

Eclogues by Graeme Bezanson

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Graeme Bezanson's chapbook, *Eclogues*, from H_NGM_N press's portable document format series, was published October of last year. Scrolling through the chapbooks on H_NGM_N's [site](#), I was taken by the cover of this collection. Designed by June Kim, the title *Eclogues* is characteristic of pastorals yet it clashes with the digital blue background it rests on. The pattern also speaks to the past and the modern, with its blending of floral and geometric designs, and it fits the collection perfectly. Also, to note, Bezanson is currently the editor-at-large and a founding editor of *Coldfront*. Online since 2006, *Coldfront* publishes poetry reviews, poetry and music news, and visual poetry.

To begin talking about eclogues we must first look to Virgil. The character Meliboeus in Virgil's "Eclogue I" says,

It's not that I'm envious, but full of wonder.
There's so much trouble everywhere these days.
I was trying to drive my goats along the path
And one of them I could hardly get to follow;

Bezanson's poems seem to have no trouble seamlessly leading me along their path. Classical style eclogues have moved from Virgillian shepherds like Meliboeus to fishermen, sea gods and then London high society. Where we land with Bezanson is with astronauts, perfect timing given the many space-related films finding us via Hollywood. Thankfully, there is tension here in *Eclogues*, but not the kind we find in other space-related media. In an early poem, Bezanson focuses in on these astronauts, writing:

In orbit, volatized scientists

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

Bezanson is interested in the tension found in subtle motion, a shuttle drifting in space, a race horse moving down a track. None of the poems are titled, which give us the ability to drift from one into the next. The next poem begins:

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

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

The more elaborate footwork.

In the chapbook's epigraph, from A.R. Ammons, we are asked, "can we make a home of motion:". The answer, Bezanson shows us in these nineteen succinct, cohesive pages, is certainly yes. He works at defining movement in such new ways.

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 definition of motion would also require a definition of matter; however, through association we so often connect sound with movement. The sound of speed becomes speed itself. If watching TV the action is represented to us through light and sound waves. Except for the beating of the heart and the eyes scanning the TV, our own movement is suppressed.

In *Eclogues*, there is a wealth of wondrous metaphors. In the last three lines quoted above we consider that "Matter is mobility," and find that this is a qualified statement, we cannot enact the action or movement. A far-off general orders the dropping of a bomb; we have no control over the sinoatrial node which regulates our heartbeat. Bezanson has taken eclogues and successfully given us a modernization of them. The movement continues throughout, with Bezanson writing in another poem:

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.

The quixotic speaker and his sidekick move through this strange and modern pastoral in search of home. As we near the end of this collection, the movement doesn't slow and we find a fitting theme of disintegration taking hold. Bezanson closes a later poem with this: "In dressy flipflops. Like an astronaut,/ My most heroic period will be my decline."

With any movement, there is a direct relationship to disintegration. This collection is our shuttle, reentering the atmosphere, glowing, burning, and holding all we hold precious.

Mike Salgado is a poet and Training Senior Specialist with Eurofins Lancaster Labs. He is also a poetry and art editor for Marathon Literary Review. You can find more of Mike's work in *Third Point Press*, *Lehigh Valley Vanguard*, and *G3: Genes, Genomes, Genomics*. He has poetry forthcoming in *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Experimental Literature* by tNY.Press. Mike currently resides in Lancaster, PA where he is active in the growing literary community. Find him online at [Michael Salgado Poetry & Further](#).