

## Chapter Four

### “Fantasy – Idea – Realization” (1961–1970)<sup>1</sup>

The year 1961 saw the construction of the Berlin Wall, known in the East as the “anti-fascist protection wall.” The completion of this physical barrier cemented the division of Germany in the minds of many and put an end to the flow of easterners to the West. The SED considered the Wall as a sign of the end of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Nevertheless, while West Germany experienced its economic miracle, the East still had much to rebuild.

In 1961, Ulbricht introduced the *Neues Ökonomisches System* (New Economic System or NÖS) designed to expand the GDR’s industrial base. This plan channeled resources towards so-called *Zukunftsindustrien* (future industries) and what Ulbricht declared his *Wissenschaftliche-Technische Revolution* [Scientific and Technological Revolution or WTR] (Staritz 279). The NÖS and the WTR placed special focus on science and technological progress by means of the Soviet model so that East Germany might take a place among the world’s premiere industrialized nations.<sup>2</sup> To accomplish this goal, Ulbricht’s policies focused on the creation of a class of broad-based,

- 1 This quote from Bilenkin, a Soviet theorist of science fiction, characterizes the dialectical nature of the narrowly defined space made for the genre as a source of productive scientific inspiration (138).
- 2 Böhm and Dörge’s “Jugendweihe” book *Weltall. Erde. Mensch*, first introduced in 1962, was a science textbook that primarily outlined the use of science and technology in the furtherment and development of Marxist–Leninism and included projections into the future. Walter Ulbricht wrote the book’s introduction: “The sciences, particularly the leading branches of the natural sciences like Physics, Chemistry, and Biology and such disciplines like Cybernetics and Mathematics, penetrate production more and more and change its foundation. The sciences become an immediate productive force and revolutionize all other forces of production. However, this process will be fully accomplished only under socialism and communism, because the capitalist society cannot cope with its social consequences.” 17.

highly trained intellectuals and the desire for greater employee creativity in the workplace.

The New Economic System targeted cultural products as the means with which to create a technologically aware populace. Moreover, it altered publication policy to further focus on polytechnical and scientific education. Additional financial and political support broadened education in the natural sciences. As a result, the percentage of math and science teachers in the schools jumped from thirty-three percent to fifty percent (Sckerl 156). The New Economic System also instructed the publishing houses to expand and further specialize, enabling them to focus more on the quality and quantity of their printed product (Simon and Spittel 29).

Equally influential to the development of science fiction prose and policy in the 1960s was the official adoption of the scientific theory of cybernetics. Originating in the West in the 1940s, cybernetics was initially termed an enemy of socialism in Stalin's Soviet Union. In the wake of the thaw under Khrushchev, the science of cybernetic systems quickly became popular, particularly after a series of Soviet space successes. In East Germany, philosopher Georg Klaus did much to legitimize this theory, which, simply put, presented the opportunity to pre-program systems to respond in a variety of ways to their surroundings. "Feedback loops" conveyed information necessary to refine and improve what was a self-correcting system (Caldwell 144–152). The new focus on cybernetics held mathematics to be the basis of all sciences, whether natural, social or aesthetic. It implied the development of an integrated system of multi-talented individuals all unified by a central belief in mathematics. Cybernetics' increased use to explain and plan all aspects of GDR society, including cultural affairs, was central to the implementation of the WTR. The Sixth Party Congress of the SED proclaimed cybernetics to be the official method of its New Economic System (NÖSPL) of 1963.

Official recognition of the importance of the study of the future did much to legitimize science fiction's place in East Germany through the end of the Ulbricht era. East German state planners became interested in cybernetic applications in the area of societal model building. This method presented them with new forms of policy-making knowledge that enabled them to more accurately

forecast future needs based on the study of the past and the present. What emerged as the science of futurology in the West became known by its application to the socialist economy of East Germany as *Prognostik*. In his closing remarks at the VII Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party, Walter Ulbricht emphasized the importance of expanding work done on “societal prognosis” in order to precipitate a “dialectical discussion with problems of the future” (92). Albeit criticized as utopian early on, *Prognostik* developed as a legitimate policy in East Germany, in part through the work of Adolf Bauer and colleagues (*Philosophie und Prognostik*, 1968).

The first high-level recognition of science fiction as a socialist genre came early in October 1962, when the German Writer’s Union held its *Konferenz zur Zukunftsliteratur* (Conference on the Literature of the Future). It laid out a policy that recognized science fiction, not as literature, but as a societal and scientific tool. The results of this meeting appeared in a series of articles in *Sonntag* in 1962.

Conference discussion quickly revealed the typical gulf in science fiction criticism that was evident in West Germany as well. This gap existed between authors with an interest in science but very little literary training, and literary critics with no scientific knowledge. The difference is apparent in Günther Ebert’s position on science fiction. He believed that Soviet science fiction overemphasized science and technology. “The communists will not win because of the superiority of their social system, but solely due to their technological superiority” (“Wie müssen” 10). For science fiction to conform, Ebert felt it needed to demonstrate not only the technical superiority of socialism, but also a more complete illustration of the socialist personality in the communist future. Otherwise, the genre failed to provide the reader correctly with a well-developed model to emulate.

In response to Ebert’s critique, author Eberhardt Del Antonio argued for a focus on science and technology. He believed that science fiction must be granted a broader scope than the *Gegenwartsroman*, which focuses on the realistic, daily lives and struggles of its characters.

Naturally, if human beings will be the focal point of science fiction [Zukunftsliteratur], so will technology and the various scientific branches – as means for

the liberation of mankind from uncreative, manual labor and in the daily surroundings, in which he lives and, which he transforms. ("Kind von Kunst" 11).

Del Antonio also stressed the importance of the need to dream, especially on the part of scientists. "Dreaming – the ability to see ahead to the coming results of today's actions is a typical human advantage!"<sup>3</sup> First mentioned by Schierlich, the process of dreaming in science fiction became a central issue at the conference, particularly in light of Ernst Bloch's recent ideas in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* that placed so much importance on the revolutionary quality of dreaming.

