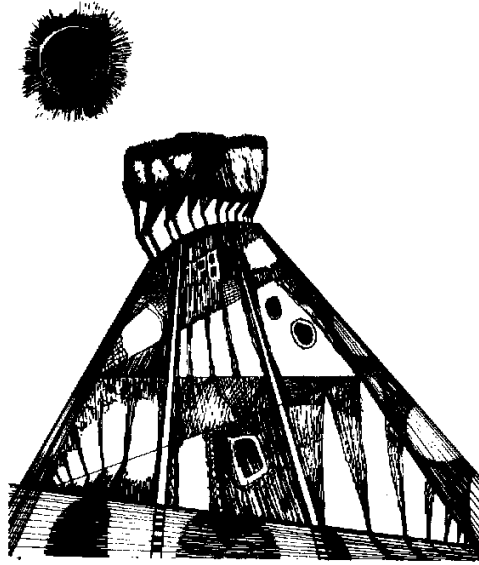


The
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Krzysztof Ostaszewski



Allegories

opus 24, a tragedy

The supplying of ourselves, if of course we can speak of ourselves, with the appropriate number of spare parts is taken care of completely externally and independently of us, though not necessarily independently of us ourselves. But let's forget about that spring (almost summer's) day which is so vainly recalled in all our books, now Marmot is upbraiding and reprimanding us, he is a mature creature (he was once called "educated" which offended and moved him at the same time, so that he could not utter a single word) who will then listen to him as himself, not imitating a doll which flows through his warm, well-meaning words? And his thoughts too are so delicate that one can easily be lost in them; for the wanderer, his long and happy life passes before his very eyes.

Lowicz, September 10, 1979

opus 34, a comedy

Let's imagine a cage (yes, again a cage). Inside, a crowd of people going about their own business, hurrying. Only one of them does absolutely nothing; he lies bound in a corner of the cage.

His fate has taken many strange turns. Every time he managed to free himself from his bondage, someone else would immediately shackle him.

He used to shout, cry for help, struggle. But not anymore. Now he lies quietly, peacefully. He even closes his eyes.

Next to him sleeps a tiger. Though not much mention is made of it in the cage (the tiger is asleep, so there's no real problem), its presence does not go unheeded in the overall situation.

The breathing of the bound man irritates the tiger. The animal growls through its sleep.

Everyone freezes for a moment — alarmed.

What will happen, should the tiger wake up? What will happen?

"Stop breathing! Stop breathing!" they tell the captive. "You mustn't upset predatory beasts!"

The man in shackles holds his breath, straining every nerve. But he can't help it. He lets out a breath.

The tiger growls louder.

What will happen? What will happen?

Seattle, November 16, 1981

opus 35, a comedy

Let's imagine a large cage full of birds. And let's pretend it has one additional very unusual feature — if any of the birds come near the cage's mesh, the bars separate, leaving wide-open space before the bird.

And so the walls are always some distance from the inhabitants. And in this way they don't have their freedom of movement restricted in any way.

Let us observe, however, that for the birds nothing *actually* exists beyond the cage; everything on the outside is distant from them. On the other hand everything exists for them *potentially*, no matter which way they fly, they're bound to find what they're looking for. Of course they won't find everything right away. That would be impossible.

Lódź, May 18, 1978



opus 87, a comedy

When it was learned that the mosquito drinks blood, great consternation spread through the animal kingdom.

For the mosquito had been disregarded till then.

And the bear, raising his paws to the heavens, declared: "Forsooth, I say unto you, he penetrates the skin and drinks the blood."

And all the animals felt anxiety in their hearts.

"Is such an atrocity possible?" asked the doe, contemplating her sleek young body.

But no one knew the answer.

And the leech, seeing the universal condemnation of the mosquito, herself felt threatened.

She spoke in the mosquito's defence.
But no one said a word against the leech.
And all the animals looked upon her with distrust.
Then the baboon took the floor, submitting a proposal.
And it was decreed that the lion, king of all animals, be replaced by the mosquito.

Sarbinowo, August 16, 1978

opus 108, a comedy

The only criterion for distinguishing the present moment from others which have passed is the memory of the past. If not for memories, there would be no way for us to feel the passage of time. And we accept it without reservation, assuming it to be the way it is, whereas it is only the accumulation of memories.

Yet, if we were to recognize the creation of these memories and their differentiation as a natural function of human consciousness, we could then, without fear, imagine ourselves as beings which float on the surface of events — always the same ones — in one unalterable darkness, creating for ourselves beneath it a bizarre, confused, chaotic vision of the past, which is no more than a longed-for presence, which in turn does not exist at all. And death — we could call death the ultimate absence of memories.

Lódź, May 28, 1978

Translated by *Wojtek Stelmaszynski*