

Introduction

On 5 September 1908, Frank Eaves, a collier from Tonypany in the Rhondda Fawr valley, south Wales, stood before Judge Bryn Roberts at Pontypridd County Court. Eaves had met with an accident while working underground in Blaenclydach Colliery in 1906, when a stone of half a hundredweight had fallen on his foot. He had not worked since that time and had been in receipt of compensation from the insurance company that covered the liabilities of the Blaenclydach Colliery Company. The company had exerted pressure on Eaves to accept a lump-sum payment for some time and had now brought a case before Judge Bryn Roberts to terminate the compensation payments on the grounds that he was sufficiently recovered to resume work. The insurance company drew upon the expert medical testimony of four doctors who all testified that Eaves now suffered 'neurasthenia', an ill-defined condition of the nerves, and one often associated with malingering, rather than the effects of the accident in 1906. For their part, the South Wales Miners' Federation, who supported Eaves in his case, instructed medical opinion and three doctors testified that Eaves was suffering from a 'functional disorder', loss of sensation in his leg, and that he was unable to use his foot and to continue work underground.

In the event, the judge found in favour of the insurance company and ordered the termination of the compensation payments. He stated that he believed that Eaves' present condition was due to his 'long abstention from physical labour'. He did not accuse him of malingering, he said, but he did think that Eaves would be much better if he had gone back to work. Expressing his concern at the larger number of neurasthenic cases coming before the courts, Judge Bryn Roberts stated that 'he was convinced that the man would have recovered if he had only made a determined effort ... he thought it was absolutely in the man's own interests to go back to work, otherwise he would become an incurable invalid'.¹

Miners' leaders in the Rhondda valley reacted with fury to the decision. Dai Watts Morgan, the Agent for the Rhondda No. 1 District of the Miners' Federation, opined at a meeting of lodge delegates of the District that Eaves was a man of 'unblemished character', who had led 'as clean a life as anyone of them' present, but the moment he met with an accident, 'he became a vagabond and a dishonest person'.² Watts Morgan's reaction in this case was also coloured by the numerous compensation cases that had been decided against miners by Judge Bryn Roberts in these years. Again and again, it was noted, Roberts had found against injured miners and had dismissed cases or else terminated payments

at the request of coal companies and their insurance companies.³ The feeling was such that delegates at that Rhondda No. 1 District meeting discussed the possibility of strike action to protest Roberts' judgement. Another trade union leader, the fiery Charles Butt Stanton, was even more critical of Judge Bryn Roberts and referred to him scathingly as 'boss union smasher' who tried to ruin the miners' union by bleeding the Federation's resources through his numerous decisions against its members in compensation cases.⁴

The legal case would have had profound consequences for Eaves. His ability to access compensation payments was crucially important to his standard of living and to the well-being of his family, while the experience of standing in court to hear a judge tell him that he needed to try harder to overcome his impairment – thus constructing his disability as a personal challenge to be overcome if only he were sufficiently determined – would have been damaging to his self-esteem and his sense of himself as a respectable workman. Some comfort might have been derived from the sympathy, moral support and practical help provided by his trade union comrades, but the benefits of this would have extended only so far. On another level, however, Eaves' case is rather mundane. These kinds of accidents and injuries were daily occurrences in the British coal industry, while the contestation of compensation cases in the courts was similarly an everyday reality in mining communities. The everyday and mundane nature of the case, however, is precisely the point, and it illustrates many of the major themes of this study of disability in industrial Britain.

In the first place, Eaves' case highlights the centrality of the compensation system to the understandings and experiences of disability in coalfield society in the twentieth century. It shows the ways in which medical diagnosis defined a person's status and determined their access to resources. The case also hints at the possibility of, indeed the requirement for, continued employment in order to make ends meet, regardless of bodily ability to carry out any such work. But the case also demonstrates that medical definitions of impairment were contested and politicised in a struggle between capital and labour. The case offers an excellent example of the centrality of impairment and disability to industrial relations in the coal industry, and the extent to which such issues both mobilised activism and could be used in a rhetorical fashion to mobilise workers in class struggle. The words of Judge Bryn Roberts are also a striking articulation of the widespread narrative which saw disability as a personal tragedy in which 'accommodation to the impairment is squarely [the disabled person's] own responsibility or that of their families' while demanding a 'strenuous effort toward improvement'.⁵ The individual is enjoined to overcome (or adjust to) their disability by, in the words of Judge Bryn Roberts, 'determined effort'.

