

THE
INVENTION
OF
HUNGER

RAE ARMANTROUT

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RAE ARMANTROUT



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Rae Armantrout

NATURAL HISTORY

I

Discomfort marks the boundary.

One early symptom was the boundary.

The invention of hunger.

"I could *use* energy."

To serve.

Elaborate systems in the service of
far-fetched demands.

The great termite mounds serve
as air-conditioners.

Temperature within must never vary
more than 2 degrees.

2

Which came first
the need or the system?

Systematic.

System player.

Scheme of Things.

The body considered as a functional unit.
"My system craves calcium."

An organized set of doctrines.

A network formed for the purpose of ...

"All I want is you."

3

was narrowing their options to one,
the next development.

Soldiers have elongate heads and massive mandibles.
Squirtgun heads are found among fiercer species.
Since soldiers cannot feed themselves, each requires
a troupe of attendants.

4

Her demands had become more elaborate.

He must be blindfolded,
(Must break off his own wings)
wear this corset laced tight
(seal up the nuptial cell)
to attain his heart's desire.

Move only as she permits
(Mate the bloated queen each season)
or be hung from the rafters.
How did he get here?

5

Poor baby,
I heard your hammer.

The invention of pounding.

"As soon as it became important
that free energy be channelled."

Once you cared to be
set off
from the surrounding medium.

This order has been preferred
since improvement was discovered.

The moment one intends to grow
at the expense.

When teeth emerge

Demand for special treatment
was an early symptom

THE DARK

Particular

figment
of flesh.

Grasping.

Lone. Firm. Felt. There.

Mindlessly?

"When you feel the urge, bear down!"

Great urge to rain

YOU FLOAT

You dazzle all eyes by increasing.

You wear a cross of gold, a bit of history,
regions, riot gear, polemics.

Every familiar piece
made of delectable candy.

You eat chocolate "lentils"
from France. Butterscotch barley.

You float above necessity, shooting.

*

You restore order with
a lead crystal gavel,

sleek periodicity.

You float on frosty-colored hiring freeze,

see no major damage,
danger to Niagara Falls
or evidence of spreading.

You seek only
to impersonate Queen Victoria.

You float above the state of nature
in a miniature Japanese cart.

*

You seek only to spangle
essentials
with rhinestones.

HYPNO-SEXISM

AUTOPSY
wink from theatre marquees.

You wear long strands
of sign language.

You float above refugees,
dazzle all eyes with searchlights

FICTION

When the woman's face contorted and she clutched the railing for support, we knew she would die for this was a film with the set trajectory of fiction.

*

When she looked down at the birthmark on her leg, it did not seem out of place like a blemish. Rather like a landmark on a loved terrain. She had always answered "no" with a touch of indignation when people asked if she had burned herself. But when she saw her bare leg in the mirror, the red splotch surprised her. From the alien perspective it appeared extraneous.

*

The measure of fear is the distance between an event and its mental representation. Small doses were sometimes taken for pleasure. Distortion locked in the funhouse and tickets sold.

*

Her month old son would really watch her now, she hoped. After three days she should seem 'strangely familiar.'

*

The old architecture.

Roof over
the tongue

*

Hands wandering netherworlds. A sense of self starts in
the mouth and spreads slowly.

*

pacifier. Lost again and
crying because empty.

"He's just a baby."

"He's just hungry."

"He's just scared."

The poor vacuum!
as best he can

*

Her elderly father said the baby looked "like a wise little
old man."

*

He predicted her child would be male. His motive was
obvious. He insisted this baby would look Irish as he
did - himself reborn in a form she must love. She hated
such transparency. "When have your hunches paid off
before?" she asked. She planned to give birth to a girl

who resembled her husband's family or, perhaps, no one
at all. An utterly new countenance. When a grandson
was born who did resemble him, her erstwhile hostile
father grew doting. A superstitious streak she fought a-
gainst made it difficult not to accept the prophecy entire-
ly now, with all its implications.

*

Furthering the story.
Furthering
'the ends of the species'

*

Driving imitated sanity.
Blurred gargoyles shrank into the past.
Why should she notice or care?

*

When her husband was late she imagined him dead. Now
that he had a son, she feared, he could be killed on the
highway.

*

"Everything's a message," her friend said. And her son's
birth injury must be a sign, symbol of some weakness in
her thinking or her life.

*

crying because lost. The growing

fibers of desire cannot
locate ...

