



# **Working-class Culture and Work as portrayed in the Texts and Films of Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner***

Stephen Keady

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**WORKING-CLASS CULTURE AND WORK AS  
PORTRAYED IN THE TEXTS AND FILMS OF  
ALAN SILLITOE'S  
*SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING*  
AND  
*THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE*  
*RUNNER.***

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In memory of my parents, Patrick and Kathleen,  
and for Pilar.

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## INTRODUCTION

Alan Sillitoe rose to prominence in 1958, with the publication of his novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. The collection of short stories, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, published the following year, confirmed the opinion that an important new writer had arrived in England. The films of the novel and the title story of the collection, which were released in 1960 and 1962 respectively, and for which he wrote the screenplays, further strengthened his reputation. Since then he has produced a large and varied body of work, including over twenty novels, over fifty short stories, poetry, plays, travel writing and children's books, and remains active at the age of 79. He is, to my mind, one of the most significant English writers of the last 50 years, and possibly the only one whose work spans the post-war and the present. My opinion, however, does not seem to be generally shared, at least in terms of the critical attention which Sillitoe has received. My primary research has been carried out in Catalonia, naturally, and in the whole of the Catalan university library system the only two critical works dedicated exclusively to Sillitoe date from the 1970s. Furthermore, of the 133 theses written over the last 20 years or so, whose details are available from the departments of English Philology of the University of Barcelona (U.B.) and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (U.A.B.), not one deals with Sillitoe, or indeed with the themes found in Sillitoe which I have chosen as the area of enquiry for this thesis.<sup>1</sup> With wider research, I have found reference to only 3 books on Sillitoe published in English in the last 25 years, all of them written by British writers but published in the U.S.A. Peter Hitchcock's *Working-Class Fiction in*

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<sup>1</sup> [ccuc.cbuc.es](http://ccuc.cbuc.es)  
[www.bib.ub.edu](http://www.bib.ub.edu)  
[www.uab.es/servlet](http://www.uab.es/servlet)

Not surprisingly, the themes which most recur in these post-graduate works reflect the current interest in post-colonialist and feminist areas of research.

*Theory and Practice: A Reading of Alan Sillitoe* (1989) has some interesting points to make, and will be quoted from later. However, Hitchcock only treats in any depth *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, with some mentions of “The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner”, an emphasis mirrored by John Sawkins in the more recent *The Long Apprenticeship: Alienation in the Early Works of Alan Sillitoe* (2001), a book whose title is self-explanatory as regards the works examined and the focus of the examination. Gillian Mary Hanson, in *Understanding Alan Sillitoe* (1999), does at least give a more comprehensive idea of the scope of Sillitoe’s work: in terms of its variety she mentions many of his stories, apart from novels and autobiography; in terms of the length of his career, she considers his work up to 1995; and as regards themes in his work she discusses existentialism, alienation and his depiction of women. Such a quantity of material necessarily makes the book descriptive rather than analytical, introductory rather than investigatory. Hanson’s bibliography is useful, however, and hers and those of the other books mentioned reveal a dearth of recent (from 1980) books and articles about Sillitoe. Stanley Atherton’s *Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment* (1979) is necessarily limited by its age, as is R.D.Vaverka’s *Commitment as Art: A Marxist Critique of A Selection of Sillitoe’s Political Fiction* (1978), although both will be quoted from. Before these books, now almost thirty years old, one has to go back to the early 70s to find references to critical works on Sillitoe. My most general aim, therefore, is to attempt to redress with this thesis, in however small a way, what I consider to be the critical neglect of a writer whose work has been unjustly ignored or undervalued.

Although he is mentioned in a number of recent books and articles, such mentions are usually limited to his first two works, and are generally in the context of the “Angry Young Men” phenomenon. I shall give examples of this, and also offer some

suggestions as to why attention still seems to be limited to his first books, in Part 2 of this thesis. I am, of course, conscious of the possible irony in the fact that I have chosen these two books myself as the basis for this work, whilst seemingly complaining about the narrowness of the attention devoted to Sillitoe. There are a number of reasons for my choice, perhaps the most obvious being the aforementioned deficiency of criticism of almost all of Sillitoe's later production. His first two books are, of course, significant, but they by no means represent the only significant work in his long and productive career. Another of my aims, then, will be to show, by quoting from a number of his works, that although *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*<sup>2</sup> have become somehow isolated by time and success, they represent simply the first, rather than the only expression of ideas which were to remain evident in Sillitoe's work over the next forty-plus years.

The fact remains, however, that until Sillitoe no writer in English fiction had given or had been able to give a detailed and informed picture of the English working class living in a period of seemingly stable prosperity, and thus the two books retain the prominence reserved for the first in the field. Though, as has been mentioned, these first books were and still are included in the Angry Young Men/working-class fiction groupings of the 1950s/early 1960s, there are, in my opinion, several aspects which differentiate them from other works of the same period with which they are often associated and, indeed, differentiate them from most others before or since. These differences lie mainly in the areas of the depiction of the way of life of the characters, and in their beliefs and attitudes, which is to say their ideology. These two questions, way of life and ideology, which could be summarized in the word *culture*, are the central focus of the critical approach known as cultural studies, and in using this

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to, for the sake of brevity, as *SNSM* and *LLDR* respectively. Page references are to the 1993 edition (*SNSM*) and the 1962 edition (*LLDR*) and will be included in the main text.

approach as the theoretical basis for this thesis I feel that I shall be re-examining the books<sup>3</sup> from a new perspective, a perspective which has been missing from previous criticism of Sillitoe in general and of these two now emblematic books in particular.

Cultural studies is or was primarily a British field, though it has taken many theories from French, German and other writers. Though originally evolving from the area of literature, it overlaps with other areas such as sociology, anthropology, history or newer disciplines such as media studies. Though there may be as many definitions of cultural studies as there are writers, Storey summarizes it thus:

The object of study in cultural studies is not culture defined in a narrow sense, as the objects of supposed excellence (“high art”); nor in an equally narrow sense, as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual development; but culture understood, in Raymond Williams’s phrase, as “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group”... Therefore, although cultural studies cannot (and should not) be reduced to the study of popular culture, it is certainly the case that the study of popular culture is central to the project of cultural studies (Storey 1998: xi).

In this quote Storey gives a brief summary of the meanings which the word culture has had and continues to have, though finally settling on the one which is probably now the most commonly-used, at least in the area of cultural studies, that of culture as a way of life. (Williams said: “Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (Williams 1988: 87).) With his emphasis on the importance of popular culture, an integral component of any way of life, Storey implicitly introduces the question of ideology, a theme about which he is more explicit elsewhere: “Ideology is without doubt the central concept in cultural studies” (Storey 1996: 4). In the first part of this thesis I shall examine these crucial terms, and others, in order to define more exactly my approach to the works, but for the moment suffice it to say that I shall be examining the books and films from a cultural point of

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<sup>3</sup> Though *LLDR* is, strictly speaking, the title story of a collection, I shall frequently refer to it as a book, for the purposes of convenience. The abbreviation *LLDR* can be taken as referring to the story rather than the book, unless otherwise stated.

view, and in doing so I hope to offer some new insights into these works as depictions of, to paraphrase Williams's phrase quoted by Storey above, a people and a group in a specific period. Most criticism of these books, particularly at the time of publication but also since, has tended to focus on the rebellion of the characters against the political and economic conditions of the class in which they live. These are, of course, important factors in their lives, and form part of the society with which they are in conflict. However, as I hope will become clear, there is another factor, that of culture, which is less tangible but equally if not more important; culture, in its different meanings, is both the justification of the capitalist system which has assigned a specific place and role to Arthur Seaton and Smith, the protagonists of the two books, and is also the outward manifestation of their disagreement with the dominant ideology which they should embrace if they are to become the "good" subjects which are the hoped-for end result of the workings of this ideology.

My aim, therefore, will be to recreate from the texts and films the world which is shown, and then examine it in order to demonstrate a number of points. Firstly, I hope to show that there is such a phenomenon as a working class, and that this class has its own culture. This culture is different from, and in many ways opposed to, the "high" artistic culture of the elite, but is in no way a culture of lack, as in "lack of culture", or "lack of education"; it is rather a creation of the working class themselves and serves as a positive force in their lives, which are again different from and frequently opposed to the lives of the upper and middle classes. Furthermore, although political and economic factors are important in the creation and definition of this culture, they are by no means the only factors.

Ideology, as has been noted, is a central question in any discussion of culture, and I also hope to show that the working class, rather than being simply passive consumers

of mass culture and the ideology which it conveys, or is argued to convey, either resist or subvert this for their own ends and in their own manner, and these resistant attitudes form part of their own culture.

I shall also look at the role of work in the lives of Sillitoe's characters, seeking to demonstrate that this plays an important role, not always necessarily a positive one, and that this activity has been consistently neglected in English literature, at least as regards the working class. In order to demonstrate these points it will be necessary to place the books in their historical, social and cultural contexts, and with this contextualization I believe that it will become clear that the works do not, despite the view commonly expressed both at the time of publication and since, represent a new, more individualized and somehow less cohesive working class. D.J. Taylor, for example, writing of Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton from *SNSM* and David Storey's Arthur Machin, the main character of *This Sporting Life* (1960), says: "Like the majority of working-class fictional characters of the period, they are on the move between an older, communal life and a newer individualism" (Taylor, D.J. 1994: 126). I hope to show that this view is mistaken, and that although the material circumstances may have changed for the better in post-war Britain, leading to some changes in the way of life of the working class, the way that the people shown by Sillitoe still live and think about their lives reflects the previous history of the working class, and the attitudes revealed had been developed over more than a century. The working-class culture depicted in these two books was not atypical, or limited only to these people at that particular time, but can rather be seen as a particular representation of a way of life which had existed before and would continue to exist afterwards, as shown in Sillitoe's further literary production. Rather than being an isolated picture of two disconnected young men who typify for many critics the individualistic youth of post-

war Britain, I shall attempt to show that these works should more accurately be seen as representing a point in a continuum of literature about the working class in England, a continuum which has been extended not least by Sillitoe himself.

As I have already stated, there are a number of reasons for choosing these two works as the subject-matter for this thesis, and I cannot ignore the fact that some of them are undoubtedly personal. I can still remember reading *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* for the first time, when I was probably 14 or 15, and the impression that it made on me. The life that it described was the working-class life which I had experienced myself, but which was denigrated or ignored by the middle-class education which I was enjoying, or suffering, at that time. Both in the “official” reading which was part of the school curriculum, and in my own reading for pleasure (and having been born just prior to the time when television became omnipresent, my habit of reading, not to say addiction, started very early), the life which I knew and lived seemed hardly to exist, at least in books. There were, of course, occasional appearances by characters from the working class, immediately identifiable as such because they spoke “funny”, or occupied positions such as servants, workers or rank-and-file-soldiers<sup>4</sup>, but it seemed to me that they were never the hero, though they could sometimes be the hero’s faithful retainer, often prepared to die for the more glamorous protagonist. Sillitoe’s novel, then, turned this world upside-down, since everyone in the book was from the working class, and the way that the people spoke and thought about their lives struck me as being real, as opposed to the usual wishful romanticising or contempt that were the common attitudes expressed in fiction. From then on I sought out other books by Sillitoe, and continued to read him, something

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<sup>4</sup> A recent example of this would be the character of Hagrid in the *Harry Potter* books. He speaks a non-standard English, he is physically imposing but intellectually wanting, he occupies a subordinate professional position, but is loyal, brave and honest. He fulfils all the working-class stereotypes. See, for example, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Rowling 2003: *passim*), or any other of the series.

which is not difficult bearing in mind his long and productive career. Unlike many other writers, his political and social ideas have not altered with time, which may well be one of the reasons why he now seems to be somewhat marginalized in the world of English literature, despite his large and varied output and the critical and commercial success he continues to enjoy (though his sales are rather less in recent years, it must be said). Why this should be so is open to debate, but some of the reasons may be that he is still seen as a working-class writer (a label which he has consistently rejected) even though his work soon moved away from the self-contained world of his earlier books; that he represents the non-metropolitan life of the provinces; that he has never been or sought to be part of the literary establishment; and that his work retains the ability to provoke doubt and discomfort. Quite possibly, the fact that he has outlived most of his contemporaries, yet remains productive, has caused many people to think that he belongs to another era, or is dead, or both.

I was too young to see the films of *SNSM* and *LLDR* when they originally appeared (1960 and 1962 respectively) but since, with the passage of time, they no longer seemed as shocking as they once did, they would periodically turn up on British television, usually late at night, as I seem to remember, and of course with developments such as video or D.V.D. they became more readily available. My decision to include the films in this thesis is due to a class which formed part of the doctorate course, taught by Dr. Ana Moya at the University of Barcelona, on the subject of film adaptations of literature. This is a relatively new field in academic terms, and is differentiated from the more traditional film studies. With Dr. Moya we learned to consider more the semiotics and contextualizing of what was seen and heard on the screen, and I found the active type of viewing necessary in this type of study to be more in keeping with the cultural point of view which I have chosen as

my approach in this work. Furthermore, the films of *SNSM* and *LLDR* are closely linked with the books not only through contemporaneity and the fact that Sillitoe wrote the screenplay for both, but also through the Free Cinema movement which, I shall argue, can be seen as the cinematic counterpart to the Angry Young Men in literature. There are also personal reasons for choosing to look at the films as well as the books, since I have always been a regular cinema-goer, something which started in my childhood with the then-common habit of the “Saturday-morning flicks”.

If there is a certain amount of personal nostalgia, then there is also what could be called some historic nostalgia. Both the books and the films show a world which has now disappeared, the world of post-war England<sup>5</sup>, and the car, immigration, modern architecture and changes in consumer habits, among other factors, have irrevocably changed the face of English cities, thus the world of Arthur Seaton and Smith, the Borstal boy hero of *LLDR*, whether that world be called Nottingham or anything else, no longer exists. Working practices have also changed, and although Smith has rejected the role of worker, the type of work which Arthur is seen to perform is also now a thing of the past, as are the conditions under which he does it, at least in England. This historic nostalgia would also include the works themselves in an artistic sense, since both the books and films are now considered to form part of two peculiarly English movements, the Angry Young Men in literary terms, and the Free Cinema in film terms, which both petered out soon afterwards, and thus are symbolic of the cultural production of the time.

Regarding the structure of this work, I have organized it as follows: in the first part I shall give a brief outline of the Industrial Revolution in England and the changes

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<sup>5</sup> In restricting my work primarily to England I do not mean any disrespect towards the rest of the British Isles. Rather, it is a recognition of the fact that the different regions and countries do not always share a common base in terms of political, industrial, educational or linguistic development, and so what is true for England (or Wales or Scotland) may not be necessarily true for other places.

which it produced in English society, especially in the political, educational and cultural fields. The key words in the title of this thesis, “work”, “culture”, “class”, are all complex, open to multiple interpretations, and all of these words in their present meanings have their roots in the Industrial Revolution, and thus any definition of terms necessitates a historical overview of this phenomenon. This will lead me to the development of the idea of culture, and thus to the development of cultural studies as a discrete field of inquiry; I shall also examine the literature produced by and about the working class, with particular reference to the work itself.

In the second part I shall look at the cultural production in wartime and post-war England, which will include the work of those writers usually grouped together as the Angry Young Men, to give the social and cultural background against which Sillitoe wrote the works to be studied; this will take me on to the books themselves. Particular attention will be given to the role of work and of culture, in its various meanings, in both books, and also to the different reactions of the two protagonists (Arthur as worker, Smith as prisoner) and their relationship to society as a whole, including the ideology to which they are subjected, the society in this case being post-war England.

In the third part I shall examine the two films, in their context as representatives of the Free Cinema movement and also in the same terms as used for the books, namely in terms of the portrayal of the two main characters in their respective roles in society and their reactions to the ideology of that society, and also in terms of the portrayal of culture.

Finally, some conclusions will be drawn, in which the main point will be to show that in the two works considered Sillitoe showed that the working class have their own culture and their own ideology, and that these are different from and opposed to the culture and ideology which are dominant in the society in which they live.

NOTE: In all quotations I have kept to the original in terms of layout, punctuation, italics, etc. unless otherwise stated.

Any films mentioned will be listed in the filmography, alphabetically by director, and also giving the year of release and the production company.

## **PART ONE. THE BACKGROUND**

### **1.1. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION**

Since, as has been mentioned, the key terms which I use in the title all have their basis in the Industrial Revolution, it will be necessary to give a brief historic outline of this process and some of its effects on different aspects of life in England. Much, of course, has been written on this topic, from various points of view. Nevertheless, the work, culture and class which form the lives of Sillitoe's characters in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century were first created and defined over one hundred years before, so I shall attempt to give an explanation of the development of the conditions which gave birth to these terms.

For Hobsbawm, "The Industrial Revolution marks the most fundamental transformation of human life in the history of the world recorded in written documents. For a brief period it coincided with the history of a single country, Great Britain" (Hobsbawm 1999: xi). The first part of this quotation reveals the profundity of the changes which industrialism brought to many aspects of life in Britain, which will be examined in these pages, and with the latter part of this quotation he is voicing the fact that industrialism came first to Britain, and so Britain experienced changes at every level of society for which there was no precedent and no model, a situation which other, later, industrialized countries did not have to suffer; thus Britain, and principally England, served as a model, both positive and negative, of the transformation which now affects practically everyone in the world, and many of the questions which arose with industrialism were first posed in England.

It is generally agreed that industrialism started in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the cotton industry in Lancashire, with Manchester as its centre, soon spread to other parts of north-west England, and then encompassed the woollen textile areas of Yorkshire; the later expansion of the engineering and iron industries helped to stimulate an increase in coal-mining, especially in Northumberland and Durham, and industry became consolidated and concentrated in the north and midlands of England. Although technological advances, particularly in the textile industry, played an important role in the early stages of industrialism, they were by no means the only factors involved, and financial and organizational developments were equally if not more important. In general the shift was from small-scale domestic production on hand machinery to large-scale concentrated production on more elaborate machinery, though this change was slow and uneven, varying greatly from place to place and from industry to industry (Belchem 1996: 10-11; Harrison 1965: 50-51; Hobsbawm 1999: 11-13; Williams 1985: 13).

Another fundamental factor in the process was the increase in the population.

Harrison says:

It is now generally accepted that the population of England and Wales increased from 5.5 million in 1700 to 6.5 million in 1750, and nearly 9 million in 1801. The second half of the eighteenth century was thus characterized by a 40 percent increase in population, and the rate of increase was even greater in the succeeding decades of the nineteenth century (Harrison 1965: 4).

Whether this increase was the cause or the effect of industrialization is a moot point, and other reasons for this population explosion could be a steady but high birth rate, more extended access to medical care, or the growing prosperity of England in a period of accelerating imperial expansion which had been, paradoxically, given an impulse by the loss of the American colonies in 1776 (Harrison 1965: 4). Whatever the reasons, the results were undeniable, and were an important factor in the

continuing process of industrialization. The population of Manchester, for example, “multiplied tenfold in size between 1760 and 1830, from 17,000 to 180,000 inhabitants” (Hobsbawm 1999: 34), and by 1851 “when 54 per cent of the population [of England] was classified as urban, roughly a quarter of the people lived in great towns of over 100,000 inhabitants (Belchem 1996: 37). The growth of the urban population was partly due to the aforementioned general increase, but also to the drift from the country to the town. Changes in agricultural production practices led to increased precariousness and redundancy in rural employment, and Belchem writes of:

...the low proportion of the labour force employed in agriculture, well below the European norm...high levels of agricultural productivity enabled the release of labour at an unusually early stage in the development process. The triumph of the industrial revolution...lay in getting a lot of workers into industry rather than obtaining high productivity from them once there (Belchem 1996: 9).