Significantly, Eaves passes out of history after this brief moment of attention and his case communicates a fundamental truth about the experiences of disabled people in the past. Eaves' case was reported in the local and regional newspapers and was minuted in the trade union district meetings, and these sources allow us to put together the basic outline of his circumstances, but Eaves' voice is never heard at any point and we have little idea of any aspect of his life not connected to his injury and his claim for compensation. As with so many disabled people in the past, we are unable to get a real sense of his feelings or emotions, his sense of self and his experience of disability in an ableist society. In his disappearance from historical view, Eaves suffered the fate of so many disabled people in the past. This book cannot restore the voices of disabled people in industrial society, but it does trace the material circumstances, political interventions and social and cultural contexts of disabled people's lives in order to understand both the lived experience and the rhetoric of disability. It explores the ways in which disabled people and a politicised discourse of disability influenced the nature of coalfields society along material, political and cultural axes. Indeed, disability can be seen at the pivotal centre, as a site of struggle, in industrial society.⁶ In this interdisciplinary study, we trace the way in which disability was central to campaigns for reform to employment law, welfare, medicine, political agitation and the imaginative literature which sought to reflect, in a highly mediated way, the daily and structural conditions of coalfield society.

The coal industry provides an excellent case study for any such attempt to locate disability in industrial society, since the extent of impairment was considerable. Frank Eaves would have been very aware that he was not the only miner to experience impairment or to suffer injustice. He could pick up his local newspaper on any day of the week and see numerous reports of men similar to himself injured in accidents in any one of the numerous collieries in the Rhondda valley. When he attended the doctor's surgery for medical assessment, he would have joined a long queue of men with injuries and ailments that required treatment or certification. If he attended any of the regular meetings of his colliery trade union lodge, he would have heard accounts of numerous cases very similar to his own in which liability was denied by the coal company and the trade union was forced to decide how to assist their stricken member. In the cultural sphere, he would hear of disabling accidents in ballads and, though it would be a few more years before his fellow colliers began to fictionalise his experience, soon he would be able to see his experiences reflected in a burgeoning working-class literature. If it has become a truism that disability is ubiquitous, that, in the words of Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories

we write', then it is in coalmining communities that this assertion is most apposite.⁷

Whether it is in the dry and statistical approach to accidents and disasters in parliamentary papers, the sensationalist and melodramatic portrayals of popular journalism, the rhetorical and self-righteous indignation of trade union campaign materials, the potent disability metaphors and stories in coalfields literature, or the heroic self-portrayals of miners in oral history reminiscences and working-class autobiographies, the dangers to life and limb in the coal industry loom large. Phrases such as 'blood on the coal' and 'the toll of the mine', or 'traul y pwl' in Welsh, have become well-worn tropes intended to convey danger and to elicit sympathy or even anger. Whatever the rhetorical or melodramatic aspects of such portrayals, they do nevertheless communicate an essential truth, for the coal industry was undeniably dangerous. Work underground was an inherently dangerous business and there were innumerable ways in which miners suffered accidents, experienced injuries and became impaired. Impacts from heavy machinery or tools, the fall of the roof or sides of underground passages, collisions with fast-moving and heavy trams of coal, the misfiring of explosive 'shots', flooding, explosions, fires, electrocution and a great many other perils all posed a threat to a miner's well-being. In the period between 1868 and 1919, for example, 'a miner was killed every six hours, seriously injured every two hours and injured badly ... every two or three minutes'.⁸ Relative to other industries, this was a significant toll of injury: in the few years just before the First World War, 16.5 per cent of coalminers were injured every year compared with 8.3 per cent of metal smelters, 5.3 per cent of railway workers, and 2 per cent of workers in the cotton industry.⁹ Added to these threats, occupational diseases were a major cause of chronic illness and impairment. Miners' nystagmus, a condition that involved the oscillation of the eyeball, dizziness and other symptoms, caused many miners to give up their employment in the industry or else shift to surface work, while pneumoconiosis ('miners' lung' or 'black lung') incapacitated increasingly large numbers of miners by the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ As if these risks to miners' bodily well-being were not enough, miners also suffered impairment as a result of rheumatism and arthritis, a range of inflammation ailments, such as 'beat knee', 'beat hand' and 'beat elbow', and hernias and other strain injuries.¹¹ The high accident and occupational disease rates in the coal industry, and the large absolute numbers of individuals affected, are compelling reasons to choose coal as a case study in the analysis of disability and industrial society.