The Conference on Literature of the Future established the first cohesive theory of a peculiarly East German science fiction. First, the reference to science fiction as a "literature of the future" instead of as "utopian literature" signaled a shift in generic definition. Both *Zukunftsroman* and *utopischer Roman* commonly appeared on East German science fiction publications as "generic identifiers."<sup>4</sup> Socialist utopian literature confined science fiction's interrogative space to an alternate world, whose rules were set to reflect an immediate Marxist–Leninist future. Its utopian visions were directed toward changes in economic and social development in the present day. A "literature of the future," on the other hand, implied a change from the circular motion of the utopian referent to a single vector, pointing in the direction of a distant, albeit less defined and yet ostensibly assured, communist future. Certainly, this literature continued to respond to its sociohistorical context. Yet the magnitude of technological progress in the 1960s, particularly of the space race, fortified the belief in humanity's kinetic motion toward the future and away from its dark past.

- 3 See Del Antonio, "Kind von Kunst" 11. Del Antonio is one of the few authors who wrote on science fiction in the 1960s. Carlos Rasch did develop a theory of "Realphantastik," a method of demonstrating various possible socialist models in the near future. Rasch's theory is very similar to Taut's position elucidated here. See Rasch, "utopische Literatur" 55.
- 4 In Fredric Jameson's theory of the generic contract, the identifier communicates the kind of subgenre to the consumer. (*Political* 106)

The conference referred to the new type of science fiction as *wissenschaftliche–Phantastik* or *wissenschaftliche–phantastische Literatur* (literally scientific fantastic or scientific-fantastic literature). These new terms represented the German translation of the Russian *nauchnaia fantastika* (lit. scientific fantastic). The conference designated this form as a more refined type of East German socialist science fiction. It used its fantastic qualities not to escape contemporary and future problems, but to aid scientifically in their rational solution.<sup>5</sup>

Heinrich Taut embedded *wissenschaftliche Phantastik* in the East German Marxist–Leninist belief system and lexicon. Citing Lenin’s “Dream, dream, where is your delight?” in the title of his article, Taut argued that dreams and fantasy had brought socialism to its current success. He referred to the newest resolutions of the Twelfth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that stressed the decisive effect of “the forces of production and pace and degree” of technological advancement in the success of socialism. In this manner, Taut contended that scientific advancement necessarily requires a degree of fantasy and creativity for it to exist.

Theoretically, he based his argument on a recently published work by the Soviet literary scholar Eugeni Brandis entitled *Über Phantastik und Abenteuer* (On the Fantastic and Adventure, 1960). In essence, Brandis saw science fiction as a literature based on the most advanced scientific knowledge and hypotheses presented by cybernetic theory (Taut, “Träume” 11). To get to that point, scientists must be creative, to think of possibilities and to think into the future. Brandis thus outlined the effectiveness and necessity of fantasy in the scientific world and encouraged science fiction authors to adopt this method. Nonetheless, Brandis was very careful to limit the nature of the fantasy. He recommended: “Even the passionate fantasy has the right to exist, if it does not contradict the general direction of scientific and technological progress” (quoted in Taut 11). Brandis stressed fantasy’s importance, as it lets the author dream of new worlds and

5 *Wissenschaftliche Phantastik* hardly became a term used exclusively for GDR science fiction. In practice, it was used somewhat interchangeably with *Zukunftsroman* or *utopischer Roman* and later even with “science fiction.”

possibilities that could be helpful to the progress of socialism. He believed that writers could bring things out that scientists are not aware of yet.<sup>6</sup> In his opinion, science fiction was a type of scientific prognosis in literary form, what he termed *künstlerisch Futurologie* (artistic futurology).<sup>7</sup>

Taut introduced the importance of imagination and fantasy to natural and social scientific advancement only five years after Bloch's denunciation. Consequently, he was very careful to qualify his suggestion, stating outright that he is not referring to the "ideological" theory of Bloch ("Träume" 11). Instead, Taut viewed science fiction as a rational, cybernetic model in which the author can play with possible futures that would benefit the scientific and socialist worlds.

Science fiction [*Zukunftsliteratur*] can play a meaningful and encouraging role that carries us forward in the dynamic, dialectical interaction between the precise establishment of a realistic and doable action today and the keen and fanciful anticipation of possibilities in the future ("Träume" 11).

In this manner, he expected the authors to proceed with an imagination that limited itself to very concrete and pragmatic futures as opposed to irrational, seemingly impossible dreams as would be feasible in an open interrogative space. As a result, troublesome "utopian" elements that remained fantastic despite efforts to constrain science fiction to the ideological "real" now had an encoded justification.

Taut's theory was underscored the next year at the Sixth Party Congress of the SED. There, Walter Ulbricht linked the presentation of a socialist future based on the cybernetic model with the importance of the new future science of "Prognostik."

In the primary areas of scientific and technological development, prognoses deal with the projected coming domination of natural laws, the associated consequences for technology, and the rapid application of technological discoveries to production (*Die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung* 102).

6 Taut paraphrased Brandis here. See Taut, "Träume" 11.

7 See also Karl-Ludwig Richter's discussion of the implications of "künstlerischen Futurologie."

This policy regarded prognosis as a method of forecasting the symbiotic progress of science and society so integral to historical determinism. The science of *Prognostik* relied primarily on scientific extrapolation similar to western *Futurologie*. Since a theory of science fiction as a type of prognostic yet fictional literature now existed, it would be able to aid in the Scientific–Technological Revolution.

## Novels of the Space Age

GDR literary histories describe the period immediately following the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 as a “turn inwards,” characterized by a retreat from overt Cold War politics and a new focus on internal GDR matters (Emmerich, *Kleine Literatur*). The Sixth Party Congress of the SED in 1963 declared a further expansion of socialism domestically and required the arts to address challenges related to this project. To some extent this “turn” took place in the country’s science fiction. The immediate danger of industrial spies and saboteurs faded with the construction of the wall. Class conflict now appeared in metaphorical form beyond the geographical context of East versus West German. A greater emphasis on the personal experience of the proletariat in socialism became apparent with a new focus on social-cultural visions of the future. However, the protagonists still remained objects within a greater utopian project. Although the socialist personality most often took the form of the scientist in the science fiction of the fifties, the super cosmonaut now made an entrance.

