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The vast majority of critics who have discussed the work of Alan Sillitoe have, perhaps understandably, tended to concentrate their discourse on the male protagonists that are, in both his novels and short stories, a distinguishing feature of Sillitoe's work. In Post-War British Working-Class Fiction (1990) for instance, Salman Malek-Mohammed is quick to dismiss the role of the female in Sillitoe's fiction as that of a "mere appendage"(Mohammed, 130)) to the male protagonists. Similarly, in The Silent Majority: A Study of the Working Class in Post-War British Fiction (1973) Nigel Gray conceives Sillitoe as being "too much taken with the working class hero cult"(Gray, 23) and what he perceives to be the sexist attitudes inherent in these figures, for any lengthy, enlightened discussion of the female. Likewise, Ian Haywood concedes, in Working Class Fiction from Chartism to Trainspotting (1997) that it would be "misleading to claim that Sillitoe is consciously progressive in his portrayal of gender"(Haywood, 104) before moving on to explore the issue of a masculine identity that is, according to Haywood, primarily manifested through Arthur Seaton's "rampant sexuality"(Haywood, 100)) in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1958), which, like many other texts in the nineteen fifties, such as Osborne's Look Back in Anger (1957), or John Braine's Room at the Top (1957), has as its focal point an aggressively masculine, heterosexual working class protagonist, culturally mythologised as the Angry Young Man. Even book length studies, such as Stanley Atherton's Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment (1979), and David Gerard's Alan Sillitoe (1986), offer little more than a cursory glance at the issue of the depiction of women in Sillitoe's fiction, opting instead for thorough

explorations into that perpetuating theme in Sillitoe's work: the psyche of the working class male. A partial, if not whole, prevarication about the question of the representation of the female in Sillitoe's books, then, predominates in most, but not all (Understanding Alan Sillitoe, Understanding Contemporary British Literature- Gillian Mary Hanson's recent critique of Sillitoe's work- includes some interesting passages on Sillitoe's "complex and defiant" characterisation of women), scholarly enquiry into Sillitoe.

My intention in this paper, then, is to address two issues. Firstly, I intend to suggest reasons- social, cultural, and political- why there is a dearth of concentrated criticism on the female characters in Sillitoe's fiction and, where such analysis does exist, why Sillitoe's representation of women is usually simplified to a synecdochic, implicitly negative portrayal of the female, where the complexities of the individual character are reduced down to a single element- their biological function, for example- and perceived only through this component. Such an approach by critics to Sillitoe's female characters denies any difference between women, either socially, culturally, sexually, or religiously and, as I will argue later, is founded on, and premised by, an ideology of patriarchy historically predominant in Western society. Secondly, I aim to interrogate Sillitoe's representation of women in order to help elucidate and evaluate a somewhat neglected narrative thread, and, in so doing, I will assess the validity of those accusations aimed at Sillitoe of the over-simplification and one-dimensionality of his female characters.

I have already suggested that it is perhaps understandable that the greater part of critical enquiry into Alan Sillitoe's fiction has, as its focal point, a dialogue that is fundamentally concerned with masculine identity, be it through studies of the working class male in relation to his community and environment (one notes, in particular, the relative cornucopia of text, in terms of Sillitoe criticism, devoted to explorations of Arthur Seaton in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning), or the dichotomous relationship that exists between bastions of institutionalisation- the schools, the army, the borstals-, and the rebellious, anti-authoritarian nature that

characterises a number of Sillitoe's most prominent male protagonists (the aforementioned Arthur Seaton, for instance, Brian Seaton in Key to the Door (1961), and Colin Smith in short story 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' (1959) are prime examples).

The most obvious reason that critics are so acutely concerned with the male protagonists of Sillitoe's fiction is that there is such an abundance of male characters to choose from. When we look at the whole of Sillitoe's published works of fiction, the vast majority are either written in a male first-person narrative or in third-person narratives that are concerned with describing events from a predominantly masculine point-of-view, whilst very few can be said to be describing events from a predominantly feminine point-of-view, and, tellingly, none of his novels are written in a female first-person narrative.

If our analysis is to gain clarity, it is necessary here that we make the distinction between sex and gender. Put bluntly, the sex of a person- male or female- is a natural, biological attribute; one person is a male because they possess certain hormones, genes and genitalia, whilst another person is a female because they possess different hormones, genes, and genitalia. Gender, on the other hand, is a contentious and complicated concept rather than a biological certainty, and the notions of masculinity and femininity which constitute gender are psychological phenomena, cultural constructions rather than physical reality. Whilst it may be said that there is no single definitive doctrine of masculinity or femininity, there is nonetheless, in Western society, a hegemonic version of masculinity to which the male in these societies is expected to aspire. This dominant form of masculinity is historically characterised by assertions of 'manhood', such as (hetero)sexual prowess, physique, and exhibitions of 'manliness' and toughness. It is, to borrow Mark Simpson's term, masculinity as 'performance'. This prevailing ideal of masculinity is an important feature of Sillitoe's fiction. The element of physique is stressed in Sillitoe's Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, for example, where Arthur Seaton is described as a "tall, iron-faced, crop-haired youth"(SNSM, 34), thus conforming to the dominant masculine ideal of what a 'man' should look like.

Moreover, Arthur asserts his 'masculinity' and his 'toughness' at the beginning of the novel in a drinking competition with a sailor. It is both the ability to drink and the element of competition that are stressed in this particular episode in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, and Arthur's successful accomplishment in both can be read as an affirmation of hegemonic masculinity.

