

TWO POEMS



Peter Robinson

DIE LILLIPUTBAHN
for Diethard Leopold

It wasn't roasted chestnuts in their cones,
a roller-coaster's ups and downs
or that famous ferris wheel's slow turns,
but the quiet of the Lilliputbahn's
station platform, where we sat
until the train arrived, which came
to represent for me Vienna's quiet.

Because they had taken a piece of its heart
during the seven German years,
if through the Prater's woods a train's
going in mist with an echo of voices,
its clatter among the leaves explains
why quiet on that station platform
came to represent Vienna's quiet.

I'm taking exactly what can't be undone
to hurl it, at least in a manner of speaking,
into a future, as trees on the turn
will bear this summer's memories
but hint while they do of a chill to come.
We had arrived by the Lilliputbahn.
I was listening in to Vienna's quiet
among the leaves of an early autumn.

ZOO TIME

It doesn't occur that often—
we're brought from the daily routine
of being mucked out and fed, unseen
for years on end, backdated now
by theme park jungle and stately home;
but sometimes we're suddenly on show,
caught, as the gleam from a window
for a moment catches Harry Lime;
true, there's something of shame and crime
about our exposure, though mostly it's more
a Caspar Hauser from his cell,
or petrified rabbit in a headlamp beam.
Another voice is speaking us:
we're a Disney natural history short,
Johnny Morris on 'fifties TV,
domestic-sentimental, the lightly humorous.
In fact, we sound a bit like you and me.

It seems they're not supposed to feed us,
but sometimes we're offered a crust
or curiously asked, "Are you depressed?"
I could envy the famous animals
for whom it seems more *Show Time*,
the albatross and woodworm, stars
like Rilke's panther on display
who constantly paces round his cage,
till no world starts beyond the bars
making him appear centre stage.
For most of us there's nothing for it,
nothing but to turn away,
drift off with barely a backward glance
to where in our natural habitat, a state
of anonymity, isolation, of distance,
we're sometimes still given the chance,
somehow, to communicate.