After the success of Sputnik in 1957, authors began to set their science fiction either in space or on other planets. As space flight had been proven possible, it was now fair game for utopian realism.<sup>8</sup> The

8 Heidtmann categorizes developments among the novels of this time period with the following terminology: “Raumfahrtromane,” “phantastische Reise- und Forschungsromane,” and “utopische-phantastische Kinderbücher,” see *Utopische* 50–58.

appearance of Soviet novels such as Alexei Tolstoy's *Aelita* (1922; GDR 1957) and Ivan Efremov's *Andromeda* (1957; GDR 1958) in East Germany expanded the legitimate narrative possibilities from the GDR of the near future, to the stars and distant communist civilizations that faced displaced class conflict.<sup>9</sup> Many modeled their stories on Tolstoy's revolution on Mars or on Lem's voyage to Venus in *The Astronauts* (1951, GDR 1954), and planted socialist colonies on the Moon, Mars and Venus.<sup>10</sup> A number of authors followed Efremov's lead to the stars. They told of long exploratory journeys to distant locations and sometimes even built upon Efremov's fictional universe that contained a stellar communication system known as the "big ring."

Despite the message of the Bitterfeld Path in 1959 to "take up your pen, comrade" and describe the socialist experience in GDR factories, science fiction leapt instead into what has been described by Erik Simon and Olaf Spittel as the "Age of Space Exploration" (41). Most novels did not overemphasize the development of heavy industry and technology important to Ulbricht's plan for German reconstruction. Instead, they moved further and further away from the everyday problematic of East Germany to a literally universal socialist realism. Science fiction turned "outwards," as authors Eberhardt Del Antonio, Günther Krupkat, Horst Müller, and Carlos Rasch set their novels in more distant spaces and times. Although ideologically compliant, these novels were far from the technically useful prognostic models of the near future, which Taut envisioned. Indeed, writers often set their stories on other planets to escape the stricter censor. Some used these alternate worlds to address issues very relevant to contemporary East Germany (Spittel, "Afterward" 468). Of the new narrative possibilities, Carlos Rasch commented: "This creative space

9 Efremov's *Tumannost' Andromedy* [*Andromeda*] appeared in the Soviet Union in 1957. It was translated into German and serialized in a highly censored version in the magazine *Jugend und Technik* beginning in 1958.

10 Kurt Maetzig directed *Der schweigende Stern* (The Silent Star, 1959), the first GDR science fiction film. Lem's *The Astronauts* provided the basis for the screenplay. In the United States, the film appeared as *First Spaceship on Venus* (1962). The significant editing in the latter version changes the entire tone of the film.

that has been made for us authors is by no means too large” (“Utopische Literatur” 56).

For the most part, science fiction from the sixties follows set narrative patterns. By the late 1960s, a generic contract for GDR adventure science fiction was fairly well established (Jameson, *Political* 106). Simon and Spittel attribute the existence of these similarities to the “space-euphoria following the launching of Sputnik I.” They would later become the clichés of “Space-SF” through 1990 (210). Authors Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller conclude that such clichés were, in part, a symptom of censorship and established through political precedent (*Vorgriff* 165). Once certain narrative formulas repeatedly passed the censors, authors considered them to be safe and used them again and again in different variations.

Examples of these clichés include the displacement of class and cold war conflict onto other planets and the presence of aggressive capitalist aliens who threaten nuclear war. Peaceful, highly advanced communist aliens often brought about a revolution or became allies against aggressive, imperialist powers (echoing Turek). These plots tend to focus on a time and place much further away, reachable only by a long space journey to a distant planet(s) where a cosmic-style class conflict ensued. Typical of such stories are Eberhardt Del Antonio’s *Titanus* (1959), Horst Müller’s *Kurs Ganymed* (Course Set For Ganymed, 1962), Lothar Weise’s *Das Geheimnis des Transpluto* (The Secret of Transpluto, 1962), and Hubert Horstmann’s *Stimme der Unendlichkeit* (The Voice of Infinity, 1965).<sup>11</sup>

Common characters include a Soviet space ship commander and/or a Soviet party officer and a novice crewmember, from whose perspective the reader learns about the future society and its technology. The crew often includes an American, who presents an element of conflict either through sabotage or through miscommunication due to his socialization in a “regressive” society.<sup>12</sup> This last cliché is present in Günther Krupkat’s novel *Die große Grenze* (The

11 It is interesting to note that Horst Müller’s novels were published in the Dominowa Verlag, the publishing house of the Sorbian Slavic minority in Bautzen, Saxony.

12 To the best of my knowledge, the American is never a woman.

Big Border, 1960), in which an American ship on its way to the moon floats helplessly in space after an accident. Soviet cosmonauts subsequently rescue it.<sup>13</sup> The moral superiority of the East Bloc proceeds from the rescue of the antagonistic capitalist followed by the conversion of that same capitalist to communism.

The turn outwards of the sixties did turn inwards in one way. While many novels focused on adventure, the image of the crew (brigade) as commune in the isolation of space provided an objective ideal for behavior in a newly formed East German island. As with more mainstream literature of the time, portrayals of the socialist personality in science fiction became increasingly psychological. They thematized personal problems in individual relationships rather than depicting the crew as a perfect mechanized unit.

The nearer the future and the closer the proximity to Earth, the narrower the ideological space in which the author could write. As a result, novels set closer to Earth took one of two forms. One combined space adventure with aspects of the production novel. For instance, instead of finding new elements in Algeria as in Heinz Vieweg's *Ultrasymet Remains Secret*, Lothar Weise's *Unternehmen Marsgibberellin* (The Marsgibberellin Enterprise, 1964) places the raw material on Mars. Plot tension stems from the difficulties of mining it in space and the obligatory class conflict. The second form relied on plot tension provided by a new and relatively apolitical scientific discovery. Carlos Rasch's successful novel *Asteroidenjäger* (Asteroid Hunters, 1961) tells the story of a group of star pilots designated to hunt down potentially dangerous asteroids.<sup>14</sup> In this and other like adventures, asteroids often bombarded the ship. The crew played in zero gravity as well. The challenges of space travel were common popular science issues at the time and often appeared in science fiction.

Two of the most prolific science fiction authors, Karl-Heinz Tuschel and Alexander Kröger, also began writing a series of novels

13 Krupkat became the head of the *Arbeitskreis Utopische Literatur* of the German Writers' Union in 1973 ("Stenographische Niederschrift eines Gesprächs" 2).

14 This novel provided the basis for Gottfried Kolditz' film *Signale* (Signals, 1970).

in which the communist society remained relatively free of conflict.<sup>15</sup> Tuschel's first book *Ein Stern fliegt vorbei* (A Star Flies By, 1967) contains an asteroid field that threatens to collide with the Earth. Only the combined efforts of humanity avert total destruction and lead to the establishment of a socialist planet.<sup>16</sup> Kröger debuted in 1969 with *Sieben fielen vom Himmel* (Seven Fell from Heaven), in which visitors from Proxima Centauri are stranded on the Earth. They find it difficult to understand the nature of class and racial conflict, after encountering both an Indian expedition and an American expedition. A technologically advanced, international, socialist group discovers the aliens and helps them to return home. Both of these authors carried the utopian realist tradition of East Germany into the seventies and eighties.

