

The Architect, the Planner and the Bishop: The Shapers of 'Ordinary' Dublin, 1940–60

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At the end of September 1948, Dublin Corporation's housing architect Herbert Simms committed suicide, allegedly from overwork. Whatever the precise catalyst was that led to Simms' untimely death, we can be sure that the architect was experiencing considerable stress. By 1948, having overseen Dublin's slum clearance programme since 1932, and the design and construction of ca. 17,000 dwellings, Simms was confronted with a change of government in Ireland that brought a Labour Party minister to the Department of Local Government. Housing provision for the masses was to be accelerated. Furthermore, since Dublin's city architect retired in 1945, the position had remained vacant, thus exposing Simms to evermore responsibility. How was Herbert Simms to cope?

As a result of proposals that emerged from the Patrick Geddes and Raymond Unwin-inspired 'Dublin Civic Exhibition and Competition' of 1914, ex-urban areas to the west of Dublin city had been earmarked for development. Patrick Abercrombie's winning design for that competition echoed those proposals, concentrating on the Crumlin area to the south-west where, after decades of hesitation due to international and local conflict – World War I, the Irish War of Independence and civil war – construction began in the mid-1930s on a vast housing colony. Such a mass housing development was unprecedented in Ireland, and by the 1950s, with a population equivalent to Limerick (Ireland's third city), the Crumlin Estate comprised some 6,000 dwellings. Indeed, throughout the 1930s and 1940s,

Crumlin dominated Dublin corporation activity and arguably hijacked Simms, absorbing his energy and diverting his talents. Even a cursory overview of one small development, the Captain's Lane extension within the new Dublin neighbourhood, reveals the extent of the housing architect's responsibility and workload. This minor extension engaged Simms in incessant correspondence to do with planning, designing and redesigning schemes from 1944. [fig. 1] Firstly, he laid out 802 houses, alongside which he set aside five acres for a convent, schools, and an acre for shops and a cinema, as well as attempting to purchase a site for a playground.¹ Simms then laid out the scheme's second section, comprising 589 houses on forty-three acres. On the remaining seventy acres he planned two parks, a community centre, a site for the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) representing indigenous Irish sports, a Catholic church, two schools (boys and girls/infants), a dispensary, a library and an industrial site.

Clearly, the construction of 1,391 houses, mostly four-roomed and at a density of fourteen per acre, was only one part of Simms' brief: at Captain's Lane the housing architect was projecting an autonomous and fully-serviced neighbourhood. But, again and again, as the archive correspondence describes, Simms' efforts were thwarted, leading ultimately to an internal inquiry. Both the ecclesiastical authorities and the corporation's town planning department were intent upon influencing all design layouts. From 1947 until his death, Simms was

forced to continuously revise the plans, the principal problem being the siting of the new Catholic church and its subsequent relationship to school buildings. Simms would draft a plan and circulate it internally to the town planning department, which would forward it (externally) to the archbishop, who persistently disapproved. The plan would then have to be redrafted within Simms' architecture team, and on, and on.

These processes behind the realisation of the Captain's Lane extension – only later revealed by the archive – began to reposition the Bishop and the Planner of our title as the shapers of ordinary Dublin, while the Architect, bent over his drawing board, becomes a castrated agent. The Bishop was John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin from 1940 to 1971. The Planner was Michael O'Brien, Dublin Corporation Town Planning Officer from ca. 1941 through the 1960s. Significantly, McQuaid was at the helm of all practices – social, educational and cultural – in what was the most extensive archbishopric in Ireland: the Dublin Diocese. And while his centrality to mid-twentieth-century Ireland's social development has been acknowledged by contemporary Irish history, and to a lesser extent by Irish Studies, Archbishop McQuaid's role in the physical formation of Dublin has not before been considered – most specifically, his close relationship with O'Brien – which in turn forced design decisions upon the architect of our title, Herbert Simms.

This architectural history explores how the unsystematic collusion and everyday agency of cleric and civil servant manipulated the built fabric of the growing city. Yes, we know about Dublin's relatively extensive housing development between 1920 and 1950: certainly the ongoing 'The Making of Dublin City' historical geography series outlines changes to the city's boundaries, explaining economics and the various roles of private developer and public authority along the way.² But this paper unpacks the city's recent history with its fringe biases in an

alternative manner: by following the archive's lead, along with the everyday reality of the built evidence, this research moves from the Crumlin development towards the vast housing colonies on Dublin's northern edge, which were taking shape from the mid-1950s. Starting out as a way of understanding the architectural make-up of ordinary Dublin, the paper is ultimately a speculation about the Catholic nature of suburbanised development in mid-century Ireland.

Theocratic Dublin

It is not an exaggeration to state that Dublin in the 1940s and 1950s was a potently Catholic city. The mass popular commitment to Catholicism in Ireland ensured that the space of the capital city was infused with religiosity, made manifest physically through the proliferation of new outdoor grottoes and large-scale churches. Visiting Dublin in the 1950s, Heinrich Boll described his impressions of a Sunday morning in a central street, Westland Row, behind Trinity College:

The Thunder continued, became articulate, the powerful opening bars of the *Tantum Ergo*. [...] I was left with the impression of an overwhelming piety as it flooded Westland Row after *Tantum Ergo* in Germany you would only see that many people coming out of church after Easter Mass or at Christmas.³

Boll's observations tally with those of French researcher Jean Blanchard in his 1950s study *The Church in Contemporary Ireland*. Like Boll, Blanchard was struck by the volumes of people attending masses, and in regard to the new north Dublin suburb of Cabra he stated: 'The entire congregation – with a few exceptions – attend Mass every Sunday.⁴ Mass attendance was so much a part of Irish life in the mid-twentieth century that one commentator wrote in the Dominican journal *Doctrine and Life*: 'On Sundays and Holy Days, especially in the cities, there may be as many as ten or twelve masses to cope with the crowds.'⁵ When



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b

New Zealand Archbishop P. J. B. McKeefrey came to visit in 1950, he claimed that Dublin's streets were 'impregnated with faith', concluding, like others, that 1950s Ireland was the most Catholic country in Europe.⁶

Irish historiography has established how an integral Catholic nation state was constructed following Ireland's official independence from Britain in 1922.⁷ It would seem that the Catholic Church was waiting by, as the moral guardian of constitutional nationalism, to ensure that post-colonial Ireland made the transition to Catholic nationhood. And, inevitably, as patterns settled and the Catholic ethos was legitimised by each government, Catholic hegemony had social welfare implications: frankly, mid-twentieth-century Ireland was becoming something of a Catholic corporatist state.⁸ The origins of this were rooted in the fact that church teachings governed most aspects of state and social policy, and, importantly, in the position of the religious orders as providers of Ireland's social services, especially health, charity and education.⁹ Let us not forget that by the mid-1960s there were 16,000 nuns and 14,000 male religious and clergy in Ireland, making the Irish Church the most heavily staffed of any Catholic church in the world. These 'foot soldiers' were the teachers, the nurses and the care workers of Ireland's schools, asylums, juvenile homes and hospitals.