Of all the industries found in modern Britain, it is perhaps coal that has attracted most attention from labour historians, and a well-established historiography, both of the industry as a whole and of specific coalfields, has developed.¹²

Much of this work has its roots in the flowering of labour history from the 1960s and 1970s onwards and tends to be institutional in approach, focused on trade unions and the broader labour movements of which they were a part, and grounded in a class-struggle narrative that prioritises conflictual industrial relations and industrial disputes.¹³ More recent historical work has broadened the field of vision somewhat and had added new perspectives on community, culture, women, gender, the body and sexuality, but attention to older themes such as solidarity, militancy and union organisation continues to be important.¹⁴ Studies of the literary and cultural histories of coal follow a similar pattern, with an emphasis on class¹⁵ broadening to include studies influenced by scholars working on gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, dialect and nation, affect and humour.¹⁶

Despite the growth in disability studies, disability has been conspicuously absent from studies of industrial history and literature. Aside from David M. Turner and Daniel Blackie's book, *Disability in the Industrial Revolution*,¹⁷ which emerged from the same research project as the present volume, disability is notable by its absence from the historiography of the coal industry despite the attention to related issues such as safety, accidents and occupational health.¹⁸ Yet disability history, particularly an interdisciplinary approach that embraces cultural representations of disability in literature written from inside the communities themselves, has much to say that is new, innovative and fundamentally important about coalfield societies and about disability in industrial society. Disability, as already noted, was a very common experience in mining communities and, as such, became an important organising principle as trade unions and the broader labour movement fashioned industrial relations campaigns and political strategies to deal with the issues that arose. Similarly, in the working-class literature of the twentieth century, class, industrial politics and disability are represented as intimately related. Histories of coalfield societies have tended to focus on political and industrial radicalism, but, arguably, a more radical historiography can derive from work that looks at the confluence of forces and discourses that converge around disability and which also considers the experiences of disabled people and ideas about impairment, disability and normalcy in this particular context.

Like many works on disability history, our perspective borrows heavily from disability studies and the social model of disability, where a distinction is made between impairment and disability.¹⁹ Impairment is based purely on physical difference, while disability is a social issue: the former does not simply 'cause' the latter, social barriers do, such as restricted access to medical activities, educational institutions and welfare provision. A medical model which sees disability solely as an individual, personal tragedy in need of cure has been

categorically rejected. Industrialisation has long had an important role in key works of disability theory, and prominent scholars advanced the theory that the industrial revolution witnessed and, more importantly, brought about the exclusion of disabled people from the workplace and their economic and social isolation, often in institutions. One of the starkest portrayals of this came from Victor Finkelstein, who argued that while disabled people were oppressed in the pre-industrial period, they were nevertheless integrated into work placements.²⁰ This changed with industrialisation, however, which created a society based on 'large scale industry with production-lines geared to able-bodied norms', and with it the creation of institutions designed to separate those who did not conform to these norms.²¹ The work of theorists such as Finkelstein was crucial in questioning narratives of industrialisation as a time of positive economic progress for disabled people. Yet the broad categorisation applied by Finkelstein has been seen as unsatisfactory. Other scholars have since constructed more detailed models of the structural disability caused by industrial modes of production.²² Anne Borsay argues that the impact of the Industrial Revolution has been overemphasised, and the social exclusion of disabled people in spaces such as education, philanthropy and leisure had developed long before industrialisation.²³ The onset of industrialisation undoubtedly affected disabled people through some measure of exclusion from work, but the record of the British coal industry demonstrates there were still large numbers of disabled people within the industry with a number of different experiences which changed over time, and disabled people sometimes had the opportunity to take their own decisions regarding their welfare, social relations and place in the industrial economy. A case study of the coal industry presents an opportunity to examine in detail the relationship between physical disability, work and industrialisation, challenging existing assumptions about the place of disabled people in the industrial workplace.

