

Precarious Histories

Deindustrialization in Wales

Pontypridd, South Wales, 2009



In 1984, British coal miners went
on strike...

Background:

- >> Postwar Britain had numerous nationalized industries – like the National Coal Board.
- >> Margaret Thatcher's government planned to cut funding to the coal board.
- >> Certain areas (South Wales) were dominated by coal.
- >> The National Union of Mineworkers, led by Arthur Scargill, was the main organ of organized labor.
- >> The government deliberately misrepresented its desire for massive cuts.

Davies, "Dark Inner Landscapes: The South Wales Coalfield"

No miner enjoys his working landscape which is inimical to most human experience. It is a polymath of great complexity about which allegorical illusions abound. Here in the coalfields of Wales, vicars fail to terrify miners with tales of Hell since the description is an all too familiar experience for them. In their semi-nakedness such men have extracted coal in cramped, dangerous, claustrophobic landscapes, amidst noise, cloying dust, and foul air for 200 years. (40)

Wales is subject to a program of deindustrialization which involves the drastic shedding and the eventual eradication of the traditional pillars of its economy, namely coal and steel.... Consequently, this area from which employment has departed or to which it comes but fitfully and rarely is undergoing a landscape transformation that is leaving mining villages void of identity, forlornly isolated, and awash. (37)

So rapid is the ongoing erasure of the mining scene with its two landscape surfaces--the rarely viewed, dark inner landscape of the pit and the more familiar surface features of pit head gear, slag heaps, and grey streaked villages--that soon all visual testimony to an industry that once fueled the Industrial Revolution and gave light and warmth to a nation will be extinguished. (37-38)



"30 Years of Hurt"



'The Death of a Coa Mine'

Ultimately, Brexit (2015)

"Puzzling many analysts, the Leave vote was the strongest in deprived, postindustrial areas that have arguably benefitted the most from EU support."

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQyP--U_tbA)