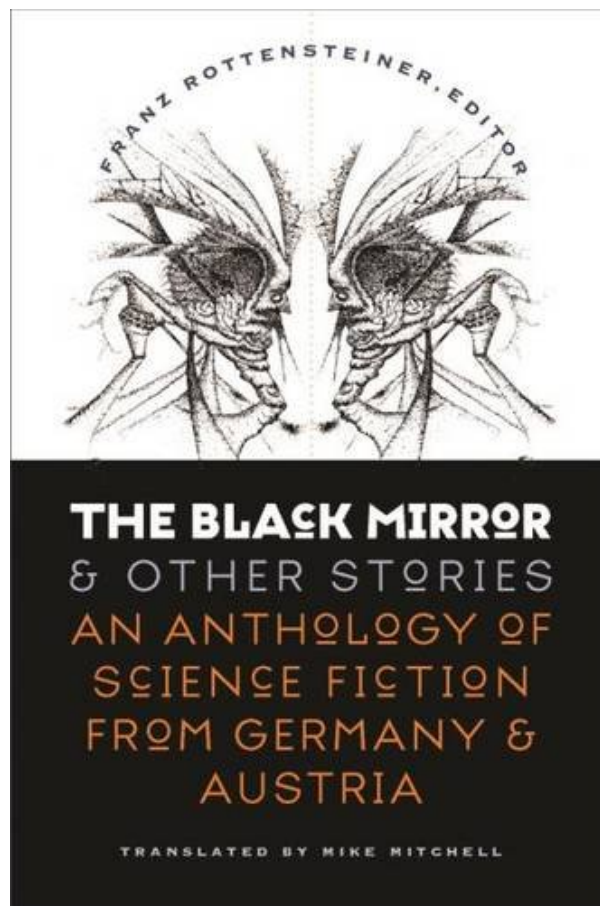
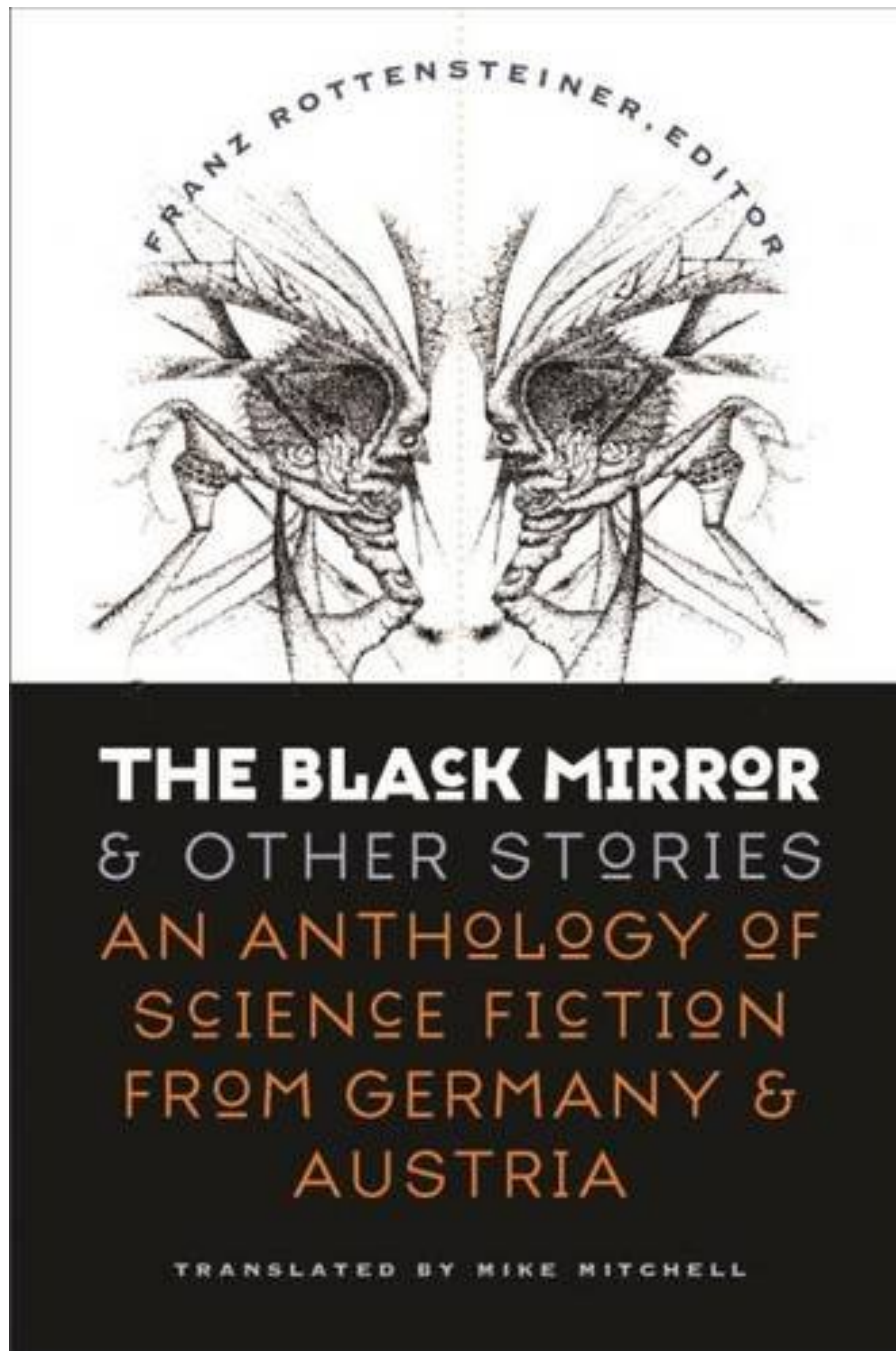


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Starred Review. Handsomely equipped with a comprehensive introductory historical essay, editor's notes and selected bibliography, this distinguished anthology is a model of genre research. These previously untranslated stories, published from 1871 onward, offer reading virtually unknown to most American (and many German) readers. Some authors combine scientific and philosophical issues, like Kurd Lasswitz in his witty tale *To the Absolute Zero of Existence: A Story from 2371*, while others, as in Erik Simon's 1983 title story, pose psychological puzzles involving alien phenomena. Though the earlier stories in particular demand painstaking reading, all of them repay it with rewarding insights into German and Austrian culture and the many possible uses and misuses of science. (Dec.)