This study of coalfield disability is not confined to male workers alone, however, and we have endeavoured to integrate disabled women into the study at all points. Coalfield history has focused predominantly, sometimes exclusively, on men. Historians such as Angela V. John, Griselda Carr, Sue Bruley and Valerie Gordon Hall challenged this male-dominated landscape with pioneering studies on women in the coalfields during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁴ Studies of *disabled* women in the coalfield are almost non-existent, given the tacit assumption that coalfield disability was an occupational issue, and women were legally banned from working in the pits from 1842. Yet the category of 'work' in the coalfields needs to be expanded to include the unpaid but no less arduous work generally done by women in the home, as well as the labour of care. Women's labour was equally dangerous and exhausting, and disabling

injuries were common among miners' wives. Relatedly, congenital impairment has largely been ignored in coalfield communities and such disabilities, whether experienced by men or by women, would likely have most affected women care givers, at least in the early years. In expanding the category of work and considering disability in relation to work, this study builds on a special issue of *Disability Studies Quarterly* on 'Disability, Work and Representation: New Perspectives'.²⁵

If women's experiences have been ignored, so too has the ethnic diversity of the coalfields been overlooked. The coalfields were far from ethnically homogeneous. Immigration from Ireland, Poland and the British empire was widespread as work in the coalfields became readily available, and in particular south Wales saw high levels of immigration from England.²⁶ As such, in researching disability we have aimed to avoid the assumption of a male, ethnically homogeneous coalfield workforce. This is not without its practical challenges. The lives of disabled women are – if historians wish to find them – visible in autobiographies, literature and oral testimony, as well as hidden in coalfield records. Not only were there many disabled women in the workforce, but women also had a huge role in the political battle over disability compensation and disabled people's rights in the coalfields. Ethnicity, however, has proved much more difficult to explore with our limited source base – that is, records which record both disability and minority ethnicities are scarce – though we have included ethnicity as a concern where possible and do, of course, foreground the sometimes significant ethnic (particularly linguistic and religious) differences between Wales, Scotland and England in our comparative study. Furthermore, while there is undoubtedly room for a transnational study which compares different countries' attitudes to disability and looks at the movement of labour and empire from a disability history perspective, our British focus limits us from tackling this subject in depth.

This study of disabled men and disabled women in coalfield communities adopts a comparative approach that utilises three coalfields as case studies. It is organised around a thematic approach to work and the economy, welfare, medicine, social relations and politics in the south Wales, north-east of England and Scottish coalfields. Relative to its companion volume, by Turner and Blackie, this study has an additional chapter on the place of disability in the unique body of industrial writing to emerge from the coalfields during our period, 1880–1948, and we draw on this literature throughout in a deliberately interdisciplinary methodology. Each coalfield had its own distinctive geographical, economic, political, cultural and literary features, and these could vary considerably from pit village to pit village, let alone from region to region. The three coalfields have been chosen for their importance within the British coalmining

economy as well as the significant features that set them apart from each other. The smaller, more geographically diffuse Scottish coalfields, for instance, differ greatly from the more concentrated coal measures in the north-east of England and south Wales. Similarly, the Welsh and Scottish coalfields had reputations for industrial militancy and political radicalism that were not matched to the same degree in the north-east of England. In addition, each coalfield experienced a different chronology of development: the north-east of England was a well-established and mature coalfield society by 1880, while south Wales and parts of the Scottish coalfields underwent rapid industrialisation from this point onwards. This comparative approach to coalfields disability history complements the significant body of work that exists in relation to coalfield societies.²⁷ Other major coalfields, such as Lancashire, Yorkshire, north Wales and Staffordshire, and smaller areas in Bristol, Leicestershire, north Warwickshire, Cumberland and Kent, have their own rich disability histories and warrant study in their own right.

