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Stanislaw Lem: Philosopher of the Future (Liverpool Science Fiction Texts and Studies LUP)

Peter Swirski

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Stanislaw Lem: Philosopher of the Future brings a welter of unknown elements of Lem's life, career, and literary legacy to light. Part One traces the context of his cultural influence, telling the story of one of the greatest writers and thinkers of the century. It includes a comprehensive critical overview of Lem's literary and philosophical oeuvre which comprises not only the classics like Solaris, but his untranslated first novels, realistic prose, experimental works, volumes of nonfiction, latter-day metafiction, as well as the final twenty years of polemics and essays.
The critical and interpretive Part Two examines a range of Lem's novels with a view to examining the intellectual vistas they open up before us. It focuses on several of Lem's major but less studied books. "Game, Set, Lem" uses game theory to shed light on his arguably most surreal novel, the Kafkaesque and claustrophobic Memoirs Found in a Bathtub (1961). "Betrization Is the Worst Solution... Except for All Others" takes a close look at the quasi-utopia of Return From the Stars (1961) and at the concept of ethical cleansing and mandatory de-aggression. "Errare Humanum Est" focuses on the popular science thriller The Invincible (1964) in the context of evolution. "A Beachbook for Intellectuals" is a critical fugue on Lem's medical thriller cum crime mystery, The Chain of Chance (1976).
Stanislaw Lem: Philosopher of the Future closes with a two-part coda. "Fiasco" recapitulates and reflects on the literary and cognitive themes of Lem's farewell novel, and "Happy End of the World!" reviews The Blink of an Eye, Lem's farewell book of analyses and prognoses from the cusp of our millennium.

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