

JUDITH BAUMEL

Mother Tongues

1. Praying a Niggun

Ya na na na na na na ya na na na na na na
Bim bam bim bam bim bim bam
Ya na na na na na na ya na na na na na na
Lai diddle diddle dai dai dai dai diddle dai.

The mystics say melody was our first embrace.

How distant that moment. I want words in my eyes,
the silent embrace before
a tune cleaves my childish breast.
How broken and long ago it was before words.

The stone that my father refused
is now the head cornerstone.

2. Cleaning House

After years speaking it my brain
is tired. It does not want any more
to remember the snap front house
dresses with shirred sleeves.
It does not want to touch terry

towels smeared with grime where
hands swipe after soapless rinsing.
Newspapers and magazines stacked
on tables, chairs, floors, weary me
who does not want to hear cluck
or hiss when my cortex misses the mark.