



Maureen Thorsen photo

Seconds Please: Reissuing Big Game and Jacket2

By Chris McCreary (*Big Game*) and Amelia Bentley (*Jacket2*)

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Elizabeth Harney

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Big Joy and Cine Magic at Anthology Film Archives' Show & Tell

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PRINTED MATTER

Felipe Benítez Reyes Studies the Stars

Jessica Fiorini Takes It Personally

Links

<http://www.tinymixtapes.com/film/visitors>

<http://www.uglyducklingpresse.org/>

<http://lamehouse.blogspot.com/>

Bio

Ariel N. Kates makes it to the office at 9 in the morning in exchange for her poetry degree. She lives in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn.

Tim Terhaar's writings have appeared in *PELT*, *The Capilano Review*, *The Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, and *Tiny Mix Tapes*. He lives and works in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

PRINTED MATTER

En Una Noche Oscura Reyes Studies the Stars



BY TIM TERHAAR

The Errant Astrologers

Felipe Benítez Reyes, translated by Emily Toder
Ugly Duckling Presse

The *Errant Astrologers* is a three-act play in verse that proceeds "as if the universe had the dimensions of a shadow puppet theater." I wonder how familiar Felipe Benítez Reyes is with the tarot, especially the Moon. Three kings dream of a shooting star. Haunted, each obsesses over his vision until he catches sight of his star in the sky one night. They abandon their kingdoms to follow it and run into one another on the way. After some mutual verbal harassment, they encounter the light but don't find enlightenment, or even relief.

The three kings are three paragons of nihilism. Amerín, the joker, considers the world a farce, and not a very funny one. Damascón, the killer, seeks the destruction of the world and its inhabitants. Kagba, the weakling, imagines the world to be a structure as fragile and deceptive as a glass. These figures are kings not because kings are important but because they're idle. They're errant because they wander beyond their kingdoms and because they're mistaken, misguided. Along with absolute, unwanted, power, they've inherited an unbroken night, blind, dark nothingness.

When these impoverished seekers find their dreamed-of star, they collectively disprove the narrator's claim that "stars never shine in vain, not even in the dreams of idle kings." None of them is transformed by the light. Damascón is the only one who claims he's obtained knowledge he didn't have before—though he acknowledges that he's "the owner of [an] enigma," which Kagba points out is ridiculous—making him the greatest fool of all. While Amerín and Kagba are soberer, more cynical, each also continues in his own characteristic folly: Amerín goes back to sleep, while Kagba laments, "And I shall never come out of the night," which in his case means that he'll never escape his philosophy, the trap that makes his life a vacuous anticipation of death.

The *Errant Astrologers* is a cautionary tale—narratively flat, without any hint of tonal or moral positivity, unless you misread some of Amerín's comments, for example when he says, "My body is an eardrum," which is the most potentially spiritual utterance in the play. It somehow puts me in mind of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales in *A House of Pomegranates*, only with the redemption of love and beauty stripped out. Kagba, unlike the Fisherman, resists reunion with his soul through all the trials the Devil puts to him, never to be lost in a way that will get him found. The third incarnation of Lucifer approaches him "in the form of a sibyl," and he says of her, "and [she] told me that my journey/ would lead to nothing itself." It's curious that when Kagba first reveals himself to the other kings, Damascón (and Amerín, mocking him) says, "What are you doing here, sibylline phantom of night?" A prophetess, a beggar, a sham-king, Kaba is confronted by no one outside himself. "Nothing itself" is exactly what he feels, so that's what he seeks and finds.

This book—beautifully printed, by the way—is like a lonely acid trip. All evening and night in a frigid apartment, prowling across the bed on all fours, sitting cross-legged to meditate, squinting at a candle flame's spears of colored light. Feeling the relief of resolution, at peace with the realization that you'll never find what you're looking for, will forever seek it anyway. Then putting up with hours of demons' faces, LCD eyes leering from writhing shadows in relief on the wall.

One minor complaint: in a passage distinguishing between things and their relations to light, Toder (or Reyes) would have Kagba say, "The sun is the enemy of gold," when the sun must certainly be the brother of gold if the moon is the sister of silver.

Reyes doesn't offer any counterpoint to the tortured conditions of his three fools, who act as if they've heard of the existentialists but not read them. If we want to avoid their fated conclusions, we have to jettison their assumptions. Arrogant and melodramatic though he is, Damascón is essentially right when he says, "All hearts are dark labyrinths/ and in all hearts a spider/ weaves prisons to keep our destiny captive." But so reform your heart! (Most necessary, most difficult.) But I don't want to be too stoic about it. The stupidest lines are sometimes the truest, or at least the most helpful: rather than an object to be lost, life is a process to process; rather than a journey doomed to end in failure, life is a series of walkabouts.

Perhaps the best possible comment on this book—a curiously apt one—is Mary Jo Bang's poem "Costumes Exchanging Glances."
Now who wants to write *The True Astronomers*?



Felipe Benítez Reyes



Emily Toder

Reyes doesn't offer any counterpoint to the tortured conditions of his three fools, who act as if they've heard of the existentialists but not read them.

**YOUR
AD
HERE**
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at all—words of poetry and prayers are similarly simultaneously muddled and didactic, beautiful, unsettling—I let the feel of them wash me into myself. Time and gesture. Embodiment and anthropomorphosis. The meaning—and the writer—hide in the language, offering revelation in fragments and impressions. Clauses become nouns; sentiments replace sentences. In the wash of the words it's an exercise for the reader to reveal truths to herself, while also digging in for what Fiorini might be revealing.

