

Peter Collins

A Study in Parallax

This article illustrates how architectural educator and historian Peter Collins's collection of 35-mm slides and his personal papers are useful windows on his work, life, and even his death. Parallax allowed Collins to constantly reinvent himself and his work, just as his books suggested that it had provided twentieth-century architects with a revolutionary way of making space.

Architectural historian Peter Collins (1920–1981) is best known as the author of three significant texts in the postwar period, *Concrete* (1959), *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750–1950* (1965), and *Architectural Judgment* (1971). Thanks to its republication by McGill-Queen's University Press in 1998, with a foreword by Kenneth Frampton, his magnum opus *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* is once again widely read as a major text on Modernism.¹ It was in this book that Collins asserted his own notion of parallax as an alternative to other popular, style-based histories, suggesting that Modern architecture was an extension or reversal of traditional methods of exploiting parallax. This bold assertion was intended to counter publications such as Sigfried Giedion's popular book, *Space, Time and Architecture*.

To Collins, parallax was an architectural condition experienced directly by a visitor to a building, "whereby an apparent displacement of objects occurs when the point of observation changes," an experience he liked to illustrate with interior photographs.² In order for the change of perspective to occur through this shift in position, Collins insisted on an initial or originating position. This baseline position functioned as a sort of precedent for Collins. Just as in his own life he drew from a sense of tradition and continuity (both real and imagined) to make sense of his life and work through a series of dislocations, so too in his theory of parallax the visitor to a building must have first occupied a clear position in order to understand the spatial change that has occurred.

This article engages Collins's collection of 35-mm slides and his personal papers to explore the relationship of parallax to his life, teaching, writing, and even his death.³ Numerous aspects of his personal life functioned in a dynamically shifting mode, just like the buildings he claimed were based on parallax: his social class and politics, his profession, the loss of his wife, and his suicide in 1981. Each of these purposeful displacements offered Collins a fresh, unencumbered point of observation from which to see and interpret "another" way, just as a changed observational position inside a building could provide a new line of sight. Although Collins spent most of his career in Canada, his scholarship was shaped by the scholarly and architectural traditions of France and his frequent forays into American universities. He savored his prospect from the City of Montreal, the Province of Quebec, and Canada, the nation, of the 1960s and 1970s. It was from these particular positions that his deep interests in precedent, authority, hierarchy, and heraldry were not only tolerated but also nourished; and his position vis-à-vis the mainstream could change in parallax.

In terms of his publications, Collins's search for unfolding perspectives on Modernism is most evident in the way he approached his book-length projects. In March 1961, he wrote to J.M. Richards, the editor of *Architectural Review*, offering to write an article on the concept of space-time as used by Giedion and others.⁴ In this letter, Collins told Richards that he planned to conclude the article by suggesting his own theory of parallax as a more effective explanation than Giedion's Modern

architectural space. Richards took Collins up on his offer to write the article. It appeared in *Architectural Review* in December 1962 and subsequently became Chapter 24, "New Concepts of Space," in *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*.⁵ The essay was classic "PC," as he was affectionately known to his colleagues: bold in its assertions, focused in its argument, and unforgettable in its elocution. Here he asserted, for the first time, that twentieth-century architecture was essentially an extension and reversal of traditional methods of exploiting parallax.

During his lectures at McGill's School of Architecture in Montreal, where he taught from 1956 until his death in 1981, Collins used a series of numbered slides (Figures 1 and 2) of the Panthéon in Paris to illustrate traditional, pre-Modern parallax. As the photographer's point of observation changes, the apparent relationship of columns changes, legible in these images through the appearance of the tiny, white-shoed figure and the increased visibility of the tapestry. Surprisingly, Collins used no illustrations in the *Architectural Review* version of the article and used only a few photographs, disconnected from the text, to explain the idea in the book.⁶

Collins argued in *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* that twentieth-century architects, especially Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Auguste Perret, and Louis Kahn, extended or reversed this earlier version of parallax.⁷ Wright's Unity Temple was, in Collins's opinion, an illustration of how cantilevered balconies had "extended" the traditional method of

1. Interior of the Panthéon, Paris. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



2. Interior of the Panthéon, Paris. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



parallax. Parallax occurs not only as visitors to Unity Temple move beside architectural features but also as they move over or beneath features such as cantilevered overhangs. In a building based on extended parallax, that is, building parts slide above and below users as well as beside them.

