stay for the night, yes...It was very thoughtful...They arranged a B&B and everything for me."[728] She also recalled the kindness of another woman teaching colleague on her first morning, "a very sweet nun, sending me up a notebook and a red pencil to welcome me."[729] For these participants, initial impressions are couched in terms of positive interpersonal characteristics. The care extended was acknowledged when small gestures of welcome and acts of kindness were acknowledged. Many remarked on the care they later experienced throughout their teaching career in the school in a variety of forms.

---

726 Interview with Marion.

727 Interview with Lorna.

728 Interview with Irene.

729 *Ibid*.

7.4.2 Care of the Individual

The socioeconomic context of the area surrounding the school was such that there were a considerable number of disadvantaged pupils attending the school (see Figure 44). The majority of participants recall large classes, few educational supports and little equipment to lessen the daily workload of copies, worksheets and personal planning. Many also recall the toll this could take in terms of personal health and well-being. However, counterbalancing this was a sense that the degree of disadvantage was both acknowledged and addressed, albeit in a discreet manner.

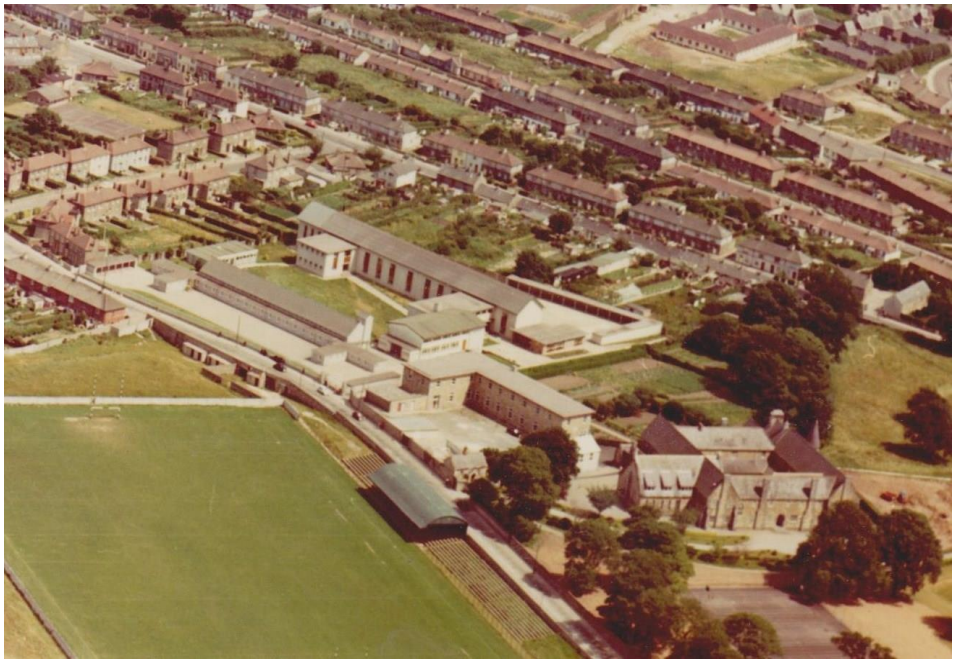


Fig. 44: Aerial view of convent, school and surrounding area, 1980s
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Pamela, for instance, remembers inconsequential acts of kindness and care in her early years as teacher in the school, such as the thoughtfulness of one nun who could always be depended on if you were feeling unwell: "If you were sick or had a headache or anything like that, she'd be bringing the Anadin over from the convent."[730] She was also touched by

730 Interview with Pamela.

the fact that they visited her in hospital when each of her children was born, but she felt particularly grateful for their care and support when she learned that her youngest child had special educational needs:

> My youngest child was autistic, or **is** autistic, and when he was very young, **on** Mother Ellen's request, Sr. Philomena...She used to come here twice a week when John was five years, six years old, and do art with him and do poetry with him. I don't know how many elocution exams she prepared him for...Right up through the years, and continued to do so for a good number of years...That gave me time, then, with the girls...She would come, I'd come with her from school and she would stay till about half past 5, about two hours. They'd do wonderful work, beautiful artwork. He'd make things and she was great at painting, and then they'd do elocution together.[731]

For Pamela, care meant being there- physically, and being concerned for the well-being of others. Her remarks acknowledge the motivational displacement shown by Mother Ellen at a time when she needed care and support. Noddings emphasises the importance of care to be felt by others in order for it to be authentic.[732] Pamela's gratitude recognises this.

Irene, as a newly-arrived teacher with no prior connection to Waterford, also found that there was a sense of being cared for in her early days in the school. She clearly remembers the school Principal making regular visits to the classroom to enquire if she was settling in well. Like many other participants, she stood out as a memorable individual:

> She was so kind, and so caring, and so concerned for everybody in the building, be it child, be it staff member. She used to come to me in the beginning.. "Are you alright? Are you sure you're ok? You're not lonely?" That sort of thing. She was very, very kind and very caring.[733]

For Irene, the caring relation she experienced was one that was not limited to staff members alone, but extended to every member of the school community, pupils and teachers alike.

---

731 *Ibid*.

732 Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, 15.

733 Interview with Irene.

Personal care extended into the financial domain, too. As the eldest of five young children whose father had recently passed away, Eleanor recalls the financial support she received to assist with family finances at a difficult time: "(Sr. Ellen) had a real caring kind of a thing, like, to make sure you had a summer job to give you a few bob for the next year."[734] Like Pamela, she acknowledged the motivational displacement made by an influential figure to give her family practical support when it was needed. As the eldest, she was keenly aware of the challenges facing her recently-widowed mother with a young family.

7.4.3 Pedagogical Care

The pedagogical support available to aspiring teaching women religious within the convent was also extended to the lay teachers within the primary school. Many lay teacher participants recalled co-operating with their women religious teaching colleagues in addressing specific areas of teaching methodologies or pedagogy. Eleanor, for instance, recalled the following:

> I remember Sr. Aoife with great fondness, because the first class I ever had, Sr. Aoife had them before me...Sr. Aoife had beautiful handwriting...We all used the Creamer handwriting, but there were certain things, like...the point at the top of a 'u', whereas the round at the top of a 'v', those little tiny things, details that Sr. Aoife went over with me when I started teaching.[735]

Other pedagogical support took the form of encouragement of initiatives of benefit to the pupils and school. Lorna recalled of one Principal: "She was very nice and very encouraging to do new things and try new things."[736] Agnes also recalled the continued and on-going support she received as a teacher from another Principal within the school when she wished to engage pupils in new initiatives: "She was **so supportive** of anything I did. She bought me

---

734 Interview with Eleanor.

735 Interview with Eleanor.

736 Interview with Lorna.

music, she bought a keyboard for the school."

7.4.4 Care of Pupils

As lay teachers in a school run by a congregation dedicated to education, however, pupils featured prominently in many responses to the nature of everyday school life. The prevailing socio-economic conditions of the area and period in question brought social disadvantage into the classroom on a daily basis, with many participants recalling severe levels of economic deprivation at particular moments in time. At its most basic level, this care took the form of sufficient food and clothing, and educational requisites. Early accounts books from the annals record the purchase of flannel material for clothing purposes, together with food supplies and other requisites.

Over a hundred and fifty years later, oral evidence suggests that this was continued, albeit not to the same degree, and this evidence is found across all three participant groups:

> Annabel: I do remember them coming to the back door...I certainly would be aware that people might go down to the back door for something...and they'd be...helped. Even when I entered...there'd be people coming to the back door for help...Children probably as well.[737]
>
> Valerie: I think we used to get lunches...But they'd be sent over to the back door for stuff, too, at different times. I remember that now, yes. The nuns in the kitchen would give them bread and jam.[738]
>
> Pamela: They may have gone without their breakfast from home but they were never hungry at school. They used to have milk at 11 o'clock and a lot of the milk would be given to the children. At one stage later on in my career the breakfast used to be given...and they would be looked after at lunchtime, as well."[739]
>
> Ena: There was never a child who went hungry. They always sensed and knew where the need was.[740]

---

737 Interview with Annabel.

738 Interview with Valerie.

739 Interview with Pamela.

740 Interview with Ena.

> Margaret: "Nuns helped them out and gave the bread and got them little jobs delivering the milk...Sr. Bella would (give out) hot drinks in the winter."[741]
>
> Pascal: Now where you would see it is the bun and the free milk...That would be given to children. Nuns would understand it, and it wouldn't be given willy-nilly.[742]

Wentzel claims that teachers who care are those whose responses closely correspond to dimensions of effective parenting,[743] and the recollections above imply that a conscious effort was made to identify pupils in need of food and hot drinks at particular times of the year.

Efforts were also made to respond to significant moments in the religious life of pupils, particularly First Communion and Confirmation, which frequently placed financial pressure on families. Lay teaching colleagues recalled the efforts made to reduce this pressure by providing suitable dresses for the occasion and organising a memorable meal after the ceremony in the classrooms:

> Sr. Brenda would have a lot of Communion dresses people would bring her in when they'd be finished, and people would be delighted. She'd have them all, and she'd be bringing them over to the convent, and she'd wash them and she'd have them all hanging up and they'd come in for their pick of dresses, and they'd be delighted. Sure they were beautiful dresses. And parents were delighted, and she'd have veils and gloves and shoes...Mother Ellen said to come up and see the children and I came up, and they were having their breakfast in the classroom, and they had these little white tablecloths. She had the desks arranged and she had little white, I suppose they were serviettes, napkins, over the tables, and what really took my fancy was they had the china eggcups and the little cup under the stand and they all got boiled eggs and a spoon. And they had cups and saucers from the convent. They had all the delft from the convent. That was the children's breakfast.[744]

A visual display of cultural *capital* is on display in this description of a meal marking a memorable day in the life of pupils- the layout of the tables, the crockery, white tablecloths,

---

741 Interview with Margaret.

742 Interview with Pascal.

743 Wentzel, "Student Motivation in Middle School," 415.

744 *Ibid*.

napkins and the meal provided. For Bourdieu, they represent 'goods of legitimate culture,'[745] which have been integrated into the system of dispositions.

Teachers also recalled strategies to address the financial demands of education. On a basic level, they remembered being asked to identify pupils in their classes in need of school books and requisites: "She'd (Mother Ellen) bring you up a bundle of copies in case you didn't have enough and you could give them out to the children, if they didn't have their copies."[746] For others, such as Agnes, for instance, it entailed extra tuition and learning support before school hours from another teaching woman religious:

> I remember Sr. Carmel. I used to go up at quarter to 9 in the morning, the school would be open, and I used to go up to the room, to Mother Ellen's room, and she used to come along and she'd give me half an hour tuition there to bring me on with the Irish, because I used be spelling. I was a bad speller in Irish. I wasn't a great speller in English, either, but I used be mixing up things...She was just lovely, and I'd say she pulled me through with Irish.[747]

Agnes attributes these efforts to a desire to assist pupils with perceived ability to achieve their potential and expressed this desire in caring terms:

> They were very caring, the nuns, and very interested in you, especially if you came from a kind of an ordinary sort of disadvantaged background...It wasn't a posh school...It was ordinary children, working-class parents, went to school there. They were very anxious to push anyone on that had any way ability. They were great like that.[748]

Ferreira and Bosworth noted that characteristics of pedagogical caring frequently included such traits as empathy, understanding, encouragement and setting expectations, interest in the

---

745 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984): 99.

746 Interview with Marion.

747 Interview with Agnes.

748 *Ibid*.

student as an individual and responsiveness.[749] Agnes's remarks echoes these characteristics.

Whether, of course, recipients of this care considered themselves objects of charity or fortunate individuals is difficult to ascertain. There is little indication of an acknowledgement of care as described by Noddings. Indeed, they arguably fulfil Turner Hershey's definition of paternalism, where the action is primarily designed to benefit the recipient, and their consent or dissent is not a relevant consideration for the initiator.[750] What can be said, however, is that economic *capital* was mobilised to improve the social conditions of pupils.

7.4.5 Teaching Methodologies and School Discipline

Lay teachers provide a unique perspective of daily life in a Presentation primary school, and their memories indicate the realities faced by many working in an economically disadvantaged area at that time. One of the most vivid of these memories was the large classes:

> Pamela: I remember it used to take a long, long time to call the roll, 48, and there were 3 streams of 48.[751]
>
> Orla: There were probably forty or fifty children in the one class...[752]
>
> Marion: I remember lugging home really heavy bags, when you had 48 in the class and you had 48 essays to correct.[753]
>
> Harriet: I do remember that that class that I got then I had for three years, 4th 5th and 6th. There were 43 in it, which was normal at the time.[754]
>
> Irene: The largest class I had here was 43 children.[755]

---

749 Maria M. Ferreira and Kris Bosworth, "Defining Caring Teachers: Adolescents' Perspectives," *Journal of Classroom Interaction* 36, no. 1 (2001): 25.

750 Paul Turner Hershey, "A Definition for Paternalism," *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine* 10, no. 2 (1985): 171.

751 Interview with Pamela.

752 Interview with Orla.

753 Interview with Marion.

754 Interview with Harriet.

Given the numbers involved, teaching methodologies tended towards whole-class teaching rather than group work, with participants recalling the long hours preparing for the following day's teaching. One pupil participant, however, commented directly on teaching methodologies in her interview. Alice distinctly remembered efforts made by her woman religious teacher to introduce group work for those needing extra support:

> Alice: Every afternoon she would set a large part of the class (working independently), we had a book called "Better English." It was an English workbook and there were comprehensions and essays and crosswords, and we would work through that, and she would bring up the girls who, now I realise, needed extra help…around her…(She was) kind of conscious that there were people who weren't learning at the same rate as some of the others, and that she made time for them.[756]

These methodologies also extended to project work in small groups: "In 5th and 6th class we did projects, because I remember writing to the Port Harbour Commissioners and doing a project on Waterford port…when we joined the EEC."[757] Her memories also included those relevant to the teaching of Irish:

> Alice: She really tried to do I'd say what was maybe a new method for them at the time, because I know when it got to Thursday and Friday, myself and some of my friends would be hopping out of our seats to do the drama. We'd be Colm and Nuala *ag dul go dtí an siopa*, you know, or *an fiaclóir* or whoever it would be. God, it was lovely…[758]

Despite the large numbers and socioeconomic disadvantage, however, memories across all teacher participants regarding school discipline were generally positive, with the lay teachers recalling few instances of behavioural difficulties:

> Marion: The children were well behaved. There was no.. corporal punishment at that time. I never saw anybody (slap)…[759]

---

755 Interview with Irene.

756 Interview with Alice.

757 *Ibid*.

758 *Ibid*.

759 Interview with Marion.

> Irene: (Children) sat down, they did their work, and there weren't that many issues of discipline, to be honest.[760]
>
> Pamela: I have no memory of a child being physically punished in Presentation...If a child, I suppose, misbehaved or that, parents were called up and spoken to…[761]

The lay teachers generally recall very few instances of corporal punishment being used in the school. One of the few references made to an actual incident is remembered by Marion for its rarity:

> They were playing around the curtains, running in and out, having hide and seek... one of the nuns saw them and complained them…(The Principal) gave them two or three slaps each with a **cane**. I had never seen a cane being administered. I don't know where it came out of, but I was horrified.[762]

For Marion, the punishment meted out was excessive and not deserved: "They weren't bold children at all. They were only having fun and they never gave me any trouble in the classroom."[763]

7.5 Pupil Voices

7.5.1 School Curriculum

Many former pupil participants recalled the nature of the curriculum they experienced, particularly in the latter stages of primary school, at an age when the majority would traditionally have left school to find employment. Margaret would have articulated the expectations of many when she remarked: "I think we never saw ourselves going further than leaving school and going to work."[764] Unsurprisingly, therefore, the curriculum reflected these realities. When setting up her schools in Cork, Nano Nagle had placed a particular emphasis on including a vocational element to her curriculum, to enable her pupils to gain

---

760 Interview with Irene.

761 Interview with Pamela.

762 Interview with Marion.

763 *Ibid*.

764 Interview with Margaret.

skills which would help them earn a living, and this vocational element was remarked on by many participants in their interviews.

In the years preceding free secondary school education, the Principal taught what were called 7th and 8th classes, vocational-style post-6th classes designed for pupils unable to transition to secondary school because of financial barriers in the form of fees and associated expenses. Known officially as 'secondary tops', they offered up to a maximum of six core secondary school subjects for a year or two before leaving school,[765] and thereby provided one of the few opportunities at the disposal of poorer students to access second-level education. O'Connor noted that since the Presentation order was founded to cater exclusively for the poor, they established very few secondary schools in the nineteenth century by comparison with the Mercy order.[766] The 'secondary tops' classes were therefore a means of addressing this deficit at primary level. By 1961-1962, 94 per cent of pupils in these classes nationally were girls.[767] Annemarie recalled the Principal teaching Shakespearian plays, Isobel recalled being asked to teach Irish as a newly-entered postulant, while Monica recalled being asked to teach vocational skills such as typing and shorthand. They represent efforts to increase pupils' cultural and economic *capital*, but were also a means of empowering them to gain employment through the acquisition of skills.

The teaching Principal of this class not only taught this class but subsequently used her connections with small businesses in the city to find placements for her pupils. As Eleanor recalled:

---

765 Tom O'Donoghue and Judith Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories and Life Stories, 1922-1967* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 15.

766 Anne V. O'Connor, "The Revolution in Girls' Secondary Education in Ireland 1860-1910," in *Girls Don't Do Honours*, ed. Mary Cullen (Dublin: Women's Education Bureau,1987), 42.