I find delight in the imperatives. She tells me, "I insist you eat the heart meat," which feels like a combination of my old country great-grandmother's eating habits and the bossy poet woman's challenge to get bloody. I like a bossy woman, even if she does have a husband; I would fly on her "Maltese falcon black enamel rising wavelengths," even if I am a contrarian. Even if I don't learn about her narrative. Even if I find myself wondering where it is that prayer, stream of consciousness, and random word generators can find fertile concert.

And/but the recognition. Fiorini describes a number of things perfectly: "I declare I am broke down/ breasts flap to the bathroom"—I've come to a place where, despite my feet issues, I feel OK taking my shoes off for that first-poem welcome party for someone who shares this with me. As in, we share it with each other. "You know what I'm saying," she insists. I can't deny it. And in her title poem, the dazzle image and the order and the declaration, quick: "a little light tap dance on lightning/ scribble me this ramble me that/ all matter is subject matter ... I've spelt it out for you." Well I'd like to tap dance on lightning. Also, that flip: it's she who's scribbling and rambling, who's so carefully curating that totality of matter into these poems. So now we're sharing the imperatives like a mission, like a cocktail at the party where we're getting drunk.

We're doing it because we've been bossed and tricked and because we boss and trick and curate ourselves. Because we have to go out of our way to declare that we're broke and that breast flapping has something to do with it. And yeah, "fuck that guy." We get to end the night griping. I love griping. "At what ratio of skirt to knowledge of dead white guys?" I know, right?! "Gripes!" is about a page too long, but isn't that the way it goes every time? We need to say "my cunt is not for the taking," you know, it's a part of the process. It's not a metaphor.

Taking it Personally

Jessica Fiorini Says It's All About You



BY ARIEL N. KATES

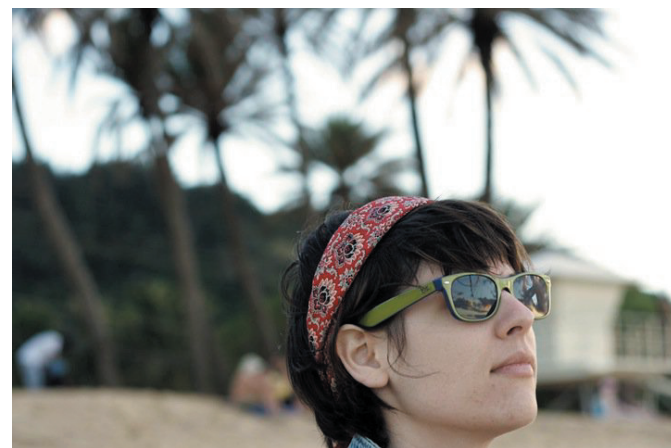
Take It Personal

Jessica Fiorini
Lame House Press

Jessica Fiorini is thinking about—no, insisting on—communication. The first poem in her new chapbook *Take It Personal*, "Nice Meet," tells me right off I'm a freak. This is an affirming start. But then she tells me "you are comfortable in my presence," which activates my contrarian tendencies, as does being told to take my shoes off to go into the party of the rest of the book with her. I'm sensitive about my feet, to be honest. But I think it might be nice that she thinks I feel "embryonic?" [why question mark here?] The definition of "embryonic" is "of or relating to an embryo." This is how it's going to go with Fiorini's words: of or relating to themselves. In terms of action, this is how it's going to go for a while—I'm placated, challenged, drawn in, recognized.

Oh, the sounds. Listen: "splash taffy elemental material/ Q/B corset pull of the guts/ I hope my baby/ I hope my baybee/ unbuttons for me when I come home." There's no beginning of the sentence so I'm not exactly sure what the splash taffy elemental material is, but it sounds so lush, and I hope she gets that unbuttoning too. I hope we all do.

When I was religious, I would pray every day. I would read the familiar words in a group of people and most days I wouldn't absorb their meaning



This is how it's going to go with Fiorini's words: of or relating to themselves. In terms of action, this is how it's going to go for a while—I'm placated, challenged, drawn in, recognized.



Big Game's tinysides on the production line.

Maureen Thorson photo

SECOND LIFE

Big Game's Tinysides are Alive Online



INTERVIEW BY CHRIS MCCREARY

Boog City small press co-editor Chris McCreary spoke with Big Game Books editor Maureen Thorson about her recent efforts to digitize the press's "tinysides," a series of 50 eight-page pamphlets published between 2006 and 2008.

Boog City: When you first decided to start publishing the tinysides back in 2006, did you know that you would publish 50 total? In other words, was there a long-term plan, or did it begin as more of an experiment?

Maureen Thorson: The plan was definitely to do 50. I love picking arbitrary numbers; basically every project I've ever worked on has involved some goal-out-of-a-hat figure. I did realize I might never get up to 50, but by the time I passed the 30-or-so mark, the momentum carried me forward. There was a time when I thought I might do a "second series" of a further 50. By the time the 50th tinyside was published, though, I had less free time overall in which to work on the books, particularly the very real and very laborious process of printing/cutting and stitching them.

What appealed to you about this particular format for presenting the poets' work?

I liked both the physical idea of making books from one sheet of paper and the idea of getting poets' work out there in a way that was aesthetically attractive and also cheap to acquire. The tinysides were individually priced at \$1 (or \$5 for a set of five). I wanted to marry a sort of high-quality visual/tactile experience to the economic benefits of mass production.

I liked both the physical idea of making books from one sheet of paper and the idea of getting poets' work out there in a way that was aesthetically attractive and also cheap to acquire.

I'm sure you love them all, but are there any of the tinysides to which you're particularly attached?