In both Saturday Night and Sunday Morning and 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' (taken from the collection of the same name), arguably Sillitoe's most famous pieces of fiction, the narratives are dominated by the voice, thoughts, and perceptions of single male protagonists: the afore-mentioned Arthur Seaton in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, and Colin Smith in 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner'. However, whilst Colin Smith's point-of-view is, by virtue of the first-person narrative technique, the exclusive and all-encompassing narrative of 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner', Sillitoe is able, by the narrative techniques that he utilises in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, to punctuate the predominating world-view of Arthur Seaton. For instance, there are occasions when Sillitoe employs an omniscient perspective which presents the general context of Arthur's experience, rather than how he is experiencing it: "summer skies lay over the city, above rows of houses in the Western suburbs, backyards burned by the sun...a summer blue sky up to which smoke from factory-chimneys coiled blackly"(SNSM, 148). Sillitoe also periodically employs a second-person narrative where, though Arthur's consciousness appears to be directly reproduced, the area of relevance is extended beyond the individual- "the New Year swung its fist and dragged you [my italics] blindfolded"(SNSM, 149), "you followed the motto of 'be drunk and be happy!...'"(SNSM, 9), "Without knowing what you were doing, you had chewed off more than you could bite"(SNSM, 252). As Stuart Laing observes in Representations of Working Class Life 1957-1964 (1986), the slippage between 'I' and 'you' in Arthur's deliberations "indicates how often they involve not so much his personal problems as his general condition- as a semi-skilled factory worker on piecework"(Laing, 70). It's rather debatable as to whether or not Arthur can rightfully be categorised as a

"semi-skilled" worker, but Laing's point is valid nonetheless. The second-person narrative style also works as a device by which Sillitoe can claim kinship with the working class community that he is describing. Moreover, the 'you' that the narrator is addressing can also refer to the reader, thus the reader, too, is implicitly inducted into the author's system of belief. Arthur's point-of-view is also punctuated by other characters, although these voices usually take the form of other male perspectives, such as Arthur's elder brother Fred: "If I can't help him [Arthur] in a fight I can at least see that he doesn't get into one, Fred told himself" (SNSM, 118). However, it is important to note here (for the matter is at the very crux of this paper) that there are passages of the text that are given over to female perception. Laing points to the "decisive shift" (Laing, 64) at the beginning of Chapter 11 to Doreen's perception, imagined or otherwise, of Arthur: "She created his image: a tall young man of the world, nearly twenty-three, and already a long way past his military service, a man who had been a good soldier and who was now a good worker because he was earning fourteen pounds a week on piecework" (SNSM, 180). I will return to the character of Doreen later on in this paper, for she proffers an invaluable female narrative that, as we will see, goes some way to destabilising the apparent surety of Arthur's dogmatic world-view.

That there is such a proliferation of male protagonists in Sillitoe's fiction can be said to reflect the system of patriarchy that regulates working class society as a whole. The notion of patriarchy as a governing force in working class society has been recognised as far back as the German Marxist philosopher Frederick Engels, who saw the relations between working class husband and working class wife as being roughly analogous to that of the relations between the bourgeois and the proletariat, with the male in the role of the dominating bourgeois and the female functioning as the oppressed proletariat.

A key device within the mechanism of patriarchy is the concept of masculinity. Throughout history, masculinity has been asserted in a number of ways and, in turn, has been transformed into male dominance in terms of division of labour, economic advantage, man's historical privileging within the political and public

sphere, and, in some cases, in men's physical and sexual violence against women. Indeed, in a short story entitled 'The Match', Sillitoe explores the function of violence towards women as an assertion of masculinity, and the role that such brutality has in perpetuating male dominance within a relationship. There is the chilling suggestion that the main character, Lennox, has perpetrated violence towards his wife with an alarming, almost casual regularity. Their next door neighbours, a young couple called Fred and Ruby, are not particularly disturbed by the events happening next door. Ruby merely remarks that she is glad that Fred isn't "like that", whilst, at the end of the story, Lennox's wife takes the children and leaves him, not for the first, or only time, but "for the last time"(LDR, 100). In Richard Hoggart's seminal work, The Uses Of Literacy, first published in 1957, and therefore contemporaneous with Sillitoe's early work ('The Match', incidentally, appears in The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner collection, first published in 1959), Hoggart describes a continuum of the type of patriarchal system that Sillitoe describes in his fiction, whereby the male in general, and the father in particular, is "the boss...[who] if something goes amiss...may 'bash' you, especially if he has had a couple of pints on the way home from work"(Hoggart, 48).

Another facet of male dominance which helps assert a patriarchal continuum is premised by the reduction of the female, in the eyes of the male, to a singular entity, denying any differences between individual women, whether sexual, economic, or social. Arthur Seaton expresses precisely this patriarchal ideal when in the woods with Brenda, when he thinks to himself that "women are all the same"(SNSM, 58), an evaluation which, as we shall see later on in this chapter, is counteracted by the substantial and complex differences between the women that inhabit Sillitoe's texts.

Another prominent, yet rather more complex, reason for the lack of serious study into Sillitoe's female characters has its roots, I argue, in the fundamental historical urge of both artists and critics to simplify and stereotype members of the working classes into a collective, caricatured, and unremarkable whole. In Mountains and

Caverns (1975), Sillitoe himself makes this very point in an essay entitled 'The Long Piece', remarking that the arts and the media in England portrayed working people as "either criminals, servants, or funny people...They lacked dignity because they lacked depth"(MC, 25). Mike Storry and Peter Childs suggest, in British Cultural Identities(1997), that "more ink has been spilled about [the working class] than any other group. Unfortunately, most of these studies have been conducted by members of the middle class"(Storry and Childs, 215), and cite The Road to Wigan Pier (1937), George Orwell's pseudo-assimilation into the ranks of the unemployed in the nineteen-thirties, as a prime example of the type of formulaic study of the working classes that predominated, and to an extent still predominates in bourgeois intellectual thinking on the subject. Indeed, one has to think back only a few years to nineteen ninety-four, and the enormous controversy caused by the award of the Booker Prize to James Kelman (who is undeniably of working class heritage) for his novel How Late it was, How Late (1994). Simon Jenkins, the then editor of The Times, summed up sentiments among the more conservative elements of the British literary establishment, calling How Late it Was, How Late "literary vandalism" from an "illiterate savage". Kelman's masterly novel, among other things, proffers an account of the working class that does not rely on stereotypes, and de-centres the traditional utilisation in English fiction of a 'standard English' narrative by being written in an uncompromising Glaswegian vernacular.

