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# The Sphere and the Labyrinth

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Avant-Gardes and  
Architecture from  
Piranesi to the  
1970s

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G. Krutikov as a Ph.D. thesis (1928) explain without compromises the "flight from the real" that the *plangity* of Malevich had already pointed out as a cul de sac for the suprematist annihilation of the object.

By now there remains only the space of matter. Beyond it lies the exit from the world; on this side of it, the nostalgia for bourgeois "totality," pursued by the means of the communicative redundancies of an archaic kitsch.

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### The New Babylon: The "Yellow Giants" and the Myth of Americanism

(Expressionism, Jazz Style,  
Skyscrapers, 1913–30)

While the adventures of planning in the Soviet Union follow paths in which the avant-garde, tradition, and realism converge—at least until 1927—demonstrating reciprocal limits and defining the conditions of a tolerable coexistence, the second of the "great world-systems" endures, until the Great Depression, the incubation period of a disease marked by the conflict between a progressive tradition and dispersed aspirations to new models of capitalistic self-management. There, where the Armory Show had introduced the virus of the "European negative" and where dadaism had experienced an autonomous and original phase, the avant-garde appeared to find before it, in the 1920s, two "strait gates" to pass through: on one side, the paradox of a radicalism that identifies in the tradition of the American Renaissance a reference point with which it must continually keep faith; and, on the other side, thematics that emerge from metropolitan reality, but that exclude purely utopian "solutions"—that exclude from the very start a *one-to-one* correspondence between a utopia devoid of any mediations and techniques of intervention.

✕ *The impracticability of the negative* appears to be the imperative that winds through the debate on urban reform in the America that had seen frustrated the hopes fueled by the wartime economy and the uncertainties of Wilson's policy of the "New Freedom." Nevertheless, it is with respect to the control systems of urban chaos that American progressivism plays its hand: among the "conclusions" we have attempted to draw regarding the destiny of the avant-garde theatre, we have not by chance encountered the Hollywood musical.

This poses a problem, upon which criticism seems not to have adequately reflected: Does not what appears in the United States as a rejection of the avant-garde, at least in architecture, in fact conceal a "diverse" approach to the same themes animating the European *negatives Denken*? Do we not find ourselves confronting in America a rapport with the public

that appropriates the theme of shock, embodying it in nonhuman subjects, or rather superobjects, that, indeed, obviates the strategy of the elites and the esoteric *Bauhütten*? In considering American culture, must we not adopt a different viewpoint from which to evaluate the utopia of the avant-garde?

Significantly, perhaps no better way exists of grasping what the American skyscraper is *not* than by studying how European culture has attempted to assimilate and translate into its own terms, especially in the years immediately following the First World War, that paradox of the Metropolitan Age. The skyscraper as a "typology of the exception": the first elevator buildings in Manhattan—from the Equitable Life Insurance Building of Gilman & Kendall and George B. Post (1868–70) to Post's mature works<sup>1</sup>—are real live "bombs" with chain effects, destined to explode the entire real estate market. The systematic introduction of the mechanical elevator, equalizing the price of rents at various floors of commercial buildings, levels in a single blow the existing economic values and creates new and exceptional forms of revenue. Immediately, the "control" of such an explosive object presents itself as an urgent problem—even if there ensues, just as immediately, a clear renunciation of any regulation of the economic effects. The entire typological elaboration that, first in New York and then in Chicago, lies at the heart of the structural inventions of architects like Post, Le Baron Jenney, John Wellborn Root, Holabird & Roche explicitly tends toward a visual control of all that which now appears as "anarchic individuality," a mirror of the "heroic" phase of the entrepreneurship of the Age of Laissez-Faire.<sup>2</sup>

Winston Weisman has quite correctly emphasized the central role played by Post in the formation of the typology of the nineteenth-century skyscraper.<sup>3</sup> In many ways the work of Post takes an opposite path from that of Sullivan; nevertheless, Sullivan owes a great deal to the until now undervalued New York architect. In Post's U-, "tree-," and tower-shaped structures, there already emerges quite clearly that aspect of the skyscraper phenomenon that European interpretations tend to overlook: namely, that it is exactly by embodying the laws of the concurrent economy and, afterwards, of the corporate system, that the skyscraper becomes an instrument—and no longer an "expression"—of economic policy, finding in this identity with economic policy its own true "value." Only after the typological and technological experiments of the last decades of the nineteenth century have exhausted their provisional tasks, setting into position repeatable structures, will the attribution of the "surplus value" of language to these structures manifest itself—correctly—as pure ornament. But it will do so with a precise function: to emit well-known or immediately assimilable messages, to soothe the "distracted perception" of the metropolitan public subjected to the bombardment of multiple shocks, both visual and economic, provoked by the new *giganti della montagna* [mountain giants] in the downtowns.

It is just this phenomenon that European culture could not or would not grasp. What in the United States was produced by a complex but straight-

forward process was experienced in Europe as a trauma. The skyscraper, which Henry Huxley could call in 1875 the "centre of intelligence,"<sup>4</sup> was seen, especially by German culture after 1910, as a symbol and threat of total reification, as a painful nightmare produced by the drowsiness of a metropolis on the verge of losing itself as a subject. In such a frame, optimism and pessimism wind up coinciding. In 1913 Karl Schaffler points out the possibility of a new "Spirit of Synthesis" in American territorial organization: the metropolis will be recuperated as a conscious subject dominating the complementarity of City and Suburb—and here he re-proposes a municipal administration retaining ownership of the terrain—but also reestablishing the equilibrium between the individual and the totality.<sup>5</sup> Reification can be overcome only by considering it a "bridge" that permits the crossing of the Grand Canyon of the anguish of the masses. A "bridge": but precisely by going beyond the experience of the Brücke, Kandinsky, in presenting his own theatrical piece *Der Gelbe Klang* [The Yellow Tone] in *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912), puts forward in metaphorical form a completely opposite interpretation of the same phenomenon. In Kandinsky's unique text, as is well known, five yellow giants undulate, grow disproportionately or shrink, contort their bodies, emit guttural sounds, under a flickering light that accentuates their oneiric aspects.

The previous allusion to Pirandello's *giganti della montagna* was not accidental. For both Kandinsky and Pirandello, the theme is that of individuals who are "all too human," and therefore on the verge of becoming pure signs, dumbfounded testimonies of an existence whose faculties of communication have been blocked. The whispering of the yellow giants and their "difficult" movements are the last, clumsy attempts at expression by beings who, having seen the truth, feel condemned to drown in it:

*at the very instant in which the confusion in the orchestra, in the movements, and in the lighting reaches the high point, all at once, darkness and silence fall on the scene. Alone at the back of the stage, the yellow giants remain visible and are then slowly swallowed up by the darkness. It appears as if the giants are extinguished like lamps; or rather, before complete darkness sets in, one perceives some flash of light.*

The finale of *Der Gelbe Klang* represents, in tragic form, the annihilation of value in the flux of monetary currents—which the people of Manhattan could register, nondramatically, using such real giants as the Woolworth or the Equitable Life Insurance buildings. Moreover, such giants, in reality, despite their linguistic clothing that is just as paradoxical as the yellow color with which Kandinsky clothes his "new angels," also give off a flash of light. But here we are already dealing with—in the words of Rosenquist—"the fleeting gleams of static motion." Kandinsky's symptomatic piece synthesizes the entire European attitude toward the zeroing of form that the skyscraper induces as a corollary of its own domination of the laws of economic growth of the American downtowns. The yellow giants have lost the gift of speech; but, they nevertheless insist on attempting to communicate their alienated condition. If one now glances

over the pages of the German and Dutch avant-garde magazines from the period immediately following the First World War (*Die Woche*, *Frühlicht*, *Wendungen*, G), one will find that the projects entered in the competition for the Berlin skyscrapers on the Kemperplatz or on Friedrichstrasse, or for the administrative center on the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Platz in Magdeburg, and the experiments on the typology of tall buildings by Mies and Hilberseimer all represent a mood quite similar to Kandinsky's. Once again, optimism and pessimism go together hand in hand. Whether in the graphic divertissements of Hablik, in the dignified reserve of Behrens, or in the grotesque geometric distortions of Scharoun or Wijdeweld, a common concern remains: to try to discern within the depths of the "great alienated one" the promise of a collective catharsis.

Just like Mendelsohn's photographs taken, a little while later, in the American metropolises,<sup>6</sup> the skyscraper projects of the German avant-gardes are immersed in a mystical atmosphere reminiscent of that of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. And this is not simply because the compositions of Soder, Taut, and Scharoun involve a derangement of signs similar to that of Robert Wiene's film, but, more important, because in those troublesome tangles of forms, torn asunder by an unrelievable tension between aspiration for the sky and rootedness in the earth, reside the same drama and the same hope: the overturning of the disenchanted and pure "being" of the skyscraper to make it into an instrument of a superior *synthesis*. Therefore, not the skyscraper as a type, no matter how paradoxical, but the skyscraper as a *unicum*, as a Merzbau, that, by upsetting the order of the stratified city, succeeds in recuperating a symbolicalness, a communicative structure, a genius loci. The skyscraper that, finally, through an act of extreme violence, succeeds in purifying, while restoring its own power of speech, the place of the collective murder—the metropolis—which is now dominated by an observatory explicitly designed to reincarnate the symbolic place of the Gothic community: the cathedral.

The esotericism of Taut's *Stadtkrone* is, therefore, the leitmotiv of these invocations of a "spirituality" of the exceptional, of these mystical exorcisms intended to reestablish—like Feininger's Cathedral of Labor—the community spirit so dear to the sociology of Tönnies.

Even Mies, in mounting the model of his skyscraper in the form of a mixtilinear design with a typical medieval texture, appears to have wanted to respond to the assumption of his friend Schwitters: "because of the tiresomeness of its materials, there is no other task for architecture than to reutilize the old and to integrate it within the new . . . thus the metropolis can be transformed into a powerful masterpiece of matter."<sup>7</sup> Certainly, Mies's project responds to this in a paradoxical way. But its anti-materiality, with respect to the surrounding context, plays the same role as the emphatic materiality of the skyscraper designs of Poelzig, Walter Fischer, and Max Berg.

