

# Ryszard Handke

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"Pomiędzy baśnią a science fiction",  
Ryszard Handke, "Teksty", nr 1 (1975)  
: [recenzja]

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Literary Studies in Poland 1, 176-178

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1978

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art sells so easily and expensively only to prove the bankruptcy of aesthetic criteria and corruption of the art establishment. Its nihilism is the symptom of the Great Labirynt our world became at this juncture, i.e. during the hectic and expensive passing from the industrial to the post-industrial era. The dramatic tensions and ambiguities of the modern avant-garde reveal problems and antinomies of existence of mankind today in the same way as does the searching of contemporary philosophers for new, not known yet, axiological foundations. It is obvious that the avant-garde formation of our time must differ from its forerunners of the 1905–1930 period. With the whole civilizational context altered, the social status of art became highly dubious and shaky. No one can be sure today whether art survives and, if it does not, what will take its place in the not-so-far-away future.

Sum. and transl. by the author

Ryszard Handke, **Pomiędzy baśnią a science fiction (Between the Fairy-tale and Science Fiction)**, "Teksty", 1975, No 1, pp. 19.

The question on the mutual relation between these two literary forms raises further questions: can typical science fiction function as a fairy-tale and if so, to which traits do we owe this relationship? Can a contemporary fairy-tale identify itself with science fiction by taking on its features while, at the same time, not losing its own and retaining its connection with the tradition of its own genre? *Robots' Stories* by Stanisław Lem are considered to be such a hybrid. If certain works bring to mind both fairy-tales and science fiction, they do not have to do this in completely equal measure.

There are though, numerous similarities between fairy-tales and science fiction, although some of them also embrace other types of works. One of these mutual similarities is the aim of taming the unknown. The fairy-tale was one of the first experiments in this field. At present, science fiction is trying to overcome the isolation of man who, having become the subject of changes taking place in the world, cannot keep up with adapting himself to situations created by himself and with fear and hope he tries to

penetrate their further course. The leitmotiv here is also man's wonderful, or if one prefers, fantastic endowment which intensifies his possibilities. Finally, both fairy-tales and science fiction take advantage of the trick which removes the introduced world out of reach of the reader's empiricism, although they achieve this through different methods and motivating in different ways the inability of passing, in direct experience, from the level of fantastic fiction to actual reality.

Scientific and technological elements play a special role in science fiction. Even when they are reduced to mere accessories they compose a sign of affiliation to the genre. Science fiction retains its identity only under the condition that it gives its invention at least a slight scientific appearance and provides the presented wonders with scientific and technological pseudo-motivations. Meanwhile, any explaining formula heterogeneous towards the immanent regulations of fairyland immediately destroys its dreamworld. Magical objects are recognized by their abnormal features which they possess by their nature. Every explanation of the source of these features, even in only general terms and only seemingly taking into account the laws of nature, brings us to the fantastic, but scientifically fantastic this time.

Thus fairy-tale elements can appear in science fiction (every time the scientific and technological motivation is weakened in it) and vice-versa (every time the traditional fairy-tale canon tries to be diversified by typical science fiction motivations). This though, does not change the basic individuality of creative regulations.

For example, Lem's *Robots' Stories* could appear to be a new type of the fairy-tale as it seems to define the general principles of the work's architectonics as well as its style and phraseology. However, the transformations of traditional fairy-tale moulds, resulting from this, are significant since they are robot fairy-tales. Thus, cybernics take the place of brownies and for example, digital computers fight with dragons. Something similar happens in Maciej Kuczyński's story *Babcia-robot przy kominku* (*Grandmother Robot by the Fire-place*).

Neologisms are an important component of these science fiction fairy-tale pastiches. The conflict between elements of such different provenances, as fairy-tale archaism and ultramodern science fiction, is also vividly shown.

The analysis of the material which has been taken by way of example, finally leads to the conclusion that, by connecting science fiction with fairy-tales, one may obtain effects which are both interesting and of artistic value. To a great degree, they are the result of the rather grotesque incoherence of elements. The composition as a whole, which has come into existence in this way, lacks essential fairy-tale features because the science fiction elements have brought with them a diametrically different principle of motivation. If we are to recognize the intrusion of science fiction at all, it must be easily perceptible, but it also means that it will be sufficiently strong to violate the fairy-tale principle of motivation. Thus, though fabulously stylized, science fiction will come into existence and, since even the slight mythical additions are absolutely contrary to science fiction, the effect of the combination will inevitably have certain features which, once again, will make us think of a burlesque, despite the intentions of the author, which may be to the contrary.

Neither is science fiction a fairy-tale, although it may play a similar role, nor does a fairy-tale become science fiction. By observing the meeting point of these two genres one comes to the conclusion that, as long as the essential principle of the fairy-tale genre holds good, there are no sufficient reasons to speak about science fiction, but once it becomes justifiable there is no sense in speaking about fairy-tales. After passing the critical point, the fairy-tale elements become only a stylized layer of science fiction work and give to it traits of a burlesque.

Sum. by the author

Transl. by *A. Korzeniowska*

Zbigniew Jarosiński, **Tekst użytkowy i tekst literacki w drugiej połowie XIX w. (Applied and Literary Texts in the Second Half of the 19th Cent.)**, "Teksty", 1975, No 4, pp. 19.

In the second half of the 19th century, a man of culture has to do with a never-ending abundance of applied texts: journalistic articles, causeries, *faits divers*, newspaper advertisements, police