*

Fuss Balloon. Squirm Bag. The hero's nicknames described unexpected animation.

*

In the Bach fugue it was difficult to know which theme was the traveller with whom one should identify. One's self

*

In his old age he went mad. Any stress, including the imminent operation, returned him to an incident that occurred during WWII. The 'Japs' had torpedoed his ship and it had almost sunk. Now, whenever he got agitated, he would yell, "We're taking on water." This idea was like a painted screen let down between himself and the particulars of his danger.

*

The French reserve a special past tense for fictions.

*

She seemed to enjoy each new crisis as if it were a complication in the plot of a comedy, a mere detour en route to the happy resolution she was still expecting 'after this' old 'after this' dear 'after this'

RELIEF

"A son who's
taken over the story," she said.
With relief?

Compact
envoy from limbo - demanding
candy, toy trains. Manic
circuitry!

Do you always read *escape*
into mysteries?

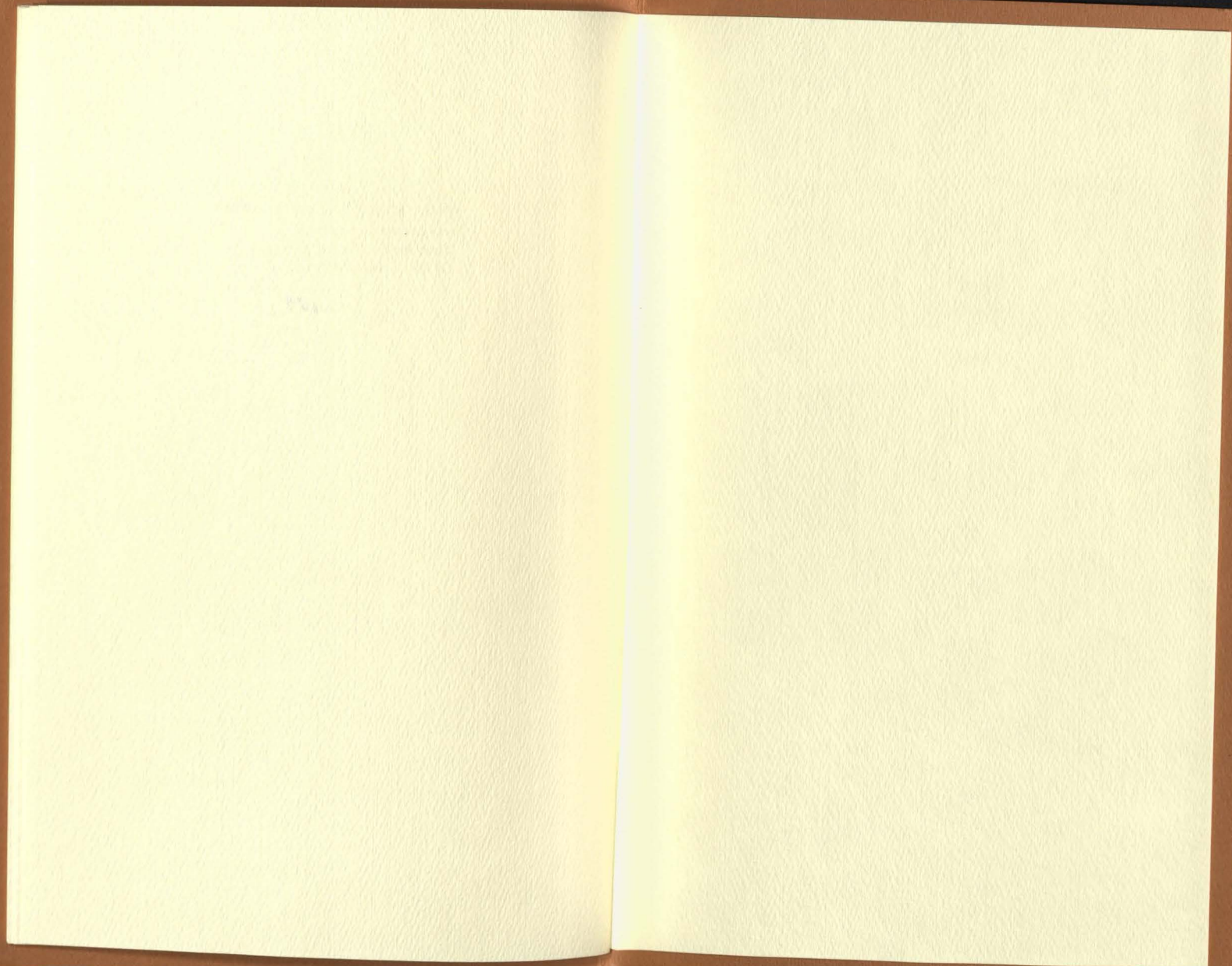
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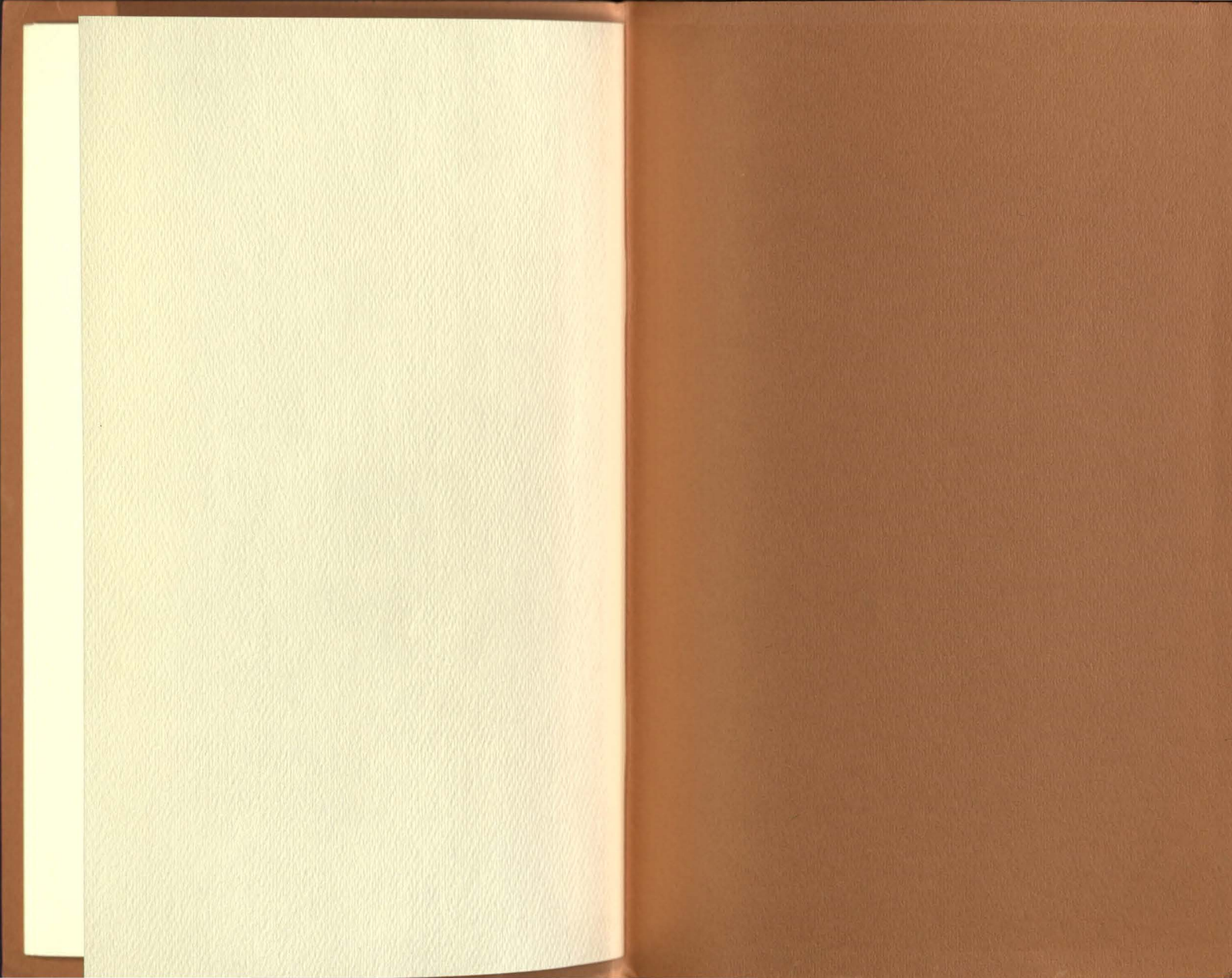
spider on the cold expanse
of glass, three stories high
rests intently
and so purely alone.

I'm not like that!

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