Postgraduate English

community.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english

ISSN 1756-9761

Issue 35 Autumn 2017

Editors:

Megumi Chou and Yimon Lo

Literalisation of Class Antagonism: The Dichotomy of them and us in Alan Sillitoe's Fiction

Sercan Hamza Bağlama

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey

In his works, Alan Sillitoe renders the themes of hunger, poverty, escape, war and even the threat of death, which was constant during his childhood, and depicts individual lives situated within a distinctively evoked and detailed socio-historical process. Sillitoe's characters, whose attitudes develop on the basis of their social and cultural milieu, draw closely on autobiographical experience and his political reflection on the situation of his class and often look back on his own experiences and social consciousness as a former factory worker in post-war Britain. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, one of Sillitoe's most acclaimed works, similarly provides a realistic snapshot of the working-class life in Nottingham during the 1950s through the eyes of Arthur Seaton, its protagonist, a 21-year-old man, working as a lathe operator at a bicycle factory, spending his weekends dressing up, drinking excessively, falling into occasional fights and brawls and always hoping for opportunities to sleep with *any* women.

Published in England in 1958, the novel earned the Author's Club Award for the best English first novel of that year. Like most first novels, this novel attracted little critical attention at first although the *Observer* listed it as one of the best books of 1958 by the end of the year, and *Books and Bookmen* announced it as the best first novel of 1958 in 1959.[1] However, over time, the importance of the novel was recognised, and it was subsequently subjected to widespread critical examination in numerous journals and daily newspapers. What almost all critical responses shared in their appreciation of what seemed hugely innovative in this novel was Sillitoe's ability to authentically portray working-class life within the aesthetic structures of the novel.[2] The novel was

[1] Stanley S. Atherton. *Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment*. London: W. H. Allen, 1979. p. 110.
[2] Malcolm Bradbury. 'Beating the World to the Punch'. *New York Times Book Review* 16 August 1959: pp. 4-5; Richard Mayne. 'Book Review'. *Sunday Times* 12 October 1958: p. 18; Maurice Richardson. 'New Novels'. *New Statesman* 18 October 1958: pp. 539-40; John Wain. 'Possible Worlds'. *Observer* 12 October 1958: p. 20.

also categorically labelled as a *true* working-class novel. Peter Green in the *Daily Paragraph* wrote that *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was 'that rarest of all finds: a genuine, no-punches-pulled, unromanticised working-class novel',[3] while Anthony West claimed the novel to be a 'genuine working-class novel',[4] and Hitchcock discussed how it was 'an articulation of the strength and dilemmas of the very possibility of a working-class fiction'.[5] However, in an interview, Sillitoe himself said 'I don't see myself as a working-class novelist. I see myself as a novelist and I always have',[6] and described the novel as 'simply a novel' by pointing out that 'the greatest inaccuracy was ever to call the book a working-class novel for it is really nothing of the sort';[7] he referred to it instead as a 'picaresque novel'.[8]

In one of his articles published in a special Nottingham issue of *Anarchy* (1964), Sillitoe focuses on the psychology of being poor with an attempt to analyse the conditions of working-class life. Condemning petty-bourgeois morality and discussing the differences between the working class and the upper class in terms of lifestyle, mentality and cultural and political tendencies, Sillitoe explores the central bias of working-class life and theorises the dichotomy of *them* and *us* by asserting that, in order to define themselves, working-class people have developed a simple sociological perception about the world which can be divided into two:

> The poor know of only two classes in society … [They] are *them* and *us*. Them are those who tell you what to do, who drive a car, use a different accent, are buying a house in another district, deal in cheques and not money, pay your wages, collect rent and telly dues … can't look you in the eye … hand you the dole or national assistance money; the shopkeeper,

[3] Peter Green. 'Book Review'. *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* 17 October 1958: p. 15.
[4] Anthony West. '*On the Inside Looking In*'. *New Yorker* 5 September 1959: p. 100.
[5] Peter Hitchcock. *Working Class Fiction in Theory and Practice: A Reading of Alan Sillitoe*. London: UMI Research, 1989. p. 57.
[6] Alan Sillitoe in M. Lefranc. 'Alan Sillitoe: An Interview'. *Etudes Anglaises* (1973): p. 39.
[7] Quoted in Michael Billington. 'Alan Sillitoe, Angry Young Writer of the 1950s, Dies at 82'. *The Guardian* 25 April 2010: p. 1.
[8] Alan Sillitoe in M. Lefranc. 'Alan Sillitoe: An Interview', p. 42.