767 O'Donoghue and Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland*, 16.

> You stayed there till you got a job. And Mother Ellen used be on to all the employers to get her girls jobs...I never was in there, but they were taught book-keeping and they were taught, you know, fabulous skills for life...She used be ringing up everybody.[768]

The curriculum in this upper primary class contained a blend of the academic and vocational, but also reflects a degree of cultural *capital* in the inclusion of elements such as Shakespearian plays.

Participants also remembered subjects not often part of the school curriculum at the time, such as elocution, public speaking, drama and physical education. Some of Sinéad's fondest memories were the plays that were performed in the "tin shed", as it was known, but she also remembered an elocution teacher coming into the school on a regular basis, together with a limited amount of physical education. Her sister Margaret also recalled activities such as cookery and knitting, home-making skills for marriage and family, which reflected prevailing conceptions of female education and the reality of women's lives at this time. For Karen, however, they were remembered as exposing pupils from a disadvantaged area to new experiences: "They were very forward thinking, with elocution, Irish dancing, teaching knitting and crochet, cookery in 6th class."[769]

One specific display of cultural *capital* was performance, either in the regular school concert or participation in *Féile na Scoileanna,* a non-competitive schools' festival. For many in the city generally, but particularly those from a more disadvantaged background, this would often be their only opportunity to perform on stage in the city's Theatre Royal, the centre of the city's cultural events for many years and, as such, the embodiment of municipal cultural *capital*. Many former pupils such as Kirsty recalled their participation in this event as one of their fondest childhood memories. For Alana, her admiration as an adult for the

---

768 Interview with Eleanor.

769 Interview with Karen.

woman religious who taught her for five years was expressed in terms of the regularity with which her class participated in this event:

> She was a great nun. At the time I didn't think of it. Looking back, what she done with us, she was fantastic. She had us in Féile na Scol **every** year, we were in concerts for everything. Anyone was looking for an act, we were put in it.[770]

7.5.2 Financial Care

For many participants in this study, financial barriers were commonplace for those wishing to progress through the educational system. Apart from the financial outlay involved in the purchasing of uniforms, school requisites and extra-curricular activities, second level education in particular was only accessible to those in a position to afford the fees required, however modest. Third level education, for the majority of Irish citizens, was the preserve of the few. For participants such as Karen, the financial support and care she experienced enabled her to become the first member of her family to attend third level education. As the daughter of a tradesman with insecure employment, strict financial management was a constant feature of family life, but she credits Sr. Ellen in particular with ensuring that this never prevented her from completing primary education: "When my father would be on wet time, that she knew, she would make sure that we weren't short of anything."[771] Later, on being offered a place in training college, she intervened again to ensure that financial concerns would not prove a barrier to social mobility:

> I got my Leaving Cert results and my parents didn't know I got teaching, training, because I wouldn't have put that on them. She came down to the house to know why I wasn't going. This was the first time my poor parents heard about the fact that I got the **call**...We had to pay for a uniform and whatever, and she paid for that...And when I went back, teaching there, that was my aim, to pay that back…We got paid every month, and I went to her every month and she took that from me until it was paid and then gave it back to me in an envelope. She had been saving it all the time. 'Now,' she

---

770 Interview with Alana.

771 Interview with Karen.

> said, 'you're paid.' I'll never forget her for that. The influence she had on me, on my family.[772]

Clearly Karen had exhibited potential during her time in school, particularly the possibility of increasing her educational *capital*. Economic barriers in the form of college fees were overcome through an investment in the economic resources within the convent and school, allowing Karen to become the first in her family to attend third-level education in a teacher training college. By her actions above in actively repaying the monies loaned, Karen acknowledged the care she had received, thereby completing the caring relation.

7.5.3 Memories of Pastoral Care

Participants from all groups recall the locus of pastoral care as the "back door." However, former pupils in particular differ significantly in terms of their interpretation of the care received. Pascal and Michael remember both the poverty in the surrounding area and the efforts made by the convent community to alleviate social distress. Alana, Karen, Alice and Sinéad all remember the pastoral support available at the 'back door,' albeit in neutral terms. Kirsty, on the other hand, felt that it was selectively given: "...the nuns at the back door might give them food...But there was a lot of discrimination, I think, now."[773] For Kirsty, care was conditional and a function of family origin, and therefore not felt as authentic. This view is shared by Margaret, who felt that little was done to support poor children with potential. Despite these reservations, the general tenor of participant responses indicates that individuals in receipt of these interventions were treated with dignity, discretion and respect.

---

772 *Ibid*.

773 *Ibid*.

7.5.4 Memories of Pedagogical Care

In the classroom and pedagogical context, there are also conflicting memories. In a previous chapter, memories of corporal punishment were dramatically different, according to the teacher or pupil perspective. This was equally the case in the pedagogical context. Pupils such as Karen and Harriet speak warmly of the financial, emotional and pedagogical support they received as pupils, and subsequently became teachers themselves, while Alana remembers school in terms of safety: "I always felt safe in school...always."[774] Kirsty, however, claimed that this was not the case for all pupils. She felt that a hierarchy of provision existed, with the children of wealthier parents given preferential treatment: "Say if your father had a good job, right, that's my opinion of it anyway, like, they'd be more interested in you."[775]

Sinéad and Michael, too, appear to echo this view. Sinéad considered that, in the school context, a degree of non-engagement was accepted: "But you see, school wasn't very interesting. You could laze there if you wanted to."[776] Clearly, Sinéad's understanding and expectation of a caring teacher meant more than this lack of active engagement in the learning process. As Wentzel noted in her research on characteristics of pedagogical caring, these included developing expectations for behaviour in light of individual differences, modelling a 'caring' attitude towards their work, and providing constructive feedback.[777] In the absence of engagement, this cannot take place. Therefore, Sinéad did not experience the caring relation.

---

774 Interview with Alana.

775 Interview with Kirsty.

776 Interview with Sinéad.

777 Wentzel, "Student Motivation in Middle School," 416.

For Michael, while conscious from a young age of the care and support provided by the convent to the local community over many years, pedagogical care and encouragement in the classroom was also conditional:

> ...if a pupil wanted to progress they'd look after you…If you didn't want to progress, you were put down the back and just left there...Now, they did look after you but they didn't put their heart out. They didn't pay attention to you later on.[778]

Michael implies here that care and interest was shown only to motivated pupils, those who identified with school practices, and those who displayed interest and initiative. For those who did not display the requisite social and cultural *capital*, little investment was forthcoming. For Sinéad and Michael, pedagogical care entailed more than just ensuring that pupils were safe and secure. It also entailed such practices as setting standards, showing an active interest in pupils and being responsive to their educational and pedagogical needs. Clearly the dissatisfaction they expressed above indicates that care was not felt in their context. Goldstein, too, has noted that the appropriate caring response is contextually specific.[779]

The comments above also contain echoes of the neoliberal ideology in education, as outlined by writers such as Michael Peters,[780] with the emphasis on self-help, the 'entrepreneurial self', and a shift away from the welfare state. In Foucauldian terms, it represents a form of governmentality, or an intensification of an economy of moral regulation.[781] This emphasis on self-help and improvement is not new- in the context of relief policies during the Great Famine, Nally noted that the subjects of intervention were rarely if

---

778 Interview with Michael.

779 Goldstein, "The Relational Zone," 656.

780 Michael Peters, "Education, Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self: A Foucauldian Perspective," *Journal of Educational Enquiry* 2, no. 2 (2001): 58-71.

781 *Ibid*., 67.

ever asked for their opinion or consent. Rather, state-led management of its citizens, bio-politics, where the terms of welfare provision, in the form of eligibility tests for admission to workhouses, gave the state extensive power over a starving population.[782] While they may not all have directly felt inferior members of the school population, Kirsty, Margaret, Sinéad and Michael certainly express a sense that care was not seen to be available and experienced by all pupils. No caring relation was created.

7.6 The Face of Care: Sr. Ellen

Throughout the interviews conducted with participants from the various groups, a number of individuals featured regularly as being remembered in a special way, frequently in terms of their support and encouragement to those in their care. The individual recalled most frequently and vividly in this regard was Sr. Ellen (Figure 45), a woman religious from the southwest of Ireland who entered in Waterford and occupied many positions of leadership in the years that followed, both as school Principal and Mistress of Novices. Her grand-niece later obtained a teaching position in the school, and much of her background detail was gleaned from this source. According to family tradition she showed remarkable agency when, as a 17 or 18 year old, she made a conscious decision to both join religious life and choose her preferred order:

> I think she decided herself. From what I remember she saying...she said she had checked out a number of the different orders, and she, again she didn't walk into it...Nobody fooled her. She just knew what she was doing...She said she had checked out the different orders and that she liked the Presentation and what they stood for.[783]

---

782 David Nally, "'That Coming Storm': The Irish Poor Law, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Great Famine," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 3 (2008): 718.

783 Interview with Josephine.

A growing city where she felt she could contribute made her decide on Waterford, which was to become her home.



Figure 45: Sr. Ellen and teaching colleagues (2nd from left, front row)
Source: Presentation archives, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

7.6.1 Memories within the community

Over the next number of decades, Sr. Ellen left a memorable legacy to those who knew her. Among her community, she is remembered for her energy, care and capability:

> Annemarie: She was Principal for about 30 years in all...And she wasn't a walking Principal. Even though there were 500 or something in the school, she had a class upstairs and they were what were called 7th and 8th...She used to teach them 'The Merchant of Venice' and, you know, she did a real postgraduate course with them up there.[784]

The curriculum for these older class groupings reflects valued forms of cultural *capital* at that time, in the form of Shakespearian plays. As her novice mistress, Annabel remembered Sr. Ellen's sense of inclusivity with all aspects of convent and school life, while Valerie recalled the various activities which added to her own store of cultural *capital*:

---

784 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

> Annabel: In the evenings we had recreation with Mother Ellen who was the Novice Mistress...We were involved in everything that she'd be doing. I can remember she'd have all sorts of things on in the school and we'd be all brought along to help out when people would be in...It was like apprenticeship in a way. Like, we were seeing her as a religious, but she was out there working and we were being brought in to, you know, to work side by side with her...Everybody kind of stayed under Ellen until they made final Profession...We had met with Ellen for, kind of, a spiritual lecture and reading and all that kind of thing.[785]
>
> Valerie: During that year, then, we would have learned, we had Elocution and Drama and Music...Ellen, the Novice Mistress. She had us doing all these things...It would be kind of for your self-development, we'll say, or getting you out of yourself.[786]

These activities reinforce the valued forms of spiritual and cultural *capital* within the community, but also a sense that they were designed to contribute to personal and social *capital* in the form of self-development.

For others, she is remembered for her interest in, and promotion of, plays and musical performances. Reference was made in a previous chapter to the pageant she wrote and staged for the bicentenary of Nano Nagle in 1975, which many lay teachers claim had a lasting legacy of bonding the religious and lay teachers in the school. However, in the interviews reference was also made to plays she wrote on other religious themes such as Fatima and Knock. Although teaching in the Infant school, Brenda remembers her writing these plays on pieces of cardboard in the convent space: "She'd be sitting down maybe in the community room and she'd have a bit of brown cardboard and you wouldn't know what she was writing."[787]

7.6.2 Memories within the School

Promoting these cultural activities was also recalled by the lay teachers who worked with her as Principal. One of Marion's earliest memories of school life was of being

---

785 Interview with Annabel.

786 Interview with Valerie.

787 Interview with Brenda.

encouraged to involve her class in Féile na Scoileanna, a non-competitive schools' performance which former pupils today still recall with great fondness:

> Mother Ellen came in and she said, 'You're going to put the children now into Féile na Scoil. You can enter these into Féile na Scoil.' And she came up with some poems, I think, they dramatised. She said, 'I have a couple of nice poems here for you'...I said, 'What will I do?' She said, 'I've found these,' she said, 'and this is what you'll do. They'll be grand,' she said. 'They'll love going on stage.'[788]

This encouragement to become involved in non-curricular activities was also recalled by Eleanor, who remembers Sr. Ellen accompanying her to Dublin when Eleanor's class participated in an Irish drama festival:

> Mother Ellen would always come with me...she was a fabulous support for that. She used be delighted that somebody in the school was doing it, you see."[789]

The degree of interest and support in these activities reflects the importance attached to this form of cultural *capital*, an importance reinforced in comments in reports following school inspections. Marion and Eleanor were both aware that they were contributing to the increase in this form of *capital*, but also that the school Principal cared for and supported their efforts.

As Principal, she was also remembered in terms of her capability and energy, in her ability to adopt a form of panoptic gaze on school life, but particularly for her care of the more disadvantaged pupils:

> Annemarie: she was a very good Principal in the sense that she sort of kept the whole school in view, and was I'd say a very unifying force in the school, and she certainly had Nano Nagle's ideas in this way, that the really poor children were her special concern. You know, the worse off they were, the more concerned she'd be with them, and she seemed to have a great understanding of themselves and their parents and their situation in life.[790]

---

788 Interview with Marion.

789 Interview with Eleanor.

790 Interview 2 with Annemarie.

> Marion: Nothing seemed to be a bother.[791]
>
> Lorna: She was just everywhere and anywhere, knew everything, had her finger on the pulse without it being obvious. She wasn't tearing around like a lunatic. She just knew everybody and everything, and everything about them, but was very discreet, I would say.[792].

As Principal, and although a teaching Principal for many years, she is also remembered for the care she took to maintain a visible presence to all pupils in the school. Annemarie recalled the effect she had on the various classes if she made one of her periodic visits: "She was great for coming around to the classes and sprang on the pupils. She'd come into the room and they'd all come alive, you know, she had such a personality and she would leave her class working away and they'd be no problem."[793] This view is supported by lay teaching colleagues.

> Marion: Mother Ellen used to come to the classrooms. She always went around to the classrooms. Every week she'd come into the classroom and ask how they were getting on and what were ye learning today?...You know, she'd always be praising them and then they'd really rise to that, then, of course, they'd really come on and put their best foot forward, they loved being praised and she'd go around and she'd be looking at the children. She'd say, 'I know your mother. Sure I taught your granny' and all of this, and they'd love, 'Aren't you little O'Grady' or whatever, I don't know. 'Tell Granny I was asking for her.' And they'd love that.[794]
>
> Lorna: She was very nice and very encouraging to do new things and try new things.[795]

For many participants, however, particularly the former lay teachers, she is remembered above all for the personal interest and care she showed in each of them:

---

791 Interview with Marion.

792 Interview with Lorna.

793 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

794 Interview with Marion.

795 Interview with Lorna.

> Annemarie: Another thing about her is, as Principal, she had a wonderful relationship with the staff. She was really personally interested in them, not just as staff members...It might not be an individual, maybe, but I'd say Ellen really kept a very motherly eye on them and did help them, you know, and encouraged them. [796]
>
> Rachel: Although she had a class, you know...somebody was supposed to take over from her who'd be finished early, and she'd come around to see us all and that.[797]

Pamela was one of those who greatly appreciated her care and support, both for pupils and staff:

> She was a very compassionate woman, had to run a very large school, but she had a great personal touch. She was very, very fair and we all respected her greatly. We would have done anything for her, I would anyway, yes... She would visit the classes but not in a, you know, wouldn't make you feel uncomfortable or anything like that, and had a lovely way about her. You'd know she was on your side, always. I was very, very fond of her.[798]
>
> Lorna: She had a way of dealing with (parents) and she never raised her voice. She wouldn't want you to raise your voice either.[799]

Pamela credited her with organising support when her youngest child was diagnosed as autistic.

Former pupils, on the other hand, have a greater variety of memories. Margaret recalled the physical appearance of her mother's friend: "I remember (Mother Ellen) coming in to the class our first day and saying hello and telling the girls that we were new... and I remember she was very, very beautiful...She was really gorgeous,"[800] while her sister Sinéad, on the other hand, although in the same class, did not establish the same rapport. In their

---

796 Interview 1 with Annemarie.

797 Interview with Rachel.

798 Interview with Pamela.

799 Interview with Lorna.

800 Interview with Margaret.

research on adolescent perspectives on caring teachers, Ferreira and Bosworth note the importance of perspective,[801] and this may account for the differing viewpoints in this case.

Nonetheless, to have combined the management of a large school with teaching duties and responsibilities within the convent community demanded energy and commitment. During her tenure, the construction of the current main building and adjoining hall was completed, and the extensive correspondence between Sr. Ellen and the Department of Education testifies to an attention to detail that extended to the specifications for cookers intended for use in a cookery room in the Infant school.[802] This energy was still evident after she retired. Her grandniece Josephine, many years later, still expressed amazement at her grandaunt's energy:

> We lived...in a place called Avondale, which would be about maybe 2 miles from here, she would head off from the convent. She was not young that time, and she would walk over. She walked over, to help **me**, with the baby.[803]

As a young mother, Josephine was clearly touched that an elderly nun cared enough to walk a considerable distance to visit, and acknowledges this motivational displacement by her grand-aunt.

7.7 Conclusion

In considering the third research question, that of a residual legacy, participants were asked to summarise what they felt the school stood for. Across all participant groups, the notion of care featured with varying degrees of regularity. For the former teaching women religious group, many testified to examples of care in a variety of forms, echoing both

801 Ferreira and Bosworth, "Defining Caring Teachers," 24.

802 File in the National Archives, Dublin.

803 Interview with Josephine.

Bourdieuian concepts of reproducing *capital*, and Foucauldian concepts of productive power. Many of these examples were framed in terms of the congregational ethos, were modelled by others from the moment of entry and later reproduced by the women religious themselves. Former lay teachers also spoke warmly about the care and nurturance they considered they had experienced during their teaching career. While some actions may have had paternalistic or Foucauldian overtones, many felt nurtured and supported during the time they spent in the school. They experienced what Noddings termed a 'caring relation' both at a personal and professional level.

