

Un-mapping regions of trauma: systematicity and ordinariness in South Wales Valleys' industrial disasters

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In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth defines as traumatic our encounter, not with life-threatening events but, with those that primarily cause a break in our perception of time (1996). She then explains that the experience and memory of traumatic events, while unavoidably visceral, are always in a fleeting state, leaving connections with their time and place of occurrence fragile and obscure. So, while traumas irreversibly scar the affected bodies, through collective memories and narratives they seek for new places, times and bodies to invade.

The paper uses as starting point the first globally televised industrial accident and community trauma, the Aberfan 1966 disaster, to then look at the systematicity and ordinariness that characterises the South Wales Valleys' colliery disasters. The South Wales Valleys, widely known as "The Valleys" is a region drastically transformed by the iron and coal industries but also heavily scarred by consecutive industrial disasters since the second half of the 18th century. Echoing Lauren Berland's thoughts on crisis of ordinariness (2011) the paper looks at the density of industrial localities and the frequency of time-ruptures, to un-map the Valleys' as a region of exceptional disasters and industrial accidents.

Albion, Abercan, Cymmer, Ferndale & Blaenllechaum Maerdy, Parc Slip, Senghenydd, Aberfan etc: the Valleys' registry of industrial heritage is revisited to capture the trauma's movement across space and time. The paper speaks of the unexceptional precarity and constant vulnerability that define the Valleys industrial communities, and of the repetitive displacement of traumatic experiences that renders their mappings ephemeral if not illusive (Berland 2011). The paper ultimately suggests that regions of trauma are better defined/mapped, not by their dislocated "Ground Zeros" and their transient boundaries, but by their unbearable frequencies and persistent densities.

Keywords: industry, mining, heritage, disaster, trauma, memory

Location: Aberfan, Wales