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Hagen Bartusch and Martin Reso: Bauernmarkt–Dorfgeschichten einmal anders

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setzte Gesicht zerschloß, das waren Bilder, die sie bis in die Träume verfolgten" (102).

Abweichungen von den obengenannten Themenkreisen konzentrieren sich vornehmlich in der Brief-Erzählung "Liebe Hella," der als Handlungsgerüst eine brennende Fabel zugrunde liegt: Durch ihre Liebesbeziehung zu einem farbigen Südafrikaner gerät eine junge Studentin in Konfliktsituationen mit ihrem bürgerlich-konservativen Vater, dessen "Weltsicht" (120) rassistische Perspektiven aufweist.

Die Art und Weise, wie die bewegenden Themen dieses Buches künstlerisch verarbeitet werden, kann weniger überzeugen, denn ihre Darstellung erscheint mitunter naiv, epigonal, teilweise banal und - zugegebenermaßen nur an vereinzelt Stellen - moralisierend. Ferner bringen die auf Versöhnung angelegten Handlungen einiger Figuren keine glaubwürdigen Alternativen hervor; sie hinterlassen eher den Eindruck konformistischer Reaktionen. Ein weiteres Problem bildet das Verhältnis von Erzählzeit und erzählter Zeit, d.h. die letztere erstreckt sich mit Hilfe von Rückblenden häufig über den gesamten Lebenszeitraum einer Person, womit im begrenzten Rahmen der Erzählungen die Präsentation von Klischees und Stereotypen des öfteren nicht vermieden werden kann. Als eine Stärke erweist sich wiederum die Verwendung von Dialekten in der Sprechweise der ländlichen Bevölkerung.

Hier liegt interessante Literatur vor, doch leider kein interessantes Kunstwerk, und dennoch erkennt man (einmal mehr) den dringend nötigen Appell zur Verbesserung der oft inhumanen Beziehungen zwischen den Generationen.

Mark Gruettner
Washington University

Bartusch, Hagen and Martin Reso, eds. Bauernmarkt--Dorfgeschichten einmal anders. Halle-Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1987. 279 pp., 47 plates, 31 color.

It is not surprising that this anthology was published in the GDR--"the first workers' and farmers' state on German soil." It came about through the combined efforts of the Association of Farmers' Mutual

Aid, the Writers' Union, the Union of Artists, and the Mitteldeutscher Verlag. Much of this book will remind the reader of the efforts of the "Bitterfelder Weg" movement of a quarter of a century ago.

The purpose of this anthology was formulated at the XIIth Farmers' Congress in the early 1980s. It was to be a cooperative effort between representatives from the agrarian community and writers and artists. The latter would articulate in their medium the accomplishments that had been achieved in agriculture during the three decades since the founding of the new state.

With the exception of a few stories by well-known writers such as Hermann Kant, Jurij Brezan, and Erwin Strittmatter, most of the thirty-three selections were written by less-distinguished individuals. Most selections are character sketches of individuals who, through hard work and sacrifice, contributed in great measure to the present-day success of the agricultural enterprise. Some stories relate the long, hard road from the days of fascism, through the early days of difficulties in the new state, to the present time when the now senior citizens are still actively participating in their community's work. Other sketches tell of younger people being integrated into the highly technical world of agriculture. Even though many accounts can recall for the reader novels in the tradition of Strittmatter's Ole Bienkopp, these lack the style and imagination that a good prose writer naturally offers.

Of much greater interest and artistic quality are the colored plates illustrating the paintings by very prominent contemporary artists. One can, for example, examine the socialist realism in the large murals of Ronald Paris and Arno Mohr, the almost impressionistic portraits of Willi Sitte, new subjectivity in Wolfgang Matheuer's work, and Bernhard Heisig's landscape painted in the tradition of Kokoschka. The most spectacular work, illustrated in five parts, is Werner Tübke's "Frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland." This massive painting (139x1230 cm) can only be compared to the great Medieval and Renaissance masterpieces of Bosch and Breughel. It is plain to see that these artists did not necessarily go off to a village with pen in hand to record the accomplishments of an industrious citizen.