Among the illustrations he chose for the book to show this sideways movement was Kahn's Yale Art Gallery (Figure 3), that Collins noted illustrated the effects of parallax created by screens. Kahn's use of high towers, on the other hand, "which change their apparent relation as one moves round the building," seems to be entirely within the customary use of parallax.⁸

Collins illustrated "the reversal of the traditional method of exploiting parallax" with the work of Le Corbusier, whose interpenetrating interiors and exteriors he said were best appreciated in motion.⁹ In an extended discussion of Giedion's space-time, he notes that the interiors of Modern buildings could be assessed from outside, while the exteriors required movement. Giedion's remark that

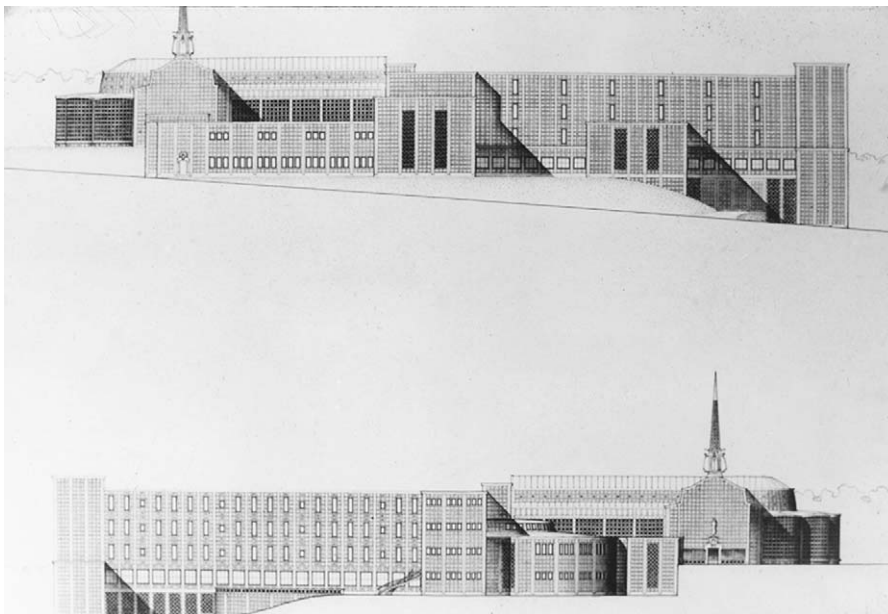
3. Yale Art Gallery, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*.



Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye was "hollowed out" seems crucial to Collins's reversal of parallax; the building is self-contained from the outside, but space burrows in rather than spilling out in separate parts that might be seen in parallax.¹⁰

Even with the most familiar buildings, Collins's idea of reversed parallax is difficult to grasp. In addition to describing the particular subtractive spatial complexity of Le Corbusier's designs, Collins's use of the term reversal may have pointed to irrational, groundless, or unexpected conditions and forms in the buildings. This categorization is implied by his quote from John Summerson's *Heavenly Mansions*, which describes Le Corbusier's work as oppositional, in particular as Cubist, a sum of destructions, and "the reverse logic of every situation."¹¹ Collins elab-

4. Peter Collins' 1948 thesis project for a seminary, elevations. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



orated on Le Corbusier's role in the chapter "The Influence of Painting and Sculpture":