Moreover, when social commentators and literary critics wrote about or commented on the working class, almost without exception, it was the world of the working class male that they had in mind (which, in itself, proffers a type of synecdochic representation of the working class anyway). In point of fact, as Pamela Abbott and Roger Sapsford have remarked in Women and Social Class (1987), expulsion, or subordination of the female in specific class-based terms can be said to have been almost institutionalised by the Government's

consistent use of conventional sociology's model for measuring social class, whereby

Most of the main stratification studies undertaken in Britain or the United States have excluded women from their samples; major theoretical lines of social class analysis have either not considered gender inequalities at all or have argued that women are marginal to class analysis...if an adult male is present in an household, it is almost certain that his occupation will determine the coding of the class position of that household. (Abbott and Sapsford, 1-2)

When we turn our attention to literary studies, we find that in the most fully theorised analysis of class, Marxist critique, there is a marked absence of text that concentrates on the female, a dearth in critical theory dealing with the issue of women as autonomous members of the class system. Whilst feminist criticism has always propagated, as one of its chief concerns, the differences between men and women, it is only in the last decade or so that feminist theorists have actively engaged with the issue of difference among women. As Diane Price Herndl points out in the chapter on class in Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism (1993), "to categorise women as just 'women' is to reinscribe a sexist ideology that sees all women [Arthur Seaton-like] as just the 'same'" (Warhol and Herndl, 834). Of course, though, just like men, women are divided by class, along with countless other aspects, such as race, religion, sexual preference, age, and ethnicity. Caryl Churchill's play, Top Girls (1982), for example, explores female difference and the complexities of feminism, amongst other things, via a socialist-feminist critique of bourgeois-feminist values, which, at the time of writing Top Girls, she was becoming increasingly concerned with, as she explained to Lynne Truss in an interview published in Plays and Players in January, 1984:

Thatcher had just become prime minister; and also I had been to America...and had been talking to women there who were saying things were going very well: they were getting far more women executives, women vice-presidents and so on. And that was such a different attitude from anything I'd ever met here, where

feminism tends to be much more connected with socialism and not so much to do with women succeeding on the sort of capitalist ladder.(Aston, p.38)

In particular (and most relevant to this discussion) Churchill's socialist-feminist critique of the ethics of bourgeois-feminism is highlighted in the final act of the play, which stages the class confrontation between two sisters, Joyce and Marlene. Joyce, as the working-class mother figure who has raised Angie (who, in actual fact, is really Marlene's daughter), is represented as economically, socially, and culturally 'deprived' in relation to the economically sound, ruthlessly ambitious, go-getting 'top girl' figure of Marlene. But the devalued mothering of a child who is not her own actually calls into question the value placed on Marlene's 'childless' career. As Sue-Ellen Case astutely observes in Feminism and Theatre (1988), "the economic situation has created two choices for women: the relative economic poverty of child-rearing, or the emotional alienation of success within the structures of capitalism"(Case, 87).

Generally speaking, then, what one derives from the points made above is that representations of working class women in literature can be said to be suffering from a dual fallacy. On the one hand, the representation of the working class as a whole is problematic. Frequently, the depiction of the working class in fiction, and, on occasion, the critical inquiry that accompanies this fiction, has been content to indulge in stereotypical and, I argue, belittling notions of the working class. Furthermore, where representations of working class women are concerned, the problem of what can often be said to be the misrepresentation of the working class as a whole is compounded by the system of patriarchy that endures, implicitly and explicitly, both in working class communities and in wider society. This system has endorsed the institutionalised oppression and expulsion of women as entities, products, or ignored them as useful exponents in measuring class in the first place, and, as I've suggested, it is only quite recently that the debate about the role of class in configuring a women's complex social identity has transpired.

The initial discussion above, and the general line of inquiry that it takes in appraising the treatment of working class women as a whole, forms a vital component in the more specific dialogue that deals with the representation of women in Alan Sillitoe's fiction, because it contextualises Sillitoe's work within a particular literary milieu, and suggests some of the problems, both social and literary, that face any author who engages, on any level, with elements of working class existence.

My more specific discussion of the interpretation of the female in Sillitoe's fiction begins with what is still one of Alan Sillitoe's most famous and most written about novels, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning. My reasons for supplementing the relative profusion of literary criticism dealing with the novel that already exists are, perhaps, evidenced and illuminated by what was discussed in the opening segments of this paper, namely, a desire to comprehend Sillitoe's female characters, and to clarify the value (in relation both to specific texts and to Sillitoe's body of work as a whole) of a female voice within the framework of an author who is very much associated, in the eyes and mind of the general public, with sturdy, robust, male-based narratives. Moreover, by locating and interrogating the role and representation of the female in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, I am attempting to invert the customary inclination of the majority of critics of the novel to (understandably, of course) analyse and work through the character of Arthur Seaton. My intention, then, is to recover and reappraise Saturday Night and Sunday Morning so that, rather than working through Arthur Seaton (whereby the female characters inevitably become, or rather, remain, Malek-Mohammed's "mere appendages"), I am concerted and deliberately 'drawing out' the female characters, establishing their import and significance, both in terms of the direction of the narrative and the way in which Arthur perceives himself, his community, and the world beyond that community.

In Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment, Stanley Atherton suggests that the "dominant matriarchal figure of the working class 'mum' [is] completely ignored

in the Nottingham fiction"(Atherton, 104). I would suggest, however, that, in the case of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning at least, Atherton's claim is somewhat misleading and that, via the representation of Aunt Ada, structurally, symbolically, and physically, the figure of the working class matriarch is a crucial and dynamic presence.

In terms of the structure of the novel and the direction that the narrative plot takes, Sillitoe introduces the character of Aunt Ada at a pivotal point. Arthur, having been informed by Brenda (a married mother of two that he is having an affair with) that she is pregnant by him, visits his Aunt Ada to solicit advice on the best way to abort the pregnancy, to "sling that half-cooked bun from the stoked-up oven. At any price"(SNSM, 82). Arthur's language here, his choice of phrase and metaphor, is brutally laddish, and reinforces the status of a dominant, aggressive masculinity. Aunt Ada is apparently the most sympathetically drawn character in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning. She had "a kindness to listen to any man's tale and sob like a twin-soul into his beer, even bring him home to bed if she thought it would make him feel better"(SNSM, 86). She is also located in an historical context as an evocation of the decisive, influential working class matriarch, a personification of "our mam" that Hoggart describes, somewhat nostalgically, in The Uses Of Literacy as being "the pivot of the home"(Hoggart, 38) and who has "an honoured place in most accounts of working class childhood"(Hoggart, 38).

The fact that Arthur turns to Aunt Ada for advice has profound implications for ones reading of the novel. To begin with, one must take into account Sillitoe's own conception (around the time that he was composing Saturday Night and Sunday Morning) of the function of the novelist, which depended on two basic assumptions: "First, that the writer has a duty to concern himself with themes which reflect social injustice, and second, that he must continually remind his readers of the pressing need for reform"(Atherton, 105). In this respect, one is inclined to see, in the rebellious, confrontational thrust of Arthur Seaton's

narrative, an embryonic, unarticulated reformist discourse. One can only assume, for instance, that Arthur's explicit desire to "plant a thousand tons of bone-dry T.N.T"(SNSM, 83) underneath the "sneering" Nottingham Castle has its origins in Sillitoe's policy of endowing his protagonists with a reformist consciousness. In the case of Arthur Seaton, this consciousness extends only to wishful thinking and personalised, rather than collective revolt, but it is nonetheless still evident. Now, what is logically deduced from Sillitoe's conception of the function of the novelist is that his concept of social reform is implicitly progressive. He envisages an evolution towards the configuration of a better, that is, a more socially just, society: entrapments and reminders of an iniquitous, feudal past, such as Nottingham Castle, need to be removed or destroyed. However, any shift, on any level, towards positive social reform in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, is surely complicated by Arthur's decision to solicit advice from Aunt Ada who, to all intents and purposes, represents pre-war working class culture, ensnared with her "tribe" of fourteen children, in the dank, decaying, 'Meadows' area of Nottingham. At the time that Sillitoe was composing Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (as Stephen Daniels and Simon Rycroft assert in an illuminating essay entitled 'Mapping the Modern City: Alan Sillitoe's Nottingham Novels'), this part of the city had not yet been subject to any form of slum clearance and was still "a low-lying slum area, by the river, near the city centre"(Daniels and Rycroft, TIBG, 472). Immune from post-war improvements in housing and legislation governing landlord-tenant relations - "The lavatory-bowl was cracked...the coal house was ruined...the curtains were torn...the back door had been left slightly ajar day and night for years because the landlord wouldn't repair the uneven floor tiles. Even though they pay their rent"(SNSM, 83-84)-, Aunt Ada, despite the worthwhile traits and forthright principles that Sillitoe endows her with, such as her willingness to listen and her compassion shown towards others, is nonetheless emblematic of a pre-war, pre-welfare state disenfranchisement, where to be working class was to be, like Arthur Seaton's father, in a constant state of "big miserying that went with no money and no way of getting any"(SNSM, 29). The British economy, during the inter-war period of the nineteen-twenties and

nineteen-thirties, was ravaged by debt. Demobbed soldiers returning home after the First World War, faced the depredations of mass unemployment and economic insecurity. The numbers out of work never fell below one million in the nineteen-twenties. By the nineteen-thirties, the number of unemployed rose to a peak of three million as economic Depression gripped the country. A Tory-dominated 'national' government, in an attempt to decrease the amount of money paid to people on the dole, introduced the infamous 'Means Test'. This law meant that before a family could receive any state benefit, its total income from all sources had to be assessed. In terms of the patriarchal structure of working class society, the effect of the Means Test was destabilising because it undermined the role of the male as the 'breadwinner' of the family in that the amount of benefit he received would be reduced if any other member of the family had any sort of income. To the vast majority of working class families, the Means Test was also an humiliating and unprecedented intrusion into their privacy, and symbolised the vindictiveness of the state at this time. As Ian Haywood remarks in Working Class Fiction from Chartism to Trainspotting, "The Means Test was tantamount to a new Poor Law in working class demonology, and is an abiding image of the period"(Haywood, 37). Accordingly, once we perceive Aunt Ada as the figurative spectre of the nineteen-thirties, a period in the history of the working class that, according to Arthur "didn't bear thinking about"(SNSM, 29), then we are not surprised that her 'remedy' for aborting Brenda's pregnancy consists of an old working class fable, quite literally an old wives tale, bereft of medical advice and opinion: "The only thing she can try, as far as I know...is to take a hot bath with hot gin. Tell her to stay in there for two hours. As hot as she can bear it, and drink a pint of gin. That should bring it off"(SNSM, 90).

