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Imaginaries of Capitalist Disablement in James Barke's *The Land of the Leal*: For a Scottish Literary History of the Expanded Proletariat

ARIANNA INTRONA
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Open University

James Barke's *The Land of the Leal* (1939) is primarily concerned with the proletarianisation of the working class and the development of capitalist modernity as processes that envelop all areas of economic and social life. Drawing upon a Marxist disability perspective, this paper traces the ways that Barke represents the impact of proletarianisation on working-class life as a profoundly body-minded phenomenon. This body-minded framework intensifies both Barke's denunciation of capitalist violence as it pervades relations of production and social reproduction, and his engagement with the complexities that determine the possibility for the emergence of the proletariat as a collective political force. This paper contends that narratives of 'capitalist disablement' in *The Land of the Leal* deepen Barke's engagement with the changing forms—and different dimensions—of capitalist violence, and sharpen his portrayal of the possibilities for working-class individuals to engage in collective modes of resistance. In particular, Barke's representation of the violence of capital and the working-class resistance to it is entangled with the idea of social reproduction as a conceptdimension in which asserts the struggle that unfold alternatively unfolds as an articulation of, or as incompatible with, workplace-based forms of class struggleas being ,,. This offers a starting point from which to speculate as to what a Scottish literary history of an expanded proletariat, whose labour and forms of struggle exceed the sphere of production, might look like, and to explore the pivotal place that *The Land of the Leal* occupies within it.

Contact: Arianna Introna <arianna.introna@open.ac.uk>

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Introduction

James Barke's *The Land of the Leal* (1939) is centrally concerned with the proletarianisation of the working class as a protean process that envelops all areas of its economic and social life. This paper traces the ways that Barke narrates the proletarianisation of agricultural workers through a focus on the body-minded impact of capitalism on working-class individualss. In a spirit similar to that proposed by Neil Lazarus, who sets out to 'explore the social phenomenology of work as it finds literary representation' in literature that 'registers the human experience of capitalist modernity',[1] this paper explores how the human experience of capitalist modernity is presented in *The Land of the Leal* as being inseparable from the body-minded impact of capitalist violence, in which physical and psychological harms are enmeshed. The body-minded perspective adopted here operates within the framework given by Margaret Price's coinage of the term. This captures the overlap of 'body' and 'mind' into a 'sociopolitically constituted and material entity that emerges through both structural (power- and violence-laden) contexts and also individual (specific) experience'.[2] Glossing Price, Sami Schalk isolates the hallmark of a body-minded perspective as a focus on the ways in which 'processes within our being impact one another in such a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern'.[3] This paper will explore the relationship between the body-minded suffering registered by Barke's working-class characters and the capitalist relations they encounter by drawing on a Marxist disability perspective with a two-fold aim. First, to investigate how Barke's imagination of proletarianisation as a profoundly body-minded phenomenon is key to its representation as articulated across both relations of production and the sphere of social reproduction defined by the labour of care and reproduction of life. Secondly, to grasp the complexities that, in *The Land of the Leal*, determine the possibility for the emergence of the proletariat as a collective political force capable of rising up against capitalist violence. This paper contends that Barke's focus on the body-minded harms suffered by his protagonists as they encounter capitalist relations of production and social reproduction deepens the analysis he provides of changing forms, and different dimensions, of capitalist violence.

1. Neil Lazarus, 'Into Our Labours: Work and Literary Form in World Literature' in *Uncommon Wealths in Postcolonial Fiction*, ed. by Helga Ramsey-Kurz and Melissa Kennedy (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2017), 18.

2. Margaret Price, 'The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain' in *Hypatia* (Winter 2015), 30.1, 171.

3. Sami Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 5.

To examine the body-minded aesthetics of 'capitalist violence as capitalist disablement' as it is narrated in *The Land of the Leal* this paper draws upon Ioana Cerasella Chis' theory of 'disabling capitalism' and the concept of 'capitalist disablement' derived thereof, which Chis develops to place of the violence suffered by disabled people under capitalism within a wider spectrum of capitalist violence that affects the working class as a whole. Chis sees the oppression of disabled people as being produced by a 'disabling capitalism'. Within this framework, the emancipation of disabled people and anti-capitalists are entangled. Taking a materialist approach to disability, Chis develops the concept 'subjects of disablement' to pinpoint 'the historically contingent nature of disablement and [direct] focus to materially rooted experiences, social positionality and social relations more generally'.[4] Building on, and modifying, the social model of disability that distinguishes biological difference and impairment from socially-produced disability, Chis probes the ways in which 'capitalist social relations subject people', including people 'with impairments, who are D/deaf, chronically ill, neurodivergent or experience mental distress' to diverse forms of disablement through oppression and exploitation.[5] Chis' socio-political and historical understanding of disability detaches the study of capitalist disablement from a biological-ontological understanding of disability and pushes it towards a body-minded understanding of 'oppression and exploitation under capitalism',[6] which allows the transfer of the concept of 'capitalist disablement' from a focus on 'subjects of disablement' defined by non-normativity or pre-existing impairments to an analysis of the changing forms of capitalist violence and their impact. This materialist detachment of disablement from biological understandings of disability is what renders 'capitalist disablement' a useful conceptual tool through which to study Barke's literary exploration of the relationship between the formation of a proletarianised working class and the proliferation of body-minded damage suffered by proletarianised agricultural workers and the urban working class alike. *The Land of the Leal* lends itself to this critical endeavour. Firstly, because it is informed by concerns that are pervasive in Barke's wider literary oeuvre in tracing the changing forms of encounter between the working class and capital as well as the relationalities that facilitate or block the emergence of the proletariat as a collective political subject. Secondly, because it is unique in Barke's literary works in relating these phenomena and relationalities through the lenses of the body-minds of the working-class individuals they invest, harm or jeopardise.

4. Ioana Cherasella Chis, 'The centrality of disablement subjectivation to the reproduction of capitalist social relations: considerations for Critical and Global Political Economy' in *Global Political Economy* (2023), 10.