The perspectives of former pupils, however, were not consistent. Many spoke warmly of the personal and pedagogical care they experienced as pupils, allowing them to achieve potential and goals that were previously out of reach. Others spoke of a safe environment, where pupils were exposed to new experiences and where potential was recognised, encouraged and nurtured. Most of these participants later became teachers themselves. However, a significant number of this group did not share these experiences, with many claiming that pastoral and pedagogical care was selective and not available to all pupils. For pedagogical care in particular, participant expectations extended to characteristics such as setting appropriate expectations according to ability and need. Some responses echoed historical notions of the deserving poor and more recent notions of neoliberal education.[804]

Finally, one individual featured regularly across all responses. Although not unanimously highly regarded by everyone, she was hugely admired for her energy and competence, but is still recalled today as the embodiment of care that many consider the essence of the congregational mission, and the virtue the school seeks to promote today.

---

804 Peters, "Education, Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self," *op.cit.* Also Bronwyn Davies and Peter Bansel, "Neoliberalism and Education," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 20, no. 3 (2007): 247-259.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

"(A visitor) said to me, one time.. 'I don't know what ye have in this school, but I wish we could bottle the atmosphere inside this school.'"[805]

8.1 Introduction

This thesis began with the departure of three ladies to Cork in 1798 to train as the first Presentation nuns in Waterford. In 2005, another departure occurred, when the convent was sold and the remaining community moved to other locations in the neighbouring region. This departure marked the end of the physical presence of the Presentation congregation in its third and final location in the city. This research sought to collate existing historical material gathered from public and private archives, and combine it with qualitative data gathered from interviews with three participant groups who were directly impacted by a presence that spanned a period of more than two hundred years in the city.

Four main research questions were to the forefront in designing this research project, namely:

1. What is known of the history of the Presentation Order in Waterford from 1798 to 2005?
2. How was life lived and experienced in the convent setting at the heart of this research?

805 Interview with Eleanor.

3. How did convent life and mission impact, if at all, on life as experienced in the adjoining primary school?
4. Is it possible to identify a legacy now that these women are no longer physically present?

This chapter summarises all of the data gathered during the study, and suggests possibilities in light of key themes that emerged from the data, namely: becoming and being a Presentation nun, the impact of their mission and the wider constituencies that they served, and finally the legacy of the Presentation Sisters in Waterford. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgement of the study limitations and a personal reflection of this research journey.

8.2 Background

The starting point for this research project was a corpus of historical and archival material then stored in a secure location in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. This had been assembled following the decision to close the Waterford convent in 2005, together with similar material from other foundations in the south-eastern province at the time. The location was intended as a temporary measure, pending the centralisation of all archives in the South Presentation convent in Cork City. Having obtained permission to access this material, a thorough examination was conducted between 2011 and 2012, with regular return visits as required after that date. The material consisted in the main of boxed documents, books, photographs and other artefacts, together with a small number of filing cabinets. Many interesting historical documents were revealed during this examination, such as the original 1799 Licence to Teach, wills of the early postulants, and the various legal documents required for the purchase of land to construct the two convent buildings. The boxed material also provided some insights into convent life- religious literature, photographs and evidence

of participation in local events. This was combined with other material gathered from a number of public and private archives detailed in Chapter 4.

The initial foundation in 1798 was part of a wider movement of female philanthropic work which encompassed many areas of social care, including health and education. It in turn was a product of the prevailing political, economic and social contexts of the day. The development of this work during the course of the nineteenth century in particular would shape both its nature and context, and reflect the changes and developments which occurred during this period. As an enclosed community, the life and experience of those who lived in this setting were hidden from view. This research sought to give a voice to these social actors, revealing in the process the complexity of this life, both as women religious and as teachers, from a variety of perspectives.

For many years women's history was a relatively neglected area of research. However, the latter decades of the last century saw an exponential interest and growth in research into this area worldwide, and women religious history in particular. A considerable corpus of literary research is now available, and it is hoped that the present study will contribute to this body of work. Reflecting frequent criticisms levelled at women's history generally, it quickly emerged during the examination of the archival data in this case study that one vital element was missing- the voice of the women religious who had entered, trained, taught and lived in this specific setting. This, therefore, provided the lacuna in the research which the current study sought to fill.

The research was also undertaken during the current and ongoing educational debate on models of more diverse school patronage, specifically in the context of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism, whose report was published in 2012. It recommended new models for a changing Ireland, and this study focuses on one of these school contexts in question, in a

retrospective exploration of life and experience in both the school and convent settings from the viewpoint of a variety of participant groups.

8.3 Summary of the Qualitative Study

With both archival and qualitative data at my disposal, the case study approach as advocated by Yin was chosen because it facilitates the exploration of 'how' and 'why' questions which lie at the heart of this research, and also because it allows the researcher to draw on multiple sources of data. It is also consistent with the use of Grounded Theory techniques of data analysis and the constructivist paradigmatic stance. Three relevant participant groups were identified who could best address the four key research questions: former women religious, former lay teachers and former pupils. The decision to choose three groups was made for a number of reasons: the small surviving population of the first group, and the fact that the other two groups, also stakeholders in one of the two settings, would generate additional data to enhance validity and trustworthiness, and thereby provide additional insights and perspectives into school life in particular. Participants were encouraged to recall and recount their life histories, both before and after their decision to enter religious life, and their lives as either teachers and/or pupils.

Details of each participant are contained in tables 4-6, and the three lists of guiding questions are contained in Appendices 5-7. The oral history interview was chosen as the methodological tool, since, as noted by Yow, it enables the researcher to learn about a way of life by studying the people who live it and asking them what they think about their experiences.[806] Conscious of the role of memory in oral history research, due ethical considerations and safeguards were put in place prior to undertaking the interviews at a

[806] Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 8.

location of participants' choosing. In all, more than 31 hours of interview material was gathered, transcribed and coded following Grounded Theory principles. Chapter 4 outlined the procedures employed in this process. Three themes subsequently emerged from the analysis of data, namely those of identity, power and care. These were detailed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

8.4 Addressing the Research Questions

The thesis began with four key research questions. This section will address each question in turn and capture the responses given by participants through an analysis of the data.

The first question sought to summarise what is currently known of the history of the Presentation Order in Waterford from 1798 to 2005. It was addressed by researching available historical and archival data, particularly the material gathered following the closure of the convent in 2005. It showed a strong commitment to female education, particularly the education of the socially and materially disadvantaged, over a period lasting more than two hundred years, and in three different locations. An examination of this material also showed that, despite the restrictions imposed by the rule of enclosure, gender and political realities, the community cultivated strong links with influential individuals, which in turn enabled them to negotiate obstacles successfully and thereby fulfil their educational mission. Chapter 2 presents the summary of this material. Although the dates involved a long chronology, they represent specific moments in the history of the Presentation Order's presence in Waterford, and are justified on that basis.

The second question arose from an examination of the archival material above. It quickly became clear that the voice of those at the centre of this setting was absent. The second question therefore sought to ascertain how convent life was lived and experienced by those directly impacted by this way of life. The majority of responses came from the first participant group. As described and recalled by them, and reflecting the monastic design of the building itself, convent life was characterised by a high degree of regulation and activity. Daily life followed a strict timetable of activities, and individuals were expected to be constantly occupied and engaged in productive work. Participants recalled having a highly prescribed timetable of daily events which they could still recall vividly many decades later, and these included work and activity in various spaces within the convent. Documents such as the *1850 Directory* outlined in detail the rules and obligations of women religious at all levels, and each member of the community made a contribution to the division of labour required to sustain such an enclosed, self-supporting community. For the teaching women religious, this also entailed balancing the demands of convent life with those of teaching in the adjoining school, and induction into school life was begun at the earliest opportunity after entry. For those engaged in teaching duties, this was accompanied by a system of mentoring and support from other experienced women religious within the community.

There were clear lines of separation, power and control within the convent at various levels: between novices and the professed community, between the professed community and lay sisters who occupied the kitchen area, and between novices and lay sisters. The formation process was instrumental in establishing the new relationships, and the enclosed nature of the community setting reinforced the supervision and surveillance needed to sustain them. Foucauldian techniques of power were evident in many participant responses. These included the distribution of individuals in space, the emphasis on productive work and techniques of self-regulation. The extent to which power was exercised by significant individuals

frequently influenced how life was lived and experienced. Prior to the changes brought about following Vatican II, the distribution of individuals in space according to rank was particularly visible in areas such as the chapel, for instance, where the lay sisters were relegated to the space behind the rood screen.

The motivations behind participant decisions to join religious life were varied, but many expressed them in terms of sense of calling from God, a desire to deepen their faith, or a wish to emulate women religious they had known and admired as pupils. A strong sense of wishing to contribute to the teaching mission for which the congregation had been founded was also expressed, and for many participants in this study, religious and teaching life were inextricably linked. Identity as a woman religious was therefore closely aligned to teacher identity. Many teaching women religious described this identity as continuing the ethos of their foundress, Nano Nagle, and the sense that they were engaged in a collective endeavour to achieve this was clear from several testimonies. However, many participants recall their own wishes being superseded by community requirements, particularly in the choice of school level or subject choice. Responses also demonstrate that some showed remarkable human agency to fulfil their personal goals, with several encountering disapproval and hostility from family members. Bourdieuian concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *capital* were evident in participant responses, and these were used for the benefit of the community and its educational mission.

The formation process was instrumental in 'becoming' a nun. It involved leaving behind the old identity associated with the individual's birth family, and the adoption of a new identity as a woman religious, and followed closely the stages associated with Van Gennep's rites of passage. The outward, visible symbol of this formation was the wearing of the religious habit, particularly the veil, which elicited a variety of responses from participants across all groups. It also inducted novices to their new way of life, both in the

convent and school, assisted by other professed women religious. Finally, it established clear lines of power and control from the moment of entry. For many in this study, Foucauldian techniques of separation and the distribution of individuals in space were also evident during the formation process, with novices separated from the rest of the professed community.

Prior to Vatican II, convent life was both highly regulated and supervised. When the vast majority of participants joined religious life, the rule of enclosure, which restricted movement within the convent areas, was in operation, although many participants felt that the extensive space and physical grounds of this case eased the challenges this brought. In such an environment, Foucauldian techniques of surveillance ensured that lines of power and control were observed, with some participants recalling examples of the panoptic gaze. Despite these restrictions, resistance could, and did, occur between agents, leading to lifelong friendships and relationships between, for example, novices and lay sisters, or professed religious and lay sisters. Responses indicate that these continued after the changes introduced following Vatican II. These changes were to have a far-reaching impact on the life experienced by many women religious, particularly those pertaining to enclosure, the call to renewal and reform, and a return to the original charism of the congregation. This was also the case for the changes introduced following the administrative reorganisation of the congregation as a whole. Individual houses were no longer autonomous units, and moving between houses became the norm. For some participants, these changes proved challenging, since they claimed that they led to a diminution in the lived communal identity as professed religious.

The Convent was also a historical product of social class, and convent life reflected this. For lay sisters, who traditionally came from less affluent socio-economic backgrounds and who performed the domestic tasks, they occupied a different position to that of their teaching sisters. Unfortunately, one of the acknowledged limitations of this study was the fact

that no lay sister survives, with the result that their voice cannot be heard. However, their surviving teaching sisters did give their perspective on the differential in power relations between the two groups. This was recalled with varying degrees of emotion, with some expressing unease at the visibly inferior position they occupied within the community at various levels. The responses from many former lay teachers and pupils would echo this view.

For professed women religious, daily life centred on combining the demands of religious and school life. For the lay sisters, daily life centred on supporting and facilitating these demands, together with the responsibility for much of the pastoral care to the wider community, the locus of which was the rear entrance to the convent colloquially known as the 'back door.' The visible work of philanthropy and charity was recalled in detail by participants across all groups, although its interpretation varied.

The third question addressed the impact of convent life and mission on life as experienced in the adjoining primary school. As a congregation devoted to teaching and female education, for professed Presentation women religious, school life was inextricably linked to religious life. Many had openly expressed the opinion that participating in the teaching mission was one of the principal motivations for joining the congregation. Life as a woman religious teacher was therefore an extension of life as a woman religious itself, with Bourdieuian concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *capital* also evident in the school setting.

Lay teacher colleagues were both participants in, and observers of, this link. For those who with no previous experience of the school, their initial impressions were frequently couched in terms of the welcome and support they received on arrival. For those who had previously been pupils there, it was an extension of school life as they had previously experienced it, albeit now viewed through another lens, that of a teacher. As pupils, many

recalled examples of support, either at a personal level or for fellow pupils in need, with the locus of this care being the ‘back door’ of the convent. As teachers, they also recalled being specifically asked to identify proactively any pupils likely to need financial or pedagogical support by school authorities. For many lay teachers, evidence of the ethos and example of Nano Nagle was frequently referenced as characterising the impact of convent on school life. This founding ethos was brought alive in the eyes of many by a play written and performed to commemorate the bicentenary of the Order in 1975. It was recalled as bonding the lay and religious teaching staff together in a special way, impacting identity and creating a link between the convent and school communities.

For former pupils, the sight of a woman religious teacher wearing the religious habit represented the first connection between convent and school. This induced emotions ranging from fear to a sense of discomfort for the wearer. Like the lay teachers, the ‘back door’ was another concrete link with the nearby convent, as was the sight of the older women religious in the grounds. While they acknowledged the assistance and support given at this location, many differed in their assessment of it, with some contending it was selective in nature. Likewise, in the classroom, others claimed that they did not experience the pedagogical care and support they needed, and which they appeared to expect from a teaching congregation. Nonetheless, there was a recognition of the pastoral and educational support the religious community gave to the wider community over many generations. This view is also supported by much of the archival material.

The fourth question addresses the issue of residual legacy. In one sense, this is more nebulous and difficult to define. Many of the lay teachers have now retired and few of the former pupils have direct contact with the school today. However, these provisos aside, the descriptors requested towards the end of the interviews from the second and third participant

groups may provide some indication of what this legacy might involve. They are summarised below in Table 8.

Table 8: Legacy descriptors

Descriptor terms (max. 5)	Group 2	Group 3
Caring/solicitude/kindness	7	2
Supportive/enabling/encouragement	5	4
Fairness/equality of opportunity	5	1
Education/educational values	4	4
Stimulating/love of learning/active learning	4	1*(also in group 1)
Concern for the poor and disadvantaged	3	0
Respect/dignity	3	3
Religion	2	4
Artistic activities-plays, concerts, crafts	2	3

As we can see above, lay teachers characterised what the school stood for primarily in terms of providing a caring and enabling environment. Qualities such as fairness and equality of opportunity, and the creation of a stimulating environment, were also highlighted. Concern for the poor perhaps reflects the memories of the 'back door,' the socio-economic context of the school itself and the impact of the congregational ethos on daily school life, while qualities such as respect and dignity also feature. Surprisingly, given the vivid memories of the 1975 play recalled by many participants in this group, artistic activities did not feature strongly, neither did the importance of religion.

For former pupils, however, the importance of religion, educational values and creating a supportive environment all receive an equal frequency of responses. This may reflect the memories of school life and experience, where religion infused all aspects of the daily routine, and the religious motivation that inspired the foundation of the Order in 1775. Reflecting the findings in Chapter 7, where care was not always felt or experienced by former pupils, descriptors of care occurred less frequently than by lay teachers. This also reflects the

observation that many of the pupils who recalled an experience of care subsequently went on to become teachers themselves. Although many participants may not have experienced care, they did consider the school created a supportive, encouraging and enabling environment, and that an importance was attached to education and educational values. This would appear to imply to acknowledge a recognition of the efforts made to fulfil the congregational ethos and mission.

In summary, therefore, religious life was one characterised by a high degree of regulation and productive activity, and the teaching mission of the congregation was an extension of this. Although women religious and lay teachers contended that one of the chief legacy descriptors centred on caring for all, this was not experienced by everyone, particularly by pupils.

As a teacher currently working in the primary school, I found these descriptors of particular interest, given that they come from an educational landscape that is, in many respects, one of a fading past. Nonetheless, it was clear that modern practice has not emerged in the recent past. I see evidence of these descriptors on a daily basis: provision of everyday necessities, assistance with school requisites, and financial support to ensure access to the modern curriculum for all pupils in need. Above all, the interest shown in each individual pupil, the acknowledgment of achievements and the care for the individual is, I feel, very much both a product and a legacy of the past. Equally, this research reminds everyone to be mindful that this care may not always be experienced by every pupil, and that it is incumbent on everyone to ensure that this is so.

8.5 Limitations of the Study

This case study was focused on one specific location in an urban setting in south-east Ireland. Having closed in 2005 and the remaining residents relocated elsewhere in the region, it was subsequently renovated and now functions as a primary health centre for the local community. A number of limitations are therefore acknowledged regarding the study.

The principal limitation centres on the lack of voice of the lay sisters within the former community. Unfortunately, none survived at the time of the research design, and I feel the study could have benefited greatly from their input, particularly in addressing the second key research question. The aging population of women religious who had lived and worked here also led to a reduced population from which to draw eligible participants. Fortunately, the majority of those asked to participate did so willingly, which counterbalanced this limitation.

