



"The Farmer who Was Pregnant with a Foal" | "Der schwanger bawer mit dem full"

Text Information

Author | Hans Sachs

Language | Early Modern German

Period | 16th Century

Genre | Comic poetry

Source | Hans Sachs, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Adelbert von Keller (Tübingen, 1875), vol. 9, pp. 316–319.

Collection | Pregnancy, Medicine, Peasants, Gender roles

URL | <http://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/underneath-my-forehead-i-carry-your-beautiful-image>

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Introduction to the Text

The Farmer who Was Pregnant with a Foal is a comic poem by Hans Sachs (1494–1576), a cobbler and poet from Nuremberg. The work is an example of a Schwank: a genre of short, comic tales about mundane characters and situations, either in prose or verse.

Sachs was one of the most prolific composers of Schwänke and other genres of text designed for public performance in Nuremberg. In all, over 6000 works are attributed to Sachs. He is perhaps best known for his leadership of the Nuremberg Singschule (singing school), a guild-like organization composed of local craftsmen that held gatherings at which members would perform songs that had to fulfil certain criteria of rhyme, meter, melody, and delivery. This tradition of Meistersgesang (master song) is perhaps most known to modern audiences from the 1868 Richard Wagner opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (The Mastersingers of Nuremberg), in which Hans Sachs is a leading character.

Other genres Sachs produced include dramatic tragedies and comedies based on Classical and Biblical source material, fables based on the writings of Aesop, religious treatises in support of Martin Luther and the Reformation, and Fastnachtspiele—short, usually comic dramas performed at the beginning of Lent. Hundreds of his works were printed as short pamphlets during Sachs' lifetime and Sachs also compiled a multi-volume edition of his own collected works before his death.

The Farmer who was Pregnant with a Foal concerns an unnamed farmer who develops a terrible stomachache after over-indulging in wine. He sends his servant to the doctor with a urine sample to inquire about his boss's ailment (a standard method of diagnosis in sixteenth-century Germany). The servant accidentally spills the farmer's urine along the way and refills the vial with the urine of the horse he is riding, leading the doctor to declare that the producer of the urine is pregnant with a foal. The simple-minded farmer takes the diagnosis seriously and goes out into the field to give birth to his foal. The poem is in many ways representative of Sachs's work as a whole: the poem is short, entertaining, bawdy, preoccupied with gender roles and norms, and it pokes fun at the rural inhabitants of the area surrounding Nuremberg; a particular target of urban writers like Sachs.

Introduction to the Source

Hans Sachs dated the work December 9, 1557, although it was not printed until Sachs compiled his collected works in the late 1560s and early 1570s. This work appears in the second volume of his works, first printed in 1570. Two years after writing this Schwank, Sachs turned the work into a Fastnachtspiel. Both works were included in the 26-volume collected works of Sachs edited by Adelbert von Keller and Edmund Goetze between 1870 and 1908.

About this Edition

In our translation, we have tried to maintain the simple and, at times, crude language of Sachs's text. We have not kept the rhyme scheme of the original work.



Hans Sachs. "The Farmer who Was Pregnant with a Foal | Der schwanger bawer mit dem full". Trans. Mikayla Jordan, Sydney Rester, Edith-Marie Green, and Christopher Hutchinson *Global Medieval Sourcebook*. 2023. sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/farmer_pregnant_foul.

Further Reading

Hess, Peter. "Poetry in Germany, 1450-1700." *Early Modern German Literature, 1350–1700*, edited by Max Reinhart, Camden House, 2007, pp. 395-465.

- *A good introduction to poetic forms in sixteenth-century Germany.*

Holzberg, Niklas, and Horst Brunner. *Hans Sachs: Ein Handbuch*. DeGruyter, 2020.

- *An up-to-date catalog of Sachs's works, their sources, their reception, and a bibliography.*

Benedek, Thomas G. *Medicine and Humor from the Writings of Hans Sachs and Hans Folz, Meistersinger*. Nova Science, 2018.