5. Chis, 10.

6. Chis, 11.

As Keir Elder demonstrates through the analysis of Barke's fiction and personal papers, Barke must be situated within 'the canon of engaged literature in Scotland in the 1930s and beyond'[7] due to the politically engaged nature of his work. Paul Malgrati similarly finds that Barke 'explored radical Burnsian themes, bridging the gap between literary imagination and political commitment'.[8] Consideration of Barke's literary oeuvre, most notably of *The World His Pillow* (1933), *The Wild MacRaes* (1934), and *A Major Operation* (1936), as well as of his plays, in particular *When the Boys Come Home*, supports these insights. This paper places a sensitivity to the body-minded harm inflicted by capitalist relations on the working class as being central to Barke's political vision. A sociological approach is adopted in the following analysis of narratives of capitalist disablement in *The Land of the Leal* in an attempt to draw out the relevance of Barke's belief that the task of the artist is 'to organise experience in an art form'[9] for literary analysis of the novel. The prefatory notes to *The Land of the Leal* betray this organisational intent as Barke declares he is going to cover a specific chronological span, from 'the birth of the hero's father in 1820, to the point where we bid farewell to the heroine in 1938', alongside covering 'the major political and economic issues of [a] generation' by organising in narrative form the 'historical discords' experienced by the generation.[10] A sociological approach is also warranted on a second count. As Corey Gibson proposes, class in national literary contexts is encountered through narratives that are both locally and historically specific.[11] This is clearly the case with *The Land of the Leal*, in which the literary rendition of the penetration of capitalist relations into every dimension of social life is rooted within specific locales visited by the Ramsays at clearly defined historical conjunctures.

As far as terminology is concerned, Barke's description of David Ramsay's trajectory as marked by displacement from 'a life of semi-agricultural labour, semi-peasantry, into one of industrial wage-slavery' (p.448) captures phenomena that will be discussed, drawing upon the conceptualisation of 'proletarianisation' offered by Marxist theory and literary critical history. To capture the forms of capitalist violence and disablement, which is depicted in *The Land of the Leal* through a vocabulary of exhaustion and physical brutalisation, Marxist disability studies and feminist theory will be drawn upon. While Barke names the subjects of these processes as 'workers', 'farm workers', 'agricultural labourers',

7. Keir Elder, *James Barke: Politics, Cinema and Writing Scottish Urban Modernity* (University of Dundee, 2013), 32.

8. Paul Malgrati, *Robert Burns and Scottish Cultural Politics: The Bard of Contention (1914 – 2014)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 24.

9. James Barke, 'What is Art', James Barke Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Box 2A.

10. James Barke, *The Land of the Leal* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), x.

11. Corey Gibson, *The Voice of the People Hamish Henderson and Scottish Cultural Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 368.

'lumpen proletariat' and 'slum proletariat', the subjects of disablement will be referred to as 'members of the working class', or will retain Barke's terminology where relevant.

In focusing on the body-minded impact of capitalist violence, this analysis will explore the different dimensions of working-class life it affects, and will excavate the complexities attached to working-class resistance as represented in *The Land of the Leal*. Part One considers the capitalist disablement that originates from relations of production, in which both the agricultural labourer following primitive accumulation and the urbanised worker are implicated. Part Two examines capitalist disablement as it penetrates the sphere of social reproduction, intended both as the dimension of biological reproduction / procreation and the effort involved in the social reproduction of the labour force, which encompasses a variety of activities ranging from childcare to domestic work. Part Three addresses forms of capitalist disablement specific to the experience of poverty and unemployment, discussing how Barke presents these dimensions as disconnected from exploitation but not from body-minded disablement. Part Four studies the ways in which in *The Land of the Leal* body-minded disablement produced by capitalist violence feeds a contradictory tension between forms of—or desire for—refusal of work, and struggles internal to the sphere of social reproduction. This tension is foregrounded in the novel as one of the major stumbling blocks to the formation of the proletariat as a collective subject of anti-capitalist struggle. For this reason, I Part Five suggests a disability perspective on the representation of capitalist disablement in *The Land of the Leal* calls for the theorisation of how an 'expanded proletariat' is imagined in literature as a collective subject of disablement and of class struggle.

The Land of the Leal follows David Ramsay as he changes occupations from agricultural labourer to industrial worker. David's journey maps onto the two-fold literary encoding of the 'worlding' of capitalist modernity described by Lazarus, for whom a first 'inaugural' moment is linked to the moment when commodification becomes generalised, and a second corresponds to capitalist consolidation. By placing David's shifting occupational status as the pivot around which *The Land of the Leal* unfolds, Barke captures the moment of rupture in traditional modes of living and working that the consolidation of capitalist modernity involves. As Patrick Eiden-Offe remarks in relation to the literary production specific to the Vormärz (the period in German history preceding the revolutions of 1848), literature from this period witnessed the establishment of capitalist 'modernity' and engaged in dynamics proper to the form of exploitation that industrialisation ushered in. This yielded imaginaries of hardship as what people have 'historically struggled with … and fought against'.[12] Eiden-

12. Patrick Eiden-Offe, *The Poetry of Class: Romantic Anti-Capitalism and the Invention of the Proletariat*, trans. by Jacob Blumenfeld (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2023), 5.

Offe's reflections on the imaginaries of hardship that encoded the impact of the expansion of capitalist relations in pre-industrial Germany capture the central concern with socioeconomic strife of novel dimensions that underpins Barke's narrative of capitalist development in *The Land of the Leal*. As Part One shows, Barke's literary rendition of the 'worlding' of capitalist modernity is also centrally concerned with such hardship and exploitation but it does so from a body-minded perspective. Barke's focus regularly returns to the ways in which David and his family encounter the body-minded harm generated by the oppression that permeates fast-changing relations of production. This highlights 'the historically contingent nature of disablement' but also, more generally, it directs the reader's attention to the 'materially rooted experiences, social positionality and social relations'[13] specific to the working-class 'subjects of disablement' that are the protagonists of *The Land of the Leal*. This paper will demonstrate that Barke's body-minded representations of the effects of capitalist violence function to intensify the critique of capitalist violence that is threaded through the novel.