... most of Le Corbusier's basic revolutionary ideas also imply what Summerson describes as Alice-in-Wonderland inversions, and which, despite their elaborate rationalization, are essentially examples of a logic turned upside-down. In other words, when compared with traditional building methods, they constituted a kind of "anti-architecture." For example, whereas in traditional architecture, a villa is situated in a garden, in Le Corbusier's architecture, the garden is situated in the villa. Whereas in Classical architecture colonnades are placed on a base of solid walling, Le Corbusier places solid walling on top of his columns.¹²

Unpredictable displacements also marked Collins's early career trajectory. Born in Leeds in

1920, he developed a passion for French architecture early in his youth.¹³ Nevertheless, he claimed throughout his life that he had decided to become an architect as a nine-year-old when he visited Canterbury Cathedral. During World War II, Collins joined the Yorkshire Hussars as a trooper and served as an intelligence officer. After the war, he returned to Leeds to complete his architectural studies. The thesis project (Figure 4) he completed at Leeds in 1948 for a National Seminary—a complex of undecorated, flat-roofed, high-rise towers, and a Church linked through a series of courtyards—shows how his interest in Modern design was already well established.¹⁴ In 1948, Collins moved to Fribourg, Switzerland, where he worked in the office of Denis Honegger, a former student of Perret and one of Perret's most rigorous followers. He then relocated to Paris, where he would return frequently, and was employed by Pierre-Édouard Lambert, whose office was among

the firms working with Perret. It was during this five-year period that several of the seeds of Collins's lifelong passions were sown, especially the architecture of reinforced concrete, the city of Paris, and the work of Perret, the main subject of *Concrete, the Vision of a New Architecture*.¹⁵

A fourth passion of the young architect was Margaret Gardner Taylor of Ottawa. On one trip to Paris, in 1953, he married the young Canadian. Responsible for his eventual move to Montreal, Mrs. Collins became a familiar figure to students at McGill University, as a constantly reappearing scale figure in many of the school's 35-mm slides (Figure 5). In 1955, Collins graduated with his masters from Manchester University, with a project that had focused on the life and work of Jacques-François Blondel (for which he won the 1954 RIBA Silver Medal). The young couple moved to New Haven, Connecticut, that same year, where Collins taught architectural history as a Fulbright scholar at Yale University, launching his academic career as

a transplanted colonist. By the age of 35, then, Collins had lived in England, Switzerland, France, and the United States, in addition to his somewhat mysterious wartime travels in the Middle East (probably Egypt) and Italy. He would return to the United States for two extended periods: in 1964, to teach at Smith College and in 1967–1968, to visit the University of California, Berkeley.

The remainder of Collins's life was spent in Montreal, where he and Margaret moved in 1956, in order for him to take up a position at McGill University's sixty-year-old School of Architecture, directed by Modernist John Bland since 1941.¹⁶ Bland and Collins shared a pedagogy based on the Modern movement's teaching of rationalism and functionalism. Their gentlemanly demeanors and previous experiences in Britain, too, may have provided the foundation for their lifelong cordial friendship.¹⁷ Perhaps equally appealing to the young Collins was the absolute freedom Director Bland offered faculty members to teach courses as they pleased.

In addition to secure employment and a like-and open-minded boss, Montreal in this golden decade of the 1960s offered Collins a number of tangible benefits. First, Montreal was close to Margaret's family in Ottawa. Second, Collins took every advantage of the highly charged architectural scene unfolding in his milieu, as indicated by his beloved photographs. We know, for example, that he witnessed the opening of I.M. Pei's 600-foot tower, Place Ville Marie, in September 1962, because he described the military band that played at the event in a review for Manchester's *The Guardian* and photographed it for the McGill slide library (Figure 6). "A fair sprinkling of inquisitive onlookers [were] attracted by the music of the military band," he reported.¹⁸ He also reviewed and photographed Pier Luigi Nervi's Place Victoria (Figure 7), under construction in 1964. It is difficult to imagine Collins, who always dressed in a proper white shirt, black suit, and tie for class, on this frenetic construction site.¹⁹ He was definitely there, however, as his photograph of Place Victoria, like nearly all his slides of buildings under construction, focuses on the exposed reinforced concrete frames.²⁰

