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James Barke

Politics, Cinema and Writing Scottish Urban Modernity

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Keir Elder

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Chapter 1 – Politics: “Raise the Scarlet Standard...and plant the Thistle in the middle of it.”

No Scottish identity worth having will emerge or re-emerge, in other words, until the crushing weight of present capitalism is removed, for the root of Scotland's many ills was not national but economic: and it is the history of modern economic systems, not of ancient race (as Grieve with his theory of the Celtic underfelt was coming perilously close to saying) that mainly fashions national characteristics.¹

T.C. Smout

The world moves relentlessly towards the resolving of its historic discords. But the events of our generation are on too vast a scale to come within the organisational scope of our literary artists. Nevertheless we cannot throw down our pens in despair and endeavour to console ourselves with the knowledge that, in a more leisured age, when the historic discords have been resolved, the future Tolstoy will then (and only then) be in a position to complete the sequel to *War and Peace*.²

James Barke (December, 1938)

Though overwhelmingly Left-leaning, the range of political positions in Scotland in the 1930s that were encompassed by this broad socialist ideological tendency ensured that the public forum was consistently fractious and adversarial. In addition to the political spectrum that can be described as pro-socialist, there nestled the emotive issue of Scottish nationalism and home rule manifesting in various guises. In this context the aspects of the political impetus of James Barke's fiction can be evaluated, situating him in the canon of engaged literature in Scotland in the 1930s and beyond.

The canon and Barke's place in it are of course contingent and arguable, subject as they are to such criteria as: cultural and political impact; critical perspective; and 'success', measurable by units sold, critical acclaim or other aesthetic criteria. Additionally, there are questions of Barke's self-perception, his subjective evaluation of his own work and how his politically-conscious fiction lives up to his authorial intention. In charting the evolutionary arc of Barke's political commitment throughout the 1930s and 1940s, we can discern how these convictions were allied to the author's beliefs on the role and responsibility of the writer. Analysis of his personal papers and published works will serve to: illuminate the diachronic nature of Barke's evolving political and aesthetic credo while providing a synchronic impression of Scotland's politico-cultural topography; characterise the fissures that existed between the figures producing politically engaged literature in the Scottish idiom and consider the manifestation of these as they are embodied in Barke's work.

In any evaluation of the interaction between politics and literature it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of a literary work. Barke's political allegiance may be ascertained hermeneutically from his fiction, and more explicitly from his personal papers, but how this political and artistic influence flowed into (and was nourished by) the wider realms of literature, his literary peers and society is harder to discern. The methodology employed in this particular endeavour is an examination of the personal correspondence that circulated between those involved in the Literary Revival, but principally between Barke and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, and between Barke and Neil Gunn, two of the more prominent literary lights. In addition, Barke corresponded with political figures, editors, publishers, film producers and critics. Reference to Barke's works of fiction

published during the 1930s will supplement evidence from these sources. From these we can elucidate the intellectual currency of this particular pocket of the Scottish Literary Revival and establish how the literature was tied to political concerns on a domestic and – increasingly – international front. More specifically, this will illuminate the role James Barke played in accentuating a particular strand of political thinking within the movement and how this was transmitted in his writing.

Though it can be argued that Barke's early novels borrow something of the kailyard or Highland picaresque, the author tried to invest those elements with a redefined political purpose. For instance, the land-grab that is attempted (and thwarted by an informant) in *The Wild Macraes* (1934) reflects real events that occurred throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries in action taken by disgruntled and disenfranchised sections of the Highland population, but is refigured in Leftist revolutionary terms by Barke. While the subversive action had some degree of pragmatic intention and basis in atomised practical concerns, it is cast as essentially ideological and symbolic; part of a wider rebellion against the ruling classes. The motivation of large-scale politics is not, of course, common to all the characters, the majority of whom are seeking small-scale improvements to their own lives. However, the presence of an urging voice – in the case of the men of Ross-shire, the revolutionary voice of Maria – and the sense of a wider social inequality that needs to be addressed, extend the events of Barke's novel from the conditions of their specific locale to reveal them as a universal truth.

For the fiction writer in Scotland in the 1930s, as Margery Palmer McCulloch explains in her study of *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts 1918 –*

1959 (2009)³ ‘artistic experimentation and a response to “the new” can simultaneously interact with political and social agendas, thus allowing the modernist artist a more active role in a changing world.’⁴ It may be questioned whether or not this role is genuinely active in the sense that social and political change may be instigated by the endeavour of writers, or whether literary works, by their very nature, are destined at best merely to reflect lived experience and run in parallel but never truly act on ‘reality’ in an affirmative way. Nevertheless, James Barke and his contemporaries undertook the challenge with some gusto and signalled their faith in the former.

Left Review and Socialist Realism

This belief that the writer could be an agent of historical transformation was not merely the hope of a cadre of culturally and politically conscious Scots, but a wider response to prevailing conditions that suggested another large-scale international conflict might be looming. The Marxist American literary journalist, Edmund Wilson, who published a study of the innovative forms of Modernism and their relation to French symbolism in *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870 – 1930* (1931), explained his reservations that ‘any literary movement which tends so to paralyze the will, to discourage literature from entering into action, has a very serious weakness, and I think that the time has now come for a reaction against it.’⁵ Initially celebrating the advent of modernist forms, Wilson felt the pressing issues of the age now rendered that movement’s early prioritisation of the aesthetic (to the point where the text’s primacy caused a detachment from external events) a damaging tendency.

In line with these changing attitudes, the first issue of *Left Review*, published in October 1934, called for the formation of an organisation of socialist writers in Britain and reproduced the establishing ethos of the Writers' International conference.⁶ Taking its place front and centre as the cultural forum of the Left, this publication played an important part in providing a space for working out political arguments and ideas. Contending that what was perceived as the current 'cultural crisis' of 'triviality and decadence' in Britain could be directly attributed to the collapse of capitalism and the global political crisis, writers were rallied to the cause:

[...] Increasing numbers of people are reading seriously, trying to get some insight as to the causes of events that are shattering the world they know, and some understanding of the reasons for men's actions...It is time for these, together with the working-class journalists and writers who are trying to express the feelings of their class, to organize an association of revolutionary writers such as the associations already formed in the United States (where there is the John Reed Club with Dreiser, Dos Passos and Sherwood Anderson [...])⁷

The precept that people should be 'reading seriously' to gain an insight was echoed in more specifically Scottish literary terms by John Speirs in his 1940 book, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism*, when he suggested that literature could not exist unless there was not just a reading public, but a 'discriminating reading-public.' In a decidedly unqualified assertion that begged a fuller explanation, Speirs went so far as to suggest that such a body of readers had existed in Scotland between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries (in an era that was pre-mass literacy).⁸ The subtext in both these instances (and putting aside for the moment the elitist implications of Speirs' claims) was that the

massed ranks of the proletariat were the group who must reconsider their reading habits to stand a chance of enlightening themselves to their own predicament.

Left Review emerged onto the scene in the thirties, born out of a very tangible desire to oppose and ultimately defeat the rise of fascism while achieving a radical shake-up of global power structures. The editors of the publication perceived in the population an appetite for political writing and placed a clear faith in the ability of authors and journalists to galvanise broad support for the Left.⁹ By virtue of such urgings toward the barricades, the thirties has been characterised in the cultural-critical memory as being that most urgent decade where large-scale adversarial politics, ideological ferment and entrenched class antagonisms were forged in the smithy of social injustice and looming conflict. As Peter MacDonald contends, the enduring notions of Britain in the thirties, like all histories to some extent, arise by a process of ‘myth-making’ which began almost immediately, concurrent with the unfolding events of the decade and ‘entailed at every step a self-historicising habit of interpretation and presentation.’¹⁰ During the decade there was as much, if not more, critique and assessment as there was literary output. MacDonald explains the situation that prevailed as the decade drew to a close:

The many statements of conclusion and retrospect which came from the writers tended to suggest that work of the period had a worth and distinctiveness which made its interpretation significant; specifically, this significance was presented in terms of the relation between the writer and society, the individual and history, art and commitment.¹¹

However valid the retrospective evaluation of the decade’s literature, there was a real sense that writers throughout the 1930s were engaged in a crucial process. Clearly articulated in the above quotation is the assumption that writers, in their

very activity, became inescapably political. As David Margolies terms it, 'literature was not merely a reflection but a part of life, an agent of revolutionary change and an activator of the great reserves of human potential.'¹² Such was the expectation and burden of responsibility placed upon the writer by such manifestos that we can well imagine Stalin's definition of writers as the 'engineers of the human soul' being one of his few dogmas that possessed genuine universal currency.

With their function under considerable scrutiny in Stalin's Russia, it was in a highly charged and volatile atmosphere that the writers' method was expected to promote Communist ideology. In an era of perpetual intimidation and coercion of writers by the authorities, Socialist Realism became the official literary form in which the burgeoning Communist State and its citizens would be represented. Although perhaps unsurprisingly greeted with enthusiastic support at the Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934, the term Socialist Realism in actual fact provided literature with nothing more than a vague and notional formal framework. While this new term gained widespread prominence and promised much in denoting an effective revolutionary literature, it was a term that British writers on the Left seemed unwilling or unable to further define. That said, the desire to produce a form of literature that functioned as Socialist Realism was still pursued by many writers in Britain.

The writer and translator of Russian literature, John Cournos, accurately described Socialist Realism as 'a phrase which may mean much or little, according to the definition [...] but no precise definition has been offered'.¹³ Similarly, Philip Henderson, writing in *The Novel To-day: Studies in Contemporary Attitudes* (1936) detected in Britain 'the beginnings of the

proletarian novel,' though drew attention to the nudity of the emperor when he adjudged that Soviet Socialist Realism 'inaugurates no particularly new literary method.'¹⁴ So despite being heralded as the elixir that would decisively establish a link between literature and the socio-political world inhabited by the masses, Socialist Realism was found for the most part and particularly by writers in the West to be mere 'snake-oil'; the project to divine a form of literature that ably connected to the conditions and the lived experiences of the people continued unabated.

