

## John Baglow / THREE POEMS

### BABEL

And the Lord said, Behold, they are  
one people, and they have all one  
language; and this is only the be-  
ginning of what they will do; and  
nothing that they propose to do will  
now be impossible for them. Come,  
let us go down, and there confuse  
their language, that they may not  
understand one another's speech.

—Genesis II: vi, vii.

perhaps it all comes down to  
this smoky room and your momentary inattention,  
your glance to my left or right a background of voices  
and not one phrase distinct.

clearly we had forged ourselves  
in stolen fire  
and then we had nothing to say to each other.  
words too were possessions  
treasured by force. interpreters seized  
and held power.

out of the colossal building  
we panicked, torn from each other's arms.  
our wasteful prayers were polyglot,  
each word hieratic;  
visions warned us home  
and made their own contacts.

now in my hiding place  
of refusing to talk, i am the quarry.  
i clear my throat  
and create my own narrow tower,  
the upper of rooms alight with windows.

## MEMORY

i.

i threw my white bones in the air:  
they joined  
where i write.

ii.

there were opal waters,  
floors the colour  
of old honey, a portrait

of welcoming fire . . .  
*a gargoyle sang in its cage*  
*like a cricket:*

*something of wood*  
*gone green and sinewy*  
*danced on four legs.*

iii.

this nest in the attic.  
the heart, its  
good beginning.

## MEDIATED VIEW

through miles of dirty glass  
i see you touch  
a skin so rough and cold  
(my own, keeping the world  
apart)

you cannot tell,  
nor could, where i begin

a wisp of sound across  
the ugly wires, you would  
sing to me, beloved  
(the words so unimportant,  
love's the thing)

green grass invade  
the rare red earth

or so it feels, tanned limbs  
to take the mountain exercise,  
warming the stone; your fingers  
(dear for the effort, daring  
to hold the sheer)

will slip, of course  
but have me, just the same, a moment