

panthers in the city

somewhere in Bombay the sea purrs

i wake in a sweat to the ghostly padding of a sleek body
– a panther a shadow

thatha curled grey and soft against the afternoon golden
green unfurling a time in which these
terrible (beautiful) beings
roamed the Smallest of Forests burgeoning
restlessly in the middle of Goregaon East

i swelter awake into the night

peering into the ink for panthers
stealing through my room

for langurs crowding my window ledge
in the languid amber sunlight

of the Smallest of Forests burgeoning
restlessly in the heart of Film City

until one morning the trees are pruned and plucked
shutters and sharp light planted in fields

thatha curled grey and soft under some
choking river and

i still peer into the ink -

the sea in my lungs the salt
of its flesh rotting bitter and sweet

the ghost of a panther the ghost of a city

cat leaping from my window
into an endless night.