

On Not Developing the Site

Against the chaos as the tower crashes,
Like the mocking skyline of a time
Whose architecture speaks the confidence
Of pre-Depression fantasies-- its chrome,
Its angularity, its pinnacles--
Those last expressions of America
As guiltless in its eagerness for height
Look southward from their ambience to ours.
As foreground to the pillars dust by day
That follow on the fire of Babel fallen
They beckon back, if not to innocence,
To absence of self-doubt. No topless tower
Was built by any Ilium whose sights
Were on its underclass; that valued space;
That sounded fanfares for the common man.
Encumbered by restraints, for all their height
Our topped-off eminences do not soar.
Now clearing, on the web that is their wreck,
A terror's white dust darkens, and to find
Again the Midtown visions gone before,
Imagine through a sandstorm a Dubai
In competition with its own mirage:
High rise the manifested destiny
Of emirates. If in the West we reach
No longer for the clouds to stretch the reach
Of Mammon, in the nations East, their tongues
Already sore confused, the old appeal
Of "Let us build a city and a tower,
That we be not scattered on the Earth"
Brings back that future Deco has not had.

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