In its approach to cultural history, this book attempts where possible to foreground the perspectives and lived experiences of working-class disabled people in history. The challenge is to find such traces in the archives. As the author Gwyn Thomas once wrote: 'the family records of the proletariat do not stretch back so far, except in shadow form in the account books of the coal owners.'²⁸ As we have noted above, there are even fewer traces of the voices of disabled people in the archives, though some of the miner-writers we discuss were themselves temporarily or permanently disabled. A number of sources help to get closer to the lived experience of disability. Newspapers offer innumerable insights into the major issues in coalfield societies in addition to the micro-level experiences of individual miners and women; autobiographies of coalminers highlight the everyday occurrence of injury and disease and the consequences for daily lives; existing collections of oral testimony offer first-hand perspectives of the emotional aspects of impairment; and contemporary coalfield literature included disability both as a trait of characters and as a metaphor for the industry. However, the vast majority of primary sources offer a top-down perspective, concerned with disability but where disabled voices are silent and disabled lives are accessible only in 'shadow form'. For this historically marginalised group, this is an issue that all disability historians are confronted with, but methodologies borrowed from 'history from below', in which sources are read 'against the grain' in order to extract some sort of meaning about the objects of these sources, can help turn such sources to our advantage, while recognising the limitations of reconstructing experience, particularly for oppressed groups with shifting identities.²⁹ Furthermore, compensation documents, registers of

disabled employees, mutual aid records and medical records all help to piece together the institutional framework within which disabled people lived their lives.

Perhaps one of the most innovative dimensions of this book is its deliberately interdisciplinary approach, and this reflects our debt to the foundations of disability studies, which draw on a wide range of disciplines. It not only draws on literature as a rich source for the cultural historian attempting to foreground the perspectives and lived experiences of working-class disabled people in history; it goes further in exploring the cultural representations of disability in coalfields literature using methodologies taken from literary criticism. For the purposes of this book, 'coalfields literature' encompasses a range of genres and forms of literature which have as their primary focus the coalmining industry and people of coalfields communities. For much of the nineteenth century, ballads, autobiography (much of it unpublished),³⁰ and 'pit poetry' by 'miner-poets' such as Joseph Skipsey³¹ were the most important forms.³² Ballads and poems (often composed using a dialect of English such as 'pitmatic', or another language such as Scots or Welsh) record major accidents and disabilities. By the 1880s, a tradition of coalfields novels began to emerge, largely in the form of romance mainly by middle-class writers, including a number of female authors.³³ While sympathetic to the hardships of the workers, the narrative perspective was usually positioned outside the community depicted and suspicious of substantial challenge of the status quo. Victorian romances of the late nineteenth century were slowly replaced by increasingly ethnographic forms, which – though still at one remove – attempted to describe the everyday quality of life in mining districts.

By 1918 the vast majority of writers were working-class men³⁴ refining a broadly realist genre (with some notable modernist exceptions) that allowed them to write about work and life – and disability – in coalfields society. Our approach to this literature has been informed by the interdisciplinary work of disability scholars, including Rosemarie Garland Thompson, Lennard Davis and Tobin Siebers. A broadly historicist literary methodology draws on well-established literary critical praxis in which critics draw on a range of imaginative and non-literary texts in the study of cultural and historical manifestations of power, ideology and the linguistic underpinning of these. The significance of literature in understanding contemporary discourses has been acknowledged by some historians. In his ground-breaking volume *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Seth Koven adopts a mixed methodology which draws on journalism, Victorian photography and archival sources as well as literary fiction. He argues not only that novels provide valuable knowledge where traditional historical sources may be thin, but that an appreciation of

literature offers a different kind of insight into cultural attitudes, assumptions and taboos:

Novels register not just what can be said, but also what cannot be said, and sometimes, what cannot be fully understood by contemporaries. Novels can give us access to cultural attitudes – and fantasies ... [-] which may allow us to reread and put greater pressure on our traditional historical sources.³⁵

In disability studies, which has tended to adopt interdisciplinary approaches from the outset, literary scholars such as David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder contend that since texts ‘inevitably filter disability through the reigning ideologies of their day’, a study of literature is an important element of disability history:

the analysis of imaginative works allow scholars in the humanities to record a history of people with disabilities that comes closer to recapturing the ‘popular’ values of everyday lives. If disability is the product of an interaction between individual differences and social environments (architectural, legislative, familial, attitudinal, etc.), then the contrast between discourses of disability situates art and literature as necessary to reconstructing the dynamics of this historical interaction.³⁶

Literature can provide a source for understanding the lives of disabled people in the past, but also more broadly a way of exploring attitudes to embodiment and structures of social relationships.

