

Riverfront (Moulmein Poem)¹

By Kyi May Kaung

I am stressed
pale blue river
muddies.

Sampan going
across river
oars creaking.

On far side
storm coming over
to this side.

Rain like a sheet
halfway across
river.

We're sitting on
verandah
jutting into water.

Below us boats
unloading
jaggery.

Roof has hole
in middle
to catch rain.

Under the hole
is a tank
where we bathe.

Toilet also
lies over water
look down see waves.

¹ Riverfront -- is based on a trip to Moulmein way back in 50s before my father died.

This grand aunt was widowed early, I think she was Daw Than Mya's sister's mother in law --Dr Ba Than (kmt's father) diagnosed the cancer early, but she refused to get an operation, until it was as big as a cauliflower and bleeding one condensed milk tin of blood a day. Then she came to Rgn but died on the operating table. The cancer had spread too far.

Night – rats come up
run all over plates
need to be washed again.

Three times riverfront houses
connected burnt down
only mosquito nets saved.
Grand Aunt isn't cowed
by anyone or breast cancer
swears every day.