Nevertheless, a substantial difference does remain that will reveal its true significance only in the works undertaken by Mies in the United States. The glass prisms of the experimental skyscrapers of 1921 and 1922

appear to announce the same "Millennial Kingdom" of which Ulrich speaks to his sister in the third part of Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*: "you must imagine it to be like a solitude and a motionlessness full of continuous events of pure crystal." That "Millennial Kingdom" is—as has been written<sup>8</sup>—the "*unio mystica* of proposition and silence, activity and nihilism," the place where something happens without anything happening. The skyscrapers of Mies "realize" the truth of the solipsism of Wittgenstein and Musil: they cannot speak of it.

By contrast, the tall structures planned by Otto Kohtz, Emmanuel Josef Margold, Paul Thiersch, Poelzig seem to want to *speak*, as completely as possible, of the tragedy of solipsism, caught in the pure substance of the great mountains of Babel. Too much happens in these projects—Poelzig's designs evoking a spiral-shaped *Flughaus* are typical—so that something actually does happen in them. They contain too many "words," repeating to the point of obsession that the *unio mystica* they invoke is not that of Mies, but, on the contrary, that of the Great Subject with the crowd.

However, was it not Otto Kohtz himself who predicted, in 1909, the advent of an architecture in the form of a gigantic landscape designed for pure contemplation, the evocation of a Schillerian people in the form of a "universe decorated for a festival"?<sup>9</sup>

The skyscraper as a cathedral, as a metaphor symbolizing a rediscovered collectivity, did not remain solely at the unconscious level in German culture. Gerhard Wohler, commenting in 1924 upon the results of the competition for the new *Chicago Tribune* headquarters, spoke of the German skyscraper as a "symbol of the aspiration toward the metaphysical and of the spiritual behavior" proper to the Cathedral, which, when translated into modern terms, represents nothing other than "the exaltation of the idea of work."<sup>10</sup>

Not far from such a reading are the judgments given by Wijdeweld and by Adolf Behne in the first issue of *Wendungen* (1923) dedicated to the theme of the skyscraper.<sup>11</sup> Wijdeweld—who published in the same issue, among other things, his notable project for Amsterdam from 1919, which was decidedly organic in origin—spoke explicitly of "constructing life from death"; Behne, having criticized as useless and provincial the initiatives in Frankfurt, Danzig, Berlin, and Königsberg, in the end pointed out a way to transform such a typology: "We must be custodians of a certain romanticism even when we hide it behind the cold American hyperobjectivity. Doubtless, the construction of the American Goliaths in our cities will provoke a shock; if conceived correctly their construction will be urbanistically romantic."

And "urbanistically romantic" are, for sure, the results of the competition for the skyscraper in Cologne that, in 1925, under the auspices of Burgomaster Konrad Adenauer and the Tietz firm, was planned to be built exactly at the approach to the new bridge, with its flow of traffic directed transversally to the elongated square adjacent to the Neumarkt. The Cologne initiative is a greater example of provincialism than those for Berlin or Danzig: a long satiric article published in *Wasmuths Monatshefte* in

1926—perhaps drawn up by Hegemann—attacks both the enterprise that gave rise to the competition, initiated by Fritz Schumacher's compromised plan, and the 412 competing projects.<sup>12</sup>

In effect, from the project in spherical form by O. E. Bieber to the restrained romanticism of the project by Bonatz and Scholer, to the exaltation of dimensions in the projects by Wehner and by Poelzig, to the Mendelsohnian organicism of the project by Scharoun, to the ziggurat-shaped solutions of the project entered under the motto "*Haus der Arbeit*," to the populism of the projects by Fritz Fuss, by Edgar Wedepohl, and by Wilhelm Pipping und William Dunkel, to the geometric restraint of the projects by Werner Hebebrand, Rudolf Perco, Pols und Richter, and Wilhelm Riphahn, to the project with flights of steps and formed like a St. Anthony's cross by Max Berg, to the many vaguely neogothic executions, the elaborations for the Cologne competition mark a fundamental stage in the long crisis of the expressionist and spiritualist hypotheses through which in Germany the formal problem of the skyscraper was stated. In the sphere (a geometric motif used many times in the architectural culture of expressionist origin), in the metaphors of the cathedral, the torn castle (the project of "*Haus der Arbeit*"), and the triumphal gate planned aerodynamically (Poelzig and Scharoun),<sup>13</sup> hides a common investigation that traverses the diversity of forms: the "mountains" of the German architects attempt to be, simultaneously, "bridge and door," to reabsorb grotesquely the metropolitan "sickness" by exhibiting it as totem and Moloch. Thus, the monster of Caligari poses as an instrument of mediation between the extremes of degradation and a new salvation: the paradox of the distorted giant insures that the positiveness of the "Good Old Days" will shine in the new light. The economic program of the Tietz firm could not have found a more cunning sublimation. The *Kölner-Carneval* brings back in disguise the pressing need to restore the "Spirit of Synthesis," hidden within the impotent *will to form* expressed by the enthusiasm for the tall building as the new "soul" of metropolis.

Beyond such ineffectual exasperations, the European analysis of the skyscraper, while not abandoning its predominantly un-American viewpoint, tended, at the same time, toward projects involving a new global management of urban land and a scientific criticism of this phenomenon. Let us put in brackets the well-known proposals of Le Corbusier, Perret, and Sauvage, to focus our attention on three complex projects of urban planning based on the systematic use of the skyscraper: the two worked out during the first years of Weimar Germany by Bruno Möhring, for Berlin, and by Max Berg, in his capacity as Stadtbaurat of Breslau (1920), and a later one put forward by A. L. Pasternak in the Soviet Union on the verge of the launching of its First Five-Year Plan.<sup>14</sup>

The first interesting fact is that these projects, despite the diverse political-economic situations in which they are immersed, all presuppose a global control over the land available for building—exactly the opposite condition from that which in America generates the proliferation of tall office buildings. Berg, in particular, like Möhring in Berlin, conceived a

municipal building policy aimed at concentrating skyscrapers to form a crown around the historic center of Breslau (on the Lessing Platz, near the Cathedral, on the Schweidnitzer Graben). This arrangement had the specific function of centralizing within these urban nodes the entire pressure of commercial affairs and of tertiary functions, thereby unburdening the historic center that was destined for a conservative restoration and for residential use. The sketches that accompany Berg's essay display towers characterized by a moderate expressionism, in line with the contemporaneous work of the designer of the *Jahrhunderthalle*. However, it is interesting to observe that in this proposal, which was never actualized, the mystical exorcism of Taut and Scharoun becomes administrative policy without losing the basic trait of those utopias: the skyscraper—put forward as a providential "exception" through which the language of matter expresses itself—intervenes to "save," not to change, the existing community.

The criticism of the indiscriminate *laissez-faire* of the United States is quite apparent in the programs of Berg and Möhring, which in some ways bring to mind Lissitzky's subsequent project for skyscrapers as "stirrups of the clouds," which he proposes to arrange in the form of a crown around the center of Moscow. But this criticism is even more explicit in a 1926 article by Pasternak—and even more significant, when one remembers that Pasternak will become, four years later, an adherent of the theses of the "disurbanist" group.<sup>15</sup> Pasternak attacks polemically both the German urbanists (Taut, Möhring, Berg) and the chaos of the American cities. For him, insisting as he does on the full social ownership of land, the skyscraper is a simple element of urban composition, capable of establishing an area equipped for and subjected to an incessant dynamic. Pasternak regards the skyscraper as pure form, stripped of any economic functions—he ignores, as do "disurbanists" later, that not only the land but also the building and its management involve costs—introduced for its ability "to incorporate velocity," for its ability to give form to that exaltation of change so pursued by the Americanism of the Soviet avant-gardes during the NEP period.

And so the skyscraper introduced as a disposable object in the regional landscape has a polemical role: it proclaims the socialist victory over space, over time, over economic materialism. Although Pasternak would never have admitted it, the skyscrapers of the Stalinist era that triangulated the center of Moscow do not have, finally, any objectives distinct from those now introduced.

The skyscraper as a "structure that incorporates velocity within itself" was interpreted in a different way by the famous project that Eliel Saarinen entered in the 1922 competition for the new headquarters of the *Chicago Tribune*:<sup>16</sup> once again, we are dealing with a "magic mountain," which prevents a direct confrontation with the painful reality of the American metropolis.

Thus it becomes possible to describe precisely the critical attitude of European culture toward the skyscraper: whether that critique expresses

itself in global proposals or results in the fascinated contemplation of the advancing monster.

This critique becomes scientific only in the pages dedicated by Raymond Unwin, in 1924, to the relationship between the skyscraper and the city.<sup>17</sup> One should note that the Unwin of the twenties is no longer the simple mediator between the ideas of Morris and the Sittian tradition of the pre-war years. As Chief Architect for Building and Town Planning in the British Ministry of Health, Unwin had assumed tasks involving the comprehensive management of urbanization; from that viewpoint and not from one of a romantic antiurbanism, he sees the skyscraper as an insurmountable obstacle in the way of the rational planning of the city. The example analyzed by Unwin is the Woolworth Building of Cass Gilbert (1913), facing city Hall Park. In twenty-eight floors, including the basement level, with a daily movement of employees equivalent to 14,000 persons, to which the number of occasional visitors must be added, its permanent population—Unwin writes—would occupy approximately 854 meters of sidewalk; but, if everyone were in movement, the occupied length of the same sidewalk would leap to more than two kilometers, equivalent to around half an hour for everyone to gain access to the subway. Furthermore, calculating one car for every ten people, Unwin obtains a figure of approximately 1,280 meters of street used for parking space. He also notes that, at the beginning of the 1920s, in a situation such as the Chicago Loop there circulate 60,000 cars, with parking available for only 3,500; the remaining cars are forced back into Grant Park, jamming it.

The skyscraper system, therefore, becomes uneconomical with respect to the *comprehensive* tertiary functions. This is what in America the commissions of inquiry into congestion, the studies of the RPAA, the investigations of the Committee for the Regional Plan of New York, and, a little bit later, those of Frederick A. Delano were all beginning to recognize, despite their failure to find efficacious solutions to the problem.<sup>18</sup>

And this is what Werner Hegemann observes, analyzing skeptically the initial proposals of the Regional Plan of New York, in a 1925 essay that takes up in great measure Unwin's analysis.<sup>19</sup> Hegemann, it should be recalled, is a particularly acute observer of the urban scene in the United States, which he experienced as an insider from 1905, serving as the housing inspector of Philadelphia, then as an expert with the East Bay Communities of San Francisco, and then as an associate of Elbert Peets and Joseph Hudnut on planning jobs in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Therefore—as urbanist, as organizer of the great exhibitions of urban planning in Boston (1909), Berlin (1910) and Düsseldorf (1911), as essayist—Hegemann is the most adequate link between the urbanistic cultures of America and Germany:<sup>20</sup> his critique of the skyscraper system belongs to his distinct polemic against the urban *laissez-faire* of the United States. This polemic also implicates the protagonists of the Chicago School as well as the New York Zoning Code of 1916 and Bassett's action.

