
writ 14

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KRZYSZTOF OSTASZEWSKI

Krzysztof Ostaszewski was born in 1957 in Łódź, Poland. In 1980 he graduated from Łódź University with a Masters degree in mathematics. Since September 1981 he has been a graduate student in mathematics at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is a member of the Polish, American and Australian Mathematical Societies, "and a devoted member of Amnesty International."

Krzysztof Ostaszewski writes poems, prose poems and short stories in Polish. His work has appeared in Polish in numerous magazines in Poland, the U.S. and France. A collection of poems, *Pytania* [Questions], was published in 1980 (Warsaw: M.A.W.). A collection of prose poems, *Patrzymy na zwierzęta* [Gazing at Animals], appeared in 1981 (Warsaw: Iskry). A second volume of prose poems, *Pozornie przynajmniej* [At Least Apparently] is forthcoming (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie). English translations have appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review* and *Poetry Australia*.

opus 6, a tragedy

Old grey-haired travellers tell marvellous stories about oceans. After all, couldn't the oceans be made out of tiny blue and green balls, with white clouds added? — we wouldn't notice the difference. Or think about coasts. There are only three oceans, there shouldn't be too many coasts. Yet every traveller counts them again.

Your fate might depend on whether you travel below clouds, or above them. If you're Australian (or everyone thinks you are), you can look at the world through clouds. And you can see the world through them.

You'll see the oceans, you'll see them suddenly. Be careful, they might dazzle you.

But isn't that enough now, there's an end to the oceans. When they disappear, there will be people again — women with dark eyes, men looking over their shoulders.

opus 14, a tragedy

If I happen to write about the world (I don't want to do that, I don't mean to do that), if I happen to look at the world (this is my desire), I will see the sky full of clouds, getting darker every day (there's a plane flying in the midst of the clouds, so we must be in the modern world — isn't the modern world a cavalcade of planes and helicopters?), I will see small, smoky chimneys — they are smaller than they appear to be, the smoke is billowing out of them and wandering among the trees.

If I happen to travel throughout the world (isn't that my destiny, my curse, my quiet sigh), I will walk in the streets of cities, surprised again. Yet these cities are my weariness, my escape, and my dance — a tempestuous modern dance.

I look around (I let my eyes serve reality), I behold the everyday life of the locals, as if their fate were to waste their lives. When I talk about reality I mean wasted lives, when I talk about wasted lives I mean reality — and something more.

TRANSLATED BY KRZYSZTOF OSTASZEWSKI