

## On Reading her Story

She stood at the crossroads of her life for him  
she stood there denuded of the poundage of her everyday.

He had asked her to leave her baggage behind  
promised her that they would start afresh  
that he would always be there for her  
she lugged the weight of the moments  
she couldn't have left behind.

All the raindrops on her leaves  
all his poems they would read aloud  
all the coffee bills they could laugh at  
all her fresh ferns, spear grass,  
train tickets and egret feathers,  
a small water-bottle and some money  
lipstick and comb,  
also memories of scratches on her dry barks  
yellow leaves at her feet  
in short, her bare essentials and the whole of Sukna Forest Range.

She waited for him there  
through all the droplets of water  
that formed in the mouth of the taps  
fell one by one  
she waited for him there  
until she was hungry and not hungry anymore  
she waited for him there  
until the last train left the platform  
until the bodies around wrapped blankets  
turned dead on the benches  
until she was unburdened of all the tearing noises the world makes

until it was time to return home

*Zinia Mitra teaches English in the University of North Bengal. Her travelogues and articles have been published in The Statesman, her reviews, articles, translations in books and journals, including Indian Literature. Her books include: Indian Poetry in English: Critical Essays, Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra: Imagery and Experiential Identity and Twentieth Century British Literature: Reconstructing Literary Sensibility, Interact (co-edited). Her online articles include "A Science Fiction in a Gothic Scaffold: a reading of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" (Rupkatha Journal), "Master of Science and Non-Sense" (Parabaas), "Why does the Negro speak of Rivers" (Teesta Review), "Contemporary Indian Theatre: Theatricality and Artistic Crossovers" (Asiatic IJUM Journal of English Language and Literature). Her poems have been published in Muse India, Ruminations, Contemporary Literary Review, Kavya Bharati, East Lit. Indian Literature, Asian Signature and Setu. She is on the editorial board of Teesta Review.*

*The Pangolin Review, Issue 13, November 2019*