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Review

"Both libraries and sf readers looking to expand their geographical horizons should purchase this thought-provoking collection."—Sonja Fritzsche, *Extrapolation*

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This entertaining anthology delivers great reading and an overview of German-language science fiction, including works by the “German father of science fiction” Kurd Lasswitz, the Austrian writer Ludwig Hevesi (author of “Jules Verne in Hell”), the fantasist Paul Scheerbart (a scurrilous, idiosyncratic writer who was an outsider in both literature and science fiction), popular writers Otto Willi Gail and Hans Dominik, as well as the contemporary luminaries of the genre: Wolfgang Jeschke, Herbert W. Franke, Andreas Eschbach, and Carl Amery. The introduction by the editor gives a succinct history of German language science fiction, including its representation in Hugo Gernsback’s popular magazines. With select bibliographies of German language science fiction and writings on German science fiction, this book will be appreciated by scholars and general readers alike.

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By Alex C. Telander

THE BLACK MIRROR & OTHER STORIES: AN ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION FROM GERMANY AND AUSTRIA TRANSLATED BY MIKE MITCHELL, EDITED BY FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER: In this fascinating new collection from Wesleyan University Press readers get to see a great anthology of original science fiction from Germany and Austria spanning over a century of work. Editor Franz Rottensteiner offers a lengthy introduction spanning the entire history of science fiction in Germany and Austria, going into detail on the important authors starting back in the eighteenth century and continuing up to the present. Rottensteiner also does a great job of discussing German and Austrian writers who were eventually published in American magazines and anthologies and became popular in the United States.

The anthology is divided into sections by era, the first five stories being published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this early period, science fiction stories were a lot more ponderous and philosophical, critiquing the way of life and its meaning and worth. In the next era, set between the World Wars, Hans Dominik in "A Free Flight in 2222" has the world not developing space travel and making it to the moon until the early twenty-first century; but after this hurdle is reached, we travel on to each of the planets by the end of the century. It is an interesting outlook from 1934 on a space race that in reality began with the moon and essentially stopped there.

In the title story, "The Black Mirror" from 1983 by Erik Simon, the world has made first contact with an alien race, but because of the distance, ships from Earth and ships from their planet take years to arrive. And now the aliens are arriving with a new invention: a giant silver mirror of immense beauty on one side that cannot be broken or shattered. On the other side is a black mirror that is in fact nothingness. It is a black hole in which an unbelievable darkness can be seen, and whatever is thrown into it, disappears forever. At first humanity is delighted at this amazing invention, and then begins to consider every possible item that can be tossed into it, without regarding any consequences. "Bit by bit, they'll throw the whole universe," one alien says to the other, uncertain as whether humanity has doomed itself.

In stories from the more recent period, there are stories debating the merits of technology and the Internet and whether in the long run it will benefit or hinder humanity. What is perhaps most interesting in this collection is that science fiction stories from Germany and Austria are really no different from those written by American authors. Ultimately, humanity has always and always will hold a great fascination for the future and what it may entail, no matter what country or culture they are from. *The Black Mirror* is a great science fiction collection that opens a great window into a world of foreign literature that many English speakers have never known, which will hopefully lead them on to reading more of these works from other countries.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Worthwhile and Very Satisfying

By The One You Need To Listen To

Rottensteiner has intelligently broken up the stories into the times they were written; this served me especially well because I had recently taken a course in German History, which gave me an even greater appreciation of what their aspirations or current situations were. The stories begin as early as 1871 and end in the present day. Regardless of whether you have any foreknowledge going into the book, there are many stories to be enjoyed:

The Absolute Zero of Existence - this is a great example of a utopia, at this point in history an overwhelming majority of the world thought that peace was possible, and it is fun to imagine alongside the author. In this story we read of a group of young people, all virtuosos in different sciences and our main character is an artist who plays an Odorchord (a piano that plays smells instead of music). What happens next shows us the folly of youth and the hazards of an overly scientific world.

The Missing Clock Hands - disorienting at first but ensnaring, this is a very fun read that I wish could have been infinitely longer. The protagonist finds himself in court but only after the most mysterious of circumstances.

Is Earth Inhabited - This author would have loved discussions about Carbon bias regarding life on other planets. It's a fun summation against the possibility of life on this planet, from the view of another race.

Thought Control - A sadly brief, but very good story born during the time of the Stasi and overbearing Russian influence.

A Letter From the Other Side - A short story that bears a chilling semblance of texting and our addiction to computers. This one is without a doubt, my most favorite of the entire selection, hopefully you will see why.

Project 38 - A remarkable journey of a hacker who reaches high above simple sabotage and details his life to the last person you would suspect to listen to him.

Mother's Flowers - if you do not feel wounded after reading this, you have no heart. A subtle SciFi story, this one hurts the way Flowers for Algernon did..

I reached the end of the book very sad that my journey through German/Austrian SciFi had ended. However, thanks to Rottensteiner's many suggestions of other titles by the authors included in this book, I think I am about to embark on an even longer adventure!

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Fantastic anthology

By harlsmits

A great collection of scifi.

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