

Two Contemporary Bavarian Songs: “Veterans Day” and “You Here Too?” by Hans Well

Translation and Commentary: Christopher Wickham

Veterans Day

Great-granddad, they said, was a tree of a man,
 You won't find one like him now, try if you can.
 Sabers for plowshares, the order was given.
 You can read where his name In Memoriam is written
 In German letters gilded by hand;
 The forget-me-nots' paint has kept well.
 In seventy-one in France he fell
 For the German fatherland, for the German fatherland.

Grandad they say was a jovial man,
 You won't find one like him now, try if you can.
 Cannons for butter, the order was given.
 On a plaque you can read where his name is still written
 In German letters gilded by hand
 and a handsome colorful print:
 didn't come home from his World War One stint
 For the German fatherland, for the German fatherland.

Your dad they say, lad, he was a real man,
 You won't find one like him now, try if you can.
 Panzers for bread, the order was given.
 On the war memorial his full name is written
 In German letters gilded by hand,
 Scratched in with others in a bunch
 Since forty-five missing, Russian front,
 For the German fatherland, for the German fatherland.

Now they've called me up to the Bundeswehr.
 To the German army my oath I'm to swear.
 Cannons for butter, the order's still given,
 Who will pay next time the check's to be written?
 We stand by traditions we know
 With obedience, uniform, German band;
 The family waits down below
 For the German fatherland, for the German fatherland.

Heldengedenktag (1985)

Da Urgroßvadda, hads ghoaßn, war a baamstarka Mo,
wie ma heit so leicht koan mehr findn ko.
Saabl'n statt Pflug, so is seinazeit gwesn.
Auf da Gedenkdofi kann ma sein Nama no lesn
in deitscha Schrift und goidna Rand;
Vergißmeinnicht dazu gmoin.
Oanasiebzg in Frankreich gfoin
fürs deitsche Vaterland, fürs deitsche Vaterland.

Da Großvadda, hoaßts, war a lustiga Mo,
wie ma heit so leicht koan mehr findn ko.
Kanona statt Butta, so is seinazeit gwesn.
Auf a Gedenkdofi kann ma sein Nama no lesn
in deitscha Schrift und goidna Rand
und a scheena farbign Druck:
Ausm erstn Woitkrieg nimma zruck
fürs deitsche Vaterland, fürs deitsche Vaterland.

Dei Vadda, songs, Bua, des war a Mo,
wie ma heit so leicht koan mehr findn ko.
Panzer statt Brot, so is seinazeit gwesn.
Aufm Kriegadenkmoi kann ma sein Nama no lesn
in deitscha Schrift und goidna Rand,
mit an Haufa andre eingritzt:
Seit fünfvierzg in Rußland vermisst
fürs deitsche Vaterland, fürs deitsche Vaterland.

Mi hams jetzt eizogn zur Bundeswehr.
An Eid derf i schwörn aufs deitsche Heer.
Kanona statt Butter, so is oiwei scho gwesn;
Wer zoit denn des nächste Moi wieda de Spesn?
Mir stengan zur Tradition
mit deitschm Gehorsam und Gwand;
d'Verwandschaft wart untn scho
fürs deitsche Vaterland, fürs deitsche Vaterland.

You here too?

The archbishop of Regensburg has only one concern,
How to keep the protestants from high communion.
A crusade against the godless throng would suit him very well
But even many a Christian thinks that he can go to hell.
When he arrives in the devil's fire
Sings a diabolic choir:
You here too? You here too? We've waited long for this;

Rogues like you we love to see; this we wouldn't miss.
 You here too? You here too? You'll soon be up the flue.
 Smoked bishop's hams! -- a specialty we're looking forward to.

In the L.A. zoo today guests of honor come,
 An Austrian delegation met by Austria's favorite son.
 The governorator personally is hosting with his spouse,
 And now they go expectantly into the monkey house.
 With Arnold there among the apes
 The gorilla yells out: That's just great!
 You here too? You here too? Well now, how can this be?
 We must have had one father, 'cause you look just like me.
 You here too? You here too? How's this for an idea?
 I'll govern California while you come and sit here!

The youngsters in the CSU, the up and coming crop,
 Have a leader who has figured how to make it to the top.
 The post of General Secretary has opened up at last,
 And so he runs to Stoiber and begins to kiss his ass.
 And through the sphincter's opening
 He hears Erwin Huber sing:
 You here too? You here too? Who is it this time?
 Just take a look at you my boy, your face is full of slime.
 You here too? You here too? Now we have the full set,
 Back in the duodenum is the entire cabinet.

