

Richard P. Jasinski



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SCIENCE FICTION IN EAST GERMANY

/ 1949 - 1982 /

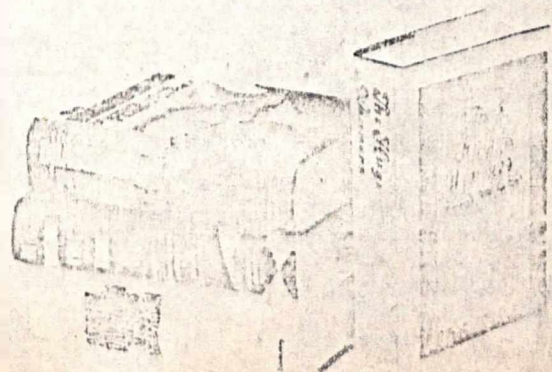
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Szczecin, November, 1982

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

I have read science fiction for over 20 years since I moved to Szczecin, the Baltic harbor city in the northern part of Poland. When I graduated from high school I began to make semi - professional SF broadcasting programs in Poznan, Poland.

Next stage was a series of meetings during sf conventions in Poland and abroad. During those meetings we discussed the resemblances and differences of national science fiction literature in various countries. The most fruitful of these discussions was the one that was attended by Erik Simon from German Democratic Republic, a distinguished sf writer, translator and copy reader in one of the biggest publishing houses in East Germany. That is how we learn more and more about one another and our sf in general.

As a result of our long, round the clock debates this article about science fiction in G.D.R. has been written recently as a part of a longer series of articles about science fiction in various countries and changes of fashion in writing.

This series will contain some valuable information about unknown territories of Chinese, Hungarian and Catholic science fiction, as well as essays on dysopian novels, Stanisław Lem, Prophecies and Reality.

I would love to hear from you not only what you think about this article but also what changes would you like me to make. So put your comments in a letter and send it either to my publisher or to my home address in Poland.

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## OUTLINE OF HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION IN G.D.R.

German science fiction is regarded as the oldest genre in the national literature of Germany. They have a lot of fairy tales, horror and thrilling stories that are one of the sources and pedigrees of science fiction.

Its history began in the Middle Ages when Germans invented wizard and monster stories of which GOLEM is the most known.

After the World War II, both Germany as a state and its culture were split into two different pieces. Fiction of West Germany, Austria and Switzerland has been influenced by Americans while East Germany's has been modelled after the Soviet pattern that has remained unchanged since the first ~~xxx~~ years of détente.

The Cold War Period  
1949 - 1965      The first science fiction novel published in the Soviet Zone (as the German state was not founded yet ) was Die Goldene Kugel (The Golden Sphere, 1946) by L. Turek. The novel which is three years older than German Democratic Republic described the adventures of some aliens visiting the United States which was torn to pieces by riots and revolutionary uprisings.

Although the novel is set apart from the first wave of G.D.R.'s sf, viz. the Cold War fiction formed according to Stalin's personal wishes and Zhdanov's instructions, it somehow became a pattern for other sf authors in East Germany.

After the Thaw in the USSR and some other socialist countries the Cold War propagating fiction started to disappear and ideological clues were given more subtly. However, this type of literature lasted in G.D.R. longer than in any other European socialist country where it had been officially banned: in the USSR in 1956, in Poland in 1958, in Czechoslovakia in 1959. In GDR so called "socialist realism" has never been criticized or banned so that it has influenced both main stream and science fiction until now. In this period apart from various sf novels the first science fiction movies were made in GDR in co-operation with Soviet and Polish film producers. The very first post-war science fiction film made in Eastern Europe was

"Der Schweigende Stern" (The Silent Star, 1960) directed by Kurt Maetzig and based on Stanisław Lem's novel The Astronauts and released at the same time in GDR, the USSR and Poland.

Three authors: Heinz Vieweg (b. 1920) who wrote two novels: Ultrasymet bleibt geheim (1955, Ultrasymet Lasts A Secret) and Die zweite Sonne (The Second Sun, 1958), Eberhard del'Antonio (b. 1926) the author of four socialism-realist's novels: Gigantum (1957), Titanus (1959), Projekt Sahara (1962) and Neinkkehr der Vorfahren (1966), and Carlos RASCH (b. 1932) author of several novels and a greater number of stories incl: Asteroidenjäger (Asteroids' Hunters, 1961), Krakentag (1968, 1972) and Magma am Himmel, 1975, who is regarded as the last "dinosaur" writer of socialist realism in the whole of Eastern Europe; they all together they were leading authors of socialist realism, and the most distinguished writers of the Cold War period.