> copper, schoolteacher, doctor, health visitor, the man wearing the white dog-collar. Them are those who robbed you of your innocence, live on your backs, buy the house from over your head, eat you up, or tread you down. Above all, the poor who are not crushed in spirit hate the climbers, the crawlers, the happy savers, the parsimonious and respectable –like prison.[9]

Sillitoe's insistence on such an explicitly class-conscious attitude towards dominant groups in his culture is highly reminiscent of Richard Hoggart's discursive construction of *them* and *us* in *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* in which Hoggart gives a powerful, honest and subjective account of the experiences of working-class people in the urban centres of Northern England like Leeds, Hull and Sheffield between the 1930s and 1950s. In order to reinforce working-class solidarity and to sustain a sense of being a member of a group in a 'friendly', 'cooperative' and 'neighbourly' way,[10] this discursive rhetoric is relatively functional for working-class people, and *them* includes a variety of occupations including 'policemen', 'civil servants', 'local-authority employees',[11] and 'foremen'.[12]

This class antagonism constructed upon the binary opposition between *them* and *us* is one of the basic political motivations of the narration in Sillitoe's literary works; indeed, it reflects how Sillitoe's working-class characters perceive and comprehend the world around them – understood more abstractly as British society – as divided between *them* and *us*. The working-class characters feeling themselves neglected, exploited and rejected, particularly in the early fiction, align themselves with their own class by revealing antipathy and hatred towards the oppression and the repressive mechanisms of the dominant social order and non-working-class individuals and institutions. And a *them-us* contradiction is expressed through the inner and outer

[9]Alan Sillitoe. 'Poor People'. *Anarchy* 4 (April, 1964): p. 127.
[10] Richard Hoggart. *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life*. London: Penguin Classics, 2009. p. 65.
[11] Ibid., p. 57.
[12] Ibid., p. 59.

conflicts of the characters which are unfolded in relation to their social, cultural, moral and personal experiences.

The destructive, chaotic and anarchist tendency of Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is a precise example of the rebellious nature and anger against *them* – or the Establishment. Despite being self-centred and primarily concerned with how to spend his fourteen-pound wage on dapper suits, Arthur, feeling trapped within the mechanisms of this alienating and dehumanizing money-oriented world, rages against the system and stands 'for his rights': [13] 'I'm a bloody billy-goat trying to screw the world, and no wonder I am, because it's trying to do the same to me'.[14] Conceiving his world as a hostile place in which 'there had never been any such things as safety, and never would be', Arthur revolts against the institution of family, law, government, army and industrial capitalism in an individualised way: [15] 'Don't let the bastards grind you down'.[16]

The metaphors of mental rebellion against *them* are relatively visible in Arthur's free-floating interior monologues while working as a lathe-operator at a bicycle factory: 'This lathe is my everlasting pal because it gets me thinking'.[17] His discomfort with his stifling and repetitive working conditions and consequent questioning of his exploitation and victimization with respect to the factories and governmental institutions and policies are convincingly rendered by Sillitoe:

> It's best to rebel so as to show 'em it don't pay to try to do you down. Factories and labour exchanges and insurance offices keep us alive and kicking … factories sweat you to death, labour exchanges talk to you to death, insurance and income tax offices milk money from your wage pockets and rob you to death. And if you're still left with a tiny bit of life in

[13] Alan Sillitoe. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. London: Harper Perennial, 1958. p. 33.
[14] Ibid., p. 203.
[15] Ibid., p. 9.
[16] Ibid., p. 38.
[17] Ibid., p. 202.

> your guts after all this boggering about, the army calls you up and you get shot to death. And if you are clever enough to stay out of the army you get bombed to death.[18]

Arthur's personal aversion towards army and war is also explicitly suggested in the novel. He recalls his experiences in the army – one of the institutions classified as a part of *them*: 'When I'm on my fifteen-days' training … the bastards … put the gun into my hands'.[19] One day, Arthur is conscripted again after the war and ironically becomes a Redcap due to his physical characteristics. As a military policeman, he objects to any war, particularly to a possible war between Britain and Russia:

> Let them start a war … [but] 'Them at the top' must know that nobody would fight … they were angling for another war now, with Russians this time. But they did go as far as to promise that it would be a short one … What a lark! We'd be fighting side by side with the Germans that had been bombing us in the last year … They think they've settled our hashes with their insurance cards and television sets, but I'll be one of them to turn round on 'em and let them see how wrong they are.[20]

Arthur's rebellion against a capitalist war of them regarding the 'territorial division of the whole world' and 'the dominance of finance capital' and of 'international monopolist capitalist associations' is a clear reflection of the fact that he is essentially opposed to being a soldier of the ruling class or to fighting for anyone other than himself:[21] 'I tell you I hate the army, and I allus have done … I'm not daft enough to like it'.[22] However, Arthur locates his position against the war in accordance with the impulses driving his personal and social experiences rather than taking up or reflecting on more abstract political ideas in their distinct theoretical and historical context. In a different context, Mary, the grandmother of Brian Seaton, stands up to the war of 'them Italians' against the 'poor black people' in Addis Ababa and makes the point that

[18] Ibid., p. 202.
[19] Ibid., p. 132.
[20] Ibid., pp. 131-2.
[21] Vladimir Lenin. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Sydney: Resistance Books, 1999. p. 10.
[22] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 134.