For Hegemann the skyscraper is the consequence of an "arbitrary law" that must be broken; in support of this, he cites favorably the proposals of

Harvey Wiley Corbett, aimed at introducing into the congested tertiary centers multilevel systems of traffic, employing elevated pedestrian walks. Yet in 1913 Hegemann himself had already advanced similar proposals: but these are merely palliatives—as he himself recognizes—in the face of which the comprehensive uneconomicalness of the "skyscraper system" remains certain.

The European critiques do not, however, appear to touch the American architects themselves, whose concern was focused on the problem of gaining partial control over such a distorted system. Writing in *Pencil Points* in 1923, Corbett exalts—as he had already done in previous articles<sup>21</sup>—the new formal possibilities and the functional advantages of the New York Zoning Law. Corbett is not as interested in the structural significance of zoning, even though he points out in passing its effect on the stabilization of land prices,<sup>22</sup> as he is in the new scenic apparatus that it suggests: precisely in that article are reproduced the four famous schemes for setback skyscrapers, made emphatic in the perspective renderings by Hugh Ferriss that illustrate the results of Helmle & Corbett's zoning envelope studies. Corbett, while holding reservations of an economic and functional nature regarding the second scheme—with its upward thrusts arranged in levels of two floors in the tower on the right side, and with its tower of an indefinite height on the left—comments on it in a most significant way: "with the vertical part inclining up to the top and with the tower that, like the ideal of the Biblical epoch, touches the sky: an authentic tower of Babel."<sup>23</sup> The specter of the tower of Babel thus begins to circulate in New York architectural culture; the apocalyptic allusions perfectly coincide with the new optimism that in Manhattan, especially after 1925, follows the upsurge in building and the new boom in tertiary structures. It is not accidental that a few years after the publication of Corbett's article, Fritz Lang films, in his *Metropolis*, the very reconstruction of the myth of Babel.<sup>24</sup> The setback skyscrapers, determined by the zoning law, come to be read as carriers of two complementary symbolic meanings. The confusion of tongues resulting from the undertaking of Babel merges with the reference to the city as "New Babylon": the project for the system of roof gardens and bridges suspended over the streets in Rockefeller Center is only a belated result of this widespread identification.<sup>25</sup> But, meanwhile, it becomes necessary to compensate for such a disquieting reading with a cathartic interpretation. Babel is the prelude to new knowledge, to the division of language, the triumph of "difference"—but only as the premise of a new globality. If Claude Bragdon could interpret the renderings by Ferriss as Piranesian prisons, in which man is swallowed up by a machine that is infernal because it is irrational,<sup>26</sup> Helmle & Corbett do not hesitate to elaborate in 1925 an ideal restoration of King Solomon's Temple and Citadel, in a plan sent, along with others, to the Berlin exhibition of American architecture opened in 1926 at the Akademie der Künste.<sup>27</sup>

It would be an error to consider the pastiche designed by Helmle & Corbett as simply a *divertissement* of kitsch derivation. The rationality of Solomon is not an antithesis to the "differences" institutionalized by the

Harvey Wiley Corbett  
Pencil Points  
1923

chaos of Babel; on the contrary, the latter is the very foundation of that rationality. The paroxysmal competition that invades mid-Manhattan along with the new commercial skyscrapers does not need to rationalize interventions coming from outside the market. The new *laissez-faire* has built into itself adequate potential for *self-planning*: this is the unexpressed ideology that makes the rounds of New York architectural culture during the 1920s. The zoning law, precisely for its "restrictive" characteristics, for its capacity to project the status quo into the future, for its use as an instrument for stabilizing the economy, can be accepted as a tranquilizing measure; the same does not apply, however, to the reports prepared by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein for Governor Al Smith, which were seen as destructive of a *self-correcting* equilibrium. The orgy of forms deposited on the skyscrapers of New York, between the resumption of building activity after the First World War and the crash of 1929, cannot be interpreted monolithically as a simple optimistic merging of the influences of late-romantic European culture and Hollywood taste. That art deco, expressionist, Viennese, and Dutch influences had shaped this orgy of forms is indubitably, as has been recently underlined by Rosemarie Bletter. But nothing as yet has been said about the structural reasons that pushed for such a widespread adoption of the "jazz style," for such a deliberate mediation of mechanization and allegories that are immediately understandable, for such an indifference to matters of linguistic coherence (every language is permitted in the "great theatre" of the metropolis). Certainly, the "New Babylon" is invited to participate joyously in the world of commerce: the commodities themselves, here, tend to hide the abstractions of their exchange value, to exalt the "gratuitous," to present themselves as pure use-value. The refined lobbies of the Chanin Building, the Chrysler Building, and the Film Center Building are composed as true and proper *boîtes à surprises*: the conventional naturalism of the exteriors (the decorated walls of the Chanin Building come to mind) or their fragmentariness are exalted in spaces that absorb into themselves the only "social" values possible in the new metropolis. Yet the fragment, isolated as it is, celebrates its own provisionality: the elevator lobby designed by Ely Jacques Kahn for the Film Center Building (1928-29) is merely an accumulation of plastic objects in syncopated rhythm, unstable, ready to change form in a mechanically controllable metamorphosis.

There is no celebration of the irrational in such an ostentatious fragmentation of objects. The cute remark that Benjamin made in "Zentral-park" is quite valid. Referring to Nietzsche's well-known metaphor, he writes:

*For the idea of eternal recurrence, most important is the fact that the bourgeoisie no longer dared to face the next phase in the development of the order of production which it had set into motion. Zarathustra's idea of an eternal recurrence and the motto on the antimacassars covering the cushions [of the divans of the bourgeois salon] 'Just a quarter hour' are complementary.<sup>28</sup>*

Thus the unstable surfaces hollowed out and dotted with denticles and the graded, slanted ceilings of Ely J. Kahn's Film Center elevator lobby, and the spiral tangles of the radiator grills in the lobby of Sloan and Robertson's Chanin Building and the polychrome backgrounds of that building's elevators, though through different devices, express the same allegorical meaning: the exaltation of the temporary. "The eternal recurrence" is banalized, but rendered totally enjoyable; "the bad infinity of time" is exorcized in a triumph of the transitory, of the flowing without pause, of the "inessential" play of forms. "Just a quarter hour": the entire metropolis calls for the ceaseless acceleration of movement, of velocity, of exchange. Within the metropolis, it must be made impossible "to stop," impossible to perceive the laws of its own productive order. "The New Babylon" must present itself as a variety theatre, through which eccentricity becomes an institution, a mode of collective behavior.

Outside of this framework, the link, continually reaffirmed in the twenties and the early thirties, between the development of the skyscraper and Americanism is incomprehensible. No longer a structure but a scenic toy rich with ludic valencies, the skyscraper negates the structural matrix imposed upon it by George Post and by Earnest Flagg. Its vitalism is both a response to the unrestrained course of financial speculation that leads directly to the catastrophe of the Great Depression and, at the same time, a "mask" superimposed on that course.

Writing in 1930 in *The Architectural Forum*, Paul Robertson, President of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, reaffirms the tenacious bond between the development of the skyscraper and the American way of life, contesting, with the usual arguments addressed to the forces governing the financial speculation of the epoch, the relation between congestion and tertiary concentrations. The real enemies that Robertson intends to strike are the restrictive regulations conceived, as he writes, by the same mentality that in the good old days would have been frightened by the thought of trains proceeding at the speed of fifteen to twenty miles per hour. Robertson, having taken into account the values of the lands and buildings, does not hesitate to affirm that the total investment in the commercial building sector is in excess of seven billion dollars, making the skyscraper, at least in terms of invested capital, into an industry larger than the auto, steel, and railroad industries. Moreover, he expresses disappointment on behalf of his own group in the system of taxation that hits the buildings of the central business districts:<sup>29</sup> in his analysis, the inflationary effects provoked, on an urban scale, by the proliferation of skyscrapers are made to disappear, along with any consideration of the paradoxical situation of the building market in New York City—afflicted already around 1926 by an overproduction of office spaces, according to investigations by Frederick A. Delano and confirmed (note well) by the New York chapter of Building Owners and Managers Association.<sup>30</sup>

While even during the depression, the skyscraper, against all evidence, could be reaffirmed as an ineluctable component of an urban "destiny"

already marked out, the initial stages of the economic cycle that reshapes the face of the tertiary aspects of New York were experienced in an exactly opposite manner by the architects. To begin the chapter on New York art deco—as is usually done—with the Barclay-Vesey Building (1923–26) by McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, with Ralph Walker as designer, can, from the viewpoint of the previous sentence, send us off in the wrong direction. If we examine the structure of this skyscraper, which was constructed for the New York Telephone Company, we find that its base takes the form of a parallelogram, coinciding with the shape of its lot. The building rises compactly to the tenth floor, where it assumes the planimetric form of an H, with the short sides still determined by the basic shape of the parallelogram. Independent of this structure, however, the central core of the building rises for another nineteen stories, culminating in three large triumphal arches and a series of recessions in the form of parallelepipeds descending in tiers against the sky “à la manière de Saarinen.” The typology of the skyscraper with an open courtyard—introduced by Post in 1880—is thus replaced by one with a single tower. And since we are dealing with an assemblage (a tower that twists in relation to the base of the building), what is emphasized is the effect of torsion, produced by the divergent orientation of the geometric coordinates of the central core and of the volume articulated by the form of the parallelogram. The dramatization of structure is further accentuated by the prevalence of the continuous vertical bands of brickwork that “liberate” themselves from their functional constrictions once they reach the level of the crown with its varying heights: a “liberation” that is underlined by, among other things, the heightened density of the decorative motifs—interwoven plants and exotic animals—at the levels of the shopping arcade and the upper stories.

