archetypical solutions to contemporary programmes Le Corbusier tended to show them wrested from context. Yet visiting the buildings reveals that, unlike those of his followers, they are full of subtle accommodations to and dialogue with their setting. His work is full of such contradictions. Often presented as highly rational, it far transcends the rational in the pursuit of poetry. The canonical Five Points for the new architecture are mere inversions and displacements of the old Classical system. And though these Five Points theoretically replace the facade with a tight skin, he was one of the greatest masters of facades, designing them in such depth that some of their layers were to be found deep within the building.

Le Corbusier built and wrote when there were prejudices against some of what he considered essential dimensions of a complete and timeless architecture, and when an expression of interest in such things would have prejudiced the technocratic image deemed necessary to secure the commissions he sought. So, although he acknowledged history as his master and though he dropped clues, he left it to others to discover that many buildings were in some degree modelled on historic example and most were rich in historic and esoteric allusion. Hence the Purist villas described by Richard Elpin (opposite) now look less avant-garde, in the sense of looking forward only, than Janus-like. Yet it is more complex still, for just as the palace was dignified by the forms of the temple, so these villas allude to ancient temples, either directly, or via the intermediary of specific palaces or villas of the past.

Le Corbusier was hoping not just to reinterpret and reinvigorate tradition, but to sacramentalise daily life to make the everyday epic. Hence the raised piano noble of the Villa Savoye (p.27) not only addresses the four horizons as did Villa Rotonda, but its occupants stroll on the roof like the gods on Palladio’s cornice, and are also framed in a horizontal opening that renders this living tableau into a contemporary equivalent of the Panatheniac frieze of the Parthenon.

In retrospect Le Corbusier’s work represents less a break with history than a last ditch stand for the Humanist values of the Renaissance, telescoping selected aspects of the past and contemporary potential into a vibrant new culture centred on Man. In today’s jargon, his buildings are full of double-codings, or better, multiple codings. Indeed the two essential hallmarks ascribed to Post-Modernism, a conscious re-use of history and double-codings, are in fact two of the essential hallmarks of Modernism. Unless of course Le Corbusier was not a Modernist—nor Picasso, Joyce, Eliot, or Stravinsky.

Most of the articles in this issue touch on the very topical subject of Le Corbusier’s use of history. Together they give some sense of the many dimensions of his work and of the different kinds of study and interpretation it is now being subjected to. Let us hope that all the attention focused through the year on Le Corbusier will lead to a better understanding of both his work and of the as yet unrealised potentials within modern architecture. In the current state of conflict and confusion in architecture, we can use Le Corbusier’s towering legacy to help once again approach architecture with humane ambition and deeper understanding, and to get some sense where we have come from and where it is possible still to go.

**Corb**

*Born 1887*