'nobody' won the war as she, 'not wanting to be fobbed off with any point', lost uncle Oliver in the last war in *Key to the Door*.[23] These examples, indeed, support Hoggart's arguments in *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* in which he points out that working-class people are more inclined to follow ideas having their root in something real, personal and concrete instead of theories and that working-class people are anti-militarist:

> Working-class people are not, we know, particularly patriotic: they have streaks of insularity, of Francophobia and Americanophobia; but if put to the question they will soon say that working-class people are the same world over. They remain confirmed anti-militarists; the memory of the old days, old brothers going into the army through lack of a job or to escape some trouble, and having to be bought out at great sacrifice [is still alive].[24]

The episode of 'Rat Face' in the novel is particularly striking in terms of comprehending the attitude of the working class towards the agents of the Establishment.[i] While walking with Fred, Arthur hears the sound of breaking glass and encounters a woman holding a man by his wrist since he broke the window of a shop with a beer mug. The woman, aligning 'herself with order and law',[25] wears an army uniform which 'immediately prejudiced him [Arthur]',[26] while the man is an 'odd, lonely person who gave off an air of belonging nowhere'.[27] The woman, whose face is like 'Old Rat Face', refuses to release the man and waits for the police.[28] Although the crowd shouts that 'he be set free' and Arthur passes him a lighted cigarette and whispers to him to run, the man, having petty-bourgeois tendencies, does not run and prefers to answer the questions of the police 'truthfully' and with clarity to 'satisfy the police'.[29] In this respect, the woman in khaki/army clothes acts as an agent of the army

[23] Alan Sillitoe. *Key to the Door*. London: W. H. Allen, 1961. p. 90.
[24] Hoggart, p. 92.
[25] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 108.
[26] Ibid., p. 108.
[27] Ibid., p. 109.
[28] Ibid., p. 109.
[29] Ibid., p. 109.

collaborating with the police; she is another agent of *them*. She can, therefore, be seen to symbolise an 'inhuman figure of authority' and represents oppression and 'institutionalised violence through her pitiless treatment of the window breaker'.[30] The reaction of the crowd and Arthur, on the contrary, suggests the solidarity of *us* against *them*, the strength of which comes from 'the close, huddled, intimate conditions of life' indicating that they 'are, in fact, all in the same position'.[31]

In *Key to the Door* (1961), the characters share a similar anger against the police officers who also stand for *them*. In a conversation in which Brian and Bert, who would 'still vote red for Labour' even if they had 'ten trillion pound notes', have an argument about whether they would save a drowning policeman or not, Brian Seaton says 'if a copper got cramp and I was near, I wouldn't help him to get out' whereas Bert declares 'Coppers is bastards'.[32] Brian and Bert subsequently compare coppers with schoolteachers and reveal the reason why they do not like them: 'They [coppers] are worse than schoolteachers … It's all part of the gov'ment. They're all Conservatives, as well'.[33] Including teachers as a part of *them* also reinforces the argument that *them* represents 'anything foreign, official, or bureaucratic' while *us* represents 'everything local and familiar'.[34] In 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner' (1959), Smith similarly describes policemen as 'big headed stupid ignorant bastards' with a Hitler-like face and 'illiterate blue eyes', [35] and rebelliously reacts against the threat of oppression and torture of the police officer:[36] 'I hoped one day though that him and all his pals [police officers] would be the ones to get the black-eyes and kicks; you never

[30] Ronal Dee Vaverka. *Commitment as Art: A Marxist Critique of a Selection of Alan Sillitoe's Political Fiction*. Uppsala: Ubsaliensis s. Academiae, 1978. p. 43.
[31] Hoggart, p. 65.
[32] Sillitoe. *Key to the Door,* pp. 156-7.
[33] Ibid., p. 156.
[34] Peter. J. Kalliney. 'Cities of Affluence: Masculinity, Class, and the Young Angry Young Men'. *Modern Fiction Studies* 47. 1 (2001): p. 109.
[35] Alan Sillitoe. 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner'. London: W.H. Allen, 1959. p. 32.
[36] Ibid., p. 28.

knew. It might come sooner than anybody thinks'.[37] When a copper comes to question Smith about a robbery, Smith does not invite the copper in; instead he keeps the copper outside not to make the copper suspicious since 'they know we [*us*] hate their guts and smell a rat if they think we're trying to be nice to them'.[38] This hostility and demonstration of mistrust towards the agents of the Establishment justifies Hoggart's observations again:

