
SF-CLUB ANDYMON

The Quest for a Bright Future

—

Images of the Future in GDR Science Fiction

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EuroCon 2017
June 17



SF - Eurocon in Dortmund 2017

Itinerary

- Preparations
- On Ground
- Take-off
- Adventures On Route
- Goodbye to Paradise
- Many Worlds
- Crash Down



Preparations: German SF Tradition

Kurd Laßwitz (1848 – 1910)

- 1897: Auf zwei Planeten (On Two Planets)

Hans Dominik (1872 – 1945)

- 1921: Die Macht der Drei (The Power of the Two)
- ...
- 1939: Treibstoff SR (Rocket Fuel SR)



Preparations: Movies



(1927)



Woman in the Moon
(1929)

Itinerary

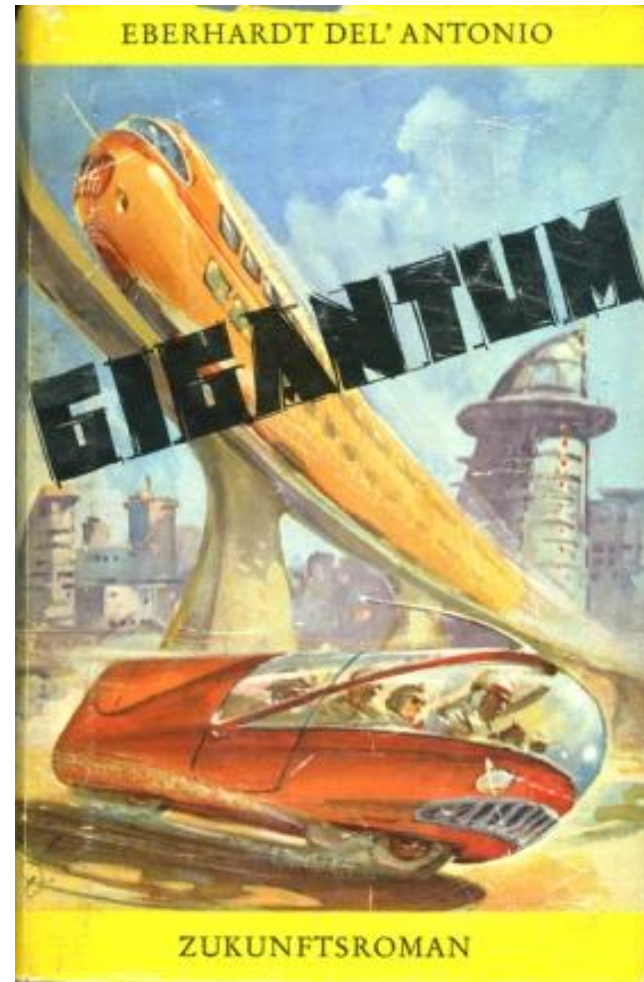
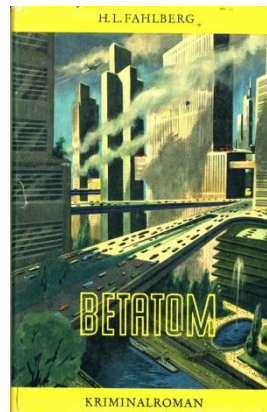
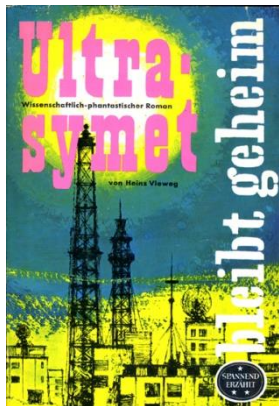
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The 1950ies: Utopian Production Novels

“Utopian Literature”:
Novels of a socialist (near) future

- 1955 Heinz Vieweg:
Ultrasymet bleibt geheim
(Ultrasymet is Kept Secret)
- 1957 Eberhardt Del' Antonio:
Gigantum
- 1957 H. L. Fahlberg:
Betatom

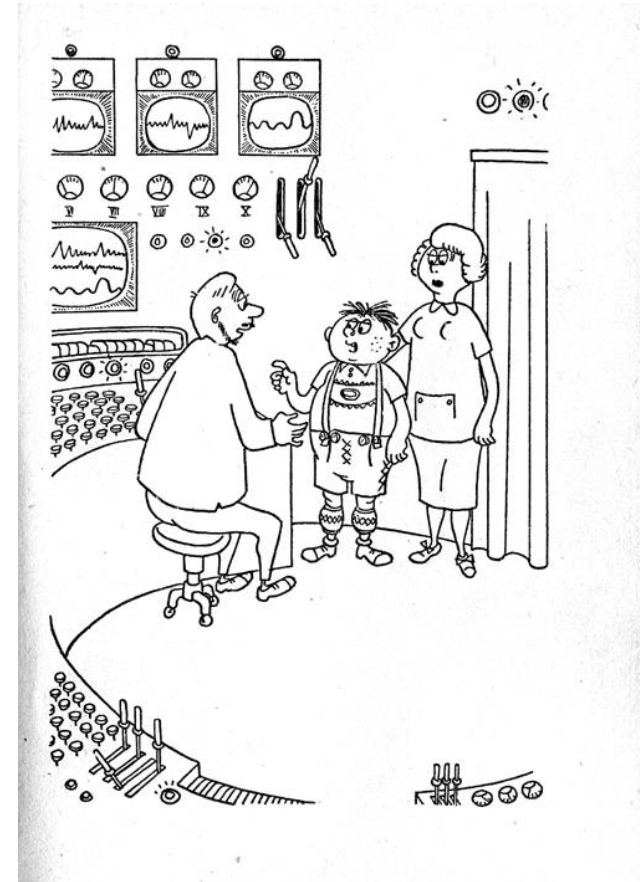
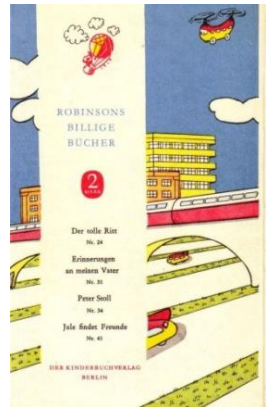
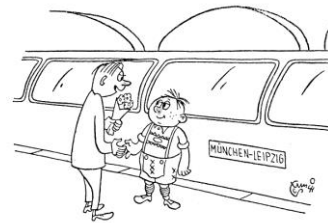


High-Tech Utopia

1956 Werner Bender: Messeabenteuer 1999 (Adventures at Leipzig Trade Fair 1999)

- Electronic Brains
- Robots
- Automatisierung
- Weather Control
- Monorails
- ...

MESSEABENTEUER 1999



Thrills in Utopia

How to bring in suspense?