- *A collection of works on medical themes by Hans Sachs, translated into English. Includes the Fastnachtspiel adaptation of "The Farmer who Was Pregnant with a Foal."*



"Underneath my forehead I carry your beautiful image" | "Der schwanger bawer mit dem full"

Ein pawer saß zu Schnepffenrewt,
Der reit eins tags nach einer brewt.
Het int hitz knollet truncken nein
Ein aufgestanden zegen wein.
Des ward im in dem bauch nicht recht.
Da schickt er Heintzen, seinen knecht,
Mit seinem brunnen in die stadt,
Bey dem artzet zu suchen rath.
Der auff einer merrhen dahin drottet
Und uber ein wiesen hin hottet.
In dem stach er sein merrhen an,
Das sie ein weng solt furbas gan.
Da thets ein stolprer auff der straß,
Das er verschüttet das harmglaß.
Der knecht erschrack ob diesem allen.
In dem war gleich sein grusel stallen.
Bald stieg Heintz ab und fieng besunnen
In sein glaß widerumb ein brannen
Und kam mit zu dem artzt hinein.
Als der beschawt den brannen sein,
Der artzt darob groß wunder het
Und sich darvor gesegnen thet.
Sprach zu dem knecht: Diese person
Die ist mit ein full schwanger gon.
Der pawrenknecht des beimlich lacht.
Der artzt im ein purgatzten macht,
Die sol er heim dem krancken bringen,
Dardurch hm wider möcht gelingen.
Der knecht riet heim, sagt ihm die mehr,
Wie eins füllens schwanger wer.
Da der pawer hört diese wort,
Er rauft sein bar und schrier: Das mordt!
Wie sol ich nur das fall gepern?
Sol ich erst ein roßmutter wern?
Wern doch all nachtpawrn spotten mein!
Sprach zornig zu der frawen sein:

There was a farmer in Schnepffenreut,
Who went riding one day after a brew.
In the heat he drank a lot of wine,
5 And racked up an outstanding tab.
It didn't sit right with his stomach.
So he sent Heintz, his servant,
Into town with his urine,
To seek advice from the doctor.
10 Heintz trotted there on a mare
And walked through a field.
There he spurred his mare on,
That she would go a little faster.
She took a stumble in the road
15 Which made him spill the urine.
The servant was flustered by this.
But just then, his beast had started urinating.
Immediately Heintz dismounted and cleverly caught
A stream in his glass again
20 And he brought it in for the doctor.
As he examined Heintz's sample,
The doctor marveled greatly
And made the sign of the cross before it.
He spoke to the servant: "This person,
25 She is pregnant with a foal."
At this the farmhand laughed to himself.
The doctor made a laxative for him,
Which he should bring home to the patient,
And which should make him better.
30 The servant rode home and shared the news with the farmer;
That he was pregnant with a foal.
When the farmer heard these words,
He tore at his hair and screamed bloody murder!
35 "How should I give birth to the foal?
Am I about to become the mother of a horse?
All the neighbors will make fun of me!"
He spoke angrily to his wife:



Du hast nur sein wöln herr und mon,
Da kommet dieses fülle in von.
Und sie mit feusten stieß and schlug
Und bey dem har im hauß umbzug.
Da er sie nun het wol geschlagen,
Da thet knecht Heintz erst zu ihm sagen,
Er brecht do ein purgatzten kul,
Die von im treiben wirdt das füll.
Fro war der pawr, nam die purgatzten.
Die würd im bauch in reissn und kratzen.
Er rieb den bauch und seine lend
90 Und meint, es kem sein letztes end.
Die pewrin thet weinen und schnuppen
Und macht im ein gelbe käßsuppen,
Auff das sie ibm leget den grim.
Und als sie die nein truge im
Und vergas des milchlöffels sein,
Legt ihm ein kleinen löffel drein,
Geitzig die suppn er schicken wur.
Den schlickt er nab mit stiel und al.
Est ihm der bauch groß aufgeschwal.
Im hauß lof der pawr umb und wemert.
Er seufftztet, echtzet unde gemmert.
In seinem bauch ward im sehr we
Und kondt endtlich nicht bleiben me.
Loff hinauß und wolt in der kul
Geperen sein leibhaftig foll.
Kam auff sein wiessn, den madern klagt,
In mit kleglichen worten sagt,
Wie er mit eim full schwanger was,
Und fiel darnieder in das graß,
Darinn hieß sich umbwalgen er,
Auff das er dester eh geper.
So walgeten den pawren thumb
Die mäder auff der wiesen umb,
Biß im doch endtlich die purgatz
Im banch gab manchen harten kratz
Und ibn hart umb das loch wurd nagen.