Because of shared social and educational experiences among Irish statesmen and Irish churchmen, the language of public discourse was conditioned, most notably around the hazards of excessive state control.¹⁰ So, Catholic social teaching grew into a powerful and dominant ideology at all levels of Irish society. Significantly, in its tension with the state and state control, Irish Catholicism was not in *opposition* to the state but an *extension* of the state, often acting in place of it. Tom Inglis, after Pierre Bourdieu, calls this Irish Catholic collective consciousness a *habitus*. Inglis points to the *habitus's* basis within an

inherited disposition to be 'moral', the embodiment of which was crucial to the operation of Ireland's civil society and 'a central element of cultural capital, central to survival and achievement within the educational system, to obtaining employment [...] to attaining the honour and respect of people [...]. This is what made Ireland an example not so much of a theocratic state, but rather of a theocratic society'.¹¹

The sense of shared meaning in 1940s and 1950s Dublin – how Catholicism pervaded the air – had a physical manifestation that is of interest to this study. Symbols and rituals maintained and strengthened the collective consciousness and, for Dublin, this included mass-going as a public display of community solidarity, as did processions for certain religious festivities and the erection of crosses and statues both within and outside the home.¹² [fig. 2] The celebration of the Marian Year in 1954, for example, initiated an informal programme of outdoor grotto and indoor shrine building across the country. [fig. 3] The Marian Year was marked in Dublin by a vast urban procession in May, which, as the *Irish Catholic Directory* described, transformed the city into a sacred domain:

The procession which started from the Pro-Cathedral, passed through O'Connell Street, where all traffic was suspended for more than two hours as crowds twenty-deep packed the processional route [...]. A hush fell over the streets and the great throng knelt on the roadways. The heart of the city for that brief moment was silent in prayer.¹³

The temporary transformation of the so-called profane spaces of the city into a sacred realm through the evocation of Catholic ritual was, unsurprisingly, current in all aspects of Dublin life at this time. For example, Dublin Corporation reports reveal the debate around the naming of new housing complexes, such as the post-World War Two flat blocks by Herbert Simms. In 1949, it was decided



Fig. 2: Children Processing, Henrietta Street, central Dublin, 1960s.
Photo © Elinor Wiltshire collection, National Library of Ireland

to name one scheme Fatima Mansions, followed by the endorsement a year later of an application from a Reverend Canon Turley 'for permission to have a statue of Our Lady of Fatima' erected in the new complex.¹⁴ [fig. 4] In 1950, it was voted to name another scheme St. Teresa's Gardens, while the large scheme at the docklands was to be named St. Brigid's Gardens.¹⁵

A key protagonist and engineer of this theocratic governance was Dublin's Archbishop McQuaid. It would seem that his art and architectural patronage, although not straightforwardly, was dominantly conservative in terms of twentieth-century representation. Along with the hierarchy in key jurisdictions around Ireland, such as Bishop Michael Browne in Galway, Bishop Cornelius Lucey in Cork and Bishop Birch in Kilkenny, McQuaid was reticent to embrace modernism in Catholic visual and spatial culture, seeking instead continuity with the revivalism of late nineteenth-century practices. As such, throughout Ireland's urban centres during the pre-conciliar age of the 1950s, large concrete churches were built onto which stone and brick dressings were hung and bell towers affixed, surmounted by domes and fronted by rose-windowed west facades. Conversely, Ireland's architectural community were grappling with international sources – most notably from the reform movement in Germany and the architecture of Domenikus Bohm and Otto Bartning – in order to radicalise the hierarchy and overturn public conservative tendencies. As one commentator, Michael Halton, bemoaned in an article to the architects of 1948:

The flight from reason must be nearly complete when intelligent men can believe that a collection of Italian Romanesque, Byzantine, and Classical-Gothic churches can have any real meaning for the vast majority of the people of Dublin or that the dead generations of middle and eastern Europe have any connection with the people of modern Connaught.¹⁶

While church design did not dominate Ireland's architectural discussion and debate from the period per se, it did occur on an equal footing with more obviously central issues to architectural discourse, such as urban preservation or new materials in building. Thus, it was a marked concern of the Irish architectural profession during the mid-twentieth century, and there was much lively debate on church design and ecclesiastic art matters.¹⁷ Of note was an exhibition of 150 photographs of recent German architecture at the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) in May 1953, followed in April 1954 by a lecture from Herman Mackler on 'Contemporary Ecclesiastical Architecture in Germany'.¹⁸ The debate over church design spilled out into the public domain during the mid-1950s, primarily due to the failed design competition for a new suburban church at Clonskeagh in South Dublin in 1954. Despite the enthusiastic response by the architectural community – 101 designs were submitted making it the single most popular competition in the history of the state – and the fruitful assessment process undertaken by three architects and one priest, Dublin's archbishop negated the competition by overturning the premiated schemes and choosing to construct a non-commended neo-Byzantine design from the crop.¹⁹ The archbishop's decision led to outrage within art and architectural circles, and to an outpouring of commentary and letters in the daily newspapers. A public symposium, 'Church Architecture Today' was held in Dublin city centre in April 1954, attended by a large lay and cleric audience. And ultimately, the RIAI established the 'Church Exhibitions Committee' out of which an impressive itinerary of events was curated.