This backstage perspective on Montreal Modernism offered a new point of observation for Collins's evolving interpretation of French rationalism, clearly reflected in his changing ideas about *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*. The two-page outline he sent to Faber and Faber in 1959 was for a book completely different from what he eventually would publish. At this stage, there was no five-part division, and perhaps more importantly, no analogies. From the letters and notes which he left regarding the book, the final structure seems to have evolved some time between 1959 and April 1963, when he submitted seven chapters of the book. These were published serially in the magazine *Canadian Architect* between May 1963 and March 1964. Some parts, too, like the article in *Architectural Review*, appeared in the international press. There is no mention of any Canadian building or architect in the book, although he began

5. Margaret Collins, Malton Airport. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



6. Marching band, Place Ville Marie, Montreal. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



writing reviews and articles on Canadian buildings as early as December 1959.

This parallaxic, ever-changing approach to scholarship continued even after the book's publication. An intriguing, undated note (Figure 8) that Collins probably made to himself listed the changes he would have liked to make to *Changing Ideals*. There were six numbered points:

1. Pevsner's factual errors
2. An expanded discussion of Revolutionary
3. More material on the influence of painting
4. Additions to the section on decorative arts
5. Additions to the mechanical analogy
6. Rewrite biological analogy

Unnumbered items also appeared on the list, including the addition of a musical analogy, material on Nervi's attitudes to various structural types (perhaps inspired by his first-hand knowledge of Place Victoria), an expanded discussion of

nationalism and Gothic, a section on environmental harmony, and some people to add to the revised book's acknowledgments. The undated note is a remarkable document: a one-page review of *Changing Ideals* by its author, who was its toughest critic, and clear evidence that whenever Collins wrote this note to himself, he had changed his mind about *Changing Ideals*. Always worried that the book would usurp his usefulness as a lecturer, Collins continuously revised his courses, which may have led him to new ideas for the book.²¹

Evidence of this penchant for revision appears throughout his papers. His lecture notes, typically only a page (Figure 9), are layered with changes, edits, and suggested improvements. Sections of text are crossed out; arrows indicate a change of order; sometimes there is even a record of discussion time for a particular class.

A second form of revisiting past ideas, the notion of architectural precedent, also recurs

7. Construction site, Place Victoria, Montreal. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



throughout Collins's papers, culminating in his third and final book, *Architectural Judgement*, in 1971. His insistence on precedent is the main reason that the "Vernacular" was such a ticklish subject for Collins. "Important thing is relation of *programme to solution*," he says, "difficulty of knowing former re vernacular." In addition to the lack of a clear program, the notion of Vernacular was particularly thorny for Collins, because to him it had no clear relationship to precedent.

Collins's entire life, indeed, was a search for precedent and authority via these constantly shifting perspectives. In 1968–1969, he stepped out of the box to see things in a remarkably new way by attending law school at Yale University. During his

Changing Ideas: Future modifications.

- (1) Pöschner's lecture cross
- (2) Discuss "Revolutionary" at length, at end of the chapter.
- (3) ~~the~~ Infl. of Painting: (A) refer back to Rev. tradition esp. to Pöschner's lectures
(b) refer to V. & E. D. and art. abstract
(c) Influence of "capacities"
- (4) Heidegger Deconstruct art: discuss Redtenbacher.
- (5) Add to mechanical analysis: Poissons of modern movement: Chambers
Pöschner & D. D. C.
Cognates
- (6) Review biological analogy.

(7) Add human analogy, which is not a functional analogy, "explanatory" why it was not possible to see, understand and formalize (8) Space, p. 275. re Cézanne for "cubes" round, pressure, and "analysis" of the part after the work comes.

add to "inventions" a resume of Louis Schuikowski's activities.

add to SS on concrete a clarification of different trusses
New: re: (1) small span (2) tall buildings (3) wide span structures.