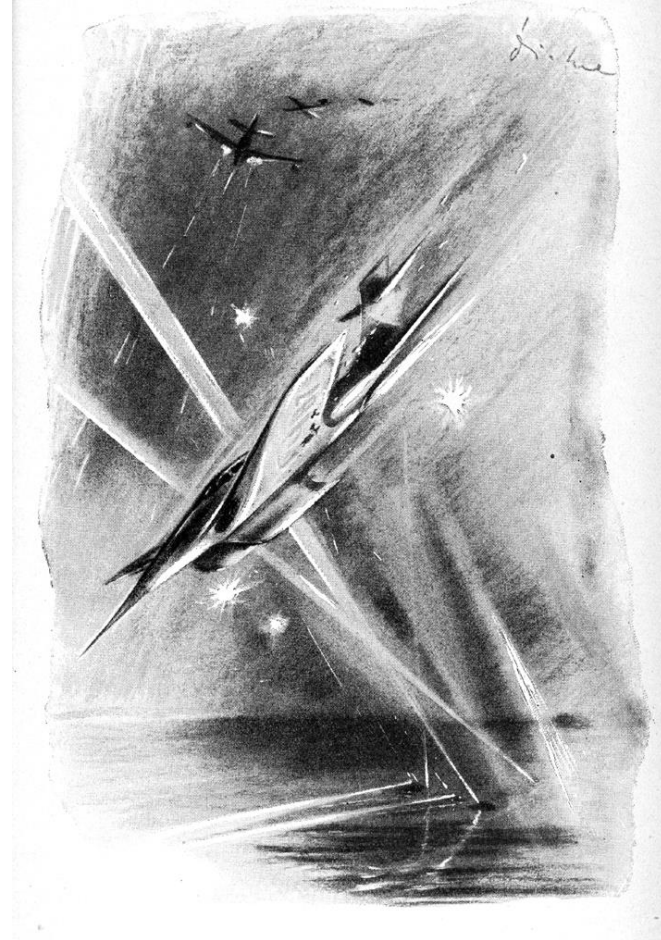
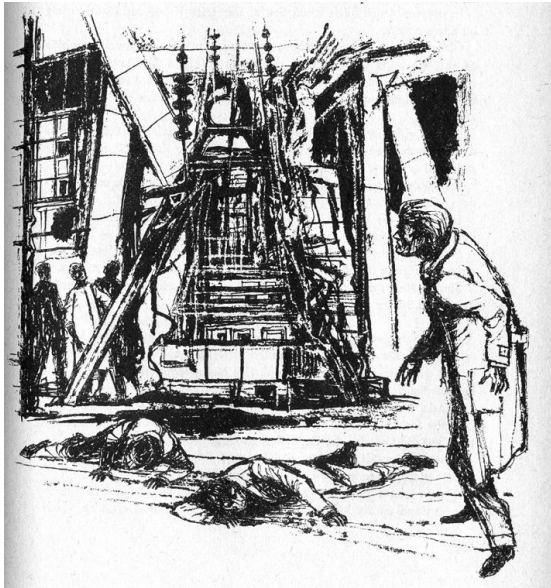
- Socialist competition:
Enthusiasm contra planning
- Accidents



Thrills in Utopia

How to bring in suspense?

- Imperialist spies
- Sabotage

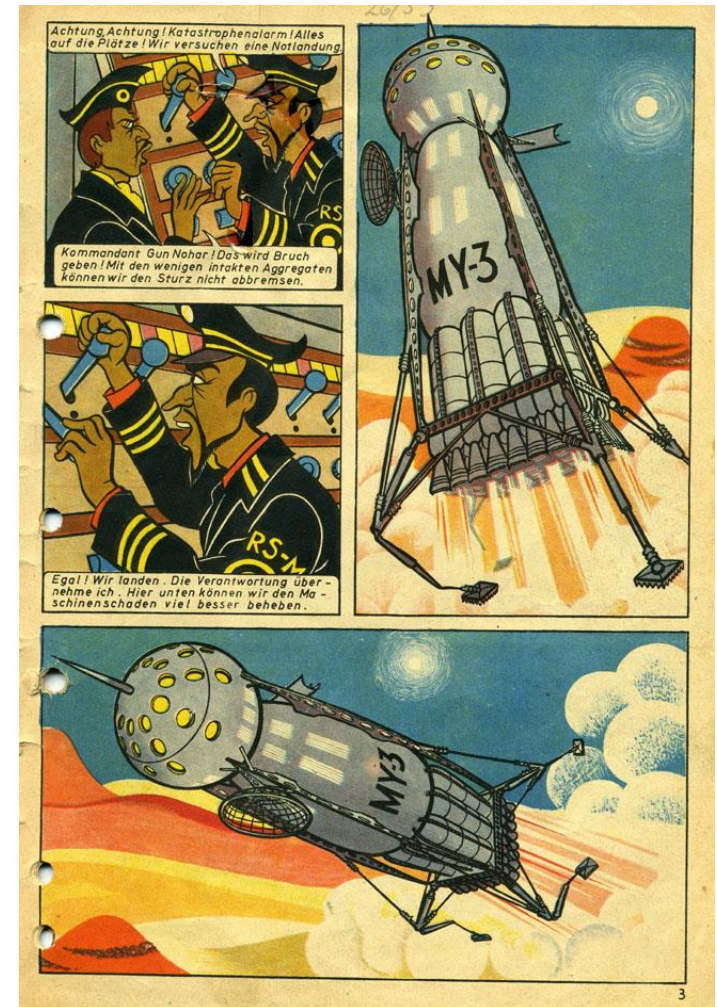
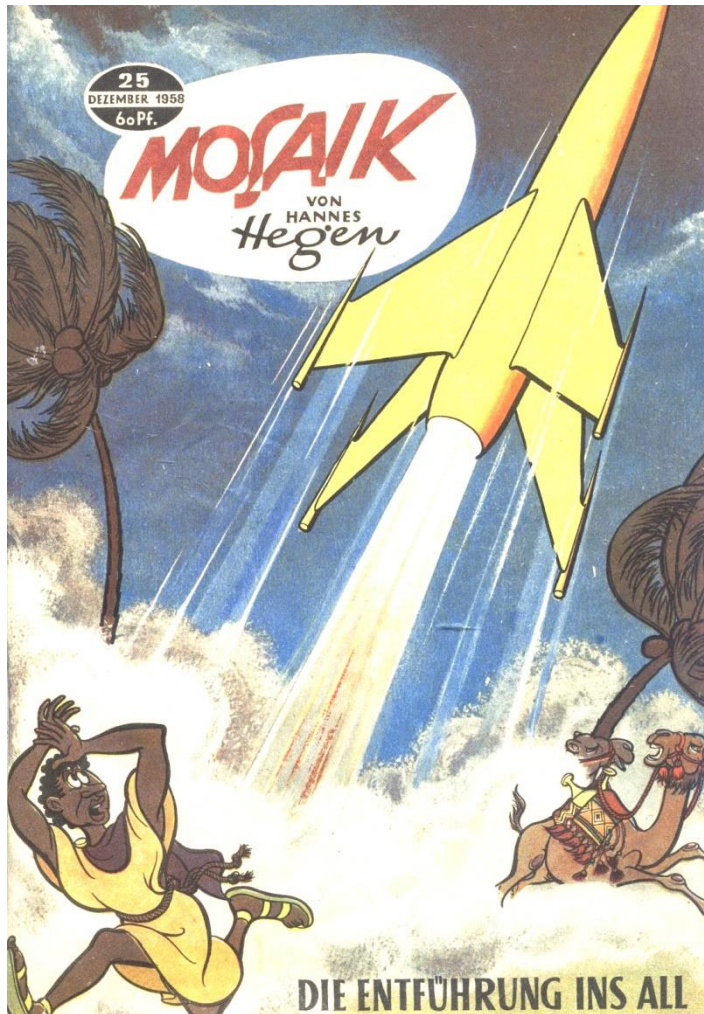


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Take Off: With Hannes Hegen's Comic ...



Early Launches...