Perhaps tempering enthusiasm for Socialist Realism, in the West the aesthetic values of Modernism were not treated with anything like the disdain that came from the Soviet critics. The avant-garde element of Modernism would be susceptible to a critique that concluded it articulated the 'personal desires and relationships, of the successful and evolving bourgeoisie itself.'¹⁵ Thus, any approach to forging a new and progressive literary culture along avant-garde lines could be argued to be riven with bourgeois attitudes. On the other hand, salvaging traditional forms may be deemed culturally reactionary by those who prized wholesale change as the gold-standard of the socialist ideal. Either approach could be held as merely the continuation of an inherently bourgeois cultural hegemony. What was beyond question was that the metropolitan nature of the avant-garde ensured an accelerated communication around the (primarily western) world, the unique feature of the movement being 'mobility across frontiers.' The suggestion of an inherently revolutionary movement essentially derived from the transgression of these frontiers, 'the most obvious elements of the old order which had to be rejected, even when native folk sources were being included as elements or as inspiration of the new art.'¹⁶

However, interrogating literature to purge bourgeois tendencies may be to turn the focus on the wrong aspect. The left-wing German satirist and poet Kurt Tucholsky shifted the emphasis when he suggested that ‘one is bourgeois by predisposition, not by birth and least of all by profession,’ bourgeois being ‘a spiritual classification’ rather than a political one.¹⁷ Barke himself defended the language from such classifications when he wrote that ‘the bourgeoisie have no special claim to our common language. Art is simply a word – neither is it bourgeois nor proletarian.’¹⁸ Thus, the idea that art had an inherent bourgeois quality was dispelled and instead the subject was the locus for this predisposition.

Despite having launched its first issue with optimistic fanfares and devoting the next four years of publications to consistently sounding ‘the call [...] for writers to depict social and political reality,’ when it ceased publication in 1938 *Left Review* had seen no uniform ‘aesthetic template [...] adopted by contributors.’¹⁹ Few writers in Britain had advocated the stringent prescriptions of Soviet Socialist Realism, which really only amounted to denunciations of inappropriate forms: Peter Marks argues that ‘by 1938, the threat of Fascism’ had superseded any defence of the Soviet Union and nuanced declarations as to the most productive forms of literature. This entailed a certain pragmatism that rejected already minimal formal dogma. Marks also points to Randal Swingler’s contention that *Left Review* ‘established the core of a true social culture, the starting point of a new phase of literary development – socialist literature’, as evidence that ‘such literature still remained for the most part an aspiration.’²⁰ The following chapter will also consider the implications of Socialist Realism from an aesthetic point of view and the concept is introduced in this chapter to

illustrate the substantial thematic overlap between aesthetic principles and political commitment in 1930s literature.

In the popular imagination, as well as many critical accounts, the British literary milieu of the thirties seems to have been what David Margolies describes as the analogue of Speakers' Corner, with numerous committed voices vying for an audience, all espousing differing concerns and credo. The ambition for *Left Review* was to overcome this disparateness and unify the proponents of Leftist politics to instigate 'proletarian culture'²¹ that it viewed as essential to the emergence of a truly socialist society. Arguably, far from unifying the Left, the publication provided yet another forum for disagreement, and several of the country's most eminent novelists contributed to lively debates on the form of writing that best promoted an effectively democratised literature.

In rejecting Alec Brown's highly doctrinaire prescriptions for what constituted an acceptable literary form in pursuit of the socialist agenda – 'WE ARE REVOLUTIONARY WORKING-CLASS WRITERS; WE HAVE GOT TO MAKE USE OF THE LIVING LANGUAGE OF OUR CLASS, and ALLUSIVE WRITING IS CLIQUE WRITING; WE ARE NOT A CLIQUE [Upper-case emphasis in original]'²² – Lewis Grassie Gibbon wrote: 'I hate capitalism; all my books are explicit or implicit propaganda. But because I'm a revolutionist I see no reason for gainsaying my own critical judgement – hence this letter!'²³ Brown's initial contribution elicited responses in varying degrees of opposition from, amongst others, Montagu Slater, C. Day Lewis, Douglas Garman and Hugh MacDiarmid, all of whom espoused far less dogmatic approaches to artistic form. It is fair to say that no such uniform literary method could be said to be widely practised in Britain during the thirties as was being

promulgated in demands for Socialist Realism in Soviet Russia. At this point, the official cultural position of Communism's central authority in Moscow (Soviet Russia being regarded by many a prototype for a workable socialist state) in the pursuit of a literature apposite to the Communist ideal, was Socialist Realism. However, as Peter Marks reveals in his essay 'Illusion and Reality: the Spectre of Socialist Realism in Thirties Literature,' the impact of this 'varied measurably from nation to nation.' Specifically in Britain, Marks argues, while Socialist Realism 'certainly commanded advocates...the evidence from periodicals suggests that the impact of the approach was not as pronounced as its supporters expected, or as its opponents feared.'²⁴ The large body of Leftist British writers 'found the potential imposition of a literary method anathema.'²⁵ As David Smith points out of the British Labour Party (and helpfully for the particular slant of this study) one of its notable divergences from other socialist bodies around the globe was that it 'cherished no theories about literature and politics.'²⁶ As the variety of positions attested to in the submissions to *Left Review* implies, the publication's ambition to unify the literary forces of the Left seems to have been overly-ambitious and remained ultimately unrealised.

With this in mind, in producing literature in whatever form in the thirties, the writer was presented with something of a quandary. The argument runs that Auden, Spender, Caudwell, Day Lewis *et al* could not be held responsible for the social class into which they were born, but would have been liable to considerable criticism had they chosen to ignore the pressing issues of the decade: writers were rather ham-strung by obligatory political topicality. The author and critic, Richard Charques put the case for political engagement in the following terms: 'Those [...] who appear to be politically indifferent or who

make a show of detachment are [...] the tacit supporters of the prevailing system.²⁷ These people, Charques suggested, are effectively ‘the servants of the propertied class.’ He goes on to temper his assertion by stating that ‘it is just about impossible to make any criticism of life that is totally devoid of political implications.’ Where a writer, whose very stock-in-trade is the business of communicating, ‘refrains from communicating anything [...] about contemporary political events or arrangements,’ the assumption must be that they have essentially ‘come to terms with the existing social-political structure.’²⁸ Though what Charques’ rather absolutist argument fails to consider is the potential for nuance and levels of commitment; we are reminded here that ‘this was the age of repetitious harangues.’²⁹

However, filling a novel with revolutionary invective was often a form of artistic suicide, evidenced in the number of minor and largely forgotten novels that were criticised by reviewers for failing to achieve a successful blend of political diatribe and artistic integrity. What resulted was often jarring passages of polemic, gossamer-thin characterisations as emblems of class, and numerous improbable incidents to drive the plot in politically expedient directions. Also of particular concern for the aspiring revolutionary novelist, while the decade is one remembered for its polarised politics, it is a fact that the body of support for the Communists (and for social change instigated by revolutionary uprising) was very small. At the beginning of the decade the Communist Party of Great Britain had around 2,700 members, rising to just over 10,000 members during the middle of the decade. With this in mind, there was a justifiable fear that the novelists who adopted a ‘completely revolutionary posture’ were likely to marginalise their potential readership.³⁰ In his final novel of the decade, *Land of*

the Leal, in all but around 20 of the 400 pages, James Barke had ‘partially solved the propagandist’s problem: the natural and artistic development of the political message.’³¹ Unfortunately, as the decade drew to a close, it was a message from a man who had begun to spiral towards a state of disillusionment and who lived in a world that was far more pre-occupied with impending global conflict than issues of political theory and social justice. However, from the beginning of the thirties, a relatively small and politically conscious group of writers were engaged in the modernising of Scottish letters in reaction to cultural events elsewhere, and in conjunction with their own literary tradition and political conditions.

Scottish Literary Revival

In developing the themes and forms that were forged in the more prominent and influential Anglo-American modernist movement by the central innovators (T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf and the Irishman James Joyce) the Scottish group were reacting, sometimes constructively, sometimes critically to these High Modernists and infused the new modes with elements of their own literary traditions, cultural influences and political sensibilities. Flourishing in the wake of their southern counterparts and at their most productive in the 1920s and 1930s, the unique character of the Scottish movement was that, far from a unity of artistic forms being the driving force behind their innovations, their literature tended to be more overtly tied to ideas of a national culture, nationalism and historical change. Thus, the leading lights in Scotland – Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Neil Gunn – produced literature as a response to invigorated modes of modernist

writing, in which each explored issues of national identity, historical context, idiomatic socio-cultural conditions and political ideology.

Widely regarded as the most prominent figure in the Scottish Literary Revival, Hugh MacDiarmid was highly influential and contributed a remarkable body of work to the Scottish modernist canon. Certainly in the early years of the Revival, one contention is that MacDiarmid was driven by a certain high-mindedness that could be pejoratively construed as an aesthetic Puritanism echoing the early attitudes of Eliot and Pound. This entailed a particular form of cultural elitism that prompts David Goldie to describe MacDiarmid as ‘a kind of humourless, tutting public moralist disapproving the irresponsibilities of music hall and cheap literature.’³² The effect of this, Goldie argues, was to sever MacDiarmid’s ‘lines of communication to that “vast majority” [...to place] himself above the culture, speaking as a True Scot to the sorry mass of inauthentic Scots perverted by the English and their popular culture [...and close] down the possibility of a meaningful dialogue.’³³ This account reads as a damning indictment of MacDiarmid’s inability to establish a connection between high literature and the Scottish people while he was in the throes of consciously trying to produce an authentic Scottish culture. In effect, one argument runs that the potential for significant political comment that may have been communicated by MacDiarmid through his poetry was hobbled by his aversion to what he regarded as lower forms of culture.