While this study confirms that literature is a crucial source for the cultural historian and a means whereby the historicist literary critic can engage with contemporary ideological values, our approach to literature is also attentive to disability theorists such as David T. Mitchell, Sharon L. Snyder and Ato Quayson, who foreground literary aesthetics – that is, the particular formal and creative ways in which literature constructs and conveys meaning. In order to understand how coalfields literature ‘adds another tier of interpretation [of disability] that is comprehensible within the terms set by the literary aesthetic domain’,³⁷ we need to understand the genesis, forms and exemplary tropes of this body of writing. Literary scholars would remind us that we cannot simply assume that there is a ‘direct and mimetic relationship between literature and social attitudes towards disability.’³⁸ Rather, literature is a rich and complex art form which both informs and is influenced by social understandings and embodied experiences of disability. Thus, the final chapter of this book focuses on the literary history and a literary critique of disability in coalfields writing.

Language is central to the way we think about ourselves and others. In this volume, in referring to people with impairments we have used the term ‘disabled

people' rather than 'people with disabilities'. As Gleeson points out, the notion that 'people with disabilities' is a humanising improvement on the term 'disabled people' (the same may be said for the singular form) is problematic. He follows Abberley in declaring 'this to be a retrograde terminological change which effectively depoliticises the social discrimination that disabled people are subjected to'.³⁹ As Ato Quayson, a literary and cultural theorist, notes, 'In practice, it is almost impossible to keep the two [terms] separate, since "impairment" is "automatically" placed within a social discourse that interprets it and "disability" is produced by the interaction of impairment and a spectrum of social discourses on normality that serve to stipulate what counts as disability in the first place'.⁴⁰ Thus 'disability' itself is a shifting and historically contingent term; very few coalminers with impairments, injuries or diseases whom we would today label 'disabled' would have identified as 'disabled'. In the coalfields, disability is a concept closely bound to work, and many miners with impairments continued to work.

It is also worth noting the position of the authors of the present volume themselves, some of whom are non-disabled or non-physically disabled. Our role as historians and critics requires an awareness of positionality and our relationship to the historical subjects and discourses. In her essay 'Getting Personal', Kim V. L. England implores researchers of minority groups to consider their place in the social landscape, applying 'reflexivity' as 'self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher'.⁴¹ Although England is here talking mostly about field work (in particular, her project about a lesbian community), her points about the study of experience are crucial for disability historians and already embedded within literary and cultural studies:

In our rush to be more inclusive and conceptualize difference and diversity, might we be guilty of appropriating the voices of 'others'? How do we deal with this when planning and conducting our research? And can we incorporate the voices of 'others' without colonizing them in a manner that reinforces patterns of domination?⁴²

The position of the historian and critic, particularly a non-disabled scholar, with the research subject of impaired and disabled people is essential to consider and theorise, avoiding applying perspectives and opinions that may not have existed.

The scope and potential of disability history in the British coalfields is enormous, and this book is structured thematically to cover as much ground as possible. The chapters cover work and economy, medicine, welfare, social relations, politics and literature. This thematic structure facilitates the exploration

of issues relating to disability in the coalfields, but it also creates limitations. Firstly, there is no linear chronological structure, though much of each chapter is structured around change over time and key events for disabled people such as the 1880 and 1897 Compensation Acts, and more general milestones such as the 1926 miners' lockout and the nationalisation of the industry after the Second World War. Secondly, there is inevitable overlap between these themes: disabled miners likely did not use these categories at all to describe their lives, and the boundaries that we draw here would have been crossed constantly. Welfare and socialising, for instance, could happen at the same time at the meeting of a friendly society in a public house. We flag these overlaps and connections between chapters where possible and certainly the flexibility of these categories allows us room to discuss the complexity of disability in the coalfields.

Chapter 1 outlines the world of work in the colliery districts. We consider the factors that led to impairment in mining districts and outline the character and variety of those impairments. The assessment of the working conditions of women in the home and the impairments they experienced in these highly segregated communities is an integral part of the discussion, reinserting the domestic sphere into industrial and disability history. The chapter also considers the ways disabled workers could find employment in the coal industry and how their opportunities for doing so changed over time. The second chapter outlines the medical and rehabilitation services accessed by impaired miners and the extent to which the miner's body was medicalised during the half century or so up to the founding of the National Health Service. Attention here comes to focus increasingly on the 1940s as orthopaedic medicine, the government and the trade unions came to prioritise the size, fitness and productivity of the mining workforce. We find that medicalisation was complex and varied, with impetus coming from miners and disabled people just as much, perhaps, as from the medical profession. Chapter 3 assesses the various sources of welfare available to miners and their families in their attempts to ameliorate the financial and economic consequences of impairment. The entry of statutory systems of relief into the mixed economy of social welfare care for disabled people and their families is a major theme here, as is the inadequacy of that statutory provision.

