

CHARLES BYRNE

An Argument From Theology

Were woman from man,
oughtn't she be an *an*?
Instead, she conjoins
an *o*, a *w*,
and so is supervened
by him. In fact, to use
the language of God,
she is the breath in
his nostrils, though in truth
she breathes instead
into his navel,
hand on his breast, hand
on his rib, as she
shapes him from the mud
of her womb. In the end,
though, one wonders why

it should matter who
came from whom, since we're
here, and that is not
in dispute, and what's
more, would it not be
preferable to know
how one thought follows
another, or the genesis

of thought at all, or
to explain how *won't*
can derive from *will*,
or for that matter,
will from *wish*? Since *word*
has been wooed from *world*,

the tongue has been
the duplicitous
utensil of ruination
and woe, able, in
its newfound capacity,
after consumation,
after love, to construe
all and everything
in every possible
manner – yet who knew?
The bill and coo of two
tongues, knotted in linguistic
ardor so that they forge
the first letter and
the first word, *I*. Who
take the lay of the land:
river leg and foot
of hill, head of mountain
and arm of tree, kidneyed
stone and décolletaged
skein of geese, while swallows
gauge the flood-wombed field
from the darkening sky,

and somewhere in
a wooded mountain
stream a long-shadowed
woodsman stands plumb,
were his wont, waiting for
the sound to materialize
from his naked hands
of the riving of gill
from caudal fin
and the showering
of roe upon the face
of the water.