- 1952 Arthur Bagemühl:
Das Weltraumschiff
(The Space Ship)
- 1956 Günther Krupkat:
Gefangene des ewigen
Kreises (Prisoners of the
Eternal Circle)
- 1956 H. L. Fahlberg:
Erde ohne Nacht
(Earth without Night)
- 1960 Günter Krupkat:
Die große Grenze
(The Great Frontier)
- 1960 Horst Müller:
Signale vom Mond
(Signals from the Moon)

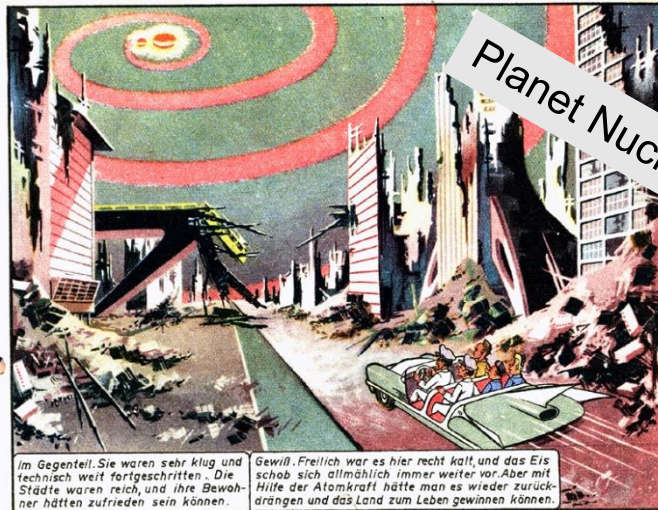


Hazards of Space Flight

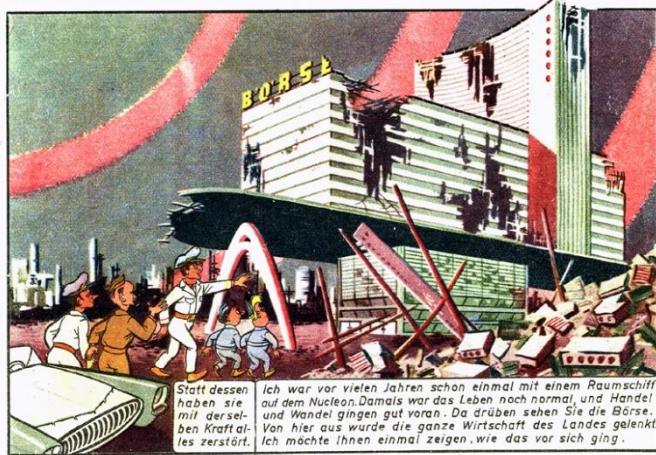


Warnings of Nuclear War

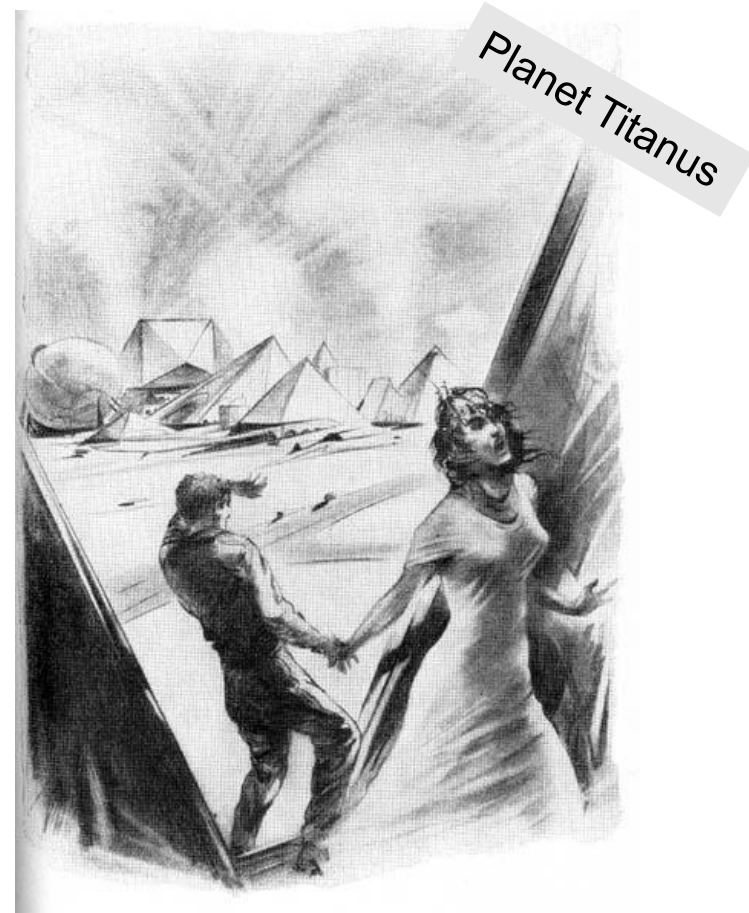
Mosaik
27/1960



BUT:
not on
Earth!



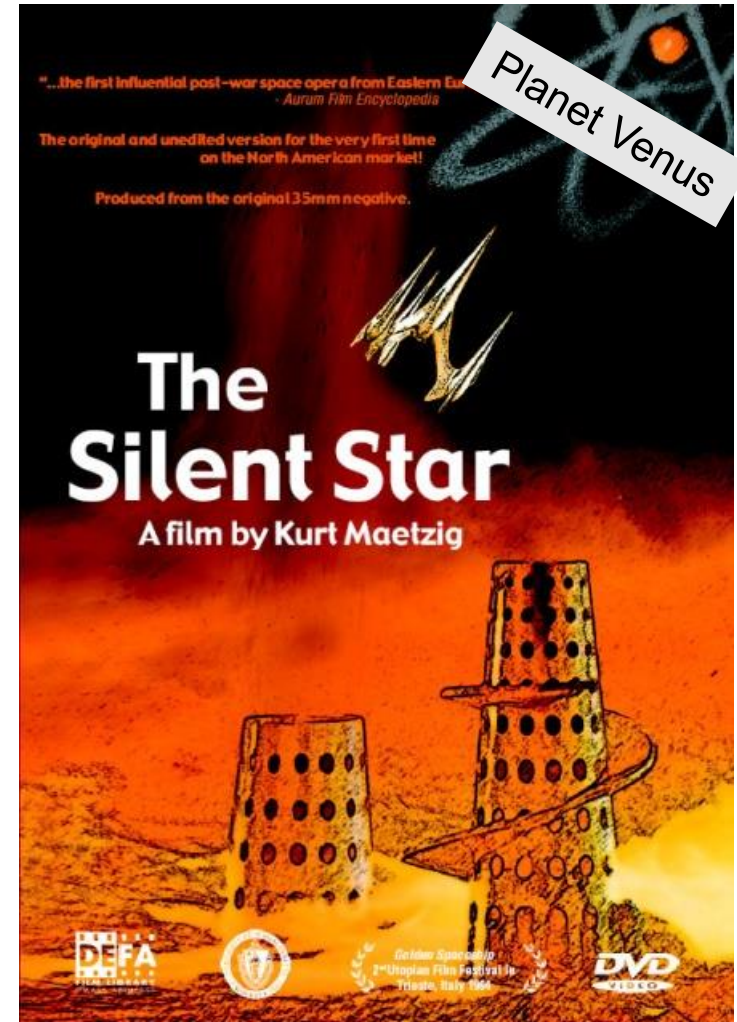
11



1959 Del' Antonio: Titanus

The Silent Star / First Spaceship on Venus

Der schweigende Stern /
Milczaka Gwidzada
(DDR/Polen 1960)
Director: Kurt Maetzig
After Lem's novel
Astronauti (1951)



Brothers in Space – Brothers by Reason

1. Only humanoid creatures can develop intelligence; on the higher steps of their mental development they will even share a classic aesthetic ideal.
2. Only civilizations which are socially far advanced and peaceful can develop the technology required for spaceflight.
3. Only after the arms race has ended, a peacefully united humanity will have the necessary means at its disposal to engage in spaceflight on a major scale. Hence, space wars are out of the question.