Part of the reason I started the tinysides project was to get more experience with designing book covers, and different sets of five reflected different ideas that I was trying on over the course of the three years during which the books were published. I really enjoyed doing the painting and line work for Joanna Fuhman's *Clone School*, and finding/scanning the old Czech stamp that provided the image for Jordan Stempleman's *I'll Show You Room*. The visual jokes inherent in the covers for Betsy Fagin's *Belief Opportunity* and Stacy Szymaszek's *Why Do Some People Burn With the Gift of Love When* still amuse me today.

As for the content of the tinysides themselves, I really tried hard to make sure the tinysides reflected a variety of poetic styles/approaches. It's hard to pick favorites, but I was very pleased to be able to publish Anna Moschovakis' *No Medea* and Sarah Manguso's *Finally*.

On your website, you mention that after "too many moons of hemming and hawing," you are finalizing digitizing the tinysides. What, for you, is the value of releasing them as pdfs now?

At the time I made the tinysides, I was very interested in the book as object, and wanted to find a way to make books that were interesting as objects, but without the limitations of artist's books. 50-copy runs seemed like a happy medium. Now, however, it feels like I locked these poems up in little 50-copy chunks. They're just not very accessible, when accessibility was the thing that led me to create them in the first place.

By having PDFs of the books themselves, anyone can enjoy the poems, and anyone can see the design. There is a sort of physicality to the PDFs, scans of the originals show the way the print adhered even, at times reflecting the handmade production in a digital form), and even the string used to bind the books.

The chapbooks you've published via Big Game Books are all sold out. Is there any plan to turn these into PDFs as well?

One of the chapbooks, Catherine Wagner's *Articulate How*, is available right now via the *usie* website (see *Links*). I would like to digitize the other chapbooks as well, particularly the three "mediumsides," but will probably wait on that project until all the tinysides are done.

What's next for Big Game Books? Moving forward, will you focus on getting titles into print, or will there be a dual print/online release strategy?

Big Game Books has been "sleeping" since about 2008, when I put out the last tinysides and chapbooks. I had thought of trying to publish full-length books, but my day job has become more and more all-encompassing, and I soon realized there was no way I could do that, work on my own writing, and do a good job on publishing other people's work at the same time. I have hopes that Big Game will someday come roaring back to life, but for now, the digitization of already-published chapbooks is probably as much as I can manage.

Butterflies Behind Glass: Jacket2's Reissues

INTERVIEW BY AMELIA BENTLEY

Boog City contributor Amelia Bentley has worked as an e-book coordinator for Copper Canyon Press and as a digital media archivist for University of Pennsylvania's Kelly Writers House. She writes, "I've had the great pleasure of working with reissues editor Danny Snelson over the past year to scan materials for *Jacket2 Reissues: Inventory of digitized magazines*. I caught up with him over e-mail from the PUB room at Kelly Writers House, and he replied from Zurich, where he was busy curating *The LUMA Foundation's inaugural 89plus* exhibition."

Boog City: When/where and with whom did the conception of Reissues occur?

Danny Snelson: Reissues was my immediate response to the news that the Kelly Writers House would produce an archive of *Jacket* magazine in 2010. After 40 issues, editors John Trantner and Pam Brown decided their pioneering online periodical had finished. Al Filreis, Charles Bernstein, Jessica Lowenthal, Michael Hennessey, Julia Bloch, and the rest of the *Jacket2/Kelly Writers House* team were sitting around a long table discussing options for a continuation of the *Jacket* legacy. The original magazine, of course, had been the most important site, internationally, for poetry and poetics on the internet, nearly from its inception in 1997. We decided to host the magazine in its original format on the University of Pennsylvania servers. As I was contending for the ease of this transition (really you just drag and drop a folder and change the links), it occurred to me: why not begin *Jacket2* (a kind of meta-magazine) with an ongoing archival project that mirrors the "J2" moment of inception.

Anyhow, those are the particulars. Really, I have to trace Reissues back to my work with *Eclipse*. As a freshman (!) from Utah (!), I started scanning some of the rarest and most obscure works of language poetry. One such project was the complete run of *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K."* It was a revelation! I was hooked. (Incidentally, *Jimmy & Lucy's*, for one reason or another, was never released on *Eclipse*. We're planning on finally producing the digital copies in the very near future at Reissues—so that's a point of entry, too!)

That said, we've really taken off since you began work with the collection. Perhaps you can jumpstart our conversation with some thoughts on how the kinds of archival PDFs (with OCR and bookmarked contents) that we produce at Reissues might relate to, or differ from, the more fluid e-book forms that you've been developing with Copper Canyon? From the very beginning, Reissues is strictly bound to the codex: spine, staple, or string! How might you characterize your experience with the various kinds of digital productions you've been publishing here and there?

I found *Eclipse* as an undergrad in Washington state, at Evergreen State College, largely through a pedagogical trail of crumbs laid by Leonard Schwartz. It's a little stunning to think that at that time that you were probably still scanning that work, and that I would eventually be scanning for you at J2.

I started doing some archiving work for Kenny Goldsmith and Derek Beaulieu for the Ubuweb around the same time as I became the e-book coordinator for Copper Canyon Press, because I wanted to stay involved with other poetries beyond the Copper Canyon stable. It's since been a slow slide.

The materials that J2 Reissues is interested in making available are significantly different than my work with e-books, both in nature and technology. The Reissues were originally very limited in circulation, and making them available online serves to make public a history that would be otherwise unavailable. Discolorations of paper, creases, variations in typesetting and layout are all made visible in the PDF. There's often a simple genius and active thought visible in the shifting and inconsistent layouts, as well as the mapping of the development of human connections formed between the by now well-known and loved contributors that are constellated in the tables of contents.

It's really lovely and surprising as well to see the design solutions arrived at with limited methods of production, the personal touches possible in the limited runs, the interpersonal communications made within those pages.