The large-scale shift of population from the country to the towns had been increased if not started by the various Enclosure Acts of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a legal process which served to “...consolidate the scattered strips in the open fields and to divide up the commons...the needs of an expanding and increasingly urbanized population for more food were met by large-scale capitalist farming and a concentration of estates through the absorption of small holdings” (Harrison 1965: 22-23).

It is clear, then, that by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, English society had started to be transformed by industrialism, and Williams says of this transformation:

The phrase *Industrial Revolution* confirms this, for the phrase, first used by French writers in the 1820s, and gradually adopted, in the course of the century, by English writers, is modelled explicitly on an analogy with the French Revolution of 1789. As that had transformed France, so this has transformed England; the means of change are different, but the change is comparable in kind: it has produced, by a pattern of change, a new society (Williams 1985: 14).

As mentioned, the spread of industrialism had been slow and uneven, based mostly on the production of textiles, especially cotton, and concentrated in the north-west and some parts of the midlands of England, and still based on labour-intensive production methods. What can be described as the consolidation of industrialism took place in the 1840s and 1850s, and Hobsbawm writes of what he and others call “the second phase”:

The first, or textile, phase of British industrialization had reached its limits or looked as though it might soon do so. Fortunately a new phase of industrialism was about to take over, and to provide a much firmer foundation for economic growth: that based on the capital goods industries, on coal, iron and steel. The age of crisis for textile industrialism was the age of breakthrough for coal and iron, the age of railway construction (Hobsbawm 1999: 87).

Belchem concurs when he speaks of:

...the “second phase” of diversified industrialism. The “workshop of the world”, Britain then enjoyed a quasi-monopoly position in overseas markets as other countries sought to industrialize by importing capital goods on an unprecedented scale. The secular expansion of the British economy reached its highest levels between the 1840s and the 1870s (Belchem 1996: 153).

Ironically, this phase of the manufacture and export of capital goods permitted other countries to compete with Britain, and helped to create what has come to be known as the “great Depression” of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Belchem 1996: 193), but on the home front the importance of the second phase lies more in the fact that industrialism and its concomitant conditions now became irrevocably established in all parts of England, and though agriculture continued, of course, since the steadily-growing population had to be fed, its relative importance declined, as did the number of workers that were needed in the countryside. According to Read: “In the first decade of the century agriculture and related activities had contributed about one-third of the national product, but by 1851 this was down to one-fifth and by 1871 to one-seventh” (Read 1994: 14). Britain’s economic base as an industrialized

country had been established, and though there were fluctuations in different regions or different sectors, the underlying structure prevailed until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The process which had begun over 100 years before had proved to be unstoppable, and some idea of the changes on a more local level can be seen from the writing of Lady Florence Bell when in 1911 she gave the following figures for Middlesbrough:

The population of Middlesbrough

In 1811 was	35
In 1821 was	40
In 1831 was	154
In 1841 (after railways had begun) was	5,463
The population in 1861, after the discovery of the iron, had risen to	18,892
The population in 1871 was	39,284
The population in 1881 was	55,288
The population in 1891 was	75,532
The population in 1901 was	91,302

At the moment of writing returns of the census of 1911 come to hand, giving the population of the Municipal Borough as 104,787 (Bell, Lady Florence 1965: 298-299).

From these figures it can be seen how what for centuries had been a hamlet on the river Tees grew some three-thousandfold in a single century, firstly with the development of the railways, then later with the discovery of iron ore in the nearby Cleveland hills, and also by taking advantage of the proximity of the Durham coalfields, into what became one of the foremost industrial steel and shipbuilding centres of the British Empire. Middlesbrough was not part of the original textile-based expansion, but once the industrial base had been set in place with the railways and the

iron, its growth was assured, and it should be noted that the largest absolute, as opposed to relative, growth took place in the second half of the 19th century.

It could be said, then, that once the conditions of industrialism had been established, any further change was quantitative more than qualitative. From its inception in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, its primary characteristic was its extension to other parts of Britain and to other countries. Its effects are still being felt, and Williams was able to say in 1961: "... the industrial revolution, in its broad sense, is also at a comparatively early stage" (Williams 1975: 11).

## **1.2 WORK AND LIVING CONDITIONS**

As previously mentioned, the general trend of industrialism was the substitution of small-scale hand production with large-scale machine production, and this inevitably caused profound changes in the lives of the workers. The greater centralization and organization of the production process affected every aspect of the workers' lives, not least the economic relationship between employer and employee, generally resulting in a greater dependence on wages. "Pre-industrial labour ...consists largely of families with their own peasant holdings, craft workshops and so on, or whose wage-income supplements – or is supplemented by – some such direct access to the means of production" (Hobsbawm 1999: 63). In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, much production, especially in the textile industries, was still on this home-based system, with a variety of financial arrangements, frequently negotiated on an individual basis. Although this "outworking" remained an important part of the overall output, and

indeed increased in the early years of the textile boom (Belchem 1996: 14)<sup>6</sup>, the conditions changed, and the growing dependence on wages “so low that only unremitting and uninterrupted toil would earn them [the workers] enough money to keep alive” (Hobsbawm 1999: 64) gradually made it impossible to have more than one job. Thompson notes how: “Only a minority of weavers in the nineteenth century would have had as varied a life as the smallholder weaver whose diary, in the 1780s, shows him weaving on wet days, jobbing – carting, ditching and draining, mowing, churning – on fine” (Thompson 1968: 442). The twin processes of industrialization and urbanization served to increase wage dependence, and also to erode many traditional practices which had played an important role in the subsistence of the poor.

In general, such practices were made illegal, and Belchem says:

The imposition of an exclusively monetary form of wage payment marked a fundamental change in employers’ attitudes to property and labour. As capitalism spread, they could no longer allow workers to appropriate any part of the materials or product of their labour, no matter how small...workers bitterly resented the enforcement of this new money-wage discipline, which denied them their traditional rights and perquisites, their bugging, cabbage, sweepings, blue-pigeon flying, wastages, fints, thrums, chippings, and the like<sup>7</sup>...Previously self-reliant, landless wage labourers...were reduced to a demoralized and indigent state, no longer able to keep livestock of their own or gather free fuel for the cold winter months, customary rights withdrawn in the age of enclosure...Within this “custom to crime transition”, the imposition of the exclusive money wage was a lengthy, hard-fought and uneven process (Belchem 1996: 14-15).

There is much debate about the wages themselves and the living standards, in which the changes noted above played a significant part, but Belchem, summarizing the various opinions, concludes that there was a decline in real terms which started around the middle of the eighteenth century and deepened during the French and Napoleonic wars; this trend was reversed during the 1820s, but “it was not until the

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<sup>6</sup> An example of the continuance of this system can be seen in Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* (1913) when “Hose” the agent comes to collect the seamed stockings from the housewives, who are paid at the rate of “Tuppence-ha’penny a dozen [pairs]” (Lawrence 1983: 41).

<sup>7</sup> These terms apply to the appropriation of waste materials (sweepings, thrum etc.) or to outright theft (cabbage, blue-pigeon flying). *Oxford English Dictionary* (Second Edition): 1989.

1840s that the levels of the 1740s were regained and exceeded” (Belchem 1996: 13). Most of the wages were spent on the two essentials, food and housing. Food, particularly for those who had newly arrived from the countryside, was both expensive and of poor quality: “Compelled to buy “dear”, to purchase poor quality food in small quantities for immediate consumption<sup>8</sup>, the working class rarely received value for money” (Belchem 1996: 28). The situation as regards housing was no better: “As with food so with housing: those at the bottom end of the market received scant value for money. Wretched as it was, the accommodation inhabited by the poor accounted for anything up to a quarter or even a third of a labourer’s wages” (Belchem 1996: 30). To call the vast areas of jerry-built slums which had been erected to accommodate the enormous numbers of new town-dwellers “wretched” is no doubt a gross understatement, and the difficulty of saving made ownership almost impossible. Slums remained as a problem in English towns for many years, despite attempts by the authorities to do something to solve the problem. (See Orwell’s *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), which will be mentioned later.) The labouring poor, as industrialism spread, became a significant and permanent part of English society, at the mercy of cyclical depressions and changing work conditions, and though conditions, with time, may have improved somewhat, Hobsbawm writes of “...a population almost thirty per cent of whom at the end of the nineteenth century were so malnourished that they could not do a proper day’s work...Another forty per cent lived so close to the margin of subsistence that they could easily be forced below it” (Hobsbawm 1999: 72).

Apart from the quantitative questions of pay and hours, which are obviously of prime importance to any worker, industrialization brought about major qualitative

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<sup>8</sup> This situation continued for many years. For a character in Sillitoe’s *Out of the Whirlpool* (1987): “His grandma’s fridge was the corner shop to which she might go four times a day” (Sillitoe 1987: 70).

changes in the relationship between the workers and the work itself, and also between the workers and employers. From having some form of independence and control over how and when they worked, the workers were forced into rhythms which were dictated by new demands and impersonal forces:

...industrial labour – and especially mechanized factory labour – imposes a regularity, routine and monotony quite unlike pre-industrial rhythms of work...Industry brings the tyranny of the clock, the pace-setting machine, and the complex and carefully-timed interaction of processes...And since men did not take spontaneously to these new ways, they had to be forced – by work discipline and fines, by Master and Servant laws such as that of 1823 which threatened them with jail for breach of contract, but their masters only with fines (Hobsbawm 1999: 64).

The increasing discipline applied in the work-place in the early and middle 19<sup>th</sup> century was mirrored in attempts, not always successful it has to be said, to extend this control to practically every aspect of life, from drunkenness to nude bathing, from Sabbath-breaking to bull-baiting (Thompson 1968: 442-443). If some legislation, such as that proposing imprisonment for adulterers, was defeated, possibly on the grounds that this would curtail the pleasures of the rich as well as the poor, the desired result was nevertheless achieved:

But if the disciplinarians lost a few legislative skirmishes, they won the battle of the Industrial Revolution; and in the process the “Irish” temperament often attributed to the eighteenth-century English poor in town and countryside was translated into the methodical way of life of industrial capitalism (Thompson 1968: 442).

As the work became more and more mechanized, so there was less space for individual craftsmanship, and this loss of the personal engagement with the materials and the product was something which was clearly felt by the artisans whose production was labour-intensive and limited, and whose skills had been developed over centuries. For Thompson, these people represented:

...perhaps the most distinguished popular culture England has known. It contained

the massive diversity of skills, of the workers in metal, wood, textiles and ceramics, without whose inherited “mysteries” and superb ingenuity with primitive tools the inventions of the Industrial Revolution could scarcely have got further than the drawing-board...Again and again in these years working men expressed it thus: “they wish to make us “tools” or “implements” or “machines” (Thompson 1968: 914- 915).

The depersonalisation of the work experience was inevitable in the context of the increasing mechanization and concentration of production. Some regions were affected sooner than others, and some trades more than others, but the substitution of a cheaper machine-made product for a locally-produced hand-made product, or the introduction of new more efficient methods of production, eventually made the small or independent business economically unviable. George Sturt relates how the firm of wheelwrights which he inherited in 1884, and which had been in his family for generations, under the weight of change, which he says came later to his region of Surrey than to many other parts of England, found itself forced to adapt to the changing circumstances to survive, in the process changing both the nature of the work itself and the nature of the relationship between employer and employee:

To say that the business I started into in 1884 was old-fashioned is to understate the case: it was a “folk” industry, carried on in a “folk” method... Consequently I was left to pick up the business as best I could from “the men”. There were never any “hands” with us. Eight skilled workmen or apprentices, eight friends of the family...The objects of the work too were provincial. There was no looking far afield for customers. Farmers rarely more than five miles away ...Reasoned science for us did not exist...So the work was more of an art - a very fascinating art - than a science...A good wheelwright knew by art but not by reasoning the proportion to keep between spokes and felloes...The skilled workman was the final judge....The main thing after all (and the men in my shop were faithful to it) was to keep the business up to a high level, preserving the reputation my father and grandfather had won for it...Two things were notable about these men...in them was stored all the local lore of what good wheel-wright’s work should be like. The century-old tradition was still vigorous in them...they lived as integral parts in the rural community of the English. Overworked and underpaid they nonetheless enjoyed life, I am sure. They were friends, as only a craftsman can be, with timber and iron. The grain of the wood told secrets to them. The other point is, that these men had a special bond of comfort in the regard they felt for my own family. Consideration had been shown to them - a sort of human thoughtfulness - for very long...And yet, there in my old- fashioned shop the new machinery had almost

forced its way in...There, in that one little spot, the ancient provincial life of England was put into a back seat. It made a difference to me personally, little as I dreamt of such a thing. "The Men", though still my friends, as I fancied, became machine "hands". Unintentionally, I had made them servants waiting upon gas combustion (Sturt 1965: 287- 293).

Even making allowances for the traditionally rose-tinted views of employers as regards their employees, it can be seen that the relations in this case were personal and paternal, almost feudal, and Sturt emphasizes the difference between "men" and "hands", a telling demonstration of the dehumanizing effects of industrialization by which people are reduced to the productive parts of the body. Another significant aspect is the way the men felt towards their work, and the difference between craftsmen to whom "the grain of the wood told secrets", and "servants waiting upon gas combustion" was one of the main sources of the hostility to industrialization. This view had been put earlier by Marx and Engels: "Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine" (Marx and Engels 1976b: 490-491).

Sturt is describing the situation in 1884, which shows how the gradual creep of industry went from north to south, eventually affecting even the remotest backwater. "Folk" industries and methods became unviable, whether sooner or later is unimportant, and although it might have taken a century for the industrial process to spread from Lancashire to rural Surrey the spread was remorseless, and the result was the same, so that the working conditions of the Lancashire weaver and the Surrey wheelwright eventually showed little difference. It is largely insignificant exactly *when* industrialism reached a particular place: the changes which it brought were so fundamental that the only distinction to be made is on the basis of whether a

community was pre- or post- industrial, rather than on the basis of the chronology of industrialism or the chronology of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Laurie Lee, in his now classic autobiographic *Cider with Rosie* (1959), when describing the coming of industrialism to his Cotswold village in the years bracketing the First World War, gives an idea of the depth of the change from a way of life which had hardly changed in centuries to one which irrevocably changed everything in the space of a lifetime, if not a generation:

The last days of my childhood were also the last days of the village. I belonged to that generation which saw, by chance, the end of a thousand years' life...Myself, my family, my generation, were born in a world of silence; a world of hard work and necessary patience, of backs bent to the ground, hands massaging the crops, of waiting on weather and growth...Man and horse were all the power we had – abetted by levers and pulleys. But the horse was king...His eight miles an hour was the limit of our movements, as it had been since the days of the Romans...This was what we were born to, and all we knew at first. Then, to the scream of the horse, the change began...Meanwhile the old people just dropped away – the white-whiskered, gaitered, booted and bonneted, ancient-tongued last of their world, who thee'd and thou'd both man and beast, called young girls “damsels”, young boys “squires”, old men “masters”, the Squire himself “He”, and who remembered the Birdlip stagecoach (Lee 1962: 216-222).

From stagecoach to motor bus in one lifetime is a radical change, and one which many people experienced. Lee gives a full picture of village life before the coming of the effects of industrialism, with its seasonal celebrations, its insularity and isolation, and its social relations. The rupture of a lifestyle is perhaps most visible in the old people, the “ancient-tongued last of their world”, but the importance of this picture is “the end of a thousand years' life”, Hobsbawm's “the most fundamental transformation of human life” (p.12), and if Lee's Cotswold village experienced it later than other places, the significance is more in the profundity than in the timing of the transformation.

### 1.3 CLASS AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE WORKING CLASS

According to Harrison: “The pyramid of English society in the eighteenth century was made up of ranks and orders rather than classes... At the top were the king and the great proprietors of land ...numbering perhaps 150” (Harrison 1965: 3). He goes on to say that below this oligarchy were the gentry, the yeomen, tenants, and labourers, and in the towns the merchants, tradesmen, and professionals, and “...the rest of the community (craftsmen, artisans and labourers – of varying degrees of skill and remuneration) made up the “lower orders”, the “common people”, or simply “the poor” ” (Harrison 1965: 3). Besides reflecting the clear hierarchy which existed in England, the words used, rank or order, also reflect the static concept of social organization. When the stasis of society was fractured, the vocabulary also altered, and thus class in its modern meaning is a relatively new term. Williams says:

It is only at the end of the eighteenth century that the modern structure of *class*, in its social sense, begins to be built up. First comes *lower classes*, to join *lower orders*, which appears earlier in the eighteenth century. Then, in the 1790s we get *higher classes*; *middle classes* and *middling classes* follow at once; *working classes* in about 1815; *upper classes* in the 1820s. *Class prejudice*, *class legislation*, *class consciousness*, *class conflict* and *class war* follow in the course of the nineteenth century... It is obvious, of course, that this spectacular history of the new use of *class* does not indicate the *beginning* of social divisions in England. But it indicates, quite clearly, a change in the character of these divisions, and it records, equally clearly, a change in attitudes towards them. *Class* is a more indefinite word than *rank*, and this was probably one of the reasons for its introduction (Williams 1985: 14-15).

These changes in vocabulary reflected the changes in society which were taking place at the time, particularly in the areas of work and politics, and the fact that the vocabulary has changed little in the ensuing two centuries reflects the fact that the underlying social structure of industrialism has also changed little, and Edgell says:

“The modern vocabulary of class is inextricably associated with the total reorganization of society that followed the industrial revolution” (Edgell 1997: 1).

The definition and analysis of class remains a hotly-debated topic, and there are numerous systems and theories of categorization. Edgell points out that the definition reached will naturally depend on the criteria used, and he defines these by three key choices which must be made:

The first choice...involves which conceptual scheme to use, i.e. a social class scheme, an occupational class scheme, or a mixed one, and by implication, which theory of class to draw upon, i.e. neo-Marxist theory, neo-Weberian theory, or both. The second and third choices concern to whom the selected class categories should be applied. This involves two distinct yet linked decisions. First, should the unit of class analysis be the respondent/individual or the family/household? Second, should the degree of coverage of the population be all adult respondents/household members or only the economically active respondents/household members? (Edgell 1997: 42)

Each of these three choices can clearly influence the resulting analysis, but it is the first and most basic question which most concerns us, namely how to define a class and the people of whom it is constituted. Marx’s theory, as mentioned above by Edgell, remains influential, and in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) he simplifies the classes into two: “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx and Engels 1976b: 485). For Marx, the basic division was between those who owned the means of production and those who did not, and thus the latter were forced to sell the only thing of economic value which they had, their labour-power, and so: “These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce” (Marx and Engels 1976b: 490).

The sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) “...is credited with developing Marx’s theory of class in the broader context of what has since become known as social stratification, i.e. the division of society into a number of hierarchically arranged

strata” (Edgell 1997: 11). Weber, continues Edgell, agreed with Marx in conceptualising class in economic terms, but he placed more emphasis on the effects of knowledge and skills, and also differentiated between class and status. His account of class is more complex than Marx’s, and for him class was only one of a number of social stratifications, a more complex view which has found sympathy among those who consider Marx’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century theories to be inapplicable to later social developments, whereas Weber’s more flexible and complex ideas are more easily adaptable to subsequent changes in society (Edgell 1997: 11-14). These two essentially overlapping rather than conflicting explanations are still the basis for most work in this area: “The theoretical dominance of Marx and Weber’s accounts of the meaning of class is reflected in the continuity between their perspectives and in virtually all subsequent attempts to understand the key concept of class” (Edgell 1997: 16). Both give a central importance to the individual’s relation to property, and to the role of work, and if Weber distinguishes more between different types of work and occupational skills, both he and Marx place the unskilled manual labourer at the bottom of the class system, as do all other tabulations of class. According to the criteria used, contemporary theorists give 3 or 5 or 10 or 12 distinct categories of class, if not more, as summarized by Edgell (Edgell 1997: 16-38). One aspect which all descriptions of class have in common, however, is that occupation and property are central factors in any definition.

In 1947 Orwell wrote: “It is usual to classify modern society under three headings: the upper class or *bourgeoisie*, the middle class, or *petite bourgeoisie*, and the working class, or proletariat. This roughly fits the facts...” (Orwell 1958: 68). Naturally, this is a simplification of a very complex question, and there are differences and gradations within a particular class just as much as between different

classes.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless these three terms, upper, middle and working, are the most frequently used and the most commonly understood, so I shall proceed on this general basis, except when further clarification is necessary.

Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), a work which is subtitled *Aspects of working-class life*, repeats Orwell's avoidance of exactitude when he gives what he calls "A rough definition" of the working class (Hoggart 1971: 18). This definition encompasses such questions as work and income, of course, but also includes housing, education, speech, attitudes and clothing (Hoggart 1971: 18-26). However, one essential feature of class categorization is self-identification, and Hoggart writes :

...those [working-class people] I have in mind still to a considerable extent retain a sense of being in a group of their own, and this without there being necessarily implied any feeling of inferiority or pride; they feel rather that they are "working-class" in the things they admire and dislike, in "belonging". Such a distinction does not go far, but it is important (Hoggart 1971: 19).

This sense of belonging is one of the most important features of class formation and

Belchem says:

Social scientists have distinguished four aspects of class-consciousness: class identity – the definition of oneself as working class; class opposition – the perception of employers and their agents as enduring class opponents; class totality – making both identity and opposition the central defining feature of one's total situation; and class alternative – the conception of an alternative form of social organization. Consciousness thus extends from the unmediated product of daily experience – workers and their families were forcefully reminded of their class identity in everyday contact with employers, landlords, creditors, charity and Poor Law officials – to the project of the "militant minority", the committed few who endeavoured to weld workmates and neighbours into a self-aware and purposeful working class (Belchem 1996: 3).

Belchem's first point, that of class identity, agrees with Hoggart's observations, and the second point simply shows that there is both internal and external reinforcement of this identification. The militant minority of the final point is and has been a crucial

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<sup>9</sup> Orwell describes himself as having been born into "...the lower-upper-middle class" (Orwell 1976: 106) a phrase which shows both some of the possible class gradations and also the general understanding of, and importance given to, such gradations which his use of the phrase implies.

factor in the history of the working class, as I hope will become clear in the succeeding pages; the point of totality is the only point which it is difficult to maintain, in my opinion, especially when it is described as “the central defining feature” of life; an important feature, certainly, but very few people define themselves exclusively in class terms, and Arthur Seaton, for example, while frequently describing himself and others in terms of identification and opposition, nevertheless has another, more personal, life where such terms and feelings do not apply.

The quote from Williams above (p.24) shows how the new use of the word “class” was a recognition of the changing divisions in society as a consequence of industrialism; the profound and ineradicable changes in every aspect of life, particularly in working conditions, of which I have tried to give a brief outline, affected unimaginable, till then, numbers of people for whom these changes had definitely been for the worse, and the commonality of experience and interests thus engendered the collective class consciousness and reactions which helped to forge the working class.

This process was described by E.P.Thompson in 1963 in his *The Making of the English Working Class*, a work which Storey calls “monumental” (Storey 1998: 41), and which covers the years 1780 – 1832, the early years of industrialism when, Thompson argues, the working class formed itself in reaction to “these times of acute social disturbance” (Thompson 1968: 13). As reflected in the title of the book, he argues that the making of the working class was an active process, and he also says that class in itself is not a fixed “thing”, but is rather a phenomenon which exists in

relation to other groups and sectors of society, a view which draws on Marx's ideas and which has since become widely accepted:<sup>10</sup>

The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making...By class I understand a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness. I emphasize that it is a *historical* phenomenon. I do not see class as a "structure" or even as a "category", but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships...Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily...In the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employers (Thompson 1968: 9-12).

Thompson argues, with a quantity and depth of detail which is impossible to summarize briefly, that as a response to the new conditions of work and life, the working people came together in numerous associations, societies, clubs, groups and unions. These were active in different regions and different industries, some were local in character while others were national, some had ties to a particular religion or sect while some were determinedly secular, and there was an enormous variety of opinions regarding strategies and objectives; however, in broad terms, the two main spheres of activity could be described as political, generally calling for a reform of the current parliamentary system and an extension of suffrage, and work-related, generally calling for increased pay and better working and living conditions<sup>11</sup>. Of the political movement, Harrison says:

The movement for parliamentary reform in the 1780s was followed by working-class agitation of a much more democratic character...In the main provincial cities the radical reformers organized themselves in Hampden clubs, Union Societies, and radical associations. With the support of a vigorous press, led by Cobbett's *Political Register*, and under the leadership of popular figures such as Henry ("Orator") Hunt and William Cobbett the radicals' propaganda for parliamentary

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<sup>10</sup> Eagleton, for example, writes: "...classes exist only *in and through class-struggle*, in and through their structural and ideological antagonisms to one another" (Eagleton 1980: 6).

<sup>11</sup> Thompson 1968: *passim*.

reform soon reached very large proportions. Their main demands were for universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and repeal of the corn laws (Harrison 1965: 123).

Such popular activism eventually found support for reform within parliament, and the 1832 Reform Act made some changes. There was a redistribution of seats, generally in favour of the new urbanized industrial areas, and the electorate was increased by about 50%. However, there was a property qualification for the right to vote, thus the newly-enfranchised were basically from the middle class, and “the vote was still restricted to one man in five” (Harrison 1965: 124). This, of course, did little to satisfy those of little or no property, and Thompson quotes the opinion of a witness before a parliamentary committee in 1835:

Q. Are the working classes better satisfied with the institutions of the country since the change has taken place?

A. I do not think they are. They viewed the Reform Bill as a measure calculated to join the middle and upper classes to Government, and leave them in the hands of Government as a sort of machine to work according to the pleasure of Government (Thompson 1968: 915).

The dissatisfaction aroused among the still disenfranchised majority served to intensify rather than mitigate the vocal calls for greater democracy, which found a focus of unification, albeit temporary, in the movement known as Chartism. Though not a new movement, inasmuch that the ideas and many of the leaders involved were simply continuing the tradition of protest which was by then well-founded, the publication of the “People’s Charter” in 1838, with its “Six Points” calling for a reform of parliament and full adult male suffrage, provided a rallying point for the diffuse movements which could now focus their efforts on a specific question, namely, the vote. Thompson says that “the claim for the vote implied also further claims: a new way of reaching out by working people for *social control* over their conditions of life and labour” (Thompson 1968: 910), and this struggle for some

control in a wider arena than that solely of politics is one of the most significant aspects of Chartism. At different periods and in different areas Chartism encompassed questions of labour and living conditions as well as politics, but the main thrust of the movement was the Charter itself, in support of which petitions were presented to Parliament in 1839, 1842 and 1848, only for the petition to be refused each time. After 1848 the movement began to peter out<sup>12</sup>, and subsequent Reform Acts in 1867 and 1884/5 eventually ended many of the more blatant corrupt election practices, and extended the vote to some two-thirds of the adult male population (Read 1994: 302), though there were still property qualifications which effectively barred the poorest members of society from voting.

Although Chartism as a movement lasted only some ten years, it was a crucial phenomenon in the formation of the working class, not so much for what it achieved as in the fact that: “Chartism was the first movement to overcome “valley mentality”, to set local and sectional rivalries aside, uniting the workers in a national campaign” (Belchem 1996: 110). The increasing acceptance of the inevitability of parliamentary reform was not due to Chartism alone, but the phenomenon of a nationally-organized working class undoubtedly gave a strong impetus to the reform movement inside and outside parliament, and the legacy of Chartism was probably more important than its achievements.

As with the increased legislative response to industrialism in the field of democracy, as measured by the right to vote, so there was a legislative reaction to the working conditions of the new workshops and factories, and the repressive measures of the early stages of industrialism gave way to a different attitude on the part of both employers and Parliament, with various laws being passed to protect the workers and

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<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed account of Chartism see: Belchem 1996: 104-144.

to limit the hours worked, particularly in the case of women and children. According to Hobsbawm, this change started in the 1840s and continued for the rest of the century, and was probably a result of the evolution into the aforementioned second phase of industry:

Extra-economic compulsion diminished, the readiness to accept legal supervision of working conditions – as by the admirable Factory Inspectors – increased. These were not so much victories of rationality, or even of political pressure, as relaxations of tension. British industrialists now felt rich and confident enough to be able to afford such changes (Hobsbawm 1999: 102).

Nevertheless, it would be the gravest mistake to view these official reactions to industrialism simply as a rational and human, if sometimes belated, recognition of the changing face of England and the responsibility of the rulers to redress the wrongs of those who were suffering most. Any advances brought about were the result of loud, vocal, often violent large-scale protests by the working class, and any progress made had to be fought for and won. Thompson says:

The eighteenth and early nineteenth century are punctuated by riot, occasioned by bread prices, turnpikes and tolls, excise, “rescue”, strikes, new machinery, enclosures, press-gangs and a score of other grievances. Direct action on particular grievances merges on the one hand into the great political risings of the “mob” - the Wilkes agitation of the 1760s and 1770s, the Gordon Riots (1780), the mobbing of the King in the London streets (1795 and 1820), the Bristol Riots (1831) and the Birmingham Bull Ring riots (1839). On the other hand it merges with organized forms of sustained illegal action or quasi-insurrection - Luddism (1811-1813), the East Anglian Riots (1816), the “Last Labourer’s Revolt”(1830), the Rebecca Riots (1839 and 1842) and the Plug Riots (1842) (Thompson 1968: 66-67).

Since Thompson deals principally with the years 1780-1832, his account ends at the beginning of the 1840s, but this is by no means to say that such popular actions finished at this time. Rallies, demonstrations, strikes and riots were common, and in a country where the vast majority of the working class could not vote, this type of popular agitation was the only method available of expressing grievances which were felt by many. Chartism had shown itself capable of attracting large numbers of people

to public meetings (the latest historical estimate of the attendance at the last and largest in Kennington in 1848 is 150,000 (Belchem 1996: 133) ) and the habit of public protest had now become deeply engrained. Hobsbawm argues that in the more prosperous period of the mid-century years some of this zeal for agitation was blunted: “Affluence – or what men used to starvation regarded as comfort – had extinguished the fires in hungry bellies” (Hobsbawm 1999: 105). However, the desire for reform continued, and the Reform League demonstration in 1867 in Hyde Park went ahead despite attempts by the authorities to ban it, and: “Led by the Clerkenwell branch of the Reform League, carrying a red flag surmounted with a Cap of Liberty, some 150,000 demonstrators marched through the open park gates on 6 May to attend a peaceable and triumphant meeting” (Belchem 1996: 179). As the economy evolved into the Great Depression of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the deterioration of conditions led to a resurgence of activity, and the Acts of 1871 and 1875, by which “trade unions were given what amounted to the legal status they were to retain for more than a century” (Hobsbawm 1999: 103) undoubtedly helped, or at least did not hinder, the strikes and protests which were a common feature of these years. In the 1880s and 90s there were strikes by dockers, the “matchgirls” of a London match factory, (a strike which had and still has a more than local and temporal significance, since it was a prime example of collective power resulting in victory)<sup>13</sup>, gas workers, textile workers and engineers, with accompanying lockouts in the cotton and engineering sectors. This period also saw the formation of powerful employers’ associations and organizations to provide blackleg labour during strikes, and this period of confrontation and increased self-awareness led to a growing co-operation between labour leaders and socialist politicians; this found fruit in the first explicitly

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<sup>13</sup> [www.unionhistory.info](http://www.unionhistory.info) Access date: 24.11.2006

“labour” M.P.s in the 1900 elections, of whom Keir Hardie was one, and thus the eventual birth of the Labour party.<sup>14</sup>

Activity was not limited to the sphere of labour, however, and even after the cessation of that activity which could be called Chartist, bodies such as the abovementioned Reform League, which had strong links with the embryo Trade Union movement, or the Social Democratic Foundation (S.D.F.) (Read 1994: 176), continued to agitate for political change, with the same main objectives as before, namely full suffrage and a more professional parliament. The mass meeting of unemployed in London in 1886, organized by a group with links to the Conservative-dominated Fair Trade League, was disrupted by the rival S.D.F., who used the occasion to denounce the Conservatives and preach socialism and revolution. After the meeting broke up, rioting and looting took place in the West End of London, and it took the police hours to restore order. This became known as “Black Monday” and Read, from whom the above information is taken, says: “According to *The Times*, the Trafalgar Square riots of February 1886 excited more alarm in London even than the Chartist meeting on Kennington Common in 1848” (Read 1994: 324). After this, the use of public space became a political question with important consequences.

As we have seen, then, from the very beginning industrialism was accompanied by protests on both a small and a large scale, many of which caused genuine fear among the ruling class of a revolution in the French style. The repression which was the official reaction to the perceived threat of a vocal, potentially violent, working class in some cases took a legislative form, as has been mentioned. In other cases the reaction was more direct, and gave rise to an alternative history with its alternative working-class heroes and martyrs.

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<sup>14</sup> For the information above see: Read 1994: 324-328.

What became known as the “Massacre of Peterloo” or simply “Peterloo” took place in 1819 in St. Peter’s Fields in Manchester; 11 people were killed and over 400 wounded when the yeomanry and regular cavalry “dispersed” a peaceful reform meeting which was to be addressed by, among others, “Orator” Hunt. The name itself, with its echo of the recent battle of Waterloo, gives an idea of the carnage which was involved, and the leading radical weaver Samuel Bamford, who took part in the meeting, writes of how: “Sabres were plied to hew a way through naked held-up hands and defenceless heads; and then chopped limbs and wound-gaping skulls were seen” (Bamford 1965: 126). Harrison (from whom this information is taken), says of Peterloo that “its memory was enshrined in the writings and speeches and on the banners of succeeding generations of reformers” (Harrison 1965: 124).

A less violent but perhaps even more notorious case is that of the six men known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, from the village of that name in Dorset. Members of a Friendly Society, a type of organization that was the forerunner of the Trade Unions, in 1834 they were arrested under an obscure law for having taken, as part of the induction ceremony, “illegal oaths”, and were convicted and transported. This aroused a huge public outcry, and they were soon pardoned and returned to England, and they are now seen as being, in some way, the earliest figures of the Trade Union movement. (There is now a park and visitors’ centre in Tolpuddle.)<sup>15</sup>

In 1839, after Chartist leaders had been arrested in the aftermath of the presentation of the Charter to Parliament, there was a mass protest, aiming at a forceful occupation of the town, in Newport, known as the Newport Rising, in which the marchers were met by the military: “22 chartists were killed and many more injured, the greatest

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<sup>15</sup> Source: [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) Access date 20.3.2006

casualties inflicted by the military on the British civilian population in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (Belchem 1996: 110).

In November 1887, eighteen months after the events of “Black Monday”, and five months after the numerous public celebrations of Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, a demonstration to protest against the banning of all public meetings in Trafalgar Square was violently broken up by soldiers and mounted police, with three demonstrators being killed (Belchem 1996: 233). There was widespread criticism of the police brutality and this suppression of free speech, and so: “ “Bloody Sunday” became a long-remembered date in the socialist calendar” (Read 1994: 325).

These names, Tolpuddle and Newport, Peterloo and Bloody Sunday, were and to varying degrees still are seminal dates and events in the history of the working class, but they are simply the most obvious of innumerable displays of the force of the established rulers. Apart from physical force, the legal system was used in the attempts to stamp out revolt, and the Last Labourer’s Revolt of 1830, for example, also known as the Swing Riots, resulted in mass arrests and trials all over the country. According to Thompson: “In the end, nine labourers were hanged, 457 transported, and about 400 imprisoned” (Thompson 1968: 250). Arrests and prison sentences were a common form of reprisal, and although the widespread riots and protests of the first half of the century gave way to more organized and more politicized strikes and demonstrations, the power of the law was still felt, such as when two of the leaders of the “Bloody Sunday” demonstration were jailed for their part in the organization (Read 1994: 325). As has been mentioned, advances were made in the legislative field, usually in response to popular discontent, but the working class had few doubts as to whom or what the law was intended to protect or punish. Thompson concentrates on the years up to 1832, feeling that these first years of industrialism

were the most important in the formation of the working class, and one crucial factor in this process was the official resistance which it provoked. He says:

They were told that they had no rights, but they knew that they were born free. The Yeomanry rode down their meeting, and the right of public meeting was gained. The pamphleteers were gaoled, and from the gaols they edited pamphlets. The trade unionists were imprisoned, and they were attended to prison by processions and union banners. Segregated in this way, their institutions acquired a peculiar toughness and resilience. Class also acquired a peculiar resonance in English life: everything, from their schools to their shops, their chapels to their amusements, was turned into a battleground of class (Thompson 1968: 914).

#### **1.4 REACTIONS TO PROTEST**

The official reaction to the increasing assertiveness of the new working class could be characterized as one of repression, as shown by Thompson above, and partial appeasement, the latter usually coming as a last resort. Writing of the period between the Napoleonic wars and the middle 1840s, Hobsbawm says:

At no other period in modern British history have the common people been so persistently, profoundly, and often desperately dissatisfied. At no other period since the seventeenth century can we speak of large masses of them as revolutionary, or discern at least one moment of political crisis (between 1830 and the Reform Act of 1832) when something like a revolutionary situation might actually have developed (Hobsbawm 1999: 51).

The possibility of revolution was perhaps strongest in the period mentioned by Hobsbawm, but this was by no means the only time when it seemed to many that the fabric of society was in danger of being torn apart, since every aspect of life was, in Thompson's words, a battleground. The threat of revolution, or at least of widespread violence directed against the existing order, created a very real fear in the dominant classes, and events such as the revolutions in America, in France (in 1789 and 1830), and the widespread turmoil in Europe for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century all helped to see the new large industrial working class, exploited, unenfranchised and vocal, as a

genuine threat to the rest of society. One reaction was, of course, repression, and this has already been mentioned, and the view that the strikers/rioters/protestors were nothing more than criminals, and thus the authorities had the right, if not the actual duty, to use any means deemed appropriate to control them, was (and remains) common. However, there were other, more considered, reactions to the situation. Many people accepted that it was impossible to pretend that there were not now in England millions of people who lived in inhuman conditions, and it was quite understandable that they should do as much as they could to improve these conditions. This was summarized by Carlyle in the well-known “Condition-of-England” question, published in 1839 in an essay on Chartism: “Is the condition of the English working people wrong; so wrong that rational working men cannot, will not, and even should not rest quiet under it ?” (Carlyle 1971: 152-3).

