

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *Antennae*, 2001–2012

In January 2012, poet and editor Jesse Seldess announced that *Antennae* 12 was ready for the mails. “After more than 10 years of irregular appearance,” he added, “and, for me and I hope for others, generative pieces and company, 12 is the last issue.” The word “company” stands out to me as a description of *Antennae*’s editorial vision—it is also a word strongly associated in my mind with Robert Creeley, who based part of his poetics on the concept: “I took thus my own chances, and remarkably found a company.” *Antennae* too was an extension of Jesse’s poetic practices.

*Antennae* was, as its masthead indicated, a “journal of experimental writing and language-based music and performance scores,” but its editor made more elaborate descriptions of his vision that read like an artist’s statement. Jesse commented in a group interview published in *26: a journal of poetry and poetics*, “I print poems alongside other forms of writing experimentation and music and performance scores to encourage me, and I hope others, to relax the usually unhelpful insecurity of being ‘properly’ informed and to embrace how tentative and flexible an identifying of something is.” In his editing and in his own poetry, Jesse took the simple task of “identifying” from its familiar, stable place in poetry. He did this in *Antennae* by joining disparate groups, media, and styles together to create a resonant, generative “company.”

Like its editor, *Antennae* was itinerant, but for me—and I suspect for many others—it was a Chicago magazine. The first issue was published in June 2001 in Madison, Wisconsin (though largely planned in Tucson), and the final issue appeared in Brooklyn, New York. Several issues—9 through 11—were published in Germany, where Jesse lived between 2005 and 2011. But the bulk of the run (issues 3 through 8), were born in Chicago, a city whose presence was felt throughout the magazine’s life. Poets from the city, such as Daniel Borzutzky, Kerri Sonnenberg, and Mark Tardi, were printed alongside poets from the nearby north, such as Roberto Harrison and Stacy Szymaszek from Milwaukee and Steve Timm from Green County, Wisconsin. Like Jesse, some of these writers have since moved away, but the connections were made in Chicagoland reading series, bookstores, and small presses.

*Antennae* was folded and stapled, its format owing a quiet debt to *Kenning* (1998–2002), a magazine published by Patrick Durgin (whom Jesse met and befriended in Iowa City in the late 1990s). Each issue’s size and shape reflected the standard papers in the nation in which it was published.

Folded, it measured 8.5 × 7 inches in the US, and a tall, thin 11.75 × 8.25 inches in Germany (the latter gave unusually generous margins for poems). Jesse found ingenious, sometimes whimsical ways to offer the cover as a field for conceptual art: an actual coffee cup ring on issue 4 (by the artist Ryan Weber), a clear piece of tape with colorful, purplish sweater lint on issue 5 (by Jesse himself).

Work published in *Antennae* wasn't "poetry" in any narrow sense of the word. We're accustomed to the usual accompanying material in poetry magazines: essays, book reviews, fiction. The "language-based music and performance scores" found in each issue of *Antennae*—firmly in the tradition of Jackson Mac Low—still seem to me to be fresh and unusual, a rarity in the poetry world. In *Antennae 2*, for instance, George Albon's "A Stein Dance" is a script for a performance that joins recorded music, live action, and Gertrude Stein's words in a series of tableaux that end with Alice B. Toklas's "widow's dance." Travis Just's *The folks who sell food sell cars on the street* (*Antennae 9*) sets a vocal performance for "5 speakers with signal processing," a detailed score which includes notations for speaking volume and "held syllables" and other instructions. These scores often encourage group effort, an added layer of "company" that's different in kind from poetry readings. And several of the performance scores published in *Antennae* require no training in music or dance to perform; they are meant to allow any interested reader to stage an event.

Of the performance pieces, I particularly remember the excitement expressed by poets in conversations at Wicker Park readings and bars over Matthew Goulish's lecture "Parasitology," published in *Antennae 5*. Goulish, then part of the Goat Island performance collective, meditates on parasitology as "extremely domestic," characterized by "interrupted meals" and the "interchangeability of eater and eaten." Goulish's appearance in *Antennae* is a fine example of editorial border crossing. Jesse reached outside a fairly constrained "poetry community" to find work that, when brought in, would reenergize that community.

One of *Antennae's* great values was to offer a venue for poetry unlikely to appear elsewhere—not just because of its quality, but because the pieces were experiments, sketches, or somehow peripheral to their author's central project. Work debuted there that showed poets testing new forms, stretching their legs. One of my favorite examples of this is John Tipton's "tokens," published in issue 9. A Chicago poet and translator, Tipton is a practitioner of counted verse, and the eight haiku from the issue—which have yet to appear in a book—follow a strict 5-7-5 word count. He's exercising, broadening his craft:

this dusk bough bends Hokkaido  
& the birds shuffle like ink foliage  
all are the ravens awake

Though the magazine has ended, I consider Jesse to be one of poetry's saints, certainly a warm and positive force in my own experience of poetry. I first heard of *Antennae* in 2002 when I was a student in Buffalo's Poetics Program, puzzling out a thesis on Lorine Niedecker and writing some poems. Patrick Durgin forwarded an email to the Poetics List, advertising that *Antennae* sought contributors. My eyebrows popped when I saw that the magazine was located in Madison, where I'd soon be moving, and I forwarded Jesse some of my work, hoping for my own future company. And I found it. My first published poem appeared in issue 4 (later, I'd contribute to issue 9 as well). Like the best "little magazines" still in publication—such as the *Cultural Society* or *Damn the Caesars*—*Antennae* created a home, and the home will be missed.

David Pavelich

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Marjorie Perloff, *Avant-Garde Poetics*, and *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*

The new fourth edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* should be commended on many fronts, not least for its addition of essays on numerous "Third-World" ethnic and national poetics, relegated in previous editions (especially the first two, improved somewhat in the third) to brief discussions within schematic entries devoted to whole continents.

It's therefore strange and disconcerting that the entry titled "Avant-Garde Poetics," authored by the justly esteemed critic Marjorie Perloff, should echo the lamentable biases of past editions. The stunning omissions in Perloff's entry fly directly in face of the more capacious, internationalist gestures of the new *Princeton*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the entry's myopic purview is in dramatic contradiction with the internationalist outlook that the avant-garde itself (even on its minority right wing!) has long maintained at its ideational core.

"Avant-Garde Poetics" is substantial—as long, in fact, as most of the entries given to national poetics, save the ones reserved for the United States and England, which are, *Ut Imperium Poesis*, multiply longer than any others. It names dozens of poets (and other artists) and a large number of tendencies and movements, from the era of Rimbaud up to the US "post-avant" present. And with exception of a passing reference to the Brazilian brothers Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and their *Concretista* moment, not a single poet or group outside the Anglo-American/European experience is acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> The entire Iberian Peninsula, even, goes missing!

How could such a skewed summation have made its way into the new, more globally minded *Princeton*? I wonder if Perloff might explain her focus