The Assembly, Chandigarh

has been shrewd enough to establish a situation where different patterns can intersect. The miracles follow of their own accord, and a complete landscape is generated.

And the finest landscape of all lies within the forum. Here all the major elements are self-supporting, thus necessitating a great many columns rising to a great many different heights. Yet this articulation of the structural system never borders on mannerism, for Corb is working at a vast scale, and he knows just what he can and cannot do. The columns give rhythm and scale, rising like a great forest in the dappled light. And it is this light, filtering from above, washing the concrete surfaces, that draws us upward into the higher reaches of the building.

Here the light gets dimmer, the spaces more diffuse. One is walking across large dissected areas, and down strange alleys, between giant concrete forms. Where are we? At the top of the Dome! It is a strange moment, an ecstatic moment, deeply evocative of an architecture past. Then we emerge onto the roof level and into the dazzling sunlight. Here we are on an immense cobbled piazza, the landscape of Chandigarh lying all around; and like monsters rising above the surface of the sea, emerge the hyperboloids, the pyramid and the lift-tower. The last act of the drama—like the opening of the drama—is played out here against the sky.

How does this complex a building hold visually together? Primarily through the near-exclusion of a single material: concrete. Much has been written about the brutality of Corb’s architecture and, as evidence, is usually cited his handling of concrete. But Corb’s brutality is, in fact, only one side of the coin; he is much more than that. Any ape can be brutal, and Corb could never be exclusively brutal any more than he could be exclusively elegant. It is essential to his temperament that he expresses both qualities at the same time. (A glance at the Jansen houses in Paris will illustrate this.) It has been said that one understands the hardness of rock only if one knows the softness of silk, and Corb himself reputedly sprinkles his bath with large granules of kitchen salt. (This way I know what salt is and I know what meat is.) Thus we find that at certain levels of the Assembly—as for instance in the bridge connecting the lift-tower to the top of the hyperboloids—the physical protection provided is completely inadequate. A sense of danger also exists in some portions of Shodan’s house in Ahmedabad, and the question is asked: Why has Corb done this? Yet try to imagine the same architecture with a safe three-foot-high parapet providing uniform protection all around?