Bist aa do? — Hans Well (2005)

Fürn Erzbischof von Regensburg is's Wichtigste auf da Woit,
 Wie er die Protestanten, vom Abendmahl fernhoit.
 An Kreuzzug gegn die Ungläubign hätt er am liabstn woin,
 Gar mancher guate Christ hot denkt, den soit da Teifi hoin.
 Und fährt er einst in die Hölle hinein,
 Dann werdn de Teifin schrein:
 Bist aa do? Bist aa do? Auf di wart ma scho lang.
 Ja soichne Pröckerl homa gern, des war a guata Fang.
 Bist aa do? Bist aa do? Glei kimmst an Rauchfang nauf.
 Des gibt an guatn Bischofsspeck do gfrei ma uns scho drauf.

Im Tierpark von Los Angeles, is heit hoher Besuch:
 eine Delegation aus Österreich von der Firma Steirer Puch.
 Der neue Governorator, is ois Gastgeber dabei,
 jetz gehngas fröhlich und fidel, in die Affenabteilung nei.
 Und wia da Arni vorm Affenkäfig steht,
 schreit da Gorilla raus: Ja des gibt's doch net:
 Bist aa do? Bist aa do? Jetz bini aber baff.
 I glaab mir hom oan Vater ghabt, mit hom dessoibe Gwaff.

Bist aa do ? bist aa do? Paß aauf mir foit wos ei
I regier jetz Kalifornien, und du hockst di do rei!

Bei der Jungen Union in Bayern, homs eine Spitzenkraft.
Der weiß, wie man in der Partei den Weg nach oben schafft.
Kaum war der Spitzenposten, vom Generalsekretär dann frei,
do is er glei zum Stoiber hi, und kriacht eahm hintn nei.
Und wia er sich durch die Öffnung zwingt,
Sitzt scho da Erwin Huber drin und singt:
Bist aa do? Bist aa do? Ja wer schliafft denn do herein?
Jetz schaug amoi die Lätschn o, du bist ja voller Schleim.
Bist aa do? Bist aa do? Dann samma ja komplett,
Do hintn im Zwölfingerdarm hockt da Rest vom Kabinett.

Commentary;

Heldengedenktag / Veterans Day appeared on the Biermösl Blosn album *Tschuß Bayernland* in 1985 (Mood Records). The song's systematic structure counts its way strophe by strophe through the principal wars of a century or so of German history, each of which claimed a generation of the speaking subject's family. Now it is time for today's young man to do his military duty. The song leaves open whether the speaker will follow tradition or not. The mood of Christoph Well's composition is suitably melancholy.

Bist aa da? / You here too? is a traditional lively Bavarian folksong (attributed to Georg Huber and Alois Hönle) that lends itself to adaptation for topical satire. And indeed Biermösl Blosn performed many scurrilous variations during their performances over the years. The version translated here was used in 2005 during a performance at the Villa Aurora, former home of Bavarian exile author Lion Feuchtwanger and his wife Martha in Santa Monica, California. The occasion was a reading by actor Jörg Hube of selections from Feuchtwanger's novel *Erfolg*, interspersed with songs from Biermösl Blosn. The church, government (here with reference to Arnold Schwarzenegger, governor of California at the time), and political "brown-nosing" in Bavaria provide the thematic tie-ins with Feuchtwanger's novel.

Hans Well (born 1953) writes songs in Bavarian dialect and standard German, often using Bavarian musical idiom. As a member of the trio Biermösl Blosn, he performed these songs for 35 years with his brothers Michael and Christoph. Biermösl Blosn attained notoriety for their sharp satirical attacks on politics and politicians in Bavaria (especially the conservative CSU), the Catholic church, and attitudes and trends in Bavarian institutions, society, and culture, and were banned from the Bavarian state-run media (Bayerischer Rundfunk) for a number of years. They performed frequently at high profile venues such as the Kammerspiele and the Residenz Theater in Munich, and at the Vienna Burgtheater, as well as at protest events (such as Wackersdorf in July 1986), village festivals and civic auditoriums. Hans Well continues to write songs and performs with Sarah, Tabea, and Jonas Well under the name Wellbappn (since 2012).