8.6 Contribution of this Work to Research

The convent and primary school at the centre of this research were notable for being the first of their kind for girls in Waterford, with the final location being a building of architectural significance. Although a corpus of relevant historical literature was already in existence prior to undertaking the study, it did not include the voices of those who had lived and worked there. The absence of women's voice and experience had long been noted in historical discourse, and this research seeks to fill this lacuna for this particular site of human activity, by exploring the complexity of the experience and its contextual conditions. It will contribute to an extensive body of research that has gradually built up in recent decades.

The study focuses on giving voice to three participant groups with direct experience of life in the convent and adjoining primary school settings. It adds to existing literature in the realm of women's history, and specifically the history of women religious in Ireland. Much of the historical and archival material used as the basis for the early part of the work will be housed in a central location in Cork City by the time of publication, and will hopefully be available to other researchers in this area. By showcasing the various documents and papers, I hope others will be encouraged to make further use of them to engage in other avenues of study. This will be all the more important as we move to more varied forms of school patronage, where schools run and managed by religious congregations will no longer be an accepted feature of Irish education. These varied forms of patronage will also be accompanied by the fading sight of an Irish woman religious from the popular memory.

8.7 Suggestions for Future Research

This research study was focused on one specific location, and hearing the voices of three participant groups that had direct experience of this location. Although at the outset it was envisaged that all groups would carry equal weight in terms of data production and generation, it became clear very early in the process that the first group were going to assume greater importance than the other two. The differing perspectives of school life, particularly the experiences around care and caring, were striking and noteworthy. As a result, I feel there is greater scope to probe deeper into the voice of pupils, particularly as in this case, pupils of a school run by a religious congregation. The inclusion of the gender variable, in terms of the experience of male and female pupils, is also one worth consideration. Other possibilities include a comparative study of foundations established with links to Waterford. Finally, given the close and intimate connections between Edmund Rice and the Presentation Order in

Waterford over so many years, a comparative study with the first Christian Brothers' school, Mount Sion, may yield valuable fruits.

8.8 Conclusion

As a lover of history and biographies of all kinds, engaging with this research was a labour of love, and I hope I have done all those involved in it justice. Modern Ireland has brought many changes in its wake, none more so than in the arena of education. For so long, the sight of a teaching woman religious was an accepted part of the educational landscape. This is clearly no longer the case. Nonetheless, as we move towards more varied forms of school patronage, and in light of the social change in recent years, perhaps it is timely to acknowledge the contribution of these women to Irish education, and the sacrifices many made in their decision to enter religious life. We have seen from the evidence in this study that it was not always an easy life, but yet had its own joys and challenges. The work they performed, and continue to perform, may have changed according to modern and current demands, but as the participants in this study testify, they exhibit pride in their achievements and legacy. As those who are tasked to continue, let us look to the future with confidence, retaining the important, lasting elements of this legacy.



Figure 46: Presentation Community, May 2003
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Primary Sources (in chronological order)

(a) Presentation Archives, Dungarvan

1796 Lease between Francis Wyse and Edmund Rice.

1797 15th September Lease between John Sheehan and Mary Mullowney, witnessed by Edmund Rice, of site in Hennessy's Road of 1 rood, 27and a half perches, for 41 years.

1799 Licence to teach from Richard, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, to Eleanor Power, granting permission to keep a boarding school for females.

1804 8th of May: Lease of ground in Clinker St. between William Bell and John Walsh.

1816-1837 School accounts book.

1818 25th of September letter appointing James Sheehan as executor to John Sheehan (deceased).

1825 15th of September letter of indenture and costs between James Sheehan and Mary Mullowney.

1841 3rd of February Indenture between Thomas Wyse and Thomas Meagher, Robert Curtis and John Kearney for Holy Cross lands.

1841 Statement of legal costs between Thomas Wyse and Thomas Meagher.

1848 Estimate of Cost of the School at Holy Cross.

1848 May Statement of costs of making out title to the Hennessy's Road premises between Mrs. Mary Tobin and The Poor Law Commissioners.

1850 Costs of John O'Brien to E. O'Connor re George Wyse's estate.

1850 *A Directory for the Religious of the Presentation Order According to the Practices of the Parent House, Founded in 1775, By the Venerable Mother, Nano Nagle, in Douglas Street, Cork*. Cork: Wm. Hurley, 1850.

1857 September Four letters re Hennessy's Road Convent and the Poor Law.

1858 16th of January Letter from Waterford Union to the convent Superioress requesting the possibility of purchasing the Hennessy's Road premises.

1859 11th of February letter from Rev. Tobias Kirby, Irish College, Rome, to Reverend Mother de Sales Knox.

1866 letter from Rev. Tobias Kirby, Irish College, Rome, to Reverend Mother of the Presentation Convent.

1897 Solicitor's letter re Purchase of plot of ground adjoining convent lands., and solicitor's costs for same.

1928 Registry of Judgements letter confirming purchase of lands from Waterford Corporation and title deeds to same, together with Solicitor's legal costs.

(b) Presentation archives, George's Hill, Dublin

Annals of the Presentation Convent, Waterford, 1799-1895.

Reception and Profession book from Presentation Convent, Waterford, 1806-1976.

(c) Presentation archives, South Presentation Convent, Cork City

Annals of South Presentation Convent (detailing the beginnings of the Waterford foundation)., 1775-1892.

(d) Letters of Nano Nagle

Letters from Nagle to Eleanor Fitzsimons. Originals in Ursuline Convent, Blackrock, Cork City.

17 July 1769 (Transcript)

Early in 1770

29 April 1770

13 May 1770

20 July 1770 from Bath

28 September 1770

Letters from Nano Nagle to Teresa Mulally. Originals in Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

29 September 1776

21 August 1778 (Transcript)

24 August 1778

31 August 1778

16 December 1778

17 March 1779

30 October 1779

29 July 1780

31 January 1783

(e) Cashel Diocesan archives

Letter from Dr. John Power to Dr. Francis Moylan, 20 October 1807. Original in Cashel Diocesan archives, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

(f) School Reports

General Report of visit dated 2nd and 5th June, 1924.

General Report of visit dated 11 and 12 Samhain, 1926.

Annual Voucher dated 19adh Márta, 1930.

Annual Voucher dated 9adh Samhain, '31.

General Inspection of visit dated 11/1/1940.

General Report of visit dated 20/11/1940.

(g) Vatican Documents

1983 Code of Canon Law, CHAPTER 3, Article 2 "The Novitiate and Formation of Novices," Canon 647.

National Archives of Ireland

File ED/1/88/NO. 94: Letter of application to join the National System, inspectoral report, payment of Teacher's salary.

File ED/2/184/NO. 29: Register of National Schools inc. District 49.

File ED/2/184: Comments regarding attendance, timetabling of subjects such as needlework, 1899.

File ED/9/12843: Correspondence between school manager and the Office of National Education regarding school closures in 1899.

File ED/9/14125: Correspondence with Local Government Board regarding the prevention of the spread of infection in 1899.

Newspaper articles:

(a) Waterford News and General Advertiser

June 7, 1861, 3.

June 14, 1861, 3.

June 21, 1861, 3.

April 27, 1866, 3.

July 5, 1878, 3.

August 9, 1878, 3.

October 4, 1878, 3.

February 7, 1879, 3.

February 21, 1879, 3.

February 6, 1880, 3.

June 4, 1880, 3.

Official Reports (in chronological order)

First Report of the Commissioners on Education in Ireland Inquiry, H.C. 1825 (400). Parliamentary Papers Session 1825, Vol. XII.

Appendices to the Fifty-Seventh Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland for the year 1890. Dublin: Her Majesty's Statistics Office, 1891.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Report of the Forum's Advisory Group. Dublin: 2012.

Unpublished Theses and Papers

Collins, Jenny. "Hidden Lives: The Teaching and Religious Lives of Eight Dominican Sisters, 1931-1961." Masters Thesis, Massey University, 2001.

Desmond, Ann-Marie. "The Double Bind for Non-Traditional Families in Post-Primary Settings: to Tell or not to Tell their Family Identity." PhD Thesis, University College Cork, 2014.

Gallen, Ruth. "Presentation Secondary School, Waterford: Celebrating Two Hundred Years of Education." Paper submitted in part fulfilment for master's thesis, UCC, 2000.

O'Brien Moran, Margaret. "Designing for Religious Life: A.W.N. Pugin and the Presentation Convent, Waterford." M.A. in History of Art and Design, University of Limerick, 2004.

Sheehan, Alan M. "Assessment in Primary Education in Ireland." PhD Thesis, University College, Cork, 2016.

Yelverton Halpin, Carol. "A critical search for the 'self' in adult education: Bourdieuian insights into transformative possibilities." PhD Thesis, University College Cork, 2016.

Secondary Sources

Adler, Patricia A., and Peter Adler. "The Epistemology of Numbers." In *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research*, 8-11. National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper: 2012.

Akenson, Donald H. *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1970.

_____ . *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922-1960*. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975.

Aldrich, Megan. "Gothic Sensibility: The Early Years of the Gothic Revival." In *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival,* edited by Paul Atterbury, 13-29. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Armour, Noel. "Isabella Tod and Liberal Unionism in Ulster, 1886-96." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 72-87. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Arnot, Madeleine, and Diane Reay. "A Sociology of Pedagogic Voice: Power, inequality and pupil consultation." *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education* 28, no. 3 (2007): 311-325.

Ball, Stephen J., and Carol Vincent. "'I Heard it on the Grapevine': 'hot' knowledge and school choice." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 19, no. 3 (1998): 377-400.

Barnes, Jane. *Irish Industrial Schools, 1868-1908*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989.

Barone, Tom, and Elliot Eisner. "Arts-Based Educational Research." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, 95-109. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Baxter, Pamela, and Susan Jack. "Qualitative Case Study Methodology." *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 4 (2008): 544-559.

Becker, Howard S. "Visual Sociology, Documentary Photography, and Photojournalism: It's (Almost) All a Matter of Context." In *Image-Based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*, edited by Jon Prosser, 84-96. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Bernstein, Basil. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique*, rev.ed. Maryland, US: Rowman and Littl*efield*, 2000.

Bilinkoff, Jodi. "Soul Mates: Spiritual Friendship and Life-Writing in Early Modern Spain (and Beyond)." In *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordula van Whye, 143-154. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Birch, Maxine, Tina Miller, Melanie Mauthner, and Julie Jessop. *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. California: Sage Publications, 2002.

Bitel, Lisa M. "'Hail Brigit!': Gender, Authority and Worship in Early Ireland." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 1-14. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Blair, Gráinne M. "New Battlegrounds: The Development of the Salvation Army in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 88-102. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Bohman, James. "Practical Reason and Cultural Constraint: Agency in Bourdieu's Theory of Practice." In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 129-152.. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999.

Bottero, Wendy. "Intersubjectivity and Bourdieusian Approaches to 'Identity'." *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2010): 3-22.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

_____ . "Social Space and Symbolic Power." *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 14-25.

_____ . *Sociology in Question*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

_____ . *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

_____ . *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Translated by Matthew Adamson. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990.

_____ . *Language and Symbolic Power*. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, edited by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

_____ . *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Translated by Lauretta C. Clough, 1989. Repr. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996.

_____ . *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

_____ . "The Forms of *Capital*." In *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Imre Szeman and Timothy Koposy, 81-93. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

Bouveresse, Jacques. "Rules, Dispositions and the *Habitus*." In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 45-63. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999.

Brenner, Mary E. “Interviewing in Educational Research.” In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, 357-370. New York: Routledge, 2006.

British Educational Research Association (BERA). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. London: BERA, 2011.

Broderick, Eugene. *Waterford’s Mercy Schools, 1900-2000: A Centenary Record*. Waterford: Mercy Centenary Committee, 2000.

Brown, Martin, Gerry McNamara, and Joe O’Hara. “Teacher Accountability in Education: The Irish Experiment.” In *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, edited by Brendan Walsh, 359-381. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Bruno Jofré, Rosa. “The situational dimension of the educational apostolate and the configuration of the learner as a cultural and political subject: the case of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions in the Canadian Prairies.” In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 160-182. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Bryman, Alan. “How many qualitative interviews are enough?” In *How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research*, 18-20. National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper: 2012.

Buckley, Alison. “’Let the Girls Come Forth’: The Early Feminist Ideology of the Irish Women Worker’s Union.” In *Irish Women’s History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 103-114. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Bürkner, Hans-Joachim. “Intersectionality: How Gender Studies Might Inspire the Analysis of Social Inequality Among Migrants.” *Population, Space and Place* 18, no. 2 (2012): 181-195.

Burley, Stephanie. “Resurrecting the Religious Experiences of Catholic Girls’ Schooling in South Australia in the 1920s.” *Education Research and Perspectives* 28, no. 1 (2001): 25-44.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

_____ . “Performativity’s Social Magic.” In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 113-128. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999.

Campbell, Treasa. “Ethics of Care.” In *Ethics: A University Guide*, edited by Richard H. Corrigan and Mary E. Farrell, 79-108. Gloucester: Progressive Frontiers Press, 2010.

Casey, Kathleeen. “The New Narrative Research in Education.” *Review of Research in Education* vol. 21 (1995-1996): 211-253.

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London and California: Sage Publications, 2006.

Chryssochoou, Xenia. "Studying identity in social psychology." *Journal of Language and Politics* 2, no. 2 (2003): 225-241.

Clarke, Adele E., Carrie Friese and Rachel Washburn. *Situational Analysis in Practice: Mapping Research with Grounded Theory*. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2015.

Clear, Caitríona. "Walls Within Walls-Nuns in 19th Century Ireland." In *Gender in Irish Society*, edited by Chris Curtin, Pauline Jackson and Barbara O'Connor, 134-151. Galway: Galway University Press, 1987.

_____ . *Nuns in Nineteenth Century Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988.

Coleman, Michael. "'Eyes as Big as Bowls with Fear and Wonder': Children's Responses to the Irish National Schools, 1850-1922." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 98C, no. 5 (1998): 177-202.

Collins, Jenny. "'To the very antipodes': Nineteenth Century Dominican Sisters-teachers in Ireland and New Zealand."*Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 4 (2013): 494-512.

_____ . "'Have your children got leave to speak?': the teacher training of New Zealand Dominican Sisters, 1871-1965." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 117-134. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Concannon, Mrs. Thomas. *Irish Nuns in Penal Days*. London: Sands and Co., 1931.

Confoy, Maryanne. "Religious Life in the Vatican Era: 'State of Perfection' or Living Charism?" *Theological Studies* no. 74 (2013): 321-346.

Connelly, F. Michael, and D. Jean Clandinin. "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 5 (1990): 2-14.

_____ . "Narrative Inquiry." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, 477-487, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Connolly, Sean. *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1985.

Consedine, Sr. M. Raphael, P.B.V.M. *Listening Journey: A Study of the Spirit and Ideals of Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters*. Victoria: Port Phillip Press, 1983.

Coolahan, John. *Irish Education: History and Structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1981.

Corbin, Juliet, and Anselm Strauss. *Basics of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. California: Sage Publications, 2008.

Corcoran, T. "Catholic Teachers and the Penal Law of 1782." *The Irish Monthly* 59, no. 697 (1931): 422-425.

Corrado Pope, Barbara. “Immaculate and powerful: the Marian revival in the nineteenth century.” In *Gender and History in Western Europe*, edited by Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent, 260-277. London: Arnold, 1998.

Cowman, Des. “Trade and Society in Waterford City, 1800-1849.” In *Waterford History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, edited by William Nolan and Thomas P. Power, 427-458. Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992.

Crawford, Teresa. “Winning the Epistemological Struggle: Constructing a Cultural Model of Shared Authority in an Elementary Classroom.” *Teachers College Record* 110, no. 8 (2008): 1706-1736.

Crossley, Nick. “From Reproduction to Transformation: Social Movement *Field*s and the Radical *Habitus*.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 20, no. 6 (2003): 43-68.

Cullingford, Elizabeth. “’Our Nuns are not a Nation’: Politicizing the Convent in Irish Literature and Film.” *Éire/Ireland* 41, no. ½ (2006): 9-39.

Daly, Mary E. *Social and Economic History of Ireland since 1800*. Dublin: The Educational Company, 1981.

Danaher, Geoff, Tony Schirato and Jen Webb. *Understanding Foucault*. London and California, Sage Publications, 2000.

Danylewycz, Marta. *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987.

Davies, Bronwyn, and Peter Bansel. “Neoliberalism and education.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 20, no. 3 (2007): 247-259.

Dentith, Simon. *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Diefendorf, Barbara B. “Barbe Acarie and her Spiritual Daughters: Women’s Spiritual Authority in Seventeenth-Century France.” In *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordula van Whye, 155-172. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Du Bois-Reymond, Manuela. “’I Don’t Want to Commit Myself Yet’: Young People’s Life Concepts.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 63-79.

Duffy, Seán. *The Concise History of Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2000.

Dumais, Susan A. “Cultural *Capital*, Gender and School Success: The Role of *Habitus*.” *Sociology of Education* 75, no. 1 (2002): 44-68.

Duranti, Alessandro. “Transcripts, Like Shadows on a Wall.” *Mind, Culture and Activity* 13, no. 4 (2006): 301-310.

Earner-Byrne, Lindsey. *Mother and Child: Maternity and Child Welfare in Dublin, 1922-60*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Edgeworth, Maria, and Richard Lovell Edgeworth. *Practical Education*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835.

