tion of space as something horizontally stratified like the layers of a Neapolitan wafer; and there are the corollaries to this drawing: a denial of the spatial expression of the structural cell, a relegation of the column to the status of punctuation or caesura, and a penetration of the resultant product by a labyrinthine construction of miscellaneous partitions which propagate a centrifugal stress. This is almost all. Basically, it is all by now very old; and as a result there is very little to say about the living quarters of the monastery taken by themselves.

There are the usual elements of wit: an entrance which is possibly a little too Japanese, and the five parlours adjoining it; a spiral staircase which parodies something from a mediaeval building; and the

astonishing Ledoleian fantasy of the oratory as seen from outside. But these are the guilloëthes of the scholastic discourses; and more important are the distinctions of emotional tone which the different levels of the living quarters support. This is effected by an orchestration of light. There is a movement from the brilliance and lateral extension of the refectory and chapter house, through the more sombre tonality of the library and oratory, up to the relative darkness and lateral closure of the cells. Thus there are progressive degrees of concentration and intimacy; but if, in their turn, the cells’ are like a hundred private recapitulations of the church, it is now necessary to close the circuit and to approach this most problematic element.

The quality of the church, in which chiaroscuro effects reach their maximum and in which negation becomes positive, cannot be photographed; nor will it here be analyzed. Perhaps as a form it is to be related, not as first may appear to a late Gothic prototype—some King’s College Chapel or Franciscoan construction in the valley of Mexico—but to Le Corbusier’s own (and contemporaneous) Boîte à Miracles from the Tokyo Museum. This ‘Box of Miracles’, intended as the stage of an open-air theatre, although it scarcely displays the same attenuated volume, does show the same slightly oblique cut of the roof, a similar entrance condition from the side, and an identical hangar-like appearance. To borrow a term from Tokyo a megaron and a Poissy-type sandwich occur together within the same project, at La Tourette they are so compounded within a single block that Le Corbusier is able simultaneously to secure the manipulation of all spatial coefficients.

To a block one attributes a structural continuity, a textural consistency of space and a homogeneity of spatial grain or layering. While recognizing it to be a hollow and to be empty, one still conceives its emptiness as, in some way, the metaphor for a block of stone or a block of wood. It is exploitable only on the condition of collaborating with the nature which it has been assumed to possess. Or so it might have been thought. But at La Tourette, these precepts which one may often believe Le Corbusier himself to have taught and which one has sometimes felt to be a norm of procedure, are conspicuously breached, and breached with a sophistication so covert that only retrospectively does one become conscious of this means by which he has been able to charge depth with surface, to condense spatial concavities into plane and to drag to its most eloquent pitch the dichotomy between the rotund and the flat. By violating a unity at conception, by jumming two discrete elements within the same block, Le Corbusier has been able to instigate both tension and compression, sensations of both openness and density, and he has guaranteed a stimulus so acute that the visitor is not aware of the abnormality of his experience.

Vince Scully, it is one of Le Corbusier’s megaron volumes, one of those open-ended tunnel spaces compressed between vertical planes which have persisted in his work alongside those more advertised sandwich volumes where the pressure of the horizontal planes is more acute.

A history of the cross fertilization of the megaron and sandwich concepts throughout Le Corbusier’s career would be entirely relevant to the discussion of La Tourette; but it is scarcely an account which can fall within the scope of a short critique and it might now simply be noticed that, while at