If Aunt Ada is a representative of an older working class order, then the nineteen-fifties, with improvements in lifestyle for the working class, harnessed by the fruition of the Welfare State so that (as Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Sebrook observe in A World Still to Win: The Reconstruction of the Post-War Working Class (1984)) "The greatest scourge of the working-class life- the fear of loss of

income through sickness, old age or unemployment- was eradicated, it seemed for all time"(Blackwell and Seabrook, 84), high employment, and the palpable modicum of autonomy and mobility for members of the working class, make it possible to locate a younger generation of working class females whose role is not entirely regulated by, and restricted to, the home. Thus, in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Doreen, Arthur's fiancée, generates a regular income by working full-time in a hairnet factory. Moreover, there is the sense in which, empowered by a personally wrought wage which, in turn, confers on her a fragment of independence and self-determination, Doreen establishes a parity in her relationship with Arthur, both emotionally- "Arthur held her murderously tight, as if to vanquish her spirit...But she responded to him, as if she would break him first. It was a stalemate"(SNSM, 250)- and materially- "They spoke of getting married in three months time...*They*[my italics] would have collected a good amount of money, nearly a hundred and fifty pounds..."(SNSM, 252). The relationship between Doreen and Arthur can be read as representing a partial, yet nonetheless important and decisive shift in post-war gender relations. There is an emasculation of sorts, from the traditional relationship between men and women that has thrived for centuries on systems and concepts of patriarchy, with women as the subservient 'other', so that, rather than being "led through life"(SNSM, 86), as had happened to Aunt Ada by her first husband Doddie, Doreen, as a product of the new post-war working class, can, to a certain extent at least, establish a relationship with Arthur in life, that utilises both the character and the capital of each of them on an equal, or at least a less unequal, basis.

The figure of Mrs Greatton, Doreen's mother, although only appearing in a short episode towards the end of the novel, is significant, not because Sillitoe explores her character in a particularly insightful manner, nor does she really alter the course of the narrative; rather, she is notable because she is one of the means by which Sillitoe introduces the reader to the wider issue of post-war immigration. Her lover, Mr 'Chumley' "represents the Asian dimension to post-war immigration"(Haywood, 104). Mrs Greatton, in choosing an Asian man as her

lover, can also be read as being representative of a new-found sexual liberality and freedom of choice on post-war Britain, and we can view the relationship between Mrs Greatton and Mr Chumley as a union of 'otherness' in Western society, that is, the union between the female, long suppressed in patriarchal Western society, and the non-European, whose 'otherness' in relation to Western society exists both in terms of the colour of their skin and in different cultural codes, forms, and values. Arthur is both supercilious yet pitying in his treatment of Mr 'Chumley'- he "did not like him"(SNSM, 245), yet suggested that he was "a lost soul...[who] misses his pals"(SNSM, 245-246). The tentative manner in which Mr 'Chumley' is considered is indicative of the precariousness and instability of the working class in the immediate post-war period, which was a time of great change and upheaval for British society as a whole, and the condescending attitude displayed towards him (and to Sam, the black migrant worker who, by dint of his acquaintance with one of her children, turns up at Aunt Ada's house during the festive season, and who can be said to denote the emergent African component of post-war immigration) signifies the difficulty and uneasiness with which these immigrants would be absorbed into the working class.

Earlier on in this paper, I suggested that Arthur Seaton encapsulates a dominant, hegemonic form of masculinity historically prevalent in Western society. To elucidate further, hegemonic masculinity can be defined, as R.W. Connell's asserts in Masculinities (1995), as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy"(Connell, 77). The type of hegemonic masculinity still authorised in the Western world is vehemently heterosexual. Subsequently, part of the way in which this masculinity asserts itself relies on a reduction of the female to the sexual aspect of femininity, where the role of women is identified, synecdochically, in their sexual function as the only value they have. Thus, for much of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Arthur Seaton refers to women in sexually derogatory terms as "birds", "whores", and "tarts", and Brenda becomes a commodity for Arthur to score off her husband, to "get at"(SNSM, 42), to "play

merry hell"(SNSM, 43) with. In short, women become the mediating tokens between men, the means by which hegemonic masculine sexuality is satisfied and assured.

Arthur's simplistic demarcation of women in general, and Brenda in particular, to a one-dimensional realm of the sexual, is offensive, ill-founded, and indefensible. Nonetheless, we are aware, from the very beginning of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, of Brenda's evident enjoyment in her illicit affair with Arthur and her lack of guilt at betraying her husband. Sillitoe's depiction of the affair between Arthur and Brenda is frank and, in some ways, rather refreshing. The episodes that detail the sexual act in the novel are described with a clarity, honesty, and rawness that, in some texts, is often lost or hidden behind veils of metaphor and allusion- "she [Brenda] turned and pressed her face into his groin...he kissed her breasts, pressing his leg against her. "You're lovely, Brenda. Let's get down in bed..."(SNSM, 21-22). The emphasis on men and women enjoying sex in the working class texts of this period (Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Nell Dunn's series of vignettes entitled Up The Junction (1963), Braine's Room at the Top, and Stan Barstow's A Kind of Loving(1957), are perhaps the most applicable examples) "helped to break down some of the remaining barriers of Victorian prejudice against sexual frankness in cultural representations of contemporary British life"(Haywood, 105).

