

## Ventriloquy Is The Mother Tongue

by

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### “VENTRILLOQUY IS THE MOTHER TONGUE”

—Rae Armantrout

I.

Practice alone—

“Isn’t the torture you might think.”

“It’s another kind.”

I see.

“Yes. You do.”

I throw the ball to myself.

It’s over my head. Where has it gone?

“You threw it up.”

But my hand threw it.

“Your mind.”

My right hand.

“Your right mind.”

I don’t know where it’s gone.

“Your left is poised to catch.”

“I caught a bird.”

“Don’t take my lines.”

“I caught a bird.”

“You caught nothing.”

“The ball will come down into my hand.”

“How that will hurt.”

II.

“What preposition fills the space?”

“Thought preps. Thinks. Thought does not –*sition*  
‘thought.’”

“And if I remove the final ‘t’?”

“An exception or attitude. Linear determines.”

“You rely on time, not an other.”

“Unreliable. Say *one*— not *he, she, they*.”

III.

“Memory gestures across”  
“an axis.”

“It’s simple: Intersperse knowledge”  
“into beauty art and”

“TA-DA!”

“Dummies gather round”  
“a high school track.”

“Memory chants”  
“G-O— let’s go, let’s go. G-O— let’s go!”

“More slowly.”

“The mascot need not be present.”

“Memory chainsaws”  
“backyard wood.”

“Mechanical hand vibrate. Steady the wood.”

“Trust the one holding the chainsaw.”

IV.

“Needle on record.”  
“Dance little Pasadena.”

“Picnic table overturned.”  
“Sing Voltron Transformer.”

“Here is where I forget.”  
“Here is where you’ll realize  
you’ve forgotten.”

“Is a person here now?”

“The coin edges into concentrate.”  
“The record needle bubbles into 45.”

V.

“Nothing is gathered”

“into more meaningful.”

“I’ll go by water.”

“Stream or hose?”

“I’ll perspire.”

“Fish humidity?”

“SwimFish. AirBubble. GillMouth.”

“Yes, but there is the pill.”

NothingCongeals into NothingAmnesia  
into NothingPleasure into NothingPain

““Is this sleep?””