While the authorities frequently expressed and attempted to enforce the view that the working men should, indeed, “rest quiet”, there were a number of commentators who acknowledged that the prevailing conditions were unacceptable to everyone, not only those who were suffering the most, and thus it behoved society as a whole to find solutions to the problems which were affecting, or threatening to affect, society as a whole. While there was, of course, much writing in favour of reform, there was also a great deal written by those who were against any basic political reform but were nevertheless generally sympathetic to the workers. Many of the prevalent ideas of the time had been influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, particularly the Scottish Enlightenment, and the succeeding idea of Utilitarianism, which held that the rightness or not of an action depends only on the result, which serves to increase or not the sum of human happiness. Milner defines it as “a view of the social world as consisting, ideally or factually, in a plurality of discrete, separate, rational individuals,

each of whom is motivated, to all intents and purposes exclusively, by the pursuit of pleasure (or “utility”) and the avoidance of pain” (Milner 1994: 8). It has been said by its detractors that Utilitarianism is nothing more than “political economy translated into the discourse of ethics expressing the ethos of bourgeois society”<sup>16</sup>, but, however it is defined, there is no doubt that it was an influential doctrine which could be easily adapted to the era of industrialization, and thus much of the writing in favour of change, and especially change in the conditions of the workers, presents as a primary motive the fact that a happy or satisfied worker is a more productive worker.

Even the millionaire-turned-philanthropist Robert Owen, whom Williams describes as “one of the founders of English socialism, and of the cooperative movement” (Williams 1985: 39) was capable of advising the new industrialists in 1813:

If, then, due care as to the state of your inanimate machines can produce such beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines, which are much more wonderfully constructed?...The more delicate, complex, living mechanism would be equally improved by being trained to strength and activity...it would also prove true economy to keep it neat and clean; to treat it with kindness, that its mental movements might not experience too much irritating friction...I venture to assure you, that your time and money so applied, if directed by a true knowledge of the subject, would return to you, not five, ten, or fifteen per cent of your capital so expended, but often fifty, and in many cases a hundred per cent (Owen in Williams 1985: 45).

Possibly Owen thought he would have a greater chance of success by appealing to the owners` self-interest (and increased individuality and freedom were key ideas of the Enlightenment), and to characterize Owen on the basis of only this quote as someone unaware of the humanity of the workers would be grossly unfair, yet his choice of language is nevertheless revealing, and echoes the workers` complaints mentioned earlier: “vital machines”, “living mechanisms”, “it”, and the correct (most profitable) form of maintenance of this machine is to train it “to strength and activity”, “to keep it neat and clean; to treat it with kindness” and to avoid too much

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<sup>16</sup> [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org)

“irritating friction” of the mind. There is nothing as specific as, for example, a pay rise, or a shorter working week, let alone the right to vote, and it is clear that even for someone as radical as Owen, the problems could be solved with increased personal attention to the worker on the part of the employer. The attitudes revealed in this quote are also indicative of a common attitude to the calls for increased democracy, namely that the workers were not yet sufficiently educated or responsible to be able to take important decisions, or indeed any decisions at all. Repeating an argument heard before from earlier thinkers such as Burke, Carlyle said in a response to Chartism:

What is the meaning of the “five points”<sup>17</sup> if we will understand them? What are all popular commotions and maddest bellowings, from Peterloo to the Place-de Grève itself? Bellowings, *inarticulate* cries of a dumb creature in rage or pain; to the ear of wisdom they are *inarticulate* prayers: “Guide me, govern me! I am mad and miserable and cannot guide myself!” Surely of all “rights of man”, this right of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser, to be, gently or forcibly, held in the true course by him, is the indisputablest (Carlyle 1971: 189).

This was a commonly-expressed attitude among the opponents of reform, whether sincerely held or whether a rationalization of the unwillingness to surrender power is impossible to say. In 1830, two years before the first Reform Act, the Duke of Wellington, the Tory Prime Minister and an opponent of reform, could not see any need to change or expand participation in a system that was excellent in all regards: “...I have never read or heard of any measure up to the present moment which can in any degree satisfy my mind that the state of representation can be improved” (Wellington 1965: 130). In 1867, before the Second Reform Act, Robert Lowe, the strongest opponent of the bill in Parliament, based his opposition on the argument that, even more so in the rapidly changing times, government should be the province of an elite based on ability and intelligence, qualities which the working class did not possess:

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<sup>17</sup> Carlyle treats the Chartist call for universal suffrage as the main point, and the other five as separate and additional.

Protection, for example, is the political economy of the poor, simply because they are not able to follow the chain of reasoning which demonstrates that they themselves are sure to be the victims of the waste of capital which protection implies. I dare say that a democratic House of Commons would deal with many of these questions...but that does not prove that they would, by doing so, benefit the poor, or that the interest of the poor would be promoted by placing in their hands a more extended power of injuring themselves (Lowe 1965: 238).

Even among those who were most sympathetic to the workers` causes, whether on grounds of morality or practicality, the prevailing ideas were either that the workers were, at best, like children who did not yet have the experience or education to take part fully in “adult” affairs, or at worst “dumb creatures”, and thus the rulers had a moral duty to rule *for* them, articulate those needs which they were unable to express, and protect them from themselves.

## **1.5 EDUCATION AND RELIGION**

Perhaps the main difference between these two viewpoints is that the former accepts the possibility of the workers` being improved, or trained, (whether because it was more practical or because it was morally right makes little difference) as can be seen in the above quote from Owen (p.39), and thus throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the question of education assumed great importance.

One aspect that could be agreed upon by people of all political stripes was that any education offered should have a strong moral bias, an idea hardly surprising in an age in which organized religion held an important place, not least in the field of education.

Harrison says:

The Victorian era was essentially a religious age, at least as measured by the extent of outward religious observance. Strict sabbatarianism and regular church-and chapel-going were the effects of that evangelicalism which...permeated every aspect of Victorian life. The census of religious life carried out by Horace Mann in 1851 showed that more than half the people attended some place of worship on

Sunday...Church and chapel were closely woven into the texture of English social life, and helped to provide something of that social cement which was so conspicuously lacking in the new urban industrial civilization. From the pulpit came social as well as religious leadership (Harrison 1965: 173).

The established church, the Church of England, in many ways enjoyed a phase of expansion throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was the official church of an increasingly prosperous England and a rapidly-expanding Empire, and the growth of large urban populations offered the chance of new parishes and new parishioners, and in many industrial areas the Anglican church was a vocal proponent of change. The growth of education, in the hands of the churches, also stimulated a spate of building, as the need for new churches and schools became pressing, and in general the church was active at all levels of the new society.

On the other hand, the Anglican church was considered as the representative of Tory politics (it later came to be known as “the Conservative Party at prayer”) and the social hierarchy, where the relative positions of the congregants were reflected in where they sat in church (in the “Squire’s Pew” for example) or even in what order they went to take communion.<sup>18</sup> This identification of the church as another part of the ruling system was a major cause of the increasing popularity of the Dissenting or Non-Conformist denominations. In general these preached a doctrine of spiritual equality, something which found a large appreciative audience. The chapels of the Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and others, often large and prosperous, became familiar sights in many towns, and many became fashionable centres of the new middle class, and if the Church of England was identified with the Tories, the Chapels were frequently identified with Liberal policies. Probably the most influential of these denominations was Methodism. After the death of Wesley in 1791 there were

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<sup>18</sup> For an example of the Anglican church as an agent of social reinforcement, see: Arch 1965: 174-176, in which he writes of how seeing his father having to wait in the “social queue” for communion in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century led to his embracing Methodism.

numerous splits and divisions resulting in various “connexions”. Whereas Wesleyan Methodism became increasingly conservative, many of the new connexions were egalitarian in spirit, with strong and far-reaching roots in the working communities. Eschewing the hierarchy of the established church and placing greater emphasis on self-governing participatory worship, Methodism also promoted self-education, discussion groups which were not limited to religious topics, public and private lay preaching and a host of committees, clubs and organizations.<sup>19</sup> In 1820 Southey complained:

Perhaps the manner in which Methodism has familiarized the lower classes to the work of combining in associations, making rules for their own governance, raising funds and communicating from one part of the kingdom to another, may be reckoned among the incidental evils which have resulted from it (Southey in Thompson 1968: 46).

If the organizing talents of Methodism caused disquiet among the upper classes on a level which can be called political, its religious beliefs did the same on what could be described as a more personal level, as shown by the letter from the Duchess of Buckingham, written to the Methodist Countess of Huntingdon at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

I Thank Your Ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers; their doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinged with disrespect towards their Superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and to do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.<sup>20</sup>

Plainly, not everyone agreed that “we are all sinners”, and it is clear from this letter that the tenets of the Methodists and other Non-Conformists were seen to have an effect beyond the purely religious sphere.

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<sup>19</sup> For the role of religion and the churches see: Harrison 1965: 173-188; Belchem 1996: 50-60; Thompson 1968: *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> Source: wesley.nnu.edu Access date: 30.3.2006

It should be noted here that Thompson, while not denying the deep-rooted allegiance to Methodism and other Non-Conformist sects held by a great number of workers, and the benefits in education and organization which were enjoyed, sees a more insidious influence simultaneously functioning in favour of an acceptance of one's condition in life, and thus an acceptance of the *status quo*. According to Thompson, Methodism preached that since Adam, man was born to hard work and poverty, and one could only accept this and seek grace through a methodical discipline in every aspect of life, which included such habits as sobriety, thrift and cleanliness. Since many of the employers and overseers were also Non-Conformists, these habits were also introduced and practised in the workplace, and so there was an "...extraordinary correspondence between the virtues which Methodism inculcated in the working class and the desiderata of middle-class Utilitarianism" (Thompson 1968: 401).

Whatever other effects of Non-Conformism there may have been, however, the dominant ethos of self-discipline and self-improvement meant that the Methodists and other churches were active in the area of education, both for children and adults, and one of the two largest voluntary elementary school systems was supported by the Non-Conformists, with the other falling under the aegis of the Anglicans. It could well seem that the education offered was more of an attraction than any religious solace and, writing of the mid-century, Belchem says that "...no more than 4 per cent of total Sunday school enrolment belonged at any one time to a church or chapel" (Belchem 1996: 146). He goes on to say, however, that despite the lack of formal commitment to any denomination, the influence of organized religion continued: "Few working-class people would admit to not being Christian – in pubs and

workshops... outright atheists were “looked upon as tempters of Providence, very odd fish indeed” ” (Belchem 1996: 228).

The two church-run school systems had been started at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and were later partly supported and administered by the state. Indeed, this competition between the two systems was probably the biggest obstacle to the establishment of an inclusive public education system in England, something which did not happen until 1870, later than in other European countries. However, there was some provision of education for the working class before this date, with children being catered for by the above-mentioned schools controlled by the different church organizations, plus a patchwork of dame schools, factory schools, charity schools and Sunday schools. Adults could also receive some sort of instruction at Mechanics` Institutes, Adult Schools, mutual improvement societies and night schools. All of these helped to reduce the illiteracy figures, variously estimated as between a quarter and a third of the working-class population in the 1830s and 1840s (Harrison 1965: 190). During this period, it was frequently claimed in parliamentary debates and by different commissions of enquiry that the educational, religious and moral condition of the industrial areas was much worse than in other parts of the country, something which stimulated Edward Baines, a leading Whig/Liberal figure and the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, to undertake in 1843 a survey in Yorkshire and Lancashire to show the extent of the various types of church and school provision:

3d. That the provision for religious instruction is far more abundant in proportion to the population, now than it was at the beginning of the *century*. The Church and Chapel accommodation has been increased 219 per cent., while the population has only increased 127 per cent.

4<sup>th</sup>. That Sunday Schools have been provided...in which one in every 5- *and-two-thirds of the population* are enrolled on the books, - which must include an immense proportion of all the children of the working classes.

5<sup>th</sup>. That 55 per cent of the children in Sunday Schools are *able* to read, and are *actually reading, the Holy Scriptures...*

7<sup>th</sup>. That one in every ten of the population are taught in Day Schools, of whom only a small proportion in Dame and Factory Schools.

8<sup>th</sup>. That the proportions of the Established Church and other religious bodies, so far as the sittings in Churches and Chapels would indicate, are as follows, viz.: Established Church, 377,104 sittings, - other Religious Denominations, 617,479... I might dwell on the many institutions and associations for the diffusion of knowledge, and for the disposing of every kind of good which have arisen within the present or the last generation, and which flourish most in the Manufacturing towns and villages; - such as Mechanics' Institutes, Literary Societies, Circulating Libraries, Youths' Guardian Societies, Friendly Societies, Temperance Societies, Medical Charities, Clothing Societies, Benevolent and District Visiting Societies, &c., - forty-nine fiftieths of which are of quite recent origin (Baines 1965: 191-192).

Besides underlining the comparative dominance of the Chapel over the Church in this region, the picture given by Baines is that of a working class which was increasingly self-organized, self-assertive and literate, and which while often connected to a particular religious denomination was prepared to take advantage of the benefits offered, both collectively and individually, especially in the area of education. This should not be considered as particularly surprising, since industrial society, more than any previous age, was based on the printed word. The written word was used as an agent to form the new society and to discredit traditional social habits and customs which did not fit into the new work practices; it was also used to resist these changes, in publications such as Cobbett's *Political Register*, in which were published the influential articles the *Rural Rides*, or the innumerable pamphlets, tracts or broadsheets which were distributed at all levels of society. The idea that education for the working class was unnecessary, or even downright dangerous, was an idea that died hard in many conservative circles, but at the same time many working-class people saw education as a possible route to individual and class progress, both economically and politically.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then, there was a growing demand and a growing supply in education, and this attracted ever-increasing government intervention, culminating in the aforementioned Education Act of 1870, which established free compulsory elementary education. Although it firmly placed education in the sphere of national policy for the first time, Read says that the 1870 Act and subsequent legislation did not educate the illiterate, since these did not exist in any great numbers. Rather, “What the new education did achieve was gradually to raise the standard of reading, writing and general knowledge, at the same time as it ensured that even the hard-core last few per cent of working-class illiterates had almost disappeared by the end of the century” (Read 1994: 86). The informal and haphazard system of education which had existed for some time outside the main semi-public system before 1870 had obviously had an effect in the education of the working class, and Belchem suggests one reason was that these schools were often able to concentrate more “...upon basic instrumental skills, without the unwelcome and time-consuming element of moral regulation that formed a crucial part of the public sector curriculum” (Belchem 1996: 146-147). This moral content was perhaps inevitable, given the dominance of the churches in the provision of education, but apart from, or even despite, the perceived need for more than a purely practical aspect of schooling, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a steady decrease in the illiteracy rates, and this had various effects.

One was the corresponding increase in literary production (and until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the written word retained its primacy over other forms of cultural production) which had grown apace with the other forms of production attendant on industrial methods. The formation of a numerous, prosperous, middle class and the increasing rate of literacy in the working class had created a large reading market whose demands could be, and were, met by increasingly sophisticated production and

distribution systems, and the development of the steam press and of new paper-manufacturing processes are examples of how technological changes often lead to social and cultural changes. Though in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century books were still disproportionately expensive for the middle class, there were new magazines which serialized writers such as Scott and Dickens, and the number of circulating libraries grew, which gave access to books at a more reasonable price, while the poor had cheap editions of “Newgate and Gothic novels” (Belchem 1996: 147). Williams says: “The true history is much more the bringing of cheaper reading matter to the already literate part of the population” (Williams, 1975: 188) rather than a real expansion to supply the newly-literate part of society, a conclusion which would agree with Read’s comments on the general raising of literacy levels. Radway says that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, some publishers realized that some types of book could be sold:

...successfully and continuously to a huge, heterogeneous, preconstituted public. Made possible by revolutionary developments in technology and distribution...this new idea of the book as a saleable commodity gradually began to alter the organization of the editorial process and eventually the conception of publishing itself (Radway 1993: 441).

## **1.6 THE GROWTH OF CULTURE**

This increase in the availability of commercially-produced written material, and the ever-widening variety of such material and the creation of discrete markets, was an important factor in the growth of the idea of culture, a concept which brought together many of the different social strands which were being woven with the passage of time and the evolution of society. The word *culture* itself, according to Williams, changed in meaning with the birth and spread of industrialism, as has been seen with *class* and the other key words examined by him in *Culture and Society*:

Before this period, it had meant, primarily, the “tending of natural growth”, and then, by analogy, a process of human training. But this latter use, which had usually been a culture *of* something, was changed, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, to *culture* as such, a thing in itself. It came to mean, first, “a general state or habit of the mind”, having close relations with the idea of human perfection. Second, it came to mean “the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole”. Third, it came to mean “the general body of the arts”. Fourth, later in the century, it came to mean “a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual”...It might be said, indeed, that the questions now concentrated in the meanings of the word *culture* are questions directly raised by the great historical changes which the changes in *industry*, *democracy*, and *class*, in their own way, represent, and to which the changes in *art* are a closely related response (Williams 1985: 16).

Eagleton says of culture and the related term of *civilization* that:

“...in the eighteenth century [culture] becomes more or less synonymous with “civilization”, in the sense of a general process of intellectual, spiritual and material progress. As an idea, civilization significantly equates manners and morals...Civilization was largely a French notion...and named both the gradual process of social refinement and the utopian *telos* towards which it was unfolding (Eagleton 2000: 9).

These twin ideas of civilization and culture were, at one stage, practically synonymous, as Eagleton says. However, in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, civilization began to be identified more and more with the physical and technical advances of industrialism, both positively and negatively. The positive aspects would include the expansion of education and literacy outlined above, the slow creep towards democracy which was a manifestation of the gradual loss of power of the old landed oligarchy, and the nominal, at least, importance of religion, all of which were seen as visible proof of the progress being made. However, as has been seen with the “Condition of England” question, many were aware that the negative effects were equally visible, and in 1839 the prominent Utilitarian John Stuart Mill wrote:

Take for instance the question how far mankind have gained by civilization...the multiplication of physical comforts; the advancement and diffusion of knowledge; the decay of superstition; the decline of war and personal conflict; the progressive limitation of the tyranny of the strong over the weak;...Another fixes his attention not upon the value of these advantages, but on the high price which is paid for

them; ...the loss of proud and self-relying independence; the demoralizing effects of great inequalities in wealth and social rank; and the sufferings of the great mass of the people of civilized countries, whose wants are scarcely better provided for than those of the savage, while they are bound by a thousand fetters in lieu of the freedom and excitement which are his compensations (Mill 1965: 295- 296).

