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Fritz Rudolf Fries: Bemerkungen anhand eines Fundes oder das Mädchen aus der Flasche

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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.

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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