In May 1957, the Committee succeeded in mounting *Eglises De France Reconstituées*, the first major exhibition of modern sacred art from France to be held in Ireland. Of importance to our study is the fact that the exhibition attracted large numbers of visitors, a fact which not only pointed to the Irish public's interest in Catholic visual culture but, more



Fig. 3: Crowd praying, St. Colmcille's Well, Rathfarnham, Dublin, 1954.
Photo © Elinor Wiltshire collection, National Library of Ireland

basically, to the presence of an extensive Catholic population. After all, this was a period of expansion for the Irish Catholic Church in its urban centres, and particularly around the Dublin area. Significantly, between 1940 and 1965, Archbishop McQuaid oversaw the erection of thirty-four churches and the formation of twenty-six new parishes in response to the Catholic population growth of the Dublin diocese from 630,000 members to 725,058.²⁰ The demographic backdrop explains such religious zeal: this was a twentieth-century tale of rural depopulation, or, as the Irish euphemistically called it, 'the drift from the countryside', whereby as Dublin swelled with rural migrants, its Catholic congregations expanded.

Catholic expansion: suburban context

Relentless Catholic expansion ensued. And as a written tribute in 1965 to Archbishop McQuaid justified, expansion dictated the revivalist default tone of the new churches:

Not all of the churches built have been distinguished in their architecture [...] it is enough to record here that as a practical administrator and as an understanding father, Dr McQuaid's decisions in many instances were influenced by his desire to provide adequate churches without unnecessarily putting too grave a financial burden on his people.²¹

Expansion, as a condition, also led to the new suburban context for Dublin's growing congregation. Ostensibly, the Irish Catholic Church of the mid-twentieth century developed at the edge: furthermore, it would seem that that same church and its hierarchy were the lead *authors* of this suburban context. Indeed, McQuaid's ascendancy in 1940 coincided with the seminal *Report of the Inquiry into the Housing of the Working Classes of the City of Dublin* (1939/43, hereafter *Report of Inquiry*), a report which, above all, confirmed an anti-urban attitude underpinning housing development and planning culture in Ireland from the 1930s.

The report's salient recommendations were in favour of suburban two-storey houses (or 'cottages' as they were known) over urban flats. Figures published by the Dublin Corporation Housing Committee in 1938 revealed that of the schemes then under construction, 6,987 were cottages and only 1,641 were flats.²² As the *Report of Inquiry* asserted in its lengthy appendices, the average cost during the period 1937–39 for a four-room cottage was £565 as opposed to £992 for a four-room flat.²³ Obviously city centre land was more expensive than virgin sites at Dublin's western edges, and early 1940s material obstacles – more metal and extensive foundations were needed in flat-block construction – clearly discouraged urban flat development.

Not forgetting that housing in 1930s and 1940s Dublin was a crisis situation.²⁴ The authorities were in the midst of a slum clearance programme, so that suburban preference, stemming from the suburban cottage's relative cheapness, was pragmatic and logical. But economic exigency was conveniently matched by theoretical bias, namely, British Garden City theories, which had been gaining ground in Irish officialdom since the 1910s. Undoubtedly, in the face of extreme urban disorder resulting from tenement squalor, Dublin's predominantly middle-class housing reformers championed garden suburb teaching on the subject of lower densities and fresh air. Conversely, key housing officials in the corporation opposed suburban development, arguing that transport costs would preclude many from easy access to the city, and so, suburbia could only privilege the wealthier tenant. When Dublin's first housing architect, Herbert Simms, was appointed in 1932, he inherited these opposing planning ideologies but mapped out a slum clearance project that in the short time from 1932 to 1939, oversaw the design and construction of 7,638 units. He and his team worked tirelessly to decant slum neighbourhoods and provide Dutch expressionist-style four-storey deck-access perimeter flat blocks on



Fig. 4: Typical Marian shrine near new block of flats, Dublin city centre, 1964.
Photo © Elinor Wiltshire collection, National Library of Ireland

disused urban sites, and to develop a vast housing colony of two-storey pitched-roof houses at the city's edge. [figs. 1 and 5]

While Simms' flats provided some soft modernism in the city centre, they were 'the other': it was really the low-rise pebble-dashed terraces of houses in former green-field sites that became the image of post-war Ireland. Being closer to rural experience, Ireland's inchoate suburban terrains presented officials, housing reformers, former slum-dwellers, rural migrants and, indeed, the Catholic Church with a palpable alternative to expensive urban regeneration. The language employed in relation to Dublin's flat-blocks in the *Report of Inquiry* was at best disdainful. In terms of public health, the level of 'cramping and confinement', 'the drudgery of stair-climbing', the lack of privacy and attendant space for coal storage and laundry facilities were all 'undesirable' factors of the new multi-family housing blocks. On the other hand, as presented in the report, the ever-growing suburban cottage estates provided a healthier context for families: 'The average family prefers a separate dwelling, with a garden if possible. [...] A recent investigation carried out in England by Mass Observation, a scientific fact-finding body, has reported that the majority of people there still prefer to live in a small house or bungalow, with a garden, rather than in a flat.'²⁵

At its best, the suburban housing estate could offer autonomy of environment, as romanticised by J. M. Richards's 1946 homage to the British suburb, *Anatomy of Suburbia*: 'In the suburb each man can see his own handiwork [...] to some extent he can feel responsible for his environment and thus get a sense of controlling his destiny.'²⁶ For Ireland, suburbia's rural affinity was crucial. Writing a review of Dublin architecture in 1966, Dermot O'Connell described the 'wave after wave of migrants from rural areas, who now constitute in this generation, or at one remove, the major part of the city's population', and suggested that this predominately rural

identity had shaped the urban form: 'The effect has been to perpetuate in urban conditions the countryman's characteristic desire to see and to touch the land.'²⁷ So, Dublin's mid-century suburban vernacular arose out of economic exigency and a degenerate form of liberal Garden Suburb individualism, but also out of Irish Catholicism's pro-rural communalism.

The key to Catholic social teaching was the sanctity of the family unit, which was emphasised in Ireland through the 1937 redrafting of the Irish Constitution. As recent research has shown, Archbishop McQuaid had direct input into the shape of pastoral and family-related articles in the Constitution and sent this wording to the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Eamon de Valera: 'The State guarantees the constitution and protection of the family as the basis of moral education and social discipline and harmony, and the sure foundation of ordered society.'²⁸ More specifically in relation to the archbishop's interest in and influence upon the built environment of Dublin, it is interesting to observe what corporation documents he held in his papers. Sent to McQuaid by the various city managers from the 1940s onwards, these documents include a large folder on public lighting (1941); the city manager's remarks and reactions to the *Report of Inquiry 1939-1943*; a report on vandalism of tenement properties (1943); an extensive housing report (1947); a report detailing a new power station in Dublin's dockland area (1949); and a file on the proposed lighting of key Dublin churches for a national festival, *An Tostal* (1953).²⁹ Evidently, the archbishop was well informed on municipal matters, and, pointedly, as we see from the presence of engineering documents, he was informed beyond social and pastoral affairs.