This passage is from Mill's essay on Coleridge, and was a response to the latter's *On the Constitution of Church and State*, published in 1837. In this work, Coleridge clearly separated civilization and what he called *cultivation*, "...the first time, in fact, that this word has been used to denote a general condition, a "state or habit" of the mind. The word depends, of course, on the force of the important eighteenth-century adjective, *cultivated*" (Williams 1985: 76). Cultivation was both a process and the desired result of that process, and in many ways the opposite of civilization. To administer this cultivation, which he considered to be a necessity in the troubled times, Coleridge proposed a National Clerisy, or National Church, which would be an organ of the state. The scheme would be applied everywhere, and thus it was primarily a plan to produce the individual perfection which was so desired by everyone from Methodists to Utilitarians, but to do this in a social setting and for the general social good. As such it would correspond to the first two meanings of culture given by Williams above, namely the individual and collective development of human potential. The National Clerisy, made up of "the sages and professors of all the so-called liberal arts and sciences", would train a number of other members who would then be distributed throughout the country, each to be a "resident guide, guardian and instructor" whose job would be to "preserve the stores and guard the treasures of past civilization,... to perfect and add to the same", since it is only "by the vital warmth diffused by these truths" and "the guiding light from the philosophy" that everyone will be able to appreciate fully "the permanent distinction and the occasional contrast between cultivation and civilization" and understand "that a nation can never be a too

cultivated, but may easily become an over-civilized, race”; but the most important duty of the National Church would be “to diffuse...to every native entitled to its laws and rights, that knowledge which was indispensable both for the understanding of those rights, and for the performance of the duties correspondent. (Coleridge 1990: 172-3). Coleridge was more explicit than most writers of the period, and he does at least give some idea of both the content and method of cultivation (though the question of “rights” is skated over rather quickly, I feel) and he was much admired by Mill, among others, as can be seen by the fact that Mill felt it necessary to respond to his ideas. His emphasis on the “cultivation” of society, and his frequent use of the word, and of the related “culture”, helped to move the vocabulary closer to its present meaning, and also to give the ideas contained in the vocabulary a prominent position in contemporary discussion. Williams says: “...it is from the time of Coleridge on, as...so ably recognized by Mill, that the idea of Culture enters decisively into English social thinking” (Williams 1985: 74).

Coleridge had been influenced in his thinking by the European ideas of Romanticism and the Romantic poets in England, who took an active role in the political debates of their day, generally on the side of reform. Shelley, for example, wrote his *Sonnet: England in 1819* as a reaction to Peterloo, a poem which contains lines such as “An old mad, blind, despised and dying king...Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know...A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field...” (Shelley 1965: 129). Shelley, Coleridge and other poets such as Wordsworth or Southey were well-known commentators on current events (Williams 1985: 50), adopting a stance which could be described as anti-industrialist and pro-“people”, and for the Romantics, according to Eagleton, “...there is something intrinsically precious about a whole way of life, not least if “civilization “ is busy disrupting it...For the radical

Romantic art, the imagination, folk culture or “primitive” communities are signs of a creative energy which must be spread to political society as a whole” (Eagleton 2000: 14-22). The Romantics’ position on culture (though the word was not in common use at the time) would seem to be close to the fourth definition given by Williams, that of culture as a way of life. On the Romantics’ romanticizing of “the people”, McGuigan says:

In terms of aesthetics, the discovery of popular culture is related to the Romantic reaction to Classicism, the attempt to break with excessively formalistic, dry and unemotional art. To recover something of the vital impulses of ordinary people, their apparent spontaneity and disregard for propriety, their “naturalness”, are among the themes which cut both ways: back to a myth of an “organic” past in contrast to a “mechanical” present, or forward to a Utopian future of popular emancipation (McGuigan 1992:10).

The Romantic idea of art and the role of the artist was influential in the changing use of the words, as mentioned above by Williams. From the time of the Romantics onwards a number of interconnected ideas become established, particularly that of art as a superior expression of the reality of the world, and of the artist as a special type of individual, blessed with unusual abilities. At this time we can also see a change in the attitude of the artist (and in his argument on these points Williams specifies the artist as writer) towards the public (Williams 1985: 49-50). Keats wrote:

I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence – but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the memory of Great Men. When I am writing for myself for the mere sake of the moment’s enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me – but a preface is written to the Public; a thing I cannot help looking upon as an Enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of hostility (Keats 1952: 221).

The public is differentiated from the people, so appreciated by the Romantics, the former being the embodiment of “popular”, which could not serve as any real basis for the judgement of art, whereas the ideal people could be seen as standing above the actualities of the market, and Williams says: “This insistence, it is worth emphasizing,

is one of the primary sources of the idea of Culture. Culture, the “embodied spirit of a People”, the true standard of excellence, became available, in the progress of the century, as a court of appeal in which real values were determined” (Williams 1985: 51-52).

Eagleton writes of the efforts of Romanticism to “square the circle between finding in aesthetic culture an alternative to politics, and finding in it the very paradigm of a transformed political order” (Eagleton 2000: 16); this explanation of the overlapping of the fields in which the romantic poets were active prefigures later developments in the area of culture, such as Coleridge’s National Church, or in the work of Matthew Arnold, whom Milner calls: “...indisputably one of the central figures in the culturalist tradition ...perhaps the single most important 19<sup>th</sup> century progenitor of contemporary English studies” (Milner 1994: 22). For Storey and many other critics, “Arnold established a cultural agenda which remained dominant from the 1860s to the 1950s” (Storey 1998: 3).

## **1.7 CULTURE VERSUS ANARCHY AND CIVILIZATION**

In his most famous work, *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1869, Arnold expressed and synthesized many of the dominant political and social ideas of the time, and sought a solution, for what he saw as the ills of society, in culture. Provoked by the specific events of the suffrage campaign of 1866-67, and the Second Reform Act, it is more generally a reaction to what the middle and upper classes saw as a breaking down of the established order and the threat of the working classes’ eruption into every sphere of national life, and also a reaction against civilization, which is now seen as the enemy of culture, and the cause of many of the disturbing changes in

England. “Civilization was abstract, fragmented, mechanistic, utilitarian, in thrall to crass faith in material progress; culture was holistic, organic, sensuous, autotelic, recollective” (Eagleton 2000: 11).

The title of the work is in itself significant, since Arnold places culture as the direct opponent of anarchy, which was a synonym for popular culture defined as working-class culture, and this is extended to include any political action taken to disrupt the status quo. His view of society in general was far from approving, and he characterizes the aristocracy as Barbarians and the middle class as Philistines, but they do not represent as much danger as the working class. “But that vast portion...of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman’s heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes” (Arnold 1998: 10). He was the son of the famous Headmaster of Rugby school, Dr. Arnold, and besides making a reputation for himself as a poet and essayist he wrote on education and was a schools inspector for over thirty years, so he could claim a much greater practical knowledge of the themes on which he wrote than most of his contemporaries. As could be expected, there is a strong religious and humanist influence in his work, as can be seen in *Culture and Anarchy*:

The whole scope of the essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits... Futile as are many bookmen, and helpless as books and reading often prove for bringing nearer to perfection those who use them, one must...be struck more and more ...to find how much ...a man’s life of each day depends for its solidity and value on whether he reads during that day, and, far more still, on what he reads during it... If a man without books or reading...gets nevertheless a fresh and free play of the best thoughts upon his stock notions and habits, he has got culture...This inward operation is the very life and essence of culture, as we conceive it...Culture... has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater! the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect

man...Only it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty; *real* sweetness and *real* light... Through culture seems to lie our way, not only to perfection, but even to safety...Thus...the very framework and exterior order of the State, is Sacred; and culture is the most resolute enemy of anarchy, because of the great hopes and designs for the State which culture teaches us to nourish (Arnold 1998: 7- 12).

Arnold presents a cogent argument, in that if the sweetness and light of culture can be diffused through all society, the resulting glow of life and thought will give both personal happiness and the accompanying support for order, the antithesis of anarchy, since without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection. The state is the expression of society, and the eventual function of culture is to “nourish” the state. He says that other possible solutions to “our present difficulties” are ultimately ineffective: the provision of popular literature adapted to what are considered the needs of the masses fails on the basis that it is not *real*; while not condemning the work of religious or political bodies, he thinks that they teach down to the masses, and are more interested in winning support for their own ideas; only culture seeks to abolish classes and bring together all the people in a true equality of sweetness and light. Culture is not something which is or has been only for the cultivated minority, and the men of culture who have worked to humanize and diffuse culture to all, who have persisted in sharing the best ideas and the best knowledge of the time, these are the true “apostles of equality”. Until such time that culture prevails, Arnold is in agreement with his father that the best solution to anarchy is that practised by the Romans, which was to “flog the rank and file, and fling the ringleaders from the Tarpeian Rock!” (Arnold 1998: 11). Indeed, Arnold argues, with the spread of culture, the State will eventually become the best expression of our best self, and then anarchy will be suppressed even more firmly, since the State that it is threatening will be even more precious. Unfortunately, the predominance of the humane spirit instilled by culture over the self- or class-instinct

will depend to some extent on the receptivity of the individual, in any class, thus there will probably always be some recalcitrant elements in society. Nevertheless, the natural curiosity about one's best self, and the aspiration to perfection will eventually leave these elements in a minority (Arnold 1998: 7-12).

Arnold's political beliefs were those of a man of his class and time, namely Tory, (throughout the essay he gently berates "our Liberal friends" for what he sees as their over-indulgent attitude to the working-class rioters) so his dependence on firm control as a last resort is hardly surprising, less surprising, in fact, than his belief in a classless society under culture, or his opinion that people ignorant of or resistant to culture would be found at every level of society, not only among the masses.

In many ways Arnold's plan for the spread of culture in society has similarities with Coleridge's, and in many ways the latter's remains the more specific, with a scheme for the diffusion of culture and with a more clearly stated objective, the knowledge necessary for the people to understand and exercise their rights and duties, or at least for those people who had rights. Arnold's objective is the perfection of humanity through sweetness and light, and he makes no specific mention of how this condition is to be brought about, implicitly leaving it to "the men of culture". Although in *Culture and Anarchy* he gives the impression that culture and its benefits are available to all, in other writings he revealed a more conventional distinction:

The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them;...The highly-instructed few, and not the scantily-instructed many, will ever be the organ of the human race of knowledge and truth. Knowledge and truth in the full sense of the words are not attainable by the great mass of the human race at all (Arnold in Storey 1998: 4)

The influence of *Culture and Society* is due to a number of factors. Arnold was the first writer to give a clear and succinct definition of the content and methods of culture as "the best that has been thought and said", and he clearly identified reading,

of the right sort, as the primary means of imbibing culture. He grants that culture is possible without reading, but he does not specify any other way of receiving the “best thoughts”. He also clearly places culture as the opponent of anarchy and, by extension, civilization:

For a long time...the strong feudal habits of subordination and deference continued to tell upon the working class. The modern spirit has now almost entirely dissolved those habits, and the anarchical tendency of our worship of freedom in and for itself, of our superstitious faith, as I say, in machinery, is becoming very manifest (Arnold 1998: 8).

The forces of mechanization and anarchy, or civilization/industrialism and democracy, in other terms, are inextricably connected, and in Milner’s words, “Culture is thus for Arnold a social force in opposition to material civilization, the equivalent, at the societal level, to his own individual role as inspector of schools” (Milner 1994: 22). The “culture and civilization” tradition, Storey says, was “for almost a hundred years...undoubtedly the dominant paradigm in cultural analysis. Indeed, it could be argued that it still forms a kind of repressed “common sense” in certain areas of British and American academic and non-academic life” (Storey 1998: 5). This important idea can thus be seen to have been first explicitly posited by Arnold, and this tradition was, according to Turner,

...concerned by the development of popular culture, and the concomitant decline of more “organic” communal or folk cultures that proceeded from the spread of industrialization...*Culture and Anarchy* warned of the likely consequences of the spread of this urban, “philistine culture”, which was accelerating with the extension of literacy and democracy...The aesthetic barrenness of the culture of the new “masses” worried Arnold (Turner 1996: 39).

Apart from making explicit the developing idea of culture *versus* civilization, Arnold’s insistence on reading, and reading *real*, as opposed to popular, literature, helped to concentrate culture in literature (as opposed to music, or painting), which is logical in that this was the only means of reproducing that which has been thought or

said, a phrase which necessarily involves the use of language. In Eagleton's words, "From Arnold onwards, Literature – of all things! - inherits the weighty ethical, ideological and even political tasks which were once entrusted to rather more technical or practical discourses" (Eagleton 2000: 40).

As previously mentioned, Arnold was also active as a critic, and so could be instrumental in deciding what works could be included in "the best", obviously a crucial question, and even more so if literature was to assume the importance which Eagleton assigns to it in the quote above. Of his criticism, Davis and Schleifer say:

The heart of Arnold's definition of criticism, like his definition of culture as the achievement of "perfection", is its *disinterestedness*...such disinterestedness eschews the critique of its own procedures in favour of a *pedagogic imperative* of disseminating what is self-evidently the best that has been thought and said (Davis and Schleifer 1991: 48).

It is this self-evident aspect, that which Belsey criticises as the "common-sense" view of literature (Belsey 1980: 2) which begs the most questions: if culture, for Arnold, can only be acquired from "the best that has been thought and said", the distinction between what is, and is not, the best is central. The distinction made by Arnold between the *real* and the popular is one basic difference, but in general he seems to leave this problem of judgement to "the men of culture", without specifying exactly who they are, other than describing them as the "highly-instructed few", without clarifying in what particular field they have been highly instructed. They can be found in any class of society, but they will be influenced "not by their class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit" (Arnold 1998: 11). Milner calls them: "...the "remnant" of the cultured within each class – what today we might perhaps term an intelligentsia" (Milner 1994: 22). Nevertheless, it is clear that they are not to be found on the side of anarchy or civilization, the enemies of culture, and thus culture and literature become identified with a particular social position, basically

conservative in outlook, and a particular social class, that which can afford the high degree of instruction necessary. Whereas, however, Arnold's idealized concept of culture could meet all of Williams's definitions (p.49), since through exposure to the best thinking of society people will improve both individually and as a whole, and this improvement and perfection will become the way of life for everyone, the reality was that culture was limited, in practical terms, to a small number of people who could identify "the best", a term which was opposed to "the popular", who had acquired the necessary knowledge, and whose interests were generally that of the non-industrial ruling class.

The insistence on literature as the main vehicle for culture had an immediate effect on the education system. Before this time, non-scientific higher education was more or less restricted to the Classics, but "During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a properly Arnoldian discipline began to evolve: chairs of English language and literature were established at Trinity College Dublin, and at the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham and Newcastle" (Milner 1994: 25). Milner goes on to say that the two ancient universities were less enthusiastic, but eventually in Cambridge:

...in 1917 an independent English school, with a distinctly literary bias, was finally established...English literature had justified itself as a discipline not in terms of the particular class interests of the Arnoldian remnant, but rather the contribution that sweetness and light might make to the construction of a unitary Anglo-British national culture (Milner 1994: 25-26).

While the sweetness and light of Arnold's culture was now concentrated mostly though not exclusively in literature, and its function was now expressed in a national rather than social discourse, the institutionalization of literature helped to establish the idea of the canon as the accepted opinion of the best that has been thought and said, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Arnold's remnant, the men of culture, had a great say in the selection of the works to be included or excluded. The canon was or is

by no means monolithic, and is under constant revision, something which is shown by the acceptance of works which were originally considered as shocking or even obscene, an effect which was often the expressed aim of the artist. Now, however, as Jameson says of the literary and artistic canons: “Not only are Joyce and Picasso no longer weird and repulsive, they have become classics and now look rather realistic to us” (Jameson 1998:18-19). Eagleton says of the canon: “It is not on the whole the content...that radicals should complain of, but its function. What is objectionable is that it has been used as the spiritual badge of a privileged group” (Eagleton 2000: 52). Writing of those works included in the canon, which they term classics, Kaye and Whelehan assert: “Classics have snob value because they are inherently elitist; an intellectual coterie confers value on certain works and judges an individual’s value on familiarity with such “high” cultural artefacts, thereby allowing her or him to enter the elite” (Kaye and Whelehan 2000: 1). The political views expressed by a work or an author seem to make little difference to its critical acceptance (Shelley and Coleridge, for example, were hardly supporters of the status quo), but the significance of the canon lies in the fact that the recognition of and familiarity with the canon became a marker of the cultured individual. The influence of the canon should not be underestimated. Easthope wrote in 1991:

Twenty years ago<sup>21</sup> the institutionalised study of literature throughout the English-speaking world rested on an apparently secure and unchallenged foundation, the distinction between what is literature and what is not. While other aspects of F.R.Leavis’s criticism are not universally accepted by literary studies, he did spell out this basic opposition in an exemplary way in a pamphlet he published a year after the economic collapse of 1929 (Easthope 1991: 3).

One of the leading figures of the aforementioned new school of English at Cambridge, Leavis, as a teacher and critic, “helped to fix the early directions of

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<sup>21</sup> i.e. 1971, which gives some idea of the speed and depth of change in the area of literary studies.

literary criticism as an institutional practice and as an approach to cultural criticism” (Davis and Schleifer 1991: 73), and the “secure and unchallenged foundation” of literature as defined by Easthope has an obvious similarity with the “self-evident” nature of Arnold’s literary criteria mentioned in the previous quote from Davis and Schleifer (p.58). Together with his wife Q.D. (Queenie) Leavis, and other collaborators, grouped around the critical journal *Scrutiny*, in the period between the wars and after the Second World War, Leavis extended Arnold’s distaste for the philistine culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the new mass production of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when technology had enabled the general distribution of forms such as magazines, radio, cinema, the popular press and cheap paperback books. He was the most influential proponent of the continuing culture *versus* civilization debate, and *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (1930), the pamphlet referred to by Easthope above, particularly the adjectives, gives an idea of the polarization of the two concepts. Civilization is now another name for industrialism as applied to the supply of products for a mass market, whereas culture is clearly identified with a minority, an elite. In contrast to Arnold, probably because of the different times in which he was living, Leavis saw the state of culture in a much more pessimistic light; the forces of commercialization and standardization of the product, the increasing volume and power of advertising, and other factors such as the car or the cinema (many of the above being grouped under the ever more common term of “Americanization”) all represented the hostile forces of civilization against whose attack culture was rapidly retreating, and the only hope that Leavis offers is that in some putative future the machine will be converted into a tool of culture rather than its enemy. Whatever the forces ranged against it (and in this aspect Leavis is much more explicit, quoting specific works and texts, and his importance and continuing influence as a critic are

now recognized more in his analytical methodology than in his conclusions), his concept of culture is very similar to Arnold's, in that culture can only be appreciated by a minority, Arnold's "highly-instructed few", the "men of culture", who in turn can impart this appreciation to another, larger minority who are capable of endorsing it. The first and smaller minority, who are now named "critics" by Leavis, in fact perform the more important function, and are under attack from the rapidly-encroaching forces of mass civilization. He acknowledges his debt to Arnold, but he sees culture, while still offering the only hope for society, as being in a state of peril and siege. Rather than the offensive, active force delineated by Arnold, culture now has to resort to defensive tactics if it is to have any importance:

For Matthew Arnold it was in some ways less difficult...When...I am asked what I mean by "culture", I might (and do) refer the reader to *Culture and Anarchy*; but I know something more is required. In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is...only a few who are capable of unprompted, first hand judgement. They are still a small minority, though a larger one, who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgement by genuine personal response. The minority capable not only of appreciating, Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, Baudelaire, Hardy...but of recognising their latest successors constitute the consciousness of the race (or a branch of it) at a given time. Upon this minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past ... upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than that ... In their keeping...is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends, and without which distinction of spirit is thwarted and incoherent. By "culture" I mean the use of such a language...The machine...has brought about change in habit and the circumstances of life at a rate for which we have no parallel... It is a breach in continuity that threatens: what has been inadvertently dropped may be irrecoverable or forgotten ... "High-brow" is an ominous addition to the English language. I have said earlier that culture has always been in minority keeping: but the minority now is made conscious, not merely of an uncongenial, but of a hostile environment ... "Civilization" and "culture" are coming to be antithetical terms ...The prospects of culture, then, are very dark. There is the less room for hope in that a standardising civilisation is rapidly enveloping the whole world (Leavis 1998: 13-18).