It's really lovely and surprising as well to see the design solutions arrived at with limited methods of production, the personal touches possible in the limited runs, the interpersonal communications made within those pages.

J2 adds to these publications in a way that is monumentalizing. Put a butterfly behind glass and it becomes a specimen for critical examination, a museum display. In that sense, these small and often frail publications gain an indestructibility, a lack of personal specificity, gone is a sense of first-contact, the ability to perceive the actual varying trim-size, paper-weight, as well as whether various marks are made on each copy by hand, and with what materials. Sometimes what's missing is the delight of having to figure out, turning them over in one's hands, how to interact with them. But now they are widely available as artifact of a vital time and tradition. They lose and gain left.

MIAM (which is not yet up) and some other journals made me laugh with the difficulty of figuring out which way to scan them, how to standardize the table of contents and bookmark the contents, when they were clearly built to be handled, to ignore rules of mechanized classification and distribution.

Copper Canyon's e-book program was much more intent on simultaneous distribution of front-list titles for commercial reasons. There was a joy in the problem-solving of project coordinating a team to create a production workflow, and fine tune the coding of the e-books. The challenge there was much more in terms of what was technically possible within the non-book designer designed e-book platforms when met with the sort-of maximal challenge of form that is poetry. How do you deal with a line that begins at a third level hanging indent and needs to re-flow dynamically in multiple formats?

So scanning for J2 was a welcome flight into the more mechanically simple, (altered) fidelity, and relatively visually lush environment of pdf, as well as the vicinity of the community there. It's a tremendous joy to spend time with materials that are so poetically and historically rich, and it's great to know that some will find in them, as I found *Eclipse* through your scanning, access to histories and experiences that would otherwise be out of reach.

"to be continued"

Links

<https://jacket2.org/reissues>

<http://www.reenhead.com/biggame/bluetinysides.htm>

http://www.usie.org/Wagner_ArticulateHow.pdf

Bio

Amelia Bentley's chapbook *&PARTS* was released from Damask Press in 2013.

Chris McCreary's most recent collection is the chapbook *Elseworlds* from Cy Gist Press (2012). He co-edits *ixnay press* (ixnaypress.com) in Philadelphia.



'There is a sort of physicality to the PDFs, scans of the originals show the way the print adhered to the page, how the pages were sewn into the cover (crookedly, even, at times reflecting the handmade production in a digital form), and even the string used to bind the books.'

—Big Game editor Maureen Thorson



Hessan Scler photo

Links

<http://betsyfagin.com>
<http://theblueletter.wordpress.com/>
<http://apexart.org/events/truth-of-poetry.php>

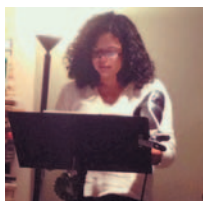
Bios

Betsy Fagin is an activist, poet, and librarian who explores the territory where art, information access, and political engagement through direct action meet. She received degrees in literature and creative writing from Vassar College and Brooklyn College and completed her M.L.S. degree in information studies at the University of Maryland, where she was an ALA Spectrum Scholar. She is the author of *Poverty Rush* (Three Sad Tigers Press), *the science seemed so solid* (dusie kollektiv), *Belief Opportunity* (Big Game Books Tinyside), *Rosemary Stretch* (dusie e/chap), and *For every solution there is a problem* (Open 24 Hours). She was a Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Writer-in-Residence during 2012-2013.

Cecily Iddings is from Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Her poems have appeared in *Jubilat* and *SPORK*. Along with Chris Hosea she edits *The Blue Letter*.

Casey Smith's film *The Truth of Poetry* will have its New York premiere Fri. April 18, at 8:00 p.m. at Apex Art, 291 Church St.

POETRY



Betsy Fagin

Sunset Park, Brooklyn *for all the candy eaters and invisible friends*

tacked up oilcloth
to differentiate chaired space
neither friends nor enemies
no sellout

my future in corporate finance
sleeps under the duvet
we owe each other
nothing

determined air scripted
my calling and hanging up
writing and saving
as draft

why flood
the terraformed planet?
and what's with the aggressive
breeding program?

one to one we worked
to pierce fantasy
of sugared people
and tranquil nights

fazed to see and sense
heavy enough with love
our own city
let down, divided

hundreds of work
uncovered lifetimes'
future homes
noodle shop's a nail salon

vintner, fruiterer
celebrity parade
of apoplectic inflatables
trade heat for water

necklaces of cut glass
on gold chains dried out
ecosystems in small bottles
yellow like the sun



Casey Smith Washington, D,C. *In Realms of Gold* for John Keats

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:
Where are those voices coming from?
There are no voices, there is no sound.
We are thinking about last summer at the lake house.

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:
It looked like a dead animal.
See here it is, I hold it towards you.
My final art project for the spring semester.

I think about my family & they are weird.
A moose once came on to my sister.
"Oh! Please enjoy every part of my body.
I give myself to you," the moose crooned.

Skinny, ugly & nasty body of mine
Amazing, amazing heart of thine
So in these veins red life might stream again.
Was it really not meant to be?

It's not so much life,
It's the living that can be so hard.

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:
Stuck in my head, I can't forget the smell,
Of this living hand, now warm and capable.
I was the guy in the Speedo with the neck tattoo.

I was the one winking at the girl with one eye,
So haunted were our days and
Chilled our dreaming nights.
We rummage through abandoned houses.

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:
It could have been the aerosol I was huffing.
Bad habits are hard to break. With earnest grasping
I sucked my thumb until I was eight. I miss it.