"To rationalism & Gothic" discuss (a) Pöschner & D. D. C. (Annals Architecture 1896)
(b) environmental learning (eg. Street & Lane (Louis King's Cages)
Barry's Pal. of Westminster.

Re: Poisson discuss { meaning of Revolution
structural influence (B.H. Ins.) "it is needed" etc.
and review Q. re Poisson's remarks on "stress" in his determination

Alexander's review
Cable
Pöschner, ap. Pöschner.

CNC 64/01/127/1007

116 : "Vernacular"

(1) "Vernacular" & "anonymous" architecture
NB: "Anonymous" derives from folk.

(2) Pevsner's distinction between architecture & "building"
(3) Important thing is relation of programme to solution: design of housing forms, re vernacular

NB: Astoria carpet floor made there

1971:
~~Linnah collected at~~ ← NB: floor area is about 60,000 ft².
~~Chetum Chinglam:~~ If the chapel number 60 canon, the land gave c. 1,000 ft² per person.
~~Military Engineering, Kingston~~
~~Hutchinson & Steele - Grafton House~~
~~The same Chetum Chinglam - Hutchinson & Steele~~

(3) Mykines Athens [Ver.] - discusses Remensch in Greece
Athens Bruges apse [fr. GtH] (2.)

Romanow
Danish farm (See Bear later (circled) after Jan before c. 1800)
Bruges
Lacoste
D'Astoria - Slaved House
Street architecture Paris
S. Kensington
Gaudi: Casa Batlló
Montfort - Sherborne St.
Van Mieris C...
Mixed "Western Vernacular":

1971-70:
(1) D'Astoria - carpets of Slaved House
Chetum Chinglam
(2) Pevsner: New German
Nazi's Indian
Sweden
Fr. Coe Bruges cathedral (2)
(3) Ver. Astoria - church
discuss Remensch in
Greece - the details]
4 Ver. Bruges 1/2 timber
apse 1/2 "
5 E. Danish (jam)
6 Romanow (3)
7 Athen - Kingdus
Mykines Island
Mixed 20% as "vernacular"
P.T. Western Vernacular

(18) In 1971-70, discussion lacked
40 minutes!
CONTINUED TO NEXT
LECTURE from Item

whose perspectives on the power of architecture were decidedly more progressive than Collins's.²⁴

During his twenty-five years at McGill's School of Architecture, Collins never discussed his childhood. No father is listed on his birth certificate, and no one seems to know anything about his mother, Ann Collins, who is described as a hospital registration clerk on his birth certificate.²⁵ Did Ann Collins raise her son? Was this in Leeds, at the working-class address cited on the birth certificate,²⁶ or in London? Did Collins know the identity of his father? Was Collins's unremitting search for precedent and authority in architecture, and his deep interest in lineage, nourished by a childhood without these? Perhaps his deep personal interests in both hierarchy and heraldry are offshoots of his compelling search for a father figure.²⁷

Collins suffered from insomnia and depression throughout his adult life. When depressed, his preference for aristocratic surroundings became especially evident. For example, he often went to expensive restaurants and hotels in Montreal. While on a tour of the Palace of Versailles during a summer course he taught in France in 1978, he confided to a student that he would have liked to live there. He surrounded himself with symbols of aristocracy; in his office (which also housed the slide library) was a huge wooden coat of arms.²⁸ Similarly (and perhaps related to his dislike for vernacular architecture), Collins disdained the ordinary. He found particularly distasteful the penchant of journalists to interview the "man on the street," whose opinions he considered absolutely meaningless. He had no sympathy for student participation in university affairs. During the student protests at McGill in the 1960s, Collins exited the McConnell Engineering Building wielding wire cutters, and cut the power to the activists' loudspeakers. Just before his death in 1981, he apparently responded to nearly every remark by his colleagues with a three-word question: "on whose authority?"²⁹ Born into a social system based on authority, lineage,

10. Home of Peter and Margaret Collins, Westmount, Quebec. Photograph by Ricardo Vera.



11. Ottawa City Hall, Ottawa. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



12. Malton airport, Toronto, Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



13. Toronto City Hall. Slide library, School of Architecture, McGill University.



patriarchy, and exclusivity, Collins came to cultivate these values in his adopted city, Montreal.