The question that remains to be asked is whether the Catholic hierarchy (the Bishop) reacted to local government plans (the Planner) or pre-empted and shaped those plans. In other words,

what influenced what? And who influenced who? Returning to Catholic social teaching and the sanctity of the family unit in 1940s–1960s Ireland, clearly this teaching favoured a moral and social order of small-scale capitalism and family property, most appropriately met in the small farm infrastructure of nineteenth-century Ireland. Again, suburbia's affinity to rural experience was central, the inference being that the lower the density of the housing, the higher the moral behaviour therein. While the Garden Suburb movement was mostly motivated on aesthetic grounds of universal human experience (the emotional advantages of the readymade yet natural environment), the Irish Catholic Church aspired towards moral control of a growing and potentially unwieldy urban flock. In 1947, Rev. John Kelleher commented in an influential local Catholic journal, that as rural Catholics moved to urban centres, their innate piety brought 'a fresh accession of strength to the Church in the cities.'³⁰ Then, to put it crudely, if Ireland's Catholic hierarchy 'managed' the demographic crisis, the cities could become prime Catholic breeding grounds in 1950s and 1960s Ireland – or more particularly, the new housing estates fringing those cities.

Parish architecture: Catholic *habitus*?

The spatial unit at the basis of this expansion and its management was the parish; it provided the physical boundary and structure for the collusion of the Irish state and Catholic Church during the period. In 1949, the American Jesuit sociologist Alexander Humphreys situated the meaning of the parish in both the lived and metaphysical experiences of Dublin's working or 'artisan' classes:

The parish [...] stands as the liturgical and sacramental centre that effects a strong, over-arching unity among the artisan practitioners in the realm of ideas and ideals. It is the most immediate and articulate source of many of the major values that impregnate its parishioners' lives. From it, the artisans imbibe most

of their great definitions of the world, and of their place and meaning in the cosmos.³¹

The architectural makeup of these new parishes, set out on the peripheral territories of Dublin's western edge, was best considered from the sky: wheels of narrow roadways, punctuated by green spaces, provided the low-density frameworks for terraced residential boxes surmounted by pitched roofs and fronted by pocket gardens. The geometrical forms made by radiating and bifurcating roads, enabled the championing of the motorcar over the pedestrian and cyclist, a vision that was not to be suburban Dublin's reality until the 1990s. And these roadways – as the leitmotif of this Abercrombie-inspired settlement pattern – were punctuated by vast structures of ecclesiastic authority.³² The church building and the suite of Catholic schools were constructed, understood and used as support structures for the mass housing, thereby completing the image and experience of Dublin's new ground-scraping parishes. [fig. 5] From the 1930s, Dublin's 'middle landscape' was carved out – an a priori environment and ordinary world brought about by expedience, amounting to repetitive form and to a sameness of landscape. But behind these vernacular and so-called ordinary developments was a complex web of design decisions, planning preferences and moral imperatives.

Certainly, Archbishop McQuaid understood the need for territorial consolidation in the face of exponential growth and, it would seem, readied himself by appointing a team of advisors on architectural and planning issues. With these advisors – Fr. Fitzpatrick, Canon McArdle, Fr. O'Reilly and Fr. Barrett, to name a few – expansionist planning through the unsystematic chopping up of parishes could be achieved straightforwardly. While initial observation would suggest that the Church was *reacting* to corporation plans, some uncatalogued archive correspondence between McQuaid and his advisors on the subject of parish apportionment

sheds an alternative light, and the active agency and influence of local authority upon church or vice versa becomes increasingly ambivalent. Furthermore, as we know from particular church commissions and religious art censorship, such as McQuaid's overturning of the Clonskeagh Church competition (1954) and his rejection of a Georges Roualt painting from the French art exhibition *Eglises De France Reconstituées* (1957) – not to mention the presence of a British Education Ministry manual on school design among his papers – that the archbishop troubled himself with both aesthetic matters and formal choices.

The first example of the revealing correspondence on evolving parish lands is from 1953 and relates to parishes in west Dublin. One of the Diocesan advisors, Fr. Thomas O'Reilly, outlined four plans (A to D), explaining: "D" provides a solution for that small triangular piece of Clonskeagh district, which could be conveniently annexed to Ballyfermot parish.³³ Secondly, jumping ahead to 1968, the correspondence from Fr. Cecil Barrett regarding the subdivision of a parish in south Dublin seems alarmingly cold and methodical, yet somehow simultaneously arbitrary and subjective:

I have seen the PP [parish priest] Canon Redmond, and he is perfectly willing to part with the portion of his parish which I suggest should be allocated to the new parish of Newtown Park. [...] I understand, from Canon Redmond and others that the PP of Foxrock would be willing to cede a portion of his parish to the new parish. [...] I shall ask him for the Ardagh estate and Ardlui Park, consisting of about 220 houses, situated just south of the present boundary between Blackrock and Foxrock parishes. I expect he will be agreeable. The question arises as to whether the new parish should stretch southwards even beyond Ardlui Park – as far as the Bray Road to include Belmont, the Oblates' House, and the village of Galloping Green.³⁴

What is interesting in these exchanges around the

development of neighbourhoods in mid-century suburban Ireland is the interplay of everyday forces: those everyday and omniscient agents of church and corporation in the foreground, sharply focused, chopping and rearranging Dublin's peripheral territories, with the architect reacting, bent over his drawing board in some distant background. The supporting mechanism, as both knowable and traditional, yet shifting and emerging is the parish. The parish presented the Irish physical and cultural landscape with a common language, a common place, a common behaviour, and ultimately enabled what we may call 'a homology of structure'; or, as Pierre Bourdieu would term it, a *habitus*.³⁵ Interestingly, one of Bourdieu's earliest definitions and conceptions of *habitus* came from Erwin Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (1967), where Bourdieu was struck by Panofsky's reading of the shared vision of medieval Paris' cathedral architects and Catholic clerics.³⁶ Panofsky referred to the common culture as 'the habit-forming force', which arguably became the basis for Bourdieu's *habitus*. In the example of mid-twentieth-century Ireland, there is the same homology of structure and habit-forming force between the clerics and the civil servants as there was between scholastic philosophy and Gothic architecture which so tantalised Erwin Panofsky. Not only was the Catholic Church the dominant institution in Irish society, but 'religious capital' was the most powerful form of cultural capital.³⁷ Through the mechanism of the parish as a web of spiritual, recreational, educational and communal means serving Irish life, the *habitus* was assured physical form. And parish consolidation was a celebration of both the power of religious capital in Ireland, and the common vision and shared culture of the Catholic Church and municipal body.