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Close Encounter with USS Enterprise

East German SF	Star Trek – TOS
Peacefully united mankind	Peacefully united mankind
Multiethnic crew	Multiethnic and multi-species crew
Utopian society on board	Utopian society on board
Intervention – yes or no? (Interplanetary revolution)	Intervention – yes or no? (Prime Directive)



Interplanetary Revolution

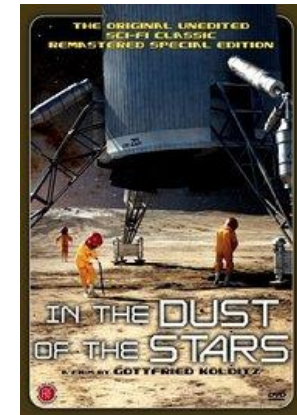
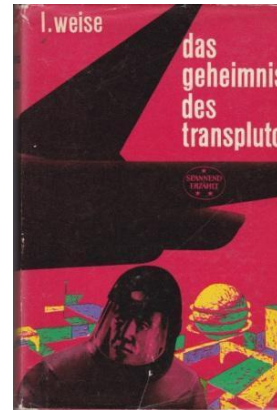
Supporting the extraterrestrial working class:

- Intervene or not?
- “Export of the revolution”?

1962 Lothar Weise:
Das Geheimnis des
Transpluto
(The Secret of Transpluto)

1965 Hubert Horstmann:
Stimme der Unendlichkeit
(The Voice of Infinity)

1976 Im Staub der Sterne
(In the Dust of the Stars,
movie)

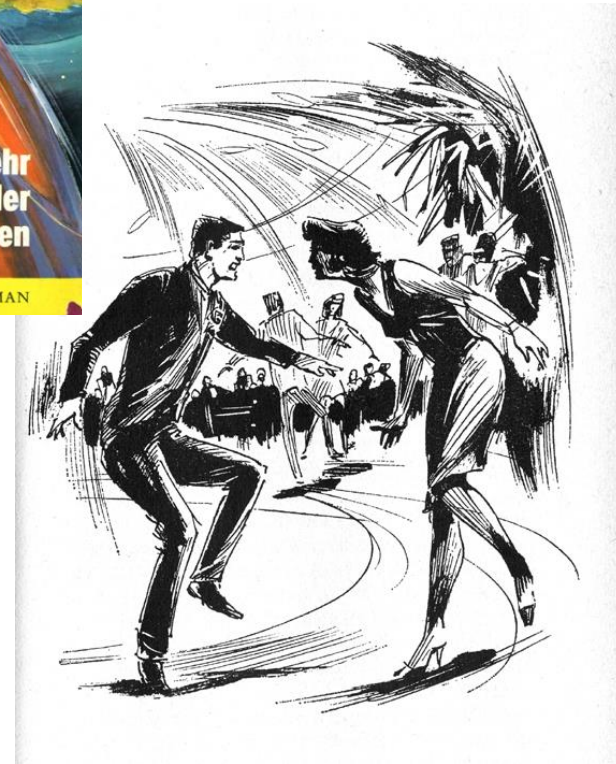


Returning Home: Communist Society

1966 Eberhardt Del' Antonio:
Heimkehr der Vorfahren
(Return of the Ancestors)

Utopia realised

- No conflicts
- No war, crime, hunger
- Nearly no illnesses



Returning Home: Communist Society

Better human beings

- Beautiful
- Healthy and strong
- Intelligent

- No greed
- No lust for power
- No envy (?)



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A Critical View on Paradise

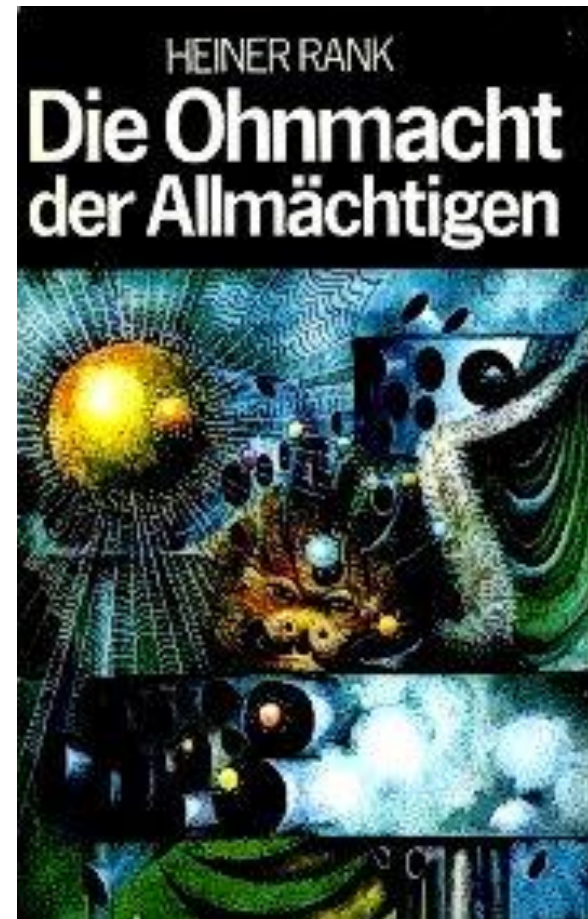
1973 Heiner Rank:
Die Ohnmacht der Allmächtigen
(The Impotence of the
Omnipotent)

Paradisiacal life on planet Astilot

- Automatic production
- Life in luxury and pleasure
- Without duties and worries
- Genetically excluded violence