Louis Sullivan had perceived correctly; Eliel Saarinen’s project for the *Chicago Tribune* concluded a formal experiment that Sullivan had left incomplete. The Barclay-Vesey Building is entirely within such a tradition. The struggle of structure to reaffirm its own coherence assumes here an epic tone: only formal distortion guarantees to the tension of volumes an organicity regained by means of a dialectic. Thus the tragic quality inherent in the very condition of the skyscraper—a typological event sundered from every morphological support on the urban level—is assumed and sublimated: the organicity of the building is not guaranteed by the givens upon which it is based but by their deformation, by the imposition of a structurality obtained by means of “heroic” disarticulations. The distance from the fragmentariness of the Film Center Building could not be greater.

Nevertheless, three years after its opening, the Barclay-Vesey Building would be hailed by Mujica as a work marking the triumph of the Modern School, as opposed less to the neo-Gothic already in decline than to the classicism advocated by Hastings.<sup>31</sup> Yet even Lewis Mumford, writing in 1928 his first article dedicated to the review of new tendencies in American architecture,<sup>32</sup> having argued against every connection between the zoning envelope and the aesthetic treatment of the skyscraper, cites the Barclay-Vesey Building as one of the signs of a cultural renaissance, placing it

alongside Hood’s Radiator Building, the Graybar Building, and the Alabama Power Company Building. Mumford, however, sees the work of Ralph Walker not as a unified organism, but rather as a split, dualistic structure:

*The building as a whole has a feeling of dark strength, but in the stonework of the lower stories and in the interior the designer introduces a delicate, naturalistic carving, heightened within by the use of gold. When one enters the main hall, one almost forgets its purpose: it is as gaily lighted and decorated as a village street in a strawberry festival. Mr. Walker, in other words, accepts the contrast between structure and feeling; he does not attempt to reconcile them. . . . In Mr. Walker’s design decoration is an audacious compensation for the rigor and mechanical fidelity of the rest of the building; like jazz, it interrupts and relieves the tedium of too strenuous mechanical activity.<sup>33</sup>*

It is significant that Mumford does not comprehend the structural aspects of the Barclay-Vesey Building, which, with its shopping arcade on Vesey Street, among other things, takes into account the principle of multilevel traffic, even though it is confined to the restricted ambit of a single passage. What interests the American critic is the juxtaposing of the elementaristic terrorism of the European avant-gardes against the principle of synthesis at the heart of the tradition of Sullivan and Wright; to Walker’s work, he opposes the Park Avenue Building by Ely Jacques Kahn, which he interprets as a reconciliation of the two poles that, in his opinion, the Barclay-Vesey Building keeps apart.

And yet, from the structural point of view, Raymond Hood, Corbett, and Kahn are in accord in advancing proposals antithetical to the regionalism that was advocated by the RPAA and that Mumford himself will defend against the bland hypotheses of decentralization suggested by the Regional Plan of New York drawn up by Thomas Adams. Hood and Corbett more explicitly, and Kahn more generally, propose concentrations of high density in the large areas of the central business district to create a vertical integration of residences, services, offices, industries, and social spaces, in single and completely equipped blocks.<sup>34</sup> However, Kahn arrives at the solution of the Park Avenue Building only after a Beaux-Arts education, an experience as a painter, researches in vernacular style, buildings in New York that are still ambiguous, such as the John Thorpe Building (1921), the Arsenal Building (1925), the 550 Seventh Avenue Building (1925), the International Telephone and Telegraph Building (1927). Only with the triad of skyscrapers built in 1927—the Insurance Building, the Park Avenue Building, the Broadway and Thirty-seventh Street Building—does a Kahnian “style” become definitive: exactly the personal style that triumphs in the Film Center discussed above, in the Allied Arts Building of 1929, and in the Bricken Casino Building of 1931.

It is evident that Mumford praises the formal continuity of the Park Avenue Building for its vague resemblance to some of Wright’s formulas. But the decomposition of Buchman & Kahn’s skyscraper, on the whole a

traditional organism, effected by its ornamental and colored projections, designed in collaboration with Leon Solon, belongs to a composite poetics, which departs from European experiments only to confront them critically with openly anti-European traditions. The abstract silhouettes that torment the surfaces of the Park Avenue Building alternate, and enter into dialogue, with a gamut of colors and materials ranging from masonry, to terracotta, to ochre, to magenta red, to blue, with gradations dimensioned according to their distance from the observer's eye. Presenting the building in 1928, Leon Solon speaks of a scientific approach to form as opposed to a stylistic approach:<sup>35</sup> one should note that in this same year Kahn, together with Hood, Walker, Saarinen, John Root, and Schoen, organizes an architectural exhibition for the Metropolitan Museum of New York, which testifies to the ferments raging within the Architectural League and which is in some way a response to the Paris Exposition of 1925, thoroughly studied by Kahn. And one should further note that Kahn himself, so attentive to the debate of the European avant-garde,<sup>36</sup> cites the use of color in ancient Greek temples to justify the formal artifices of the Park Avenue Building. In an unpublished autobiographical manuscript composed shortly before his death (around 1972), he writes: "We were thinking of the primary colors of Greek antiquity. It is exactly those that we have attempted to reproduce."<sup>37</sup> (Particularly interesting, the detailed model of the building was submitted to the judgment of Hood, who approved its erection.)

Thus the color and the texture of materials come to be exalted as new formal instruments. Kahn also writes in 1928:

*The dream of a colored city, buildings in harmonious tones making great masses of beautiful patterns, may be less of a vision if the enterprising city developer suspects the result. There is evident economy of effort in the application of color in lieu of carved decoration that cannot be seen and the novelty of a structure that can be distinguished from its nondescript neighbors has a practical value that must appeal without question to the designer and his public.*<sup>38</sup>

The "colored city" is therefore a self-advertising structure, a system intended to involve the metropolitan public, and, as in the case of the new skyscrapers on Forty-second Street and on Park Avenue, the efficient instrument of a speculation perceived as pioneering, an attack upon and conquest of new areas for the "adventure" sung by the skyscrapers themselves. It is not coincidental that the professional organization of Kahn's studio is ironbound: the firm can offer its clients not only new forms of publicity but also accurate advice on the suitability of locations, thanks to a scientifically kept up-to-date archive monitoring the state of land prices on the chessboard of Manhattan.<sup>39</sup>

It is upon such a relation between design and speculation that a poetics aimed at a search for the autochthonous values of "American Civilization" is based. Kahn possessed, not by chance, a library containing texts on classical, Egyptian, and Oriental archaeology and a collection of objects,

majolica, and porcelains from ancient Persia that were unique in New York. His interests in Chinese primitive decorations, Mayan architecture, Persian art, Moorish styles directly influenced his work, but they also have a deeper ideological meaning: Kahn saw the ascendancy of the Turkish Empire and the decadence of the Byzantine and European civilizations as consequences of the definite deterioration of an obsolete tradition, whereas his recourse to pre-Columbian art belongs to a "cult for roots" that places him close to the free wanderings of Wright in search of the red thread that was broken, in the American continent, by the "corrupting" rationality of Europe.<sup>40</sup>

Besides, had not Rose Henderson, already in 1923, exalted the colonies of painters who had installed themselves after 1903 at Taos and Santa Fe, in New Mexico, near the anthropological sites of the Indians and the remaining Pueblo tribes, affirming that "the Indians were the first Cubists in this country"?<sup>41</sup> The unitary masses of Kahn's skyscrapers, commented upon by a fragmentism that becomes appeased only in the Squibb Building (1930), are not as remote from Helmle & Corbett's reconstruction of Solomon's Temple as appears at first sight. The Park Avenue Building, the Allied Arts Building, and the Holland Plaza Building (1930) are also monuments to "knowledge": even if in them the cult of the archaic merges with a celebration of the "monumentality of the eccentric and the transitory," unknown to the formal disjointedness—by now lacking any will to reintegration—of a skyscraper like the Master Building (1928–29) by Helmle & Corbett.

The immediately consumable image, despite its articulation by dynamic trajectories (one thinks immediately of the flagrant virtuosity exhibited by Kahn in the ultimate designs for the Bricken Casino Building), seeks roots in a culture that ignores the historicity of the European tradition. In the quest for the autochthonous, Kahn encounters neither Emerson nor Whitman, but rather arts and cultures apparently "ahistorical," stable, capable of being absorbed as new "Sources of Inspiration," in a context that makes the transitory into a monster to be exorcized but to which, nevertheless, sacrifices must be dedicated.

And is it not significant that the reductionism that Ely J. Kahn and Raymond Hood both reach, but by different paths, was anticipated by an American sculptor, only recently "rediscovered," like John Storrs?<sup>42</sup> It is uncertain whether his aluminum statue placed at the vertex of the Board of Trade Building at Chicago's Century of Progress Exhibition in 1933 concerns us in this matter. Rather, more emblematic are his abstract sculptures influenced by the complex Parisian milieu, in which in 1920 this pupil of Rodin gave birth to a meditation on cubism in a work entitled *The Spirit of Walt Whitman*. Storrs's *Forms in Space* (those in marble from 1920 through 1923 and those in metal from 1924 through 1927) have been interpreted as postsuprematist documents of a technocratic universe: abstract models of potential purist skyscrapers, they nevertheless do reflect the influences of the jazz style, even though restrained and reduced to minimal signals. In this sense, the experimentalism of Storrs—he estab-

lishes himself permanently in Chicago only in 1929—clears a path that American architecture will have to traverse reckoning with itself alone, once again removed from every advance made by the avant-garde in the traditional sense.

Note well: whether for Richardson, Kahn, or Wright, the “roots” sought for a new American culture are embedded in the *other*. What counts is the equation between the archaic—symbol, and only symbol, of an uncontaminated truth—and the victory over the atavistic inferiority complex vis-à-vis Europe. But with a new feature, which emerges alongside the neoromanticism of the Golden Age: now, at the end of the twenties, the enemy to defeat appears to be the organicity of language. In fact, being neither able nor willing to offer themselves as complete “syntheses,” the skyscrapers of the “new” Manhattan pose as spectators at a gigantic collective ballet. The subjectivity that the system of big business transfers to the molecules of the crowd—the individuals—it dominates is thus recuperated, in a sort of propitiatory rite, by the “new subjects” of the city, who advance joyously to the front of the stage of the metropolis transformed into a music hall. The ludic installs itself in the metropolis with masks that lack thickness; the vitalism that emanates from it knows not the desperation of Fitzgerald, but rather the “foolish” vanities of Zelda.

