

Visionary Veterans

On German future-novels during the interwar-period

During the Weimar Republic and the early years of the Third Reich Germany's popular book market was flooded by the genre of the *Zukunftsroman*, a kind of proto-science-fiction-novel. In contrast to the term science fiction, which was not in common use in Germany until the 1950s, the term *Zukunftsroman* characterises its subject more aptly insofar as technical innovations are often the subject of the created secondary worlds, but not necessarily their dominant theme. If we look at the genre of the *Zukunftsroman* more from the point of view of its contemporary self-characterisation than that of its American relatives, it is clearly noticeable that among the protagonists of the novels in question, in addition to inventors and engineers, another group is strongly represented, namely that of veterans. It is veterans of the First World War who achieve by dying world revolution in Johannes R. Becher's novel *(CH Cl = CH)₃As (Levisite) oder Der einzig gerechte Krieg* (1926), just as in Karl August von Laffert's novels *Fanale am Himmel* (1925) and *Flammen aus dem Weltenraum* (1927) a German World-War-Veteran finally becomes the undisputed leader of the world. In many German future-novels only as former frontline-soldiers the characters have voice and mandate to speak about the future political order of Germany, Europe or the world, only carriers of the war-experience have the right to have visions. The novels discuss the question of who, after the world war and revolution, is actually addressed as a subject of the political and what kind of "agency" can be ascribed to the individual. The paper will discuss visions of war in communist, nationalist, national-socialist and pacifistic German future-novels and will especially focus the aspect of the main characters' agency.

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