Probably the most intriguing example of the Church / Local authority interchange, and one that is wholly reflective of Dublin's social development during the mid-century, is the speedy 1950s development of suburban neighbourhoods at

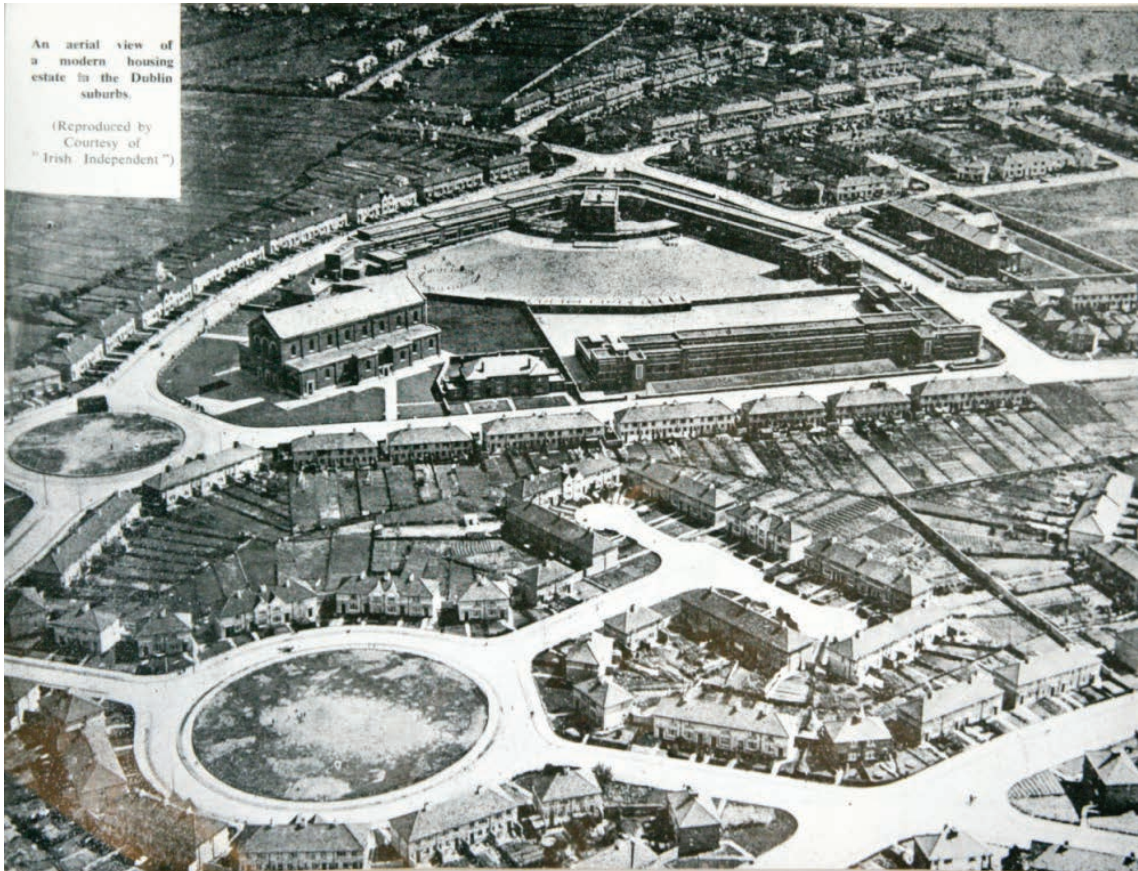


Fig. 5: Relationship of RC church to houses in new suburb of Drimnagh, 1940s.
Photo © Ireland Rebuilding pamphlet, 1955

Dublin's north-eastern edge: Raheny, Donnycarney, Coolock, Killester, Artane. In the Raheny instance, the archbishop's advisor Canon McArdle began by reacting to corporation plans and forwarding a crucial planning document to McQuaid in late 1950:

I enclose very fine report by Mr O'Brien [...] on plans for the years to come. Your Grace will note paragraph (g) referring to development on the North side, depending on the new Howth drainage scheme. They expect now that building will begin there about 1952 or 1953. This whole area is very large. It is to be laid out for private building and large areas of Corporation houses [...]. I have discussed this matter with the City Engineer and he is of the opinion that it will be possible to get between the two sites, drainage facilities for approximately 4,000 dwellings.³⁸

The infrastructural development in question was a major drainage and outfall scheme, which would ultimately facilitate swathes of mass housing and create whole new communities throughout the north suburbs of Dublin. Taking a typically reasoned and remote approach to parish planning, by January 1953, McQuaid had activated his advisor Fr. Fitzpatrick (also a parish priest in the area) into responding to the corporation plans by notionally subdividing the lands in question and predicting their future shape on the basis of parish culture. Fitzpatrick produced four remarkable hand-drawn maps representing the parishes in 1949, 1954, 1959 and post-1960. [fig. 6] Here was a priest arranging parish boundaries with the liberty and power of a colonising emperor.