Yet the vitalism of the parade, denounced by critics like Croly or Murchison,<sup>43</sup> is deeply characteristic of the search for the Americanism of which we are attempting to reconnect the threads. The “New Babel” is the innocence that accepts every language, but also the ability to single out collective myths to follow, conscious of their provisionality. It is not surprising that one of the first systematic histories of the skyscraper—that of the Chilean Francisco Mujica—works out organically some of the hypotheses that Ely Kahn had formulated empirically and with the taste of a collector.

The binding together of the search for a truly American architecture and the “American” typology par excellence, that of the skyscraper, is for Mujica a straightforward operation. In this sense, his interpretation of the reasons for the “downfall” of the so-called Chicago School, after the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, is symptomatic: the neoromanticism of Root and Sullivan was “un-American.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the search for “roots,” obstinately pursued by Mujica, is the legacy of the tradition of the American Renaissance. That compounding of transcendental subjectivity and the naturalistic refounding of civil society had as its objective a “frontier” folded back on itself: the metropolis of the skyscrapers was an instrument at the national level, the brain of a complex organization, that, especially in the twenties, aspired to a self-control, to an automatic healing of its institutional wounds. (In fact, such an aspiration to capitalist self-planning, in the absence of interventions by the public administrators was the goal of the regional plan for New York financed and organized by the Russell Sage Foundation, from 1923 onward.)

It is exactly to such a “miraculous” compounding of irrepressible differences that the search for the roots of a “pure” Americanism, liberated

from the mortgages fixed by European culture and founded on a neo-Rousseauian naturalism of the “noble savage,” attempts to offer a contribution. Mujica writes:

*In these latter days a new tendency has appeared that does not accept the preconceived patterns of the classical and the Gothic styles, but strives to express spontaneously a rational and sincere decoration of the structure employing for this purpose the most modern lines. . . . The characteristic qualities of these new lines and proportions present great resemblance with the elements of primitive American architecture. As to cornices it has not been possible to apply to skyscrapers any of the hitherto known proportions. The new architecture has had to find an element which only marked the limit of the wall-surface. By this quality and by the fact that its principal decorative elements are brought out in large surfaces, the new style strikingly recalls the Pre-Columbian architecture with its palaces and pyramids with small cornices, and magnificent decorations carved in big dominating surfaces.<sup>45</sup>*

That the first illustrations in Mujica’s book are ideal reconstructions of the Mexican pyramids of Papantla and Teopantepec and that of Tikal, in Guatemala, has therefore a polemical significance. The “new” draws its guarantees of validity by fastening itself to the primitive—even though the examples used by Mujica do not appear innovative with respect to the practice of designing within the circle of the Architectural League of New York. But let us allow the author to continue:

*After a profound study of the ruins it is possible to conceive a new line in which only the sentiment of the American forms subsists. It appears to me correct to call this new type of architecture Neo-American. The difference between the Renaissance and the Neo-American architecture is fundamental: The Renaissance worked with a model before it. The Neo-American architecture is a new creative work which requires profound study of the primitive American architecture and of the geometrical and mechanical elements of the regional nature. When all the forms peculiar to us have germinated in our minds and can follow the summons of our imagination we will be prepared to create this new architecture and to produce designs and plans embodying reminiscences of their primitive origin, but at the same time revealing their modern character clearly and powerfully.<sup>46</sup>*

As you can see, Mujica manages merely to rationalize the ideas widely circulating in the New York milieu. Beyond the subjective mysticism of a Frank Lloyd Wright, it is very clear that the appeals to a “Neo-American architecture,” to the art deco style, to a domesticated machinism tending toward kitsch—I am thinking of the Chrysler Building, but also of the residential skyscraper by the Chanin firm—are merely instruments to seize a general consensus for an urban structure that is paradoxical and increasingly shackled by its own laws of growth. The opinion poll of New York architects that addressed the convenience of the skyscraper system,

which Mujica published in the fifth chapter of his book, is indicative. The opinion of Thomas Hasting, who is absolutely opposed to the tall commercial building, is coupled with that of Mayor Henry Curran, who, in his speech delivered at the meeting in 1927 of the Civic Development Department of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, confirms the uneconomicalness of the tertiary concentrations, posing these questions:

*Is it good sense not to have a dollar for any other city need, to pour it all into more traffic facilities to take care of a coagulated bunch of skyscrapers, is that sense? Is that city planning? Is that good business? Is it good for your individual business? That is where we are.*<sup>47</sup>

But John Sloan, Wiley Corbett, and Mujica himself are ready to demonstrate that the skyscraper can be an instrument of good business: the problem is to limit the central business district, possible because of the high tertiary concentration; to apply taxes compatible with the market; to use the resulting fiscal yield for a reconstruction of the streets, supervised by a public administration capable of taking into account the proposals for the separation of traffic advanced since the first years of the century; and to adopt Le Corbusier's model for the *ville radieuse*.<sup>48</sup> Here utopia extends its hand to professional optimism: Corbett, Sloan, Hood, Mujica merely put into the form of their own discipline the demands of Paul Robertson.

If, going beyond such considerations—with which American big business will not come to terms even after the Great Depression—we attempt to consider the effects the "New Babel" had upon the collective consciousness of the 1920s, we must place, alongside documents like the film *Madam Satan*, cited by Bletter,<sup>49</sup> one more illuminating cinematic sequence. In the film *Gold Diggers of 1935*, Busby Berkeley inserts a practically independent segment, a film within the film: *Broadway Lullaby*. The camera begins with a long shot of the singer Wini Shaw, isolating her face against a black background. While Wini performs her song, the camera executes a perpendicular movement, framing the protagonist from above. After a dissolve, Wini's face remains only in profile, within which appears an aerial view of Manhattan. The metropolis of the skyscrapers is completely contained in the unconscious of the individual, as it were: the whole and its parts are no longer distinguishable, bound as they are in a relationship of complete correspondence. But here we are dealing with a mortal relationship. After an exceptional representation of "urban chorality"—a musical sequence that assembles a hundred dancers in a gigantic nightclub—Wini falls from the top of a skyscraper, while the camera moves within a Manhattan that continues indifferently its own existence. Once again, the metropolis is superimposed upon the face of Wini.<sup>50</sup>

In this way, Berkeley demonstrates that the loved-hated big city requires concrete reform in order for the collective festival of the musical to be experienced "authentically"; but he also shows that the entire search for "roots," which we have attempted to characterize by isolating some examples from the 1920s, is completely superfluous. The individual has already internalized the "values" of the urban machine—and they are

mortal. The dream will survive: the dance and the choral song of the musical. We are no longer dealing with the gaiety of the Chrysler and Park Avenue buildings. The hopes raised by Roosevelt's New Deal remain as yet unfulfilled; the "Dinosaur City" will see to their destruction all too soon, reaffirming its own indissoluble connection with the triumphal march of urban-industrial America toward imperialist expansion, the destiny of which—in spite of everything—the Americanist ideology of Helmle & Corbett, of Ely Kahn, of Mujica had celebrated.

## Appendix

### A City under a Single Roof

by Raymond M. Hood

The following essay by Raymond Hood (1882–1934), a designer of highly innovative skyscrapers in New York in the 1920s and one of the chief figures in the realization of Rockefeller Center, contains a proposal described even by the magazine in which it appeared, *The Nation's Business*,<sup>1</sup> the organ of the National Chamber of Commerce, as worthy of one of Jules Verne's fantastic tales. And yet, however much at the beginning of the great crisis of 1929 the idea of an enormous complex housing a large number of the most varied facilities might have seemed anachronistic and the expression of an entrepreneurial class tied to economic formulas against which the New Deal would launch an attack, Hood's proposal constitutes a prophetic document with respect to the enormous structures that, from the 1970s on, have attempted to install themselves as autonomous islands in the American metropolises. Hood was surely inspired by vague recollections of Le Corbusier's *ville radieuse*. Nevertheless, in the same year (1929), he presented a proposal for the whole of Manhattan, in which the island and the boroughs across the water, dotted by a series of enormous complexes are connected by residential bridges for three million inhabitants. Hood's proposal closely combined the elimination of commuting between home and downtown with the renewal of tertiary structures, anticipating projects such as Battery Park City. (See M. Tafuri, "The Disenchanted Mountain," in *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal*, by various authors [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1979], pp. 451–60; *idem*, "La dialectique de l'absurde," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 178 (1975): 1–19; Walter H. Kilham, Jr., *Raymond Hood Architect: Form through Function in the American Skyscraper* [New York: Architectural Book Publishing, 1973]; Robert A. M. Stern, "Raymond Hood," *Progressive Architecture* 7 (1974): 110–14; *idem*, *Raymond Hood* [New York, 1982].) In any event, the typological formula of the skyscraper is Hood's solution for the most diverse spatial situations. Also in

1929, he planned for A. A. Ainsworth a recreational center, Arcady, near Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, amid 16,000 acres of virgin forest, dominated by a Main House built on levels. Rather than the return to rude nature advocated by Emerson and Thoreau, Hood's Arcady involves the conquest of nature by a culture closely tied to the forces of the great urban speculation that tries to export its own models even in the planning of luxury suburbs designed for the ruling classes. (See Rosemarie Bletter, "King Kong en Arcadie: Le gratte-ciel américain approvoisé," *Archithese* 29 (1976): 25 ff., in particular pp. 32–34.)

#### A City under a Single Roof

By Raymond M. Hood, President, New York Architectural League  
(As told to F. S. Tisdale)<sup>2</sup>

The traveler in Italy gazes in wonder at the works of the Renaissance. He is moved to deplore what he considers the shortcomings of his own period as he studies magnificent buildings adorned by the paintings and sculptures of the immortals.

What a pity there are no such artists in our day! How colorless and commonplace our lives seem beside the vivid romance of the sixteenth century!

This man is too close to the twentieth century to see what is happening. The truth is that he is in the midst of a Renaissance compared to which other upheavals in art are local phenomena. To reach Italy the traveler traversed the ocean in a palace which compared favorably to those of Florence and which was able to travel thirty miles an hour.

Perhaps he realized man's age-old dream of flight by crossing the Channel in an airplane. If he was worried by his business in New York he went to a telephone and talked with his partner, 4,000 miles away.