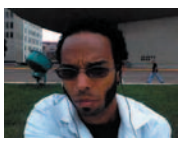
Cecily Iddings Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Our Interest Accrues Interest

All my false friends come
over and party.
Meryl suggests strip
poker instead we talk
of money. Barry's portfolio
is inexhaustible,
Barry inexorable,
Barry. No one's natural
resource. After the gold
standard standards
tended toward
abstraction. I care
for my real friends
so greatly I can't
bear them.
There's just a store
of misunder-
standing in for me.
I imagine them
the conversations
I shy from
when I gain you.
But for everything else
I have credit.
We love olives
and olives are rich,
Sara reminds us
of the Third World.
Where we could be
millionaires, uneasy perhaps
but easier than most.
Meryl on the roof
overlooks the slum
the oligarchy overlooks.
Overnight pennies slap
into our laps automatic
as the moon.
They smell of old
wounds. They hurt
the tender more.

Stephanie Barber is a writer and film-maker. Her most recent book is *Night Moves* (Publishing Genius Press). Her most recent movie is *DAREDEVILS* (see above url).

Kenyatta Jean-Paul Garcia is the author of *What Do The Evergreens Know Of Pining*, *Yawning On The Sands*, and *This Sentimental Education*. He was raised in Brooklyn, worked for a decade as a cook, has a degree in linguistics, and is the editor of *Altpoetics*.



Kenyatta Jean-Paul Garcia
 Albany, N.Y.

In Terms Of

the problem has an address

(how is it) pronoun(ced)

?

an I, a you, they, he or she, it

what can one

say?

indefinitely, trouble lives somewhere

I just know it. You do too.

She said he does also

they choose a weapon

and go.

It is what it is - forget about

what comes

next/ came before

could have been

the dilemma exists

! you hint at a solution.

I can't hear(t) it.

She saw what he didn't

They argued for (h)ours over it.

You is subject

is object

is character developed

developing

development understood after character

remains

only in terms

of actions.

Stephanie Barber



Baltimore
The Writer of Royal Proclamations

the muqaddimah of ibn khaldun holding tight in 7th place

inspires the zsa zsa gabor's of sunnyside

to bet the house on the rest of the field to show

and pray that the favorite

finishes out of the money.

this is the laffer curve of the equestrian world.

a nose becomes shorter as the jockey grows

in sorrow and want.

like anyone i need assurances and

like most everyone else i need

more assurances than most.

All the cool kids
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Bio

Elizabeth Harney was born in 1988 on a military base in Enid, Okla. She grew up on bases in California, Maine, Texas, and Florida, before finally settling in New Jersey. In May 2013 she graduated from New Jersey City University with a B.F.A. in painting. Soon after she was awarded an Artist Fellowship Award at the Vermont Studio Center. She lives and works in Bushwick.

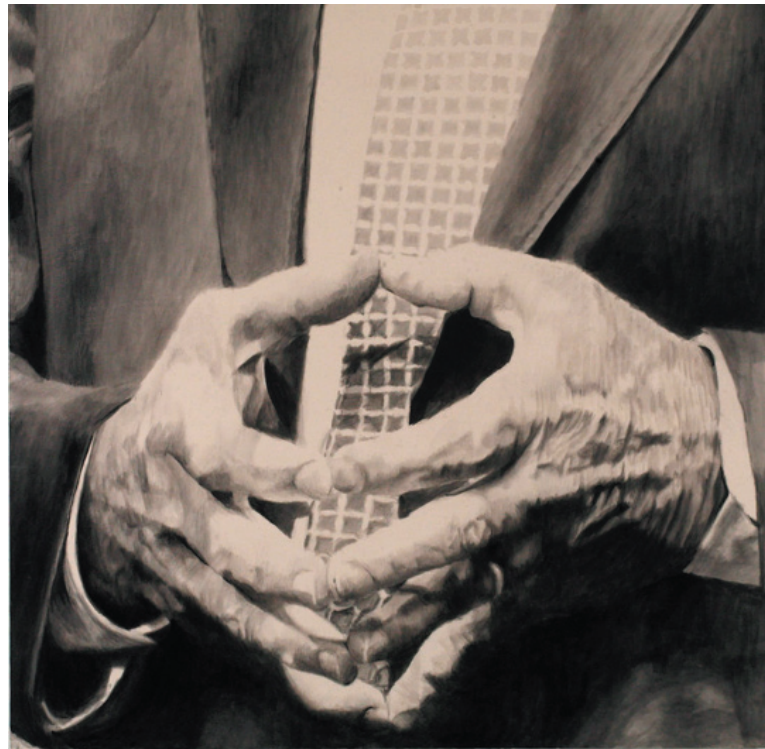
Artist Statement

As a woman raised in a military family, I was inundated with symbols of power, all of which were synonymous with masculinity. My attraction to signs of dominance comes from a desire to appropriate them for myself. Military tradition enforces a narrow masculine ideology that permeates all American culture. This ideology, and its ability to influence, drives my artwork.

My goal is to bring attention to and subvert power. It is through my processes, by which I recreate found images from news outlets, that I absorb the authority. I show power positively and overtly and am, myself, absorbed by it. Through subtle irony I cannibalize it from the inside.

The MQ-9 Drone wood cut print was created through the analog process of hand carving, inking, and printing. The print indexes the 66-foot wingspan of an actual drone in order to give the plane a tangible presence. My paintings of powerful white men are created using only black acrylic paint; the thin application is mostly transparent. Through cropping, revealing the un-gessoed canvas, and focusing on nuanced expression, the illusion of omnipotence becomes explicit.

Elizabeth Harney
Bushwick, Brooklyn



Benedict acrylic on canvas, 48" x 48", 2012.



Mike Duke acrylic on canvas, 48" x 48", 2013.