Part One – Capitalist Disablement in Relations of Production

When the inaugural moment of the literary encoding of the 'worlding' of capitalist modernity is considered, for Lazarus this is linked to an 'experience of modernisation, commodity-production, and wage labour' that is in flux but gradually creates the conditions whereby commodification can achieve 'sufficient density to become the organising principle of society and to insinuate itself into the fabric of everyday life'.[14] *The Land of the Leal* is centrally concerned with the expansion of processes of modernisation, commodity-production, and proletarianisation across all areas of the economic and social life of the agricultural working class. In a suggestive opening section, Barke presents Jean Ramsay's parents, Tom and Jean Gibson, as archetypes of the Galloway agricultural labourer and his wife. Tom Gibson possesses the 'virtues' and 'vices of the Galloway agricultural labourer'[15] and stands for a world that is being 'ruthlessly' cast, alongside 'Age-long traditions and customs', to the 'furnaces' of the 'Dragon of Capital', which had 'devoured in a decade a generation of men, women and children'.[16]. Crucially, the life of the traditional Galloway agricultural labourer before the coming of the 'Dragon of Capital' was not immune to disablement. Rather, 'Nature had not lavished any bounties on the Rhinns of Galloway. The fruits of

13. Chis, 10.
14. Lazarus, 19.
15. *Leal*, 2.
16. *Leal*, 1.

the soil could only be won by hard and, if necessary, brutal toil'[17] and, because of this it is 'From daylight to dark, from youth to old age' that 'the yoke of work was firmly riveted to the necks of the Galloway agricultural labourers'.[18]

While Tom Gibson 'did not find the yoke burdensome. He revelled in it',[19] this is not the case for David or his father Andrew Ramsay, who express the perspective of agricultural labourers forced to put up with the tyranny of the farmers. In his conversation with Reverend John Ross and the headmaster, Sam MacKitteroch, Andrew Ramsay lays out the ways in which the appropriation of land creates the conditions for agricultural class relations of intense exploitation to develop. He declares 'I'm all for progress and invention. But man should come before progress. The farmers have turned men into beasts o' burden'; and states that 'Life was hard enough' when 'men had their bit o' land' but the agricultural labourer at least 'was his own master as well as his own servant', now men must accept 'to be driven like beasts and worse than they dare drive any beast'.[20] He proceeds to rhetorically ask, explicitly denouncing the body-minded impact of these exploitative relations of production, 'Who's John MacMeechan that my bairns should sweat their blood out for him?'.[21] The target of Andrew Ramsay's critique is the local farmer, John MacMeechan, but its message reverberates throughout the novel as Barke's narrative addresses different agents of capitalist violence, which mutate in form but unfailingly forces members of the working class represented to sweat 'their blood out'. The reader witnesses the disabling impact of exploitative working practices on young David as Barke depicts him 'drudging home from the hay field, the sun casting a long shadow before him. He was dog tired: he felt he could hardly straighten his back. It had been thus now for many days'.[22] Once older, thinking back to the tyranny of the farmers in Galloway, David explicitly recalls the violence and disablement suffered by his father and brothers by referring to their exploitation at the hands of John MacMeechan as both brutalising and dehumanising: 'John MacMeechan of Achgammie had been as big a tyrant as could be found …. John MacMeechan had brutalised his brothers. He knew now what was wrong with them. They had toiled like beasts, been treated like beasts'.[23] Barke mourns the impossibility of revolt for the Galloway agricultural labourers when David remembers 'his father revolting against the hardness and cruelty of the life and yet being beaten in the end'.[24]

17. *Leal*, 2.
18. *Leal*, 3.
19. *Leal*, 3.
20. *Leal*, 34.
21. *Leal*, 35.
22. *Leal*, 91.
23. *Leal*, 196.
24. *Leal*, 196.

David's specialisation as an agricultural labourer directs his subsequent encounters with the changing forms of disablement endured by the agricultural working class. As a young boy, he learns the 'art of cheese-making' and this earns him and Jean access to employment as servants in the dairy, at the Glenoch farm in Ayrshire, after they marry. This is their first encounter with the exploitative relations of production in the dairy industry. The body-minded impact of exploitation at Glenoch is rendered by Barke as he narrates how Jean and David, in their sleep, 'still tramped the endless treadmill of their toil'.[25] The exhaustion brought on by working at Glenoch leads David to contemplate the possibility of leaving Ayrshire and the brutal toil he and Jean are subjected to there. He ponders: 'Surely he was fit for something better than mucking byres and making cheese – surely Jean was fitted for something better'.[26] Nonetheless, David is under no illusion that departing Glenoch would guarantee access to more just work relations: he becomes 'depressed' in reflecting that while 'it would not be hard to find a better dairy …. no matter where he went, he would still be a slave to the cattle – and a slave for every day of the year'.[27]

Some respite instead attends David and Jean's encounter with the technologisation of the dairy industry in West Neuk of Fife. Both are amazed at the electric lights, which 'suggested a touch of fairyland' and the 'incredible speed' at which the churn revolved, as if 'to the invisible behests of electrical energy'.[28] However, the couple's encounter with technologised dairy processes introduces Barke's engagement with the violence and disablement proper to the consolidation of capitalist development. This corresponds to what Lazarus describes as the second moment of the literary encoding of the 'worlding' of capitalist modernity, which reflects 'the experience of capitalist development in its consolidation' by portraying 'contexts in which the commodity has become the dominant social form', making 'inherited ways of seeing and knowing … obsolete'.[29] In *The Land of the Leal* these contexts of capitalist modernity in its phase of consolidation correspond to those inhabited and constituted by the urbanised industrial working class.