Instead of being the property of a few rich lords, our awakening is devoted to all humanity. It does not center its forces on the creation of so-called works of art which give pleasure only to the eye; it directs its energies toward the intimate things of everyday life which perform our heavy labors and serve our convenience. Instead of being at the mercy of mercenary Borgias or Medicis, the modern artisan is directed by business scientists who, by means of mass production, are bringing hitherto unheard-of luxuries within the reach of common men.

Art and beauty are no longer confined to some pretty object to be hung on a wall or installed in a museum. They are now woven into the construction and design of the things we use and live with. You find beauty in kitchen accessories, in motor cars, fountain pens, office desks, grain elevators, factory buildings, locomotives.

While the sweep of this Renaissance is world-wide, its most spectacular phases are to be found in the United States and particularly in New York City. As a nation we are too busy with our own part in the work to get a perspective on what is taking place about us. Visitors from Europe view

New York with more astonishment than any American tourist could possibly feel in "doing" Rome.

#### *Acute growing pains*

Since the cultural and industrial power of the nation pours into New York, that city suffers a constant agony of growth. Buildings that once were pointed to as marvels are torn down—dissolve before our very eyes to be replaced by loftier towers. The streets are ripped up while four-track subterranean railways are installed. Tubes carry traffic under the rivers and great bridges are thrown across the water channels.

It is no wonder that such swift and powerful growth gets beyond control. Problems multiply themselves. Skyscrapers created congestion; there was a great outcry for subways. Instead of easing the jam of traffic, the subways produced more tall buildings. These in turn demand more subways and so on in a vicious ascending spiral whose end no man can foresee.

Big buildings do not merely follow the subways: they now anticipate them. As soon as real estate operators learned there was to be a subway along Eighth Avenue land values in the vicinity leaped skyward. While subway engineers were digging under the street, other engineers were sinking building foundations alongside. The race has been won by the building constructors. The subway is still a long way from completion but rows of tall buildings have grown up along the route, many of them already occupied.

Both the above factors aggravate conditions on the street level. Vaster hordes of pedestrians jostle each other on the side walks; motor traffic freezes more frequently into hopeless solidity.

Intolerable conditions bring about cures. New York has been experimenting in the right direction.

The tendency is toward related communities within the city—communities whose activities are confined within certain areas, whose traffic does not need to travel distant streets to collect supplies or deliver orders.

The Grand Central Station is one example. I know men with offices in this section who add nothing to the city's traffic problem. They come in daily from homes along the New York Central or the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroads. Their offices are in buildings connected directly with the terminal. They lunch in clubs or hotels which can be reached by convenient tunnels. It is possible for these men to go to work every day for weeks without once venturing onto the crowded streets.

The Garment Center is another example. This is a district along Seventh Avenue and neighboring streets devoted to the clothing industry. Furriers, cloth manufacturers, tailoring establishments—all are gravitating to this area where long street hauls are unnecessary and where the traffic is confined largely to related thoroughfares.

About the Pennsylvania Station another community has been formed. Plans for the New Metropolitan Opera center at Fifth Avenue and Fiftieth

Street are now being worked out.<sup>3</sup> The new Medical Center on Riverside Drive is built on this principle.

A smaller but even more exact expression of the idea can be found in the Architect's Building, where the advantages of gathering together a whole industry are evident. Here, under one roof, are assembled the various elements of the building business—architects, contractors, material dealers and even professional clubs. Only hotels and apartments are lacking to make it a complete city within a city.

#### *Save time and rush*

It seems to me that the salvation of New York depends on the wider application of this principle. Every business man in the city must at some time have realized what an advantage it would be to live in the building where his office is located. It is toward this ideal that real estate firms and architects should work.

Whole industries should be united into interdependent developments with clubs, hotels, stores, apartments and even theaters. Such an arrangement would make possible great economies in time, as well as diminish wear and tear on human nerves. An average office working day is seven hours, and of this many persons spend from one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours on the street. These persons add a further incumbrance to an already difficult traffic problem. Put this worker in a unified scheme and he need hardly put his feet on the sidewalk during the entire day. His business, his lunch, his club and his apartment are all in the same building. The time he saves goes either into recreation or into greater production.

The plan I have worked out and which I hope to make a reality covers a space of three blocks, developing later into greater units. There is no limit to the possibilities, the only requisite being that each layout be properly integrated to pursue its activities without jostling the rest of the city.

In this plan the whole ground area is free for traffic—for automobiles, pedestrians and parking. The buildings are supported on columns which leave the space beneath them open. Only the stairways and elevator entrances come down to the street level. Below are as many stories of covered garage space as the foundations permit.

From the second to the tenth floors are shops, stores and even theaters, served by connecting arcades at every floor. Office space occupies the level from the tenth to the twenty-fifth floors. From the twenty-fifth to the thirty-fifth are clubs, restaurants and hotels. Above that are the apartments. The entire unit would be planned with reference to the needs of an industry and the type of people who compose it.

Compare the relative values of three blocks under the present disorganized system of building and the same three blocks under logical coordination. The same amount of money is spent in each construction, the same floor area and capacity for occupancy is produced.

Under present conditions forty per cent of the total building is in badly lighted and ventilated space which faces depressing backyards or interior

courts across which the maximum view is not more than fifty feet. The rest of the space is what we call first-class exterior space: it is lighted entirely from streets that are between sixty and one hundred feet wide. In buildings averaging twenty-five stories, at least forty per cent of the room is below the tenth story, which is today rated as inferior.

#### *No dark offices here*

In the new plan all space is outside. Each office would look across an opening at least three hundred feet wide. This would be true in the case of a single unit, where three or four units were planned together, every window would look into a court seven hundred feet square.

By present methods forty per cent of all space is in undesirable levels below the tenth floor; handling such as described above would reduce the space below the tenth floor to fifteen per cent. Since these floors would be devoted to shops, theaters and the like, the closeness of the ground would be an asset rather than a liability.

It is safe to say that there is hardly a block in the center of New York that will not be torn down and rebuilt within the next twenty years. Under present real estate conditions the operations will consist of from five to twenty separate transactions, each conducted by a separate interest which is opposed to all the others. Rarely will they be complementary; in most cases they will be competitive and mutually destructive.

An example of this is a block on the East Side with which I am familiar. In this block within the past two years there have been two twenty-story operations costing in all about five million dollars. One is a building for printers, and it has some chance of success, but it completely blankets the rear of an apartment house operation. Both buildings are damaged by their unhappy juxtaposition.

On all sides of these structures are garages and old apartment buildings under eight or ten separate ownerships. Any one of these may introduce discordant factors which no one can foresee. In that block an investor must keep his sails continually trimmed to meet dangerous and unforeseen developments. A single enlightened ownership would improve conditions in every way.

Even in neighborhoods where operations are of a single character, such as apartment houses, there are continuous quarrels.

Each group covets and encroaches on the trade, light and other advantages of the neighboring group.

This undirected growth has brought about real estate conditions that would not be tolerated in any other industry. The whole tenor of the age is toward consolidation and mutual aid against individual conflict. Building units are too small. They are not sufficiently financed to give themselves even partial protection. Huge investments are at the mercy of chance and the whims of a next-door neighbor. The result is a quarrelsome, competitive, destructive battle into which only the shrewdest opportunist or the most audacious adventurer can afford to put his money.

#### *Would be no more costly*

As a basis for calculation let us take a block under present conditions where buildings of twenty-five stories cover seventy per cent of the ground area. I would substitute for that building a spread over three blocks which would give the same floor area as the above. It would work out as a forty-five-story building in the new form.

The cost of the single structure covering three blocks would be no greater than in the other case. The only difference would be that the money would be assembled at one time and by a single syndicate instead of being brought together by fifteen or twenty operators over a period of fifteen or twenty years. It would mean a single, directing intelligence rather than a score of mutually destructive interests of relatively feeble financial strength.

I have proceeded on a basis of a three-block operation. The exact size is not essential. It should merely be large enough so that each operation can control its own environment and comprehensive enough to include a branch of industry. The central organization endures a form of amalgamation such as occurs every day in the business world. It means the application of farsighted direction to a movement that already has shown itself in the city's growth. Certainly, some such remedy must be applied to prevent New York from strangling itself by its own growth.

more than six stories, in continuous construction.

The construction of buildings of fewer than three stories is not permitted. In the Chinese city it is prohibited to construct new residential buildings. Only the utilization for residential purposes of part of the new buildings of a commercial and industrial nature is permitted. In the part of the city situated within the perimeter of the boulevards it is permitted to construct buildings not higher than ten sazen with five stories above ground and in continuous construction, providing that the height of the building does not exceed the width of the adjacent streets.

The erection of buildings on the street of less than three stories is not permitted. It is forbidden to reconstruct and make repairs on a capital account in buildings facing the boulevards, destined for demolition. In the part of the city beyond the boulevards it is permitted to construct buildings no higher than three sazen, with no more than four stories above ground. It is not permitted to construct on the street buildings having fewer than two stories.

In the part of the city beyond the ring of gardens, it is permitted to construct buildings up to six sazen in height and up to three stories. [Izvestiya no. 238 17 October 1925]; see Iz istorii, p. 49.)

19. A. Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate*, 1924-28 (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); N. Spulber, *Soviet Strategy for Economic Growth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964); E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Le origini della pianificazione sovietica 1926-1929*, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1974); Cacciari, *Preobrazhenskij*.

20. See *Sovetskaya arkhitektura* 4 (1931); L. Kaganovich, *L'urbanistica sovietica* (Soviet city planning), report presented to the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., June 1931, chap. 4; Mikhaylov, "Dalla Mosca feudale alla Mosca socialista" (From feudal Moscow to socialist Moscow), *Krasnaya nov' 9* (1935). Schchusev replies to Mikhaylov's article in *Stroytel'naya promyshlennost' 3* (1925). On this polemic, see Quilici,

*Città russa*, pp. 176-78. On the affair of the Moscow plan in the overall scheme of Soviet planning, see also the detailed volume by Marco de Michelis and Ernesto Pasini, *La città sovietica 1925-1937* (Venice, 1976).

