

*Basudhara Roy***Keeping In**

The world shutters up. I follow suit.  
Only to realize there's no one place  
where I fully belong. Home, walled in,  
loses concavity. Flattens out like a lounge,  
a place of transit wanting one to only  
bide patiently. To not stay, grow, belong.

I walk our rooms like lines of a poem  
I have always known by heart. Only now,  
there is more here. Fear lines the walls like  
dense memories of finger-prints. Silence has  
more questions to ask. Laughter finds ways  
to avoid mirrors. Suspicion stretches wearily

under the dining table like a homeless cat. I  
feel its thick fur under my feet. Condiments,  
grains, I have never befriended before, stare  
me in the face. They promise my famished  
nightmares boiling pots, well-fed hearths ablaze.  
Do I have enough for our need, I ask myself,

but having never really learnt need's arithmetic,  
I let go. I decide, in walling in, I must play host to  
them all. I scrub floors, water plants, offer damp  
clothes, hair, pillows to the sun. I allow myself,  
for a moment, to be taken in by the unchanged  
smell of coconut oil on my palms. Their little

noses pressed to the glass, the children's  
longings remind me of the world's edges,  
of tender fish hungers at an aquarium's  
corners, of caged birds, of freedom on a  
leash. I dig out with both hands the gravel  
in the heart, beckon to the brood, sing a song.

### **The Premise of a Promise**

Not every  
 promise, they will dismiss, is a  
 promise. And if promises, they say, are meant  
 to be broken, is a promise merely a word that's spoken  
 and if some promises indeed are to be honoured and kept,  
 how would those few be marked from there stand who  
 shall aver their date is due or crown the one who keeps  
 them true and what will be fall them who miss and  
 who maintains the defaulter list and how vast,  
 how long, how wise, how small, who  
 knows what's a promise  
 at all?

But not till the  
 moment you train your eyes to the  
 bewilderment of words do you realize there  
 is no ground beneath a promise's feet for it's a word  
 destined to seldom meet its yearned intent and were you  
 steadily set to pursue its bent, you would find a promise in  
 its utter steadfastness is simply a word peeping over a  
 fence and in a moment's heady assurance,  
 performing a turn in the air over  
 its temporal tense.

It's the  
 epiphany of a consonant,  
 a vowel's satori, a desire's wild pirouette.

Its ambition defying its drab finitude, it seeks  
 the future's embrace in a dreamy ball room promenade  
 aspiring always to close the gap, to bear into tomorrow  
 today, and pin the moment to eternity in an utterance's  
 resolute way, forever in love, always in medias res,  
 succumbing relentlessly to gravity's call,  
 forever poised in an arabesque  
 in time, a victim always  
 of its tireless  
 fall.

**Basudhara Roy** is Assistant Professor of English at Karim City College, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India. An alumna of Banaras Hindu University, she holds a Ph.D. in diaspora women's writing from Kolhan University, Chaibasa. Her areas of academic interest are diaspora writing, cultural studies, gender studies and postmodern criticism. As a poet and reviewer, her work is featured/upcoming in anthologies and magazines like *The Helter Skelter Anthology of New Writing in English*, *The Aleph Review*, *The Kali Project*, *The Poetry Society of India*, *Mad in Asia Pacific*, *Teesta*, *Borderless*, *Muse India*, *Shabdadhguchha*, *Cerebration*, *Rupkatha*, *Triveni*, and *Setu* among others. She is the author of two books, *Migrations of Hope* (Criticism; New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2019) and *Moon in My Teacup* (Poetry; Kolkata: Writer's Workshop, 2019). Her second poetry collection, *Stitching a Home*, is forthcoming this year.