On an interesting side-note, author Günter Krupkat came under criticism due to his preoccupation with Erik van Daniken's tales of past alien landings on the Terraces at Baalbek. Paleontological themes existed in GDR, Polish and Soviet science fiction throughout the 1960s. Such publications speculated on the meaning of earth mysteries of the past and the not so recent past and often drew inspiration from the Tunguska meteor landing of 1908 in Siberia. Lem's book *The Astronauts* and Kurt Maetzig's film *Der schweigende Stern* (The Silent Star, 1959) drew inspiration from this very meteor. Efremov's *Andromeda* included references to archaeology and anthropology, and Efremov himself was a paleontologist. After the publication of Edward van Daniken's theory of alien influence on human history, this too became a favorite theme.

An array of novels by Rasch and Krupkat took place in an alternate time, often on the Earth of the past. These books included Rasch's *Der blaue Planet* (The Blue Planet, 1963), which chronicled

15 The two became frequent authors in the series *Spannend erzählt* (Excitingly told) in Verlag Neues Leben. Tuschel later published a number of short stories in the series *Das neue Abenteuer* (The New Adventure) in Verlag Das Neue Berlin.

16 This book belongs to a long history of doomsday novels predicting the collision of heavenly bodies with Earth. Perhaps the best known of such stories is "When Worlds Collide" (1951), which was directed by Rudolph Mate and produced by George Pal.

the landing of a socialist alien in ancient Sumeria from the alien's point of view. Krupkat's *Als die Götter starben* (When the Gods Died, 1963) began with the discovery of diaries on the Mars moon Phobos in the 21st century. An inhabitant of the planet Meju, who had visited Earth's Near East around 4000 B.C., wrote the diaries. This book's sequel, *Nabou* (1968), relates the story of a member of a research team that is investigating the Earth's crust. This team member turns out to be the third in a series of "Biomaten" who the Mejuans left behind to prepare for direct contact with humans. (Robots or cybernetic beings were rare in the GDR at this time). This historical science fiction shifted class conflict to an encounter between "advanced" socialist aliens or humans and societies at a "lower level" of historical development. No open conflict existed between the two societies. Instead the author compared and contrasted the two, stressing the superiority of the socialist model.

Taut praised Rasch's *Die Heloiden* (an early name for *Der blaue Planet*) in an application review (441). Others called this paleontological bent, particularly Krupkat's pursuit of Erik van Daniken's theories, unrealistic and dangerous ("Stenographische Niederschrift eines Gesprächs" 55). At a special meeting of the Kulturbund in 1973, concern grew after a science fiction club screened Harald Reinl's film *Erinnerung an die Zukunft* [Chariot of the Gods, 1970] ("Stenographische Niederschrift eines Gesprächs" 55).<sup>17</sup> The film, based on the book of the same name by Daniken, met with great interest and further demand among the event participants. Krupkat himself made a trip to the Terrace of Baalbek and gave a presentation on this for the Stanislaw Lem Club (Simon, Personal interview, 1997). Certainly, Daniken's status as rare western material made his work exotic. It is worthwhile to note that what has been called "pseudoscientific" science fiction in the West as well (recently by Thomas Disch [43]), also made its mark in East Germany.

17 Harald Reinl is best known for his series of West German Westerns and particularly for *Winnetou I* (Apache Gold, 1963). These films are adaptations of Karl May's adventure novels from the turn of the century, which began with *Winnetou* (1908).

## The New Wave

In 1961, as the Berlin Wall stemmed the threat of books from the West, the definition of GDR popular literature as a political weapon against *Schund und Schmutz* literature faded into the background. The growing influence of television, western broadcasting in particular, led to the formulation of new policies in the field of entertainment literature and programming. Pedagogues became interested in popular literature, in part due to a call by the Seventh Party Congress of the SED in 1967 to refocus energy on the creation of the Socialist Personality and the “socialist way of life.” The first academic project on popular literature originated in 1968 at the Pedagogical University “Karl Liebknecht” in Potsdam under the direction of Gustav Schröder (Mallinckrodt 32). This research group included science fiction in its study.

In addition, a reader survey conducted by Christa Hein and Karin Ludwig, shed light on the science fiction audience. In the sixties, the majority of readers were between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five. They were secondary school and college students, apprentices, skilled workers, engineers, and white-collar workers. A small percentage was women (33).

New efforts by the German Writers’ Union to create socialist literature led to a second Bitterfeld conference in 1964, which acknowledged the importance of popular literature in the GDR. A hierarchy remained nonetheless between high literature and popular literature of the “transition phase” (from socialism to communism). Literary scholars continued to ignore the popular form. The worker’s novel (*Arbeiterroman*) entertained the essentialized (male) worker. Ideologically, popular literature remained for those (i.e. women and children), who still required more trivial forms of entertainment (Hochmuth 49).

This hierarchy sheltered science fiction from the crackdown on cultural policy announced at the Eleventh Plenary of the SED’s

Central Committee in December 1965.<sup>18</sup> In fact, science fiction production expanded during this period. Following the meeting, the Ministry of Culture reevaluated the work of all publishers in the present and their plans for the future. Anita Mallinckrodt notes the reorganization of several dime novel series and the addition of others in which science fiction appeared. For instance, in 1966, the Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt changed its *Kleine Jugendreihe* to *KAP* [*Krimi, Abenteuer, Phantastik* or Detective Novel, Adventure, Fantasy] (32). In that same year, the publication of science fiction novels rose from one novel per year to three or four per year (Neumann, *Bibliographie* 862). Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller cite that support for GDR science fiction publications grew visibly beginning in 1968. They point to a jump from a total of five publications in 1967 to sixteen the following year and then twelve in 1969 (*Vorgriff* 10). This figure includes foreign and domestic science fiction.

At this time, a new type of science fiction began to appear in the West. By the late sixties, science fiction in the United States and England responded to and participated in the era's social and political revolutions. In 1964, Michael Moorcock took over the British journal *New Worlds*. This journal began what became known as "New Wave" science fiction, which explored the notion of "inner space," the psychological and the subjective. Authors included Brian Aldiss, Samuel Delany, Philip Dick and Robert Silverberg (James 167–176).