We are introduced to urban contexts of capitalist disablement first fleetingly through the narration of Robert MacMorran, the husband of David's sister Agnes, then as experienced first-hand by the Ramsays. David and Jean, on their way to Caddom in the Borders, visit Agnes and her husband, a 'ploughman who had got a job as a carter with a firm of contractors in Glasgow'. Agnes presents waged labour in the city as preferable to the exploitation that was the lot of the

25. *Leal*, 181.
26. *Leal*, 189.
27. *Leal*, 189.
28. *Leal*, 339.
29. *Leal*, 20.

agricultural labourer. She explains, 'there was no life for us in Galloway … Bob gets his wages every fortnight … he'd never have gotten that working to the farmers'.[30] The body-minded impact of work is foregrounded as Bob, when he comes home, is 'obviously tired after his day's work'; still, he confirms Agnes' view that there was no future for him in the Rhinns and resents the fact that he did not leave the area earlier. He states 'I worked ower long down yonder. I should hae been away ten years before I was. That's the biggest mistake I made. Ach to hell! yon place is finished – nothing but hard work and poverty'.[31] David eventually follows in Bob's footsteps to find employment in a Glasgow shipyard. His encounter with the relations of production specific to capitalist modernity is rendered through the impact of the urban working conditions that he registers on his body and mind: although the work was 'never as heavy as he had known it in the country', its body-minded impact is considerable and 'after his eight and three-quarter hours in the yard [David] was exhausted, mentally and physically, to a degree he had never known'. We learn that this is because 'Not only was the assault on his senses continual and devasting' but this occurred in 'an alien environment – a harsh unsympathetic environment that neither gave nor expected sympathy'.[32] To render this assault, Barke portrays David's working environment sensorially: 'The pneumatic drills beat shattering drum-like rolls on the steel plates; the rivet hammers beat like crazed woodpeckers; a plate slammed on the deck with a roar of protest: the gaunt holds reverberating in sympathy'.[33]

Part Two – Capitalist Disablement in the Sphere of Social Reproduction

Barke's literary encoding of the 'worlding' of capitalist modernity and the disablement inseparable from it encompasses relations of production as much as the labour of social reproduction. The study of the sphere of 'social reproduction', a concept developed by autonomist and feminist Marxists, focalises the reproduction of life as 'the foundation of every economic and political system' and attends to its gendered character.[34] In engaging the labour of social reproduction through a focus on the representation of caregiving in Victorian fiction, Talia Schaffer identifies a trend whereby 'care-givers often join a care community that mystifies their labour to refashion it as a voluntary, leisured, feminised

30. *Leal*, 217.
31. *Leal*, 218.
32. *Leal*, 439.
33. *Leal*, 435.
34. Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 2.

activity'.[35] Barke frames the labour of social reproduction, and the caregiving it involves, in an opposite register by foregrounding the body-minded and gendered harms it generates, as well its imbrication with capitalist relations of production. This is inevitable because Barke's persistent concern lies with how changing occupational frameworks affect the relationship between David and Jean; the author is therefore sensitive to the labour that Jean and other female characters perform in both the sphere of production and in that of social reproduction. *The Land of the Leal* fits a literary tradition of novels that inscribe tasks pertaining to the realm of social reproduction 'at the level of content … in depictions of families, households and parenting; of foodgetting and water provision; of domestic work, care-work'.[36] What is remarkable is how Barke displays a keen sense of how women's work involves 'entangled inequalities', which reconfigure along gendered hierarchies the 'social characteristics of the already occupied setting, according to variations in the types of technology, capital and labour power employed'.[37] Barke's rendition of the changing forms assumed by relations of social reproduction and the entangled inequalities and disablement attached to these encompasses the two constitutive dimensions of the labour of social reproduction: the first is the sphere of what Martha Gimenez refers to as 'relations of procreation', namely relations through which biological kinship relations are established; the second is that which encompasses 'relations of social reproduction' through which labour power is maintained and reproduced more generally.[38]

The entangled inequalities and related disablement that Barke devotes most attention to are those connected to what Martha Gimenez terms 'mode of procreation'. For Gimenez, the 'mode of reproduction' combines different elements (means of biological, physical and social reproduction, labour and objects of labour) and relations between the agents of reproduction. Through the concept of 'mode of procreation' Gimenez seeks to isolate the biological elements of the process of reproduction. *The Land of the Leal* registers the entangled inequalities that pervade the mode of procreation as being entwined with intense body-minded disablement. This is first denounced through the story of Agnes Gibson, Jean's mother, who is introduced at the beginning of the book burdened with the labour of procreation as an unavoidable destiny: 'It was her duty to bear

35. Talia Schaffer, *Communities of Care: The Social Ethics of Victorian Fiction* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022).

36. Sharae Deckard, Social Reproduction, Struggle and the Ecology of 'Women's Work' in World-literature', in *Feminist Theory*, Vol.25, No.2 (2024), 225.

37. Guilherme Leite Gonçalves and Sergio Costa, 'From Primitive Accumulation to Entangled Accumulation: Decentring Marxist Theory of Capitalist Expansion', in *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol.23, No.2 (2020), 161.

38. Martha E. Gimenez, *Marx, Women, and Capitalist Social Reproduction: Marxist Feminist Essays* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 305.

children – even had it not been her duty she could not have escaped – no more than the tethered mare … She knew there was no alternative to her slavery outside her house or the drudgery within it'.[39] The physicality of Agnes Gibson's disablement is evoked by Barke through imaginaries of exhaustion and premature aging, the sight of which inspires both revulsion and anger in David. If 'At twenty-seven [Agnes Gibson] was already an old woman',[40] many years later she is presented to us as 'tired of life – exhausted by life', and aware that 'further exhaustion lay ahead of her. She knew that as long as she could bear a child it would be deliberately fathered upon her'.[41] It is tellingly 'with a shock of revulsion' that David realises that Mrs. Gibson is pregnant again, and describes the disablement wrought on her by relations of procreation thus: 'physically she was worn and aged beyond her years. Her face was thin, lined and shrunken: she looked sixty. How Tom Gibson could father children on her was beyond him'.[42] Despite David's awareness of the disabling impact of relations of procreation, and the gendered inequalities that entrench its reproduction, the fact that Jean is not exempt from either is made clear at the Glenoch. Anticipating the disablement she is going to suffer when she realises that she is pregnant with her second child, Jean 'wept bitterly … for immediately she saw how difficult life would become'[43] and when David learns she is pregnant 'All the while he was eaten with remorse. ... He could never acquit himself of the responsibility of Mary's existence and the hardship her existence caused her mother'.[44]