Egan, Moira E. "Nurses, Nuns and Ladies: A Study of Class, Ethnicity and Religion in the Crimean War." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 60-71. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Eisenhart, Margaret. "Representing Qualitative Data." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, 567-581. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Entwhistle, Joanne. "Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice." *Fashion Theory* 4, no. 3 (2000): 323-348.

Erlandson, Peter. "The Body Disciplined: Rewriting Teaching Competence and the Doctrine of Reflection." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 39, no. 4 (2005): 661-670.

Fahey, Tony. "Nuns in the Catholic Church in Ireland in the Nineteenth Century." In *Girls Don't Do Honours: Irish Women in Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Mary Cullen, 7-30. Dublin: Women's Education Bureau, 1987.

Ferreira, Maria M., and Kris Bosworth. "Defining Caring Teachers: Adolescents' Perspectives." *Journal of Classroom Interaction* 36, no. 1 (2001): 24-30.

Field, Sean. "Oral History Methodology." SEPHIS Workshops in Vietnam and Philippines, University of Cape Town, South Africa, 2007.

Finnegan, Frances. *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Fitzgerald, Garret. *Ireland in the World: Further Reflections*. Dublin: Liberties Press, 2008.

_____ . *Irish Primary Education in the Early Nineteenth Century: An analysis of the first and second reports of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, 1825-6*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2013.

Floersch, Jerry, Jeffrey L. Longhofer, Derrick Kranke and Lisa Townsend. "Integrating Thematic, Grounded Theory and Narrative Analysis: A Case Study of Adolescent Psychotropic Treatment." *Qualitative Social Work* 9, no. 3 (2010): 407-425.

Foster, Roy. *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972*. London: Penguin Books, 1988.

Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-795.

_____ . *Madness and Civilization*. Translated by Richard Howard. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. First published 1967 by Tavistock Publications.

_____ . *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Books, 1991. First published 1977 by Allen Lane.

Fox, Noela. *A Dream Unfolds: The Story of Nano Nagle*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2016.

Frabutt, James M., Ronald J. Nuzzi, Thomas C. Hunt, and Margaret A. Solic. "*Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*: A Ten-Year Retrospective Review of Catholic Educational Research." *Catholic Education* 11, no. 4 (2008): 428-441.

Geary, Laurence M. "'The best relief the poor can receive is from themselves': the Society for Promoting the Comforts of the Poor." In *Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, edited by Laurence M. Geary and Oonagh Walsh, 38-58. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015.

Geiger, Susan. "What's So Feminist about Women's Oral History?" *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 169-182.

Gervais, Christine, and Amanda Watson. "Discipline, Resistance, Solace and the Body: Catholic Women Religious' Experiences from the Late 1930s to the Late 1960s." *Religions* no. 5 (2014): 277-303.

Girouard, Mark. "Three Centuries of Commerce: City of Waterford, Ireland-III." *Country Life*, December 22, 1966: 1695-1698.

Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967.

Gluck, Sherna. "What's so Special about Women? Women's Oral History." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 2, no. 2 (1977): 3-17.

Goldstein, Lisa S. "The Relational Zone: The Role of Caring Relationships in the Co-Construction of Mind." *American Educational Research Journal* 36, no. 3 (1999): 647-673.

Goldstein, Lisa S., and Vickie E. Lake. "'Love, love, and more love for children': exploring preservice teachers' understandings of caring." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16 (2000): 861-872.

Grace, Gerald. *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hall, Catherine. "The early formation of Victorian domestic ideology." In *Gender and History in Western Europe*, edited by Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent, 181-196. London: Arnold, 1998.

Hall, Dianne. "Necessary Collaborations: Religious Women and Lay Communities in Medieval Ireland, *c*. 1200-1540." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 15-28. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Harford, Judith, and Deirdre Raftery. "The Education of Girls Within the National System." In *Female Education in Ireland, 1700-1900: Minerva or Madonna*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Susan M. Parkes, 33-68. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2007.

Harford, Judith, and Tom O'Donoghue. "Continuity and Change in the Perspectives of Women Religious on Themselves both as Religious and as Teachers in the Years Immediately Prior to, and Following, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)." *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 3 (2011): 399-413.

Harker, Richard, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes. *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Macmillan, 1990.

Harnett, Sr. M. Kieran. *Nano Nagle: Woman of Vision*. Cork: Presentation Centre of Spirituality and Hospitality, 2001.

Hayes, Alan. "Afterword: A Feminine Occupation for a Female Audience?: A Future for Irish Women's History." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 199-202. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

Hegarty, Neil. *Story of Ireland: In Search of a New National Memory*. London: BBC Books, 2011.

Hellinckx, Bart, Frank Simon, and Marc Depaepe. *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching Sisters: A Historiographical Essay on the Educational Work of Catholic Women Religious in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009.

Heylin, Frank. "The Waterford of Brother Rice." *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society* no. 32 (1986): 45-48.

Hill, Rosemary. "Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin: A Biographical Sketch." In *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, edited by Paul Atterbury, 31-44. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Hodkinson, Phil, and Andrew C. Sparkes. "Careership: a sociological theory of career decision." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 18, no. 1 (1997): 29-44.

Hoy, David. "Critical Resistance: Foucault and Bourdieu." In *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersections of Nature and Culture*, edited by Gail Weiss and Honi Fern Haber, 3-22. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.

Hoy, Suellen. "The Journey Out: The Recruitment and Emigration of Irish Religious Women to the United States, 1812-1914." *Journal of Women's History* 6, no. 4/7, no. 1 (1995): 64-98.

Hursh, David. "Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies." *American Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 3 (2007): 493-518.

Hutch, William. *Nano Nagle: Her Life, Her Labours and their Fruits*. Dublin: McGlashan and Gill, 1875.

Hyland, Áine, and Brian Bocking. "Religion, Education, and Religious Education in Irish Schools." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 18, no. 3 (2015): 252-261.

Hyland, Áine, and Kenneth Milne, eds. *Irish Educational Documents*. 3 vols. Dublin: Church of Ireland College of Education, 1987-1995.

Järvinen, Margaretha. "Immovable Magic: Pierre Bourdieu on gender and power." *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 7, no. 1 (1999): 6-19.

Jenkins, Richard. *Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.

Jones, Greta. *'Captain of All These Men of Death': The History of Tuberculosis in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Ireland*. Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2001.

Kelly, Jane. “Loreto Education in Australia: the pioneering influence of Mother Gonzaga Barry.” In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges,* edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 199 -214. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Keogh, Daire. “Thomas Hussey, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore 1797-1803, and the Rebellion of 1798.” In *Waterford History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, edited by William Nolan and Thomas P. Power, 403-436. Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992.

_____ . *Edmund Rice and the First Christian Brothers*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008.

_____ . “Forged in the Fire of Persecution: Edmund Rice (1762-1844) and the Counter-Reformatory Character of the Irish Christian Brothers.” In *Essays in the History of Irish Education,* edited by Brendan Walsh, 83-103. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Kendall, Gavin, and Gary Wickham. *Using Foucault’s Methods*. Introducing Qualitative Methods. London and California: Sage Publications, 1999.

Kilroy, Phil. “Coming to an Edge in History: Writing the History of Women Religious and the Critique of Feminism.” In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges,* edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 6-30. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

King, Anthony. “Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A ‘Practical’ Critique of the *Habitus*.” *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 3 (2000): 417-433.

Kingston, Paul W. “The Unfulfilled Promise of Cultural *Capital* Theory.” *Sociology of Education* Extra issue (2001): 88-99.

Kolmer, Elizabeth. “Catholic Women Religious and Women’s History: A Survey of the Literature.” *American Quarterly* 30, no.5 (1978): 639-651.

Koven, Seth, and Sonya Michel. “Womanly duties: maternalist policies and the origins of welfare states in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920.” In *Gender and History in Western Europe*, edited by Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent, 319-346. London: Arnold, 1998.

Kuhns, Elizabeth. *The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Kvale, Steinar, and Svend Brinkmann. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. California: Sage Publications, 2009.

Lahire, Bernard. “From the *habitus* to an individual heritage of dispositions. Towards a sociology at the level of the individual.” *Poetics* 31, nos. 5-6 (2003): 329-355.

Lang, S. “The Principles of the Gothic Revival in England.”*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 25, no. 4 (1966): 240-267.

Larkin, Emmet. “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875.” *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (1972): 625-652.

Lauckner, Heidi, Margo Paterson, and Terry Krupa. "Using Constructivist Case Study Methodology to Understand Community Development Processes: Proposed Methodological Questions to Guide the Research Process." *The Qualitative Report* 17, no. 13 (2012): 1-22.

Lee, Jung-Sook, and Natasha K. Bowen. "Parent Involvement, Cultural *Capital*, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children." *American Educational Research Journal* 43, no. 2 (2006): 193-218.

Lipsitz, Joan. "Why We Should Care About Caring." *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 9 (1995): 665-666.

Logan, John. "The Dimensions of Gender in Nineteenth-Century Schooling." In *Gender Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres*, edited by Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy, 36-49. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997.

Lortie, Dan C. *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Lovell, Terry. "Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu." *Feminist Theory* 1, no. 1 (2000): 11-32.

Luddy, Maria. "Women and Charitable Organisations in Nineteenth Century Ireland." *Women's Studies International Forum* 11, no. 4 (1988): 301-305.

_____ . "Presentation Convents in County Tipperary: 1806-1900." *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1992): 84-95.

_____ . *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

_____ . "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations* 7, no. 4 (1996): 350 -364.

_____ . "Religion, Philanthropy and the State in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Ireland." In *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to 1850*, edited by Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes, 148-167. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

_____ . "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland." In *Women, Philanthropy and Civil Society*, edited by Kathleen D. McCarthy, 9-28. Bloomington and Indiananpolis: Indiana University Press, 2001.

_____ . "Convent Archives as Sources for Irish History." In *Religious Women and their History: Breaking the Silence*, edited by Rosemary Raughter, 98-115. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005.

Lynch, Kathleen, and Anne Lodge. *Equality and Power in Schools: Redistribution, Recognition and Representation*. London: Routledge Falmer, 2002.

Lyons, Francis Stewart Leland. *Ireland Since the Famine*. 2 vols. London: Fontana Books, 2009.

Lyons, Tony. “Thomas Wyse and Non-Denominational Education in Ireland, 1830-1845.” In *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700-2000*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer, 42-59. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014.

MacCurtain, Margaret. “Late in the *Field*: Catholic Sisters in Twentieth-Century Ireland and the New Religious History.” *Journal of Women’s History* 6, no. 4 (1995): 49-63.

MacCurtain, Margaret, Mary O’Dowd and Maria Luddy. “An Agenda for Women’s History in Ireland, 1500-1900.” *Irish Historical Studies* 28, no. 109 (1992): 1-37.

Maguire, Moira J. *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009.

Mangion, Carmen M. “’Good Teacher’ or ‘Good Religious’? The Professional Identity of Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales.” *Women’s History Review* 14, no. 2 (2005): 223-242.

_____ . *Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008.

Mann Wall, Barbra. “Sister-physicians, education, and mission in the mid-twentieth century.” In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 60-76. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Margolis, Joseph. “Pierre Bourdieu: *Habitus* and the Logic of Practice.” In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 64-83. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999.

McCarthy, Michael. *The Origins of the Gothic Revival*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1987.

McDermid, Jane. “Girls at School in Nineteenth-Century Ireland.” In *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, edited by Brendan Walsh, 105-128. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

McLaren, Peter. “Making Catholics: The ritual production of conformity in a Catholic junior high school.” *Journal of Education* 168, no. 2 (1986): 55-77.

McLaughlin, Denis. “The Dialectic of Australian Catholic Education.” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 10, no. 2 (2005): 215-233.

McKenna, Yvonne. “Entering Religious Life, Claiming Subjectivity: Irish Nuns, 1930s-1960s.” *Women’s History Review* 15, no. 2 (2006): 189-211.

_____ . *Made Holy: Irish Women Religious at Home and Abroad*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006.

_____ . “Embodied Ideals and Realities: Irish Nuns and Irish Womanhood, 1930s-1960s.” *Éire/Ireland* 42, no. 1/2 (2006): 40-63.

McManus, Antonia. “The Transformation of Irish Education: The Ministerial Legacy, 1919-1999.” In *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, edited by Brendan Walsh, 267-296. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

McNamara, Jo Ann Kay. *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

McNay, Lois. "Gender, *Habitus* and the *Field*: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity." *Theory, Culture and Society* 16, no. 1 (1999): 95-117.

_____ . "Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation." In *Feminism After Bourdieu*, edited by Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs, 175-190. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Mertens, Donna M. *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity With Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, 3rd ed. California: Sage Publications, 2010.

Michelman, Susan. "Breaking Habits: Fashion and Identity of Women Religious." *Fashion Theory* 2, no.2 (1998): 165-192.

Milan, Michèle. "A path to perfection: translations from French by Catholic women religious in nineteenth-century Ireland." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 183-198. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Mills, Sara. *Michel Foucault*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Milne, Kenneth, and Áine Hyland. *Irish Educational Documents*. 3 vols. Dublin: Church of Ireland College of Education, 1987-1995.

Moi, Toril. "Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture." *New Literary History* 22, no. 4 (1991): 1017-1049.

Nally, David. "'That Coming Storm': The Irish Poor Law, Colonial Biopolitics, and the Great Famine." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 3 (2008): 714-741.

Navarro, Zander. "In Search of a Cultural Interpretation of Power: The Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu." *IDS Bulletin* 37, no. 6 (2006): 11-22.

Nelson, Siobhan. "Pastoral Care and Moral Government: Early Nineteenth Century Nursing and Solutions to the Irish Question." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 26, no. 1 (1997): 6-14.

Noddings, Nel. *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, 2nd ed. New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2005.

_____ . *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd ed. California: University of California Press, 2013.

Nowlan-Roebuck, Catherine. "The Presentation Order and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland." In *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700-2000*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fisher, 124-145. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014.

_____ . "Sisters as Teachers in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: The Presentation Order." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and*

Colleges, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 77-98. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

O'Brien, George. *The Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*. Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1977.

O'Brien, Gillian. "The 1825-6 Commissioners of Irish Education reports: background and context." In *Irish Primary Education in the Early Nineteenth Century: An analysis of the first and second reports of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, 1825-6*, edited by Garret Fitzgerald, 1-43. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2013.

Ó Buachalla, Séamus. "Educational Policy and the Role of the Irish Language." *European Journal of Education* 19, no. 1 (1984): 75-91.

_____ . *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1988.

Ó Cíosáin, Niall. "Boccoughs and God's Poor: Deserving and Undeserving Poor in Irish Popular Culture." In *Ideology and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Tadhg Foley and Seán Ryder, 93-99. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998.

O'Connor, Anne V. "The Revolution in Girls' Secondary Education in Ireland 1860-1910." In *Girls Don't Do Honours-Irish Women in Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Mary Cullen, 31-54. Dublin: Women's Education Bureau, 1987.

O'Donnell, Roderick. "The Pugins in Ireland." In *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, edited by Paul Atterbury et al., 137-159. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

O'Donoghue, Tom. "Researching the Lives of Catholic Teachers who were Members of Religious Orders: Historiographical Considerations." *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 469-481.

_____ . *Come Follow Me and Forsake Temptation: Catholic Schooling and the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers for Religious Teaching Orders, 1922-1965*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2004.

_____ . *Planning Your Qualitative Research Project: An Introduction to Interpretivist Research in Education*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

O'Donoghue, Tom, and Judith Harford. "A Comparative History of Church-State Relations in Irish Education." *Comparative Education Review* 55, no. 3 (2011): 315-341.

_____ . "The Conception, Construction, and Maintenance of the Identity of Roman Catholic Female Religious Teachers: A Historical Case Study from Ireland." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 20, no. 4 (2014): 410-426.

O'Farrell, Sr. Mary Pius. *Nano Nagle: Woman of the Gospel*. Monasterevan: Presentation Generalate, 1996.

_____ . *Breaking of Morn: Nano Nagle (1718-1784) and Francis Moylan (1735-1815). A Book of Documents*. Cork: Cork Publishing, 2001.

Offen, Karen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall. *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*. London: Macmillan, 1991.

O'Malley, Eoin. "The Decline of Irish Industry in the Nineteenth Century." *The Economic and Social Review* 13, no. 1 (1981): 21-42.

O'Neill, Sr. Assumpta. "Nuns and Monks at Hennessy's Road: Edmund Rice and the Presentation Sisters in Waterford." In *A Man Raised Up: Recollections and Reflections on Venerable Edmund Rice*, edited by Br. Peter S. Carroll, 79-95. Dublin: Elo Publications, 1994.

_____ . *Waterford's Presentation Community: A Bicentenary Record 1798-1998*. Waterford, 1998.

_____ . "James Vincent Cleary (1828-1898)." *Decies* 56 (2000): 123-133.

O'Reilly, Louise. *The Impact of Vatican II on Women Religious: Case Study of the Union of Irish Presentation Sisters*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

_____. "Great Changes, Increased Demands: Education, Teacher Training and the Irish Presentation Sisters." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 135-159. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Ortbals, Candice D. and Meg E. Rincker. "*Field*work, Identities and Intersectionality: Negotiating Gender, Race, Class, Religion, Nationality, and Age in the Research *Field* Abroad." *Political Science and Politics* 42, no. 2 (2009): 287-290.

O'Sullivan, Eilís. "Irish Women and Elementary Education for the Poor in Early Nineteenth-Century Ireland." In *Educating Ireland: Schooling and Social Change, 1700-2000*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer, 61-90. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2014.