> They [the working-class people] tend to regard the policeman primarily as someone who is watching them, who represents the authority which has its eye on them, rather than as a member of the public services whose job it is to help and protect them. 'Oh, the police always look after themselves. They'll stick by one another till they're blue in the face, and the magistrates always believe them', they have said for years, and go on saying.[39]

In much of the early fiction of Sillitoe, the hatred of working-class people towards the government is mostly directed against the Conservatives or the Tories. The ruling government which is conceived as an extension of *them* is blamed for the war and dire poverty, and conservative politicians are constantly mocked by the working-class characters. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur describes the Conservatives as 'big fat Tory bastards in parliament',[40] since they rob the workers' 'wage packets every week with insurance and income tax' and try to tell the workers that it is all for the workers 'own good'.[41] In *Key to the Door*, Brian Seton remembers his father claiming that coppers and schoolteachers are all Conservatives and advising him not to vote for the Conservative party: [ii] 'If ever yer vote conservative … I'll smash yer brains out'.[42] Being aware that 'millionaires vote Conservative',[43] Brian also calls himself a communist and emphasises the association between *them* and conservatives

[37] Ibid., pp. 29-30.
[38] Ibid., p. 27.
[39] Hoggart, p. 58.
[40] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 36.
[41] Ibid., p. 30.
[42] Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, p. 156.
[43] Ibid., p. 439.

by stating that conservative is 'an official word to be distrusted, hated in fact' and that wars are indeed in the service of the ruling-class and have nothing to do for working-class people: [44] 'He [Churchill] didn't give a bogger about us. It was all his bleeding factory-owners he saved, the jumped-up bags like owd Edgeworth who's making a fortune'.[45] In 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner', Smith, implicitly criticizing the mass culture of the 1950s, similarly ridicules 'some Tory [on TV] telling us about how good his government was going to be if we kept on voting for them'.[46]

Although Hoggart points out that 'most working-class people are non-political and non-metaphysical in their outlook' since they think 'there's no future in it for them' and 'politics never did anybody any good', Sillitoe's working-class characters, being opposed to be governed by the Conservative Party, actively align themselves with the Labour Party as well as having a certain tendency and sympathy with communism.[47] In *Key to the Door*, young working-class people regularly visit a local club supported by the Labour Party, while Bert insists on voting for the Labour even if he had 'trillion pound notes' and Brian, influenced by his father who was 'red Labour', thinks that the Labour is the best thing.[48] In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, in spite of having inconsistent political ideas and indicating that he does not believe in equal share, Arthur illegally votes for the communists:

> I don't believe in share and share alike … I like to hear 'em talk about Russia, about farms and power-stations they've got, because it's interestin', but when they say that when they get in government everybody's got to share and share alike, then that's another thing … I did it because I thought the poor bloke wouldn't get any votes. I allus like to 'elp the losin' side".[49]

[44] Ibid., p. 157.
[45] Ibid., p. 366.
[46] Sillitoe, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner', p. 20.
[47] Hoggart, pp. 85-86.
[48] Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, p. 157.
[49] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, pp. 35-6.

The political alignment of Sillioe's working-class characters against a traditional conservative government associated with privilege, tyranny and authority indicates how they comprehend and interpret English society divided between *them* and *us*. Having sympathy for 'the losing of resentment at being perpetual underdogs in society',[50] feeling themselves rejected and facing nothingness in a chaotic world because of the ruling government, which is actually a 'committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie',[51] these characters 'constantly search for ways to redress the balance' and 'feel justified in stealing from them and frustrating their agents, the police, whenever the opportunity presents itself'.[52]

Violating laws is another mental motive for rebellion against *them* since laws function as 'the manipulating forces of control and repression' for the working-class characters.[53] According to Hoggart, courts, liable for enforcing the laws, explicitly illustrate the division between *them* and *us,* and have negative connotations upon the perceptions of working-class people:

> It [court] has an air of sour, scrubbed, provincial puritanism and mortification, from the stench of carbolic which meets you at the door, past the lavatories still marked MALES and FEMALES, to the huge pitch-pine bench lighted by high and narrow windows … to the working-class people in the well of the court they [superior officials] look like the hired and menacing … assistants of that anonymous authority.[54]

Acting against the law, therefore, functions as a sort of illusory self-actualization for the characters, whereby they discharge anger and suppressed frustration against the repressive and alienating social order and restore and maintain a sense of dignity. The awareness of the working-class characters in the novel concerning the relationships

[50] Atherton, p. 87.
[51] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf. p. 15.
[52] Atherton, p. 87.
[53] Vaverka, p. 42.
[54] Hoggart, pp. 59-60.

