

When I scan your letter, left to right,
seeking light between spaces,

I wonder if it is the way my grandmother
sifted wheat or the lentils in a chalni.

I loved that rattling sound of her work
back and forth, she'd swing the thali,
picking out small kankars, only leaving
what her family could imbibe.

But how do I tell you all this when I have
not seen you in over 25 years.

It feels like another dimension in my short
stay here in geological time.

Instead, my palms upturned cup the sky
as if in a drought, searching for rain.

Bodies in the night slipsliding into ease.

How do we travel back? What if we never

have the chance to go back home
before dying? Like my mother in her 70s

who is too frail to make the voyage back
as if to a dying star whose time is of another.

In the city I once lived where you reside
on the pavement where people gather

to sip coffeetea, words etched in concrete:

In the space between the lines, not dedicated

You too can gather the distance
in your hands, for I am too feeble
to travel back to you.