Apart from Arnold's "the best that has been thought and said" being transformed into "the finest human experience of the past", and the incorporation of foreign

writers into the canon, the main point of interest is the explicit pre-eminence that Leavis gives to the critics over society as a whole, and over the artists themselves. The dominant role now is not the creation of art but the appreciation and transmission of art, and also the power to say what is and what is not art, not only for the past and present but also for the future. The criteria to be used are, by Leavis's own admission, implicit, or self-evident, but are clearly the standards of the minority and are thus naturally oppositional to the levelling-down of standards which is both the aim and effect of mass civilization, lacking as it does, for the critics at least, any aesthetic or moral worth. This point of view is unashamedly elitist, and although the question of social class is not explicitly mentioned, it is implicit, as it was with Arnold, that the masses are the working class, something inevitable on the basis of numbers alone, and also that the masses are incapable of ever having any appreciation of or even interest in the benefits of culture. The continued technological innovations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were inimical to culture (in Leavis's terms) and also to the still-existing idea of the organic, "folk" culture, and both the products and consumers of mass culture were, in Bennett's words, "approached from a distance and gingerly, held out at arm's length by outsiders who clearly lacked any fondness for or participation in the forms they were studying. It was always the culture of "other people" that was at issue" (Bennett in Turner 1996: 40).

Indeed, for Leavis, the idea of mass culture was practically a contradiction in terms, and in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* he always wrote it thus: "mass culture", and the inverted commas are revealing of his attitude. The work of Leavis and his group spanned the Second World War, and continued to exert an important influence in English thought. His ideas, and those of his collaborators, were elitist, as has been said: society was not, or should not be, a democracy, but rather an oligarchy,

with the small central group of the critics surrounded by the larger, but still small, minority who can endorse the opinions of the first group. These people were in opposition to civilization, and the popular culture that it produced was:

...to be deplored for its deficiencies – for its lack of “moral seriousness” or of aesthetic value. The mass culture of contemporary England was unfavourably compared to an earlier, albeit mythical, folk culture located in some past formation of the “garden of England”. Industrialization, mass communication and technology were all seen to be inimical to this earlier, more organic version of British existence; it was as if the entire twentieth century were intrinsically “anti- British” (Turner 1996: 40).

This nostalgia for an idealized England which probably had never existed was an important part of Leavis’s vision,<sup>22</sup> one shared by a number of other critics, and Strinati says “...it is difficult to resist the conclusion that an idealised “golden age”... is an intrinsic part of mass culture theory” (Strinati 1995: 44). Hebdige speaks of it as “...the dream of the “organic society” – of society as an integrated, meaningful whole” (Hebdige 1997: 358), while for Eagleton, much of the anthropological research into “primitive” societies which followed the spread of the British Empire was based on the belief that the people being studied were still in the pre-industrial, pre-lapsarian stage that had been lost in England, and thus the “primitives” were a “...kind of South Sea island version of English common law and the House of Lords, living in a Burkeian utopia in which instinct, custom, piety and ancestral law worked all by themselves” (Eagleton 2000: 28). The idea that industrialism did irreparable damage to this “organic” society was central to Leavis’s work, and in this he was, according to Inglis, “part of a formation going back to the best intelligences of early Romanticism which absolutely abjured the scientific study of humankind and Bentham’s utilitarian calculus for the ordering of social life” (Inglis 1993: 36). For the

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<sup>22</sup> “Leavis and [Denys] Thompson recommended the writings of George Sturt, the wheelwright from Farnham in Surrey, chronicler of the lives of the local labourers and craftsmen in the years before Sturt’s wheelwright’s shop became a garage” (Strickland 1983: 184). See p.21 of this thesis for Sturt.

supporters of culture against the dehumanising forces of civilization, only culture, which was responsible for the keeping of “the finest human experience”, which constituted the “consciousness of the race”, could counteract the increasing mechanization of life and society. For Leavis, culture was embodied in language, and he “presumed the existence of a precisely definable “great tradition” of Anglo-American novelists involved in an ongoing discourse about values and ethics” (Davis and Schleifer 1991: 73). The right use of language, as manifested in what he calls literature, which includes not only how language is used but also to what ends it is used, is the only way to maintain and defend the humane values which are under attack from all sides, attacks which often take the form of a *misuse* of language in fields such as advertising or popular fiction, which are themselves constituting factors of civilization defined as industrialism. John Wain, writing of the Cambridge English tradition in the inter-war years, gives more prominence to Leavis’s colleague I.A.Richards: “The field of literary studies was very much dominated by I.A.Richards... Leavis complicated matters by regarding literature as primarily character-building” (Wain 1986: 97). This judgement of Leavis’s aims may be simplistic, but it can not be denied that individual improvement was one of the functions of literature as he saw it, and in this he reflected views earlier put forward by Coleridge or Arnold.

It should be noted here that, according to Milner at least, Utilitarianism, far from being restricted to the role of the intellectual justification of early industrial capitalism, continues to be a dominant theory in the modern capitalist world, and in the realm of cultural theory. He argues (Milner 1994: 8-19) that most academic courses in cultural theory “manage carefully to ignore what is almost certainly the single most influential such theory available to our culture, that is, utilitarianism”

(p.8)<sup>23</sup>. He says that it was the first of all modern cultural theories, and is still the “preferred paradigm of the contemporary business and political elite” (p.8) but since it falls within the province of the organic rather than the traditional intellectuals, the result is that “an actually dominant paradigm is persistently misrepresented as either marginal, archaic or even simply non-existent” (p.8). It justifies, through its idea of “the greatest good for the greatest number” (p.9) the social and political framework of modern capitalist democracies, and is present in the academic disciplines of economics and political science. A recent example of its continuing influence would be Margaret Thatcher’s famous, or notorious, statement that: “There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families”.<sup>24</sup> This agrees perfectly with the aforementioned utilitarian concept of society as a plurality of individuals, each pursuing his or her pleasure or utility. Utilitarianism also, says Milner, provides “a quite explicit theory of culture” (p.9) in that if people are willing and able to seek their own satisfaction, “objects of cultural preference, be they literary genres or religious doctrines, can be treated as commodities for sale in the market place” (p.9-10) and thus people are “entitled to whatever cultural pleasures they may please, as long as they are practically procurable” (p.10). He quotes Bentham’s phrase “push-pin is of equal value with poetry” (p.11), and although other utilitarians such as Mill or Hume argued against this idea of individual preference being the only valid criterion, since they wished “to secure the continued existence of certain enduring standards of taste” (p.10), it is this market-centred view of cultural production which is at the heart of the culture/civilization debate, or the “antithesis between utilitarian

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<sup>23</sup> This and succeeding page references are to: Milner, A. 1994. *Contemporary Cultural Theory*. London: UCL Press.

<sup>24</sup> Originally given in an interview with *Woman’s Own*, 31.10.1987. Source: [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk). Access date: 18.4.2006. The choice of magazine, which can be said to be overwhelmingly practical, rather than theoretical, is also in keeping both with utilitarian principles and Thatcherite politics.

capitalism on the one hand, and the traditional intelligentsia on the other” (p.17), as made explicit by Arnold and Leavis.

Summarizing the period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it can be seen that culture continued to evolve both theoretically and practically. Continuing, in broad terms, Arnold’s hopes for culture as the vehicle for sweetness and light, Leavis wanted to confront the new world which arose from the First World War by seeking for “a vocabulary and an idiom – a way of language which was also a way of *being* – which would immerse its readers in the depths of the experience described” (Inglis 1993: 40-41). Culture was still seen as the hope for society, even if Leavis now saw it as being in retreat, but it was in theory available to everyone, and each individual could feel its beneficent effects and help to extend these to the rest of society. As Eagleton says: “From Coleridge to F.R.Leavis, the broader, socially responsible sense of culture is kept firmly in play, but can only be defined by a more specialized sense of the term (culture as the arts) which threatens constantly to substitute for it” (Eagleton 2000: 20).

In practice, then, culture became the province of a minority, what Williams calls “a virtuous minority, against commercialism – the preferred word for capitalism – but also against “popular taste”...Actual history impinged less and less” (Williams 1983: 188). Far from being classless, culture can be seen to operate as a reinforcer of difference, and Storey, commenting primarily but not exclusively on Arnold, says:

The function of culture is to produce a cultured middle class; a class with the necessary cultural authority to be hegemonic. The working class are always to be on the side of “anarchy”, always in a relation of binary opposition to “culture”. All that is required of them is that they recognise their cultural difference and acknowledge cultural deference (Storey 1998: 4).

The cultural authority which Storey sees as the true objective of culture is something which can be acquired, and indeed must be acquired if the superiority of culture is to be maintained. Bourdieu, while writing mostly about painting, argues:

Thus the encounter with a work of art is not “love at first sight”, as is generally supposed, and the act of empathy...which is the art-lover’s pleasure, presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code. (n. It will be seen that this internalised code called culture functions as cultural capital owing to the fact that, being unequally distributed it secures profits of distinction.) ...art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences (Bourdieu 1998: 432-436).

These commentators on the implicit function of culture can hardly be accused of politicising the word, since it was always openly political, being for Arnold a response not only to industrialism but also to democracy, while for Leavis it was a defence against the technological innovations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its original egalitarian ideals and objectives had shrunk to a defence of that artistic production, particularly literary production, which was considered by a small group of professional intellectuals to be “the best”, and this was in conflict with the popular, or mass, production, which failed to be true culture on aesthetic and moral grounds. The former, now frequently known as “high” or “elite” culture or art, was inevitably identified with the upper and middle classes, while the popular was that which was produced for (usually not by) the masses, the working class. Day says: “The use of culture as a tool of social differentiation has a long history” (Day 2001:155), and indeed he quotes a writer from the fourteenth century in support of this view in a continuation of this passage. This concept of culture, however, would change with the birth of what came to be known as Cultural Studies.

## 1.8 BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES

Leavis had found it necessary to examine the products of mass civilization, such as advertising, films, and popular literature in order to demonstrate what he considered to be their noxious effects on society as a whole. Inglis says:

If it is fair to say that Cultural Studies proper were brought into being by a quartet of Englishmen, then they did so by wrenching Leavis round to their own purposes. The four Englishmen were, in point of fact, a Welshman, a West Indian, a working-class orphan from a desperately poor home, and the Communist son of a Methodist preacher who had lived much of his life in India. They were Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Richard Hoggart, and Edward Thompson (Inglis 1993: 47).

All of these, with the exception of Hall, have already been mentioned, and the importance of their work lies in the fact that they “established the consideration of popular culture – from the mass media to sport to dance crazes – on an academic and intellectual agenda from which it had been excluded” (Turner 1996: 2). This change in the appreciation and definition of culture started in the late 50s – early 60s, with Williams’s *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961); Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), and Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). If Leavis’s work was in many ways a reaction to the First World War, then that of the early culturalists can be seen as having been influenced by the changes wrought by the Second, changes which were many and profound. The war had demonstrated that the hypothetical improving effects of culture had signally failed to work; Orwell’s wartime work *The Lion and the Unicorn* begins: “As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me” (Orwell 1982: 35), and the image of Nazi concentration camp guards listening to Beethoven is now a cliché. The overwhelming belief that the war was the fault of the ruling class was clearly shown by the 1945 Labour election victory, probably the most surprising result of any

election before or since; the post-war expansion of the university system in England also enabled a large number of people, particularly from the poorer sectors of society, to take advantage of something which for centuries had been the privilege of the elite few; the continuing popularity of the radio and the cinema (during and immediately after the war cinema admissions reached an all-time high) broadened the popular access to all levels of culture, and the use of these media for propaganda purposes helped to strengthen the position of the (comparatively new) technologies, while the shortage of paper drastically cut the production of all types of printed material; the increased democratic ethos led to a loss of deference, including cultural deference, and while the high culture provided some events or images as rallying points for the whole of society (Olivier's *Henry V*, for example), the emblematic songs, films, radio shows and personalities were all firmly based in popular culture and the modern mass media.

The extension, often unavoidable, of popular culture to all areas of life, through the cinema, radio, the press in all its forms and, later, television, made it practically inevitable that something which touched on everybody demanded to be considered as a relevant aspect of life. Easthope gives as a personal example:

I remember vividly one morning early in 1961 watching the Master of my college at Cambridge emerge from his lodge wearing morning dress and walk slowly round the courtyard towards the gate while from a window three storeys above Jerry Lee Lewis screamed "My baby's got the sweetest little \* " (\* being a single very high note on the trumpet) (Easthope 1991: 19).

The impossibility of ignoring or downplaying the importance of popular culture was further strengthened by the left-wing political ideas of the four writers mentioned above, ideas that naturally led to equal attention being paid to the culture of the working class as to the elite culture. Milner says that:

...the more independently-minded left-wing British intellectuals of the 1950s began to forge their own “third way”, between Leavisism on the one hand and Marxian socialism on the other, both in practical politics and in cultural theory. The politics eventually became that of the “New left”; the theory what would be represented in structuralist retrospect as “culturalism”, but it is surely much more accurately described as “left culturalism” (Milner 1994: 36).

Williams, who had in fact been a student of Leavis’s at Cambridge, and whom Eagleton calls culture’s “most eminent theorist in post-war Britain” (Eagleton 2000: 36) traces in *Culture and Society* the idea and importance of culture in Britain from 1780 to 1950, analysing literary texts “in order to establish the cultural grounding of ideas and their representations” (Turner 1996: 48). It was the first attempt to examine and define culture and its importance in a text-based analytical way, and even Eagleton who, despite his explicit respect and admiration for Williams, in *Criticism and Ideology* (1976) is quite hostile to him, accusing him of “over-subjectivising” “anti-intellectualism” and “naivety” among other faults, nevertheless recognizes that Williams was hampered in his work by the lack of theoretical terminology and concepts simply because he was the first in his field (Eagleton 1978: 25-37). As mentioned previously (p.49) Williams gives definitions of the four meanings of culture as he follows their evolution, and at the end of the book he expands on Leavis to make explicit the social and political definitions of culture:

Yet culture is not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work; it is also and essentially a whole way of life. The basis of a distinction between bourgeois and working-class culture is only secondarily in the field of intellectual and imaginative work...The primary distinction is to be sought in the whole way of life, and here, again, we must not confine ourselves to such evidence as housing, dress and modes of leisure...The crucial distinction is between alternative ideas of the nature of social relationship (Williams 1985: 311).

The idea of a culture as “a whole way of life” was by no means new. Orwell, in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, published in 1941, attempted to describe the English character. The book was commissioned as part of the left-wing effort to define the political

aims of the war, and was in fact subtitled *Socialism and the English Genius*, which gives an idea of the aims and content, and many of his phrases still resonate.<sup>25</sup> With his customary clear-sightedness Orwell makes many observations on those minutiae of everyday life which would form the basis of the work of later writers such as Hoggart, for example his comment on “...the *privateness* of English life...All the culture that is most truly native centres around things which even when they are communal are not official – the pub, the football match, the back garden, the fireside and the “nice cup of tea””(Orwell 1982: 39).

The famous definition by T.S.Eliot in 1948 is still current, in which Eliot says that:

Culture ... includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes; the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth-century Gothic churches, and the music of Elgar (Eliot in Hebdige 1993: 359).

Williams refutes this view, saying that a complete list would also have to include “...steelmaking, touring in motor cars, mixed farming, the Stock Exchange, coal-mining, and London Transport. Any list would be incomplete, but Eliot’s categories are sport, food and a little art – a characteristic observation of English leisure (Williams 1985: 230).<sup>26</sup>

If culture is indeed a whole way of life then it should include *all* the activities of a people, whether they meet the criteria of popular or high culture or not, and the way in which someone earns a living is a central part of any society, thus to limit the

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<sup>25</sup> “Old maids biking to Holy Communion through the mists of the autumn morning” (Orwell 1982: 36) was quoted by John Major while he was Prime Minister to evoke his idea of England, though Major unconsciously updated “biking” to “cycling”. Source: [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk) Access date: 30.6.2006

<sup>26</sup> For Hanif Kureishi, writing some forty years later, the updated list would have to include: “...yoga exercises, going to Indian restaurants, the music of Bob Marley, the novels of Salman Rushdie, Zen Buddhism, the Hare Krishna Temple, as well as the films of Sylvester Stallone, therapy, hamburgers, visits to gay bars, the dole office and the taking of drugs” (Kureishi 1986: 169).

definition to a hodgepodge of leisure activities is illogical even by Eliot's own definition.

If *Culture and Society* was primarily concerned with showing the development of the idea of culture in English thought up to 1950, in *The Long Revolution* (1961) Williams continues to develop the themes of his first work and he also extends his argument to a definition not only of culture but also of cultural theory, that is *how* we should look at culture. He posits three categories in the definition of culture, the ideal, the documentary and the social, in which last:

Culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture (Williams 1975: 57).

The chapter from which this is taken is "The Analysis of Culture", and Storey calls it "perhaps the founding text of culturalism", and says:

Taken together, the three aspects embodied in the "social" definition of culture – culture as a particular way of life, culture as an expression of a particular way of life, and cultural analysis as a method of reconstituting a particular way of life – establish both the general perspective and the basic procedures of culturalism (Storey 1998: 40-41).

If Williams in 1958 gave the first theoretical base for cultural studies, in the previous year Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), had given what is generally acknowledged to be the first practical application of the theory, which Inglis calls "one of the sacred texts of the subject" (Inglis 1993: 47). Hoggart, like Williams, was from a working-class family, and had a background in adult education, as did Williams and Thompson, and all three acknowledged that this experience in "the real world" had an influence on their work (Inglis 1993: 49). Hoggart, who went on to found the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the first and "key

institution in the history of the field” (Turner 1996: 70), wrote *The Uses of Literacy* in two halves. The part which he wrote first was an examination of the reading material received and consumed by the working class, and he then wrote what became the first half of the book, which was a picture of working-class life as he had experienced it, to depict the conditions in which the people received and used this written material. He was influenced by the work of the Leavisites, and he shares with them the idea of a deterioration of culture. The main difference is that Hoggart places the “good” culture in the 1930s, in the working-class community in which he grew up, rather than in the misty, pre-industrial past. His culture is the very culture that the Leavisites were resisting, and although he shares the view that mass, American-influenced culture was an agent of the corruption of the genuine culture, his work was groundbreaking on various levels. Firstly, foreshadowing the work of later writers such as post-colonialists or feminists, the book is unashamedly autobiographical, and his commitment to the working class is clear on every page. This emotional engagement with the subject was considered questionable, to say the least, by the academic establishment at the time, as was the first move away from the text to the lived experience which the book represented, a crucial break with the past when the text had been the only true object of study. His emphasis on the relation between texts and how people live, his depiction of the minutiae of working-class life and his rejection of the common concept of the working class as mere passive consumers or victims of a manipulative mass culture, all set out the basic ideas which would form the areas of study for later culturalists, not least those in the Birmingham Centre. He wanted to show, by giving a picture of the lives of the people he was describing, how the “appeals of the mass publications connect with commonly accepted attitudes, how they are altering those attitudes, and how they are meeting resistance” (Hoggart 1971:

19), and the question of resistance is one which would come to assume great importance in later theories. His work was criticised, both at the time and later, as ignoring the question of production, as overlooking the role of women in the society he paints, and as giving an overly sentimental and nostalgic picture of working-class life (see, for example, Turner 1996: 44-45), possible faults of which Hoggart himself was aware and which he warns the reader against at the beginning of the book (Hoggart 1971: 18). However, whatever the strength of these criticisms, the book remains as one of the founding texts of cultural studies, and both the content and style represent a break with previous studies in the field of culture. Hoggart himself said about the book: “Many people I knew in departments of English kept fairly quiet about it, as though a shabby cat from the council house next door had brought an odd – even a smelly - object into the house” (Hoggart in Goodwin 1998: xiii).