among war, capital, laws and *them* leads them to challenge the position of *them* and to question their victimization, oppression and exploitation within a class-ridden society. Losing their trust in the force of the laws of *them* and understanding the fact that laws function as a tool of the repressive state apparatus to dominate and suppress them, the working-class characters are inclined to sustain their own justice through explosions of physical rebellion which they regard as 'perfect justice'.[55] The episode in which Arthur is run over by a car is a precise instance of this argument. While walking along the road, a car hits Arthur, and the driver of the car starts shouting at and blaming him for the accident. In order to punish the cranky driver and 'his four-seater friend' which struck him, Arthur and Fred tip the car over and implement their own justice instead of pursuing legal proceedings.[56] The collective action of Arthur and Fred against the driver, symbolizing the wealthy class, and the car, alluding to the materialistic relations of the middle-class within the money-oriented world, is, perhaps, a reflection of the rebellious nature of the working-class characters against the unavoidable antagonism between *them* and *us* and a proof of the 'self-conscious sense of community' and potential solidarity that the working-class characters can share in hope of a better future: [57]

> They felt a sublime team-spirit of effort filling their hearts with a radiant light of unique power and value, of achievement and hope for greater and better things. The weight was enormous at first, then became lighter and lighter, until the car was held gently.[58]

The working-class characters are shown as believing in a kind of natural justice which is outside the law because the law claims to be fair and equal but is instituted in an economic context which is deeply unequal and therefore already unjust. Importantly,

[55] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 115.
[56] Ibid., p. 114.
[57] Hoggart, p. 66.
[58] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 116.

however, none of them theorises the position in conceptual political terms. Commenting on this, Salman points out that this tendency of the characters towards fighting against those controlling and perpetuating unjust social order is, in fact, more instinctive rather than expressive of an explicit ideological standpoint:

> Sillitoe's characters are not concerned with any kind of a united action motivated by political belief; they simply recognise that others are caught in the same trap as they are. The major achievement of this perception and representation of working-class solidarity lies … in the way Sillitoe's work shows the historical inevitability of this solidarity, one that is necessitated by shared social, economic and political conditions of living.[59]

In 'The Loneliness of The Long-Distance Runner', the fundamental metaphor of the mental rebellion of *us* against the laws of *them* is described through the dichotomy of 'in-law blokes',[60] representing the governor, and 'out-law blokes', representing Smith:[61] Functioning as an agent of the Establishment, the governor of the Borstal is descriptively depicted as a conservative person training Smith into adaptation to a society, the rules and laws of which are already rejected by him:

> A certain consistency of impression is immediately evoked in the manner of description such as the formal euphemistic expression "this establishment", the gesture of "smoothing out" his newspaper, his "lily-white workless hands", and the conservative *Daily Telegraph*.[62]

The first step of this integration to the mainstream values in the society is based on the ideological-political problem of the concept of honesty. In the story, the governor wants Smith to be 'an honest man' and win the cross-country race through 'hard honest work' and 'good athletics'; however, Smith refuses to compromise:[63]

[59] Malek M. Salman. 'Post-war British Working-class Fiction with Special References to the Novels of John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Stan Barston, David Storey and Barry Hines' (Ph.D. Thesis), The University of Leeds, 1990. p. 205.
[60] Sillitoe, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner', p. 9.
[61] Ibid., p. 10.
[62] Vaverka, p. 60.
[63] Sillitoe, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner', p. 9.

> I'm a human being and I've got thoughts and bloody life inside me that he doesn't know is there, and he'll never know what's there because he's stupid … Another thing people like the governor will never understand is that I am honest, that I've never been anything else but honest, and I'll always be honest … I know what honest means according to me and he only knows what it means according to him.[64]

Aware that he is used by the governor for his own interests; recollecting the 'out-law death' of his father who did not want to die in a hospital like a 'bleeding guinea-pig', [65] and therefore refusing to sell his soul to the governor; and losing the race intentionally at the end of the story, Smith challenges the ideological hegemony of the status quo and debunks the myth of the morality of the 'in-laws'.[iii]

Considering the material and political background of this conflict, it is noticeable that such moral codes, unconsciously shaping individuals, are historically conditioned and implicitly enforced by the institutions of the ruling class.[iv] From a Marxist perspective, the concept of morality is underpinned by a specifically bourgeois framework of what constitutes a moral action, and bourgeois morality is satirized on the basis that it serves the interests of the bourgeois class and status quo: 'Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests'.[66] For Friedrich Engels, the moral concepts and norms of them, hampering the development of human essence and self-actualization, necessary for the development of concrete individuals, should consequently be rejected, and working-class people should roof their morality upon working-class morality:

> [A]s society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality has always been class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or ever since the oppressed class became powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed … we have not yet passed beyond class morality. A really human morality which stands above class antagonisms

[64] Ibid., pp. 12-14.
[65] Ibid., p. 44.
[66] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, p. 20.