Certainly, Collins's deep interest in precedent had a discernible impact on his critique of Canadian Modernism. The buildings he admired, such as Rother Bland Trudeau's Ottawa City Hall (Figure 11) or Toronto's Malton Airport (Figure 12) by John B. Parkin Associates, constructed as he was writing *Changing Ideals* between 1957 and 1965, were ones which both relied on and set obvious precedents. Because the wise decision was made to emphasize a parking garage, claimed Collins in an assessment of three Canadian airports in the *RAIC Journal* of 1964, "Malton undoubtedly constitutes a prototype of world-wide significance in its compositional conception."³⁰ Buildings he did not admire, like Viljo Rewell's Toronto City Hall (Figure 13) and Wright's Guggenheim Museum, were unique and thus commanded little sense of authority and engaged no precedents. He described the New York museum as "about as inhuman as a boa constrictor and as exotic as the tendrils of some Brobdingnagian plant," and Collins critiqued Rewell's widely praised masterpiece:

There is no doubt that both the Guggenheim Museum and the Toronto City Hall will be regarded by future historians as great works of art, because art historians tend to see buildings as abstract sculpture, requiring neither antecedence nor succession for their justification. It will be a mark of excellence that no one has ever designed anything like them before, and that no one will ever design anything like them again.³¹

Regardless of his subject, Collins always found a way to mention his pet peeves, especially the myopia of art historians and the devastating impact of the so-called Form-Givers (Modern architects who ignore the program and produce arbitrary sculptural forms, like Paul Rudolph). This was his real contribution to the interpretation of the

architecture of his own era. His criticism of the Toronto City Hall, Sydney Opera House, and the “forms” produced by Rudolph et al. addressed the same problems as Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour’s *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972). These authors, too, condemned Rudolph’s work for being irrelevant, self-important, and original. Collins’s clear identification of this problem of novelty in postwar Modernism more than a decade before *Learning from Las Vegas* has yet to be recognized.³²

Near the end of his life, Collins’s parallax became a one-way system. In the way his personal life unfolded, there was no doubling back, no reworking of the *parti*, and in the end, no final look back. By the late 1970s, his perspective on Perret was even ambivalent. During the second and final time he taught Summer Course Abroad (Rome and Paris) in 1978, he encouraged his students to visit Perret’s Le Havre, but refused to go with them, perhaps recognizing that the project was less successful than he had previously believed.³³ In the fall of 1980, Collins’s world of reason and order was shattered by depression and loneliness, especially following the death of Margaret by suicide in Montreal while he was in Paris. With this devastating passing of his life partner and scale figure, his changing point of observation apparently lost all discernible references. He took his own life at home on June 7, 1981.³⁴ His second book’s title, in this sense, was an accurate reflection both of its central argument on parallax and as a biographical metaphor for Collins the man: *Changing Ideals*.³⁵

Nearly twenty-five years after his death, Collins’s role as a major figure in the historiography of Modernism is only beginning to be studied. Special issues of architectural journals (*ARQ: Architecture Quebec* and *Fifth Column*) devoted to his work, the republication of two of his books and a French translation of *Concrete*, and a symposium and related publication at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in 1999 have nurtured new interest in his prolific career. Our understanding of this elusive scholar, like his own work and life, is thus changing in parallax.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in Richmond, Virginia, in April 2002. I am thankful to members of the audience and to the session chair, Marc Grignon, who raised insightful questions on that occasion, and also to the Institut de recherche en histoire de l’architecture, Montreal, for a seed grant in support of this research. I also acknowledge the helpful comments of two anonymous *JAE* reviewers. Peter Collins’s papers are housed at the John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University. My colleagues at the School of Architecture, McGill University, have generously contributed to this paper through their vivid memories of Peter Collins, especially Maureen Anderson, Vikram Bhatt, Martin Bressani, Ricardo Castro, Derek Drummond, the late Norbert Schoenauer, Pieter Sijpkens, and Radoslav Zuk. Cynthia Hammond, Jeffrey Hannigan, David Krawitz, Tanis Hinchcliffe, Anthony King, Louis Martin, Aurèle Parisien, Peter Sealy, David Theodore, and Dell Upton also helped with the challenges of researching this elusive man.

