

There Are No Pasts

Piotr Nawrocki

There are no pasts. There is only one: the past. The small one and at the same time the large, shared one.

There are letters that have never been written, there are words that have never been spoken. But what if they want to be written, want to be spoken? Must be spoken and written? . . .

"To go to the theater is everyone's risk." Yes, indeed. There is screaming, there is laughing, there is crying, there is dancing. Over and over, over and over, in a circle. And once more, and once more. The organ-grinder grinds away, the parrot screeches, skeletons get up to go to the ball. In Wielopole? In the Dead Class? Suddenly it will be quiet around the orchestra who is leading to the grave those who think they are still alive. Go, you living ones. We, the dead ones, we will accompany you living ones. No, no we you. We—you. We know the way better after all. Is there such a thing as hell? Yes, on earth. Is there such a thing as heaven? Yes, on earth. Is there such a thing as salvation? Yes, not in the hereafter but in in this life. With people, in people. The theatre of death becomes the theatre of life, a tragic and at the same time comic, an incomprehensible and inhuman, sublime as much as dirty life. Danse macabre. "Let the artists die"—this was once the wish of an old Parisienne. And so they may. But: being nailed to the cross also means pointing out the four directions of the world, the earthly as well as the cosmic order.

Was Kantor a shaman? No. Was Kantor a dictator? No. How could a shaman, a dictator love his subjects so much? How could his serfs love him so much? For better or worse?

Is Kantor's theater theory thinkable without him? No.

Having packed some old clothes—rags from something, which somewhere, somehow was important—we are waiting for a train that will never arrive. Let's go together into our old, run-down classroom to dance the tango and laugh. One more time. . . .

Although we have gotten old, very old and very tired.

And then

"The performance has ended.

The auditorium is empty.

I am alone.

SHE [death] is standing
backstage."¹

Note

1. Tadeusz Kantor, "My Meetings with Death," *Performing Arts Journal*, 16.2 (May 1994): 44.