While the intentions were worthy in that both Fitzpatrick and the archbishop were great educators and were stimulated by the provision of social and educational services within these blank canvas contexts, the process is striking. As the drawings express, Fitzpatrick's exercise was not about building more churches; there remained four parish churches between 1954 and post-1960. But

motivated by Catholic ideology and pragmatism, a *habitus* as such, we witness an almost implausible mix of straightforward naiveté and rational, modernising geographical and cultural engineering. On the one hand, the architecture and layouts of the new neighbourhoods came out of systematic processes, having been defined by the geometric form of Garden City legacies: those wheels of narrow roadways punctuated by green spaces. On the other hand, Fr. Fitzpatrick's map-making points to the unsystematic processes and arbitrary practices unfolding within the Dublin region's planning projections. In his epilogue to Panofsky's study *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, Bourdieu carried the common culture and education at play between medieval Paris's clerics and architects beyond a Hegelian *Zeitgeist*, calling it a 'system of schema [that] constantly orient choices, which, though not deliberate, are nonetheless systematic'.³⁹ He seems to define *habitus* from that heady mix of the 'not deliberate' yet systematic: as a 'system of thought schemes, of perception and of action'.⁴⁰ With these north Dublin maps, we are presented with a similar collision of systematic and unsystematic processes. Considering the immense implications and the subsequent a priori nature of this suburban environment in which most Dubliners grew up, it is potent that such subjective arbitrary methods ultimately shaped Dublin's periphery during the mid-twentieth century. From the maps and other contemporary correspondence, Archbishop McQuaid emerges as a type of medieval God-with-compass figure, carving out the former green fields of Dublin's urban/rural edge and divvying up parish lands with extraordinary ease and calculated detachment.

Fitzpatrick reported that one of the neighbourhoods, Killester, could already become an autonomous parish by 1953; that he had 'drawn in green ink a line to indicate tentatively the area it might claim. As your Grace will see this area might include some of the St. Anne's housing estate'.⁴¹ Fitzpatrick's account continued, inadvertently

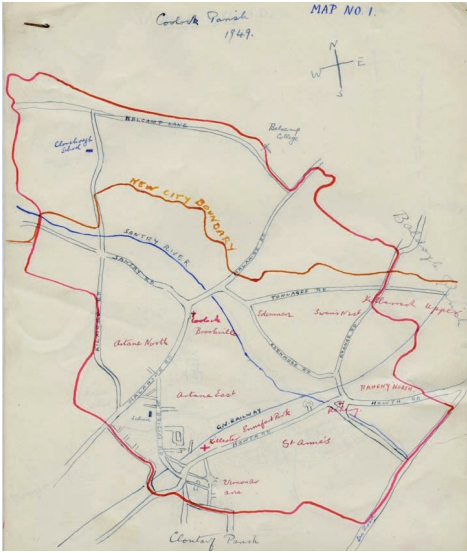


Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b

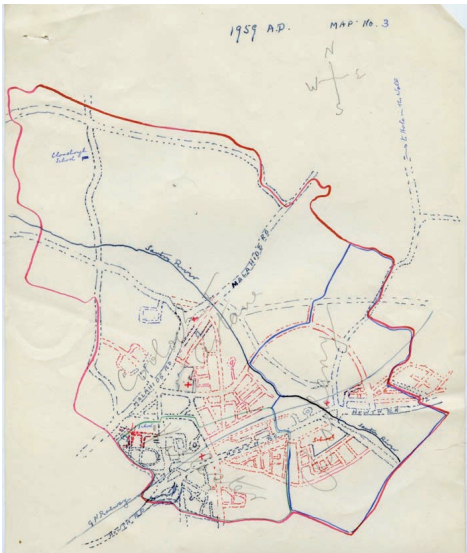


Fig. 6c

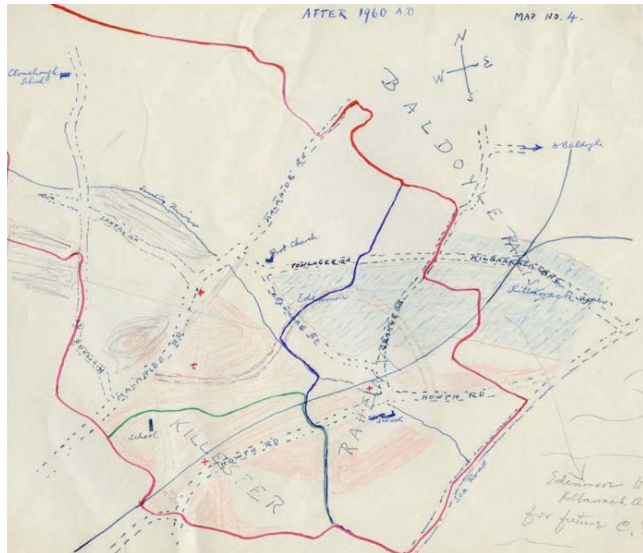


Fig. 6d

Fig. 6: Hand-drawn projections for 1949 (6a), 1954 (6b), 1959 (6c) and 1960 (6d), map, Fr Fitzpatrick, Ratheny Dublin, 1953. Source: Bishop McQuaid Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives.

highlighting the mundane realities of parish formation and the difficulties posed by the 1950s Irish economy:

Raheny presents great difficulties. Raheny has no money, and even with the new parishioners in St Anne's they will not provide sufficient resources to pay even the interest on the cost of a Church – until the area north of the railway has a population. I was fortunate in getting money from outside sources to pay the debt existing when I came here and to purchase the school and church sites. These sources have now dried up. Yet the population in 1955 will already be too big for the tiny St Assam's Church and it would be a pity to put a temporary church on the fine site chosen by Fr. Gregory Byrne as far back as 1942. With the development of the Edenmore-Kilbarrack area another church and more schools will be needed in the Howth Junction district. Between it and the sea, private building has already laid the foundation of such a need. But this is in another parish.⁴²

These documents provide remarkable first-hand accounts of Dublin's suburbs as a mass of inchoate territories to be manipulated. The everyday processes, revealed by the archive correspondence, are unsystematic and naïve. Yet the built outcomes, revealed by walking through the 1940s housing estates and growing up in Dublin's mid-century suburbia, are immense and potent. The means were modest but the ambition was not curbed, amounting to the frenzied making of Dublin's 'middle landscape', an ordinary world into which most Dubliners were born.⁴³ The effect of the predictions and projections of cleric and civil servant alike is all too harshly captured in the oral histories of the new Dubliners, collected in 1949 by Fr. Humphries. For the new Dubliners, born of rural migrants, and by the 1940s the inhabitants of these new suburban parishes, such a swollen and ever-swelling, alienating place was never their choice:

When we first moved out here, there were only a few families and the parish was much smaller. [...] They used to have all sorts of functions in the little school house. [...] The priests were much closer to the people. [...] Then in a short time, people just poured in here by the thousands and we had to build a new church. Now everybody here is practically a stranger.⁴⁴

And so...