Notes

1. The second edition also includes an exploration of the book’s genesis. See Annmarie Adams, “Notes on the Publication of *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*,” in Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750–1950*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 1998), pp. xv–xx. *Concrete* was republished by McGill-Queen’s too in 2004 with a foreword by Frampton, and a French version of *Concrete* has recently been published: Peter Collins. *Splendeur du béton, Les prédécesseurs et l’oeuvre d’Auguste Perret*. Translated by Pierre Lebrun (Paris: Editions Hazan, 1995).
2. Collins, *Changing Ideals*, p. 292.
3. For more on Collins’s slides, see Annmarie Adams, “‘With Precision Appropriate’: Images from the Peter Collins Collection,” *ARQ: Architecture Québec* 75 (October 1993): 18–19.
4. Peter Collins to Mr. Richards, 14 April 1961. John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, CAC064 009 019.
5. Peter Collins, “Parallax,” *Architectural Review* 132 (December 1962): 387–90.
6. Frampton associates the minimal illustrations and their traditional presentation in *Changing Ideals* with Collins’s sense of academic restraint. See his foreword in Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750–1950*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 1998), p. viii.
7. Collins, *Changing Ideals*, p. 292.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 290.
11. Collins, *Changing Ideals*, p. 292. Summerson’s position appears in *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture* (New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 190–91. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing the importance of this connection.
12. Collins, *Changing Ideals*, p. 277.
13. There are relatively few biographical sources on Collins. See the special issues dedicated to his work: *The Fifth Column* 4 (Summer 1984), which includes a brief biography by John Bland; and *ARQ: Architecture Québec* 75 (October 1993). See also Radoslav Zuk, “From Theory to Realization: A McGill Tradition,” *ARQ: Architecture Québec* 92 (August 1996): 15. More general explorations of his importance can be found in: Tanis Hinchcliffe, “Peter Collins: The Voice from the Periphery,” in Louise Campbell, ed., *Twentieth-century Architecture and its Histories* (London: Society of Architectural Historians, 2000), pp. 177–94. Also, the papers from a one-day symposium on Collins held at the Canadian Centre for Architecture on October 9, 1999, have been published as *Peter Collins and the Critical History of Modern Architecture*, Irena Latek, ed. (Montreal: IRHA, 2002), pp. 18–19.
14. Although the design of the thesis is overtly Modernist, Collins’s slides of the project include a series of precedents drawn from pre-Modern, traditional architecture: the refectory of the Dominican Convent of S. Sisto in Rome; the Aula Magna of Le College du Pape, University of Louvain; a fourteenth-century *crozier* and the spire of Rheims Cathedral; the Triptych of Odense Cathedral in Denmark; and the Seminary at Mechlin, Belgium.
15. Peter Collins, *Concrete: The Vision of a New Architecture: A Study of Auguste Perret and His Precursors* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. xv–xx. Frampton notes that the book title was “perverse and

misleadingly” complex, as it was actually three books in one. See his foreword to the second edition, xix.

16. More information is needed on how Collins came to meet Bland. He may have been visiting Margaret’s family and dropped in on the School, according to colleagues.

17. Although born in Lachine, Quebec, Bland had studied planning at the Architectural Association in London and was a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

18. Peter Collins, “In Place,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), September 25, 1962.

19. Collins worked seven days a week and wore a sports jacket to McGill on Sundays. He stayed in his office every night until Margaret telephoned to say dinner was ready. Personal correspondence from Derek Drummond, April 16, 2002.

