
dr Andrzej Jarosz (Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław) / “Too sophisticated”: Stanislaw Lem critically and parodically about modernist texts and images

In “the phantasmal library” (Jerzy Jarzebski) by Stanislaw Lem – reviews, introductions or afterwords of non-existing book – a separate, specially selected place was taken by parodies, pastiches and mockeries. The example of this can be found in a review of a book by a fictional author Patrick Hannah, titled *Gigamesh*. This anti-review is a joke played on the idea, structure and semantic complexity of a fundamental for modernist culture piece, *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

Recollection of this text is a reason for attracting attention to a critical, sometimes even spiteful and mocking, attitude of Lem to many figures of contemporary culture. While considering the breadth of cognitive horizons and fields which were of interest to the *Solaris*'s author his critical thinking touched besides literature also – broadly understood: from high culture to manifestations of popular culture – contemporary idioms of artistic activity, especially “modern art”. When at the beginning of 1970s he wrote that “art, touched by slight madness, eats its own tail and starts chewing on its own bowels and liver – its heart devoured already”, Lem also affectionately stooped over “bored and indifferent as probably never before” audience. He noticed ousting of an intellectual factor from the area of modernism by postmodernist and hedonistic anti-ontology of advertisement, commercial dimension of the picture which accompanied literature (as illustrations and translations by the means of film) or introduction of new, lethal for the artistic work formats, such as “bestseller” – a mass and dwarfed form of modernist text.

By analysing penetrative changes which took place in the world contemporary to him and adopting rational, constructive model of work, Lem did not exclude, however, recognition of the “elusive” element in the creative process. According to him, the factor of inspiration would foster Pascal's certifying of the Truth. By stating that “I control a discourse but NOT the artistry”, the writer was close to metaphysical qualities, as well as painting and visionary parts of *Solaris*; a perfect work and not at all devoid of empathy. This might be a reason for the distance to classic texts of modernism, such as *Finnegans Wake* by before mentioned Joyce: “too sophisticated” – too exquisite, too perfect and overly original.