This quote says much of the reaction of academia, and though class snobbery is never admitted to exist in universities or other academic institutions, the disquiet or embarrassment provoked by the work can be seen to have a basis in class differences besides any more purely academic doubts, as shown by the adjectives “shabby”, “council”, and particularly “smelly”. At first glance the word seems inexact though insulting, but it is more powerful than that. Orwell reveals this middle-class shibboleth when he writes:

Here you come to the real secret of class distinctions in the West – the real reason why a European of bourgeois upbringing, even when he calls himself a Communist, cannot without a hard effort think of a working man as his equal. It is summed up in four frightful words which people nowadays are chary of uttering, but which were bandied about quite freely in my childhood. The words were: *The lower classes smell*. This is what we were taught: *The lower classes smell* (Orwell 1976: 112).

The fact that Hoggart was a self-confessed Arnoldian (Corner 1998: 278) perhaps prevented the cries of “Anarchy”, but the instinctive repulsion of the work by the

academic establishment is clearly shown. *The Uses of Literacy* opened the door to later works which capitalized on its use of the analytical practices of literary study applied to an increased variety of cultural products such as popular magazines, song lyrics or newspapers, and for possibly the first time the range of the proper objects of study expanded beyond the limits of the canon to include the whole of life and how it is lived, and he will be quoted later.

The other work which is usually credited with being one of the founding texts of culturalism is E.P.Thomson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, published in 1963, which has already been mentioned, and which Turner calls "one of the constitutive texts in British cultural studies" (Turner 1992: 643). Thompson, who like Hoggart and Williams had been involved in adult education, had an academic background in history rather than in literature, but both his method and attitude place his work with that of Hoggart and Williams. Dealing with the years 1780 to 1832, he maintains that the working class was formed by itself through the myriad movements and organizations which were the expression of the reaction to industrialism. Much of the book deals with societies and movements which had been largely ignored by conventional history, and this rediscovery of the previously-excluded voices was to be an influential aspect of later study in the field of culture. Besides affirming the community-based nature of working-class culture, he also joined Hoggart in rejecting the idea of the working class as passive victims of change, and showed them as actively protesting against the political and economic inequalities of the time. These protests were naturally communal, based on shared interests, and one of the effects of Thompson's work was to question the idea of class as a "thing" and to see it in terms of historical relationships: "For I am convinced that we cannot understand class unless we see it as a social and cultural formation, arising from processes which can only be

studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period” (Thompson 1968: 12). His emphasis on the importance of relationships within society echoes Williams, but he differs from him and Hoggart by insisting that cultures are always in conflict with each other, and rather than a particular way of life there are a number of competing ways of life, and Milner sees in his work an explicit comparison of “working-class resistance to utilitarianism with the tradition of Romantic anti-utilitarianism” (Milner 1994: 36).

With the publication of Thompson’s work, one in which the perspective and procedures of culturalism were evident, it could be seen that by the late 50s and early 60s the paradigm of literary studies had changed, and that the canon, while still of course exerting great influence, was no longer the defining power it used to be. While early cultural studies can be seen to have had a text-based foundation, evident in the abovementioned works of Williams, Hoggart and Thompson, the range of texts studied had expanded far beyond the purely literary, and much greater attention was paid to the social conditions which produced and consumed them.

A major event in British cultural studies was the founding in 1964 of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (from now on known as the C.C.C.S. for the sake of brevity). Richard Hoggart was the first director, and Stuart Hall joined him as his deputy in 1966, replacing him as director in 1969. The C.C.C.S. was instrumental in the evolution of the discipline, since, particularly under Hall: “Hoggart’s project of understanding the everyday “lived” culture of particular classes, was overtaken by interest in the mass media, which quickly came to dominate the Centre’s research and has provided it with its longest-running focus...It moved towards the analysis of the ideological function of the media” (Turner 1996: 71-72). Hall’s work, both at the C.C.C.S. and after he left the institution in 1979 to work

elsewhere, the Open University, for example, has been more widely dispersed than that of the other “founding fathers”, both as director, collaborator, contributor and mentor of many other writers in the field. Inglis says:

Hall’s intellectual career has been, like that of all his fellow-founders, conducted in the margins of academic life, dodging the border police patrolling the checkpoints between academic criticism and political dissent of a rowdy kind...That is to say, Hall has written much, but in short bursts” (Inglis 1993: 82).

Perhaps the single most important influence of Hall and the C.C.C.S. is the importance given to ideology and its transmission and reception, and the resistance it meets, ideas which continue to exert an enormous influence : “For Hall, ideology is the central fact *and* the paramount cultural category of historical inquiry into the present” (Inglis 1993: 85). This is true not only for Hall, and Storey, as previously noted, says: “Ideology is without doubt the central concept in cultural studies” (Storey 1996: 4). Ideology is not a neutral term, and as used in the area of culture it can be traced back to Marx’s statement that:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production...The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations expressed as ideas...[The ruling class] rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch (Marx and Engels 1976a: 59).

This assertion is the basis of what is known as the “dominant ideology” theory. If, as Marx says, the means of mental production, or culture, are in the hands of the ruling class, it is logical that they use these means for their own ends, namely to promote their own beliefs and interests. Eagleton says: “Perhaps the most common answer is to claim that ideology has to do with *legitimizing* the power of a dominant social group or class...This is probably the single most widely accepted definition of

ideology” (Eagleton 1991: 5). As civilization (in Leavis’s terms) spread to impinge on everyone and all aspects of life, thus ideology became omnipresent. Barthes wrote in 1972:

The whole of France is steeped in this anonymous ideology: our press, our films, our theatre, our pulp literature, our rituals, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching wedding, the cooking we dream of, the garments we wear, everything in everyday life is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie *has and makes us have* of the relations between men and the world (Barthes in Hebdige 1993: 360-361).

Ideology, then, can be considered as a tool of subordination, and as such is closely related to popular culture. Easthope attempts to clarify this latter term when he says that popular has different uses:

1. “popular” meaning “well-liked by many people”;
2. “popular” in the contrast between high and popular culture;
3. “popular” used to describe a culture “made by the people for themselves”.

This third requires a counter-definition:

4. “popular” to mean the mass media imposed on people by commercial interests.

Although, especially in North America, the term “mass culture” is widely used to describe popular culture (as in “mass” media), it tends to ally itself to a conventional sociology and theories of popular culture according to functionalist notions of “mass society” and social control, thus subscribing essentially to definition (4) above. In order to keep open the possibility of such culture as an expression of the working class the term “popular culture” is retained here...Widely drawn on for the study of popular culture, the dominant ideology thesis regards popular culture as specially marked by ideology while high culture, relatively, is not (Easthope 1991: 76-79).

Easthope’s definitions (3) and (4) above can be seen as both useful and necessary. If it is accepted that the older term “folk” culture now hardly exists as a reality or a category, there is a need for a term which can encompass both *Eastenders* and Guy Fawkes Night, rap music and fishing, and popular culture, in meanings (3) and (4) is

generally able to do this, and thus I shall use the term in this wide meaning. However, despite the variety of meanings and activities which it can include, attention is usually focused on the mass media and the ideology which they express, and particularly the effects the ideology has or seeks to have on the largest section of the audience, the working class; as the section of society that enjoys the least benefits of the ruling system, they are seen to be most in need of the ideological manipulation necessary to maintain the *status quo*, although in recent years the original class-based focus of cultural studies on the weight of ideology has expanded to reflect such areas of research as feminism and post-colonialism.

The continuing influence of the original argument by Marx is hardly surprising, since, according to Storey, “All the basic assumptions of British cultural studies are Marxist” (Storey 1998: xi). By this he means that whether the authors of the texts are Marxists or not, the texts themselves are informed by Marxism, in two basic ways. Firstly, he says, a culture can be understood only in relation to a specific society with a specific structure and history, and the importance of culture is that it helps to form this structure and history rather than being simply a reflection of it. Secondly, he goes on, it is assumed that capitalist industrial societies are divided unequally, along lines of gender or class, for example. Culture is one of the main sites where these divisions confront each other, a site in which “...subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interest of dominant groups” (Storey 1998: xii).

This view represents the Marxist structuralism which became dominant in cultural thought from the late 70s. Rather than an expression of the working class, as seen by Williams and the other early culturalists, popular culture came to be seen as a vehicle for the dominant ideology, and attention focused on the ways in which it was

constructed, transmitted and received. Marx himself and other writers such as those known collectively as the Frankfurt School had tended to view the process as a direct line between the sender of the ideologically-imbued message and the receiver of the message, who accepts its meaning within the terms of reference in which it is presented. (See, for example: Milner 1994: 62-65, or Turner 1996: 183-186). In this view, the masses are seen as little more than passive consumers of products specifically designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator, and which have the objective of producing a deadening of the emotions and the intellect, thus facilitating the acceptance of society as it is. These views are not very different to those expressed by Leavis, for example, or in America by Dwight Macdonald (Macdonald 1998: 22-35), who both saw in mass cultural production something anti-aesthetic and anti-human, and Hayes says:

The Leavisite and Frankfurt school objection to mass culture was that it was produced by a culture industry operating under monopoly conditions, the result being that popular culture is everywhere identical with only the details endlessly interchanged to create the illusion of difference (Hayes 2000: 81).

However, this picture of the working class as passive consumers of mass-produced popular culture was contested by later theorists. While French structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers such as Barthes, Foucault, or Althusser, who will be mentioned later, were instrumental in the examination of how ideology is presented to an individual or a group, and the tactics that are used, in Britain Hall was one of the most influential proponents of the idea that, far from being a direct line between sender and receiver, the process is open to any number of conscious or unconscious influences at every stage, and the reactions produced could vary enormously. According to Turner: “While it is difficult to specify any precise moment as *the* seminal one when the practices of “left-Leavism” became semiotic/structuralist, it is customary to see

Stuart Hall's important article "Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse" as a turning point" (Turner 1996: 83). In this article, originally written in 1973 but not generally available until 1980, and which will be quoted later (Hall 1993: 91-102), Hall shows both how a message is encoded using commonly-accepted codes that exist in the mass media (the use of certain types of lighting in the cinema or television, for example) and also how the process of reception (decoding) can show various strategies employed by the viewer (in the case of television). An example or demonstration of these ideas can be found in the study performed by Ien Ang of the different reactions of the viewers of the American soap-opera *Dallas*, (Ang 1998: 265-274), in which, using the viewers' own responses she shows the number and variety of reactions to what can be taken as a prime example of commercial, American, mass culture.

As the concept of ideology and its transmission continued to occupy a central place in the evolution of cultural studies, one final name that must be mentioned is that of Gramsci. Although he lived and wrote before any of the other ideological theorists mentioned above (except Marx, of course) with his *Prison Notebooks* having been written in 1941, he was not translated into English until 1971, and thus his influence was felt later in British cultural studies. After Gramsci, the structuralism/culturalism split occupies a less important position than it once did, and he gives a less mechanistic view of the question of domination. For Gramsci, rather than "ruling", the dominant class "leads", that is to say that it assumes a position of hegemony:

The "normal" practice of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent ... hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed (Gramsci 1998: 210- 211).

The idea of consent helped to see the question of ideology in a different light. If rule and repression are replaced by hegemony, and if coercion is replaced by consent, then the cultural and ideological relations of the ruling class with the subordinate classes are not as direct and simple as previously thought. There must be some accommodation made with opposing groups, and the ideology must be articulated in a form which will take into account the different ideologies and affiliations of those who will be led, and furthermore this accommodation must be, at least in part, genuine. Hegemony thus posits domination as something which must be won, rather than something which is practically the logical result of the class structure formed and reinforced by the ideological message. From this point of view culture is not something fixed, and bourgeois culture, for example, is never found in a pure form but is only encountered in the forms which have made an effort to accommodate opposing values. By acknowledging many of the contradictions which had been glossed over in previous definitions of popular or mass culture, Gramsci's more flexible explanation encompasses the many different apparently mutually exclusive views:

...it consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which – in different particular types of popular culture – dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are “mixed” in different permutations (Bennett 1998: 221).

This depiction of culture as something which is fluid and pliable, while still defining it as the area where ideology is negotiated, fought for and resisted, also had an influence on several other current ideas in cultural studies. It disputed the assumption that a culture could be assigned to a particular class, and that the organization of relationships within society was simply bourgeois *versus* working

class, since a practice which is connected to bourgeois values today may be disconnected and related to working-class ones tomorrow, or vice versa (football in England, for example, has become increasingly expensive and increasingly popular with the middle classes over the last ten years). Gramsci's ideas have also made it possible to analyse popular culture without having to adopt a stance of uncritical opposition or uncritical acceptance, since a cultural practice does not carry its politics with it, but rather: "...its political functioning depends on the network of social and ideological relations in which it is inscribed as a consequence of the ways in which, in a particular conjuncture, it is articulated to other practices" (Bennett 1998: 222).

Bourdieu illustrates this point when he writes:

The exaltation of "manliness" and the cult of "team spirit" that are associated with playing rugby – not to mention the aristocratic ideal of "fair play" – have a very different meaning and function for bourgeois or aristocratic adolescents in English public schools and for the sons of peasants and shopkeepers in south-west France (Bourdieu 1993: 349).

Pop/rock music, to give another example, has been viewed from its beginnings as: an incitement to juvenile delinquency, a major force in the counterculture/anti-Vietnam war movement, a nihilist response to Thatcherite Britain, an articulation of Black anger and disengagement, and a manufactured end-result of television programming. The social and ideological role depends on the "particular conjuncture", and it can be seen that the form in itself does not have a fixed ideology.

What has been called "the turn to Gramsci": "...reaffirms the importance of understanding ideology, but categorically withdraws from the installation of a monolithic or mechanical explanation of its workings" (Turner 1996: 198). Hall says:

Hegemony implied that the dominance of certain formations was secured, not by ideological compulsion, but cultural leadership. It circumscribed all those processes by means of which a dominant class alliance or ruling bloc, which has effectively secured mastery over society in such a way that it can transform and refashion its ways of life, its mores and conceptualization, its very form and level of culture and civilization in a direction which, while not directly paying immediate profits to the

narrow interests of one particular class, favours the development and expansion of the dominant social and productive system of life as a whole (Hall in Hitchcock 1989: 36).

Hegemony explains the attempts to produce and transmit a uniform and cohesive ideology, but it also explains why these attempts always fail. It is in the inevitable disruptions between the transmitter and sender, or between the reader and the text, or between the signifier and signified, that cultural and other studies are now concentrating their efforts. The different points of view which have evolved over the last few decades, such as feminist, post-colonial, queer, post-structuralist or new historicist, to name but a few, have all found cultural studies a fertile field. Postmodernists, though generally disagreeing with what they see as its Marxist basis, find many similarities and shared assumptions. Gramsci, while usually ultimately refuted, is considered as a thinker who must be taken into account, at least, and his concept of society and ideology as something in a constant state of motion and change chimes with much postmodernist thinking (Hebdige 1998: 381-385). Furthermore the recovering of voices which had previously been silenced fits in with the postmodern scepticism of the privileged voice speaking from the privileged position, and its rejection of any centrally-organized authority.

In more recent years cultural studies has become increasingly institutionalised, as more universities accept it as a separate discipline<sup>27</sup>, and it is also more international, having expanded from its British origins. What postmodernists and others see as the fragmentation of modern society is reflected in the frequent focusing on minority or sub-cultures within society as a whole. Hartman says we now have “camera culture, gun culture, service culture, museum culture, deaf culture, football culture...the

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<sup>27</sup> Although Milner, writing in 1994, shows how, in England at least, the institutionalisation of cultural studies still seems somewhat confused, with the subject coming under many other different disciplines such as visual arts, media studies, anthropology, English or sociology (Milner 1994: 1).

culture of dependency, the culture of pain, the culture of amnesia, etc.” (Hartman in Eagleton 2000: 37). This contrast between the wide and narrow senses of the words is something which preoccupies many critics, and thus “what was once conceived as a realm of consensus has been transformed into a terrain of conflict. Culture, in brief, has passed over from being part of the solution to being part of the problem” (Eagleton 2000: 38).

It would seem, then, that culture is still a contentious term, and that cultural studies as an academic field is performing an internal examination of itself as well as the external examination of culture in all its meanings which is its area of inquiry. Nevertheless, I believe that the methodologies and areas of preoccupation are by now generally well-defined, and they will be applied to my study of the chosen works in the later parts of this thesis. Before that, however, it will be necessary to give some further contextualization.

## **1.9 WORKING-CLASS LITERATURE AND WORK**

If it can be accepted that the working class has existed in more or less defined terms at least since the Industrial Revolution, then a natural step would be to see if there are any artistic records of the common experience, that is, if there is a working-class literature, a phrase which begs a definition. One definition could be that it is literature produced by the working class, but in that case does a novel by a writer from a working-class background written about middle-class society qualify? If we limit the definition to literature written by the working class about their own conditions of life, we will find a good deal of work which endorses the system under which they live. For Eagleton:

The primary concern of a socialist, then, is not with fiction which “reflects” the lived experience of the proletariat, but with literature which “reflects” the *class-struggle*. It is not... literature produced by the proletariat which should engage our attention, but literature which is “proletarian” because it is written, whatever the original class-allegiance of the author, *from the standpoint of the historical interests of the working class* (Eagleton 1980: 6).

Whether one is a socialist or not, this definition is consistent both with Thompson’s idea of class as a historical phenomenon (p.29) and also with Williams’s assertion that the crucial difference between bourgeois and working-class culture lies in the different ideas of the nature of social relationship (p.71), and literature, as one form of culture, should reflect these historically different ideas. Thompson’s argument is that the working class has historically expressed itself in the forming of associations, clubs, unions and other such groupings, an argument supported by Eagleton when he says that: “...the working class under capitalism is *materially forced* to create such institutions to defend its own interests. There is no equivalent material force constraining it to write novels or paint landscapes” (Eagleton 1980: 8). In this article, *Proletarian Literature* (1980), Eagleton goes on to say that any art produced by proletarians will almost certainly be inferior, in aesthetic terms, and there is less likelihood of its having an impact on the other sectors of society, not least because the accepted forms of literature like the novel are, or were, not the “property” of the working class (Eagleton 1980: 6-10). He cites the example of :

...perhaps the most notable body of proletarian literature to have been produced in English history: the literature of Chartism. The Chartist writers (and it is remarkable how efficiently they have been elided from English literary history) had at their disposal certain traditional popular artistic forms: the ballad<sup>28</sup>, broadsheet and so on. They were also confronted by certain powerfully hegemonic forms...which happened to be part of the cultural possessions of the bourgeoisie...Such conventional literary forms were not ideologically innocent (Eagleton 1980: 9-10).

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<sup>28</sup> Thompson says of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: “And we must also remember the “underground” of the ballad-singer and the fair-ground, which handed on traditions to the nineteenth century (to the music-hall, or Dickens’ circus folk, or Hardy’s pedlars and showmen); for in these ways the “inarticulate” conserved certain values” (Thompson 1968: 63-64).