This study began as a project to understand the architectural fabric of Dublin's mass housing programme from 1930 through the 1950s. In the process, the archive disclosed such mysteries as local Catholic priests projecting and planning by making drawn maps of suburban parishes. The extraordinary nature of these maps, these artefacts, never before situated or analysed historically enlightened a big story through its 'micro-moments': finding the general in the particular.

Returning to the opening micro-moment and the example of the Captain's Lane extension in Crumlin, south west Dublin, we encounter the interplay of forces, revealed through informal unsystematic instruction. In October 1947, Dublin's city manager wrote to the housing architect, Herbert Simms, 'Kindly let me have a plan showing the location of the Church site mentioned in yours of 12th August, so that same may be submitted for the formal approval of His Grace, the Archbishop of Dublin.' Later, Michael O'Brien (our Planner) asserted that Archbishop McQuaid (our Bishop) must be consulted, 'and I would suggest that you might have the views of the Archbishop on the matter before a definite commitment is made as regards the location of these sites.' Following from this, in August 1948, O'Brien established the ecclesiastic authority's proposal, 'I had the opportunity, recently, of discussing this matter with His Grace, the Archbishop, who suggested that it would be preferable to have a site for the Church and School buildings at Kimmage Road West.' And by March of 1949, after Simms' death, the corporation's chief housing officer conveyed to the Irish

government, by means of an enclosed site plan that 'The Planning Officer now reports that His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin has intimated that the site, coloured red on the attached plan, should be reserved for a Church and School. Planning Officer has recommended accordingly.'⁴⁵

And so, controversies around the placement of the schools and church building at Captain's Lane were resolved. The example sums up the situation – our Bishop had the final word. It announces the lacuna between archive / built experience, between everyday / architectural practices, and between systematic social engineering / arbitrary collusion of officialdom as suggested throughout this paper. The position of the architect as strangely marginal yet overworked is compellingly reinforced by Herbert Simms' tragic death in 1948, when the north side of the city fringes was opening up for development. In a tribute from Ernest Taylor, Dublin's city surveyor, the architect of our triad was described as follows:

Behind a quiet and unassuming manner there lurked a forceful personality; and Mr Simms could uphold his point of view with a vigour that sometimes surprised those who did not know him well. By sheer hard work and conscientious devotion to duty, he has made a personal contribution towards the solution of Dublin's housing problem, probably unequalled by anyone in our time. [...] It is not given to many of us to achieve so much in the space of a short lifetime for the benefit of our fellow men.⁴⁶

Just as the serialised pitched-roof windswept houses, set against a horizon of squat mountains, became the image for mid-twentieth-century Ireland, so too was the looming presence of the supporting structures of ecclesiastic authority, the bombastic church with the accompanying collection of schools. The mid-twentieth-century Irish parish or the nascent Dublin parish was a complex mesh of Catholic institutions, integrating the social and the

spiritual and whose influence permeated the very fabric of society. Unsurprisingly, then, this Catholic collective consciousness, this *habitus*, shaped the architectural form, giving rise to ordinary Dublin.

Notes

1. The account, including all the correspondence, of the development and extension at Captain's Lane, Crumlin, south-west Dublin, comes from Crumlin South Correspondence, Dublin housing Development Files, Captain's Lane extension 34, B1/03/105, 'File #5. Revised Lay-out Plans', Dublin City Archives, Gilbert Library, Dublin.
2. 'The Making of Dublin City' series by Four Courts Press Dublin, namely the excellent and pioneering work of Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910–1940. Shaping the City and Suburbs* (2002); and, more recently, Joseph Brady, *Dublin, 1930–1950. The Emergence of the Modern City* (2015).
3. Heinrich Boll, *Irish Journal* (London: Minerva, 1995), 9–10. Boll came to Ireland in the mid-1950s and his journal was first published in 1957.
4. Jean Blanchard, *The Church in Contemporary Ireland* (Dublin: Clonmore + Reynolds, 1963), 27.
5. Ambrose Crofts OP, 'The Irish Way' in *Doctrine and Life* (June–July, 1954): 258.
6. Archbishop P. J. B. McKeefrey, 'Farewell to Shannon' in *The Furrow* (March 1950): 5–8.
7. James Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923–1979*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 15, and conclusion, 362–376.
8. Eugene McLaughlin, 'Ireland: Catholic Corporatism', in *Comparing Welfare States. Britain in International Context*, eds. Allan Cochrane and John Clarke (London: Open University, 1993), 205.
9. Tony Fahey, 'The Catholic Church and Social Policy', in *Social Policy in Ireland. Principles, Practice and Problems*, eds. Sean Healy and Brigid Reynolds (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 1998), 413–414.
10. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland*, 163.
11. Tom Inglis, 'Religion, Identity, State and Society', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*,