Another point pertinent to our discussion of female sexuality in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, and an issue central to Sillitoe's representation of women in general, is the depiction of working class women as objects of beauty and desire. More often than not, in critical studies and fiction alike, images of the working class had ignored or displaced the idea of attractiveness and beauty within the working class. Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook make precisely this point, suggesting that "The words that people had used to describe members of the working class evoked ugliness, stunting of body and spirit, pallor, premature ageing"(Blackwell and Seabrook, 85). In The Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell

accentuates the "pinched faces ruined by malnutrition and idleness...a woman with blackened neck...regarding us blankly with yellow, cretinous, face"(Orwell, 128). Indeed, even Richard Hoggart suggests, in The Uses of Literacy, that any semblance of sexual attraction in working class women quickly dissipates, and is rapidly replaced by the "shapeless figure the family know as 'our mam' "(Hoggart, 42). Undoubtedly, Sillitoe has his fair share of female characters in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning that, arguably, conform to the stereotype of the maternal, matriarchal, sexually unattractive working class female. In addition to Aunt Ada, whom we have discussed at length, Arthur's mother has "half grey" hair and her wrinkled face is "unmade up and thin"(SNSM, 52). Significantly, she is initially introduced to the reader tending to her ill son, thus fulfilling her 'function', first and foremost, as a traditional, archetypal, maternal female. Then there is Mrs Bull, Sillitoe's take on the street gossip, the "Loudspeaker" who "with pink face and beady eyes...stood with her fat arms folded over her apron at the yard-end"(SNSM, 30). I think it's fair to assume that none of these three female characters exhibit features or characteristics that enable us to characterise them as conventionally sexually attractive or desirable. However, when we examine Sillitoe's representation of some of the younger working class female characters in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, we see referrals, for instance, to "the glow of [Brenda's] soft features"(SNSM, 78), or "the warmth of her breasts"(SNSM, 57). And again, we see the narrative describe Brenda's sister, Winnie, as "a passionate woman [with a] small wild body"(SNSM, 110), or Doreen's "slim but good figure"(SNSM, 63). Sillitoe's emphasis on the physical attributes and desirability of these women signifies the beginnings of a major post war departure in cultural representations of working class females, and subverts the canonical view in literature that physical beauty and desirability is, almost without precedent, a characteristic belonging solely to the middle and, especially, aristocratic classes.

Thus far, our discussion of Sillitoe's representation of women in his fiction has, via our interpretation of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, interrogated the

ways and means by which Sillitoe chooses to portray a diverse assortment of working class females. The diversity of his representation of working class females in this (and other) novels and short stories can be rendered, on the whole, a positive step forward in English literature because it posits, or at least begins to posit, a multifaceted version of working class women that's not entirely bound by the kind of one-dimensional socio-historical stereotypes that I discussed in the first part of this paper. *The working class woman*, and the implication it carries that there is only a single type of working class female, begins to become *a working class women*, which implies that there is multiplicity of 'types', and that this diversity of types, by implication, provides further scope for expressions of individuality. Hence, as we have seen, the younger generation of working class females in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (and I include Brenda in this category) are not necessarily tied to the domestic sphere, but have jobs, permeate places that are traditionally the preserve of working class males, such as pubs, and even revolt against what they see, arguably, as the constraints of matrimony by having casual affairs and, moreover, enjoying (for the most part) these affairs.

One of Sillitoe's early critics, Anthony West, referring to Saturday Night and Sunday Morning in particular, in a famous article entitled 'On the Inside Looking In' that appeared in the September 5th edition of in the New Yorker in 1959, commented that Sillitoe's fiction "breaks new ground [because] for the first time working class life was being conveyed by a writer on the inside looking in" (New Yorker, 99-100), meaning that, in simple terms, we had a writer of working class origins writing about the working class community that he was familiar with. Moreover, Sillitoe's early fiction in particular stresses the intractable insularity of these communities whereby change is greeted with hostility and strangers with suspicion. The notion of working class neighbourhoods being, in a sense, 'closed' communities, is underpinned by the attitudes, assumptions, and psychologies of the working class themselves. This working class mentality is often expressed in post-war writing via the utilisation of a 'them/us' dichotomy. Hoggart, for instance,

dedicates a whole chapter in The Uses of Literacy, entitled 'Them and Us', to exploring the social implications of this attitude from a working class perspective. The literary critic Paul O'Flinn uses the term metaphorically in Them and Us in Literature (1975), to refer to the difference in views, in presentation, and in perceptions between middle class and working class literature. And Tony Harrison conceives of this dichotomy in a poetic and linguistic context in his poem "Them & [UZ]", in which he tries to negotiate the problematical issue of his own social and linguistic division between both being a writer and being from a working class background. For his part, in an essay entitled 'Poor People' that appeared in the Mountains and Caverns collection of essays, Sillitoe suggested that "There are them and us. 'Them' are those who tell you what to do...use a different accent...pay your wages...can't look you in the eye...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"(MC, 76). In Sillitoe's early fiction in particular, characters usually define an allegiance to their own class, 'us', by expressing hostility towards a broad spectrum of non-working class institutions collectively classified as 'them'. The church, the police, the army, bosses at work, the education system- All of these modes of authority are condemned, at varying junctures and on various levels, in Sillitoe's fiction.

When we come to analyse Sillitoe's representation of non-working class women, what we notice, above all, is the infrequency with which such characters surface, either in the novels or in the short stories. We are, indeed, drawing from a shallow pool of resources. Nonetheless, Sillitoe does produce versions of the non-working class female on two or three occasions. Moreover, in those pieces of fiction that do contain female characters that can be said to be non-working class, Sillitoe ensures that they are never on the periphery of the story, and ascribes to these characters a central role within the narrative itself.