In the case of Jean's double pregnancy at the Glenoch farm, what is foregrounded is how the labour of procreation neatly shades into the labour of social reproduction. In the chapter aptly titled 'Cradle Song', the harsh working conditions at the Glenoch are shown to be exacerbated by the labour of social reproduction brought on by the birth of Barbara, crucially depicted as women's work. The body-minded disablement that Jean suffers following the birth of Barbara is conveyed by Barke through a focus on the drudgery that Jean is bound to accept, and on the ways in which the physical impact of the tasks is increased by her having to perform these with Barbara on her back. Jean 'milked with Barbara strapped on her back with a shawl. The child cried and whimpered and wet her through to the skin. Jean set her teeth, pressed her forehead into the cow's flank and milked in an almost frenzied determination. In the dairy she laid the child in a cradle beside the cheese vat'.[45] The disabling effects of this labour on Jean are

39. *Leal*, 3.
40. *Leal*, 3.
41. *Leal*, 3.
42. *Leal*, 3.
43. *Leal*, 205.
44. *Leal*, 206.
45. *Leal*, 281.

made explicit as 'It seemed as if she would break under the strain. But her fibre was too tough to break'.[46] The additional toil of social reproduction involved in caring for newborn Barbara at the Glenoch is primarily carried by Jean but is, to some extent, shared by David: 'Without Barbara their struggle would have been hard enough. Handicapped with the child, it took a superhuman effort to pull through'.[47] The deep gender inequalities attending the labour of social reproduction are not diminished by this. Rather, they are underscored in David's later recollection of, and anger at, the hardship Jean experienced during 'Those days at the milking when she had to drag [Barbara and Mary] down the byre with her from cow to cow in turnip baskets'.[48]

If *The Land of the Leal* is centrally concerned with the body-minded impact of the violence that is generated by unequal gender relations and by the rule of profit over life under capitalism, the sphere of social reproduction provides a key dimension in which to observe their compounded harmful impact. This is because, in *The Land of the Leal,* experiences of illness and care are tied into it. . The sphere of social reproduction spotlights the challenges implicated in the preservation of life under capitalism because under capitalist modernity, working-class life is deemed disposable if not useful for capitalist exploitation, and at the same time survival is rendered dependent upon commodified relations of care that are themselves productive of ill-health and even death. As Beatrice Adler-Bolton and Artie Vierkant argue, 'Health under capitalism is an impossibility. Under capitalism, to attain health you must work, you must be productive and normative, and only then are you entitled to the health you can buy'.[49] That the possibility of finding employment is conditional on being healthy is confirmed by how Jean and David, after getting married, leave for the Glenoch farm knowing 'it meant hard work, harder than they had ever known in their lives. But they were young and strong and healthy' and 'It seemed to them there was nothing in the world they could not overcome, no obstacle they could not surmount'.[50] It is for this reason that when David complains to Jean about 'the life of the Rhinns in terms of brutal slavish toil and brutal slave drivers', suggesting that 'He began to hate the sight of it',[51] Jean dismisses him as a raving madman and scolds him, reminding him of the fortune he still possesses in being healthy and able to work: 'Thank God you've got the strength to work hard for

46. *Leal*, 281.
47. *Leal*, 184.
48. *Leal*, 285.
49. Beatrice Adler-Bolton and Artie Vierkant in Beatrice Adler-Bolton and Artie Vierkant, *Health Communism* (London & New York: Verso, 2022), ebook.
50. *Leal*, 147.
51. *Leal*, 195.

it will be a bad day for us all when you canna work – or when you havena got work to do. I'm damned if I can think what's come over you'.[52]

The obverse scenario to that in which good health guarantees the (mis)fortune of being available for exploitation connects to the working-class experience of ill-health, in a context where medical care is provided only when it does not come into conflict with the capitalists' pursuit of profit. In *The Land of the Leal*, these dynamics materialise when Mary is found to have diphtheria on arrival at South Meigle. When Jean informs Walter Armstrong, 'a traditional Border farmer', of Mary's illness, 'Immediately a frown of rage and disappointment spread over his features' at the thought of the danger that Mary's illness might pose to his business: the mere 'mention of fever' drives 'Wattie into a fit of rage and despair' as 'He saw himself losing the contract to supply milk to the Caddom Co-operative Society'.[53] After consultation with Doctor Murray, and spending 'a few guineas' to keep the question of diphtheria quiet, Walter allows David to start work as a dairy man while forcing Jean to quarantine with Barbara and Mary, making no arrangements for their sustenance. Mary eventually dies, three weeks after the family's arrival at South Meigle. It is only at this point that David decides to disregard the rules and enter the house to pick Mary up in his arms, caring 'nothing for orders and prohibitions. Armstrong and Murray had ceased to exist. The grief that tore through him was all-consuming'.[54]

Part Three – Capitalist Disablement, Poverty and Unemployment

The impossibility for the Ramsays to adequately care for Mary speaks to Barke's wider concern with the extent to which the chances of survival for members of the working class are seriously constrained by commodified social relations proper to capitalist modernity. Harry Braverman discusses this stage of capitalist development as triggered by the advent of monopoly capitalism and as involving the creation of a 'universal marketplace' that transforms 'into a commodity every form of the activity of humankind including what had heretofore been the many things that people did for themselves or for each other'.[55] In the world of capitalist modernity and the attendant commodification of every social relation, survival for members of the working class is jeopardised when the possibility of finding employment lapses. Barke's literary encoding of capitalist modernity

52. *Leal*, 197.
53. *Leal*, 234.
54. *Leal*, 254.
55. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), 250.

captures this mode of vulnerability through the depiction of how his proletarianised working-class protagonists experience poverty, unemployment and the disablement these conditions generate in the urban environment of Glasgow, as will be explored shortly.