Heinz  
Vieweg

Modern SF  
in GDR. Big  
Boom in the  
'70s.

A new kind of science fiction appeared in 1966. That is the date when Die andere Welt (Another World, 1966) by Herbert Ziergiebels, quite unusual for German situation at the time, book was published. It was more concerned

with man's reactions in extremely dangerous situations than with ideology or a simple adventurous plot. The novel introduced psychological background to German science fiction and made new writers think about style and language.

In 1968 three big German publishing houses: Neues Leben, Das Neue Berlin Verlag and Volk und Welt started to publish their own science fiction series as science fiction was more and more accepted by the government. The 1973 international science fiction award given to Günther Krupkat (b. 1905) changed generally negative attitudes toward sf. Günther Krupkat's fame rose from his juvenile sf novel Nabou (1968) about a robot who observes the Earth on behalf of an alien civilisation.

The best years for German science fiction were the seventies. The seventies were those years when first collections of short stories and SF anthologies were published by various publishers. Experiments made in the sixties were accepted widely as writing patterns in the seventies.

NEUES  
LEBEN



Günther  
Krupkat

Rank, Heiner  
Die Ohnmacht der  
Allmächtigen.  
Utopischer Roman  
Verl. Das Neue  
Berlin, 1974, 333 S.

~~Inx1973xHenx~~

In 1973 Heiner Rank's novel Die Ohnmacht der Allmächtigen (Allmighties' Impotence, 1973) introduced adult hard science fiction to the German market of publishing. The novel tells how the planet named Astilot had been abandoned by humanoid inhabitants and left to the biorobots. The biorobots live a peaceful life without problems but their life is permanent boredom. Asmo, the biorobot assembled incorrectly so he becomes different active humanlike being; He makes his mates to think about their own fate. He invents his own definition of man - "robots are producers and men are creators like gods".

In 1973 the first German collection of sf short stories Das Gastgeschenk der Transsolaren (Transsolarians' Gift, 1973) by A. Lehman and H. Taubert was published by Verlag Neues Leben. The book was the first and last SF work that was given <sup>the</sup> very important GDR's State Award. In the seventies three sf anthologies were published: Der Diamantenmacher, 1972, Der Mann vom Anti, 1975, Begegnung im Licht, 1976 where a lot of new, talented writers were presented for the first time. Among a dozen authors were Bernd Ulbrich (1943), Reinhard Heinrich (b. 1952) and Erik Simon (b. 1950), widely regarded as the most promising new authors of the Beatles generation. R. Heinrich and E. Simon wrote together <sup>an</sup> excellent parody of a space opera entitled Die ersten Zeitreisen (The First Time Travels, 1977).

The best writers of German Democratic Republic have been a couple of sf writers Johanna Braun (b. 1929) and Günter Braun (b. 1928) who also began writing science fiction in the seventies. Their first novel entitled Der Irrtum des Grossen Zauberers (Great Wizard's Mistake, 1972) made their reputation as the best sf writers. It told a story of a village lost in the South American jungle where natives do not have to work. They have excellent bistros where good strong drinks are served. Even their food comes from special kinds of pears that make them slow and dull. The whole state was turned by its dictator Multy Multiplier into a giant pear plant and its inhabitants were turned into pear-drug addicts. Oliver Niput, a 13 year old boy discovers that pears eaten as ordinary food make him dull and sloppy, so he tries to argue with his village mates to give up that tricky food. Although he did not succeed at first and was imprisoned, later he becomes the Great Wizard's courtier and makes his people's oppressor fall.



Johanna Braun



Erik  
Simon

The eighties  
Slow decline  
of SF in GDR

After the big boom of science fiction in GDR in the seventies a slow but visible decline of science fiction in East Germany can be observed. Erik Simon

founded a new series in his publishing house Das Neue Berlin Verlag entitled Lichtjahr, a kind of annual best world's sf anthology where he published stories written by U. Le Guin, S. Lem, the Strugatski brothers and R. Zelazny, however this year German authorities refused the buying of copy-rights from the West so that sf works from Eastern Europe could be published in GDR only. The decrease of published books could be observed as well. No new anthologies have been published yet and there is faint hope that there will be any new anthology next year. The most active writer, publisher and translator remains Erik Simon whose new book Fremde Sterne (Alien/s/ Stars) has been published recently. Reinhard Heinrich, sf writer and a high school teacher has been trying to organize a new German fandom but as far as I know he failed.

