Park Hill, Sheffield, is a singular edifice—and its singularity must not be blurred by the use of vaguily plural terms such as 'scheme,' 'group' or 'complex.' The vast size of the building, and the fact that it has more ends than the customary two, may give the impression in some photographs that a number of blocks of flats can be seen. But this is not so—two steps on the site will at once show that this is a single block of dwellings, however complicated in plan form. Nevertheless, it emphatically reverses the current orthodoxy that conceives a 'block' in terms of classical façades, an elementary form that can be seen and appreciated from a single viewpoint—as can Le Corbusier's various Unité or Baby's serpentine block in the Piano Piano development, whose wavy form merely demonstrates that a Brazilian can do the Samba without ceasing to be so much a classicist as Corb.

But if Park Hill, a building with two main façades which are not always on the same side of the building, and five ends, one of which is in the middle of the site—if it diverges so far from the Aristotelian unity of the classical mode, is it an 'anti-classical' building; in the sense in which that term began to be handled about the moreättelike junior segments of this profession at the time it was being designed? It would be tempting to suppose that it was a programmatic building of this sort, because the project team was certainly in touch with totalitarian metropolitan circles in architecture, as well as very sophisticated aestheticism of some one day call 'The West Riding School,' based on the universities of Sheffield and Leeds.

And yet, the critic must remember that against Withoower's 'exploration' of the Villa Rotonda's four porticoes in terms of Renaissance theories of symmetry and proportion, there is Andre Lurc's equally cogent functionalist 'exploration' in terms of the four views the porticoes had to concord. It often happens that a building that is formally striking has achieved that form for functional reasons that are as convincing as the formal ones, and it is better to err on the side of function than jump at formalist explanations for what can be seen on the site.

In Sheffield, the site itself makes a good beginning to critical examination. It is a crop-pointed triangle, with its long sides extending up a fairly steep hill from the blunted point which stands just above the railway cuttings in the bottom of the Shiel Valley, and the whole site is very much in view from all other elevated ground in Sheffield. Along the less visible side of the site little earlier attempts to redevelop this notorious shu area revealed only too clearly how inadequate are small-scale piecemeal reconstructions on such a slope, and it was clearly good architecture as well as good economics to take our really big bite at the job rather than several small nibbles. It was also remarkably sound tumescencing to so arrange the folded plan of Park Hill that it presents...