Ó Tuathaigh, Gearóid. *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2007.

Parkes, Susan M. *A Guide to Sources for the History of Irish Education, 1780-1922*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010.

_____ . *Kildare Place: The History of the Church of Ireland Training College and College of Education 1811-2010*. Dublin: CICE Publications, 2011.

_____ . "'An Essential Service': The National Board and Teacher Education, 1831-1870." In *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, edited by Brendan Walsh, 45-82. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Peckham Magray, Mary. *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750-1900*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Peräkylä, Anssi, and Johanna Ruusuvuoiri. "Analyzing Talk and Text." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 529-543. California: Sage Publications, 2011.

Perko, F. Michael. "Religious Schooling in America: An Historiographic Reflection." *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2000): 320-338.

Perryman, Jane. “Panoptic Performativity and School Inspection Regimes: Disciplinary Mechanisms and Life Under Special Measures.” *Journal of Education Policy* 21, no 2 (2006): 147-161.

Peters, Michael. “Education, Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self: A Foucauldian Perspective.” *Journal of Educational Enquiry* 2, no. 2 (2001): 58-71.

Pierse, Mary. “From lace making to social activism: the resourcefulness of campaigning women philanthropists.” In *Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland,* edited by Laurence M. Geary and Oonagh Walsh, 198-209. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015.

Pinto, Louis. “Theory in Practice.” In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 94-112. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999.

Polkinghorne, Donald. *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

Power, Patrick C. *History of Waterford: City and County*. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1990.

Preston, Margaret. “Discourse and Hegemony: Race and Class in the Language of Charity in Nineteenth-Century Dublin.” In *Ideology and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Tadhg Foley and Seán Ryder, 100-112. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998.

_____ . “’Souper, Souper, Go to Hell!’: Women, Sectarianism, and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Dublin.” In *Women, Reform, and Resistance in Ireland, 1850-1950*, edited by Christina S. Brophy and Cara Delay, 9-30. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Prosser, Jon. *Image-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

_____ . “Visual Methodology: Towards a More Seeing Research.” In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 479-495. California: Sage Publications, 2011.

Prunty, Jacinta. *Margaret Aylward, 1810-1889: Lady of Charity, Sister of Faith*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999.

_____ . *Dublin Slums, 1800-1925: A Study in Urban Geography*. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 1998.

Rabinow, Paul. *The Foucault Reader*. London: Penguin Books, 1984.

Raftery, Deirdre. “The academic formation of the Fin de Siècle female: Schooling for girls in late nineteenth century Ireland.” *Irish Educational Studies* 20, no. 1 (2001): 321-334.

_____ . “The ‘Mission’ of Nuns in Female Education in Ireland c. 1850-1950.” *Paedagogica Historica*, 48, no. 2 (2012): 299-313.

_____ . “’Je suis d’aucune Nation’: the recruitment and identity of Irish women religious in the international mission *field*, c. 1840-1940.” *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 4 (2013): 513-540.

_____ . "Rebels with a cause: obedience, resistance and convent life, 1800-1940." *History of Education* 42, no. 6: (2013): 729-744.

_____ . "From Kerry to Katong: transnational influences in convent and novitiate life for the Sisters of the Infant Jesus, c. 1908-1950." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 31-42. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

_____ . "The 'Third Wave' is Digital: Researching Histories of Women Religious in the Twenty-first Century." *American Catholic Studies* 128, no. 2 (2017): 29-50.

Raftery, Deirdre, Judith Harford and Susan M. Parkes. "Mapping the Terrain of Female Education in Ireland, 1830-1910." *Gender and Education* 22, no. 5 (2010): 565-578.

Raftery, Deirdre, Jane McDermid and Gareth Elwyn Jones. "Social Change and Education in Ireland, Scotland and Wales: Historiography on Nineteenth-Century Schooling." *History of Education* 36, nos. 4-5 (2007): 447-463.

Raftery, Deirdre, and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck. "Convent Schools and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Negotiating a Place Within a Non-Denominational System." *History of Education* 36, no. 3 (2007): 353-365.

Raftery, Deirdre. "Industry, Piety and Servitude: Schooling for the Female Poor, 1700-1900." In *Female Education in Ireland 1700-1900: Minerva or Madonna*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Susan M. Parkes, 5-32. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2007.

Raftery, Mary, and Eoin O'Sullivan. *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial Schools*. Dublin: New Island Books, 2009.

Raughter, Rosemary. "A Discreet Benevolence: Female Philanthropy and the Catholic Resurgence in Eighteenth-Century Ireland." *Women's History Review* 6, no. 4 (1997): 465-487.

_____ . "A Natural Tenderness: The Ideal and the Reality of Eighteenth-Century Female Philanthropy." In *Women and Irish History*, edited by Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd, 71-88. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1997.

_____ . "'Mothers in Israel':Women, Family and Community in Early Irish Methodism." In *Irish Women's History*, edited by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, 29-42. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2004.

_____ . "Pious Occupations: Female Activism and the Catholic Revival in Eighteenth-Century Ireland. " In *Religious Women the Their History: Breaking the Silence*, edited by Rosemary Raughter, 25-49. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005.

Reay, Diane. "Identity Making in Schools and Classrooms." In *The Sage Handbook of Identities*, edited by Margaret Wetherall and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 277-294. California: Sage Publications, 2010.

_____ . "Finding or losing yourself?: Working-class relationships to education." *Journal of Education Policy* 16, no. 4 (2001): 333-346.

_____ . "'It's All Becoming a *Habitus*': Beyond the Habitual Use of *Habitus* in Educational Research." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25, no. 4 (2004): 431-444.

Reay, Diane, and Dylan William. "'I'll Be a Nothing': Structure, Agency and the Construction of Identity Through Assessment."*British Educational Research Journal* 25, no. 3 (1999): 343-354.

Reich, Warren T. "History of the Notion of Care." In *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, rev. ed., edited by Warren Thomas Reich. New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995.http://care.georgetown.edu/Classic%20Article.html

Richardson, Laurel, and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 959-978. California: Sage Publications, 2005.

Richman Kenneally, Rhona. "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore." In *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 8, edited by James McGuire and James Quinn, 313-315. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Rogers, Rebecca. "Reconsidering the Role of Religious Orders in French Education." *Vitae Scholasticae* 10, nos. 1-2 (1992): 43-51.

_____ . "Retrograde or Modern? Unveiling the Teaching Nun in Nineteenth-Century France." *Social History* 23, no. 2 (1998): 146-164.

Rogers, Rebecca, Elizabeth Malancharuvil-Berkes, Melissa Mosley, Diane Hui and Glynis O'Garro Joseph. "Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature." *Review of Educational Research* 75, no. 3 (2005): 365-416.

Rury, John L. "Historical Research in Education." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, 323-332. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Rutherford, Vanessa. "Technologies of Power: school discourse in late nineteenth-century Ireland." In *The Child Savage, 1890-2010: From Comics to Games*, edited by Elisabeth Wesseling, 23-38. Abingdon and New York: Ashgate, 2016.

Ryllis Clark, Mary. "The nuns and Vatican II: Pandora's box or goldmine?" *Pacifica* 26, no. 2 (2013): 215-225.

Sangster, Joan. "Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History." *Women's History Review* 3, no. 1 (1994): 5-28.

Shields, Stephanie A. "Gender: An Intersectionality Perspective." *Sex Roles* 59, no. 5 (2008): 301-311.

Shopes, Linda. "Oral History." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th ed., edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 451-478. California: Sage Publications, 2011.

Silver, Harold. "Knowing and Not Knowing in the History of Education." *History of Education* 21, no. 1 (1992): 97-108.

Skeggs, Beverly. "Context and Background: Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of Class, Gender and Sexuality." In *Feminism After Bourdieu*, edited by Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs, 19-33. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Smart, Barry. *Michel Foucault*. Rev. ed. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2002.

Smith, Charles. *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Waterford*. Dublin: 1746.Cited in *Edmund Rice and the First Christian Brothers*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008.

Smith, James M. *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Smyth, Elizabeth M. *Changing Habits: Women's Religious Orders in Canada*. Montreal: Novalis, 2007.

_____ . "Continuity and Change within the Toronto Convent Academies of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Loretto Sisters, 1847-1950." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 43-59. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Smyth, Elizabeth M., and Linda F. Wicks, eds. *Wisdom Raises Her Voice: The Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto Celebrate 150 Years: An Oral History*. Toronto: Transcontinental Press, 2001.

Solar, Peter. "The Agricultural Trade of the Port of Waterford, 1809-1909." In *Waterford History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, edited by William Nolan and Thomas P. Power, 495-518. Dublin: Geography Publications, 1992.

Strasser, Ulrike. "Clara Hortulana of Embach or How to Suffer Martyrdom in the Cloister." In *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordula van Whye, 39-57. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Strike, Kenneth A. "The Ethics of Educational Research." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, 57-73. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Swartz, David. "Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu's Political Economy of Symbolic Power." *Sociology of Religion* (Spring 1996): 71-85.

Taylor, Frances. *Irish Homes and Irish Hearts (1867)*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013.

Thompson, John B. Introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Pierre Bourdieu, 1-34. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Thompson, Margaret Susan. "Adaptation and Professionalisation: Challenges for teaching sisters in a pluralistic nineteenth-century America." *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 4 (2013): 454-470.

_____. "Sisters and the creation of American Catholic identities." In *Education, Identity and Women Religious, 1800-1950: Convents, Classrooms and Colleges*, edited by Deirdre Raftery and Elizabeth M. Smyth, 99-116. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Thompson, Paul, and Joanna Bornat. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Tuckett, Anthony G. "Applying Thematic Analysis Theory to Practice." *Contemporary Nurse* 19, no. 1-2 (2005): 75-87.

Turner Hershey, Paul. "A Definition for Paternalism." *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine* 10, no. 2 (1985): 171-182.

Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Trans. Monika B. Viezdom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

Van Whye, Cordula. "Introduction." In *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordula van Whye, 1-8. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Vaughan, W. E., and A. J. Fitzpatrick. *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821-1871*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978.

Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Vickery, Amanda. "Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history." In *Gender and History in Western History*, edited by Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent, 197-225. London: Arnold, 1998.

Wacquant, Loïc J. D. "Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu." *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 26-63.

Walker, Claire. "Securing Souls or Telling Tales? The Politics of Cloistered Life in an English Convent." In *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordule van Whye, 227-244. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Wall, Maureen. "The Rise of a Catholic Middle Class in Eighteenth-Century Ireland." *Irish Historical Studies* 11, no. 42 (1958): 91-115.

Walsh, Barbara. *Roman Catholic Nuns in England and Wales 1800-1937: A Social History*. Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2002.

Walsh, John. "Creating a Modern Educational System? International Influence, Domestic Elites and the Transformation of the Irish Educational Sector, 1950-1975." In *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, edited by Brendan Walsh, 235-266. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Walsh, Oonagh. "Protestant Female Philanthropy in Dublin in the Early 20th Century." *History Ireland* 5, no. 2 (1997): 27-31.

_____ . *Anglican Women in Dublin: Philanthropy, Politics and Education in the Early Twentieth Century*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005.

Walsh, T. J. *Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters*. Monasterevan: Presentation Generalate, 1980.

Walsh, Tom. "The National System of Education, 1831-2000." In *Essays in the History of Irish Education*, edited by Brendan Walsh, 7-43. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Walton, Julian. "Catholic Waterford in 1798 and 1998." Lecture given on the occasion of the bicentenary celebrations of the Presentation Order, City Hall, Waterford, September 1998.

Webb, Jen, Tony Schirato and Geoff Danaher. *Understanding Bourdieu*. London and California: Sage Publications, 2002.

Weber, Sandra, and Claudia Mitchell. *'That's funny, you don't look like a teacher': Interrogating Images and Identity in Popular Culture*. London and Washington, DC: The Falmer Press, 1995.

Wedgewood, Alexandra. "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 45, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 520-525. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Wentzel, Kathryn R. "Student Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Perceived Pedagogical Caring." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 89, no. 3(1997): 411-419.

Whittle, Nicholas. *The Gentle County: A Saga of the Decies People*. Tralee: The Kerryman Press, 1959.

Williams, Kevin. "Faith and the Nation: Education and Religious Identity in the Republic of Ireland." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 46, no. 4 (1999): 317-331.

Willson, Edward J., and C. A. Pugin. *Specimens of Gothic Architecture; Selected from Various Ancient Edifices in England at Large*. London: Moyes, 1821.

Woodford, Charlotte. "Writing the Thirty Years' War: Convent Histories by Maria Anna Junius and Elisabeth Herold." In *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordula van Whye, 245-260. Hampshire, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003.

_____ . "Case Study Methods." In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, 111-122. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Youngblood Jackson, Alecia. "Spaces of Power/Knowledge: A Foucaudian Methodology for Qualitative Inquiry." *Qualitative Inquiry* 19, no. 10: 839-847.

Yow, Valerie Raleigh. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. Maryland and London: Rowman and Littl*efield*, 2015.

Appendix 1: Social Research Ethics Committee Acceptance Letter



ucc
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

Oifig an Leas - Uachtaráin Taighde agus Nuálaíochta
Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation

Urlár 4, Bloc E,
Áras na hEolaíochta Bia,
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh,
Bóthar an Choláiste,
Corcaigh, Éire.

4th Floor, Block E,
Food Science Building,
University College Cork,
College Road, Cork, Ireland.

T +353 (0)21 4903500
E vpresearch@ucc.ie
www.ucc.ie

Angela Tobin,
School of Education,

17th May 2013

Dear Angela,

Thank you for submitting your research (project entitled Presentation Primary School, Waterford, 1798-2005: History, Voice, and Experience of former Women Religious, Teachers and Pupils #154) to SREC for ethical perusal. I am pleased to say that we see no ethical impediment to your research as proposed and we are happy to grant approval.

We wish you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

S Hammond

Sean Hammond
Chair of Social Research Ethics Committee

Professor Anita R. Maguire BSc PhD CChem MRSC
Vice President for Research and Innovation

Ollscoil na hÉireann, Corcaigh
National University of Ireland, Cork

Appendix 2: Information Letter

1. Purpose of Study

As part of the requirements for the Cohort PhD degree at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with finding out what everyday life was like in the school and/or convent, what were people's experiences like, and how it impacted those directly involved.

2. What will the study involve?

The study will involve interviewing past and present pupils, teachers and nuns associated with the school on their memories and experiences. The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder. It will be on an individual basis and, while open-ended in terms of time, should last approximately an hour.

3. Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you have direct experience of everyday school life, either as a former pupil, teacher or nun, and are therefore specifically suitable to provide data for the study.

4. Do you have to take part?

No- participation is voluntary. A copy of this sheet will be provided explaining the nature and purpose of the study, together with a consent form which must be signed and returned. You will receive a copy of both. You may also withdraw before the study begins, even if you have already agreed to participate, or discontinue your participation at any point. You will receive a copy of the transcribed data and I will assume that you are happy with your contributions if I have not heard to the contrary within two weeks. Should you decide to discontinue participating, I undertake not to use the data already collected, unless you give me express permission to do so. There will a reflection period of two weeks for you to decide if you are still willing for the data to be used in the study.

5. Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

I will ensure that your anonymity will be respected as far as possible and that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous.

6. What will happen to the information which you give?

The information you provide will be kept confidential from third parties, including your superiors, and the data itself will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, it will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

7. What will happen to the results?

The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course, or similar courses. The study may be published in a research journal.

8. What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part, although it is possible that talking about your experience may cause some distress.

9. What if there is a problem?
At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, you should contact the Samaritans at 051-872114 (Waterford), 1850 60 90 90 (Dublin), or your GP. If, during the interview, you experience distress and find yourself unable to continue, I will suspend the interview and refer you to the above organisation who can assist you in your distress.

10. Who has reviewed this study?
Approval must be given by the Ethics Approval Committee of University College Cork, before this study can take place.

11. Any further queries?
If you need any further information, you can contact me as follows:
Name: Angela Tobin

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

I……agree to participate in Angela Tobin's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Angela Tobin to be tape-recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Signed……. Date……..

Appendix 4: Short Biographies of Participants

Group 1: Former Teaching Women Religious

1. **Annabel**: was born in the south-east of Ireland, one of a family of one boy and four girls. Her father was a baker. She received both her primary and secondary education in a Presentation school and joined the order shortly after completing her Leaving Certificate. She lived in the convent from 1966 to 1973, and again from 1974 to 1983, teaching in both primary and secondary schools before qualifying as a secondary teacher.
2. **Annemarie:** was born in the south-east of Ireland, one of a family of one boy and three girls. Her father was a cabinet-maker. She received her primary education in a country school and her secondary education in a Presentation school. She subsequently joined the order after completion of her Leaving Certificate. She also taught at both primary and secondary level. She spent two periods in the convent- the first from 1948 to 1977 and the second from 1983 to 1996.
3. **Brenda**: was born in the west of Ireland. She had one brother and her father was a postman. She joined the Presentation order in 1956, and taught in the primary school until her retirement. She was one of the final women religious to leave the convent on its closure in 2005.
4. **Carmel:** was born in the south-east of Ireland, the third eldest in a family of six girls and three boys. Her father was an inspector on the railways. She attended primary school as a pupil from 1942 to 1947. She later joined the order and taught in the primary school there. In total she spent 27 years in the convent itself.
5. **Caroline:** was born in the south-east of Ireland to a farming family, the eldest in a family of seven children. She received the latter years of her primary education and all her secondary education in a Presentation school when they relocated to a nearby

town, joining the order some years later. She spent two periods in the convent at the centre of this study- the first between 1973 and 1974, returning as a teacher from 1979-1990.