SF Fandom  
in GDR.

Three times in the whole history of German Democratic Republic sf fans tried to organize sf fandom. The first fandom lasted few months and was influenced by G. Krupkat, the second fandom was the most fruitful - E. Simon and R. Heinrich and some of their friends founded quite big sf club at high school. They published 30-pages fanzine where their first sf stories had been published and got in touch with Stanislaw Lem and some German sf writers and publishers, incl. Mr. Rottensteiner. They were in touch with other sf clubs in Halle and Berlin. Some of the writers who became popular in the seventies came from that fandom, incl. Hubert Horstmann, Carlos Rasch and Frank Töppe. The third fandom lasted about a year and then was banned by the authorities because of "dangerous influence of capitalistic ideology on youth".

**Die Rekonstruktion des Menschen.** Phantastische Geschichten.  
Hrsg.: E. Simon. 1. Aufl. Juni 80. Etwa 448 S. mit Illustrationen von I. Proft und H. Proft. 12,5 cm X 20,0 cm. Pappband.  
DDR u. Ausland etwa 11,60 M. Vlg. Das Neue Berlin, Berlin

In einem guten Dutzend Erzählungen aus der CSSR, Polen und der UdSSR werden mögliche Rekonstruktionen vorgeführt und durchgespielt. In der Begegnung mit Kyborgs, Mutanten, Unsterblichen, synthetischen Menschen sowie vernunftbegabten Tieren stellt sich die Frage nach Kriterien für Menschlichkeit und Menschsein.

**Maschinenmenschen.** Science-fiction aus Großbritannien und den USA. Hrsg.: E. Simon. 1. Aufl. Juni 80. Etwa 320 S. 12,5 cm X 20,0 cm. Pappband. DDR u. Ausland etwa 8,- M. Vlg. Das Neue Berlin, Berlin

Die vorliegende Anthologie präsentiert abenteuerliche und spekulative, lyrische und wissenschaftlich-phantastische, kosmische und irdische Geschichten, die heute bereits als klassische Werke der englischsprachigen Science-fiction gelten, und stellt beginnend mit Aldiss, Asimov, Ballard, Bester, Bradbury, Brown, Clarke und so weiter eine Auswahl der bekanntesten Autoren aus Großbritannien und den USA vor.



## G D R ' s     S F     C H R O N I C L E D

- 1945            GDRmany divided into occupational zones.
- 1946     L.Turek                    DIE GOLDENE KUGEL
- 1949     German Democratic Republic founded
- 1949 -     H.Vieweg                    ULTRASYMET    BLEIBT GEHEIM  
Beginning of Socialist Realism's literature
- 1957     E del'Antonio                GIGANTEN  
first his book
- 1958     G.Krupkat                    DIE UNSICHTBAREN  
first his book
- 1960     The first sf movie in GDR made by K.Maetzig
- 1961     C.Rasch                      ASTEROIDENJÄGER  
first his book
- 1965     H.Horstamann                DIE STIMME DER UNENDLICHKEIT  
first his book
- 1966     A new kind of science fiction books appears apart from  
"traditional"cold war novels.
- H.Ziergebels                DIE ANDERE WELT
- 1968     G.Bransyner                 DIE REISE ZUM STERN DER BESCHWINGTEN  
first satirical sf work in GDR,first  
writer's book.
- G.Krupkat                    NABOU
- 1972     J.Braun  
& G.Braun                    DER IRRTUM DES GROSSEN ZAUBERERS  
their first sf novel, regarded as the best sf book in GDR.
- The first anthology: DER DIAMANTENMACHER
- 1973     H.RANK                      DIE OHNMACHT DER ALLMÄCHTIGEN
- The Brauns                UNHEIMLICHE ERSCHEINUNGSFORMEN AUF OMEGA  
XI, their next best-seller.
- 1975     The Brauns                 DER FEHLFAKTOR  
The first collection of their short  
stories.
- Second sf anthology: DER MANN VOM ANTI
- 1976     The third anthology: BEGEGNUNG IM LICHT
- 1977     R.Heinrich  
& E.Simon                    DIE ERSTEN ZEITREISEN
- 1978     The Brauns                 CONVIVA LUDIBUNDUS
- 1980     E.Simon                      FREMDE STERNE  
first annual of sf: LICHTJAHR



INDEX OF AUTHORS AND TITLES

Eberhard  
del'Antonio

ANTONIO, Eberhard del' (b.1926 )  
b.in Lichtenstein, writer since 1953.  
He lives in Dresden. Given international  
award in 1973 in Poznań, Poland for SF.  
Gigantum Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1957.  
Titanus Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1959.  
Projekt Sahara Verlag, Tribüne, 1962.  
Heikehr der Verfahren Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1966.