> and above any recollection of them becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class antagonisms but has even forgotten them in practical life.[67]

In Marxist terminology, Marx's treatment of moralistic values and norms is also relativist. The moral value of an action or attitude hinges on whether it will hamper or promote the process of self-actualization and self-realization. To illustrate, there are basically moral and nonmoral goods in Marxism.[68] Moral goods promote the class interests of the ruling class while nonmoral goods help create an atmosphere of freedom through which individuals can solidify their intrinsic qualities. Moral goods include values like grace, fulfilling duties and possessing praiseworthy, admirable, respectable, benevolent and righteous character in accordance with social norms. On the other hand, nonmoral goods consist of what is good and beneficial for basic human needs and human essence.[69] Failing to provide human beings with the nonmoral goods, capitalism injects moral goods like social hierarchy, philistinism, virtue, individualism and honesty. These moral standards, functioning through a mystifying ideology, primarily provide 'a religious, metaphysical or bogus humanitarian rationale for observing morality's commands'.[70] The followers of such moral codes and norms internalise the values of the ruling class and start acting in contradiction to their class interests and values.

In this context, for his own beliefs, values, and sense of honesty and pride, Smith deliberately loses the cross-country race and rejects the prospect of a comfortable prison life with easy jobs in Borstal which indeed functions as a form of repressive state apparatus, imposing the morality codes of the in-laws and creating 'a sterile moral code that an authoritarian middle-class British society officially decrees all men shall

[67] Friedrich Engels (1876/78). *Anti Dühring*. Retrieved From http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Engels_Anti_Duhring.pdf. p. 53.
[68] Allen W. Wood. *Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 129.
[69] Ibid., p. 129.
[70] Ibid., p. 152.

uphold and live by'.[71] Disobediently opposing the petty bourgeois norms of the Establishment which 'trained and ordered and jailed him', Smith can, for that reason, be viewed as a revolutionary person:[72] 'Inequalities in the distribution of wealth, the obvious gulf between the possessors of property, position and power of the working class, have given Smith both target and weapon in his war against them'.[73] However, his resistance and rebellion are practically defiant rather than revolutionary since he is substantially individualistic and self-oriented. His egoistic revolt against the cultural, social, political and economic extensions of *them* cannot result in any sort of real changes in his social situation because the codes of his resistance remain within an isolated, self-centred and private sphere: 'You see, by sending me to borstal they've shown me the knife, and from now on I know something l didn't know before: that it's war between me and them … I know who my enemies are and what war is … I knew I already was in a war of my own'.[74]

Arthur's 'defiant' attitudes against the mechanisms of the class-ridden society are essentially not so very different from those of Smith.[75] His anarchic and egoistic tendencies are exercised in his own interests in spite of the fact that he has an awareness of the clash between labour and capital. The tension based on class antagonism between Arthur and the rate-checker, the foreman and the tool-setter, which does not evolve into a political struggle, exemplifies this argument. In the novel, Arthur considers Robboe, the foreman, as 'the enemy's scout',[76] since Robboe, having a car and a semi-detached in a posh district, is a careerist who regards the fourteen-quid

[71] N. Denny. 'The Achievement of the Long-distance Runner'. *Theoria* 24 (1965): p. 3.
[72] James Giddin. 'Alan Sillitoe's Jungle'. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 4.1 (1962): p. 40.
[73] Atherton, p. 74.
[74] Sillitoe, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner', p. 15.
[75] Patricia Waugh. 'The Historical Context of Post-War British Literature'. *The Post-war British Literature Handbook.* Eds. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison. London: Continuum, 2010. p. 36.
[76] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 61.

wage as a ‘fortune’ and tries to persuade Arthur of that the firm has nothing to do with the income tax:[77]

However, an explicit conflict never flares up between Robboe and Arthur although Arthur thinks that they are of equal stock and Robboe is ‘no way better than him’.[78] This is basically related to the fact that his wage is *much* higher compared to the other workers’ wages in the factory and that Arthur does not want to lose his ‘good, comfortable life’ in which there is ‘nothing to worry about’.[79] Arthur’s personal traits such as thinking in terms of money, peace at any price, individualism and stability are about Arthur’s sense of protecting his personal worth within the dynamics of an oppressive society, which makes him the representative of the petty-bourgeoisie in terms of morality.[v] Arthur, not aligning himself with his working-class *comrades*, is, in some respects, neither *them* or *us*; he is just *him*. So too, Arthur’s existentialist dilemmas, constructing a vicious circle for himself, perpetuates the existence of the social forces creating his own desperate situation instead of changing it radically.