The GDR's version of a "New Wave" coincided with the regime change from Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker in 1971. While the majority of this new style of science fiction appeared after this date, its theorization and political justification began several years before. Both literary intellectuals and editors reconsidered the value of utopian thought. External innovations in Eastern European science

18 The Eleventh Plenary targeted select authors, actors and musicians. It was particularly critical of the film industry and banned three years of production by DEFA. See *Kahlschlag*, edited by Günter Agde. Beginning in 1966, DEFA produced one *Indianerfilm* (East German westerns) per year. See Dagmar Schittly, *Zwischen Regie und Regime* 127–153.

fiction, particularly the writings of Stanislaw Lem, played a large role in the development of the literature as well.<sup>19</sup>

In a collection of essays from 1958–1966 entitled *Das Poetische* (1972), Peter Hacks reinscribed the utopian method into Marxism–Leninism. He brought back the dynamicism into what he believed had become a static theory (“Utopie und Realität” 199). Hacks’ new literary style had as its centerpiece his concept of the “poetic” in drama. Hacks’ poetic itself differs from Brecht’s epic theater in that it takes place within socialism rather than during the revolutionary period. Peter Graves argues that Hacks’ references to what he calls “historicizing” indirectly refer to Brecht (586). Like Brecht, Hacks wished “to grasp reality artistically in its total dialectic” (Hacks, “Poetische” 45). However, rather than bring the reader to “consciousness” in the contemporary world, Hacks’ poetic method was directed to the future. Through a discussion of the poem “Die Räuberbraut” (The Robber Bride) by Schiller, he identified the importance of its “identification value” to its popularity and its inclusion of “the unreachable, the unreal” to its effectiveness (Hacks 123). Hacks hoped to create a theater of contradiction by combining the two elements (Graves 586).

Although Hacks did not expressly connect his concept of the poetic and his thoughts concerning the utopian relationship to reality, Graves makes a convincing connection between the two. He points to Hacks’ discussion of the utopian playwright (Graves 587). In *das Poetische*, Hacks writes that the “utopian” does not deny socialism through her portrayal of contradiction. Rather, she “bumps into one of the iron limits.” The utopian acknowledges that “development, if it occurs, takes place via contradiction and only through contradiction” (29). In Hacks’ view, the continued existence of contradiction is necessary if a society is to progress from socialism to communism. Utopian thought is, hence, a useful tool for the socialist. Built upon the solid foundations of socialist achievement, this technique

19 Emmerich notes that it has not been established to what degree the fall of Dubcek’s reformist government during the Prague Spring of 1968 had on East German intellectuals (*Kleine Literatur* 183).

appropriated utopia to create what Hacks termed the “socialist classical literature” (41).

In a Blochian sense, Hacks reaffirmed the positive, revolutionary effect of the relationship of utopia to the real in socialism. Traditionally, the classic literary utopia identified the negative in a historical period in order to overturn that negative. In Hacks’ opinion, there was no danger of this, as he believed the positive historical end point of socialism could only lead to another positive. Aesthetically, Hacks called for an “openness in the portrayal of contradiction” (41). These open contradictions acted as the “lever for the transformation of the world” (35). Moreover, he maintained that the literary had a political function. Any contradiction between existing state policy or program and the utopian world necessarily was a positive one, aiding in the strengthening of socialism.

Most publications of the GDR “New Wave” appeared in the Verlag Das Neue Berlin. In 1968, Ekkehard Redlin became one of two head editors designated for science fiction and was to have much influence on its expansion into the eighties. An early fan of the genre, he had worked at this publishing house as an editor since 1952, and assumed his new role upon Gerhard Branstner’s resignation (Simon and Spittel 108 and 224).

Redlin contributed critical talent to the field, and functioned simultaneously as editor and censor in direct contact with established and budding authors. As is evident in his numerous well-argued and informative applications for publication, and from a number of articles on GDR science fiction, Redlin’s presence had a decisive effect. He acted as one of the growing number of spokespersons for the genre. He consistently and successfully argued for the legitimacy of new authors who wrote more critically of East Germany through allusion and allegory.

For instance, Redlin argued for the publication of Herbert Ziergiebel’s *Zeit der Sternschuppen* (The Season of Falling Stars, 1971) after it had stalled at the *Mitteldeutscher Verlag* due to “conflicting editorial reviews” (Rev. of *Zeit* 1). In the novel, the “hero,” Weyden, witnesses an alien landing on Earth and ends up a passenger on their ship. A comical, love story ensues with Weyden uncertain of his wants and desires. In the end, he returns to Earth and finds himself in

a mental hospital. Weyden's fiancée rescues him, but must leave Earth soon after.

The intercession of a skilled editor, particularly of a head editor or publisher, often led to the publication of a book deemed "questionable" (Kruschel, "Zwischen" 159). In his review, Redlin did just that. He acknowledged that Ziergiebel's protagonist was "in no way a positive example" but possessed realistic contradictions in his personality (5). He had improved himself and therefore functioned as a model for the contemporary socialist reader. In addition, Redlin's review praised Ziergiebel's juxtaposition of the real world with the novel's utopian segment. "In the novel, the utopian world helps Weyden to find himself" (4). Redlin believed Weyden learned "productive" lessons about the real world through his experiences in the estranged alternate world.

The apparent gulf between the "real" world and a text's imaginary one posed a constant problem when reconciling science fiction's speculative nature with socialist realism. Redlin criticized those who attempted to overcome this paradox by redefining the utopian novel as *Realphantastik*, its horizon an "historical position that can be determined exactly in a given societal coordinate system."<sup>20</sup> In his opinion, any creative energy present in *Real-phantastik* was channeled into a kind of "Gegenwartsliteratur [lit. present literature] of tomorrow." This form restricted the utopian text to an artistic pragmatic prognosis. Redlin regarded it as "a parity that restricts utopian thought, yes even prohibits it" ("Stenographische Niederschrift eines Gespraches uber utopisch-phantastischer Literatur." 46).

He looked for a way to emphasize the utopian novel's interaction with the real, while at the same time justifying the importance of fantasy to society. Building on Taut's association of creativity in cybernetics with dreaming, Redlin reiterated the function of the model as a legitimate space outside of proven experience in which to construct a future world and run through its selected problematic. At a later date, Redlin quoted from Georg Klaus' *Kybernetik und*

20 Redlin referred to a theory of "Realphantastik" put forth by author Carlos Rasch in his article "Fantastik hilft die Zukunft begreifen." See Redlin, "Die utopische Dimension" 166.