BRANTSNER, Gerhard

(b.1927 )  
b. in Blankenhain, south of Weimar.  
Doctor of Philosophy, scientist, poet.

Die Reise zum Stern der Beschwingten Rostock, Hinstorff Verlag, 1968.  
Der falsche Mann im Mond Rostock, Hinstorff Verlag, 1970.  
Der astronomische Dieb Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1973.  
Vom Himmel hoch Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1974.  
Der Sterneneckavalier Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1976.



Günter Braun

BRAUN, Johanna (b.1929 ) b.in ZEMMERN, Magdeburg.  
BRAUN, Günter (b.1928) b.in Wismar.  
SF pro writers.

Der Irrtum des Grossen Zauberers Verlag Neues Leben, Berlin, 1972.  
Unheimliche Erscheinungsformen auf Omega XI  
Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1974.  
Der Fehlfaktor Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1975.  
Conviva ludibundus Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1978.

KRUPKAT, Günther

(b.1905 ) b.in Berlin. Professional  
writer since 1955.

Die Unsichtbaren Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1958.  
Die grosse Grenze Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1960.  
Als die Götter starben Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1963, 1963  
Nabou Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1968.

LEMANN, Alfred  
TAUBERT, Hans

(b.1925 in Nordhausen)  
(b.1928 in Falkenstein)  
Scientists, experts in biology.

Das Gastgeschenk der Transsolaren  
Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1973.

RANK, Heiner

(b.1931 ) b.in Babelsberg.  
detective novel writer, active in the  
international organisation of sf authors.

RASCH, Carlos

(b.1932 ) b.in South America.  
Disc jockey, reporter, pro writer.

Asteroidenjäger Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1961  
Der blaue Planet Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1963.  
Im Schatten der Tiefsee Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1965.

Die Umkehr der Meridian Berlin, Deutscher Militärverlag, 1966.  
Kragkentang Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1968.  
Magma am Himmel Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1975.



Heiner  
Rank



SIMON, Erik (b.1950 )

b.in Dresden

HEINRECH, Reinhard (b.1952 )

b.in Dresden

Die ersten Zeitresen

Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1977.

TÖPPE, Frank (b.1947 ) b.in Bleicherode5Harz).

Verlag Das Neue Berlin Editor and artist.

Regen auf Tyche

Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1978.

ULBRICH, Bernd (b.1943 )

b.in Berlin.

Der unsichbare Kreis

Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1977.

D

VIEWEG, Heinz (b.1920 in Dresden, Saxony )

Ultrasymet bleibt geheim

Berlin, Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1955.

Die zweite Sonne

Halle, Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1958,  
second print: Berlin, Militärverlag, 1968.

TUSCHEL, Karl-Heinz: Die blaue Sonne der Pakel. Wissenschaftlich-phantastischer Roman. (Spannend erzählt, Bd. 142.) 2. Aufl. Mai 80. 320 S. mit Illustrationen von W. Ruhner. 14,5 cm X 21,5 cm. Pappband. DDR u. Ausland 6,60 M. Vlg. Neues Leben, Berlin February, 1980, Berlin.

Zweieinhalb Tage, bevor das Raumschiff zurück zur Erde starten soll, finden Utta und Tondo im dichten Laubgras des Planeten einen Körper, den sie für ein verendetes Tier halten. Doch als sich der Gegenstand in den grellen Strahlen der blauen Sonne plötzlich bewegt, erkennen die Steinfahrer, daß es sich um einen Roboter handelt. Wenig später entdecken sie ganze Scharen von Robotern, die sich sehr merkwürdig betragen. Und das Seltsame dabei ist - von den Konstrukteuren fehlt jede Spur.

# B I B L I O G R A P H Y :

Wissenschaftliche Phantastik

Schriftstellerverband der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik  
Sonderheft 1978.

Erik Simon

Science Fiction in G.D.R. Science Fiction in F.R.G.

IN: Literaturnyj Obozor, Moscow, 1980, in co-operation with  
M. Chakov.