What we also discern is the idiosyncratic social and emotional environment in which Sillitoe chooses to locate these non-working class females. In 'The Disgrace

of Jim Scarfedale' (1959), a short story first published in The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, Phyllis, a young middle class woman, is in a relationship with the aforementioned Jim Scarfedale, a young working class man. Likewise, in the novella Out of the Whirlpool (1987), which has strong echoes of D.H.

Lawrence's 1928 classic, Lady Chatterley's Lover, the wealthy Eileen begins a relationship with Peter Granby, after he relinquishes his factory job to become "a sort of handyman"(OTW, 44) on her estate. The point that I am making is that, in both of these stories, Sillitoe situates these non-working class women in socially atypical human relationships. The make-up of our society, arguably, impels us to expect that the relationships we construct are with others who are, broadly, of a similar social background and class. Contemporary British society is still highly class-divisive in many respects. For example, a recent survey of public opinion on the issue of class found that ninety per cent of respondents still categorised themselves in the same social class as their parents, and seventy-two percent felt that social class was an integral part of British society (Storry and Childs, 205). In addition to the apparent social incompatibility of the individuals in these relationships, it is also important to note, especially in the case of Out of the Whirlpool, that these relationships are also defined in terms of sexual attraction, which is also, in terms of breaking down barriers between different social classes, limiting because there is no intellectual or cultural basis for progress. In short, if and when sexual attraction recedes, then the relationship must also come to an end. It is significant, then, and arguably inevitable, that in both 'The Disgrace of Jim Scarfedale' and Out of the Whirlpool, both of these relationships eventually falter and fail.

In 'The Disgrace of Jim Scarfedale' in particular, we can consider the doomed relationship between Phyllis and Jim as Sillitoe's personification of the outcome of an attempted union between the previously discussed dichotomous 'them' and 'us'. Sillitoe imparts on the middle class Phyllis and the working class Jim a number of characteristics to substantiate the crudely drawn line between 'them' and 'us'. The narrator of the story, who tells us that Jim lived "in our terrace, with

his mam, in a house like our own"(LDR, 107), then goes on to say how he'd "never heard anybody talk so posh [as Phyllis], as if she'd come straight out of an office"(LDR, 107). The reference to Phyllis talking 'posh', therefore not being one of "our own" (and remember that the use of a different accent constituted part of Sillitoe's definition of 'them') is compounded by the narrator's allusion to her working in an office, whereas Jim works "a hard days graft"(LDR, 109) in the bicycle factory. The division of labour between the 'mental' toil of the office and the 'physical' sweat of the factory is historically employed as a device by which to differentiate between the working class and the middle class. For example, the working class figure of Harry Hardcastle, one of the main protagonists of Walter Greenwood's Love on the Dole (1933), despises his work as a clerk at Price and Jones's pawn shop, not only for the low wages and the monotony of the job but, primarily, because he views being "a mere pusher of pens"(Greenwood, 21) as essentially feminine work. He longs to work in Marlowe's, the "majestic, impressive...enormous engineering plant...with men, engaged in men's work"(Greenwood, 19). When Harry is offered a job at Marlowe's, Greenwood's tone is heavily ironic as the narrative tells of Harry's jubilation at becoming "a necessary cog in the great organisation"(Greenwood, 20), which is, as Haywood points out in Working Class Fiction from Chartism to Trainspotting, "an apparent reversal of Marx's theory of alienation"(Haywood, 50). At the same time, of course, we have to be conscious to the fact that such sweeping generalisations of what the working class definitively 'are', and what the middle class definitively 'are', rely first on the creation, and then on the perpetuation of stereotypes. In Mythologies (1957), Roland Barthes locates the basis of working class and middle class stereotypes within the workings of a specific dominant ideology, perceiving them to be products of the industrialisation process that took place in the nineteenth century. Since the working class had been the bearer of industrialist production, it is identified with the 'physical'. Moreover, as I suggested earlier, the vast majority of cultural images of the working class have been overwhelmingly concerned with the world of the working class male, and have mistakenly conceived of the whole of the working class through this fractional representation.

So, in addition to, and interconnected with, the idea of the working class being conceived in stereotypically physical terms, is the notion and perpetuation of the working class as a masculine entity. As its social, cultural, and linguistic counterpart, the concept of the middle class is stereotypically conceived, then, not only as being 'mental' as opposed to 'physical', but also 'feminine' as opposed to 'masculine'. It is interesting to note that, on the few occasions that his fiction deals with relationships between members of the working class and members of the middle class, not once does Sillitoe subvert the accepted stereotype of the working class as masculine and the middle class as feminine- the relationships always, without question, concern a working class male and a middle class female.

In 'The Disgrace of Jim Scarfedale', Sillitoe is also eager to explore, indeed, exploit the cultural chasm between Jim and Phyllis, again in an attempt to accentuate both the schism between, and the contesting manifestos of, 'them' and 'us'. Phyllis is shown to be interested in reading books and talking about politics, whereas Jim is "too tired to talk politics after a hard day's graft"(LDR, 109) and draws his pleasure from listening to the wireless and reading the football results in the paper. Likewise, in Out of the Whirlpool, Peter Granby, upon awakening for the first time at Eileen's house, seems baffled to find "a newspaper called the Guardian"(OTW, 43) at the side of his bed, and then to eat his breakfast in "a large square room called the lounge"(OTW, 43). Sillitoe's depiction, in both these instances, of the divergent cultural habits of members of the working class and members of other classes, proffers a number of problematical issues that necessitate discussion. To begin with, we have to question the extent to which Sillitoe, in his depiction of Jim Scarfedale and Peter Granby, presents us with a verifiable, factual account of a working man, or whether the characters become working class caricatures, submerged in stereotypes that depict the working class as uneducated or, at least, under-educated, politically unaware, culturally naïve, "noble savage[s]"(LDR, 109), to quote Phyllis' scathing remark to Jim. Similarly, and perhaps more pertinent to the thrust of this particular discussion, we have to interrogate Sillitoe's representation of these non-working class females because, in