The downside

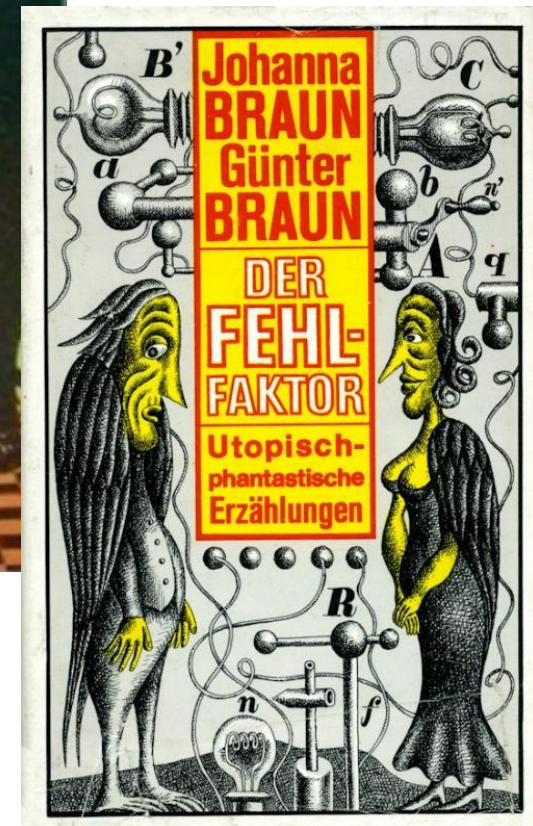
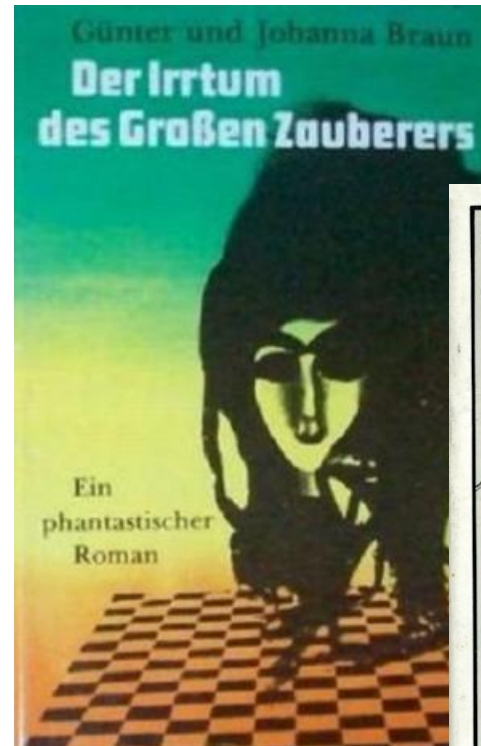
- No real love, no deeper human relationships
- Stability – and stagnation
- Degeneration



Critical Voices: Günter & Johanna Braun

- 1972 Der Irrtum des Großen Zauberers (The Error of the Great Magician)
- 1974 Unheimliche Erscheinungsformen auf Omega XI (Uncanny Phenomena on Omega XI)
- 1975 Der Fehlfaktor (The Missing Factor)
- 1878 Conviva Ludibundus
- 1981 Der Utofant (The Utofant)
- 1988 Die Geburt des Pantamanns (Birth of the Pantaman)

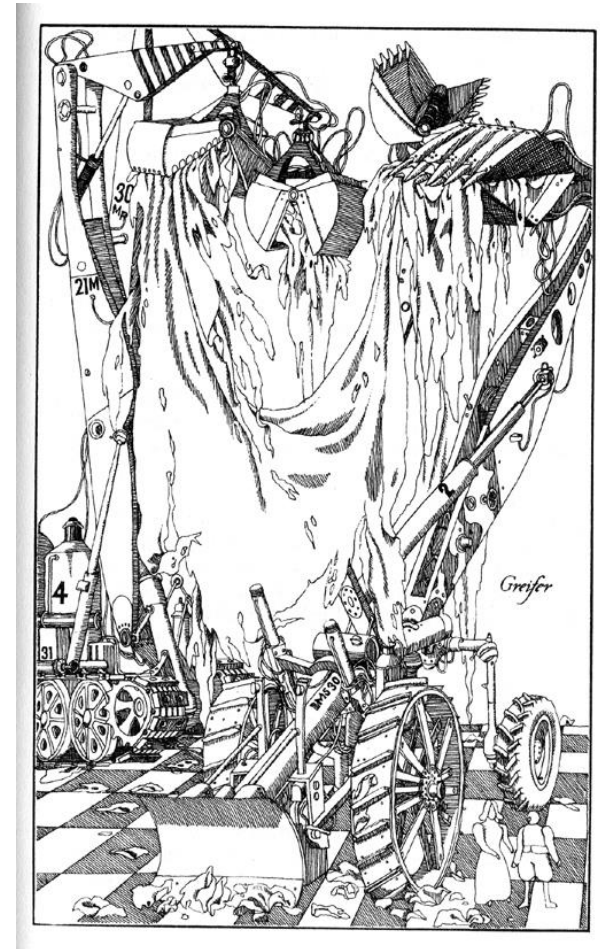
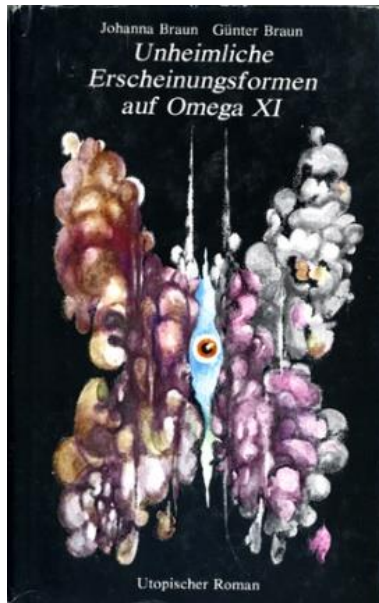
- Critique of mediocrity in science
- Critique of paternalism and bureaucracy
- Uneasy with existing East-German regime



Critical Voices: Günter & Johanna Braun

1974 Unheimliche Erscheinungsformen auf Omega XI
(Uncanny Phenomena on Omega XI)

- Super-affluent society
- Against consumerism
- Against waste production
- Against work as psychological need

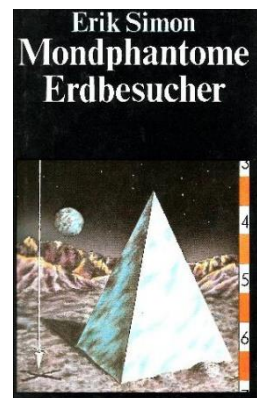
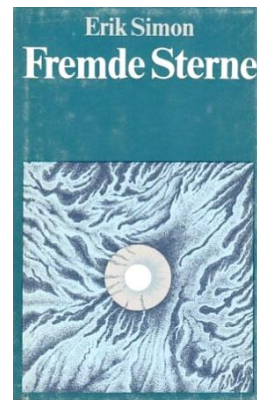
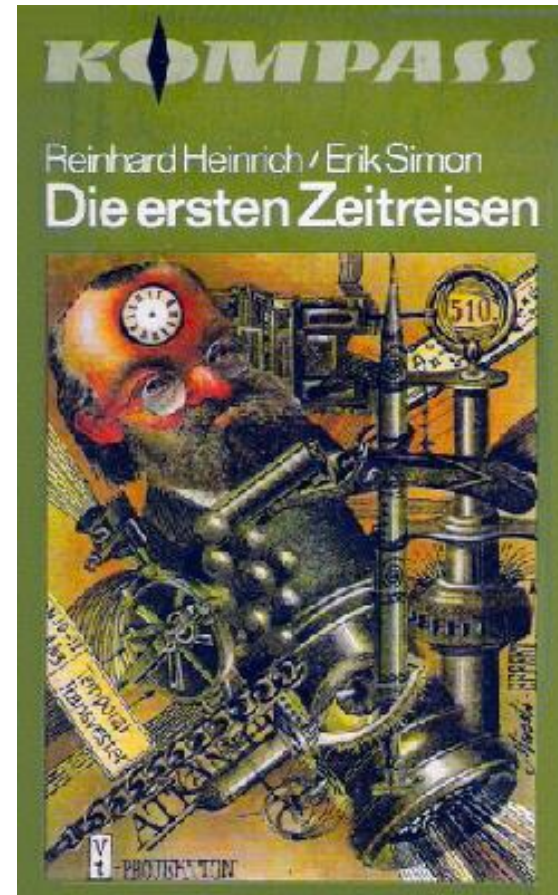


Joyful Excursions: Erik Simon

- 1977 with Reinhard Heinrich:
Die ersten Zeitreisen
(The First Time Travels)
- Playful use of traditional SF motives
 - Parody on SF motives
 - Satire on some popular myths