- eds. Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 62–69.
12. Louise Fuller's excellent overview of the proliferation of crosses, processions and pilgrimages, as well as the growing popularity of the rosary in Irish Catholicism during the 1950s, in Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism Since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002), 21–25.
 13. Description of the procession on 16 May 1954 in the *Irish Catholic Directory*, 1955, 632 (copy available at Dublin Diocesan Archives, Bishop's Palace, Clonliffe, Dublin).
 14. For the naming of Fatima Mansions see 'Breviate for quarter ending 31st March 1949' in *Reports and Printed Documents of the Corporation of Dublin* (January–December, 1950), 124.
 15. 'Breviate for quarter ending 31st June 1950' in *Reports and Printed Documents of the Corporation of Dublin* (January–December, 1951), 203.
 16. Michael Halton, 'The Prescription of Society', in *Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) Year Book* (1948), 8.
 17. Discussion and debate on the contemporary situation of church design in Ireland occurred in the following issues and / or lecture series of the *Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland Yearbook* (1945–60), the Architectural Association of Ireland annual *Greenbook* (1945–60) and the annual *Architectural Survey* (only from 1953–1960): 'President's Address' by C. Aliaga Kelly, in *Greenbook* (1951), pages 28–29; Report on Clonskeagh Church Competition, pages 46–47, and 'Architecture and Sculpture' by Garry Trimble, page 49 in *Greenbook* (1955); 'Inaugural Address' by James Green, page 41, lectures on 10 December 1957, 'Painting and Sculpture in the Modern Church' by Donal Murphy A.N.C.A., and 4 November 1958 'Art in the Service of the Church' (lecture reprinted in this *Greenbook*) by Rev. Austin Flannery, in *Greenbook* (1958–9). *When Ireland Builds Again*, (Dublin: A.A.I., 1945); 'The Prescription of Society' by Michael Halton, *RIAI Yearbook*, 1948; 'An Approach to the Design of Catholic Church Interiors', by Dominic O'Connor, pages. 5–10, *RIAI Yearbook*, 1949; illustration only of Church at Limerick, Corr and McCormick, 1949–50, *RIAI Yearbook*, 1951; Report on Clonskeagh Church Competition page 13, and full proceedings of Symposium on Church Architecture, 25 April 1954, *RIAI Yearbook*, 1955; comment on *Eglises De France Reconstituées*, *RIAI Yearbook* (1958), 27–31; and inclusion of contemporary churches in *Architectural Survey*, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1959.
 18. *The Irish Builder and Engineer* (23 May 1953), 519–525; (24 April 1954); and (25 September 1954), 933. In 1962, the RIAI also brought over an important exhibition, 'Modern Churches in Germany', which was based on a 1960 exhibition held in Munich for the Eucharistic Congress.
 19. Ellen Rowley, 'Transitional Modernism: Post-war Dublin Churches and the Example of the Clonskeagh Church Competition, 1954', in *Irish Modernism: Origins, Contexts, Publics*, eds. Carol Taffe and Edwina Keown (London: Peter Lang, Imagining Ireland Series, 2009).
 20. Deirdre McMahon, figures taken from the Irish Catholic Directory 1941–72 in 'John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin, 1940–72', in *History of the Catholic Diocese of Dublin*, eds. James Kelly and Daire Keogh (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 380.
 21. Roland Burke-Savage, 'The Church in Dublin, 1940–1965' in *Studies* 54, no. 216 (Winter 1965): 306.
 22. These statistics are taken from 'Housing Committee Report No. 6' in *Reports and Printed Documents of the Corporation of Dublin*, January–December, 1938 (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker Printers). In 1938 there were 1,959 cottages and 1,358 flats under contract (total 3,317 units). In total, there were 11,945 units in the construction programme and 8,946 of these units were cottages.
 23. 'Altered Policy Regarding the Classes of Accommodation to be Provided: Flats or Cottages', quotation is from point 333 (p.118) and the statistic is from point 338 in *Report of Inquiry* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1943), 120.
 24. For more on Ireland's housing history at this time, see Ellen Rowley, *Dublin is Building: Housing, Architecture and the Edge Condition* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate,

- 2016 [forthcoming]). For overviews of the slum clearance programme and flat-block architecture in Dublin, see Ellen Rowley, 'Slum Clearance in Dublin, 1930', and (with Eddie Conroy) 'Flat Blocks in Dublin 1930–70', in *Architecture 1600–2000*, vol. 4, chap. 9, *Art and Architecture of Ireland*, ed. Rolf Loeber et al., (Dublin, New Haven: RIA, Yale University Press, 2014).
25. Point 334–335, 'Altered Policy Regarding the Classes of Accommodation to be Provided', Section II, Department of Local Government/Public Health, *Report of Inquiry* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1943), 118–119.
 26. J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground. The Anatomy of Suburbia* (London: Architectural Press, 1946), 27–28.
 27. Dermot O'Connell, 'The Irish Architectural Scene' in *Building* (9 September 1966): 115.
 28. Cathal Condon, 'An analysis of the contribution by Dr McQuaid to the drafting of the Constitution of Ireland' (unpublished MA thesis, UCC, 1995), 93–94, cited by Dermot Keogh, 'The Role of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland 1922–1995', in *Building Trust in Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press for the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Ireland, chairperson Judge Catherine McGuinness, 1996), 126.
 29. All of these documents and files are to be found in Dublin Diocesan Archives (DDA), McQuaid Papers, Dublin Corporation/Government Box, AB8/B (also numbered on its lid, 555).
 30. Rev. John Kelleher, 'Catholic Rural Action' in *Studies* 4, (1947): 421.
 31. Alexander J. Humphreys, *New Dubliners. Urbanization and the Irish Family* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1966), 190.
 32. Patrick Abercrombie's prizewinning design for Dublin plan (1914–22) arguably underpinned all development of Dublin up to the late 1960s. See Ellen Rowley 'Growth of Suburban Housing Estates'; and Brian Ward 'Town Planning in Dublin 1911–17', in *Architecture 1600–2000*, vol. 4, chap. 9.
 33. Appendix C, #1: report, November 1953 from Fr. Thomas O'Reilly to Archbishop McQuaid, DDA, McQuaid Correspondence 1949–1971, Killiney collection 6 (uncatalogued letters to McQuaid's house in Killiney, South Co. Dublin).
 34. Letter from Fr. Cecil Barrett to Archbishop McQuaid, 24 June 1968, in McQuaid Correspondence 1949–1971, DDA.
 35. Erwan Dianteill, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion: A Central and Peripheral Concern' in *Theory and Society* 32, no. 5/6 (December 2003): 530.
 36. This relationship between Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* and Bourdieu's evolving definition of habitus is cited in Dianteill, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion', 530.
 37. Pierre Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–258; David Schwartz, 'Bridging the Study of Culture and Religion: Pierre Bourdieu's Political Economy of Symbolic Power', in *Sociology of Religion* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 71–85.
 38. Corporation report outlining 1950s development plans, forwarded to archbishop from Canon McArdle on 21 November 1950, McQuaid Correspondence 1949–1971, DDA.
 39. Pierre Bourdieu, 'Postface' (Epilogue) to Erwin Panofsky, *Architecture Gothique et Pensee Scolastique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967), 161–2, cited in Dianteill, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion', 530.
 40. Ibid.
 41. Report from Fr. Fitzpatrick to the archbishop, 12 January 1953, in McQuaid Correspondence 1949–1971, DDA
 42. Ibid.
 43. The term 'middle landscape' comes from Peter Rowe, *Making a Middle Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).
 44. Humphreys, *New Dubliners*, 190.
 45. Correspondence, 1944–1949, Dublin Housing Development Files, Captain's Lane extension 34, B1/03/105, 'File #5. Revised Lay-out Plans', Dublin City Archives, Gilbert Library, Dublin.
 46. Taylor, Tribute to Herbert Simms, *Irish Builder and Engineer* (16 October 1948): 836.

Biography

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