In contrast, Gibbon and Muir appeared more willing to accept as valid a Scottish culture with a broader appeal than that prescribed by MacDiarmid. Certainly, they were less outspoken in the promotion of a rarefied Scottish culture as per MacDiarmid’s design. It was most likely this high-handed

approach that James Barke had in mind when he criticised the schism that was growing between the nationalism engendered in the Literary Revival and the ‘aspiration and experiences of ordinary Scots,’ imploring the movement to retain in mind ‘all that is best and worthy of preservation in the various cultures is the heritage of the workers and peasants.’ Such nationalism in Scotland was, in Barke’s view, sapping potency from the forces of the Left and ‘divert[ing it] into reactionary channels.’³⁴

The division caused in the Literary Revival by the questions of nationalism and home rule saw a quarrel develop between Edwin Muir and MacDiarmid.³⁵ The basis for this argument arose when MacDiarmid took exception to Muir’s criticism in *Scott and Scotland* of ‘the futility of Scottish writers attempting to communicate through a made-up Lallans.’³⁶ It was clear that literature and politics were uneasy bedfellows when a separate Scottish Party was inaugurated in 1932, breaking away from the National Party of Scotland, the two parties eventually re-amalgamating as the Scottish National Party in 1934 ‘but only after purges in the National Party of Scotland had got rid of left-wing and literary wild men who opposed what they regarded as the watering-down of the Scottish independence movement.’³⁷ In contrast, Barke’s perspective remained consistently that the independence movement was watering-down the socialist potential for the country. This is amply demonstrated when he rebukes Gunn: ‘you do not belong either socially or economically to the working class [...] your social credit theories and Scottish nationalism confirm this.’³⁸

While seeking to occupy a similar high-literary plateau to Eliot and Pound, it may be that MacDiarmid had either been blinded to, or simply failed to take cognisance of, an alternative mode of literary innovation that could more

faithfully serve his cultural nationalist ambitions. This was a tendency that could, in a broad analogy, be conceived as having aligned MacDiarmid with Eliot's high cultural concerns, whereas Barke was more closely aligned with the themes and forms promulgated by Joyce. As David Goldie explains of Joyce's embrace of the demotic:

Joyce [...] attended closely to and relished the language and popular culture of the Dublin crowd, and in *Ulysses* wove its songs, its cheap advertisements, its jokes, and all its petty vulgarities into a work of the highest literary accompaniment. The lesson he taught, largely ignored by MacDiarmid, was that a serious modern (and national) art might be constructed out of, not in spite of, an often trivial, ephemeral popular culture.³⁹

This is a particularly crucial point when gauging Barke's fiction. By Goldie's description of Joyce's method, it is evident that this was the thread of Modernism by which Barke was most influenced and for very political reasons.

Supporting the opinion that he was burdened with the restrictive vestiges of cultural high-mindedness, MacDiarmid expressed no real regard for fiction, and it may be implied by extension, novelists. The one stated exception to this was a qualified admiration for Neil Gunn – an admiration that Barke shared. MacDiarmid called Gunn 'the only Scottish prose-writer of promise...in relation to that which is distinctively Scottish rather than tributary to the "vast engulfing sea" of English literature.'⁴⁰ However, it should be noted that, despite a generally disparaging view of fiction he was willing to collaborate with Lewis Grassie Gibbon on their collection of critical cultural essays, *Scottish Scene*. Gibbon also expressed some affection for MacDiarmid, while mocking the poet's (to his mind) farrago of contradictory political views. Writing to Barke in 1934, Gibbon asked: 'So you've met the Douglasite – Nationalist – Communist – Anarchist

Grieve [MacDiarmid]? What a boy! I think his sections (and probably mine!) of *Scottish Scene* will move you to tears when it comes out in May.’⁴¹ This is not in any way to attempt to denigrate the service of MacDiarmid to Scottish letters, but merely to illustrate the divergent cultural positions that were adopted by two men of ostensibly congruent political positions engaged in the business of producing Scotland’s literature. This really offers a microcosm of the political striations that patterned the literary Left in Scotland.

As a friend of Barke, Gibbon apparently held his writing and knowledge of the finer points of the Scottish Literary Revival in some esteem. In a previous letter to Barke written in October 1933, Gibbon informed him, ‘you’re the only man I know who has an acquaintance with Gaelic letters, and who can help me in this matter’, then goes on to ask: ‘who is the greatest living prose-writer in Modern Gaelic (Scotland)?’; ‘what is his principal work, and what is it about?’; ‘ditto and ditto for greatest living poet?’ Gibbon, by this time a resident of the south of England in Welwyn Garden City, obviously felt both physically and critically isolated from the revival at this point. While Barke’s response to the query is not recorded, in light of his position front and centre of any discernible cultural movement, it is tempting to think that MacDiarmid would have delighted in providing Gibbon with a comprehensive answer to all these questions and regarded his own opinion as authoritative.

In contrast to MacDiarmid’s position, Barke seemed to embrace a far broader spectrum of emergent and organic modern Scottish culture, not seeking to trace such a narrowly prescribed cultural pathway. Writing to his publisher in 1933, Barke set out his position on the Scottish Renaissance:

A definite literary movement has arisen in Scotland since the war. The movement is entirely spontaneous and unco-ordinated. A notable feature is the

number of Scottish writers who live and write in Scotland and manifest no desire to move to London (a former characteristic of Scottish writers): prominent examples being John Brandane and Neil M. Gunn [...] The most famous and probably greatest Scottish novel is, of course, *The House with the Green Shutters*. But this book deals with a Lowland Scottish village and gives no indication of the wider aspect of Scotland and Scottish thought. *The World His Pillow*, while giving a full and complete picture of life in the Western Highlands of Scotland, also gives a searching picture of Glasgow and modern industrialism. At the same time it correlates and shows the action and interaction of world thought and world movements as experienced and envisaged by a young Scotsman...⁴²

Here Barke explains the informal nature of the Literary Revival, implying that he did in fact regard himself as a contributing part of this disparate and impromptu cultural ‘movement’. Also, here we glimpse the ambition for his fiction writing, to represent the ‘wider aspect of Scotland and Scottish thought’ and that this facet is inevitably connected to ‘world thought and world movements.’ From the tone of this letter it suggests Barke hoped his fiction would offer a forum where the interaction between world events and Scottish life could be reflected in apposite literary forms. The author indicates that he measured the impact of world events on Scotland and is willing to offer a picture of the changing nature of Scottish society. Crucially for Barke, the effectiveness of a literary work took ultimate precedence over stylistic or formal concerns – this will be examined in detail in Chapter 2, which considers the author’s aesthetics.

Barke’s Political Writing

In a 1934 letter to Neil Gunn, Barke explained at length his belief in the importance of personal experience to the success of the Scottish Literary Revival

and the reasons for his privileging of politics and the interests of the proletariat in his work:

My experience, like yours, is first hand. I was brought up in the traditional bare-footed, peasant-lad environment. And I know the inside of country cottages better than I know anything else in the world. And I know this: that the ordinary, decent virtues and vices are better represented in the Scottish country working class than anywhere else I've read or heard about. In everything I have yet written (and I could swear that in everything I shall yet write) that knowledge has been stressed. After all I am a worker myself with absolute faith in the workers everywhere. This is almost the same thing as saying (which is not quite your point, however): that loyalty to the working class is my first and most overwhelming consideration [...] The 'philosophy' of Shakespeare and Tolstoy is now irrelevant. Their great 'humanity' still stands. We require a new and more scientific (i.e. truthful) interpretation of the universe. This Marx supplied in dialectical materialism. The great Shakespeare or Tolstoy of the future will be he who has assimilated and can apply the dialectical process – the key to the whole human and historical process (in the light of our present knowledge). In a way Theodore Dreiser is the nearest approach. Certainly he is the last great World Writer. Eisenstein and Pudovkin have achieved success in another medium. But that is about all we have.

We will never write 'big' until there is some big awakening in our lives – until the masses arise and the whole nation is put on a different material and therefore human basis. Compared to the events in Russia, Germany and elsewhere, the alleged re-awakening of Scotland is but the guttering of a spent candle. An age is wearing itself out: a new one is about to be born – nay, is born [...] The best of us are at least leaving some interesting records for future historians. In my soft moments I would like them to have some inkling of what Scotland was like.⁴³

This heart-felt declaration speaks of Barke's artistic integrity and its inextricable connection to his personal political ideology. With his explanation of the desire to leave a record of Scottish society it also reads as an *ad hoc* manifesto for Barke as a member of Scotland's Literary Revival. He qualifies his credentials as one of the workers, pledges his continued commitment to their ranks and, as an

enthusiastic proponent of dialectical materialism, expresses his faith in Marx. Citing the filmmakers Eisenstein and Pudovkin, Barke acknowledges and embraces the multi-media fabric of an accelerating culture in the modern era. This excerpt also summarises the internationalism of his political outlook and his awareness of Scotland's comparatively minor status in terms of global political and cultural affairs; the 'guttering of a spent candle' that is isolationist cultural nationalism can only be truly revitalised and develop to its full potential as part of the formation of an international Soviet. Barke's letter suggests he is aiming to represent a resurgent Scottish culture with renewed connection between it and the masses to propel Scotland forward into the 'new age'.

His compatriot Gibbon held a view that broadly concurred with Barke's. He believed that 'nations declaring their independence from each other' was not the remedy for the inequalities that result from a system of global capitalism, contending that there was more to be gained in the 'revelatory realisation of their essential oneness.'⁴⁴ Scott Lyall supports this assessment of Gibbon's attitude by citing the following quotation:

Glasgow's salvation, Scotland's salvation, the world's salvation lies in neither nationalism nor internationalism, those twin halves of an idiot whole. It lies in ultimate cosmopolitanism, the earth the City of God.⁴⁵

It is evident that the notion of cosmopolitanism is seen by Gibbon as a viable alternative to nationalism and internationalism.