*Erkenntnistheorie* (Cybernetics and Cognitive Theory, 1966) to underscore further the existence of fantasy within cybernetics.

Cybernetics teaches us that the highest form of interaction between a cybernetic system and its environment occurs when the system constructs an inner model of its environment. Experiments on and with this model lead finally to the construction of potential external situations, to models that, in reality, are fantasy worlds. (quoted by Redlin, "Die utopische Dimension" 166).

Interestingly, cybernetics had been denounced as an economic model in the wake of the Prague Spring of 1968, due to its perceived role in the economic and political reforms taking place in Czechoslovakia (Caldwell 179). Still, Redlin's approach proved effective in the cultural sphere.

Importantly, Redlin did not address science fiction in terms of scientific, but rather literary theory. He focused on the reading process and applied the concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt* to utopian literature. Through the thought experiment of utopia, the normal, everyday world takes on a different light and seems new and strange. Its reference to reality becomes apparent in the process of reading. The utopian function provides the reader with intellectual pleasure and relaxation and causes her to search for the meaning of the symbolic in the text. Redlin argued that this process brings the reader much closer to the truth and reality of her socialist world. It aids in the self-realization and growth of adults within a community.

Redlin did not specify whether he drew upon Brecht's concept of alienation in his epic theater or upon Kafka's *Verfremdungseffekt*. He used the term generally. The Kafka Conference held in Liblice, Czechoslovakia in May 1963 established the importance of this author's aesthetic within socialism. Although GDR attendees at the time maintained that Kafka's *Verfremdungseffekt* could not possibly provide a model for socialist literature, Joshua Feinstein remarks that this conference opened the door to Kafka's later influence (127).

Next, Redlin endeavored to restrain the "truths," exposed by the estrangement effect, to socialist realism. He did not understand utopia to be an all-encompassing worldview in the manner of Thomas More. Rather he insisted that it focus on specific problems, which dealt with

the contemplation and development of a Marxist–Leninist society in the GDR (Schröder, “Zur Geschichte” 45–46). It is this aspect of utopian literature, which Redlin deemed “revolutionary” and would improve the socialist experiment in the GDR. He believed that the inherent realism of the utopian in science fiction was instrumental in the perception of reality and in the development of ways in which to improve this reality. In this way “realism” and “literary utopia” complemented each other (“utopische Dimension” 166).

Redlin’s justification of utopia represented an East German contribution to a broader debate on science fiction conducted by some of its foremost representatives in the East Bloc in the latter half of the sixties. This noteworthy discussion appeared in the East German editions of the journals *Die Sowjetunion im Spiegel Ihrer Presse* (The Soviet Union Through the Mirror of Its Press), *Sputnik*, and *Kunst und Literatur* (Art and Literature). The participants included Polish author Stanislaw Lem, several influential Soviet authors including Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, and Soviet utopian theorist Eugeni Brandis.<sup>21</sup> That this discussion impacted GDR science fiction is demonstrated, in part, by the reference to its early stages in the articles resulting from the 1962 Conference on Literature of the Future (Taut, “Träume” 11). Redlin cited these authors in his editorial reviews in the seventies, in order to justify the publication of similar experimental science fiction in the GDR.<sup>22</sup>

- 21 During the 1960s, Soviet science fiction received broad structural support from the state and enjoyed a wide readership among students, academics, philosophers, engineers and cosmonauts (“Hinterm” 141). This rejuvenation occurred in part due to the success of Sputnik, but also to a period of thaw under Nikita Khrushchev.
- 22 See for instance Redlin’s review of Heiner Rank’s *Die Ohnmacht der Allmächtigen* (1972). Redlin cited stories by Lem, the Strugatsky brothers, Josef Nesvadba and Czechoslovak writer Cěstmir Vejdělek that had been published in the 1960s to justify the publication of this book (4). Redlin’s theory paralleled similar theories on the *Verfremdungseffekt* in utopia and science fiction, particularly that outlined in Stanislaw Lem’s *Phantastik und Futurologie* (1970). Darko Suvin developed a theory of science fiction based on Brecht’s theory of estrangement and Bloch’s concept of *Erkenntnis* or cognition in *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction* (1979).

This significant debate reevaluated the idyllic view of technological progress present in the historical determinism of scientific socialism. In the fifties and sixties, GDR attempts at a search for “realism” in science fiction marked Jules Verne as the founder of “humanistic” science fiction. The works of H.G. Wells on the other hand served as the receptacle for fears and accusations against the West. His more fantastic visions were labeled “irrational” and perceived to be shaped by the “late bourgeois anxieties” of his time. In his article in *Kunst und Literatur*, Eugeni Brandis rehabilitated Wells as “the progenitor of the new science fiction [wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur” (“wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur” 799). Instead of searching for optimistic plots and scientific correctness, Brandis stressed that Wells often touched upon the “dual character of scientific and technological progress that carries constructive and destructive forces buried within it” (806). This statement is significant, as it located the possible challenges and dangers of technological and societal development within Eastern Europe and not solely as a problem in the West.

Brandis cited Wells’ dystopian visions in the *War of the Worlds* (1898; GDR 1988) and *The Time Machine* (1895; GDR 1975) as examples of what he introduced as the “novel of warning” (*Warnungsroman*). Brandis emphasized its importance in accessing possible future dangers. He wrote that science fiction, as a combination of science with literary fantasy, has particular advantages in conjunction with the new science of futurology. In doing so the writer should not ignore the borders between reality and fantasy, but should incorporate the fantastic methods of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allen Poe, in order to aid in the productive aspects of writing. “The great realists never shied away from the grotesque or satiric exaggeration” (798).

Unsurprisingly, Brandis qualified his analysis by outlining the narrative possibilities for science fiction determined by the class position of the author. Socialist realist science fiction could take the form of the “positive novel” or the “warning novel.” He concluded that this last category differs from the “anti-utopia” or bourgeois dystopia in that it incorporated a productive warning, couched in an optimistic belief in social progress. The author of the anti-utopia, on the other hand, begins with the pessimistic assumption that neither

social progress nor the “productive power of the people” exists (802). This last distinction appeared in Redlin’s theory of utopia as well.