any sphere of literature that deals with the issue of class, and the interrelationship between members of different social classes, there is always a danger that the author will fall into the trap of confining the characters within the author's own ideological system of belief, supplanting the autonomy of the individual for the rigidity of type, which, in turn, leaves negligible space for the character to grow. A good deal of this paper has discussed the historical impediment of the working class in literature, by non-working class authors, and their subsequent reduction to a one-dimensional, inherently negative portrayal where a partial, usually male component is taken, almost without question, to represent a collective whole. A part of the reason for what I term the misrepresentation of the working class has been ignorance, by the middle and upper class voices that have historically dominated the canon of English literature, of the real conditions of working class existence. This ignorance has been compounded by a slovenly reliance on a bourgeois system of belief that finds it advantageous to depict the working class in a negative way. Sillitoe's task (and it is a problem faced by all authors of working class origin), is to overcome such ignorance, to construct narratives that allow for variation of personality and characteristics regardless of social class, and not to repeat the mistake of classifying all members of other social classes in a single, distortive, entity.

The extent to which Sillitoe elicits variation of characterisation beyond the 'them'- 'us' dichotomy that we have discussed (where 'them' becomes the linguistic, cultural, social, and repressive 'other' to rally against), in either 'The Disgrace of Jim Scarfedale' or Out of the Whirlpool, is slight. In 'The Disgrace of Jim Scarfedale', for instance, the middle class Phyllis is portrayed almost tyrannically- she sets fire to Jim's newspaper, hits him with the poker, pulls the plug on his wireless, and finally steals money from a jam-jar, imploring Jim to "chuck [himself] in the canal for all she cared"(LDR, 109). She demoralises Jim both psychologically- "he was never the same old Jim after he'd been married: he got broody and never spoke to a soul"(LDR, 110)- and physically- "His face went pudgy-white and his sandy-mouse hair fell out so much that he was nearly bald in

six months. Even the few freckles he had went pale"(LDR, 110-111). In Out of the Whirlpool, a more mature and complex work, the working class, as represented through the figure of factoryhand-cum-handyman, Peter, are posited as victim, both emotionally, socially, and politically. We are aware throughout the narrative that Eileen is in almost total control of every aspect of the relationship that she has with Peter. In the first place, as Peter's employer, Eileen assumes dominance on a material and economic basis: without Eileen, Peter has no regular income and nowhere to live. This economic dominance is transferred into emotional authority when the relationship between them evolves into a sexual union. The act of love, and when, and if, indeed, they will make love, is meticulously, almost militaristically, prepared by Eileen. There is something cold and calculating about the way in which Eileen conducts the relationship. For example, when she buys Peter a tape recorder, the narrative suggests that she is purchasing it because it can be counted as a tax loss, "though he [Peter] took it as a gift of love, rather than as a tip for efficient work"(OTW, 72). The whole basis of the relationship between Eileen and Peter is worked through this employer/employee scenario. Indeed, not only is the tape recorder a tax loss, but Peter himself also functions as a tax loss "because your wages get taken off my tax"(OTW, 72). This suggests that one of the principle motives that Eileen has for employing Peter is driven by a sense of fiscal astuteness- he reduces her tax bill- rather than her having a concerted need for a handyman (there is no suggestion in the novel that a handyman was employed before). Eileen is represented as equally an unpleasant character as the other non-working class female in Sillitoe's fiction that we have discussed, Phyllis. In the end, she addresses Peter in the same type of derogatory and vitriolic rhetoric by which Phyllis referred to Jim; Phyllis called Jim, sarcastically, a noble savage, whilst when Peter catches Eileen in bed with another man (her accountant, which, rather more appropriately than Peter, is a man more aligned with her in terms of social class), she bellows at him to "get back to your hut"(OTW, 90). In both instances, the references to savagery, the connotations of pre-historicism ascribed to living in huts, and the implications attached to notions of savagery as a kind of sub-humanism, are clear indicators of

the parameters by which Sillitoe conceives that members of non-working classes measure members of the working class. By choosing to portray literally all non-working class females in his fiction as objectionable and obnoxious characters (although, admittedly, as we've discussed, there are very few non-working class women in his work to choose from), Sillitoe can be accused of merely inverting the one-dimensional, synecdochic representations of working class characters rendered by non-working class authors, and this, as much as anything, is a problematic facet of his writing.

I have purposefully kept my analysis of the women in Sillitoe's fiction to a minimum of specific texts. My reason for approaching the subject of the female in Sillitoe's fiction in this way has been to offer a more vivid and concrete analysis of the characters that I have studied; had I extended my analysis to cover a broader spectrum of texts, then depth of interrogation of the individual characters would have been sacrificed and replaced by something approaching a mere overview of Sillitoe's fiction, and that was never the intention of this study. In approaching the issue of Sillitoe's representation of women in the way that I have, I hope that I have achieved not only a 'drawing out' of the specific female characters that I have analysed, but have also raised issues, questions, and points for debate concerning Sillitoe's representation of women that can be applied to further studies of Sillitoe's work, and to other characters in his fiction.

Abbreviations

SNSM: Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

LDR: The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner

MC: Mountains and Caverns: Selected Essays

OTW: Out of the Whirlpool

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First Response

“I am totally persuaded it is an excellent critical piece on the intersection of gender and class issues in Sillitoe, well-structured and carefully argued.”

Another referee, however, found the style of this piece “rather wooden.”