Representing yet another political position within the Literary Revival, Edwin Muir wrote an 'eloquent pamphlet' in 1935 called 'Social Credit and the Labour Party' in which he in fact glossed over the controversial Douglas economic scheme but expounded his position on the 'immorality of capitalism'

and the benefit to be gained from ‘trying alternative paths to Socialism than that represented by Marx.’⁴⁶ T. C. Smout explains the pull of such a Leftist ‘farrago of confusion’ in Scotland for Muir and others of the Literary Revival as perhaps resulting from their aversion to both the ‘kind of labourism perpetuating the capitalist system,’ exemplified by Ramsay Macdonald, and its apparent alternative, the ‘ruthless bureaucratic state communism represented by Soviet Russia.’⁴⁷

The differences of opinion that germinated particular disagreement amongst Barke, Gibbon, MacDiarmid, Muir and Gunn about the best direction in which to develop a Scottish cultural nationalism were also, conversely, what loosely united them.⁴⁸ From the evidence provided in opinion pieces to political and cultural magazines, as well as those offered in more formal material published by this group, the revival afforded a dialogue that endowed it with a real dynamism. However, the nuances of their respective political credoes and the increasing sense of geo-political urgency saw their differences of opinion become more deeply divisive as the decade wore on. Reviewing the era from the comparatively safe temporal distance at the end of the War in 1945, Barke adjudged that he had in fact ‘mixed very little in literary – artistic circles but what mixing [he had] done has made [him] more conscious of wrangling than of honest fellowship.’⁴⁹ In common with Barke, Gibbon had no desire to be considered a part of what he disparagingly deemed this ‘homogenous literary cultus.’ Contrary to Gibbon’s own professed view on internationalism, Scott Lyall identifies what he regards as the author’s ‘internationalist political position,’ equating this with a ‘form of radical cosmopolitanism,’ to explain

Gibbon's 'suspicions of the Scottish movement.' Again Barke's views largely chimed with those of his comrade.⁵⁰

Throughout the 1930s Barke opted to throw his support behind the Communist cause, despite the centralised doctrine (to which the British arm displayed a wavering and lacklustre commitment) that celebration and promotion of national culture was incompatible with the agenda of the international proletariat. Again, in his assessment of the age, in 1945 Barke set out his position in terms of an observance of such dogma when he said, 'I am a protestant and non-conformist and this does not make for popularity in Official Circles [...] To you my non-conformism in Communism as well, why bogle at a name – except that the Communist Party would not acknowledge me. That is the extent of my non-conformism.'⁵¹ Barke's political commitment had considerably waned over the course of the war years, and his retrospective evaluation of the 1930s seems to have been tempered by this.

In contrast, the picture that can be formed of Barke from the contemporaneous correspondence is of a man who styled himself as most politically earnest and of a man who assumed the role of ideological arbiter of a group of Scottish writers. On the occasion of Neil Gunn having *Butcher's Broom* (1934) published in Germany, Barke sent him a letter containing a stiff rebuke: 'I don't see anyone getting their books translated into German and published in Germany unless they support in one way or another the ideology of Hitler fascism...When you get back we're going to have a talk and we're coming all out for Scotland and the Scottish people.'⁵² Barke goes on to imply his belief that both Gunn's political and class position are rendered precarious: 'I have never thought of you as bourgeois – even if you were that would be nothing to hold

against you. I think that on several points you are dominated by certain philosophical and political ideas which are ideas of the bourgeoisie as a class.’ Here he acts as the self-appointed Whip for his own conception of the *de facto* Scottish Literary Communists⁵³ and tries to rally his colleague’s commitment with the rousing slogan, ‘We’re going “to raise the Scarlet Standard high” and plant the Thistle in the middle of it.’ In this same communication, Barke refers to his own political affiliations as ‘my alleged – and I say alleged advisedly – political beliefs’ in a manner that implies a suspicion that the letters could at least potentially be intercepted and monitored by a government agency, as was frequently the case with his literary counterparts who professed Communist sympathies south of the border.

In his response to Barke, Gunn makes a good-natured defence of his political position and the publication of his book in Germany when he claims he could ‘play the party game as well as anyone’ and had done so for years, imploring ‘as writers, surely we have a bit of individual thinking and synthesising to do on our own.’ Signalling his disaffection with party politics, he goes on to ask:

Perhaps you wouldn’t like me to “come out” and join something. Not at the moment, thank you. I have come out and joined too often. I am getting the impression that the masses of the people in all countries – irrespective of proclaimed creeds – are being humbugged to a hell of an extent. Your idea of doing something for our own country – English Chamberlainism was bound to get you sometime! – seems more practical to me. I have plenty zeal for reform or revolution, but I am getting distrustful, or a bit tired, at those who think their advanced ideas...should be applied to Germans - with Scotland as it is and particularly this northern part of it I happen to know fairly well. And Christ! This appalling prospect of the abomination of war.⁵⁴

It is evident that, despite his refusal to conform to the directives of a centrally controlled and rigid ideology, coupled with his waning political idealism at the beginning of the 1940s, Barke remained resolutely further to the Left than many of his literary contemporaries. Harboured very few doubts about the veracity of Barke's political beliefs, Gunn, in the same letter, compliments him on his 'brilliant remark that most of our young London communist poets have merely had their school tie dyed red.'

The two authors' sparring over their political differences continued for a number of years until relations (or certainly the correspondence) broke off during the early years of the War. By this point Barke had already, to his own mind, further distanced himself from an association with the other writers of the Literary Revival. In what is an apparent revisionism, he informed George Blake that,

I have always resolutely avoided literary cliques: for although no sea-green incorruptible I have never had any stomach for the mean and petty back-biting that infests the Scottish literary scene. I am told that I lose a lot by not 'mixing' with certain pen-pushing gentry; but I have never been able to convince myself that this is so.⁵⁵

We may only speculate as to whom Barke describes as 'pen-pushing gentry' but the implications of class difference are pointedly clear.

Throughout the 1930s, class difference and a Leftist political zeal were the perennials that informed all of Barke's fiction writing (and a number of newspaper articles), and spilled over to the following decades to infuse his quintet of historical novels on the life of Robert Burns with a significant dash of socialist sentiment. For many writers the issue of 'big' politics was an inescapable quotidian experience and therefore indivisible from their art; for

Barke it was his political commitment that was central to his fiction writing, the sense of urgency germinating in the desire to educate and inspire.

In broad terms, Barke's sometime-Communist, sometime-Unorthodox Marxist, sometime-proletarian Universalist views were most obviously flagged up in the development of his early novels. For instance, his first published novel *The World His Pillow* (1933) is true to the antagonism of the Third International's class-against-class ethos of the early 1930s. This novel relates the tale of Duncan Carmichael undergoing an economic migration from the Highlands to Glasgow where, by the helping hand of his bourgeois uncle, he is subsumed into the capitalist machine. Carmichael fails to settle into this lifestyle, eventually moving back to his working-class roots. Throughout the Glasgow portion of the novel, where a member of the rural proletariat becomes transfigured into one of the new urban working class (and thereby develops a political radicalism that brings him into collision with the middle classes) the middle class are depicted decidedly unsympathetically, the sense being that they will be denied any redemption from their inevitably doomed position in society.

Contrast this with Barke's treatment of the upper-middle-class coal merchant George Anderson in *Major Operation* (1936) as he downwardly traverses society's class divisions. This novel was written and published at a time when the class-against-class phase of international Communism had given way to the less factional and less antagonistic Popular Front. In *Major Operation* the author does imply there is now redemption available to Anderson. He depicts the middle-class convert throwing himself four-square behind the workers' cause, and his death during the course of a rally sees him buried with something akin to a working-class guard of honour in attendance. Thus, the underpinning ideology

in Barke's fiction indicates his considered engagement with the political exigencies of the day and an attempt to reflect and interpret them for the education, or more emphatically, the awakening of Scottish society: but Barke was no mere pamphleteer. In tandem with this drive to politically enlighten the working classes about the reality of their situation, he strove to develop an aesthetically exemplary Scottish fiction commensurate with the age. Taking the high ideals forged in the wake of cultural modernism, the author's works attempt to augment these with a political urgency and seriousness.

James Barke's political alignment during the 1930s has been gradually and ever more deeply etched into the 'historical truth' of Scottish literature, to the extent that the issue of his political stance is all that remains and entirely eclipses his early novels in the cultural memory. Barke was indeed, as is evident from his correspondence and activism, a highly committed socialist who nurtured a hope that Communism would be the foundation for the type of egalitarian society he desired for Scotland. However, far from an unthinking bearer of the red flag as an affectation, Barke engaged with the urgent political issues and aspirations of the day and vocally proclaimed (and stood by) his own opinions, having had to navigate through the fog of dogma.

Like most retrospections, the popular analysis of the politics of the era opts for neat compartmentalisation and in doing so suffers both from a reductively inaccurate description and a propensity for anachronistic refiguring of the implications of terms. Moreover, it is a truism to say that Communism has signified a widely differing set of assumptions over the course of the twentieth century: from the utopian, egalitarian ideals of the early 1900s; through the collectivisation and subsequent terror culminating in Stalin's purges and show-

trials; the long drawn out Cold War era in the immediate aftermath of World War II; and the failed economies and crumbling states of the 1980s. However, the contextualisation of Barke's hope that Communism would bring about a real social revolution in Scotland was one pinned on a Humanist optimism and Socialist principle that the workers would be given a fair deal when, as seemed to be the case in the Depression era, capitalism finally entered its death throes to be replaced by a new system.

In the eulogy he gave at Barke's committal service at New Kilpatrick Cemetery in 1958, MacDiarmid acknowledged the integrity of Barke's political and social will when he identified the author as having come from 'that great line of Scottish writers who sided with the working class and lived and wrote for the Social Commonwealth.'⁵⁶ Similarly, J. A. Russell, writing a eulogy in the *Scottish Co-operator*, signalled his agreement with the *Glasgow Herald's* assertion that Barke always 'wrote and felt as a conscious proletarian' but noted that this was maybe one of the author's faults:

He was too much to the Left. At 17 he chaired his first Labour Party meeting and as long as he was fit he marched in the May Day procession to Queen's Park. His affinity was entirely with the workers. Perhaps he despised the intellectuals overmuch – at least the *pseudo* ones.⁵⁷

Russell goes on to claim that he himself learned more political theory from *Major Operation* than he ever knew before and advises any young men wishing to learn ideas about philosophy, theology, economics and sociology that they sit at the feet of this 'prophetic writer' (fig. 3a).⁵⁸ Despite Barke's enthusiasm for Utopian Communism, he remained committed to his aspirations about the more positive political traits and cultural traditions of Scottish society.

Examining the character and depth of Scotland's Marxist tradition in his essay 'Marxism and the Scottish National Question', James Young identifies two Marxist traditions extant in Scotland before 1917 – termed the majority and minority tradition – and attributes them to the political leadership of John Carstairs Matheson and John Maclean respectively. Matheson had begun his political life as a Scottish Democratic Federation politician supporting home rule but, inspired by the American socialist Daniel De Leon and the emergence of what he felt was a bourgeois nationalist movement, he underwent a *volte face* to reject calls for self-government. From this political viewpoint, Nationalism, it was believed, was simply a 'petty-bourgeois romanticism' and a 'diversion from the prosecution of the class struggle.'⁵⁹ In the minority tradition, the 'famous Clydeside socialist', John Maclean's 'inherited hatred of the Highland aristocracy,' whom he held to be responsible for the infamous Highland Clearances, shaped his belief in Scotland as a nation and that his socialist ideals were compatible with agitation for home rule.

