

In a Night of Rain

Behind this time of rain, the old town
stinking of mould and wet dogs' skins,
a mist of embarrassed thoughts slowly sweeps
the dark space at the river's edge where
our homeless women have put up their huts.
There's a sound of crying in there,
of an evening jasmine being born,
the sounds of satisfaction after love's being made.
Who cares why this frail flower raised its head
and smiled? Or when one loved
he merely quickened his death?
On a night such as this something
goes far away, into a world where
no one can follow anyone. An hour when
remembrance is vague, the unknown coastline
of a land disappearing into the sea. A time
when indecipherable words of a lost language
filter down the mossed stairs from the empty mouths
of men. Here
a man's heart is moved, but the feeling is needless
like that of serving my country which hangs above me:
a tall, rosewood-framed portrait of an ancestor
that had lost its light and meaning—
in that relentless space
where the water doesn't wet the earth anymore,
but has lost its purpose, like a benediction.

— *Jayanta Mahapatra*