All the Cravings

Rabindra K. Swain

Past midnight,
and the barking dogs that chase you
remind you of all the cravings
you haven’t listened,
al the curses buried under the heels
of taking them up on your wistful self.
They give up, but not you
to have all, blessings and curses,
that’s your due.
They will be tearing the night in their sleep
as if it were a poem they did not like.
You cannot contend their will, brand it ill,
seated as you are on the mouth
of your volcanic greed
to obliterate the pyre
and those who stoke it
with the half-burnt logs of their longings.
They are the wood of the threshold
on which you find yourself for ever,
the wood that suspires,
grows leaves,
ultimately spreading jungle
beneath your feet.
Of that jungle,
you only feel its rustlings,
a path that lands you
where you started first—
home.
Old, old at eighty four,
your father on bed—when did
he start growing old? —
is blessing you again at midnight
with a son you will never have,
pushing you back to the insomniac road,
to the barking dogs, and their lonely moons.
You wish you could cuddle up to him
as your two-year-old daughter does up to you
but what’s it that’s tugging
at your heart-string
that’s beyond consolation, beyond guilt,
where even seeking pardon is redundant?