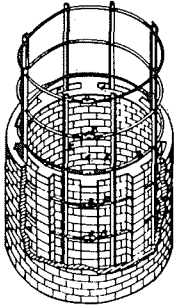


**A CONCRETE ATLANTIS:
U.S. Industrial Building and
European Modern
Architecture**

by Reyner Banham
MIT, 1986
266 pp. \$25



“For a period at the end of the 1970s,” observes author Banham, “one could look out over downtown Providence, R.I., from the raised platforms of the train station and see the façade of a new multi-story hotel visually superimposed on that of an old 1920s multi-story factory behind it—and the two façades were almost identical cellular grids of concrete structural members.”

It was no coincidence, argues Banham. The great European masters of the modernist International style of architecture, including Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier, found direct inspiration in the work of now-forgotten Americans—mostly engineers—who designed industrial buildings at the turn of this century. Pioneers of concrete construction, men such as Ernest Ransome and Lockwood Greene put up “daylight” factories (with ranks of regularly spaced windows) and grain elevators whose use of materials and simplicity of design provided European architects during the 1920s and ’30s with a “language of forms” that they in turn applied to nonindustrial buildings. “Let us listen to the counsels of American engineers,” declared Le Corbusier. “But let us beware of American architects!”

The ultimate irony is obvious: American architects of the 1960s and ’70s, inspired by the International style, created city hotels and office buildings resembling structures that had all but vanished from an older urban industrial landscape.

**THE DANCE OF
THE INTELLECT:
Studies in the poetry
of the Pound tradition**

by Marjorie Perloff
Cambridge, 1986
243 pp. \$24.95

Critics who lament the death of poetry in our age are mistaken, says Perloff, a professor of literature at the University of Southern California. To be sure, a certain type of poem—the Romantic lyric characterized by the agonized voice of its wounded poet-speaker—has reached the end of the line. But, Perloff argues, the verbal intensity and resourcefulness of poetry have simply passed on to nonlyric forms, including encyclopedic and collage poems, prose and performance poems.

Perhaps the last supreme master of the lyric mode was Wallace Stevens (1879–1955), who cleaved to the symbolist faith that “poetry as an imaginative thing consists of more than lies on the surface.” Stevens found a devoted following.

But Perloff credits Ezra Pound (1885–1972) with heralding the shift to a harder, more objec-

tive, and certainly more experimental sort of poetry. Pound's insistence that "the cherry tree is *all that it does*" was only part of his larger goal: to "MAKE IT NEW."

Elsewhere, Perloff looks at how the Pound tradition took form (partly inspired by "documentary collages" of the *fin de siècle* French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska) and then filtered through the work of other artists, including some, such as novelist James Joyce, playwright and prosateur Samuel Beckett, and composer John Cage, who are not strictly considered poets.

Beckett's "associative monologues" may baffle or repel many readers: "Absence supreme good and yet. Illumination then go again and one return no more trace. On earth's face. Of what was never. . . ." But however strange they may occasionally seem, Perloff makes a good case that they are as genuinely poetic as John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Science & Technology

FEMALES OF THE SPECIES: Sex and Survival in the Animal Kingdom
by Bettyann Kevles
Harvard, 1986
270 pp. \$20

In the opinion of Charles Darwin (1809–82) and many of his successors, females of the species stood lower on the evolutionary ladder than males. Viewed as passive and "coy," females seemed to play a secondary role in the all-crucial struggle for survival. Kevles, a science journalist, draws from a wide range of recent animal studies to present a new understanding of the "fairer" sex's role.

Kevles notes patterns and peculiarities throughout the animal kingdom. A female balloon fly and a female stickleback fish typically appear to be put off by eager male suitors. Their reluctance, however, stems not from abhorrence of sex but from the desire to choose the best possible father for their offspring. Female elephant seals actually provoke males to combat in order to identify strong mates. And high-ranking female baboons band together to attack a low-ranking female just as she shows signs of fertility.

The passive, stay-at-nest image of females crumbles before the fact that, in many species, the male is the primary caretaker of offspring. Male Antarctic King penguins have a special fold of skin on their feet for incubating eggs during the entire 50-day gestation period. Some mothers seem alto-