MQ-9 Reaper Drone 66' x 44", woodcut print on muslin, 2013.

Sing Us a Song You're an Idea Man

Joe Yoga the Novelist, Meet Joe Yoga the Songwriter



BY J.J. HAYES

Look, I can only write the way I write. I have tried miserably and failed at writing about music in any other fashion than writing about what intrigues me, and what I think is important. I should waste your time, dear reader, on things I don't think are important?

For instance, I am suggesting that you go The Sidewalk Cafe on Sat., April 12 for the premiere performance of Joe Yoga's new 20-song cycle. I have objective reasons for thinking this is important and will be beneficial to you, although the latter is presumptuous on my part. I do, however, suggest that you at least consider going to this show.

If you have been following Yoga and/or his bands Downward Dogs and Coach these past few years, then you are probably as intrigued as I am about what is going to go down on that night. Yoga has booked two full hours for an Act I and Act II. It will involve a number of other artists playing (in song) various



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nothing when it interacts with the finite. This kind of makes sense, since otherwise the infinite would obliterate the finite, don't you think? Imagine further that you realize there is an infinity (That there is Love. Or that true statements correspond to something anywhere and everywhere. Or ... whatever.)

So there is this infinity, but does it touch you in its infinitude? Can you rely on it? Imagine further that there is a chance to go to a place where they serve good food and drink, and there are creatures very like you acting out reflections on this very world. Singing the creations of a human in a world, who has taken years to work through these matters. Why it would be like watching an ancient Greek drama in Athens 2,500 hundred years ago, maybe one of the lost ones. But instead of being an ancient Greek you are you and you are here in this world, and there are people willing to spend two hours enacting an artistic creation, in which this and more are embodied in the characters who are singing.

I am not saying it's going to go down like this, but I have reasons for believing that the evening of April 12 may head in that direction.

Or consider this about Yoga: after Alice Cooper ("my first confrontation with the idea of kind of inventing your own identity for yourself") and Public Enemy ("these lyrics and ideas flying by faster than you could really absorb them, the shouting in the background, the Bomb Squad sirens") one early and lasting influence on Yoga was ... Robert Browning. "He combined storytelling with a shorter form," says Yoga, "and that really appealed me, so I started writing poetry. There were others, but he was really the first that got me going. I tried over and over again to write something like 'My Last Duchess.'"

Reading that I went and looked at "My Last Duchess." That poem, it turns out, could stand as an archetype for great songwriting. It is a mysterious dramatic monologue in which one is left wondering whether this Duke merely crushed his last wife's joyful soul, or actually gave the order for her execution, or is regretful for the loss of beauty and goodness. It is all revealed, or concealed, in the Duke talking about a painting of this Duchess which for some reason he keeps behind a curtain. It is a lyric. It is evocative. One is left wondering about the world. Among Browning's greatest poems are dramatic lyrics of this type.

Yoga sees this project in light of his former occupation as a novelist. He says this songwriting cycle "is basically a return to long-form for me. It's basically a novel in 20 songs, or a screenplay without a screen, but I really wanted to take my song ideas and make them into something bigger." I wonder though whether Yoga may finally have written his own "My Last Duchess" and whether we might find it among the songs of this cycle.

But let's get this straight. Great art is not opposed to a good time.

One of the highlights of the recent Winter Antifolk Festival was watching Joe Yoga play bass for Charles Mansfield, who is one of the best songwriters around; ask anybody who has heard his songs. Joe Yoga seemed so fuckin' happy just be playing in this band. It reminded me of how happy Eric Wolfson used to be playing bass behind Dan Penta in The Happy Zealots. I mean Yoga and Wolfson are two extremely talented songwriters, but they just seemed

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to love being there backing up these other great songwriters. After Mansfield's set, I mentioned to Yoga how absolutely loving it all he seemed and he said, "You have no idea how much fun it is to play bass in a rock 'n' roll band."

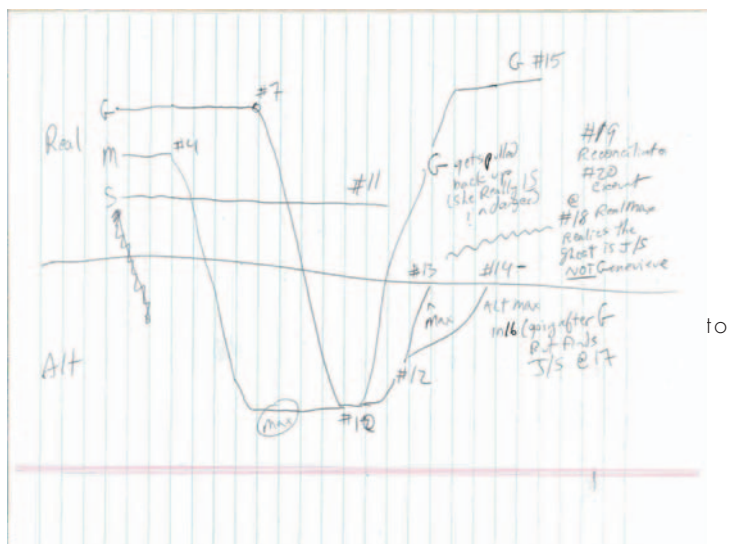
Yet this is the same man who claims "I've always considered myself an idea man first and foremost, art's just a vehicle."

Actually what I am trying to tell you is that I believe both these statements to be true, and that what intrigues me most about this new project of Joe Yoga's is that it is the work of an idea man who loves playing bass in a rock 'n' roll band.