Stanislaw Lem went even further than Brandis to reject the possible attainment of a future paradise and thus a premise of the GDR’s utopian realist novels. In an interview from 1969, he directly acknowledged the new dilemmas brought about by change and development within the East Bloc.

Every improvement has its cost. If medicine develops rapidly, the death rate goes down and there is a population explosion. Our world is a very complicated mechanism and each action can have consequences for the future (“Jeder Fortschritt” 20)

While the reader might want to believe in a perfect future, this dream is only “an ancient illusion” (23). Lem saw his role as author to illustrate the various possible futures and their implications through fiction. “I create specific alternative models” (20). According to Lem, humanity might be able to anticipate and avoid the more catastrophic events in the future through science fiction.

The analyses put forth by Redlin, Brandis and Lem represented a fundamental change in the perception of technological determinism that dominated not only Soviet and East German science fiction, but the Anglo–American tradition as well. At this time, authors in the East and West similarly turned to science fiction as a means of critiquing contemporary society. However, the shape of the ensuing science fiction depended upon the socio-historical context in which it was written. Where the new wave in the Anglo–American tradition drew from modern English literature and Kafka, this transformation in the GDR came about due to a reevaluation of German Romanticism, Brechtian alienation, Kafka’s estrangement effect and influences within the East Bloc. Western science fiction moved towards the political left and the incorporation of questions of race, gender, class and the environment. GDR New Wave authors increasingly emphasized issues that reflected concerns of the growing environmental, feminist, peace movements.

## The Ambiguous Utopia

In contrast to the utopian realism of space age science fiction in East Germany, the new wave of science fiction that emerged in the late sixties and dominated the seventies took the form of ambiguous utopia. Karsten Kruschel refers to the ambivalence in ambiguous utopia in terms of “the presence of a variety of possible interpretations” (*Spielwelten* 64). He uses the category of ambiguous utopia to characterize those novels of this period that were neither utopian nor dystopia. Rather such fiction contains elements of both, “which are opposed to and contradict each other” (64). According to Kruschel, in this manner the ambiguous utopia works towards a societal solution in a dialectical manner.<sup>23</sup>

To clarify further, the ambiguous utopia can best be defined in terms of Thomas Moylan’s similar category of “critical utopia.” In *Demand the Impossible*, Moylan identifies a new Anglo–American tradition of utopian writing that emerged in the late sixties. He exemplifies the manner in which Johanna Russ’s novel *The Female Man* (1975) is “self-critical, conscious of itself and its history” (57). Moylan remarks on the “fragmented” and “incomplete” form of Russ’ story. “She uses utopia as a literary practice; she does not assert utopia as a literary object” (56). Likewise, he remarks on the “[u]topian vision and an awareness of the denial of that vision in the everyday life of American society” in Marge Piercy’s work (121). Her *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) “breaks open realist narrative” and “allow[s] for the development of a radical utopian activism in the text that offers serious oppositional challenge to the historical status quo (123). Moylan sets these novels in opposition to the “instrumental” classical utopia such as More’s *Utopia* (*Scraps* 83). Being “critical” means that the novel rejects the “utopia as blueprint” (*Demand* 10–11). While preserving the quality and power of hope in the dream for the future, the critical utopia also acknowledges the imperfections that exist both in the present and in the utopian dream.

23 As Kruschel’s dissertation was written in East Germany and published after 1989, he remains equivocal as to the political implications of his definition.

It is imperative to remember that, where Moylan's authors composed in a free society, GDR writers worked under conditions of censorship. When I employ the term ambivalent utopia, I refer to a tradition that did not fully reject "utopia as a blueprint." Many GDR authors supported the SED's initial alignment with Marxist–Leninism. Furthermore, later science fiction in East Germany often created utopian visions that articulated the discrepancies between reality and the SED's chiefly static blueprint in indirect and discreet ways. In fact, the nature of science fiction utopia in the GDR changed over time from that of a Marxist–Leninist one, unified by censorship and historical experience, to a utopia of greater experimentation and exploration. This shift incorporated forms of ambivalent utopia and finally even dystopia written as negative reflections of the greater utopian projects of the individual author(s). The dystopia became viable politically in the final years of East Germany.

Where the East German ambiguous utopia did take the form of a serious narrative, the overwhelming number of these stories incorporated humor and satire. In this regard, the influence of Stanislaw Lem's writings cannot be overestimated. Lem's earliest publication of this sort was the *Star Diaries* (1957; GDR 1961).<sup>24</sup> Much like his other future anthologies (e.g. *Memoirs of a Space Traveler*, *Cyberiad* and *The Futurological Congress*) *Star Diaries* is a collection of loosely linked stories. There is no continuous plot, however the topic, protagonist, theme, and setting overlap to create a sense of narrative cohesion. In his study of *Star Diaries*, Richard Ziegfeld points to other more subtle practices in which Lem tied the narrative together. First, the tone between the narrator and "conventional social practices" is one of "substantial distance." Ziegfeld remarks that Lem establishes distance through "many means, the most striking of which is satire." Where Lem chooses an array of targets, his satire remains short, random and repeated. It is this random quality, which Ziegfeld believes "fosters unity" as it "provides the reader with a familiar generic mode" (13).

24 Lem's novels that appeared in the GDR include *Star Diaries* (GDR 1961; complete edition 1973), *Der Unbesiegbare* (GDR 1966), *Test* (GDR 1968), *Robotermärchen* (GDR 1969), *Die Jagd* (GDR 1972) and *Eden* (GDR 1971).

What has consistently contributed to Lem's international success is the keen creativity of his satire that he often takes to the point of ridiculous hilarity. In the seventh voyage of the *Star Diaries*, Tichy, the main character, actually travels through time in a circular manner. He meets himself numerous times, where he had just been or was just going. On the surface an amusing series of encounters with the self, this scene's circular progression through time also undermines the Soviet doctrine of historical determinism.

Most often Lem chooses to explore religious and historical issues as well as humanity's role in the universe. The genre of science fiction provides him with an abundance of settings and times in which to conduct "thought experiments." The result often takes the form of an intellectual discourse along the lines of what Ziegfeld identifies as the philosophical tale from the Swiftian tradition (13). Many of Lem's protagonists are scientists or professors and populate his tales as both the hero and the object of satire. With respect to gender, the few female protagonists in Lem's prose are often banal stereotypes. In this area, his parody and commentaries are highly reductive and, at times, misogynistic.<sup>25</sup> Usually, his target is not an individual, but rather the idea this protagonist represents.