In Young's opinion it was these 'two Marxist traditions [that] impinged on the consciousness of Scottish working men and women until the late 1950s.' Emerging from these two positions was a 'militant Leninist-type Communist Party (CP) in Glasgow,' one that was reputedly 'more willing than its counterpart in England to accept the discipline and direction of the Third International in Moscow.'⁶⁰ In the inter-war period, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was fundamentally opposed to self-government for Scotland, and this Young attributes to two factors: 'that is, a particular way of looking at Scottish history and an abstract commitment to the unity of the British working class.'⁶¹ So not only was there a division between the Scottish arm and the central body of

the CPGB, but also division within the ranks of members and sympathisers within Scotland. There was a constant battle to overcome the disagreement regarding what were in effect two adversarial ideological positions on Scottish independence that prevented unity among the intellectual and working-class forces of the Left in Scotland.

Barke's Political Convictions

The development of Barke's own political resolutions can be closely tracked over the course of his writing career. In one of his first letters to Neil Gunn, complimenting him on his writing and comparing their common features as authors producing work with a political cause at heart, Barke wrote: 'We are both Nationalists (it would probably take too long in addition to boring you to explain why I am also a Communist).'⁶² It is a curious and largely unsubstantiated claim that he is a Nationalist in its commonly understood terms at this point, and suggests Barke nurtured his own definition of the term, as he makes repeated reference to his opposition to 'bourgeois nationalism' throughout the decade. Lamenting the cultural and political paucity of Scotland's youth in an early essay, Barke assessed Scotland as a 'tired country worn out with poverty, depression and racial inbreeding' the young being 'tired and blasé' with a 'dry rot at its soul.' In this early piece of political and social critique, Barke adjudges that for the future of Scotland, 'home rule' would be 'about the last thing to have [a] beneficial effect on her.'⁶³

Again, the author's contemporary, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, took a firm stand against the ideology of nationalism when he wrote the following for his 'Glasgow' chapter in *Scottish Scene*:

About Nationalism. About Small Nations. What a curse to the earth are small nations! Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, San Salvador, Luxembourg, Manchukuo, the Irish Free State. There are many more: there is an appalling number of disgusting little stretches of the globe claimed, occupied and infected by groupings of babbling little morons – babbling militant on the subjects (unendingly) of their *exclusive* cultures, their *exclusive* languages, their *national* souls, their *national* genius.

As Scott Lyall observes, though this anti-nationalist sentiment reads like the tirade of ‘an imperialist opposed to the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated nations,’ the true target of Gibbon’s rant was the ‘reactionary, quasi-fascist basis of nationalist movements’ and in this case, somewhat ironically, ‘the modern Scottish Renaissance promoted by MacDiarmid.’⁶⁴ Despite Gibbon’s sceptical and withering expressions against this promotion of nationalism at the time, in retrospect (not a luxury afforded to Gibbon due to his untimely death) the Scottish Renaissance can be seen ‘through a postcolonial lens’ as having resisted ‘British political and cultural centralisation.’ Moreover, *A Scots Quair*, Lyall contends, contributed to the Scottish Renaissance in its use of a ‘uniquely local vernacular voice’ to articulate ‘universal concerns.’⁶⁵

With this in mind, it is more likely that the nationalism that Barke alludes to in his initial letter to Gunn is less a description of absolute autonomy as a fundamental political goal and more accurately a wider appropriation of the term to signify an interest in the people’s historical narrative and cultural tradition. This is what Gunn later refers to when he congratulates Barke on the ‘Scottish sweep’ of *The World His Pillow*. Gunn goes on to advise Barke to ‘forget...your communism! We’ll take our nationalism neat!’ and writes of his own conversion from being an ‘uncompromising socialist’ to becoming swayed by the economic

solutions of Major Douglas.⁶⁶ Gunn, it appears, interpreted nationalism in this context as an overtly political term and toed a less compromising line, in that he regarded a desire for Scottish self-government and allegiance to communism as mutually exclusive positions.

In reply to Gunn's advocacy of Major Douglas, Barke asserted that he was still a Communist – 'that can never fundamentally alter' – and denounced the economic solutions of Douglas as a 'mechanical snare' likely to 'see the human spirit caged in the galvanised bin of Credit Salesmen'.⁶⁷ Clearly enthused by their initial exchanges Barke and Gunn went on to meet, becoming friends and frequently critiquing each other's literary efforts in personal correspondence; there is much of rich interest on a variety of subjects contained within the lively engagements between Barke and Gunn (though these are ancillary to the current project).

Investigating the political position adopted by Barke, here we arrive at one of the not infrequent anomalies. He was widely regarded as a committed communist and, as we have seen, was prepared to fight his corner as such. However, surprisingly for one so high-profile and outspoken on the subject, Barke was never a card-carrying member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. As is evident from his letter of March 1936, Barke clearly drew a distinction between his Communism and membership of the Communist Party:

I understand that you are anxious to know if I am a member of the Communist Party. The first time we met you asked me this question and I replied in the negative which was true and remains so. Now you have Max Goldberg's reassurance. I am merely a Left Writer – whatever that may be.⁶⁸

The cadence of this excerpt reveals the ill-defined position of the Left at the time. Contrast the previous affirmation of Barke's Communism in the letter to Gunn

with this considerably woollier classification of his political position. This suggests a man with a degree of ideological latitude and a specifically idealised version of Communism in mind.

It is in this same letter that Barke alludes to his adversarial relationship with Hugh MacDiarmid: 'My few remarks, given in that irritating superior sarcastic fashion, were aimed against the general pretentiousness of the [P.E.N.] meeting and against Hugh MacDiarmid.' Barke frequently comes across as rather irascible, abrasive being the default position in his correspondence with agents, colleagues and even friends. In fact, when in a personal letter to Barke the correspondent remarked upon his 'notorious pugnacity,'⁶⁹ Barke's response was to deny he was pugnacious, correcting his friend by stating that he instead considered himself to be more 'carnaptious, cantankerous and damned coorse in public debate.'⁷⁰ But more than a matter of maintaining a bullish attitude, the axe that he found to grind with MacDiarmid arose from the differences that had developed in both their ideological and aesthetic positions.

Firstly, there was fundamental disagreement on the direction and potential of Scottish nationalism. Though the two men seemed to be of similar mind on a few political and cultural points, whereas Barke made the case for an internationalist agenda, MacDiarmid placed an 'emphasis on national direction rather than pluralism and international cosmopolitanism,'⁷¹ even if these positions did occasionally overlap. Whereas Barke's Communism reflected his commitment to internationalism, part of MacDiarmid's Communism was that he had (a wholly misplaced) faith in its potential to free 'minority languages, cultures and nations' from the bonds of 'imperial subjection.'⁷² Barke's commitment to Communism was recognised by his circle of cultural peers, as

acknowledged in the following excerpt from an open letter to the author, written by Bert Mackie and published in the *Evening Citizen* in 1945:

Dear James Barke [...] I know where you stand politically – despite that I am bound to admit that I feel you are an artist bigger than your communism even through it is obvious that your Communism is one of the big formative influences in your life, this may sound Blimpish the way I botch the expression of it [...] At the same time I feel your Communism is more genuine and natural than that of some literary Scots who make a song about it [...] I see the other Jimmy [Bridie] thinks you “Barke” up the wrong tree. He’s clever but he leaves me cold. A matter of taste, I suppose, or temperament, but I belong with the men of feeling rather than the “mentalists” as “Crivvens” Grieve [MacDiarmid] is now calling them.⁷³

Quite how MacDiarmid had earned the precursor ‘Crivvens’ – a Scots expression of surprise – awarded him by Bert Mackie is open to speculation.

Secondly, MacDiarmid’s hauteur and apparent disdain for the more accessible aspects of popular culture, at odds with Barke’s more all-embracing view of a modernised and inclusive Scotland, could be construed as damagingly elitist and harked back to the worst excesses of high-modernism with its often dubious political associations. Time and again, Barke’s comment regarding the ‘pen-pushing gentry’ reverberates in his adversarial relationship with MacDiarmid. In reaction to Barke’s contribution to the November 1936 Scottish issue of *Left Review*, the anti-Nationalist article ‘The Scottish National Question’, MacDiarmid dubbed him ‘the official mouthpiece’ of the ‘Scottish “Communist” clique.’⁷⁴ The men’s relationship seemed to be fuelled and characterised by regular exchanges of withering comments.

From these signs of Barke’s disillusionment with the evolution of the Scottish Literary Revival we can see the beginnings of his retreat from the

literary ideological ‘front line.’ When Barke started his ‘Immortal Memory’ series on Burns, due to a combination of Soviet Communism having been revealed as merely another route to totalitarian government, and his own challenging financial circumstances, his political idealism and aspirations had been irreparably damaged. In a letter written in 1946, the author explained to a friend that ‘success is a matter of indifference [...] All that does matter is that I get sufficient money to keep me above starvation level.’⁷⁵ By the time he had completed his Burns novels, it was estimated (by the writer himself) that the series had earned him around £180,000 in Britain and America, giving rise to allegations by orthodox Burnsians that the author was profiteering by sensationalising the life of the poet.

Unfortunately for Barke, most of the money he earned from his novels was lost to tax demands.⁷⁶ This added to his pessimism about, and alienation from, the literary world in later life, which can be gauged when the author claimed that ‘public praise and acclaim is essentially hollow and I find little personal satisfaction in it...I doubt if there is satisfaction in anything apart from doing the work one wants to do.’⁷⁷ It appears that the day-to-day poverty of Barke’s financial affairs and his now moribund political opinions were a constant concern for the author along with his faltering health, these issues being uppermost in his mind throughout the remainder of his life.