21. See Iz istorii, doc. 20.

22. On this theme, see again de Michelis and Pasini, *La città sovietica*.

23. See Rabinovich and Ryabushin, "V. I. Lenin."

24. See Iz istorii, doc. 46.

25. But on the significance of the accomplishments at Ivanovo-Voznesensk, in which an advanced policy of services and equipment is developed, one that would later be enriched by the notable residential complexes of D. Fridman (*Dom-korabl*, 1929-30), V. Pankov (complex for 102 apartments, 1930), I. Golosov (*Dom kollektiva*, 1929-30), see V. Quilici, "Un polo dello sviluppo discontinuo: Ivanovo-Voznesensk," in *Esperienze ed orientamenti dell'edilizia abitativa sovietica* (Bologna, 1976), pp. 109-18, with the account of the process of reconstruction taken from I. Khlebnikov's article in *Arkhitekturnoe tvorchestvo SSSR*, ed. Y. Yarov (Moscow, 1974). A complete analysis of the experiment carried out at Ivanovo can be found in I. Khlebnikov's essay, "L'architettura della comune operaia: la formazione dell'architettura sovietica nella regione industriale di Ivanovo," in *URSS 1917-1978*, pp. 249-67.

26. See "Notes on the Building in Petergrad-Leningrad Between 1919 and 1934" (in Russian), in *Pamiatniki arkhitektury Leningrada* (Leningrad, 1968), Italian trans. (Note sulle realizzazioni a Pietrogrado-Leningrado tra il 1919 e il 1934) in *Rassegna sovietica* 1-2 (1972): 138-43, and in Quilici, *Città russa*, pp. 181-89.

27. *Rassegna sovietica* 1-2 (1972): 140.

## 6

### The New Babylon

1. See Winston Weisman, "New York and the Problem of the First Skyscraper," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 12, no. 1 (1953): 13-21, and idem, "A New View of Skyscraper His-

tory," in *The Rise of an American Architecture*, ed. K. Kaufmann (London-New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 115-60.

2. The role of New York in defining the typology of the skyscraper has for the most part been underestimated in favor of mythologizing the "Chicago School." We will not attempt here a historical revision of the problem; however, at least a re-reading of Montgomery Schuyler's "classic" essay, "The Evolution of the Skyscraper," *Scribner's Magazine* 46 (1909): 257-91 (now in *American Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 200-20, can serve as a first step in a reappraisal, along with H. Croly's significant article, "New York's Skyscraper," *The Architectural Record* 61, no. 4 (1927): 374-75. See also Leopold Arnaud, "The Tall Building in New York in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 11, no. 2 (1952): 15-18, and W. Weisman, "The Chicago School Issue," *The Prairie School Review* 9, no. 1 (1972): 6-30.

3. See W. Weisman, "The Commercial Architecture of G. B. Post," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31, no. 3 (1972): 176-203.

4. Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1900), p. 494.

5. Karl Scheffler, *Die Architektur der Grossstadt* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1913), on which see Massimo Cacciari, *Metropolis: Saggi sulla grande città di Sombart*, E. Endell, Scheffler e Simmel (Rome: Officina, 1973).

6. See Eric Mendelsohn, *Amerika, das Bilderbuch eines Architekten* (Berlin, 1926). On Mendelsohn's attitude and that of other European architects in America, see Mario Manieri-Elia, "Trois architectes européens en Amérique: Eliel Saarinen, Mendelsohn, Neutra," in *Archithese* 17 (1976): 15-22.

7. Kurt Schwitters, "Castello e cattedrale con fontana," in Bruno Taut, *Frühlicht 1920-22* (Milan, 1974), p. 173; original ed., "Schloss und Kathedrale," *Frühlicht* no. 3 (1922): 87.

8. M. Cacciari, *Krisis: Saggio sulla crisi*

*del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), p. 137.

9. See Otto Kohtz, *Gedanken über Architektur* (Berlin, 1909). On the theme of the skyscraper in German culture of the 1920s, see Joachim Schulz, "Hochhäuser und Citygedanke in Deutschland, 1920-1923," *Deutsche Architektur* 12, no. 12 (1964): 750 ff., and Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 159-62, with a bibliography on pp. 221-22 (to which, however, should be added at least Walter Curt Behrendt's article, "Skyscrapers in Germany," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 11, no. 9 [September 1923]: 365-70). Pehnt (*Expressionist Architecture*, p. 159) recalls Josef Ponten's novella, *Der babylonische Turm*, published in 1918, in which the protagonist plans to unite in a single building every possible cultural and religious function, from a library and a Trappist monastery to a hermit's cell at the top of the tower. The Babylonian theme, here taken literally, is significant to our discourse: the Babylonian metaphor runs through both the German plans for skyscrapers (also Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*) and the actual American buildings. Marcello Fagiolo attempted an iconological interpretation of the expressionist skyscraper in his two essays, "La cattedrale di cristallo: L'architettura dell'Espressionismo e la 'tradizione' esoterica," in (various authors) *Il revival* (Milan, 1974), pp. 225-88, and "La piramide in espansione: Architettura espressionista e comunismo cosmico," *Psicon* 2, nos. 2-3 (1975): 18-37. Bletter dwells upon the influences of German expressionistic architecture on the poetics of New York skyscrapers in Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter's *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); see also Werner Oechslin's article, "Mythos zwischen Europa und Amerika," *Archithese* 20 (1976): 4-11.

10. Gerhard Wohler, "Das Hochhaus in Wettbewerb der Chicago Tribune," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 58, no. 57 (1924): 328.

11. T. Wijdeweld, "Inleiding voor de To-

renhuis-Projecten," *Wendingen* 3 (1923): 3; Adolf Behne, "De Duitse Torenhuis Bouw," *ibid.*, pp. 15-17. In addition to the well-known plans of Mies and of Mart Stam, the issue includes the plans of Häring, Poelzig, Scharoun, H. W. Krueger, Walter Fischer, and those of the Luckhardt brothers for a skyscraper on the Friedrichstrasse in Berlin. On the competition for the skyscraper on the Friedrichstrasse, see Walter Curt Behrendt's "Das erste Turmhaus in Berlin," *Die Woche* 9 (1921), in which he states that the typology of the skyscraper is the direct consequence of the logic of the metropolis.

12. See "Kölner Hochhaus-Carneval," *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst* 3 (1926): 90-120, and Dryssen-Averhoff, "Gründe gegen das Kölner Hochhaus," *ibid.*, pp. 120-24.

13. Alongside of Scharoun's project, a place should be made for that of Adolf Rading, which in the number cited of the German review had been confused with the former; see the precise information contained in the note "Weitere Teilnehmer am Kölner Hochhaus-Wettbewerb," *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst* 4 (1926): 145. Interesting also is Schumacher's embarrassed self-justification, contained in the letter published in the same number of the review, "Fritz Schumacher zum W. M. B. Bericht über den Kölner Hochhaus-Wettbewerb."

14. See Bruno Möhring, "Über die Vorzüge der Turmhäuser und die Voraussetzungen, unter denen sie in Berlin gebaut werden können," *Stadtbaukunst alter und neuer Zeit* 22 (1920): 353 ff.; 23: 370 ff.; 24: 385 ff.; Max Berg, "Der Bau von Geschäftshochhäusern in Breslau zur Linderung der Wohnungsnot," *Stadtbaukunst alter und neuer Zeit* 7 (1920): 99-104; 8: 116-18; and A. L. Pasternak, "Urbanizm," *Sovremennaya arkhitektura* 1 (1926): 4-7. Möhring's plan, drawn up for the Prussian Academy of Architecture, provided for a ring of twenty skyscrapers along the Spree River, on land belonging to the city.

15. See A. L. Pasternak, "Polemiche sulla città del futuro," in *La costruzione della*

*città sovietica*, ed. Paolo Ceccarelli (Padua, 1970), pp. 51-63; original ed., "Spory o buduscien goroda," *Sovremennaya arkhitektura* 1-2 (1930): 57 ff.

16. Regarding the competition, see Manfred Tafuri, "The Disenchanted Mountain: The Skyscraper and the City," in G. Ciucci, F. Dal Co, M. Manieri-Elia, and M. Tafuri, *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1979).

17. Raymond Unwin, "Higher Building in Relation to Town Planning," in *RIBA Journal* 31, no. 5 (1924): 125-40.

18. See *Regional Plan of New York*, vol. 2, pt. 2: *Guidance of Building*, pp. 159 ff.; Frederick A. Delano, "Skyscrapers," *The American City* (January 1926); and the *Journal of the Real Estate Board of New York* (August 1930).

19. Werner Hegemann, "Das Hochhaus als Quelle von Verkehrsschwierigkeiten," in *Amerikanische Architektur und Stadtbaukunst* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 44-54. It may be useful to compare Hegemann's analyses with Anglo-Saxon editorial writings on the skyscraper in the 1920s and 1930s, fluctuating between total and moralistic rejections, generic observations, chauvinistic praises, and bland criticisms. See P. Buitenhuis, "Aesthetics of the Skyscraper: The Views of Sullivan, James and Wright," *The American Quarterly* 9 (1957): 316-24; Vernon Howe Bailey, *Skyscrapers of New York*, introduction by Cass Gilbert and W. E. Rudge (New York, 1928); Francisco Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper* (Paris, 1929); H. Croly, "New York's Skyscraper," *The Architectural Record* 41, no. 4 (1927): 374-75; Douglas Haskell, "The Development of the Skyscraper," *The Studio* 102, no. 463 (1931): 263-66.

20. In 1912 Hegemann, after the 1910 exposition in London, began a campaign for the decentralization of Berlin; Käthe Kollwitz drew up a manifesto denouncing the conditions in Berlin, and Hegemann himself was harassed by the Prussian police. From 1913 on Hegemann visited America several times, as a result of the request made by the People's Institute of New York to Mayors Adickes of Frank-

furt and Marx of Düsseldorf that an expert be invited for a series of lectures on German city planning. From 1924 to 1933 he was city planning consultant to Leipzig and Münster, and in 1933, when his property was confiscated by the Nazis, he took up residence in America, where he died in 1936. A work of the utmost importance—even more than *American Vitruvius* of 1922 or the fundamental *Das Steinerne Berlin* of 1930—is Hegemann's last book, *City Planning Housing* (New York, 1936-38), completed after his death by William R. Forster and Robert Weinberg. On Hegemann, see the introductions to the Italian editions of *La Berlino di pietra* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1975), and the *Catalogo delle esposizioni internazionali di Berlino, 1910 e Düsseldorf, 1911* (Milan, 1975), and Donatella Calabi's essay, "Werner Hegemann, o dell'ambiguità borghese dell'urbanistica," *Casabella* 41, no. 428 (1977): 54-60.

