

## FOUR POEMS



*György Petri*

### ETERNAL MONDAY

When Monday—  
not only to the vast surprise  
of the organisers but, more,  
against all their expectations—  
successfully took place,  
the tiny tots,  
who couldn't have remembered  
the mounting troubles  
of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday—  
and even the spectacular catastrophe  
Friday had been  
succeeded in leaving no more of a trace  
than “paperbags burst with a bang”—  
they began, these tots, to criticize  
Saturdays off  
and Palm Sunday  
(the grown-ups, not even knowing  
what day it was,  
went along with their age  
and, in due accordance with respective age,  
one by one kicked the bucket).  
It was left to the infants and the nursery kids  
to stamp with fury:  
Why is it Drum Wednesday,  
why Love Thursday, how can poor Teeny Tuesday  
turn suddenly into great Good Friday,  
how is it that a reasonable border-line  
between Silver and Golden Sundays  
can be drawn only from the dynamic perspective  
of Ash Wednesday, and as for the aptly named  
Pancake Tuesday, well,  
there was certainly no meat in it—it was not,  
at any rate, meat

they left behind.  
The yet-unborn  
watched the whole  
of this comedy with disgust,  
saying that everything in it was pure fiction  
so long as they went on talking  
about all these thingumajigs, not clearly stating:  
*Friday lasts longer  
than Saturday.*

Even after that,  
the grown-ups still couldn't tell  
what day of the week it was, although  
they informed the organizers that, allegedly,  
there's a day going on all the time.  
The organizers, in their great time-confusion,  
were of one view, which was: It's yesterday.  
And so they began to experiment  
with anniversaries, saying things like  
"Today is the 150th year of yesterday".  
Then they changed over  
from round numbers to elliptical ones  
(Tomorrow is yesterday's 132nd,  
and so on) but those in the top infants  
as well as the babes in the nursery  
and the yet-unborn  
and sadly even  
the ungrown-ups as well  
made obscene gestures  
with their chronolollipops  
and sand-clocks;  
with epoch-making pongs  
their farts inflated leaky balloons,  
satellites that shat a lot were launched,  
their cocksure posters stuck up on the walls,  
their trashy banners flashed  
and pigs with wings—  
all this on the thousand year-old Momentary Square  
where an *ad hoc* meeting was held  
and they kept howling:  
What's today? What's today?  
Since the introduction of Eternal Monday  
at Eternity (formerly Momentary) Square,

thousand year-old  
turves have flourished green  
around *tableaux vivants*.  
Bluebells and harebells  
chime out: Monday! Monday!  
Only the gardeners looking after graves  
keep mumbling to themselves:  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday,  
Saturday—and setting down their rusty watering-cans  
in the sunlit cemetery—  
Sunday.

HORATIAN

I could endure life silently, even without a timetable.  
I'd withdraw among the chickens and pigs, and do without  
ideas.

Yet again I'd repair fences, mend broken tiles  
and be glad to see the young marrow flowering.

I've no ambition—less than a corpse in a grave  
who, tickled by worms, dreams of a deathless tombstone  
over his mortal remains.

I have seen and lived enough. I'll spend the short time ahead  
in a waiting-room hung with spittle, littered with butts:  
eyes open, resting my roaring head  
on a dented suitcase.

No newspapers or tobacco or firewater:  
there's a broken fag in my pocket still  
and syrupy liqueur in a stray bottle.

A tramp lights my fag. Then all my bad dreams  
about power and violence I pull up over my head.  
I'll dream that I'm a police-dog, my coat shiny.

As I disintegrate into pure reason, I can come to no harm.  
Except that trudging a Milky Way gone sour  
makes the wounded sole of my spirit gangrenous.  
Until that wharf on the River Styx is reached.

## A RECOGNITION

I

The weather-beaten captain of a small riverboat,  
I used to navigate history's local route.  
I have come ashore now. Not through desert, but duty.  
Here I am and the whole thing's beyond me.

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The epoch expired like a monstrous predator.  
My favourite toy's been snatched.

## REVENGE

I can do whatever I want.  
For instance, when we're making love,  
I'll begin to shrink all over, proportionally,  
and so contract out of you. I'll be tiny enough  
to hide in your pubic hair. You'll look  
all over the sheet for me, you'll diligently  
comb the bedding, every last inch of it—  
till finally you'll hear from your own belly  
a giggle thin as a wire: there I shall be  
running about, swinging my mini-manikin  
and chirping "Would you like to have me now?"

*Translated from the Hungarian by Clive Wilmer and  
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