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THREE PROSE POEMS

OPUS 12, A COMEDY

The cage consisted of two sections connected by a passageway. A metal grating placed at the bottom of one of the sections was connected to an electrical circuit. And in this part of the cage there was a rat.

A current was passed through the grating. The rat jumped up and down, wriggled its paws and squealed. It squealed very strangely. But the experiment didn't produce the desired effect: for it was expected that the rat would develop a conditioned reflex and cross to the other part of the cage at the sight of the small light which was turned on at the same time as the current in the grating. The rat squealed but did not cross over. It was carried across. Of course it returned to its section and began to squeal. The rat was thus entirely unsuited to the experiment. It could in no way be evaluated positively.

Today, fortunately, such rats no longer exist in the world of science.

Lódź, October 10, 1978

OPUS 30

They say the lion is a wild and cruel animal. They also say that the lion is lazy, it lies about for whole days and does nothing.

By a strange coincidence a certain man became the owner of a lion. A lion in a cage. For quite a long time he could find it no activity. Then finally he managed to get some piecework for it—knitting.

The lazy lion did not want to knit. The man bought a whip and a riding crop. With the help of these instruments he encouraged the do-nothing to work. But the widely-held opinion of a lion's

laziness was confirmed. Under the influence of the man's determined actions, the animal did start to work, but it did little and ruined a significant amount of expensive wool in the process.

The widely-held opinion of the lion's cruel character was also confirmed. One day it broke out of its cage and ate its master.

OPUS 75

A certain great scientist once developed a machine for killing people with blue eyes. It was a truly amazing apparatus, functioning in accordance with all known laws of nature. In it the scientist made use of every modern achievement in science and technology. The foolproof system for seeking out and annihilating blue-eyed people was fascinating. The harmony of the mechanism seemed to be the fulfillment of man's dreams.

At a scientific conference, a certain man asked the scientist just what purpose his fabulous machine served, and whether it shouldn't be remembered that it was possible to have blue eyes and still be a good man (maybe even a scientist).

Of course it turned out that the questioner was a chance guest at the conference, and a dilettante at that. So he couldn't really be expected to make pronouncements on such matters as the remarkably functioning mechanism.

His question was simply inconsistent with the laws of science, and poorly formulated at that.

Fortunately for him, his eyes were brown.

Translated by Wojtek Stelmaszynski