6. **Isobel:** was born in the south-east of Ireland. She attended secondary school in a Presentation school and entered there after her Leaving Certificate. She taught in the primary school before qualifying as a secondary teacher. She spent approximately 22 years in the convent in total.
7. **Mary:** was born in the south of Ireland, one of a family of two boys and two girls. Her father was a farmer. Following her education in a Presentation school, she joined the order in the southeast. She spent two periods in Waterford- one from 1976 to 1977 as a teacher, returning later as Principal from 1991 to 1999.
8. **Monica**: was born in the southeast of Ireland in a family of three girls. Her father was a civil servant with the Department of Agriculture. Having attended both the Presentation primary and secondary schools, she joined the order on completion of her Leaving Certificate. She taught in the primary school before qualifying as a secondary teacher. She lived in the convent from 1963 to 1994/1995, eventually becoming Principal of the secondary school.
9. **Pauline:** was born in the north-west of Ireland, one of a family of 15 children. Her father was a fruit importer/mineral water supplier. Orphaned at a young age, she was reared by her older siblings. She joined the Presentation Convent in the southeast in 1950 and taught in the primary school for many years.
10. **Rachel**: was born in the south-east of Ireland, one of a family of two boys and four girls. Her father was a farm labourer. She taught as a lay teacher in a Presentation primary school in the southeast from 1957 to 1960 before deciding to join religious life. She entered the convent in August 1960 and taught there until 1972.

11. **Valerie**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, the only girl in a family of three boys. Her father was a factory worker. She was educated in her local Presentation school, and later entered there. She spent two periods in Waterford- the first between 1968 and 1969, and the second from 1973 to 1974.

Group 2: Former Lay Teachers

1. **Agnes**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, one of a family of four boys and one girl. Her father was in the building trade. She received both her primary and secondary education in local Presentation schools and joined the congregation for a brief period after completing her Leaving Certificate. She later returned as a teacher in the school.
2. **Eleanor:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, one of seven children. She received some of her primary, and all of her secondary school education in a Presentation school. She spent her entire teaching career in the school.
3. **Ena:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, the only child in a farming family. She received her secondary education in a Presentation school. She taught for 13 years as a primary teacher in the school.
4. **Harriet**: was born in the southwest of Ireland, the eldest of a family of three girls and one boy. Following her move to the southeast of the country, she attended a Presentation school. Following graduation as a teacher, she taught in the primary school for her entire teaching career.
5. **Irene**: was born in the midlands and grew up in the west of Ireland. She had one brother, and her father was a butcher who also owned property. She taught in the primary school for over 35 years.
6. **Josephine:** was born in the south-west of Ireland, the third child in a family of six boys and three girls. Her father worked with the Department of Agriculture. Her

entire teaching career of 36 years was spent in the primary school.

7. **Karen**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, the daughter of a glazier. She had three older sisters. She received both her and primary and secondary education in her local Presentation school and taught there following her graduation for 9 years.
8. **Lorna:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, the daughter of a creamery manager and the only girl in a family of four children. She spent her entire teaching career of 35 years in the primary school.
9. **Marion:** was born in the southeast of Ireland. Her father was a farmer and she had three brothers. She spent her entire teaching career of 39 years in the primary school.
10. **Orla**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, the youngest of five girls and the daughter of a mechanic. She received both her primary and secondary education in her local Presentation school. Following her graduation as a teacher, she taught in the primary school for 36 years.
11. **Pamela**: was born in the south of Ireland in a family of two boys and four girls. Her father was a sergeant in An Garda Síochána. She taught in the primary school for 36 years.

Group 3: Former Pupils

1. **Alana**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, the eldest of three children, two girls and one boy. She received both her primary and secondary education in the local Presentation school.
2. **Alison**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, the eldest of a family of two boys and three girls. She received both her primary and secondary education in the local Presentation school.
3. **Brenda:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, one of family of three boys and six

girls. She attended Presentation Primary school from 1948 to 1961.

4. **Carol:** was born in the southeast of Ireland. She had three sisters and her father was a caretaker. She attended Presentation Primary school from 1970 to 1978.
5. **Kirsty**: was born in the southeast of Ireland, the middle child in a family of one boy and three girls. Her father was an electrician. She attended the primary school from 1954 to 1962.
6. **Margaret:** was born in the southeast of Ireland. Her father was an electrician with the Electricity Supply Board. She attended Presentation Primary school between 1947 and 1951.
7. **Michael:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, one of a family of three boys. His father worked in the nearby Jute factory. His family had long standing links with the local Presentation community. He attended the primary school from September to December 1948.
8. **Pascal:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, the only boy in a family of four. His father was a butcher. He attended Presentation Primary School from 1950 to 1953. His daughter later attended the school also.
9. **Sinéad:** was born in the southeast of Ireland, one of a family of three girls and one boy. Her father was an electrician with the Electricity Supply Board. She attended Presentation Primary school from 1947 to 1951.

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol for Group 1 Participants

Section 1: Background Information and Personal Details

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interviewed by: _____

Years in Presentation Primary/Convent Waterford (approx): From _____ to _____

Tell me a little about yourself-

(a) When and where were you born?

(b) How many brothers and sisters were in your family?

(c) In what occupation were your parents engaged in?

(d) (For all relevant participants) Are you now, or have you been, married? Are there any children? If so, how many?

Group 1: Educational Background, Life Choices and Experiences (Nuns and Women Religious Only)

Section 2: Guiding Questions

1. Where did you go to school (primary and secondary)? How would you describe those experiences?
2. What was your first contact with the Presentation Order? What can you remember of that first occasion?
3. At what point did you decide to become a nun? What were the circumstances at the time?
4. How did your parents and family generally react to your decision?
5. Who would you say was a major influence on your decision? Why and how?
6. Did you give serious thought to other careers or entering another order? If so, which ones?
7. Why did you finally decide to join the Presentation Sisters?
8. When and where did you enter? What are your memories of that time?
9. What can you remember of your time as a novice, as a postulant, when you made your final profession?
10. In what year did you come to Waterford? How many teaching nuns were in the convent then? How many nuns were in the convent altogether?
11. What impact, if any, did the rule of enclosure have on you?
12. Did this change over time? How and why?
13. With the benefit of hindsight, what do you think of the rule now?
14. How were those destined for teaching selected?
15. What form did their training take?

16. Were there any differences that you can recall between the life of the teaching and non-teaching nun?
17. Would you say teaching nuns were looked on differently by the non-teaching Sisters?
18. Were their duties and responsibilities within the convent the same as those for the non-teaching nuns?
19. Describe in broad terms the typical day of a teaching Sister- religious obligations, teaching duties, non-teaching duties, extra-curricular responsibilities, etc.
20. Would you say that there was much discussion of school life in the convent, for instance at mealtimes?
21. In broad terms, describe your typical teaching day.
22. Of the various things you did, which do you consider to have been the most important?
23. How would you characterise the degree of discretion you had in the school and classroom?
24. Could you give an approximate picture of your time allocation during an average school week?
25. Would you have worked much after school hours in addition to this? Would this have included weekends?
26. Would this have been typical of the other teaching Sisters, in your opinion?
27. Of the teaching Sisters you worked with over the years, were there many you would consider to have been outstanding? Why? Could you describe one of them?
28. What were your particular area(s) of interest in teaching? Can you recall any event of note that you were involved in?
29. How would you describe the approach taken to discipline in the school?
30. Do you consider it to have been effective?

31. Did it change over time? (Specific reference to pre and post corporal punishment)
32. How would you describe the level of collaboration and co-operation among your teaching colleagues? (Lay and religious)
33. Did this change over time? If so, how and why?
34. No doubt there were many changes of management, particularly at the level of Principal, over the years. How would you describe, in general terms, the relationship between senior management and the rest of the teaching staff?
35. Do you recall any instances of tension over issues such as, for example, class allocation?
36. In your opinion, how has the school reflected developments in education generally in Ireland? Would you say you were kept abreast of these by school management?
37. How would you evaluate the contribution the school has made to primary education in the city over the years?
38. How would you summarise Nano Nagle's aims and vision of education?
39. To what extent has the school, in your opinion, remained faithful to these?
40. Any other comments/remarks?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix 6: Interview Protocol for Group 2 Participants

Section 1: Background Information and Personal Details

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interviewed by: _____

Years in Presentation Primary/Convent Waterford (approx): From _____ to _____

Tell me a little about yourself-

(e) When and where were you born?

(f) How many brothers and sisters were in your family?

(g) In what occupation were your parents engaged in?

(h) (For all relevant participants) Are you now, or have you been, married? Are there any children? If so, how many?

Group 2: Educational Background and Career Choices (Present and Former Teachers Only)

Section 2: Guiding Questions

1. Where did you go to school (primary and secondary)? How would you describe those experiences?
2. What was your first contact with the Presentation Order? What can you remember of that first occasion?
3. At what point did you make a definite decision to enter teaching? What were the circumstances at the time?
4. Who would you consider was a strong influence on your decision?
5. Did you give serious consideration to any other career choices? If so, which ones?
6. Looking back in hindsight, would you have done things differently? Why?
7. Has teaching been better or worse than what you expected? How?
8. How did you hear of the vacancy in the school? Did anything else attract and encourage you to apply?
9. Did anything specific attract you to the school itself?
10. What, if anything, did you know about the Presentation Order and its ethos?
11. Were you interviewed for the position?
12. What do you remember of the interview itself? Was there anything in particular that stands out?
13. Can you remember how you felt the moment you knew you had been successful in your application?
14. What can you recall of your first morning as a teacher in the school? Was there anything in particular that struck you as significant?

15. Tell me a little of what school life was like: timetables, colleagues, etc.
16. Describe, as best you can in other words, a typical school day.
17. Could you give an approximate picture of your time allocation during an average school week?
18. Would you have spent much time working at home in addition to this? Would this have included weekends?
19. Would you describe yourself as typical of the teaching cohort in the school at that time?
20. What were your particular area(s) of interest in teaching? Can you recall any event of note that you were involved in?
21. What approach would you say was taken to discipline in the school?
22. Do you consider it to have been effective?
23. Did it change over time? (Specific reference to pre and post corporal punishment)
24. How would you describe the level of collaboration and co-operation among your colleagues?
25. Did this change over time? How and why?
26. Was there much socialising outside of school hours?
27. What impact would you say this had on you, both personally and professionally, if any?
28. No doubt there were many changes of management, particularly at the level of Principal, over the years. How would you describe, in general terms, the approach taken by the school authorities to the appointment of senior management?
29. What would you consider to be the common qualities they all possessed, if any?
30. Would you say there was ever any tension between the lay teachers and management over issues such as, for instance, class allocation?

31. Would you say religion was important in the life of the school? How was this conveyed, in your experience?
32. I believe the 21st of November was a day of special celebration in the school every year. What can you remember of how the day was marked?
33. Were there any other special occasions? How were they marked or celebrated?
34. The Presentation Order places great emphasis on the pastoral care of all pupils, particularly the disadvantaged. In your experience, was this lived out in the school? How?
35. (For relevant participants): As a former pupil yourself, what would you consider the important differences between school life as a pupil and school life as a teacher?
36. Do you have any specific memories or moments of special significance during your teaching career in the school?
37. If you were to choose five words to summarise what the school considers important, what would they be?
38. Any other comments/remarks?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix 7: Interview Protocol for Group 3 Participants

Section 1: Background Information and Personal Details

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interviewed by: _____

Years in Presentation Primary/Convent Waterford (approx): From _____ to _____

Tell me a little about yourself-

(i) When and where were you born?

(j) How many brothers and sisters were in your family?

(k) In what occupation were your parents engaged in?

(l) (For all relevant participants) Are you now, or have you been, married? Are there any children? If so, how many?

Group 3: Former Pupils Only

Section 2: Guiding Questions

1. Can you remember when exactly you attended Presentation Primary School?
2. Was there a particular reason your parents choose this school for you? Did anything else attract them?
3. What do you remember of your first day in school?
4. Tell me a little about your earliest memories- number and gender of classmates, how the classroom furniture was arranged, your teacher, room size, etc.
5. What do you recall about the other children in your class that day?
6. Are the friends you made in those years still your close friends today? Why/why not?
7. What subjects do you remember?
8. What was your favourite/least favourite subject? Why?
9. Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities? Tell me about them- who organised them, what was involved, etc.
10. What was the proportion of religious to lay teachers at that time, approximately?
11. How would describe the relationship between the religious and lay teachers, looking back?
12. How would you describe the atmosphere in the school?
13. Can you remember the other teachers you had?
14. Which teachers do you remember best? Why?
15. Are there any you would consider to have been outstanding teachers? Would you describe one for me?
16. How would describe the approach taken to discipline in the school?
17. Did it change over time, in your opinion and experience? (Specific reference to pre and post corporal punishment)

18. Were there many visits from Department of Education school inspectors? What do you remember of them?
19. Did the school receive many outside visitors? (School Attendance Officers, etc.)
20. Describe some of these.
21. November 21st was an important occasion in the life of every Presentation school. What are your memories of how it was celebrated?
22. How important would you say the role of religion was generally in the school?
23. How was this conveyed to pupils?
24. Looking back now, many years later, what would you say were the chief aims of the school?
25. How would you say they were implemented?
26. Was this felt by the pupils in a practical way, in your opinion? In what way?
27. What are you doing now?
28. Do you feel your experience in a Presentation school influence you in any way- in our career, as a person?
29. Would you send your own child to a Presentation school? Why?
30. If you were asked to give five words that sum up the school and its mission, what would they be?
31. Any other comments or remarks?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix 8: The Foundresses

Eleanor Power, in religion Sr. Mary Francis de Sales, died in 1808, at the age of 48. Despite constant ill-health, she was always interested in everything concerning the community and its extension, and is remembered for her constant meekness. As the first appointed Superioress of the Waterford house, the annals describe her as the Foundress there. Her sister-in-law Margaret, in religion Sr. M. Jane de Chantal, was sent to Carrick-on-Suir when that house was founded in April 1813, and died there in January 1833.

Teresa Mullowney (1742-1854) was remarkable for her amiable personality, her longevity, and the fact that she lived long enough to witness the move to both the Hennessy's Road and Holy Cross convents. As such, she was a living link between the origins of the community and those who came later, since she was the only one of the original group who lived to see and live in all three locations. She was considered "...a truly great woman and a worthy daughter of Nano Nagle herself- lofty in thought, of sound judgement, unpretending piety, strong in will yet ever ready to obey, firm when firmness was needed but at all other times gentle as a babe."[807] The esteem with which she was regarded by all who knew her is shown in the newspaper report of her death which says: "She, with Nano Nagle, founded the Presentation Convent amidst great trials and difficulties."[808]As she was personally acquainted with Mother Angela Collins and those who had known Nano Nagle personally, she was always a source of genuine information on the work of the Foundress and the spirit of the Institute. Teresa Mullowney was also connected through marriage with Margaret Aylward (1819-1889), foundress of the Holy Faith sisters. John Mullowney, Teresa's brother, married

807 Annals of the Presentation Convent, Waterford.

808 *Ibid*.

Ellen Murphy of Waterford in 1794. Two years after his death in 1799, Ellen married William Aylward, and Margaret was one of the children of this marriage.[809]

[809] See Jacinta Prunty, *Margaret Aylward, 1810-1889: Lady of Charity, Sister of Faith* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999).

Appendix 9: A.W.N. Pugin, the Gothic Revival and the Presentation Convent, Waterford



Figure 47: Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852)
Source: Pugin Society, UK.

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, the famous architect, designer and architectural theorist, was born on 1 March, 1812, in Keppel St., Russell Square, London, the only child of Auguste Charles Pugin (1768/9-1832) and Catherine Welby (c.1772-1833). His father was an architectural draughtsperson who had emigrated from France and set up a school of draughtsmanship in his house, while his mother was the daughter of a distinguished English barrister. His formal education was minimal and he was largely self-taught. From 1819 he made several visits to Paris and Normandy, both to see his French relations and to gather material for his father's books. It also provided him with first-hand, detailed experience of French Gothic architecture which was to influence him greatly in his advocacy of the superiority of the Gothic Revival movement. As well as medieval architecture, he was also passionate about the sea and the stage, but after a short period designing London theatre sets,

he focused on architecture. He also assisted in completing the second edition of his father's book *Specimens of Gothic Architecture*. A large family and legacy from an aunt encouraged Pugin to devote himself solely to becoming an architect. Lacking much formal education, his knowledge of architecture was based on detailed sketches and observations he had made of many medieval buildings, in both Britain and Europe. These drawings were supplemented by designs for furniture and metalwork, which in turn culminated in three books which were published by Ackermann in 1835 and 1836.

Pugin became a Roman Catholic in 1835, a turning point in his life. Alexandra Wedgewood[810] claims that he was originally drawn to Catholicism by the beauty of medieval architecture, and that the principal human influence was one of his father's collaborators, E.J. Willson (1787-1854), a Catholic architect in Lincoln. Willson's interest in the area of medieval architecture, and his admiration of classical design, were to greatly influence Pugin's later designs as an architect. In 1836 Pugin published his most famous book *Contrasts*, or *A Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste: Accompanied by Appropriate Text*. As its title implies, it unfavourably compared contemporary daily life with fourteenth and fifteenth century England, and explained the 'decline' of architecture following the Reformation.[811] These views had been greatly influenced by his father's interest and belief in Gothic architecture as a young boy himself. His championing of Gothic over Regency architecture was part of an ongoing debate at this time, and his ideas were taken up by Anglican organisations that favoured medieval church designs and rituals.

