

## Three-Legged Dog

*Simon Peter Eggertsen*

*For the little dog who was annoyed and bit me as I stood still at the entrance to the park, and for Cadbury, Minnie, and 'tiba who were sung away some time ago.*

An old three-legged dog,  
whiskers whitening, coat black  
as the carbon of a starless winter night,  
slowly hobbyhorses along  
the cobblestone street near the  
park green and water blue of  
Gradina Cismgiu in graying Bucharest.

He canters forward, absent any clear sense  
of breed, lopping at the head and tail,  
leading a dully clunking, chrome chain,  
held lightly in the small, withered hand  
of an aging lady, who has ventured out  
with him for an October evening stroll.

She is working forward, too,  
trying to get used to her liberty.  
Faded blue denim trousers,  
symbol of Ceaucescu's tattered proletariat,  
dangle beneath her simple work smock.

Toe nails sound on the pavement  
as the dog hip hops along,  
missing the sound of the fourth leg.  
Clickityclick, click, clickityclick, click.  
I want to speak the fourth click.

Then from one gray day to the next,  
near midnight, as far as I can tell  
the dog went away, quietly disappearing  
from the street, just as he did that eve,  
when he turned the corner on three legs.

Clickityclick, click.

This turn he was sung away by the death-timed  
lamenting howls of his comrades,  
their sounds slapping along the sides of the houses,  
down the street and into my room most of the night,  
until the end of the morn.

Once you leave, you cannot return again.  
Those are the rules here.

I will miss the black three-legged dog  
who clicked for me near Gradina Cismgiu.