Unlike Arthur and Smith, having ‘the political ambivalence of the contemporary, rebellious working-class youth’ and rejecting ‘mainstream politics’ and ‘the main form of organised radical discourse against the dominant power group’, the social and political maturation of Brian Seaton, the protagonist of *Key to the Door,* evolves on the basis of his childhood experiences, political contacts, intellectual and cultural activities and military service in Malaya, which, in the end, results in revolutionary consciousness.[80] In school, Brian confronts the socio-economic realities of extreme poverty during the depression years of the 1930s and becomes aware of the fact that

[77] Ibid., p. 61.
[78] Ibid., p. 42.
[79] Ibid., p. 48.
[80] Nick Bentley. Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s. Germany: Peter Lang, 2007. p. 201.

there are other 'ragged-arsed down-at-heel and often unwashed kids' apart from him.[81] His interest in foreign languages, geography and history and his habit of reading literary works such as Chang the Hatchet Man and *The Count of Monte Cristo* and of watching films like Buck Jones, Jungle Jim and The Three Stooges contribute to his intellectual growth. After leaving school at fourteen, Brian starts working in different factories during which he regards himself 'as an experienced member of the labour market, a man of the factory world already smoking and passing himself off for eighteen in pubs'.[82] His awareness of the contradiction between labour and capital and of the exploitation of workers for the sake of more profit helps him reach political maturation: 'Wage rates at Robinson's had been carefully regulated – set at a fraction above the dole money, enough to give the incentive of a regular job, but hardly enough to keep its employees far from harrowing exercise in near starvation'.[83]

Brian's involvement in political conversations within a local group run by the Co-op and Labour party and his introduction to the *Daily Worker* of the Communist Party and the *Soviet Weekly* also reinforce his political perspectives. However, despite labelling himself as a 'communist', Brian's socio-political views actually mature during his military service in Malaya.[84] The close relationship with a local girl, Mimi, and encountering the oppression of the British colonial presence, lead Brian to question the incidents and to sympathise with the struggle of the people in Malaya:

> I come from a scruffy old house in Nottingham, and before the war I remember seeing my old man crying—in tears—because he was o' wok and unemployed. He hadn't worked for years, and there was never any dough and hardly enough grub in the house. The kids were better off, mind you, because they had free milk and a hot dinner everyday – they had to

[81] Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, p. 121.
[82] Ibid., p. 241.
[83] Ibid., p. 249.
[84] Ibid., p. 439.

> mek sure we'd be fit for the war and to fight communists, the sly bastards. It's a bit better now, but why should I be against the communists?[85]

The scene in which Brian avoids shooting a Communist guerrilla in the jungle and decides to let him go manifests how Brian 'proves his beliefs by transforming them into direct personal action' and represents 'a high point as well as a turning point in the development of Brian's political consciousness':[86] 'I let him go because he was a comrade! I didn't kill him because he was a man'.[87] In fact, Brian's basic resistance is to the war of *them* which is justified through the neo-orientalist myth of democracy. In the novel, Baker, the airman, utters the anti-Communist sentiment of the British Empire: 'The Chinese communists, Baker went on, reacting as expected to the emergency, were a small minority who wanted to get rid of the British and set up their own dictatorship. If you believe in democracy you've got to do what you can to put down these terrorists'.[88] Brian's response, towards the end of the novel, to this neo-colonialist civilization argument of Baker, referred to as a 'poor bastard' by Brian, is worth considering:[89]

> The communists aren't weary and that's a fact, never will be either because they've got an up-and-coming vision that our side can never have anymore. They used to spout outside the factory ... which is more than the conservatives dare do, because a lot of the communists are working-men like ourselves and know what's what.[90]

Brian's revolutionary actions concerning the merits of an alternative social order in which 'them days is over', indeed, undermine the hegemonic political opposition of Britain in the 1950s and articulate the fact that Sillitoe's working-class characters in

[85] Ibid., p. 237.
[86] Vaverka, p. 98.
[87] Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, pp. 416-7.
[88] Ibid., p. 223.
[89] Ibid., p. 443.
[90] Ibid., p. 433.

Key to the Door are consciously a part of working-class culture and do not accept the cultural and political codes imposed by the status quo.[91]

Considering these arguments, Sillitoe nonpartisanly delineates the experiences of his working-class characters feeling neglected, exploited and rejected, and subsequently literalises the class antagonism constructed upon the dichotomy of *them* and *us* through the inner and outer conflicts of the characters as they oppose the Establishment. These metaphors of mental rebellion are relatively visible in the interior monologues of the working-class characters and unfolded in relation to their social, cultural, personal and moral experiences, which leads the working-class characters to comprehend the world around them as divided between *them* and *us* and to revolt against the institution of family, law, government, army and the money-oriented world. However, this resistance of the working-class characters does not necessarily mean that it is always a collectivised and revolutionary struggle since their defiant, self-centred and isolated rebellion might remain within the sphere of the relations of power as in the examples of Arthur and Smith, and this seems to suggest that the working class does not have a homogeneous culture and rejects any sort of generalization. The political and cultural motivations of the working-class characters of Sillitoe, in this regard, reflect the central bias of working-class life against the world of *them* in historical actuality and *authentically* represent the mindset and socio-historical realities of the working class in the UK during the 1950s.