Chapter 4 adopts a spatial approach to the social relations of disability and considers the 'private', 'public', interstitial and liminal spaces of disability. Significant differences between men and women are outlined in this chapter and we assess the extent to which social isolation could be experienced in mining communities. The subsequent chapter assesses the considerable political activity undertaken in relation to disability. It claims that disability was central to the

industrial relations strategies and political campaigns of miners' trade unions and the broader labour movement of which they were a part. The final chapter is an analysis of the cultural representations of disability in coalfields writing and the ways in which disability imagery is put to rhetorical use in working-class coalfields literature. While it picks up some of the literary threads running through the preceding chapters, it marks a change in approach – deliberately adopting a literary critical methodology which foregrounds form and aesthetic alongside historicist readings. We find that disability is pivotal in representations of economic, political, social and working lives depicted in coalfields literature.

Notes

- 1 *Evening Express*, 7 September 1908, p. 2.
- 2 South Wales Coalfield Collection, Swansea University, SWCC/MNA/NUM/3/8/10a, South Wales Miners' Federation, Rhondda No. 1 District, Monthly reports, 7 September 1908.
- 3 For further cases in which Roberts found against injured miners, see J. Eaton, "Union Smasher of the Boss Class"? The Judgeship of John Bryn Roberts in Glamorgan, 1906–18', *Welsh History Review*, 13:1 (1986), pp. 58–61; for further details on Eaves' case, see Ben Curtis, 'Adding Insult to Injury: The Case of Frank Eaves, a Disabled Miner', *Llafur*, 11:2 (2013), pp. 148–53.
- 4 Eaton, "Union Smasher of the Boss Class"?; p. 62.
- 5 Ato Quayson, *Disability Aesthetics: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 2.
- 6 David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder refer to disability as an ideological and rhetorical, as well as a material, site of struggle in *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 24.
- 7 Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History', in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (eds), *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 52.
- 8 John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), p. 43.
- 9 Arthur McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880–1950* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001), p. 120.
- 10 On miners' chest diseases, see Arthur McIvor and Ronald Johnston, *Miners' Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
- 11 McIvor and Johnston, *Miners' Lung*, p. 51; more generally, see Edgar L. Collis, *The Coal Miner: His Health, Diseases and General Welfare* (Glasgow: Industrial Health Education Society, 1920).
- 12 For examples of particularly notable works, see Roy A. Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry Volume 3: 1830–1913: Victorian Pre-Eminence* (Oxford: Clarendon

- Press, 1986); Barry Supple, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Volume 4. 1913–1946: The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). For regional works, see Alan Campbell, *The Scottish Miners, 1874–1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000); Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980); W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners, 1919–1960* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971). See also the introductory and other essays in John Benson (ed.), *Coal in Victorian Britain* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), six volumes.
- 13 For an excellent overview of the historiography of trades unionism in the coal industry, see Keith Gildart, 'Introduction', in Keith Gildart (ed.), *Coal in Victorian Britain, Part II: Coal in Victorian Society, Volume 6, Industrial Relations and Trade Unionism* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), pp. xi–xli.
 - 14 On recent developments, see Gildart, 'Introduction'; also, Sue Bruley, *The Women and Men of 1926: A Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010). See also Sue Bruley, 'The General Strike and Miners' Lockout of 1926 in South Wales: Oral Testimony and Public Representations', *Welsh History Review*, 26:2 (2012), pp. 271–96; Jaelyn J. Gier-Viskovatoff and Abigail Porter, 'Women of the British Coalfields on Strike in 1926 and 1984: Documenting Lives Using Oral History and Photography', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 19 (1998), pp. 199–230; Angela V. John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Angela V. John, 'Scratching the Surface. Women, Work and Coalmining History in England and Wales', *Oral History*, 10 (1982), pp. 13–26.
 - 15 See, for instance, Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974); H. Gustav Klaus (ed.), *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982); Dai Smith, 'A Novel History', in Tony Curtis (ed.), *Wales: The Imagined Nation, Essays in Cultural and National Identity* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), pp. 129–58; H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (eds), *British Industrial Fictions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Chris Hopkins, *English Fiction in the 1930s* (London: Continuum, 2006).
 - 16 See for instance Pamela Fox, *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890–1945* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1994); Katie Gramich, 'The Masquerade of Gender in the stories of Rhys Davies', in Meic Stevens (ed.), *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 205–15; Stephen Knight *A Hundred Years of Fiction: Writing Wales in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004); Daniel Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales, 1845–1945* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012); Nicola Wilson, *Home in British Working-Class Fiction* (Farnham: Ashgate 2015); Lisa Sheppard and Aidan Byrne, 'A Critical Minefield: The Haunting of the Welsh Working Class Novel', in John Goodridge and Bridget Keenan (eds), *A History of British Working Class Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017),

