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"First published in June 1939, this autobiography became an instant bestseller and catapulted its author, B. L. Coombes, into the front rank of proletarian writers. Coombes, an English-born migrant, had lived in the Vale of Neath since before World War I, but only turned to writing in the 1930s as a way of communicating the plight of the miners and their communities to the wider world. The result is a work that has been recognized for more than 60 years as a classic miner's autobiography. In this new edition, a scholarly introduction and textual notes accompany the original story."

These Poor Hands: The Autobiography of a Miner Working in South Wales', was first published in June 1939. It was an instant bestseller, and its fame catapulted its author into the front rank of 'proletarian writers'. B. L. Coombes, an English-born migrant, had lived in the Vale of Neath since before the First World War, but only turned to writing in the 1930s as a way of communicating the plight of the miners and their communities to the wider world. "These Poor Hands" presents, in a documentary style, the working life of the miner as well as the author's experiences in the lock-outs of 1921 and 1926. It demonstrates Coombes' desire to offer an accurate account of the lives of miners and their families, and carries a sincere moral charge in its description of the waste of human potential that is industrial capitalism in decline. Long out of print, "These Poor Hands" has been recognised for over sixty years as the classic miner's autobiography.

Coombes' title These Poor Hands first published in 1939, was an instant best-seller, catapulting the author to the forefront of proletarian writers. Coombes was born in England, but he lived for a large part of his in the Vale of Neath, South Wales, and as the economic problems of the 30s worsened, he turned to writing as a way to spread the news of the plight of miners and their communities to the wider world. He presented the daily life of miners in documentary fashion, with special attention to the damaging lockouts of 1921 and 1926, These Poor Hands retains the power to astonish readers with its description of the ways that unfettered capitalism can lay waste to pure human potential.

This is the first comprehensive study of one of the most distinctive voices of the south Wales coalfield. Considered by Raymond Williams to be 'the most effective writing about mining life in South Wales', the work of B. L. Coombes portrays coal-mining and coalfield society in south Wales in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in England in 1893, Coombes began to work in the mines before the First World War, coming to prominence as a miner-writer in the late 1930s. His autobiography, These Poor Hands, was published in 1939 and was followed by two further books, Those Clouded Hills and Miners Day, as well as by hundreds of shorter pieces of fiction and non-fiction Drawing on new archival sources as well as on Coombes's published work, this volume examines the man, his writings and the society of which he was a part.

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Arthur Mclvor and Ronald Johnston explore the experience of coal miners' lung diseases and the attempts at voluntary and legal control of dusty conditions in British mining from the late nineteenth century to the present. In this way, the book addresses the important issues of occupational health and safety within the mining industry; issues that have been severely neglected in studies of health and safety in general. The authors examine the prevalent diseases, notably pneumoconiosis, emphysema and bronchitis, and evaluate the roles of key players such as the doctors, management and employers, the state and the trade unions. Throughout the book, the integration of oral testimony helps to elucidate the attitudes of workers and victims of disease, their 'machismo' work culture and socialisation to very high levels of risk on the job, as well as how and why ideas and health mentalities changed over time. This research, taken together with extensive archive material, provides a unique perspective on the nature of work, industrial relations, the meaning of masculinity in the workplace and the wider social impact of industrial disease, disability and death. The effects of contracting dust disease are shown to result invariably in seriously prescribed lifestyles and encroaching isolation. The book will appeal to those working on the history of medicine, industrial relations, social history and business history as well as labour history.

This electronic version has been made available under a Creative Commons (BY-NC-ND) open access license. An electronic version of this book is also available under a Creative Commons (CC-BY-NC-ND) license, thanks to the support of the Wellcome Trust. Coalmining was a notoriously dangerous industry and many of its workers experienced injury and disease. However, the experiences of the many disabled people within Britain 's most dangerous industry have gone largely unrecognised by historians. This book looks at British coal through the lens of disability, using an interdisciplinary approach to examine the lives of disabled miners and their families. A diverse range of sources are used to examine the economic, social, political and cultural impact of disability in the coal industry, looking beyond formal coal company and union records to include autobiographies, novels and existing oral testimony. It argues that, far from being excluded entirely from British industry, disability and disabled people were central to its development. The book will appeal to students and academics interested in disability history, disability studies, social and cultural history and representations of disability in literature.

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