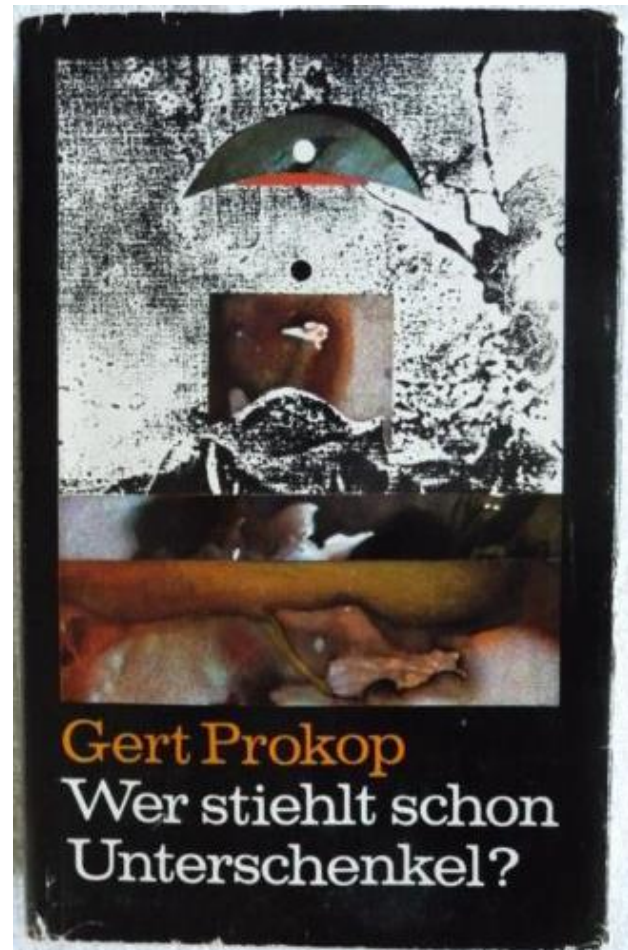
1979 Fremde. Sterne
(Strangers. Stars)

1987 Mondphantome. Erdbesucher
(Moon Phantoms. Earth
Visitors)



Future Crimes: Gert Prokop

- 1977 Wer stiehlt schon
Unterschenkel? (Who
Steals Lower Legs?)
- 1983 Der Samenbankraub (The
Sperm Bank Robbery)
- 1989 Die Phrrks. Phantastische
Geschichten (The Phrrks.
Fantastic Stories)
- pointed
 - witty
 - with hidden criticism



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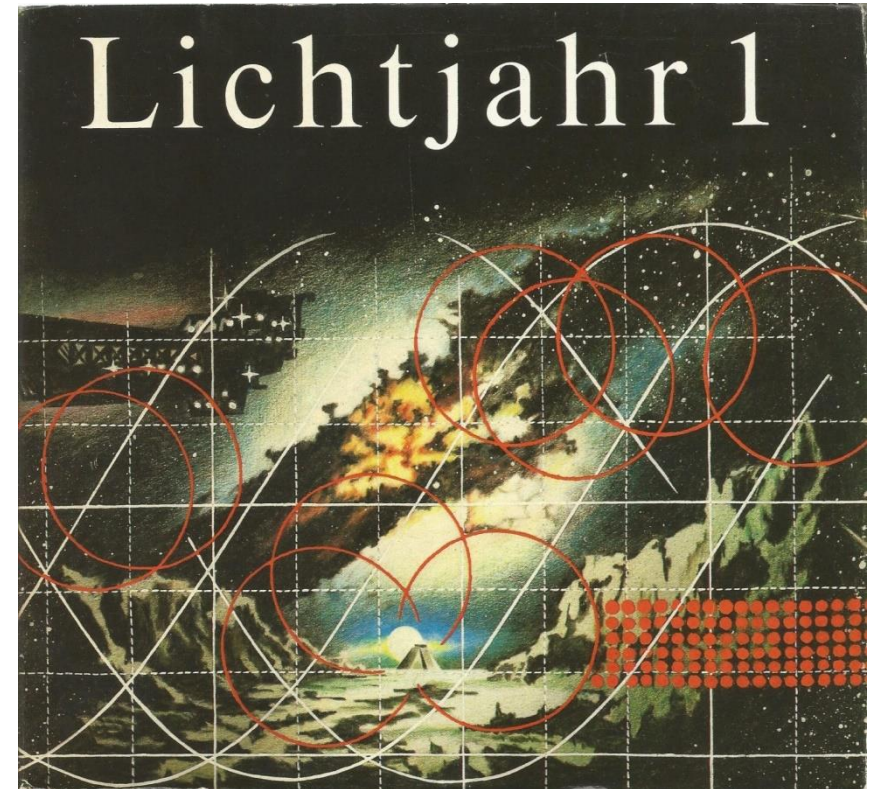


The 1980ies: Many Worlds

Getting rid of obligations:

- SF is not about the future
- SF is not about real science
- SF is not a pedagogic means

(E. Redlin: “Entpflichtung im Nirgendwo”, 1984)



(1980)

An Ambivalent High-tech Utopia

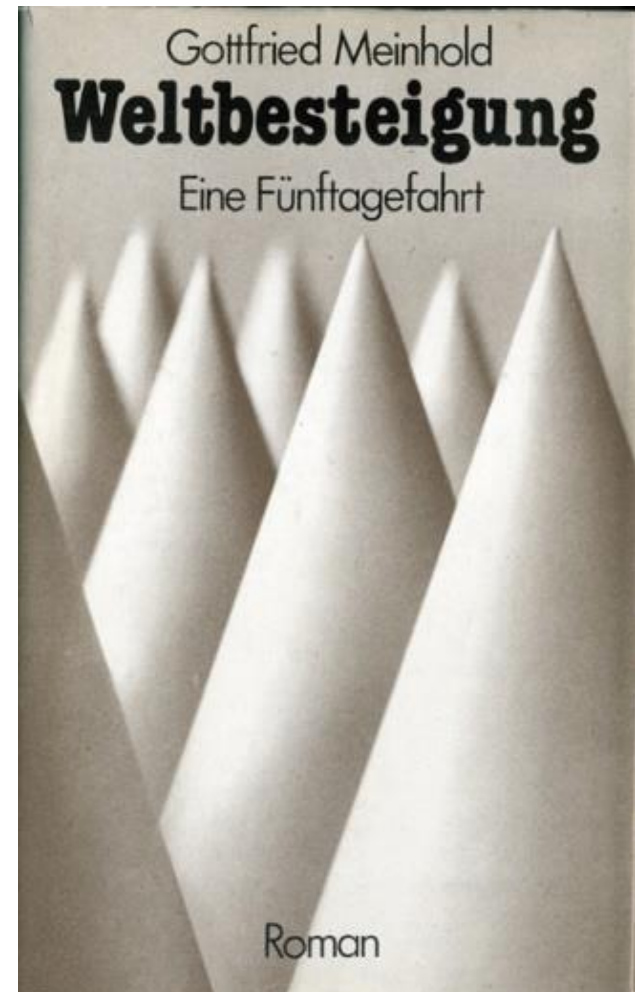
1984 Gottfried Meinhold:
Weltbesteigung
(Ascenting a World)

Setting:

Visit to Antarctic science city
Cargela

- Extreme competitive minds
- Acceleration of life
- Cognitive overload for visitors

→ Paradise for researchers
or perversion of
progress?