Much of Gerhard Branstner's science fiction publications have a playful feel similar to that of Lem and of Czech author Joseph Nesvadba.<sup>26</sup> Branstner experimented with various aspects of humor in all genres, and often mixed elements of the fable, parody, detective novel, and/or science fiction together.<sup>27</sup> In the manner of Lem, he often incorporated elements of the fantastic in a diary or short story format and connected these stories with recurrent characters and settings. His *Der falsche Mann im Mond* (The Wrong Man in the Moon, 1970), *Der astronomische Dieb* (The Astronomical Thief, 1973), and *Der Sternenkavalier* (The Star Cavalier, 1976) all follow this narrative

25 I am thinking here, for instance, of remarks in Lem's *Microworlds* (67 and footnote four on page 75).

26 An anthology of Nesvadba's short stories appeared in the GDR in 1968.

27 Branstner developed a Marxist-Leninist theory of literary humor in his dissertation entitled "Kunst des Humors – Humor der Kunst." He did not mention science fiction in the dissertation, however.

pattern. Although Branstner's works are critical, they remained relatively abstract, apolitical and quite playful.

Branstner's first science fiction story *Reise zum Stern der Beschwingten* (Trip to the Planet of the Exhilarated, 1968) adapted Lem's notion of the anti-hero. Branstner's protagonists are far removed from the socialist personality, who brought about cosmic revolution so common to science fiction of the space age. Rather, they are similar to the stumbling, yet somehow competent, Tichy of Lem's *Star Diaries*, whose comical encounters with alien phenomenon endear him to the reader. The subtitle of Branstner's novel alone indicates the less-than-serious nature of the story:

A portrayal of the galactic experiences of quite a few Earthlings who accidentally end up in the Milky Way after suffering a bit. They experience hardship but then finally end up home again happily. (3).

The heroes of Branstner's novel are retired space veterans with balding heads and beer bellies. They have been recalled to operate an otherwise decommissioned spaceship, as they alone possess the skills to operate the antiquated equipment. Each has his own set of quirks that contribute to the comedic storyline. Professor Hedderich, leader of the expedition, knows only that the expedition is to search for Martians, but not how, why, or where (9). Weynreich's function during the expedition is unclear at the beginning (8). He is later unable to function as ship watchman due to loneliness and boredom (70–72). For reasons, revealed later, the character Rinstone never speaks (21). The novel itself opens as the Paul Schimansky's wife sees him off at the door with food and his slippers for the expedition. This mundane event in the life of the anti-hero also betrays the story's exclusion of women from the narrative other than in the pejorative role of nagging, or abandoned housewife.

The anti-hero also includes the anti-scientist. Like Russian authors Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, who satirized Soviet scientists in *Monday Always Begins on Saturday* (Soviet Union 1965; GDR 1990) Branstner's novel portrays the research conducted on the ship as charlatanism. This characterization refutes the superhuman image of the socialist scientist, who deduces the "truth" through cybernetics.

Instead, Professor Hedderich consistently remembers and then forgets vital information. Despite its scientific refutation, he continues to believe that one can tell a person's temperament (phlegmatic, melancholic, choleric or sanguine) by the size of their head (28). The character Pulicke uses cybernetics to explain an implausible theory of language (19). Professor Busch, who had originally "discovered" evidence of life on the planet Mars, was later discredited. He has fabricated the discovery of a reel of information on Mars in order to breathe new life into his theory and gain access to a spaceship with which to search for further evidence of Martians in the solar system (18–19).

Branstner's novel is similar to the children's literature written by Johanna and Günter Braun in the sixties in its playfulness and in that many characters like those found in fables and fairy tales. At the same time, he borrows heavily from surrealism. On one of the various stops on their nebulous mission, the travelers help to hinder a battle between cannibals and intelligent birds that attack their enemies with guano (79–81). They visit a society of salamander-like humanoids, who, in a reversal of Darwin, retreated to a watery existence in order to escape their planet's extremely heavy gravitational pull (116–117). The salamanders have an established diplomatic corps as well as underwater hotels equipped for air-breathing emissaries. The explorers run across a genocidal robot, designed to wipe out a planet's alligator population, and distract him with their shoes (36–39). The sheer absurdity of their adventures underscores the dissimilarities between the humans and their discoveries. Where the cosmonauts of the space age repeatedly found the alien proletariat on deep-space expeditions, Branstner's characters have only the ability to speak Earth's language in common with their hosts. Due to humanity's advanced exploration of the Milky Way, this unspecified language has become a *lingua franca* of space.

In addition to Branstner, the well-known essayist and poet Günter Kunert also worked with satirical science fiction in poetry and short story form. In the same year as *Trip to the Planet of the Exhilarated*, Kunert published "Die kleinen grünen Männer" (The Small, Green Men, 1968) and "Nach der Landung" (After the Landing, 1968). An additional short story, "Andromeda zur Unzeit"

(*Andromeda Out of Season*, 1968), touches upon environmental issues with its setting on an Earth devoid of enough resources to support the human population. Those lucky enough to receive a “green card” are sent to wealthy settlements on Uranus or Neptune daily. Television becomes the protagonist’s only contact with reality, as it broadcasts the daily, hopeful rocket launchings. This reality is questioned when the character notices one day in April that the constellations behind the rocket are those of November.

Far from the space adventures of the early sixties, “*Andromeda zur Unzeit*” already demonstrates the societal critique implicit in later GDR science fiction. In a period of thaw in the early seventies, Kunert published “*Schlaf*” (Sleep, 1975), “*Museumsbesuch*” (Museum Visit, 1975) and “*Vom Pluto her*” (From Pluto, 1975). The latter incorporates elements of horror, which were rare to GDR science fiction. Kunert relates the landing of the plutonids on Earth. Despite human excitement at first contact, the biological makeup of the aliens makes them invisible to the human eye. Only blood traces, dead bodies and suppressed cries attest to their presence on Earth. The three-page story ends with a foreboding prediction of further violence.

In the first half of the GDR, science fiction authors implicitly transgressed the boundaries of official policy by envisioning a future that differed from the hegemonic ideology. Kunert was one of the first avant-garde authors to experiment with science fiction. As we will see, his poems represented the first science fiction to critique the SED regime through satire and metaphor. Under conditions of censorship, the textual ambiguity of the fantastic made this science fiction possible.



Book cover from Del Antonio's *Heimkehr der Vorfahren*  
(Return of the Forefathers, 1966)