However, it is important to first note that *The Land of the Leal* directs the reader's attention to the conditions that produce this vulnerability and that trigger proletarianisation in the first place; namely, the destruction of uncommodified structures of social reproduction that were a feature of pre-capitalist rural life. As Eiden-Offe points out, the preconditions for proletarianisation are 'most adequately defined in the negative: that someone performs wage labour indicates the absence of other, traditional possibilities of material reproduction'; in other words, proletarianisation follows the 'destruction of the previously dominant forms of labour and subsistence'.[56] *The Land of the Leal* renders the overcoming of the conditions of work and life that were the lot of the agricultural labourer by those characteristic of the rule of the 'Dragon of Capital' through David's encounter with the ruins of the Suie he and Jean visit in Galloway. David describes how 'Only the four walls of the Suie remained and even these were beginning to crumble away' and reflects that 'In another twenty no one would know that the Suie had ever existed'.[57] The ruins of the Suie force David to realise that although 'he dreaded going back to Glasgow, dreaded more than anything going back into the shipyard with its noise and clamour and dirt … there was nothing for him or his family in his native Galloway' and in any case 'it would be an agony to come back and work in a land whose physical features had remained unaltered but whose spirit had withered and decayed'.[58] The reality of the end of the rural way of life finds expression in David's final thoughts: 'there was no way back to that life: there was no way forward. He had come back to find that the past was dead or dying'.[59]

The dire consequences of unemployment for a proletarianised urban working class, at a time when the return to non-commodified rural ways of life is barred, is first intimated by an early exchange between Jean and Bob, during David and Jean's first visit to Glasgow. Jean challenges Bob's contention that life in Glasgow is preferable to life in the Rhinns by asking 'But there'll be poverty here too, I expect?'. To this question, Bob retorts by revealing that the desirability of waged labour in the city vis-à-vis rural exploitation is dependent upon the security afforded by steady employment. He explains 'Poverty in Glasgow? Wife, you ken nothing about it. There's more poverty here in MacClandish Street than there is in the whole o' Galloway. And, mind you, poverty here's poverty.

56. Eiden-Offe, 9.
57. *Leal*, 488.
58. *Leal*, 492.
59. *Leal*, 492.

There are folks here and you wouldn't ken how they managed to live. But if you've a good job you're all right'.[60] By Bob's own admission, the experience of poverty and unemployment in the urban environment of capitalist modernity is harsher than its rural counterpart precisely because of the dominance of a universal marketplace that has extinguished collective ways of life and support in favour of their commodified counterparts.

The vulnerability that haunts working-class life following proletarianisation is highlighted by the experience of poverty generated by unemployment in an urban environment. With the onset of the Depression, Jean and David register the difference between the first spell of unemployment in Glasgow and the fear of it by which they had been haunted in the Borders. Barke writes 'the single fact of unemployment was worse than all the manifold effects of the city. They had never known unemployment all their lives' although 'the fear of losing their jobs either at Blackadder or Caddomlea had often haunted them'; 'unemployment in Glasgow was a very different matter.'[61] This is because survival for the urban working class is tied to the availability of waged work and in Glasgow, during the Depression, 'Unemployment was general – was of a mass nature. It was like a social plague that had got beyond the control of the political doctors and the economic medical authorities'.[62]

The impact of unemployment on the Ramsays is registered through its body-minded consequences. We learn that 'The effect of unemployment on Jean and David was devastating. Five years in the city had aged them more than ten years in the country would have done'.[63] It is while David is looking for work that he 'tasted the iron dregs of the city's callous indifference. He tramped from work to work. He felt sick and humiliated. He became alarmed at the easiness with which he became physically fatigued: he wondered if age was beginning to tell on him'.[64] When David realises that he is going to lose his job in the shipyard of Messrs. William Anderson following the post-war depression in shipbuilding, he does not tell Jean straightaway as 'he feared the effect of the shock on her'.[65] His fear proves to be justified as 'The shock was devastating. Jean, no matter how careful her economy, had not been able to save anything. As soon as she had a pound or two gathered along came the rent notice or a bill for gas or electricity or for an instalment of rates'[66] and her 'great fear was that she might not be able to pay the rent: that they would be put out on the street'.[67] If, as

60. *Leal*, 218.
61. *Leal*, 505.
62. *Leal*, 505.
63. *Leal*, 504.
64. *Leal*, 494.
65. *Leal*, 493.
66. *Leal*, 494.
67. Leal, 505.

argued by Guilherme Leite Gonçalves and Sergio Costa, 'capitalist accumulation is sustained by a continuous and permanent creation and expropriation of non-commodified spaces', including the spaces of social reproduction, Jean's distress illuminates the extent to which universal commodification and proletarianisation in urban contexts spread the impact of unemployment from the sphere of production deep into, and across, the sphere of social reproduction, imperilling the very possibility for the labour of social reproduction to be performed at all.

Part Four – Overcoming Capitalist Disablement?

As has been shown, *The Land of the Leal* follows David Ramsay as he changes occupations from agricultural labourer to industrial worker to unemployed, foregrounding the body-minded impact of capitalist disablement in these different moments of his working-class life. This section explores how, in parallel, Barke represents the desire to escape capitalist violence that animates the subjects of disablement that are the protagonists of the novel. This desire and the dynamics of the need to escape capitalist violence feeds align with Braverman's theorisation of the need for capital to enforce subordination to the 'habituation' of working-class individuals to the 'capitalist mode of exploitation' as a process that needs to be renewed constantly and generationally, and that in both cases, will never achieve complete compliance. Braverman remarks, 'the habituation of workers to the capitalist mode of production must be renewed with each generation, all the more so as the generations which grow up under capitalism are not formed within the matrix of work life, but are plunged into work from the outside'.[68] Moreover, Braverman identifies a connection between habituation and the possibility to refuse it based on how habituation functions to enforce a state of subjection that is not natural and, as such, is refusable: for Braverman, in ways that powerfully resonate with David's hatred of exploitative work relations, the capitalist mode of production involves exploitation that 'is repugnant to the victims, whether their pay is high or low, because it violates human conditions of work'.[69]

