

Six Poems



Rae Armantrout

Count

1

The future
is a sweetener

children have to learn
to crave.

2

As cushy clouds
in full sun

are taken
to betoken—

Provisions

To suck dry.

To mean anything
by.

By itself, each breath
is a sample.

I come in, decide
what's missing.

Ions,
a concentration gradient,
and a means of transcription

just to scratch the surface.

Just to get ahead
of myself

I will need a special
proboscis.

Destinations

“You want nuggets; You got nuggets. Here!
You gonna *not* eat nuggets after I bought them.
You're gonna just eat Cheetos” she snaps

“when we’re almost to our destination?”

Yes, she said “destination.”

What story follows them where they’re headed?

Alone at another table, a man who, like the kids,
holds a bag of Cheetos, cackles and coughs

Where does he fit in?

“Oh, I dropped my candies,” he says,
in a high-pitched tone, as if imitating,
maybe mocking, a child’s voice.

The Mysteries

When seen from a certain angle,
she is “mysterious and dark.”
You love that about her.

Angle or distance?

*

Or you’ve got her number.

She’s a nihilist,
an exhibitionist,

a tad precious,
pointlessly fastidious,

hermetic, cold.

*

People are obvious
until you love them.

Then they're black boxes,
deep-sixed flight recorders,
or presents that won't open.

This is why
the word why
so often sounds
like an accusation.

Dimensions

Think of

a cowboy hat
on a bobble-head
AI
atop the dash
of an electric car
in China

as depth.

Then length
is the difference

between these bare ribs
of cloud

and your white hair
somewhere

in the scrum.

Fox

To cover the material,

“trace the historic path
of a doomed train
line.”

*

To identify

as

a cloth fox
puppet.

*

To see your way
into
a circle of six blue flowers
beneath an indigo plateau
itself composed
of tiny blossoms –

the “hydrangea.”

*

To be named.

Some deranged water

Talking Points

Processing plant blames
living conditions.

*

Incredulity
mimics boredom.

*

Children prefer to listen
to a talking animal.

This tells us something
about the world,

but what?

*

There is thought
at work here,

but it's not traceable

to a known speaker
or agent.

*

"I'm Tiger, Tigger, Trigger,"
says the sock puppet.