'It's basically a novel in 20 songs, or a screenplay without a screen, but I really wanted to take my song ideas and make them into something bigger.'

characters, including Rebecca Florence in what appears to be the female lead. It's all very mysterious. I think there may be a Greek Chorus. There will be a companion booklet with lyrics, notes, outlines, and errata distributed at the show. Yoga says it is about love between thieves, a meditation on karma vs potential. It features at least one alternate timeline (see below art). It is, however, says Yoga, neither a rock opera nor a concept album.

If this is not enough to intrigue you, let me put it this way. No matter what you think you believe is actually the case, imagine for a moment that we live in a world in which, as St. John of the Cross (I think) pointed out, that the infinite will always appear as



Links

<http://jjhayes.bandcamp.com/>
<http://www.mrjoeyoga.com/>

Bio

J.J. Hayes comes from Staten Island. Sometimes he is a poet, sometimes he's a singer, and sometimes he writes about music and the world.

Joe Yoga is a songwriter, visual artist, and poet from New York City. For years, he has been bringing his music and art to NYC's stages, festivals, subway platforms, and gallery walls. His unique songwriting style and passionate performances have made him a favorite of and a fixture at venues across the city. 20 Songs will be performed at the Sidewalk Cafe (Avenue A and E. 6th Street) on Sat. April 12 at 10:00 p.m.



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Joel Schlemowitz is a Park Slope, Brooklyn-based filmmaker who makes short cine-poems and experimental documentaries. His most recent project, "78rpm," is scheduled to be completed in early 2014. He has taught filmmaking at The New School for the past 15 years.

Big Joy and Cine Magic

Two Screenings at Anthology Film Archives



BY JOEL SCHLEMOWITZ

The ongoing series Show & Tell at Anthology Film Archives recently presented the films of Tomonari Nishikawa. Several works on film were shown, in gauges of many different sizes: super-8, 16mm, 35mm. The films share a common thread of working with the formal elements of image-making: use high contrast black-and-white, experiments in color separation, film photograms, optical soundtracks making aural patterns from the visual element of the film, single-frame exposures rapidly producing a series of images connected by the eye and mind. Many of the works take a restricted set of aesthetic inquiries and let them unfold and play out over the course of the film.

In the short 16mm film, *45 7 Broadway* (2013), the triple intersection in Times Square becomes the basis for the trisection of the additive colors of the cinematic process into their three elements: red, green, and blue. In his description of the work: "The film was shot on black-and-white films through color filters, red, green, and blue, then shots were optically printed onto color films through these filters. The layered images of shots by handheld camera would agitate the scenes, and the advertisements on the digital billboards try to pull ahead of others." The urban polyphony of activity becomes a literal rainbow of fragmented activity: the green tinted taxicab drives transparently through a magenta colored bicycle, passing through each other in further layers of yellow and cyan and aquamarine. It is a film of sheer visual beauty, but also an elegant fusion of aesthetic form and function: the chaotically colorful results of the technique merging harmoniously with the nature of the bustling city scene.

Sometimes a simple premise can produce astonishing results. A series of super-8 works, *Sketch Film 1.5* (2004-07), provides a good example of this. The viewing experience is one of witnessing an act of cine-magic. To call this "cine-magic" is not hyperbole, but how else can we describe the act of watching



45 7 Broadway by Tomonari Nishikawa.

these films? "Magic" suggests a deception, a trick that is hidden from us, and yet there is no such concealment of the illusion: a paradoxical form of magic in which we see how the trick was done, yet are still astonished that it actually works to produce such magic on screen. The camera journeys through the urban landscape of San Francisco, exposing a single frame at a time onto black-and-white (and, in one case, color) film. The edge of a building seen against the sky, the details of the environment: the brown metal covering of a tree pit, the manhole covers, the curb of the sidewalk, the metal shutters of storefronts, the cast iron railing, the outline of a wood-framed San Francisco row house, a lamppost, the white paint on asphalt of a street crossing, the solid, metal grate of a storm drain, the geometric rows of windows on a high rise.

The compositions are framed with a dividing element within each image; a gash echoing from one rapidly replaced composition to the next—creating an overwhelming feeling in the viewer at times, as if witnessing of the ripping of the fabric of the universe down its center. And yet it is astonishing to realize that this is all done in the most elegantly simple manner, by lining up the compositional elements of the frame from one image to the next. The dividing line between the building and the sky creates a diagonal across the rectangle of the screen, and in the very next frame the granite curb of the sidewalk occupies the same position in the frame. The visceral experience of watching Nishikawa's camerawork becomes the film's fruition. The cine-magic happens in the conjunction of the filmic image with the eye and mind of the viewer.

One of the intriguing things about experimental films are those works where we are not just watching the film, but we are watching the process of watching. The flickering projection performances of Bruce McClure, and the avant-garde version of 3-D found in the Nervous Magic Lantern works of Ken Jacobs are not just viewed passively, the eye and brain take an active part in putting visual information into place. And the filmmaker is consciously working with these perceptual phenomena, creating something that does not exist on its own as much as exists in the act of being viewed.

I recall a long while ago reading about the Hollywood montage creator Slavko Vorkapich's postulation of how cuts from one static shot to another create the illusion of movement, through the displacements of the bright and dark areas of one image to the next. Nishikawa's single frame works seem to bring this theorem to the screen. Was he thinking of Vorkapich when he made them, or perhaps it's an example of the old adage about two great minds thinking alike? Regardless of the answer, these films are a worthwhile example of the visceral experience of viewing.

James Broughton was a poet and filmmaker, and the subject of a new documentary shown last year at the Tribeca Film Festival, and recently made a reappearance at Anthology Film Archives.

