

The Horse's Mouth

On such a day among the stones and the shafts
among such shouts I could hear the eightpenny women
sorting the ore from the rubble at their trestles
with their hymns of the Revival rising

damping and diverting
till the Corn Riots of 1817
when grain was still exported from Anglesey
though there was famine:

*nightly assemblages of persons
amounting to nearly 200
have kept the inhabitants
in a continual state of alarm*

the anonymous title of *persons*
thus distanced from the interests
of *alarmed inhabitants*; the *persons*
of course were egged on by *ringleaders*

who were brought to justice,
having *detained a vessel in the port
laden with corn, alleging its scarcity
in excuse for their conduct*:

on receiving a six month sentence
they were *very properly and very ably
admonished from the Bench*;
the troops embarked for Ireland again.

Imagine the loyalties of eightpence a day
to the Cornish managers off the tall ships,
the torn hands and powerful forearms,
a yellow handkerchief knotted at the head.

Imagine the loyalties of eightpence a day,
the wages deducted by the Agent of the Mine
paid directly to the shopkeeper Greathead
his son-in-law, to encourage continence

and frugality among the labouring classes
*who are not aware of what you and I
understand as moral guilt,*
and filial profit:

*I fancy I have as great a feeling
for a poor man as anyone, but justice
to the concern demands severity at times.*