In a 1954 letter ostensibly relating his views about his on-going (and controversial) project to fictionalise the life of Robert Burns, the author complained:

[the process of writing the series of novels has] been a long drag but a rewarding one. Not financially, I’m a much poorer man in this sense than when

I started ‘The [Wind That Shakes the] Barley’. I’m heavily in debt to the Inland Revenue. It seems as if only death will release me from their clutches. Death or bankruptcy...Once upon a time I used to sit in judgement on people. Before the Flood. I am so remotely unconcerned now about the poor pathetic Stracheys⁷⁸ of this world that I could learn without any interest that they had taken to cutting their throats. Possibly if I lean any way nowadays it is towards a benevolent anarchism – but only the benevolence is certain.⁷⁹

This antipathy toward John Strachey is in sharp contrast with the enthusiasm of his correspondence in the 1930s which indicates Barke was the organiser for political lectures in Glasgow. In a letter dated 10 November 1936, Strachey wrote to Barke thanking him for his ‘wire’ and asking ‘what subject would you like me to talk on?’ He goes on to point out that a lecture he is to deliver at a number of Scottish universities is entitled “Socialism and the Middle Class”, but notes that ‘we have too many working-class members in Glasgow for this to be a good subject.’⁸⁰ In a follow-up letter dated 12 November 1936 he comments that he believes Barke’s idea of a talk on ‘The People’s Front in Britain is the best.’⁸¹

Influence on Barke’s Fiction

Barke’s shifting position and diminishing reserves of political idealism, evident in the above examples, have their corollary in his major works of fiction in the 1930s. The narrative arc in *The World His Pillow* follows a scheme whereby Duncan Carmichael is, due to personal misfortune and prevailing economic circumstances, forced from his Highland home to Glasgow. There he experiences an invigorating sojourn to the city, though never fully adjusts to the exposure to capitalism in the raw. Eventually he returns to the Highlands to resume the course of his intended or implicitly natural life. Strongly underpinned by a secular, economic version of the ‘Eden, Fall, Redemption’ schema,

Glasgow is truly a test of Carmichael's moral fortitude and the strength of his stoic Highland resolve; thereby his physical journey is conflated with a personal moral one.

In the Glasgow portion of the novel, there is an element akin to Joyce's *Night-town* – though Joyce's hallucinatory episode is rather more distilled in its immoral setting of the brothel, where Barke's immoral setting is a wider cityscape that unfolds over a greater timescale – as the author depicts Carmichael's giddy and corrupting urban experience. His opportunity to return to the Highlands is the *deus ex machina* that offers him the redemption from his otherwise inevitable moral decay. In this dénouement, there is an anachronistic valorisation of country and village modes of living and a suggestion that rural Scotland can still thrive in the face of urban modernisation. In this, there is more than a hint of a naïve idealism on the part of the author.

John Brandane's 1933 review of *The World His Pillow* adjudges the author's success in tackling his subject: 'There are many very different regions in the Highlands, but that with which Barke deals has never been better done by any novelist. He avoids "Kailyard" of course, and more difficult – all kinds of "Green Shutters".' Brandane suggests a criticism of Barke's writing, one that resonates with the scandalised reaction to Joyce's *Ulysses*, when he notes 'a marked flaw in the total picture is the over-emphasis on sex. But this arises from – and is nearly justified by – the author's fierce insistence on the blindness of humanity to the wonder and beauty of this element life [...]'⁸² Barke's own view of his novel and what function it fulfils is explained in a letter to the publicity manager of Collins, dated 5 January 1933, claiming the book 'while giving a full and complete picture of life in the Western Highlands of Scotland,

also gives a searching picture of Glasgow and modern industrialism. At the same time it correlates and shows the action and interaction of world thought and world movements as experienced and envisaged by a young Scotsman [...].⁸³

James Grant's review of *The World His Pillow* was even more emphatic in its connecting of Barke's novel and the political situation. His preamble to the review provides a potted history of a crumbling Capitalist Europe:

For centuries a civilization will follow the same path, worshipping the same gods, cherishing the same ideals, acknowledging the same moral and intellectual standards. And then all at once some catastrophic upheaval will come in the life of mankind, the springs of the old life will be found to have run dry and man suddenly awakes to a new world in which the ruling principles of the former age seem to lose their validity and to become inapplicable and meaningless. This is what occurred in the life of the British worker at the close of the war, when the world of Capitalism, which had lived for years on the inherited wealth drawn from foreign investment and the exploited cheap labour of subject races, seemed suddenly to cease to function on the basis of its former glory.

There was never a time in which money was to such a degree the only master and god as in the post-war years of Europe. And never had the rich been so protected against the poor and the poor so unprotected against the rich. Never was the temporal so protected against the spiritual; and never was the spiritual so unprotected against the temporal.⁸⁴

The reviewer points out the general autobiographical underpinning of Barke's novel that broadly allies the geographical and political journey of the protagonist Duncan Carmichael with the experiences of the author himself. Supporting this assertion are the more specific events that anchor the story of Duncan's political education and eventual disillusionment with organised politics to Barke's own experiences. When Duncan makes the trip to Malvern to see Bernard Shaw and his new play *Apple Cart*, he relates his fleeting encounter with Shaw himself:

He had seen a small boy with a mere toy of a camera step forward in the street and ask Shaw to pose for him. Shaw had stopped; and then seeing he was in the shadow of the trees, stepped into the middle of the road so as to get the best light for the youngster's snap.⁸⁵

Barke was an admirer of Bernard Shaw. The author informed his publisher in 1939 that 'as a relief from fiction-writing and earning a living, [I] have in active preparation two major technical works: *A History of Bernard Shaw* and *An Exposition of Marxism and Aesthetics*.'⁸⁶ However, he had made this trip, ascribed to the fictional Duncan, only to be underwhelmed by Shaw's play. A photograph of Shaw in the roadway at Malvern remains in Barke's archive as testament to the veracity of the event fictionalised in his novel (fig. 4a).⁸⁷ Throughout the novel Barke's politics tend to be expressed through Duncan, a critique being carried out through the cipher of various other characters.

On Duncan moving to the city to live with his uncle, John MacLeod feels an instant disdain and suspicion for his nephew, deciding he is 'probably pretty rebellious material,' and making the assumption that he had 'come under the influence of the Socialists.' The gulf between MacLeod – who, it is explained, always spelt his name 'McLeod' to rid it of 'a sign of Ireland' – and his potentially radical nephew is written into the relationship by his uncle's entrenched reactionary stance when he pre-emptively resolves to banish Duncan from his house 'if he showed any tendencies' toward Socialism. Barke provides the reader with an insight into MacLeod's bourgeois attitude when he describes his list of 'bogies': 'Ireland, Catholics, Socialists, Mormons, artistic people, and working people,' and his ideological position by 'his hatred of Ramsay MacDonald,' which was 'almost insane':

He had been to Buckingham Palace! A Socialist in Buckingham Palace! The last straw. Maxton, Kirkwood and Tom Johnston he didn't really worry about – they were just scruff. Wheatley, of course, was a Catholic; and one could therefore expect any low-down, dirty, scurvy trick from him. A Socialist and a Catholic!⁸⁸

Throughout the decade Barke never shied away from using (and castigating) political figures of the day to ensure that his novels had an immediacy that linked them with real events. This is demonstrated in the novel's thorough critique which Barke summarises through Duncan's stream-of-consciousness. Again, the validity and topicality of Duncan's thoughts are underlined by his specific consideration of the real figures of Socialist Politics in Scotland during the late 1920s and into the 1930s:

What then must we do – vote Labour? With noodles like J. H. Thomas and J. R. Clynes, and wind-bags like Davie Kirkwood and Jack Jones? Respectable gradualists and sawdust revolutionaries. What good was there voting for the Labour Party – after the mess they had made at Westminster? And the mess MacDonald had made of the Red Letter? [The forged letter published in the British press in 1924, purporting to be from the Bolshevik Grigory Zinoviev of the Communist International, and calling for Communist agitation in Britain] Still, perhaps the Labour Party - the Socialist part of it – did offer the only hope to a world finally shattered out of its Victorian and Edwardian calm and smug geniality.

If not the Socialist, then who? Nobody. There was nothing and nobody to put faith in. There was James Maxton. But what ultimate say had he in the party of cowards and job-hunters whose only ambition was to represent the workers – at the bidding of the party whips? It was always the workers who suffered. When there was any suffering to be done – the workers could suffer first, last and all the time. Of course, the Middleton Murrays preached their belief in Life, the significance of Christ, et cetera. And D. H. Lawrence was still nagging away about Sex and the Unconscious, while his admirers talked gravely about his being the greatest contribution to the thought of the twentieth century and so on. A lot of bellies that filled. And the men who fought like heroes lining up at the Unemployment Bureau like sheep. And miners and their wives and

children starving to death. The proletariat bearing the tremendous burden of post-war depression. Ramsay MacDonald prating away about the Burden of Office...

Duncan grinned broadly. The Burden of Office. A jest too deep for laughter. Poor old Ramsay Mac with his “door that leads from the Inn door to the Stars.” The rather pathetic, rather vain Lossie-cum-London loon – may Heaven be his bed!

What then shall we do?

Vote Liberal? What about the man who won the war? Nothing doing. What about the unhung Kaiser and the homes fit for heroes to live in? Not the good old true-blue Tories then? Not Honest Stanley? Not till we can book our table at the Ritz and spend the evening of our days on the Riviera – out of the sweat wrung from the proletariat. . . (Hush, hush! Investment. . . Investment of capital invested to capitalise industry.) No, no: let Honest Stan keep writing to America that there’s no starvation in the British coalfields. The Recording Angel must have something to record.⁸⁹

Far from trotting out a propagandistic tract Barke promotes a political viewpoint through an enlivened and gripping fiction. In textualising Duncan’s thoughts, Barke covers social and political issues, including unemployment, religion, literature, psychological pressures of modernity, the treatment of veterans and the post-World War I generation, regional division, the proletariat and capitalism.

