

Jennifer Jeremiah

Mother Tongue: Language of Clay

My baby pushes through my skin, stressed,
straining to emerge through the hole of her gaping mouth,
an incision to this world.

But what is my baby without her swaddling of sari?
Dare she climb from her coffin of water and sit
among the moth's bearded nest?

Which is life? Which is death?

Her arms pound wildly into air,
mimicking the standing ovation
of trees.

Her highchair is a cut torso, a stump,
with still-bulging roots,
one ankle over the other.

Her hairs are husks, woven into thick braids.
Her pacifier, the skull of a mushroom.

She dreams of lying against the tender hair of moss,
tantalizing the spider sacs of wounded ovulation,
squeezing storm clouds into juice.

My baby takes her first ride atop a beautiful donkey,
her face against its tuft of mane.

She sees mountains in the plains, she feels the heat
of the world's uterus and the heat of many worlds.
She sees soldiers curled in trenches, the fetal position.

She rests on the bloated belly of a jackfruit.

My baby now speaks the language of clay.