The film is *Big Joy: The Adventures of James Broughton* by the three-person directing team of Stephen Silha, Renato Teroy, and Jason Jenn. It is an effectively crafted journey through the intertwined life, poetry, and films of Broughton. Broughton's work is often autobiographical, from the direct self-portraiture of the film *Testament* (1974), with emphasis on his childhood in a well-to-do family of San Francisco—including his father, there were bankers on the paternal and maternal sides of the family—to the droll, self-mocking *Adventures of Jimmy* (1950), and the psychoanalytically ripe world of *Mother's Day* (1948). In both life and art the Dionysian aspects of Broughton's psyche became more pronounced over time. *Looney Tom* (1951), an homage to silent comedy, features his lover and collaborator, Kermit Sheets, as a Chaplinesque figure in search of love—although, in the Broughton universe, Looney Tom is more of a happy-go-lucky sex fiend than a coy and mercurial little tramp. *The Pleasure Garden* (1953), produced in 35mm

Broughton's poetry also artfully retrospective in a playful, Edward Lear-like mold; the work of the San Francisco avant-garde, written in the manner of Mother Goose.

in Great Britain, features a diversity of characters in the titular pastoral setting, with Dionysus in female guise waving her magic scarf to bring the prospective couples together. A long ellipsis appears in his career after this work, broken finally by the happenstance of a film festival giving some rolls of color raw stock to several filmmakers, Broughton included, resulting in *The Bed* (1968). By the time of *The Bed*, his most popular work, the veil of propriety has fallen, quite literally, as the film celebrates the nakedness of the many visitors to a bed. The California hills become the setting for an old-fashioned metal bed, with high headboard and flaking white paint, rusting at the seams, making its first appearance in the film with a bit of cinematic trickery, coming over the crest of a hill under its own power. Dionysus appears as a naked saxophone player sitting in a tree, later perched

on the headboard. In the words of Broughton, the bed becomes a stage, or as the perennially droll George Kuchar observes in glib Bronx accent during his appearance in *Big Joy*, "You had a very California feel to it. Beds outside, oak trees, you know, and grassy hills, people hugging one another. I think it's much despised a lot on the East Coast, they consider it ridiculous."

While the film is very much a quintessential work of 1960s sensibility, Broughton's affection for the camera tricks of Georges Melies link it equally to the world of early cinema, the spontaneous appearances and disappearances of the mostly naked characters; jump cuts produced as the camera is stopped and then started again, the conjuring trick of the moving image.

In addition to profiling his work as a filmmaker, *Big Joy* includes the nursery rhyme work of Broughton the poet. Something which might have been easily glossed over since, as the experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage puts it aptly, in his book, *Film at Wit's End*, "[T]hese have been probably the most unpopular, spat-upon, dismissed, ignored poems ever written ... Broughton always insisted on being fey, or gay, or flippant. He would flip the language this way and that, and put it into meters that were considered 'done with' a century ago; yet it would somehow work." The drollness of verse can at times be fiendishly rankling in its coyness, but much as Broughton the filmmaker looks back to the magic of Melies, in *Testament* creating a fictional account of making his first movie as a movie-within-a-movie omnibus of silent film archetypal vignettes, his poetry is also artfully retrospective in a playful, Edward Lear-like mold; the work of the San Francisco avant-garde, written in the manner of Mother Goose.

One of the more interesting aspects of Broughton's oeuvre is the arc of queer sensibility and its interplay with the attitudes of the times in which he worked. Early films of the forties and fifties contain half-coded asides, like exchanges between the pair of athletic men exercising together in *The Pleasure Garden*. His middle period films, *The Bed*, *The Golden Positions* (1970) and *Erogeny* (1976) express a fleshy polysexuality, and in the late works there is an open, joyous, and playful celebration of gay love, as in *Devotions* (1984), made in the eighties with his younger partner and collaborator, Joel Singer.

Regarding Broughton's relationship with Kermit Sheets, beginning in the forties, *Big Joy* includes the observations of the actor Norma Miller. "I assumed they were together," says Miller. "But in those days we did not discuss that. It was a different time. I would never be comfortable letting anyone know that I was gay. Those were the days of the FBI following you around, it was the days where if you had a job you were in constant terror of losing it." But, with the exception of *Dreamwood* (1972), a film interestingly (and perhaps thankfully) absent in the discussion of Broughton's work taking place in *Big Joy*—there is, in Broughton's most enduring creations, nothing of the shadow of guilt and shame one sees in certain films of Curtis Harrington and others. There was something always a bit cheerful and droll in Broughton's creative outlook, even if we learn from *Big Joy* about how as a child he requested his parents reduce from his allowance in response to any of effeminacy, or we read, in the opening sentences of *Seeing the Light*, his short book on filmmaking:

"When I was 30 my greatest consolation was the thought of suicide. But that was three years before I began to make films. What a lot of vicissitude, ecstasy and ennui I would have missed!

"Did the creation of moving black-and-white images save my life? It is certain that I have never seriously contemplated suicide since."

The lifesaving film for Broughton was a collaboration with Sidney Peterson, *The Potted Psalm* (1946), black-and-white, and silent, with an enigmatic plot and fragmentary editing style reminiscent of the avant-garde works of the 1920s. The lack of angst in Broughton's films culminates in *This is It* (1971), a portrait of his young son Orion, with accompanying poem of Zen contentment, proclaiming: "This is it. This is really it. This is all there is. And it's perfect as it is." Except, retrospectively, we might view the film poignantly, as an inversion of the Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller song, voiced by Marlene Dietrich, "Is That All There Is?" Apparently this was not all there was, since late in Broughton's life a new love came calling in the form of Joel Singer, the marriage ended, and the filmmakers of *Big Joy* let us hear the complex drama from all sides, while harmonizing the intermingled narratives of the filmmaker, the poet, and often tangled details of private life remarkably well.

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