Never far from Barke’s critique of society is the subjugation of workers in the capitalist system, and *The World His Pillow* expresses this in its narrator’s consideration of a status symbol not far removed either materially or terminologically from a process of slavery:

From the successful chartered accountant, the distinguished solicitor, the doctor, the company director, to the school master, small business man, the minister, the journalist, the music teacher and the sons of all these in respectable bowler

hat jobs. All of them possessing or struggling to attain that hall-mark of gentility – the slavey in the back kitchen.⁹⁰

Duncan, of course being engaged with Socialist politics and opposed to the system sees things very differently, looking beyond the fleeting material trappings and shallow aspirations of capitalism:

It was no earthly use. There was no need for poverty. For there was no natural poverty. It was artificially produced and maintained by a system. Only a silly system stood between man and material wealth – and yet hell-fire could not have been a greater barrier.⁹¹

The compulsion to make a positive stand indicates the strength of Duncan's spiritual connection to the people: 'But there was no way to escape from the terrible insistent demand for action?'⁹² When he finally leaves the city, the only lasting connection he is shown to have formed with the place is neither familial nor romantic but political: 'There was only one man in Glasgow to whom Duncan wished to say good-bye – John MacCafferty, the chairman of Hyndland branch of the I.L.P.'⁹³

Conversely, the prominence that Barke affords the Highland setting in his early novels reflects his political interest in the early years of the 1930s. Though resident in Glasgow and latterly for a spell in Ayrshire, Barke viewed the Highlands with a very critical and essentially protective eye. He became one of the members of the Highland Development League, writing a piece for the *Weekly Herald* entitled 'A Lie About the Highlands' in which he declared his 'privilege to be associated with them in the[ir] work.'⁹⁴ As part of his profile in this organisation, Barke was interviewed for an editorial piece in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* in 1936, called 'Big Business in Gaeldom.' The questions the editorial posed for its readers were 'what are the obstacles in the way of

Highland development?’ and ‘how must they be faced and overcome?’ Meeting with Barke ‘over an after lunch coffee in a city restaurant,’ the reporter tried to establish the answers. He set the scene and described Barke to the readership thus: ‘Smoking one of the interminable chain of cigarettes, Barke answered me quietly, tersely, and intensely. He is a young man and has all the impetuosity of a Young Man in a Hurry.’ Taking a characteristically Marxist-inflected stance on the position in the Highlands, Barke described its economic situation in terms of a correlation between the interests of big business and the oppression of the worker:

The question of Highland Development resolves itself into two opposed viewpoints: the viewpoint of the native Gael and his descendents – and the viewpoint of Big Business, which sees in the Highlands a field of economic and political development, but is utterly indifferent, except in an incidental fashion, to the native Highlander.⁹⁵

All of his first three novels of the 1930s, though featuring the city as a concern looming on the horizon, employed Highland settings and were explorations of the effects of modernity and the ruthless exploitation of rural Scotland by the capitalist machine. The shift in focus was to come with his fourth novel of the decade.

In *Major Operation*, a form of the ‘Eden, Fall, Redemption’ schema of his previous novels is present. Subjecting his upper middle-class business man George Anderson to the process, the implication in *Major Operation* is that the original Eden was merely an illusory state enjoyed by his cosseted coal-merchant as a member of the petty-bourgeoisie. When Anderson loses his business, his wife and daughter, and his home in rapid succession, his material fall is remedied by his personal ethical and ideological redemption, as he abandons his middle-

class status to join the massed ranks of the working classes under the guidance of Jock MacKelvie. Rather poignantly, Anderson's transcendence of the class divide is only fully facilitated by his ultimate sacrifice for the cause during a workers' demonstration. But in contrast with the apparently unbridgeable class divide in *The World His Pillow*, and commensurate with the Popular Front phase of International Communism, there is demonstrated here a willingness and potential for the absorption of the middle- into the working-class ranks. As Barke wrote in a letter the same year *Major Operation* was published:

A very heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of those of us who go into attack or defence with the weapons of Marxism. The class battle must be waged on every front: and the ideological front is a very wide and difficult one. At the same time we must win over every liberal individual to the defence of democratic rights and liberation.⁹⁶

Barke's novel was intended to awaken the middle classes to the power dynamics of the social relationship – conditions which they were complicit in maintaining – and the inherent inequities of ideology; we may surmise that literature is one of the fronts to which Barke refers. The subtle tactical shift in this battle that is reflected in Barke's work shows signs of having been refined from one that required outright assault to one that could be waged by educating, converting and then assimilating the former bourgeois class enemy. As the platform for Barke's 'weapons of Marxism,' *Major Operation* belongs to a genre that Margery Palmer McCulloch refers to as 'a new form of modernist "littérature engage".' By this she categorises those works of fiction that do not 'merely describe the lives of their fictional urban characters [...] do not romanticise them, but are actively engaged in an objective – and realist – critique of the conditions under which they live and how these can be altered.'⁹⁷

The changing concerns of the age can be illustrated in the modifications that the dust-jacket of *Major Operation* undergoes from its original 1936 version to its 1955 edition. In the former, the potential reader is advised that ‘it is a saga of the Second City of the Empire – Glasgow – of which the author gives a vivid picture, teeming with life, and like Joyce’s Dublin, a remarkable evocation of the great city.’ The latter edition cuts off this sentence at ‘...life,’ removing any mention of Joyce. Maybe it was thought the reference had lost the currency that it held in the earlier edition. Where the first version states that ‘the book is written from the all-embracing stand-point of dialectical materialism,’ reference to dialectical materialism is later removed and replaced with the blander ‘characters are universal in their humanity.’ Also, references to the Second City have been removed, and what was termed the ‘economic crisis’ has been relegated to the past, retrospectively designated the ‘great industrial depression.’ Most significantly, where the former says that Anderson ‘comes into contact with the working-class and through MacKelvie and others learns its point of view,’ this is later styled as coming into contact with ‘typical men of the factories and shipyards and learns much more from their outlook.’

In structural and stylistic contrast to these two preceding novels, Barke’s epic, one that most closely mirrors his own family’s experiences, *The Land of the Leal* tempers the impulse to political didacticism, dispenses with the ‘Eden, Fall Redemption’ scheme and shakes off much of the naïve optimism of the author’s earlier work. These facets are replaced with a hard-bitten conception of rural life and a pessimistic outlook for those displaced to the city so that now for the Ramsay family Eden is an unrewarding and jaded place; fall seems unavoidable and perpetual; and redemption appears to be unavailable to them in any form.

David Ramsay's youthful energy and optimism is eroded by his unremitting life of toil as well as his wife's dubious inheritance of a Presbyterian emotional parsimony, honed by years of suffering the high-handedness of her father. A man of personal principle, David's flirtation with political militancy in his attempt to instigate industrial action amongst the farmhands results only in incurring the disapproval of his employer and the wrath of his wife, furious that David has put the livelihood of the family in peril. Thus David's hopes of a brighter future flicker only briefly before being snuffed out, and he is condemned to serve the remainder of his days as a very small cog helping to drive the capitalist machine. In this episode, David could be interpreted as a cipher to represent the workers' experience following the General Strike of 1926. Defeated and emasculated by the system he has to seek whatever small-scale comforts he can from his immediate family environment, putting aside grand notions of the emancipation of the proletariat and the utopian ideal of universal social justice.

David's wife, Jean, also serves as something of a metaphor for the tribulations encompassed in the decline of Scotland's traditional rural communities. At the culmination of the epic story, as an elderly woman ravaged by an arduous life of childbearing and working the land, she sits in her cramped tenement flat in Glasgow staring out of the window. Nodding into a weary slumber, Jean dreams:

There were many women coming down the path. Ragged, bare-footed, gaunt peasant women, weary with travelling and oppressed with fear. And each one clasped to her dry withered breasts the skin and bones of a child that had died of hunger and thirst [...] And suddenly they stopped and looked up to the sky. Some of them moaned in terror and some of them kneeled in the dust and made the sign of the Cross: for the heavens were darkened with the wings of death. And the sky rained death and the earth vomited up stones and dust and when the dust had settled the women and children were no more.

And then nosing up over the crests of the hills came small fast-moving tanks spitting fire and lead behind them a forest of flashing bayonets and stooping soldiers.⁹⁸

In her dream-state she distils into one potent visual narrative her brutal and austere religious upbringing; a life of physical hardship trying to earn a subsistence living from the land; the trials and tragedy of having (and losing) children; and the reverberations of the First World War in which she lost another son. As she sleeps, her remaining son watches her:

He sat still and watched her breathe gently, almost imperceptibly. The sun caught her thin white hair. Her face was dry and wrinkled: the skin on the backs of her broad strong hands was loose and blue-veined: the hands lay open with pathetic resignation on her lap.⁹⁹

Here, in this gesture of supplication, is the final chapter of a woman's life as an allegory of the end of Scotland's traditional rural modes of living, the defeat of the urban working class and the symbolic death of the rural proletariat. She is a worn out victim of the capitalist state.

This accelerated phase of transformation in the nature of Scottish society is a central theme that had been interrogated to considerable critical acclaim by both Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Neil Gunn, though from different yet similarly comprised locales (respectively Kinraddie in the North East in *Scots Quair*, and Riasgan Glen in the Highlands in *Butcher's Broom*). Barke played his part in completing and bringing to literary life the socio-geographic map of Scotland in his depiction of life from the Rhinns in Galloway, across to the Borders and then into the rural estates round Erskine.

Across his novels, Barke's political idealism seemed to wane as his authorial stock increased. The pessimism is tangible in the conclusion of *The Land of the Leal*, and there is a sense that Barke's obligation to express his political hopes for Scotland had entered a new and more jaundiced phase. Arguably joining what MacDiarmid would have pejoratively referred to as the 'Burns cult', it may be cited as a measure of Barke's disillusionment with grand political ideologies that he rejected his early preference for didactic novels and instead undertook the writing of his semi-fictional biographical Burns quintet. Equally, his socialist ideals, though battered and bruised, do remain in some form to inject his imaginative retelling of the life of Burns with a tang of political zeal:

In the grey poverty and the grey labour of his days the sunshine of laughter had no place. Not only was life grim and earnest; it was an unending struggle against a flint-hearted nature and the greedy exploitation of rent and capital. Here there was but one justice: to him that had would be given and to him that had not even what he had would be taken away.¹⁰⁰

The (albeit pre-industrial) conditions giving rise to Marx's theories are amply demonstrated to exist in the century prior to their publication, and the reality of 'rent and capital' and gross social inequalities are expressed with a bitter irony by Barke. In the wider sweep of his novels he implies that these social conditions are an all but immutable aspect of Scottish life.

Having taken Barke's considerable political convictions into account as an influence on his fiction, the following chapter provides a countervailing aspect – the author's aesthetic sensibility – that is crucial to his producing novels that did not descend into outright polemic. Also, this chapter will examine the means by which the author shaped the form of his fiction to promote his pro-socialist message and capture the nature of modern Scotland – drawing on, and

frequently subverting, a literary tradition; injecting diverse aesthetic influences; applying Modernist formal innovations – to accurately depict an evolving, increasingly urban society.