20. See Peter Collins, “Stock Exchange Tower, Montreal,” *Architectural Review* 139 (June 1966): 433–38. A particularly interesting set of slides of buildings under construction are those of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin County Civic Center. Collins labelled buildings under construction “u/c.”

21. See Annmarie Adams, “Changing Ideas about Changing Ideals,” in Latek, ed., *Peter Collins and the Critical History of Modern Architecture* (Montreal: IRHA, 2002), pp. 30–43.

22. Peter Collins, “Expo- and After,” *Canadian Architect* 11 (October 1966): 47–48.

23. His attitude to the profession may also have been related to the comfort he found in exclusivity. There is no evidence to suggest that he ever practiced again, once he left Paris, yet Collins maintained his membership in both the PQAA, the RAIC (he was a Fellow), and the

RIBA. He described himself, too, as an architect, rather than a historian, although most of his prizes and honors were for his books and articles.

24. Collins’s relationship to his contemporaries, such as Sigfried Giedion, Colin Rowe, Reyner Banham, Joseph Rykwert, and Manfredo Tafuri, is a rich and largely unexplored subject and his personal papers abound with correspondence with key figures. The relationship of Collins and Nikolaus Pevsner is touched upon in Adams, “Changing Ideas,” pp. 30–43. Alberto Pérez-Gómez situates Collins vis-à-vis hermeneutics in his “Architectural History as Intellectual History: Peter Collins’ Partial Hermeneutic Project,” in Latek, ed., *Peter Collins and the Critical History of Modern Architecture* (Montreal: IRHA, 2002), pp. 120–32.

25. I am grateful to Tanis Hinchcliffe for finding and describing Collins’s birth certificate. He was born on August 13, 1920, at 123 Beckett Street, Leeds (subdistrict North Leeds). Ann Collins’s address on the certificate, however, is 10 Manchester Street in London W., which was a residence connected to University College Hospital. Hinchcliffe speculates that Ann Collins may have worked in London, and gone to Leeds to give birth. Another confusing detail is that Collins lists “Vera Collins” as his mother in his will.

26. 123 Beckett Street is in Harehills, an industrial area close to the city center. I am grateful to Anthony King for comments on the area and its back-to-back terraced housing. Personal correspondence from Anthony King, April 25, 2002.

27. Adnan Morshed notes the role of “father-seeking” in modernist architectural theory in his film review, “Architecture as a Means of Filial Discovery: Nathaniel Kahn’s *My Architect*,” *JAE* 58, no. 3 (February 2005): 60.

28. Drummond recalls that the coat of arms was from the set of the Red and White Review, perhaps *My Fur Lady*, rescued by Collins from the garbage. Personal correspondence from Drummond, April 16, 2002.

29. Drummond remembers that Collins said this frequently over the years, and more intensely just before he died. Personal correspondence from Drummond, April 16, 2002.

30. Peter Collins, “Winnipeg, Edmonton, Toronto: Three New International Air Terminals: An Appraisal,” *RAIC Journal* 41 (February 1964): 44–48.

31. Peter Collins, “Classics in Controversy,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), March 3, 1960.

32. Collins admired Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, although he criticized its central argument. See “Editor’s Postscript,” *SAHJ* 26 (October 1967): 198.

33. Joseph Rykwert notes that “Collins’ ultimate loyalty was to Perret and the whole of his architectural thinking can be considered as a justification of Perret’s architecture. Even when the master broke what would seem to me one of the cardinal points on which Collins was so insistent, and that is the belief that the architect must always work within the given context—a belief from which he departed in the reconstruction of Le Havre.” See Joseph Rykwert, “The Rule and the Law,” in Latek, ed., *Peter Collins and the Critical History of Modern Architecture* (Montreal: IRHA, 2002), p. 107.

34. Collins overdosed on sleeping pills. Drummond remembers that Collins, who had taken sleeping pills for years, was increasingly worried he was addicted to them.

35. See “Classics in controversy,” *The Guardian* (Manchester), March 3, 1960.