

Patchworks

of Amlwch,
a pattern of fields and buildings
interlocking with lives
 that drift
and jolt down centuries

in conflict and agreement,
through the blind accelerations of history,
the growth of poems,
the advance and retreat of peoples,

personal defeat and victory.
Like others before me,
I make shift among scatterings
of lived material:

first when the system of *cymorth*, mutual help
precluded the need for a Poor Rate
in the unbroken tradition of the farming hamlet
its innocence broken by copper;

then through the mining boom
when a sympathetic priest
petitioned for the injured
to the agent of Lord Anglesey

and through the simultaneous trough of the wave:
a hut full of naked children
destitute of all conveniences
and almost all necessities

a patchwork of rags to be coveted
under the threat of the red cloth badge
of dependence on the parish –
beginnings of the red menace in Wales.

In the wake of those years,
the visiting of the people
with a winter of cholera.

In the good times, neighbourly
hogs rooted at liberty in the streets.

Now we have tourism,
materially paper-thin,
letting in the light.

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