- pp. 367–84; Laura Wainwright, *New Territories in Modernism: Anglophone Welsh Writing, 1930–1949* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).
- 17 David M. Turner and Daniel Blackie, *Disability in the Industrial Revolution: Physical Impairment in British Coalmining, 1780–1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).
 - 18 For an overview of some recent work, see John Benson, 'Introduction', in John Benson (ed.), *Coal in Victorian Britain, Part II: Coal in Victorian Society, Volume 5, Health and Accidents* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), pp. xvi–xviii. The one exception to this neglect of disability by historians of the coal industry is McIvor and Johnston, *Miners' Lung*.
 - 19 Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 'Fundamental Principles of Disability' (1965), www.disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/UPIAS-fundamental-principles.pdf, accessed 13 September 2018. See, for example, Catherine J. Kudlick, 'Disability History: Why We Need Another "Other"', *The American Historical Review*, 108:3 (2003), pp. 763–93; Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, 'Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream', in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press), pp. 1–32; Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Writing Disability History: Problems, Perspectives and Sources', *Disability & Society*, 14:2 (1999), pp. 189–201.
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- 28 Gwyn Thomas, *Sorrow for Thy Sons* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), pp. 16–17.
- 29 See Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17:4 (1991), p. 795.
- 30 On miners' autobiographies, see William S. Howard, 'Miners' Autobiographies, 1790–1945: A Study of Life Accounts by English Miners and Their Families' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Sunderland: Sunderland Polytechnic, 1991); Emma Griffin, *A People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013); Keith Gildart, 'Mining Memories: Reading Coalfield Autobiographies', *Labor History*, 50:2 (2009) pp. 139–61. See also Nan Hackett, *British Working-Class Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: AMS Press, 1985).
- 31 According to Gustav Klaus, Joseph Skipsey was 'the first of a number of miner writers who resist[ed] the label "pit-poet", as they cherish[ed] greater ambitions and move[d] increasingly beyond the range of subjects provided by the mining milieu.' See Gustav H. Klaus, *The Literature of Labour: Two Hundred Years of Working-Class Writing* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1985), p. 76.
- 32 Aside from the well-known example of George Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* (London, 1866), which is only tangentially concerned with mining, pre-1880 examples of fiction set in British coalfields include: Robert Douglas, 'The Miners: A Story of the Old Combination Laws', *The New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, 3 (1844), pp. 25–52; G. Wharton Simpson, 'Colliers and Coal Mining', *The Working Man's Friend, and Family Instructor*, 6:71 (May, 1851); Anon. [Sarah Jane Mayne], *Jan Rutherford; or, The Miners' Strike* (London: Clarke, Beeton & Company, 1854); John Saunders, *Israel Mort, Overman: A Story of the Mine* (London: H. S. King, 1873); Frances Hodgson Burnett, *That Lass o' Lowrie's: A Lancashire Story* (London: Ward, Locke & Co., 1878).

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- 34 The predominance of men reflects the lack of time, resources and access to education and libraries which was a feature of working-class women's lives. Middle-class women writers were a significant presence up to the First World War.
- 35 Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 204–5.
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- 38 Alice Hall, *Literature and Disability* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 62.
- 39 B. J. Gleeson, 'Disability Studies: A Historical Materialist View', *Disability & Society*, 12:2 (1997), p. 182.
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- 41 Kim V.L. England, 'Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research', *The Professional Geographer*, 46:1 (1994), p. 82.
- 42 England, 'Getting Personal', p. 81.