- ¹ T.C. Smout, preface to the 1979 edition of Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* (London: W. Heinemann, in association with V. Gollancz, 1935; repr. Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 1979), p. xxxi.
- ² James Barke, in a letter to Collins Publishers, dated 6 December 1938, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ³ This is a publication to which this study owes a considerable debt for its contextualising overview of Scottish literature of the era.
- ⁴ Margery Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts 1918 – 1959: Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 2.
- ⁵ Vincent B. Leitch and others, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (London & New York: Norton, 2001), p. 1240.
- ⁶ David Margolies, 'The Writers' International Controversy', in *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism for Left Review*, ed. by David Margolies (London and Chicago, Illinois: Pluto Press, 1998), pp. 23 – 26 (p. 23).
- ⁷ David Margolies, pp. 23 – 24.
- ⁸ John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1940), pp. 180 – 181.
- ⁹ David Margolies, Introduction to *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism for Left Review*, ed. by David Margolies (London; Chicago, Illinois: Pluto Press, 1998), pp. 1 – 2.
- ¹⁰ Peter McDonald, 'Believing in the Thirties', in *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After*, ed. by Keith Williams and Steven Matthews (London & New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 71 – 90 (p. 71).
- ¹¹ Peter McDonald, p. 71.
- ¹² David Margolies, p. 2.
- ¹³ Peter Marks, 'Illusion and Reality: the Spectre of Socialist Realism in Thirties Literature', in *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After*, ed. by Keith Williams and Steven Matthews (London and New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 22 – 26 (p. 32).
- ¹⁴ Peter Marks, pp. 32 – 33.
- ¹⁵ Raymond Williams, *Politics of Modernism* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), p. 56.
- ¹⁶ Raymond Williams, p. 59.
- ¹⁷ Raymond Williams, p. 60.
- ¹⁸ James Barke, in a letter to Neil Gunn, 20 May 1938, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ¹⁹ Peter Marks, p. 31.
- ²⁰ Peter Marks, p. 34.
- ²¹ David Margolies, p. 19.
- ²² Alec Brown, December 1934, in *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism for Left Review*, ed. by David Margolies (London; Chicago, Illinois: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 28.
- ²³ Lewis Grassie Gibbon, response to debate, February 1935, in *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism for Left Review*, ed. by David Margolies (London; Chicago, Illinois: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 39.
- ²⁴ Peter Marks, p. 23.
- ²⁵ Peter Marks, p. 34.
- ²⁶ David Smith, *Socialist Propaganda in the Twentieth-Century Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 53.
- ²⁷ Stephen Ingle, *Socialist Thought in Imaginative Literature* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 5.
- ²⁸ Stephen Ingle, p. 5.
- ²⁹ David Smith, p. 71.
- ³⁰ David Smith, p. 55.
- ³¹ David Smith, p. 70.
- ³² David Goldie, 'Hugh MacDiarmid, Harry Lauder and Scottish Popular Culture', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 1 (2006), 1 – 26 (p. 4).
- ³³ David Goldie, p. 6.
- ³⁴ David Goldie, p. 16.
- ³⁵ MacDiarmid had been one of the first parliamentary candidates announced for the National Party of Scotland in 1928
- ³⁶ T.C. Smout, p. xxii.
- ³⁷ T.C. Smout, p. xxii.
- ³⁸ James Barke, in a letter to Neil M. Gunn simply dated 1941, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ³⁹ David Goldie, p. 18.
- ⁴⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Neil M. Gunn' (2.4.1926) reprinted in *Hugh MacDiarmid: Scottish Contemporary Studies*, ed. and with introduction by Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), pp. 308 – 313 (p. 308).
- ⁴¹ Lewis Grassie Gibbon, in a letter to James Barke, dated 24 January 1934, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁴² James Barke, in a letter to the publicity manager at Collins Publishers, dated 5 January 1933, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁴³ James Barke, in a letter to Neil M. Gunn, dated 25 January 1934, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁴⁴ Scott Lyall, 'East is West and West is East': Lewis Grassie Gibbon's Quest for Ultimate Cosmopolitanism', in *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, Graeme MacDonald and Niall O' Gallagher (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 136 – 146 (p. 139).
- ⁴⁵ Lewis Grassie Gibbon, reproduced in Scott Lyall, 'East is West and West is East': Lewis Grassie Gibbon's Quest for Ultimate Cosmopolitanism', in *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, Graeme MacDonald and Niall O' Gallagher (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 136 – 146 (p. 139).
- ⁴⁶ T.C. Smout, p. xxiii.
- ⁴⁷ T.C. Smout, p. xxiv.
- ⁴⁸ James D. Young, 'Marxism and the Scottish National Question', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 18.1 (January 1983), 141 – 163 (p. 150).

- ⁴⁹ James Barke, in a letter to Albert Mackie, dated 12 October 1945, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵⁰ Scott Lyall, pp. 138 – 139.
- ⁵¹ James Barke, in a letter to Albert Mackie, dated 12 October 1945, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵² James Barke, in a letter to Neil M. Gunn, dated 20 May 1938, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵³ James D. Young referred to Barke as ‘the British Communist Party’s ideological policeman.’ James D. Young, ‘Marxism and the Scottish National Question’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 18.1 (January 1983), 141 – 163 (p. 150).
- ⁵⁴ Neil M. Gunn, in a letter to James Barke, dated 21 May 1938, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵⁵ James Barke, in a letter dated 21 October 1938, to George Blake, retained in James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵⁶ C.M. Grieve, speech at New Kilpatrick Cemetery, Bearsden, at the committal service of James Barke on 24 March 1958, a copy of which is retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵⁷ J. A. Russell, ‘Eulogy to James Barke’, *Scottish Co-operator*, 29 March 1958, from a cutting retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵⁸ James Barke pictured with Willie Gallacher ‘after the culmination of the protest hunger march, 1930s’ (according to the note on the rear of the photograph), retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁵⁹ James D. Young, p. 141.
- ⁶⁰ James D. Young, p. 142.
- ⁶¹ James D. Young, p. 141.
- ⁶² James Barke, in a letter to Neil M. Gunn, dated 2 February 1931, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁶³ James Barke, in an essay signed off as ‘Twenty-Five’ and addressed from 43 Glanderston Drive, Glasgow, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁶⁴ Scott Lyall, pp. 138 – 139.
- ⁶⁵ Scott Lyall, pp. 138 – 139.
- ⁶⁶ Neil M. Gunn, in a letter to James Barke, dated 11 February 1931, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁶⁷ James Barke, in a letter to Neil Gunn, dated 11 May 1931, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁶⁸ James Barke, in a letter addressed to ‘My Dear Kerr’, dated 3 March 1936, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁶⁹ In a letter (presumably from ‘O.H.’) sent from the Citizen’s Theatre, dated 20 February 1946, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁷⁰ James Barke, in a letter to ‘O.H.’, dated 25 February 1946, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁷¹ Alan Riach, ‘Wole Soyinka and Hugh MacDiarmid: The Violence and Virtues of Nations’, in *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Gardiner and Niall O’ Gallagher (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 111 – 123 (p. 111).
- ⁷² Alan Riach, p. 121.
- ⁷³ Bert Mackie, in a letter to James Barke in the *Evening Citizen*, 3 October 1945, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁷⁴ John Manson, ‘Did James Barke Join the Communist Party?’, Communist History Network Newsletter Online, <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/chnn/CHNN19BAR.html> [accessed 11 October 2011]
- ⁷⁵ James Barke, in a letter addressed to ‘Dear Jim’, dated 13 September 1946, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁷⁶ Magnus Magnusson, ‘Novelist who Made and Lost a Fortune: The Man Who Reshaped the Burns Legend’, *Scottish Daily Express*, 21 March 1958, cutting retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁷⁷ James Barke, in a letter addressed to ‘Dear Jim’, dated 13 September 1946, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁷⁸ John Strachey’s political career saw him start as a Labour MP in 1929, becoming a parliamentary private secretary to Oswald Mosely, before resigning from the Labour Party to join Mosely’s New Party in 1931. When the New Party aligned itself with fascism, Strachey supported the Communist Party and became a prominent British Marxist. On splitting from the Communist Party in 1940, Strachey returned to the fold of the Labour Party and eventually became MP for Dundee.
- ⁷⁹ James Barke, in a letter to John Allan, dated 27 January 1954, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁸⁰ John Strachey, in a letter to James Barke, dated 10 November 1936, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁸¹ John Strachey, in a letter to Barke 10 November 1936, retained at James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁸² John Brandane, review of *The World His Pillow* in an otherwise unidentified cutting, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁸³ James Barke, in a letter to Collins Publishers, dated 5 January 1933, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁸⁴ James L. Grant, ‘A Socialist Novel’, review of *The World His Pillow*, typescript retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
- ⁸⁵ James Barke, *The World His Pillow* (London: Collins, 1933), p. 405.

⁸⁶ James Barke, in a letter to Collins Publishers, dated 14 April 1939, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

⁸⁷ In the photograph retained in the archives, Shaw is actually moving away from the camera which suggests that Barke rather reimagined the event to suit his purposes in the novel.

⁸⁸ James Barke, *The World His Pillow*, pp. 227 – 228.

⁸⁹ James Barke, *The World His Pillow*, pp. 325 – 326.

⁹⁰ James Barke, *The World His Pillow*, p. 230.

⁹¹ James Barke, *The World His Pillow*, p. 324.

⁹² James Barke, *The World His Pillow*, p. 324.

⁹³ James Barke, *The World His Pillow*, p. 413.

⁹⁴ James Barke, 'A Lie About the Highlands', *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 6 November 1937, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

⁹⁵ James Barke, 'Big Business in Gaeldom', *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, 25 April 1936, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

⁹⁶ James Barke, in a letter addressed to 'My Dear Kerr', dated 27 February 1936, retained in the James Barke Archive, Special Archives Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

⁹⁷ Margery Palmer McCulloch, p. 152.

⁹⁸ James Barke, *The Land of the Leal* (London: Collins, 1939; repr. Edinburgh: Cannongate, 1987), p. 638.

⁹⁹ James Barke, *The Land of the Leal*, p. 640.

¹⁰⁰ James Barke, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (London: Collins, 1946), pp. 20 – 21.



Fig. 3a



Fig. 4a