[91] Ibid., p. 250.

Notes

[i] The longest published poem of Sillitoe is also called 'The Rats' in which 'rats' refers to 'all the agents of organised political, religious, and governmental society who prey upon and try to devour the individual' (Giddin, p. 43).

[ii] In *Key to the Door*, Mr. Jones, the headmaster of the school, constantly tyrannises and victimises the students. '[A] gett, a four-eyed twopenn'orth o' coppers, a sludge-bumbing bastard who thumbed Brian six times across the shoulder with a hard knotty fist because he didn't open a book quickly enough' (p. 115), Mr. Jones stalks the corridors during school hours in order to make sure that the teachers have the students well controlled. In an episode, Mr. Jones asks the students to draw 'a pen-picture of the Old Sea Dog, when he comes to the Admiral Benbow Inn' (p. 126). Unable to understand what Mr. Jones means, Brian starts drawing a picture instead of writing a description of what the captain looks like. Then, Mr. Jones notices the 'mistake' and humiliates and hits Brian in front of the class. Brian, on the other hand, says under his breath: 'I wish old Jones would die ... why don't he die? Why don't the old swine die?' (p. 127).

[iii] 'In-laws' refers to 'the cops, governors, posh whores, penpushers, army officers, Members of Parliament' (Sillitoe, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner', p. 14).

[iv] Friedrich Engels points out that men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their moral ideas 'in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based – from the economic relations in which they carry on production and exchange' (Engels, p. 53).

[v] Thinking of his 'good' and 'comfortable' life, Arthur does not want to lose his 'untroubled' and peaceful working conditions: '[H]is wages would not suffer, and he always kept his work at the factory at least one day's supply ahead of those who waited for it. So there was nothing to worry about' (Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 48).

Works Cited

Atherton, Stanley S.. *Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment*. London: W. H. Allen, 1979. Print.

Bentley, Nick. *Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s*. Germany: Peter Lang, 2007. Print.

Billington, Michael. 'Alan Sillitoe, Angry Young Writer of the 1950s, Dies at 82'. *The Guardian* 25 April 2010. Web. 2 Jan. 2016

Bradbury, Malcolm. 'Beating the World to the Punch'. *New York Times Book Review* 16 August 1959. Web. 21 May 2016.

Denny, N. 'The Achievement of the Long-distance Runner'. *Theoria* 24 (1965): 1-12. Print.

Engels, Friedrich (1876/78). *Anti Dühring*. Retrieved from http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Engels_Anti_Duhring.pdf. Web. 11 October 2016.

Giddin, James. 'Alan Sillitoe's Jungle'. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 4.1 (1962): 35-48. Print.

Green, Peter. 'Book Review'. *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* 17 October 1958. Web. 18 April 2016.

Hitchcock, Peter. *Working Class Fiction in Theory and Practice: A Reading of Alan Sillitoe*. London: UMI Research, 1989. Print.

Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life*. London: Penguin Classics, 2009. Print.

Kalliney, Peter. J.. ‘Cities of Affluence: Masculinity, Class, and the Young Angry Young Men’. *Modern Fiction Studies* 47. 1 (2001): 92-117. Print.

Lenin, Vladimir. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Sydney: Resistance Books, 1999. Print.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels (1848). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf. Web. 17 September 2017.

Mayne, Richard. ‘Book Review’. *Sunday Times* 12 October 1958. Web. 22 April 2017.

Richardson, Maurice. ‘New Novels’. *New Statesman* 18 October 1958. Web. 16 Apr. 2017.

Salman, Malek M.. ‘Post-war British Working-class Fiction with Special References to the Novels of John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Stan Barston, David Storey and Barry Hines’. The University of Leeds, 1990. Ph.D. Thesis.

Sillitoe, Alan. *Key to the Door*. London: W. H. Allen, 1961. Print.

--- ‘Poor People’. *Anarchy*, 4. 4 (April, 1964). 124-128. Print.

--- *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. London: Harper Perennial, 1958. Print.

--- *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*. London: W.H. Allen, 1959. Print.

Vaverka, Ronal Dee. *Commitment as Art: A Marxist Critique of a Selection of Alan Sillitoe’s Political Fiction*. Uppsala: Ubsaliensis s. Academiae, 1978. Print.

Wain, John. ‘Possible Worlds’. *Observer* 12 October 1958. Web. 29 January 2016.

Waugh, Patricia. ‘The Historical Context of Post-War British Literature’. *The Post-war British Literature Handbook*. Eds. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison. London: Continuum, 2010. Print.

West, Anthony. '*On the Inside Looking In*'. *New Yorker* 5 September 1959. Web. 12 September 2016.

Wood, Allen W.. *Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.