A Space Utopia

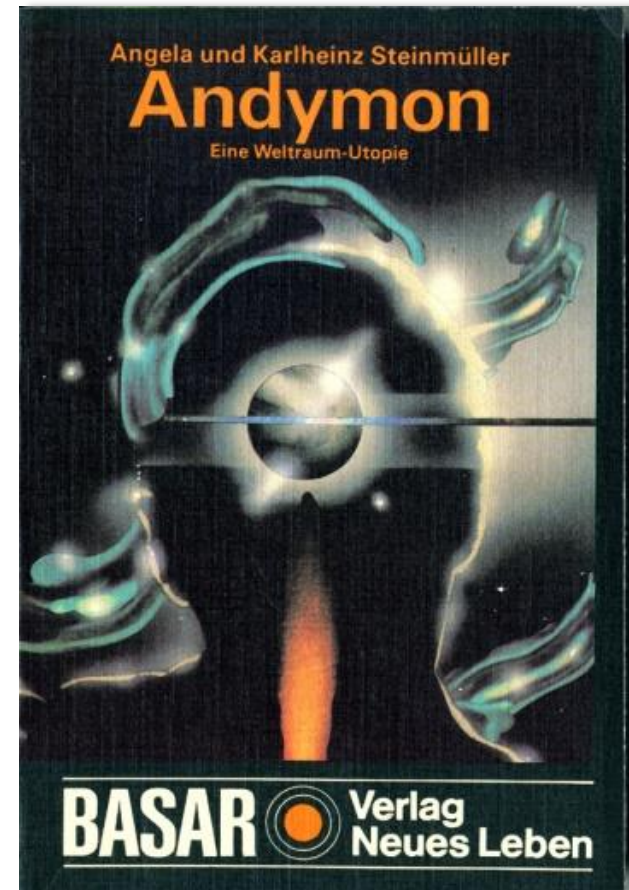
1982 Andymon. Eine Weltraum-Utopie
(Andymon. A Space Utopia)

Great Questions – Open Questions

- Where do we come from?
- Where do we go to?

- What is the destiny / fate of mankind?
- What is the cosmic role of mankind?

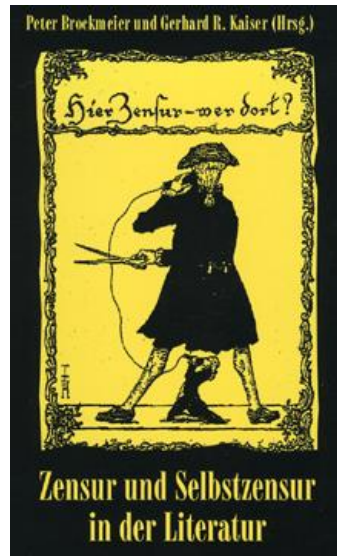
→ But what has happened to Earth?



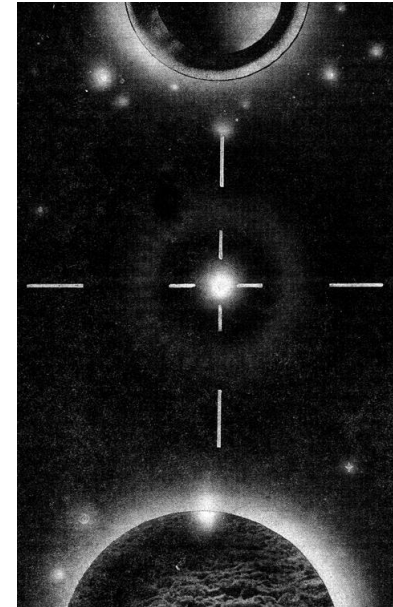
Keeping Course: Censorship

A well-organized system

- Governmental authorities
- Publishing houses
- Reviewers
- Plus: self-censorship



A. & K.
Steinmüller:
“Future by
Command”
(1996)



Killer question

- “And this should be our future?”

Words to be avoided

- Bureaucracy
- Generation conflict

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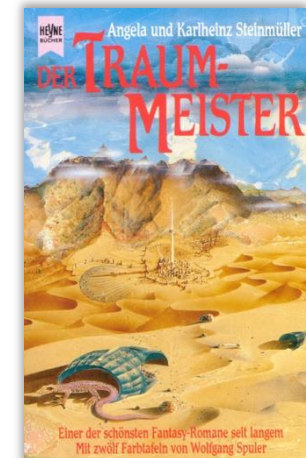


Mission ~~Accomplished~~ Disrupted

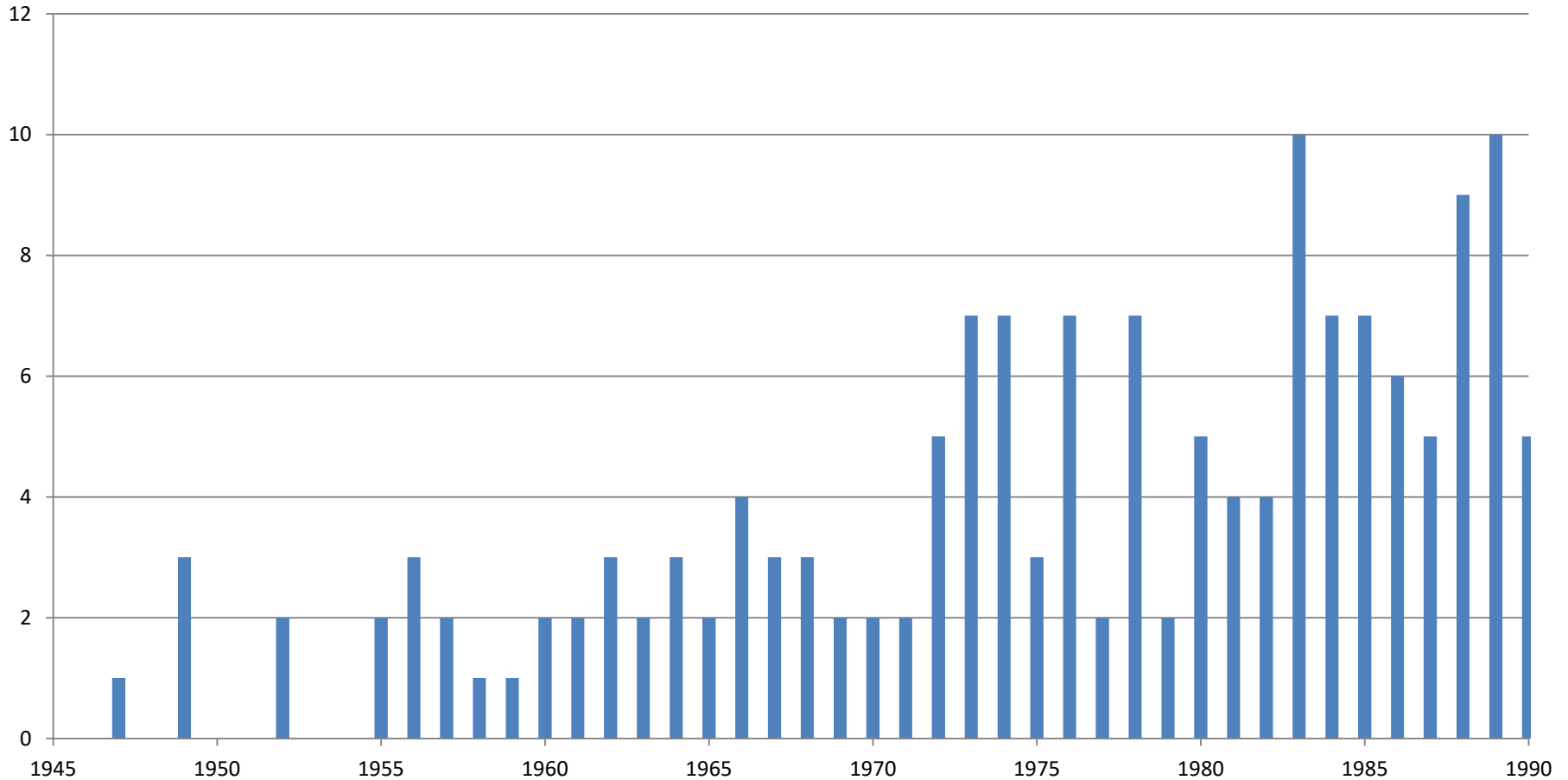
1989 Karsten Kruschel:
Das kleinere Weltall
(The Smaller Universe)