In parallel to the ways in which *The Land of the Leal* captures the capitalist disablement that capitalist modernity injects into every dimension of working-class life, it also gestures toward an ever-present yearning by subjects of disablement to refuse habituation to exploitation, as well as the complexities that surround the possibility to actualise such refusal. The title *The Land of the Leal* is itself a reference to the pursuit of happiness and social harmony that is foreclosed by all

68. Braverman, 261.
69. Braverman, 261.

the forms of employment that disable David and Jean from the start to the end of the novel. This spirit is at the heart of the song 'The Land o' the Leal', authored by Carolina Oliphant Nairne but ascribed to Robert Burns, in which the heroine is 'wearin' awa'/ To the land o' the leal' where 'There 's nae sorrow … neither cauld nor care'.[70] It also infuses David's fantasies of a life beyond exploitation in the Rhinns, animated by the hatred of the tyranny of the farmers that is the felt both by David and by his father Andrew. While it was young David's consciousness of the beauty and 'inexplicable harmony' of the land in the Rhinns that prevented him from accepting a life defined 'in terms of brutal slavish toil and brutal slave drivers',[71] on recollecting the brutal toil that was the lot of his family in the Rhinns, David, much later in the novel, works 'himself into a passionate rage against the injustice of it all'.[72] This frustration of any pursuit of happiness or of a land without sorrow or care such as that sung by Burns / Nairne infuses the title of Barke's novel with a sardonic connotation.

A first moment of actual struggle for David takes place in the West Neuk of Fife where he starts a revolt in the Blackadder harvest field by refusing to work overtime. The reader realises that 'David's natural radical instincts, though submerged, were not destroyed', and these allow him to let go of the individualism that had 'deprived of the strength and unification of the collectivity of labour' in order to recognise that working overtime would equal working 'for nothing' and that was 'nothing short o' a damned imposition'.[73] However, the first act of resistance against the farmers in *The Land of the Leal* occurs in the sphere of social reproduction and takes the form of Jean's verbal attack against John MacMath, farmer at the Glenoch. We know that 'The Glenoch had been a hard place and John MacMath had been a hard taskmaster. But David was incapable of expressing his rage'.[74] It is Jean who launches into a verbal attack on MacMath: 'he was never to forget Jean's words, never to forget her blazing vehemence … when Jean moved from facts to prophesy he turned and fled. Her curses rang in his ears. They rang in his ears till he died'.[75]

However, *The Land of the Leal* is concerned not only with the resistance to habituation that accompanies the proletarianisation of the working class, but also with the complexities that determine the possibility for the proletariat to emerge as a collective political force. A mixed picture is offered by Barke's rendering of prospects for the transformation of the proletarianised working

70. Carolina Oliphant Nairne, 'The Land O' The Leal' in *Lays from Starthearn* (1846) available at https://hymnary.org/text/im_wearin_awa_jean.

71. *Leal*, 195.

72. *Leal*, 196.

73. *Leal*, 361.

74. *Leal*, 213.

75. *Leal*, 214.

class in Glasgow into the politically constituted collective of the proletariat. In Glasgow, David remains disconnected from the workers' movement because for him 'Capitalism was the natural order of things'.[76] He never joins a union and turns a blackleg (i.e., he remains working) during the General Strike. As his son Andrew explains, David had been 'uprooted from the countryside, plunged from a life of semi-agricultural labour, semi-peasantry, into one of industrial wage-slavery … Too late for him to adapt himself to the life'.[77] While David does not become involved in the labour movement, this is not the same for his relatives in Glasgow, David's brother-in-law Robert MacMorran, and Andrew himself. It is Robert (Bob) that refers to John MacLean and Willie Gallacher as 'twa champions o' the working class',[78] while Andrew supports Maxton and the Independent Labour Party as beacons of radical socialism and in 1938 joins the International Brigade in the fight against 'the Fascist beast'.[79]

Thus, if *The Land of the Leal* traces the gradual unfolding of proletarianisation through the changing occupations of the Ramsays, it also wrestles with the obstacles on the path of the emergence of the proletariat as a political subject. This process was historically conditional upon proletarianised individuals making 'their living conditions and experiences the reference point for a collective identification', to the extent that, for Eiden-Offe, the emergence of the working class as a political collective subject was 'inseparable from the rise of the labour movement'.[80] As has been seen, not all of the working-class characters in *The Land of the Leal* respond to the threat or reality of capitalist disablement by joining the labour movement and the proletariat as a political subject. This supports Eiden-Offe's distinction between the concept of 'proletarianisation' and that of the 'proletariat', which became established in the late nineteenth century to respectively refer to the 'process of producing a social collective' and to the result 'a socio-historical process of proletarianisation' followed by a 'political act of subjectivation' capable of generating the working class's 'political identification with its own proletarianisation'.[81] Barke's representation of these dynamics directs critical attention to two further questions. First, the need to address the pressure that sphere of social reproduction exerts on the formation of the proletariat (whether positively or negatively). Second, the uses of operationalising an expanded conception of the proletariat to grasp the class dynamics at play in *The Land of the Leal* (and working-class literature more generally).

76. *Leal*, 447.
77. *Leal*, 448.
78. *Leal*, 453.
79. *Leal*, 567.
80. Eiden-Offe, 10.
81. Eiden-Offe, 9.

