POEMS

Rae Armantrout

NO MATTER

First person
is relative
placement of the phantom
limbs and organs, a holding
pattern which rises
and sinks from sight
to suit me.
I like the play
of light because
it touches me
and doesn't;
it stimulates
the way I feign being
touched and turning over,
(in my grave)
rustling.

LOCKS

1

Place things
in relation
when I want them
permanent.

   Curved
rose vine, a
standing wave.

2

Traffic
in surplus meaning
quite heavy of late.

Bulbs light up

on the cactus-shaped
                facade.

            3
Binary
alterations which
appear
to undulate,

sounded as if from
successive landings

            4
When to notice
something further
is to take a sacrament.

Ritual switch.
Photos of lighthouses
line the walls
        of banks.

THE UNIT

An inner
register jingles
punctuating sentences.

On the far side
of the napkin dispenser,
where the sugar packets
must be,

music rationalizes,
temporizes, continues.

Urgent but unctuous
soap actor
stressing every
third syllable.

"Now how much
time have I

got before Dad
and the cops
bust in?"

THE GARDEN

Oleander: coral
from lipstick ads in the 50's.

Fruit of the tree of *such* knowledge.

To "smack"
(thin air)
meaning kiss or hit.

It appears
in the guise of outworn usages
because we are bad?

Big masculine threat,
insinuating and slangy.

LATE RETURNS

1

Point of view's
a lot of
demonic possession at first.
Later we say
"to each his own."

The octave changes
when the finger
touches pink. What's
embarrassing is
getting caught

reading music
if there is no score,
just a wild chirrup
from the crossed wires.
Did you call?

2

Perspective is a can of worms
but nausea defends us
against distraction

as bird noise seethes
from everywhere at once
unlike the human

fugue where each note
is compensatory,
ringing "true".

3

As if
a flock of
sweeping exits
evened out
the score,
spreading enough
"space-time continuum"

for someone
to hear the phone.
One is
the V.I.P. lounge
where I know
it will come back to me
or vice versa.