The GDR has undoubtedly made great advancements in the field of agriculture and in improving the life of the farmer in the past four decades. The prose selections pay tribute to some of the individuals who have made this possible in a reportorial style. That part of this anthology can serve as a record of these accomplishments. It is unfortunate that the written record is not of the same quality as the visual record. But that was inevitable when the chair of the Central Committee of the Association of Farmers' Mutual Aid (VdGB) concludes the volume with the suggestion that the underlying theme of the entries to this anthology is: "Das sozialistische Dorf wird noch schöner werden." That comment should have introduced this book.

Thomas H. Falk
Michigan State University

Fries, Fritz Rudolf. Bemerkungen anhand eines Fundes oder Das Mädchen aus der Flasche. Berlin: Aufbau, 1985. 332 pp.

Fries is recognized not only as a novelist but also as an essayist of considerable merit. This volume contains 46 of his essays written between 1959 and 1984, along with three interviews. All but five of the contributions were previously published in the GDR, primarily in Sinn und Form, Neue Deutsche Literatur or as afterwords to various novels. The essays cover a wide spectrum of German and Spanish-language authors (e.g. Johannes Bobrowski, Volker Braun, Günther de Bruyn, Gottfried Benn, Anna Seghers, Stefan Zweig, as well as Cervantes, Vicente Aleixandre, Pablo Neruda, Julio Cortázar and César Vallejo). The latter authors should come as no surprise, since Fries was born in Spain and was educated as an Hispanist.

These essays are for the most part impressionistic and laudatory and not political in nature; they sometimes read like excerpts from a Spanish literary history book. They incorporate Fries' personal experiences and impressions and serve to acquaint the reader with the forgotten and unknown or to illuminate the known from a different perspective. Fries focuses on essentially two elements in each discussion of a book or

author--the use of language and literature's role in the writing of history. From his own experience Fries is interested in determining how other authors linguistically craft their works and he carefully and clearly delineates his discoveries for his readers. Moreover, he sees literature as a reflection and comment on history, in a Marxist sense, and he often discusses economic forces related to the works in question. He frequently points out the utopian dimensions of literature and praises authors for their attempts to create a new and better world. The essays thus serve not only as a comment on a broad palette of authors; they also indirectly point to Fries' main concerns as a novelist and reveal the influences other authors have exerted on his work, points also discussed in the concluding interviews.

Robert Acker
University of Montana

Bruns, Marianne. Der Fall Lot. Berlin: Union Verlag, [1987]. 304 pp.

In heutzutage modischer Haltung will der Klappentext es vermeiden, das seinem Schutz anvertraute Buch dem souveränen Publikum aufzudrängen: "Wer bereit ist, sich von Marianne Bruns in die Welt dieser biblischen Geschichte entführen zu lassen, der erlebt die aufregenden Geschehnisse in Sodom und Gomorra als den spannenden "Fall Lot," wer sich ihrer Erzählkunst anvertraut, der wird die Vergangenheit mit den Augen der Zukunft sehen." Die Augen der Zukunft, das sind in diesem Roman die zwei "Schimmernden," Space Travellers mit dem Forschungsauftrag Erde. Die Vergangenheit, das ist das Palästina der Herdenfürsten Abraham und Lot, der Stadtkönige Bera und Kedor-Laomor, Bisra und Hoptni, der Gottheiten Baal und Astarte, natürlich aber auch Jahwes.

In dieser Vergangenheit, das sehen die Augen der Zukunft sehr schnell, geht es seltsam zu. In Todesfurcht seien die "Erdebewohner" noch befangen, und der Krieg als "Ausdruck der ungezähmten, süßesten Überlegenheit" verspreche ihnen nicht nur Triumph über diese, sondern auch Besitz. Da hat sich Lot mit