Part Five – *The Land of the Leal* and a Scottish Literary History of the Expanded Proletariat

A key reason for the failure of Barke's working-class protagonists to move from refusal of capitalist habituation into revolt is associated by the author with the pressure of family responsibilities on the decision to jeopardise survival through engagement in the class struggle. A critical moment in David's de-radicalisation comes after his involvement in the strike at the Blackadder harvest field: 'It was while nursing the baby that David knew he had acted foolishly. His children came first. He should have thought of them. There wasn't much chance of the strike succeeding; and in any case the Alvington workers had not so much to lose as he had. He had been a fool: Jean was right'.[82] The failure of the revolt in the harvest field resolves David to both give up radical action and stop dreaming. The reader learns that from now on, he 'would dedicate himself to his children'; coming to terms with the fact that 'There was no escape for him. He was tied to the drudgery of life, chained by circumstances and his own limitations to work without respite'. All that David can do is to 'dedicate himself afresh to his children: make every sacrifice that lay in his power to emancipate them from the burden of labour, that they might have a freedom and a choice such as neither he nor Jean had ever known'.[83] While Sharae Deckard's contention that 'Capitalism's constant 'squeeze' on both social reproduction and extra-human nature in order to preserve profitability produces a contradiction whereby human needs remain unmet, and this very contradiction provides a potential ground for struggle' as well as class formation,[84] Barke's rendition of the relationship between the sphere of social reproduction and the possibility for proletarianised individuals to join collective working-class resistance presents a complex scenario in which social reproduction both calls for and discourages class struggle.

How Barke imagines the sphere of social reproduction as involving both toil and a form of struggle that alternatively unfold as manifestations of class struggle or remain separate from and in places incompatible with it, is the starting point from which to speculate as to what a Scottish literary history of an expanded proletariat whose labour and modalities of resistance exceed the sphere of production might look like. Mark Steven introduces the concept of the 'expanded proletariat' to challenge the orthodox understanding of the working class as 'defined by specific forms of labour and employment', which turns it into 'an exclusive identitarian category … synonymous with white, male, industrial workers'. For Steven, there is a need to embrace 'an expanded definition of

82. *Leal*, 365.
83. *Leal*, 369.
84. Deckard, 224.

class for practical as well as ideological purposes', pushing beyond 'a collective subject that has historical associations with large-scale industry in core states, so as to affirm instead the expanded proletariat, a heterogenous population of the dispossessed.'[85] Barke's imagination of social reproduction shines a complex light on the changing forms this expanded proletariat assumes. *The Land of the Leal* represents a variety of modes of labour and toiling through and despite body-minded breakdown. It also represents the constraints on the anti-capitalist resistance carried by proletarianised individuals and on the class formation that results. The forms of socially reproductive labour that the novel features connect to the changing forms of productive labour that are associated with the novel and ensure its position as a landmark of working-class literature within a Scottish literary tradition, but it also expands imaginaries of the working class beyond these. For this reason, Barke's imagination of the labour of social reproduction in *The Land of the Leal* might be taken to be paradigmatic of the centrality of social reproduction within the imagination of the working class in modern Scottish writing. This critical move would belong within a more general development of a Scottish literary history of an expanded proletariat, which includes a focus on the sphere of social reproduction alongside attention to changing forms of productive labour represented.

The ways in which Barke sets his imagination of the labour of social reproduction as a counterpoint to the story of a fraught anti-capitalist resistance, in which the encounter between social reproduction and struggles at the point of production is rarely devoid of conflict, also suggests the uses of extending the compilation of a Scottish literary history of the expanded proletariat to include class struggle. Steven regards 'class war' as being ever present: because 'Class war is happening right now. Its arena is everywhere. Its combatants are everyone', and for this reason we should use the term 'less as a technical term and more as an affective catalyst, reframing actions through military concepts and rhetoric without offering so much as a program or practical strategy.'[86] In *The Land of the Leal*, class war is what the journeys of working-class characters tend toward, both at the point of production and in the sphere of social reproduction. Central to these journeys are the responsibilities involved in the labour and duty of social reproduction, as well as the attitudes towards class struggle these duties and responsibilities predicate. How social reproduction imperatives may constrain the possibility for characters to fully engage in revolt at the point of production is a pervasive concern in the novel. When incorporated into the study of literary renditions of the expanded proletariat, it reveals the considerable extent to which a social reproduction perspective furnishes a specific

85. Mark Steven, *Class War: A Literary History* (London & New York: Verso, 2023), ebook.
86. Steven, ebook.

image of toiling undertaken in a variety of forms, and the multiplicity of challenges involved in collective endeavours to refuse habituation to the capitalist mode of exploitation.

Conclusion

This analysis has traced how Barke's literary imagination of working lives in *The Land of the Leal* engages the changing manifestations of the violence that capitalist modernity brings into the lives of working people, both at the point of production and in the sphere of social reproduction, through a consistent focus on the body-minded impact this violence produces. The novel presents the transformations that in the first decades of the twentieth century saw both modes of labour mutate through processes of proletarianisation and a reduced scope for resistance at the level of social reproduction, and saw them develop as a result of the commodification of social relations and the universalisation of wage labour as the only means to secure some degree of working-class survival. This paper concludes by proposing that *The Land of the Leal* delineates a tension between the safeguarding of survival that is the objective of the labour of social reproduction and the involvement in class struggle called forth by capitalist violence and disablement experienced at the point of production. The ways in which Barke's representation of capitalist disablement are entangled with the imagination of the sphere of social reproduction (as connected to class struggle by a fraught relationship) calls for theorisation within the framework of a Scottish literary history of the expanded proletariat, whose labour and forms of struggle exceed those specific to the sphere of production. Narratives of disability function as magnets for the representation of the expanded proletariat, as is the case in fiction as diverse as that concerned with the lives of dispossessed farm workers, for example that produced by Violet Jacob, Robin Jenkins and MacDougall Hay, or literature devoted to the classed existences of the poor, the unemployed or the precariously employed that populate the stories of Agnes Owens, James Kelman and Jenni Fagan. This paper proposes that a Marxist disability perspective facilitates the development of a Scottish literary history of the expanded proletariat because the proletarianisation of the working class is portrayed in *The Land of the Leal* through a focus on the changing forms of capitalist disablement that are generated by capitalist relations of production, as well as by social reproduction. In excavating the tension that Barke identifies between the modes of anti-capitalist resistance that emerge in these different spheres, the study of Barke's imaginaries of capitalist disablement, most importantly, illuminates the pivotal position that *The Land of the Leal* should occupy in any Scottish literary history of the expanded proletariat.