

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 elliptic 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.

2

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
George Gömöri*