21. See Harvey Wiley Corbett, "The Influence of Zoning in New York's Skyline," *The American Architect and the Architectural Review* 123, no. 2410 (1923): 1-4, in which Corbett recalls the proposals formulated in 1908 by David Knickerbocker Boyd (*The American Architect*, 18 November 1908), and "Zoning and the Envelope of the Building," *Pencil Points* 6, no. 3 (1923): 15-18. See also Corbett, "Effect of the New York Zoning Resolution on Commercial Buildings," *The American Architect* 125, no. 2448 (1920): 547-51, and Carol Willis, "Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 45, no. 1 (1986): 47 ff.

22. On the structural significance of the Zoning Law, see Franco Mancuso's well-documented essay, "Lo zoning: l'esperienza di New York," in *L'urbanistica del riformismo: Usa, 1890-1940*, ed. Pier Luigi Crosta (Milan, 1975), pp. 89 ff., and Willis, "Zoning and Zeitgeist."

23. Corbett, "Zoning," p. 18.

24. See Giusi Rapisarda, "Die Stadt und ihr Doppelgänger: Von 'Metropolis' zu 'King Kong,'" *Archithese* 17 (1976): 29-35.

25. See "The Rockefeller Building Project in Mid-Town New York," *Pencil Points* 12, no. 10 (1931): 776-77; William H. Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, vol. 4: *The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 1-85; and Tafuri, "La montagna disincantata," pp. 496 ff.

26. Claude Bragdon, "Skyscrapers," in *The Arch Lectures* (1940) (New York, 1942), pp. 103-15.

27. See "Dr. John Wesley Kelchner's Restoration of King Solomon's Temple and Citadel, Helmle & Corbett Architects," *Pencil Points* 6, no. 11 (November 1925): 69-86; Robinson and Haag Bletter, *Skyscraper Style*, pp. 11-12. Helmle and Corbett's project was also exhibited at the forty-first show of the Architectural League of New York. See *The American Architect* (20 February 1926).

28. Walter Benjamin, "Zentralpark," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 677. The passage by Benjamin has been justly compared to aphorism 105 of Adorno's *Minima Moralia*: "Man's life becomes a moment, not by suspending duration but by lapsing into nothingness, waking to its own futility in face of the bad eternity of time itself. In the clock's over-loud ticking we hear the mockery of light-years for the span of our existence. The hours that are past as seconds before the inner sense has registered them, and sweep it away in their cataract, proclaim that like all memory our inner experience is doomed to oblivion in cosmic night. Of this people are today made forcibly aware." *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 1974), p. 165. See Elvio Fachinelli, "Minima (im)moralia," *L'Erba voglio* 26 (1974): 16-17.

29. Paul Robertson, "The Skyscraper Office Building," *The Architectural Forum* 2, no. 6 (1930): 879-80.

30. See Delano, "Skyscrapers," and the *Journal of the Real Estate Board of New York* (August 1930). An outline of the historical reconstruction of the economic significance of the skyscraper in relation to the phenomena of concentration of fi-

nancial capital can be found in Heinz Ronner's article, "Skyscraper: à propos Oekonomie," *Archithese* 18 (1976): 44-49, 55.

31. Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper*, p. 33. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Hastings himself, cited by Mujica (*ibid.*), identifies in his *Modern Architecture* artistic socialism and avant-gardes, totally rejecting both: "Surely modern architecture should not be constituted by the deplorable creations of aspiring inventors of styles, the socialists who have penetrated the world of art more than that of politics, who are more interested in promulgating some innovation or other than in achieving a concrete improvement, the so-called futurists, the new thinkers, the cubists, the followers of *art nouveau*, all of them lacking in ties with the past, without any knowledge of tradition."

32. Lewis Mumford, "American Architecture to-day, I," *Architecture* 58, no. 4 (1928): 181-88. Note that Mumford's entire essay refutes the above-mentioned theses of Helmle and Corbett as well as Ferriss's rendering; his main hypothesis is that, after the dormant period from 1890 to 1920, the new experiments were linked to the great tradition of J. W. Root, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Perceptive passages on Mumford's position with respect to the "original values" of the American experience are contained in Francesco Dal Co's essay, "La forza della tradizione," the introduction to the Italian edition of L. Mumford's *The Brown Decades* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931), entitled *Architettura e cultura in America dalla guerra civile all'ultima frontiera* (Venice, 1977), pp. 7-21.

33. Mumford, "American Architecture to-day," p. 185.

34. See Ely Jacques Kahn, "On New York: Past, Present and Future (1926)," in Arthur Tappan North, *Ely Jacques Kahn* (New York-London: McGraw-Hill, 1931), pp. 25-27; Raymond Hood, "A City under a Single Roof," *Nation's Business* 12 (1929): 18-20, 206-9; H. W. Corbett, "Design in Office Building,"

*The Architectural Forum*, no. 52 (June 1930): 779.

35. Leon V. Solon, "The Park Avenue Building, New York City," *The Architectural Record* 63, no. 4 (1928): 289-97.

36. See E. J. Kahn's essay, "Schools of Europe and America," in *Design in Art and Industry* (New York, 1925), in which the author examines the contribution of the Paris Exposition of 1900 and that held in Turin in 1902, and the research of the Wiener Werkstätte, of Otto Wagner, Hoffmann, Klimt, Behrens, the Werkbund, and the Dessau Bauhaus. According to his later recollections, Kahn, as a youth in Paris, had learned to appreciate Leon Bakst's Russian ballets and the collections of paintings of Matisse and Picasso, by striking up a friendship with Gertrude Stein. See the unpublished manuscript by E. Kahn in the Avery Library of Columbia University, New York, chap. 3.

37. See the above-cited unpublished manuscript by Kahn, chap. 2, pp. 4-5.

38. E. J. Kahn, "On the Use of Color (1928)," in North, *Ely Jacques Kahn*, p. 24.

39. See Henry H. Saylor, "Ely Jacques Kahn," *Architecture* 64, no. 2 (1931).

40. See E. J. Kahn, "Sources of Inspiration," *Architecture* 9, no. 5 (1929): 249-56; and chap. 11 of Kahn's unpublished manuscript.

41. Rose Henderson, "A Primitive Basis for Modern Architecture," *The Architectural Record* 54, no. 2 (1923): 189-96 (the citation is on p. 189).

42. On the sculpture of John Storrs (1885-1956), see E. Bryant, "Rediscovery: John Storrs," *Arts in America* (May 1969), an article written on the occasion of the retrospective exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery; Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Crowell, 1968); and, principally, Abraham A. Davidson, "John Storrs, Early Sculptor of the Machine Age," *Artforum* 13, no. 3 (1974): 41-45.

43. See H. Croly, "The Scenic Function of the Skyscraper," *The Architectural Record* 63, no. 4 (1928): 77-78; and Kenneth M. Murchison, "The Spires of

Gotham," *The Architectural Forum* 52 (1930): 786, 878. The "scenic function" of the skyscraper was carried to its extreme at the ball at the Astor Hotel in New York on 23 January 1931, at which the most prominent architects of the city represented "The New York Skyline," with costumes and headgear evoking their own works: Leonard Schultze appeared dressed as the New Waldorf Astoria, Ely J. Kahn as the Squibb Building, William Van Alen as the Chrysler Building, Ralph Walker as One Wall Street, and so forth. Architecture expresses itself as theatre; its creators unconsciously close the cycle opened by the expressionist and dadaist cabarets. On the 1931 ball, see Rem Koolhaas, "The Architect's Ball: A Vignette, 1931," *Oppositions* 3 (1974): 92-96. Two symbolic interpretations of the American skyscraper are presented in the articles by Diana Agrest, "Le ciel est la limite," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 178 (1975): 55-64, and by Dolores Hayden, "Skyscraper Seduction, Skyscraper Rape," *Heresies* 2 (1977): 108-15.

44. Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper*, p. 32.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-53.

49. R. H. Bletter, "Metropolis réduite," *Archithese* 18 (1976): 26-27.

50. See Thomas and Terry, *The Busby Berkeley Book*, pp. 88-90.

#### Appendix: A City under a Single Roof

1. Raymond Hood, "A City under a Single Roof," *The Nation's Business* 17, no. 12 (November 1929): 18-20, 206, 208, 209.

2. The article came from an interview granted to F. S. Tisdale. The original text was accompanied by Hood's drawing illustrating the project, reproduced in the present volume, by a photograph of the American Radiator Building in New York City, and by an imaginary scheme of the metropolitan congestion.

3. He is referring to the initial project for what will become Rockefeller Center.

#### 7 Sozialpolitik and the City in Weimar Germany

1. On the Weimar communist party, see Ossip K. Flecktheim, *Die Kpd*. On class composition and the problems of political organization of the KPD and the SPD, see Massimo Cacciari, *Sul problema dell'organizzazione: Germania, 1917-1921* (Padua: Marsilio, 1972); Sergio Bologna, "Composizione di classe e teoria del partito alle origini del movimento consiliare," in (various authors), *Operai e Stato* (Milan, 1972); and Guido de Masi and Giacomo Marramao, "Consigli e Stato nella Germania di Weimar," *Problemi del socialismo* 2 (1976).

2. No valuable contribution to a knowledge of the organization of culture in the Weimar Republic is offered by Peter Gay's *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), and Walter Laqueur's *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918-1933* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974). Better organized, if nothing else, are the articles by Gordon A. Craig, "Impegno e neutralità nella Germania di Weimar," *Dialoghi del XX* 2, no. 6 (1968): 50-66, and John Elderfield, "Dissenting Ideologies and the German Revolution," *Studio International* 180, no. 927 (1970): 180-87. See also Ferruccio Masini, "'Rivoluzione conservatrice' e ideologia della tecnica nella Repubblica di Weimar," in (various authors), *Weimar: Lotte sociali e sistema democratico nella Germania degli anni '20*, ed. Lucio Villari (Bologna, 1978), pp. 137-51, and in the same volume, Tomás Maldonado, "Le due anime della cultura di Weimar," pp. 153-61. For the area of interest to us, the most complete study remains Barbara Miller Lane's *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918-1945*. See also Ronald V. Weidenhoft, "Housing and Socialism in Weimar Germany," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33, no. 3 (1974): 328, and John Willett's disappointing *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New So-*