



ELENA KARINA BYRNE

LANGUAGE FABLE

—civilization depending on it

Because water, fire. Because food.

Because our “yes” was in Provençal, because our hunger-worth ate
in a Feast of Lanterns, light caught in the mouth, human.

Babel: traders and navigators.

Slang-bearings to verb a name, scruple, oh uneasiness origin.
God confounded, and does.

Gender on its knees for the impolite flourishing end
sentence in Japanese,
not a simple yes or no there, to go in argument, back,

to *hurry* and *obscene*,
to flower-crush with Shakespeare
who fleshed us *barefaced* and *lonely*.

Could it primitive-be Persian
that Eve spoke to Adam, poetic? I don't believe
in them, their hour past eternity, but

that Keats's *willful choir of gnats* still darkens our throats, or
tongue

of the Philippines, Ilocano, finds three
words for *this*, in visible objects, a fourth for those out
of view, fifth for the ones that
no longer exist. Shut

your trap. Time-woe. Bite of an asp.



Your now-anatomy, proverbial,
ashes in a garden.
Your Darwin's fire beetle still
pinned-burning to black paper.

Hold on.
Hold your tongue.

The prisoner dies and wakes again, dies,
electric chair's blue flame playing
at the base of his spine . . .