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Dirty Old Man in the Dustbin of History

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Dirty Old Man in the Dustbin of History

1.

Large enough to be annoying,
too small to be menacing,
his other country follows him
around like a neighbor's dog.

He has shooed, hissed, kicked,
hurled twigs and insults, but
it continues to dog him,
pest rather than pet or patria.

Running wildly, he shakes loose.
Ends up in a cul-de-sac where
his country doggedly finds him.

2.

Watching the flags of his two countries
waving side by side, tip of star touching
tip of star, D.O.M. discovers that he has outlived
the distinction between now and never.

3.

He knows two cities. The second
exists in the shadow of the first,
the first in the second's shadow.

When he left the first city
he didn't hear doors slamming.
In his sleep he hears them now,

as clear as lightning.
Every few months hunger
lures him back to his second city.

Like a squirrel cracking nuts,
he feeds until sated, then runs away.

4.

Once upon a time when he looked up
he saw a roof-tree. Now he looks up
and sees bare sky. Inside his glass house,
he casts stones. Cracks spread like branches.

5.

Taking attendance inside himself,
he sees that his charm has deserted him,
that his voice no longer carries,
that there's no one there but him.