"You're the only one who has wooly hair and a mane,
40 That's where this little foal comes from."
And she pushed and struck him with fists
And dragged him through the house by his hair.
When he was about to hit her back,
Only then Heintz said to him,
45 That he had brought back a fresh laxative,
Which would then push the foal out of him.
The farmer was happy and took the laxative.
It tore and scratched in his stomach.
He rubbed his stomach and his loins
50 And thought his final end was coming.
The farmer's wife was crying and sniffing
And made him a yellow cheese soup,
So that she could lessen his anger.
And when she brought it in to him
55 And forgot his ladle,
She laid a small spoon in the soup for him.
He was greedily slurping the soup;
In the end the spoon went in, too.
He slurped that down, handle and all.
60 60 First his stomach grew big and swollen.
The farmer ran all through the house and whimpered.
He sighed, groaned, and wailed.
His belly began to hurt very badly
Until he could no longer wait.
65 He ran outside and in the cool wanted
To bear his incarnate foal.
He came to his meadow and complained to the mowers
That he was pregnant with a foal.
And he fell down into the grass
70 70 And ordered the mowers to roll him around in it,
In order to speed up the birth.
So the mowers rolled
The silly farmer around the meadow,
Until the laxative made
75 His stomach groan loudly
And began gnawing urgently at his rectum.



Da thet er zu seim madern sogen:
helft mir und lost mich aufsthon!
Ich muß beim eyd mein füllen hon.
Do stund der schwanger pawer auff
Und schlich nach einer heck hinauff
Und haucht darnider in den kle
Und in eim druck und dennoch ee
Mit einem lat praschleten scheiß
Die purgatz hinten im außreiß
Und sambt dem löffel die purgatzten
Macht ein groß krachen and laut spratzen.
Nun lag in dieser heck ein haß,
Welcher darinn entecblaffen was.
Der fuhr auff und lof wunder bald
Mit schönen sprängen in den wald.
Der pawr den hasen laufen sach;
Vermeint, es wer sein full, and sprach:
Ach kumb her, liebes fülle mein,
Und trinck vor von der mutter dein,
Die dich yetzunder hat geporn!
Werst du mir noch so sawer worn,
Reut mich doch kein mha noch arbeit,
Schmertz oder angst in dieser zeyt,
Dieweil du yetzt von mir bist worn
Ein solche edle frucht geporn.
Und soltu fort leben auff erdt,
Es wirdt auß dir ein weidlich pferdt,
Das hinfehrt wie der poltz im wind.
Du werst mir lieber deno weib und kind.
Ein zweintzig taler gülstu mir gern.
Het ich dich than daheim gepern,
Zu hanß, so werst mir nicht entioffen.
Mich hat gelack und anglück troffen.
Gieng heim, legt sich in die sechs wochen
Und hieß ihm gate bißlein kochen,
Wie einr andren kindpetterin,
Blieb darnach der lapp wie vorhin.

Then he said to his mowers:
"Oh help me and let me get up!
I swear I'm having my foal!"
80 Then the pregnant farmer stood up
And waddled up to a hedge
And squatted down in the clover.
And in a push and then soon
With a loud resounding shit
85 The laxative escaped from his rear
And, along with the spoon, the laxative
Created a big blast and loud spluttering.
Now in this hedge there lay a hare,
Which was sleeping deeply there.
90 It woke with a start and ran off very quickly,
Hopping gracefully into the forest.
The farmer saw the hare running,
Thought it was his foal and said:
"Oh, come here, my beloved foal!
95 And drink from your mother
Who has just given birth to you!
Even though you have brought me such pain
No effort or work affects me,
Nor pain or fear in this time,
100 Because you have come from me—
Born such a noble offspring.
And should you continue to live on earth,
You'll become a gracious horse
That runs like the arrow in the wind.
105 You will be dearer to me than my wife and children.
I would gladly give 20 Thaler
To have birthed you at home;
In the house, so that you wouldn't have escaped.
I have met fortune and misfortune today."
110 He went home, laid in bed for the six weeks
And had hearty food prepared for him
Just like any other new mother.
Afterwards, the idiot was just as before.



Der beschluß.

Die fabel and den guten schwanck

(Bitt ich) nembt nicht auf in undanek!

Es ist gscheben vor langen jaren,

Weil die pawn noch einfeltig warn,

Noch unverschlagen, fromb and schlecht.

Da stand es in der welt noch recht.

Das einfalt und frömbkeit auffwachs

In gantzem Teutschland, wünscht Hanns Sachs.

The Conclusion

The fable and the good prank

115 I ask you not to be ungrateful for.

It happened a few years ago

When the peasants were still simple;

Still honest, good, and pious.

It stood right in the world then.

120 The awakening of simpleness and piety

In the whole of Germany, wishes Hans Sachs.