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Stanislaw Lem was not only a distinguished philosopher, essayist and science fiction writer, he was also an original literary critic. *Philosophy of chance* and *Fantasy and futurology* are the books where he creates his own theory of literature. However, it was not appreciated by the experts. And yet it is a proposal so original, incisive and pioneering that it would seem necessary to be incorporated into the canon of humanistic thought. This paper tries to find an answer to the question why this part of Lem's work is still *terra incognita*. It proves that his theory is not present in literary criticism since it did not match any way this discipline was typically pursued in the twentieth century. It is a theory which cannot be easily classified, unified with any theoretical trend of the twentieth-century literary criticism. Paradoxically, it is just its originality which is here a main problem. History of science is merciless, it smashes single individuals who do not adhere to cognitive collective, to the style of thinking of the era. Lem was not a part of main scientific circles, in principal trends, that is why he could not find his place in Polish literary criticism. Theoretically-literary processes were undergoing some paradigmatic transformations and from their point of view, Lem's propositions were "non-scientific". Even today they are treated only as an original idea of the writer, trivia not considered seriously. This is a reason why he is not found in any book on literary criticism, and yet it is a fully original concept. What is more, his idea has not gone out of date. So what can Lem teach us today? First of all, he can show us the limits of contemporary literary criticism, indicate those problems and such solutions which seem impossible when observed from within the existing disciplines. Eventually, this paper highlights that Lem was dealing with subjects which neither poststructuralism nor broadly understood cultural theory notice.