



ECLOGUES

graeme bezanson

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by Graeme Bezanson

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by June Kim
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*can we make a home of motion: there is a field
of sheep, vanishing*

The first opera begins underwater. An elephant
Drifts to the ocean floor. Another blonde moonbeam

Sinks into the surface: Light, duplicitous, an actor who
Must convey himself and his subject, who shows one by

Showing the other, who calls in at White Sands, Dover,
Atrial Florida. Rocks unfolded at the sound of our arrival.

An imperceptible wave washed over our homeworld.
Light leapt down from the ladder. Wherever marmalade was

Made was where we were, holding the door for each other.
Coffee, orange peels, steam from the sink and dishes.

Prefabricated houses are becoming more beautiful.
The parakeets won't know how to sing about such joy.

All my closest campadres were named for Idaho
Which was named for nothing. Eleven set out west

To the mountains planted on the horizon
Like a row of cattle's teeth. Ten gathered their clothes

Above their heads and swam to the east
And the school-bus-shaped island. I wandered

From village to village with one boy to carry always
Alongside me two liters of Coca-Cola, one boy

To follow me everywhere with a short-handled spade
To bury me with, wherever I fell.

To orient yourself you must first hold the book
Open at arm's length and then let the sky

Supersede it. I followed a girl
Who whistled softly, whose feet

Were like houses overlooking the sea. This love
Is not the only love, I thought. I thought how much

Longer must we drive around Los Angeles.
How much further west will the same farms be

Dug up and replanted. Numberless, pink-tinted paths span
From plenitude to vacuum. In orbit, volatilized scientists

Nudge the walls of their canister. The bricks in their
Thought experiments are being ground to sand.

An astronaut's vehicle is at once concrete and imaginary,
Its value propelled by a system of symbolic gestures

Like dance. The potential for communion is then like a young
Patrick Swayze, but is difficult to realize without sacrificing

The more elaborate footwork. So I was thinking about
An orchestra: Whether the music is blaring whom I imitated

And who could perform better is often of no real consequence.
I didn't care where I was, it didn't matter how empty

My ideas or how frightening their echoes. I stuck out
My arm but didn't know what it would stick out into.

Which of the ways I had come
Which I planted with my forefinger

Which I operated as a foil to my ambition
Which amounted to a snowsuit

Which probably stunted my growth
Which prevented my trip to space camp

Which is why I was bent double
Which was the first time I saw the ground

Which is how I arrived at the grate near the public gardens
Which I popped open with my purple thumb

Blinds go up revealing movement as a system
Of ejections, embarrassing piles of clothing,

Walls never painted quite the color
We imagined. Outside in the parking lot

The dumpster levitates like a success story.
I'm here at last. I'm like a man with insurance

Who knows he'll die inexpensively. I am like
A racehorse, I stand up under a blanket of

Unpoetical material. In the province I came from
They are shiny and wheat-gold as an agrarian fable.

In the city I left they are rejoicing, it's ambiguous,
I don't know whether to call them.

The minister of exploration stops time with his
Coughing fits. Unwrap your success kit and enter

The long room with tall girls at the end of it.
More color appears on the wide expanse of

Lake Winnipeg. Black cube where your
Name is. *People sink into my heart*

And are free. Photons fall from beneath the
Kitchen cabinets. Rain spills into the irregular

Prism between our buildings, tearing
A tiny hole in winter. The horse was

A flare on the hillside. The next problem
Is to know when the dead are truly dead.

Ambiguity is good for children but bad for soldiers.
It's unclear about boy scouts. I'm going on a camping trip

And bringing green bananas. I'm going on a camping trip
And bringing Grand Bahama. I'm going on a camping trip

And bringing Georg Büchner. I miss you. Put your hands up
In the atmosphere if you know what I'm talking about.

In cartoons a pencil being dragged down a washboard
Can be used to simulate the sound of a sputtering hoofbeat.

In a physical sense, then, movement is separable
From actual objects. Matter is mobility, but is

Never enacted directly and so is like a dropping bomb
Or a valve in your heart. A nation gathers together

Around the deaths of their greatest racehorses.
All of our greatest racehorses are still animated.

To see over twelve feet of elephant grass you need
An elephant. The sky was full of dark letters, asterisks,

Omissions. Everyone took hands and represented
A giant ring of benzene. It raised morale enormously.

Wherever the camels spat, dandelions
Sprouted immediately. Wherever oil

Bubbled to the surface, mice gathered on holiday.
When night fell on the burning city we disbanded,

A parliament of shepherds. The stars blew
Strings of complicated molecules in our direction.

The astronaut's vehicle is always disintegrating,
Splinters arcing away from each other

Like fragments of a decaying particle
Loosed from their cumber and scudding:

Idiots, ungimballed, deaf to their
Autocorrecting hearts. Everything that falls

Goes softly like a generation of disoriented fruitflies,
Like ashes, like a diffuse litter of condensed light.

It's been a long time since they've felt good in Tuscaloosa.
In Bathurst they're black and weeping pomegranate tears.

In an underground bunker they're teaching the alphabet
To gorillas, sloths, animals with articulated fingers.

The aye-aye's impulse is to reread everything.
A climber shedding her antecedents

Transforms the tree house into a sniper's
Nest into a permanent dwelling

Growing so ancient in the process that she is
Descended from nothing. Clairvoyance or

Astigmatism, a clear consensus was never reached.
To my mind she was far sounder than an enormous bell.

My brothers are as sad as possible. My sister
Is full of a quality of light most closely associated with

American diners. Four-fingered helicopters
Drone on above us, conclusive of nothing,

Only themselves. In Ithaca they're gathering
In their stone-faced kitchens. I walk like an astronaut

In dressy flipflops. Like an astronaut,
My most heroic period will be my decline.

I lit two long white candles and held them until they lifted
Free of my hands and rose and rose outwards

Into the nighttime, devoted, neighbor appearing in the hat
She used to wear. We can go no further than each other.

So I laid myself down by the banks of the crossable
River, which seemed to swell as it reached for

The horizon, which was set there like a digital clock,
Like a countdown, like the hardest bone to break.

Music parts to reveal the famous antiquity, a fine lace
Of gasoline in the tapwater, an anomaly of pinkish light.

See now how the cheek of South America pulls away from
Our kisses. My wife, the compound-adjectived,

Dappled by a net of starlight, hands in a deathless
Watermelon: Everything you find in the trough of a U

Is rising: Peregrine insects, sap in the fir tree, imperative
Sentences containing just one or two words. Or you might have

No views on the rolling table, borrowing where it's cheap to borrow,
Sleeping where the beds are huge. This is why we're in your

Wheelhouse, looking for sapphires. Refracted by treetops.
I can't tell if I'm the flotilla or another wayward curl.

An astronaut tumbles through the gaptooth sky.
Herold "Muddy" Ruel called catcher's equipment

The tools of ignorance. Venus Flytrap said
The neighborhood is nothing. The waves went on

Spinning and spinning long after we gave up
Our weightlessness, a winding spool.

We listened for the storm to pass and
Lit the way with what was left.

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graemebezanson.com