---

[810] Alexandra Wedgewood, "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* vol. 45, eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 521.

[811] *Ibid*.

In 1835 he began working for the established architects James Gillespie Graham and Charles Barry, and assisted them in drawing up plans and drawings for a competition to design the new Houses of Parliament in the Palace of Westminster. His draughtsmanship was characterised by flowing lines and sureness of touch, and when Charles Barry was declared the winner at the end of January 1836, Pugin continued to help him for another year, although the lack of credit given by Barry led to protracted arguments into the next generation.[812]

By 1837, Pugin's reputation was growing, especially among Catholics. This year saw him receive a number of commissions in various parts of England, such as Scarisbrick Hall in Lancashire, St. Mary's College in Warwickshire, St. Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham and Alton Towers in Staffordshire. The latter is the most interesting for the purposes of this research, since it concerned the seat of John Talbot, sixteenth earl of Shrewsbury (1791-1852), who became his chief patron. This was no doubt the reason Pugin came to Ireland for the first time in 1838. In all he designed approximately eighteen projects here between 1837 and 1850, the majority being in the southeast. Among these are: St. Mary's Cathedral in Killarney, St. Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy, portions of St. Patrick's College in Maynooth, Adare Manor and Lismore Castle, numerous churches in Co. Wexford and, of most interest to this research, the Presentation Convent in Waterford, on which he worked from 1842-1848.

During this time, too, he continued his writing and his first publication was shortly followed by two others: *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841) and *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843). These outlined his principles and philosophy in greater detail: Gothic architecture, and especially ecclesiastical architecture, was superior to all other styles in terms of symbolism, aesthetics and structure.

---

812 Rhona Richman Kenneally, "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* vol. 8, eds. James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 314.

In her biography of Pugin, Wedgewood contends that *True Principles* reflected Pugin's confidence in both the progress of the Gothic revival and the growth of the Catholic Church in England.[813]

The early 1840s was a period of great activity and success for the architect, and he received numerous commissions throughout the United Kingdom, including Ireland. However, his churches often suffered from a lack of funds or were built for poor urban communities in unattractive settings.[814] He had experienced his first major reversal of fortune in 1837, when his designs for the rebuilding of Balliol College, Oxford, were rejected, according to Wedgewood principally because he was a Roman Catholic.[815] Despite this, he continued his scholarly work, publishing the *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* the following year, which explained the symbolism and use of vestments and church furnishings.

From the end of 1844, Pugin's position as the Catholic Church's leading architect began to be challenged by others, with the result that he received fewer architectural commissions. He was also attacked by critics, some within the Catholic Church itself, for his exclusive attachment to Gothic architecture and elements such as the use of the rood screen (see Figure 42). Despite this criticism, he was commissioned by the government to build St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. The designs needed for this building, together with his ongoing work with Charles Barry on the Houses of Parliament, now took up most of his time. The latter project, in particular, meant that he could at last work with sufficient funds at his disposal. It would seem that Barry valued Pugin's expertise and the two men had a fruitful

813 Wedgewood, "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore," 522.

814 *Ibid*.

815 *Ibid*.

relationship, although the contribution of each man to the Westminster project would later be disputed by their sons.

He married three times, the third and final time in 1848. As time progressed, he spent more and more time at home in Ramsgate, conducting his work by post. His designs for an exhibition entitled "The Medieval Court" were produced by his colleagues to feature as part of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The exhibition received a generally critical acclaim, and was a demonstration of the techniques and principles he held dear. However, he was unable to bask long in his success. Aggravated by constant overwork and the application of mercury, Pugin's health broke down and he was certified insane by the end of February 1852. He returned to his home a few days before his death on 14 September, 1852. Cause of death was registered as having been insane for six months, convulsions followed by a coma.[816] He left a widow, eight children, and an estate valued at £10,000, although his widow did subsequently receive a government pension. His eldest son, Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875) later took over some of his father's practice and inherited his papers.

Pugin was chiefly remembered for the swiftness and energy he brought to his drawings, for his prodigious memory and attention to detail, and his open and direct character. He treated everyone alike, even if on occasions this could entail abruptness to the point of rudeness. But he never harboured grudges, and outbursts of rage quickly blew over, forgotten. Humorous in his writings, he was completely uninterested in London society, preferring quiet family life at home in Ramsgate. Methodical in his ways, he was passionate and thorough in all his undertakings, and remained convinced of the superiority of Gothic architecture to the end. As with all artists, his popularity has waxed and waned in the intervening years. However, many fine buildings in both the United Kingdom and Ireland remain his lasting legacy, and the Presentation Convent of the Holy Cross in Waterford is the

816 *Ibid*., 524.

subject of particular interest in this research. Coincidentally, Pugin died on 14 September, 1852, the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Presentation Convent in Waterford was also named the Convent of the Holy Cross, and is considered by many to be his most successful example of Gothic Revival principles.

In *True Principles*, he outlined his philosophy and approach to building design: firstly, building should be designed for convenience, construction and propriety, and secondly, any ornamentation should only serve to enhance the essential purpose for which the building is intended.[817] These principles were to the forefront of Pugin's mind when commissioned to draw up plans for the new building in the late 1830s.

Prior to the Gothic Revival, ecclesiastical architecture in England tended to divide along denominational lines. Protestants built in the Gothic style, while Catholics preferred to adopt the neoclassical.[818] Pugin's father had had a keen interest in Gothic architecture and had collaborated with E. J. Willson on a literary work entitled *Specimens of Gothic Architecture*.[819] Pugin continued his father's interest, becoming in time Gothic Revival's chief advocate, particularly in the area of ecclesiastical architecture.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, historical monuments were viewed in empirical terms, phenomena to be classified and examined.[820] This later gave way during the eighteenth century to a view that, through intuition and empathy, a more profound understanding of the past could be achieved, particularly the medieval as opposed to the classical past. The Romantic movement also provided a literary context for this return to the

817 Wedgewood, "Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore," 522.

818 O'Brien Moran, "Designing for Religious Life," 42.

819 Edward J. Willson and C. A. Pugin, *Specimens of Gothic Architecture; Selected from Various Ancient Edifices in England at Large* (London: Moyes, 1821).

820 Megan Aldrich, "Gothic Sensibility: The Early Years of the Gothic Revival," in *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, ed. Paul Atterbury (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 13.

medieval past, for it was founded on the premise that medieval forms of architecture, usually ecclesiastical, could be re-used appropriately in a modern setting. As the predominant medieval architectural style, Gothic was the ultimate form of architectural perfection for its advocates. From his many visits to France on his father's study trips, A. W. N. Pugin had a deep and intimate knowledge of Gothic forms, and was clearly convinced of the supremacy of Gothic design and its architectural features. Rood screens, for example, became an integral feature in his designs, as was his insistence on the use of local, natural materials.

For Pugin, Gothic architecture was the only style which fulfilled all his demands: it was honest in its construction and it was religious, while the Renaissance and all classical styles were pagan and dishonest.[821] Over the years leading up to his conversion, he came to believe that the Catholic Church was the true church, Gothic architecture its revealed form, and true in the sense of absolute, a divine, revealed truth.[822] This intermingling of architecture and religion was central to his belief and he never wavered from the strength of his convictions. His distinguishing feature in church design was the rood screen. Its purpose was to divide clergy from the laity, thereby facilitating the greater use for which the chapel or church was built: prayer. In the case of the Waterford convent, it divided both laity and religious, and also professed from non-professed religious. For Pugin, Gothic was superior to all other forms and styles, but its beauty had to be combined with utility: a building had to be functional. When asked to design the convent, therefore, the architect had to keep the uses for which it was intended to the forefront of his mind.

Tradition has it that Thomas Wyse, M.P. for Waterford and owner of the local estate of Manor St. John, travelled with two young Englishmen during his Grand Tour of Europe

821 S. Lang, "The Principles of the Gothic Revival in England," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35, no. 4 (1966): 261.

822 Rosemary Hill, "Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin: A Biographical Sketch," in *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, ed. Paul Atterbury (New Haven: Yale University Press, 195), 38.

beginning in 1815, one of whom was Charles Barry. Barry was later to become the architect for the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, and it was no doubt as one of the commissioners for refurbishing the buildings that Wyse came into contact with Pugin.[823] However, there was also another contact: the Earl of Shrewsbury, Pugin's patron, was a former school friend of Wyse, and was well known for his generosity in spending large sums of money on churches. In any case, a statement in the annals would seem to suggest that Wyse was instrumental in the choice of Pugin as the architect of choice to design the new convent, particularly when it was to be built on land leased from the Wyse family in the townsland of Clowne.

Architecturally at this time, the Gothic Revival style would have been a departure from the prevailing taste in Waterford. The classical tradition was strong in the city during the nineteenth century: in 1834, the Franciscan church in Lady Lane was built 'of an impressive classical simplicity' by a Waterford man, Terence O'Reilly.[824] Nevertheless, Pugin's work was well known in religious spheres, even in Ireland. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the nuns may have been acquainted with his design of a chapel adjoining the Loreto Abbey in Rathfarnham in Dublin. In any case, when he began drawing up the plans, he had very definite ideas on the form the convent should take. Recalling both his knowledge of the Middle Ages and the purpose for which it was intended, he believed a sense of learning and piety should pervade the building, and he placed a great emphasis on the use of local materials and craftsmanship (see Figure 48, for example).

---

823 O'Brien Moran, "Designing for Religious Life," 41.

824 *Ibid*., 42.

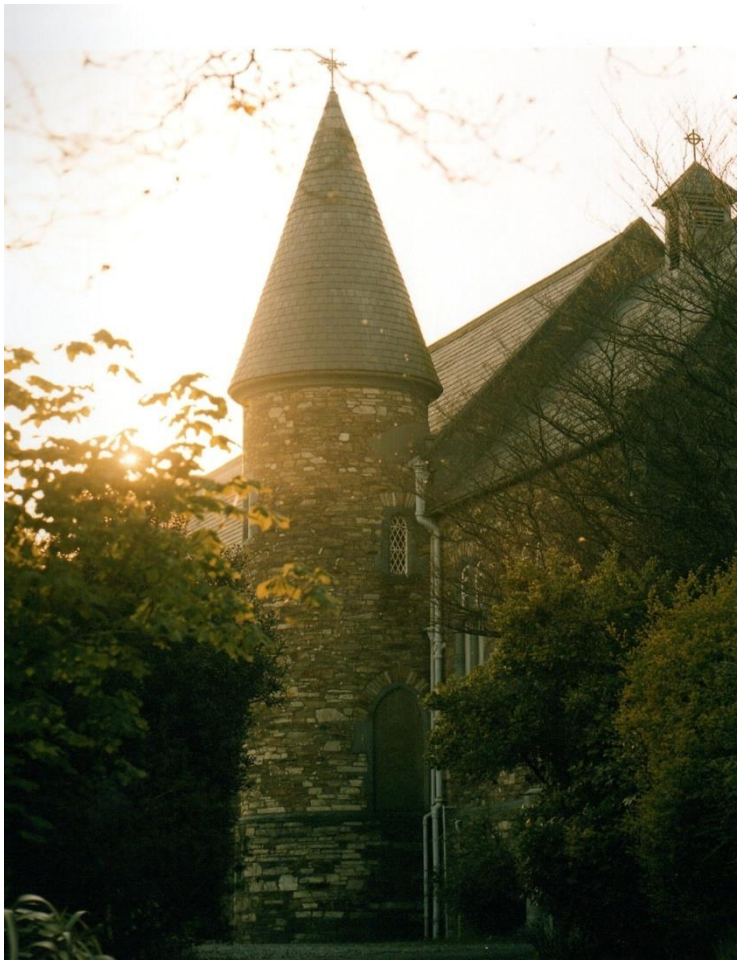


Figure 48: Circular Stair Turret, Presentation Convent, Waterford.
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran.

The plans therefore contained all the spaces necessary for a monastic lifestyle- chapel, cloister, refectory, cells, infirmary, kitchen and cellar. The front of the convent faces south, and the buttresses express both the strength and the tension of Pugin buildings. Conscious of the purpose for which it was intended, Pugin also incorporated a large schoolroom to form the north wing of the convent, a large double doorway leading from the schoolroom to the chapel. An Adults' Room close to the schoolroom was also included, where adult classes were held.

Richard Pierse from Wexford was the chosen builder, having previously been chosen by Pugin, but the workers were local. The employment was a welcome boost to the local economy in the early 1840s. In the summer of 1842 alone, for instance, there were 26

labourers and 25 masons at work on the project. Labourers were paid one shilling per day, while masons were paid three times that amount. The following year there were 8 to 10 carpenters, and 2 sawyers. By 1844, two slaters were at work, while a stonecutter came on the scene in 1846.[825] Pugin insisted on using local materials, in the form of local, rough cut yellow and white sandstone, which were dressed with more carefully-cut blue-grey limestone. The rough cut stones were not laid in regular horizontal rows but in random courses, which are particularly visible on the eastern flank in the tower area. The use of local materials enhanced the harmony between the building and the surrounding countryside. The building, in effect, was designed to suit its setting, and no detail was ignored, even to the extent of the pairing of the windows.

For the community, of course, the chapel was the most important area within the convent. Over the altar, in a structural niche designed by A. W. N. Pugin himself, was a statue of St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, a reminder that the building was called Convent of the Holy Cross. It was 60 feet long and 20 feet wide and in three divisions: the Sanctuary, the Choir and the Ante-Choir for lay visitors. It ran lengthways on the northern side of the convent, with the sanctuary facing east. On the right side of the Sanctuary, and separated from it by a screen, was a private oratory for use by the elder and more infirm community members in bad weather, while on the left side was the sanctuary where the priest robed.

The Choir contained 20 stalls enclosed by a parapet, separated from the public area by a carved hardwood screen 12 feet high, in turn surmounted by a rood rising to an elevation of 22 feet. This, together with all the woodwork in the chapel, was carved by a local carpenter, Edmund Condon of Cannon Street. The Ante-Choir was the area within the chapel designated

825 O'Neill, *Waterford's Presentation Community*, 22.

for lay visitors. A view of both the Choir and the Sanctuary could be had from an elevated platform through the rood-screen, which, following Pugin principles, was designed to divide it from the Choir. The school opened onto it by folding doors, to facilitate pupils' visits for ceremonies and celebrations. The 12 corbels, on which the roof-principals rested, each bore the name in Gothic characters of a patron saint of one of the existing members of the community when the chapel was built- Peter Clavier, Bernard, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Francis Xavier, Stanislaus, Francis de Sales, Catherine, Mary Magdalen and Ignatius.

The altar (see Figure 49) was the work of Edward Welby Pugin and was not completed until 1856. It was made of a mixture of Caen stone and Irish marble. The table of the altar was a solid plate of Sienna marble, supported by elaborately decorated pillars of Irish marble, also. The reredos was comprised of two scriptural groups typifying the Eucharistic sacrifice- those of Melchisideck and Abraham. The ante-pendium, or front tableau, consisted of three panels- Jesus hanging from the Cross and the two national patron saints St. Patrick and St. Brigid. The latter were encircled by shamrock and oak branches, symbolising the faith and nationality of Ireland, although in pre-Christian times the oak was considered a sacred tree. A bell tower was included to facilitate the ringing of the bell which marked the beginning of each day. The cloister facilitated movement through the building, while still retaining the peaceful and spiritual element essential to monastic life.



Figure 49: Altar in Presentation Convent chapel.
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran

On the level above the chapel, the windows opened internally so that ill or elderly nuns in the infirmary could participate in the religious ceremonies. This, it would seem, was a characteristic of medieval monastic houses and a tradition Pugin would have been aware of. As an enclosed order, an area within the convent itself was necessary to receive outside visitors. Two parlours were included for this purpose, and A. W. N. himself designed the fireplace with the monograms IHS and M, both done in roses.

However, the nuns moved into the building at a painful moment in Irish history, and the tragedy of the Great Famine brought about modifications in the programme of work and design. Funds had to be diverted to relief of the poor, and the convent accounts indicate its extent: in 1840, the annual expenditure was £32-5s-4d per person, but by 1849 it had fallen to

£19-7s-7d, a drop of 39%.[826] As a result, and despite the income from the Hennessy's Road convent, many of Pugin's original designs for the decorations of the convent, such as his wallpaper design, had to be abandoned. Indeed, his untimely death a short while later meant that his son, Edward Pugin, in fact completed many of the internal decorations and woodwork, such as the fireplace illustrated below (Figure 50).



Figure 50: Fireplace designed by Edward Welby Pugin.
Reproduced by kind permission of Margaret O'Brien Moran.

The fact that it has stood the test of time is testament to the skill and expertise of its designer. It has been described by some architectural historians as one of his most satisfying

826 *Ibid*.

buildings.[827] Roderick O'Donnell has indeed described it as a "perfect and complete example both of 'picturesque utility' and of Pugin's teachings as expounded in his *True Principles*."[828] It remained for many years a symbol of the strength of the Catholic Church at that time and a symbol of the order and prosperity of nineteenth century Waterford society, while still remaining true to the purpose for which it was intended- a monastic lifestyle for a teaching order.

827 Roderick O'Donnell, "The Pugins in Ireland," in *A. W. N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, ed. Paul Atterbury (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 147.

828 *Ibid*.