

TWO POEMS BY ANNE SZUMIGALSKI

Hanner Hwch, Hanner Hob (The Fritch)

Huw from the mountain/ lover of pigs/ comes down for the kill/
he who loves truly says Huw/ kills

and he so quiet when he says it/ the pig looking up at him/ from
her little gilt eyes
so you're the one too small to be a mother/ says he to the pig
called Nancy/ I can see she trusts him to make something good of
her/ a useful chine and sausage/ coils of black puddings beside
jellied feet/ and brawn in the larder

Nancy Nancy says Huw Jones/ I've made a bed for you see/ it's
all new straw/ sweet hay strewn about/ lie down my love my
beauty/
lie down *fach* he says/ in Welsh of course/ how many
pigs understand English after all

and he tells her the tale of the first hogs/
how Pryderi got them from the lord of Ireland/
how he kept them stiled in the south/
how Math king of Dyfed sent the bard Gwydion
to steal them away with his storytelling
with his magic and trickery/

how the men of the south pursued Gwydion/
that saturday morning there was a great battle/
all because of the pigs you see/
and when Math and his warriors
were bloodying and brawling at the fight/
Goewin the king's maiden was violated/

well you wouldn't want that to happen to you/ says Huw to
Nancy/
the gilt's not so sure she wouldn't/ well then darling says Huw/
and he takes out his sharp little pigknife and sticks her one/
she's gone in a minute/ with one happy sigh

when he sees me watching from the pony stall/ I could do the
same
for you *fach*/ says Huw sharpening his blade on a bluestone slab

now if I'd just had that much blessing to be born a pig/I
wouldn't
mind it at all/ I tell him

Sion Forest

look you are this
and this one, a man
with a fine but crooked nose
a woman who wryly says
of her breasts that they are
like those lidded enamel jugs
left at farm gates
for milking girls to fill
out of kindness
each can with its painted name
Granny Gruffudd, Old Tewdr
Phylip the mail, who had
it shot off in the war
and was rewarded
with the perpetual job
of postmaster

and aren't you that man
who got new teeth and cried
with the pain of them
all night and every night
for a week, his wife
rubbing his gums with balsam
weed and bringing him dillwater
in the baby's christening cup

yes you are that and that one
Mrs Salisbury, Mrs Jones
come to glean little potatoes
in our hill fields
and Huw from up the mountain
who butchers the pigs

and you are the one Siôn Forest
lying beside me the night
after the hay's cut and I
awakening in the first hour
of the new day — tomorrow that is —
listening in the storm
to the rain pour down
on the mown timothy and fescue

I can smell the dark mildew
already rotting the hay
whose seeds fall damp
and useless to the ground
count them and they are as many
as you are Siôn
sleeping and waking