1990 Andreas Melzer: Vorstoß
nach Andromeda
(Advance to Andromeda)

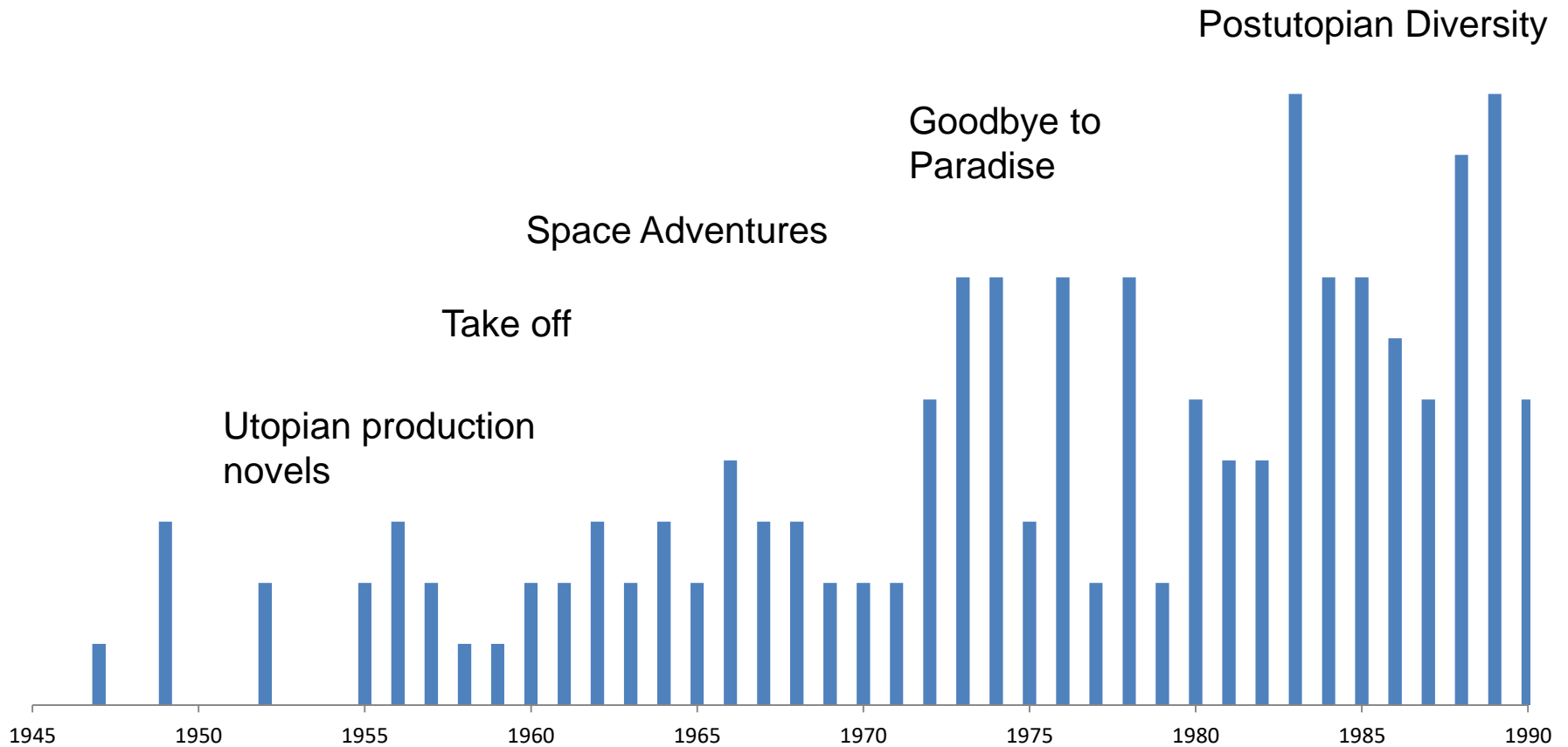
1990 A. & K. Steinmüller:
Der Traummeister
(The Dream Master)



Statistics: Number of Novels per Year



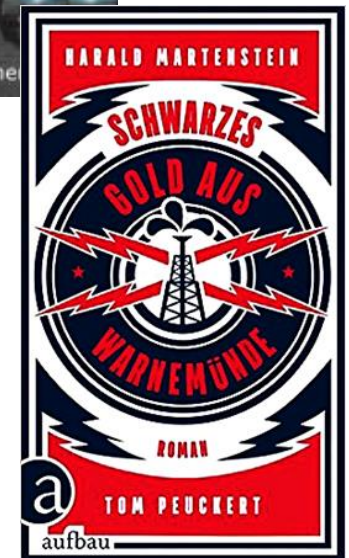
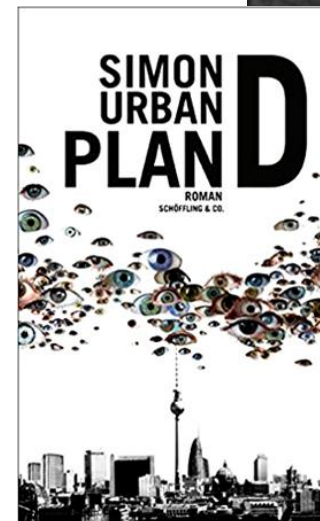
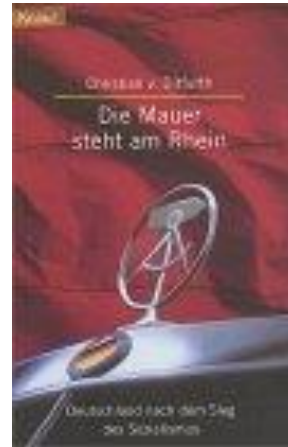
Summing it up: Periods



Afterlife: GDR as Counter-Factual History

Last Resort of Utopia: An Alternative Past, an Alternative Present

- 1999 Christian von Ditfurth:
Die Mauer steht am Rhein.
Deutschland nach dem Sieg des
Sozialismus
(The Wall at Rhine River. Germany
after the Victory of Socialism)
- 2002 Marcus Hammerschmidt:
PolyPlay
- 2011 Simon Urban:
Plan D
- 2015 Harald Martenstein / Tom Peuckert:
Schwarzes Gold aus Warnemünde
(Black Gold from Warnemünde)



Thank You for Your Attention!

And this is
meant to
be our
future?