The turn to “conventional” forms such as the novel was not successful, he argues, since many of the assumptions, conventions and modes of perception inherent in the form did not lend themselves to the articulation of the experience which the Chartists wanted to relate, and while it was necessary to compete on cultural terms with the ruling class, the use of that class’s cultural forms inevitably led to some absorption into their ideology. These arguments make it difficult for Eagleton to accept Gramsci’s hope “that the working class could achieve cultural hegemony, before, and preparatory to, their assumption of political power” (Eagleton 1980: 7).

The Industrial Revolution and the changes it brought about in English life provoked a great deal of contemporary writing, from the Chartists to Carlyle, from Southey to Coleridge, but this was factual, mostly in the area of political and economic philosophy. At the beginning of the industrial period, at least, it inspired little fiction, and one has to wait until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for any literature directly inspired by the urban working class. This is not particularly surprising, since while the spread of industrialism may have been inexorable, it was also uneven and slower than is often thought. While England was still an agricultural country, the basic work unit was the family, or perhaps the village. Even after many years of industrialism much of the production was outsourced to small workshops or homeworkers, and the large factory employing large numbers of people was a relatively late development, and it was these factories which were the real creators of a large homogeneous industrial working class. In the novels written about the factory workers, they are nothing if not homogeneous, and if the earlier writers and thinkers generalized “the worker” or “the workman”, recognizing the shared conditions of the class, or even used words such as “the mob” or simply “Anarchy”, the picture given in the novels which are now known as “the industrial novels” (Williams 1983: 233) is little more individualized. The

novels usually included in this grouping would be: Disraeli's *Sybil, or Two Nations* (1845), *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, both by Mrs. Gaskell and published in 1848 and 1855, *Alton Locke* by Charles Kingsley (1850), Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854), and *Felix Holt* by George Eliot (1866). Dickens published *Oliver Twist* in 1838, the year of the first People's Charter, and though it is not an industrial novel, it could equally well be said to be a response to "the condition of England" question.

According to Craig:

...those years saw for the first time the appearance of a quite sizable body of fiction *about* the working class. Not by them, or for them, but about them. They're viewed, usually in a state of alarming disturbance, from the windows of a house in the West End, or some way off into the country. And what can't be seen distinctly from there is the factory itself. It's present as a kind of bulky blank, a gloomy shadow-casting Thing, a source of not too well-defined troubles and ills. What goes on inside it is the least specific part of the novel. No sense arises of there being ten or twelve hours of a person's life spent daily in there, with as complex and felt a body of relationships centred in it as in any drawing-room or ballroom (Craig 1980: 139).

What these writers were reacting to were the first signs of large-scale industrialization, since the large factories were still a new phenomenon at mid-century, and much of the production was still in the hands of smaller concerns. In common with one prevailing strain of thought at the time, one of the questions posed by these works was: "...how to stop the development of industry and the proletariat, how to stop the "wheel of history" " (Craig 1980: 142), and the reaction of these novelists to this sudden development in society was little different from that of the political writers. In various types of writing at the time and later, and Craig quotes William Morris's *Chants for Socialists* (1885) as an example, "the city is "wicked" and a "hell"...the lives of the workers are "squalid" and "sordid", and they are "poor ghosts" who "droop and die" " (Craig 1980: 142). To be fair to the industrial novels, it was practically impossible for the authors to give an accurate portrait of the workers

simply because these people had not existed before, and even with a good deal of sympathetic imagination they were very much attempting to describe an unknown quantity. Orwell wrote:

If you look for the working classes in fiction, and especially English fiction, all you find is a hole...the ordinary town proletariat, the people who make the wheels go round, have always been ignored by novelists. When they do find their way between the covers of a book, it is nearly always as objects of pity or as comic relief (Orwell 1975: 82).

This impersonal “hole” is the usual picture, or lack of it, given in the industrial novels, and even Dickens, who on account of his personal experience could be considered the most knowledgeable and most sympathetic of 19<sup>th</sup> century writers, was capable of writing in *Hard Times* a description of the fictional Coketown (and the name is indicative in itself of the attitude to industrial growth) which demonstrates the prevailing attitude to industrialism and the people who powered it. After a physical description which talks of “brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it”, “machinery and tall chimneys” with “interminable serpents of smoke”, “a black canal” and “a river that ran purple”, “vast piles of buildings where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down” (Dickens 1992: 18-20), he moves on to the people and their lives:

It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next (Dickens 1992a: 20).

As a picture of what would now be called pollution, and of the dehumanising effects of new working practices, an aspect of the process which had always been a central point in the opposition to industrialism, this passage is incomparable.

However, Dickens identifies with the dominant point of view by accepting that the monotony and impersonality of the conditions, emphasized by like...like...like and same...same...same...same, produced people who were equally like one another. That the people of Coketown had to suffer the same living conditions and environment is clear, but one could have expected a more enlightened conclusion from Dickens, and the history of industrial expansion and protest should have shown clearly that the new working classes were strenuously resisting the dehumanising process. Orwell also made the point that Dickens's best remembered working-class characters (Oliver Twist is a misplaced member of the bourgeoisie) are probably Bill Sykes, Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp, "A burglar, a valet and a drunken midwife – not exactly a representative cross-section of the English working class" (Orwell 1975: 82-83). This is not to criticise Dickens in particular, but rather to emphasize the pervasiveness of the common image of the undifferentiated masses, an image which might have been rejected by Dickens, at least, since he had had a much wider experience of English life than most of his contemporaries. Writing of the industrial novels as a group, Williams says that they "were not written from within these [industrial working] class regions. On the contrary they were written by visitors to them, by sympathetic observers" (Williams 1983: 233), and this external point of view did not favour an individualizing of the people observed.

Although the industrial novels showed some interest in recent developments in English society, this interest failed to develop into anything more profound in literary terms. The earlier quotes by Orwell on this and the previous page date from 1939, and the fact that almost a century after these novels he can talk of the urban proletariat as having been ignored in English fiction shows that the situation changed little or not at all. Despite the ever-increasing production and distribution of books, and the fall of

their price, in relative terms, novel-reading remained an essentially middle-class habit, and “no later novelists seemed able to reach all classes, as Dickens had done” (Read 1994: 270), and as an activity, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the habit “had now become entirely “respectable” ” (Read 1994: 271).

One writer who should be mentioned here is Kipling who, though not usually considered as a voice of the worker, nevertheless gives a detailed picture of the life of the worker as soldier, which is the other essential role of the worker in industrial society, especially one in a phase of imperial expansion. While work is one of the central themes in Kipling, the work he shows is that of the administrators of the Empire, the officer class, whether military or civil. The other ranks do not work, they soldier, and their soldiering is described in great detail, usually in their own words, in the verse and the stories. His work was extremely popular, and Read says: “His brilliantly idiomatic cockney *Barrack Room Ballads* (first volume 1892) were reprinted some fifty times in thirty years” (Read 1994: 270).

Orwell, among others, criticised Kipling for his attitude towards the common soldiers: “If one examines his best and most representative work, his soldier poems, especially *Barrack Room Ballads*, one notices that what more than anything else spoils them is an underlying air of patronage” (Orwell 1975: 51). However, this would be to ignore the realism, if not cynicism, of the voices heard, which are neither patronized nor romanticized. Keating, writing about the opening poem of the *Barrack-Room Ballads*, “The Widow at Windsor”,<sup>29</sup> says:

There’s nothing “comic”, “lovable”, or “romantic” about the soldiers presented here. They are both the agents and the victims of the imperial dream, aware as no one else can be of the price *they* are paying to maintain the glory. And it is

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<sup>29</sup> “Walk wide o’ the Widow at Windsor, / For ‘alf o’ creation she owns: / We ‘ave bought ‘er the same with the sword an’ the flame, / An’ we’ve salted it down with our bones. / (Poor beggars! – it’s blue with our bones!)...Then ‘ere’s to the Sons o’ the Widow, / Wherever, ‘owever they roam. / ‘Ere’s all they desire, an’ if they require / A speedy return to their ‘ome. / (Poor beggars! – they’ll never see ‘ome!) (Kipling 1986: 414). (The Widow was the soldiers’ name for Queen Victoria.)

precisely Kipling's success in this poem that he neither cheapens nor idealises the common soldier (Keating 1980: 27).

This opinion could serve as a general comment on the portrayal of the common soldier, the working class of the army, in Kipling's work as a whole. It also says a lot that Kipling called his verse "ballads", which was a traditionally working-class form (see p.87). There is nothing comparable, however, which portrays the life of the factory, the only other possibility for many people.<sup>30</sup> The armed forces are perhaps the clearest crystallization of the structure of society, and perhaps another clause can be added to the definition of the working class, that they are those who receive orders rather than give them.

G.B.Shaw, like Kipling, spanned the two centuries, and like Kipling his work enjoyed great commercial success and critical acclaim (they both won the Nobel prize)<sup>31</sup> and they were both also attacked, often ferociously, by critics. Shaw was one of the first members of the Fabian Society, a socialist group which was started in 1884 by a small number of intellectuals, of whom the two most influential were Sidney Webb and Shaw. Fabian socialism was based more on the ideas of Bentham and the utilitarians than on Marx, and they were never a political party, not standing in elections as candidates themselves but urging people to vote for a socialist candidate if possible, or if not, the better of the two electable candidates, Shaw being an early critic of the two-party British electoral system, among other things. The society grew in influence, and many of its ideas were later expressed by the Labour party. It was against direct action by the working class, an attitude which was confirmed by the

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<sup>30</sup> Apart from the role of worker/soldier, the prime employment of the working class, particularly of women, was domestic service. With the increased prosperity of the upper and middle classes, a domestic staff became an essential rather than a luxury for any household with pretensions to gentility, and there were some 1.5 million servants in England in 1901 ([english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)), and the literature of these people is as scanty as that of other working-class occupations.

<sup>31</sup> Shaw is the only person who has won both a Nobel prize (1925) and an Oscar (1938, for the screenplay of *Pygmalion*). [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) Access date: 10.5.2006

events of “Bloody Sunday” in 1887 (see p.36), when police broke up a mass meeting in London, killing one demonstrator. The Fabians thought that socialism would come not by mass action but by winning over the intellectuals and infiltrating the ruling classes, a process known as permeation.<sup>32</sup> They preferred a process of education and steady progress to any radical disruption of society, and believed that the machinery for an equitable state was in place, it just had to be used better. Shaw wrote a report on Fabian policy for the meeting of the International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress in 1896, which clearly states the Fabian position and principles while realistically accepting the current situation in England:

The object of the Fabian Society is to persuade the English people to make their political constitution thoroughly democratic and so to socialize their industries as to make the livelihood of the people entirely independent of private Capitalism...The Fabian Society is perfectly constitutional in its attitude; and its methods are those usual in political life in England...It sympathises with the ordinary citizen’s desire for gradual, peaceful changes...The Fabian Society, having learnt from experience that Socialists cannot have their own way in everything any more than other people, recognises that in a Democratic community Compromise is a necessary condition of political progress...England now possesses an elaborate democratic State machinery...elected under a franchise which enables the working class to overwhelm all others...It can only educate the people in Socialism by making them conversant with the conclusions of the most enlightened members of all classes (Shaw 1965: 317-320).

It is interesting to note here that though socialism is now the clearly-stated objective of education, as opposed to culture, the methods seem to have changed little, and the Fabians’ “conclusions of the most enlightened members of all classes” seem to differ very little from Arnold’s “the best which has been thought and said”, leaving open the question of who decides what is best, although it must be said that socialism does give a more defined criterion on which to base the choice of content.

Shaw’s political beliefs were always apparent in his work, and his plays are generally impelled by ideas rather than characters or plot. He dealt with themes such

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<sup>32</sup> For the Fabians see: Read 1994: 317-320; Harrison 1965: 315; Williams 1985: 182-187.

as power, money and class, and his frankness was often considered shocking by the middle-class audience, since he dealt with such major themes with an honesty which was unusual. Brecht called Shaw "...a terrorist. Shaw's brand of terror is an extraordinary one, and he uses an extraordinary weapon, that of humour" (Brecht in Kettle 1980: 22). He was concerned with the problems of the day, and his work undoubtedly had an effect beyond the solely dramatic, and Belchem names "the "plays unpleasant" of G.B.Shaw" as one of the factors in exposing rack-rent landlordism in English cities (Belchem 1996: 210). In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898), for example, a respectable middle-aged woman is found to be the manager of an international chain of brothels. However, the point of the play is that in a society built on the exploitation of the bodily labour of those who have nothing else to sell, prostitution is simply another form of industry. Shaw often shows the poor in his work, but he does not often show a worker. When he does, the worker becomes more a spokesman for a belief than a real personality, a criticism which was frequently levelled at all Shaw's characters, and though the capitalists are openly and unashamedly capitalist and the workers are conscious and articulate (the millionaire arms-manufacturer Undershaft and the worker Peter Shirley in *Major Barbara* (1905), for example), there is no depiction of the labour on which the new fortunes of the industrial age are founded. Orwell, writing about Shaw's plays, said:

How much understanding or even awareness of working-class life do they display? Shaw himself declares that you can only bring a working man on the stage "as an object of compassion"; in practice he doesn't bring him on even as that, but merely as a ...figure of fun – the ready-made comic East Ender (Orwell 1976: 157).

Though Shaw with his honesty and wit opened doors which many people would have preferred to keep closed, in order to show clearly the relationships inherent in the new structure of society, there is little room in his work for an examination of how

the lives of the workers were actually lived. Kettle says : “But with Shaw’s people their place in the power-struggle is the essence of what they are. It isn’t exactly that it determines their character (that would be putting it too mechanistically) but it gives their character its meaning” (Kettle 1980: 12). One simple proof of this is to try and think of unforgettable Shaw characters, and when one realizes what a short list it is, especially when compared to Shaw’s production and continued popularity (he is the second most-performed English-language playwright after Shakespeare<sup>33</sup>) it can be seen that character was not his main preoccupation, and this can help to explain some of the lack of lived detail in his work.

Two other writers who are frequently mentioned as representing, in some way, the working class are Thomas Hardy and D.H.Lawrence. Though usually taken as coming from different periods, with Hardy (1848 – 1928) being the Victorian and Lawrence (1885 – 1930) the Modernist, in fact Lawrence outlived Hardy by only two years, and some of Hardy’s poetry is contemporaneous with Lawrence’s. Hardy wrote primarily of the country, and his familiarity with all aspects of country life is evident in his work. His description of work, in the swede-hacking scene in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) for instance, while not occupying much space or importance in the book, makes it clear that agricultural labour was just as hard, badly-paid and degrading as industrial labour, and at least it doesn’t rain in a factory (Hardy 1988: 276-278), and the myth of England’s pre-industrial Golden Age does not survive the reality shown. His characters are frequently of the working class and trying to get out of it, through love like the eponymous Tess, or through education, like the equally eponymous Jude in *Jude the Obscure* (1895). In the first-mentioned work, Tess and her family are the victims of fixed circumstances in a time of great change. For people

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<sup>33</sup> [www.jeanne-darc.dk](http://www.jeanne-darc.dk) Access date: 12.9.2006

like the Durbeyfields, with little capital in the form of land or money, it was becoming impossible to maintain themselves in the context of the accelerating drift to the towns and changing prices and wages. Tess herself is an uprooted character, and thus can be seen as a representative of the small farmers and farm labourers who helped to swell the population of the towns in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jude is rootless rather than uprooted, since he is never shown to have a home and is an orphan, and like Tess he moves from place to place throughout the book. He can also be taken as a representative character, since in his desire to be a student of classics at university he is an embodiment of the working-class desire for education which has already been mentioned (see pp.44-47).

The 1870 Education Act introduced free compulsory education, and the effect of this was soon felt. Writing less than a generation afterwards, Hardy says: “ Mrs. Durbeyfield habitually spoke the dialect: her daughter, who had passed the sixth standard in the National school under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages; the dialect at home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality ( Hardy 1988: 26 ). This is perhaps the first specific example of the process of the standardization of accent which occurred in England towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the growth of the imperial civil service and its educational infrastructure, and the spread of public education, the divide between state and privately-funded education became more marked, and the more that education became divided along lines of class rather than locality, the greater was the pressure for features of speech which would identify the social more than the geographical background of the speaker. Previously, such prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century figures as Wordsworth, Peel or Gladstone had retained their regional accents without suffering any type of stigmatization, Gladstone’s accent having survived both Eton and Oxford,

something which would suggest that there was no pressure on him to lose it. However, with the rise of the English public (i.e. private) schools, which frequently brought together boys from all over Britain from the ages of eight to eighteen, and educated them in a confined, often isolated space, the push towards what is now known as “Received Pronunciation”, which was originally the accent of the educated classes of London and the south-east of England, helped to create the speech of the ruling class, and at the same time created what is one of the most enduring and immediate class markers in England. Non-standard English, with the exception of a few “acceptable” regional accents such as Highland Scottish or a “soft” north English accent, is still seriously disparaged as the mark of the uneducated,<sup>34</sup> and in writers such as Dickens or Kipling the represented speech habits of a character are immediate indications of class.<sup>35</sup> In some cases this could arguably be simply a written representation of a spoken dialect, as in *Hard Times*: “But I see thee, Rachael, setten by the bed. I ha’ seen thee, aw this night. In my troublous sleep I ha’ known thee still to be there...I nevermore will see or think o’ anything that angers me, but thou, so much better than me, shalt be by th’ side on ‘t” (Dickens 1992a: 84). In this speech from Stephen to Rachael on her deathbed, the use of dialect increases the solemnity of the occasion rather than detracting from it, and it could be argued that in this case Dickens’s use of dialect serves to heighten the sincerity and thus the individuality of the character.

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<sup>34</sup> For the social connotations of Received Pronunciation, and its evolution, see: McCrum et al. 1992 11-15.

<sup>35</sup> This identification and conscious imitation can be heard in the speech of three recent Conservative British Prime Ministers, Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, all of whose acquired Received vowels are or were notoriously unstable. In contrast, the Labour leaders Harold Wilson, James Callaghan and Neil Kinnock, from similar backgrounds, retained their regional accents while making concessions to the accepted norms. Tony Blair, coming from an upper-class background, has not changed his accent at all.

Kipling also attempts to reproduce regional accents and dialects, as in the dialogues of his most-repeated soldier characters, the Irishman Mulvaney, the Yorkshireman Learoyd, and the Londoner Ortheris:

“An’ so Ah coot’s yead open from t’ chin to t’ hair, an he was abed for t’matter o’a month,” concluded Learoyd pensively.

Mulvaney came out of a reverie – he was lying down – and flourished his heels in the air.

“You’re a man, Learoyd,” said he critically, “but you’ve only fought wid men, an’ that’s an ivry-day expayrience; but I’ve stud up to a ghost, an’ that was *not* an ivry-day expayrience.”

“No?” said Ortheris, throwing a cork at him. “You git up an’ address the ’ouse – you and yer expayriences. Is it a bigger one nor usual?” (Kipling 1986: 41)

As previously stated, Kipling wrote *Barrack Room Ballads* in “Cockney”, as exemplified by Ortheris above. Orwell describes Kipling’s depiction of this accent as “not very broad but with all the aitches and final “g”s carefully omitted” (Orwell 1975: 53)<sup>36</sup>. Orwell then goes on to say that the poems can, in fact, be improved by rendering them into standard English, and that an interest in the revelation of lines which “often have a truly lyrical quality...ought to have overridden his impulse to make fun of a working-man’s accent” (Orwell 1975: 52). Whether the ballads are making fun or an attempt at a faithful representation of spoken language is a debatable point, but when one bears in mind that in Dickens, Kipling or any other writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and most of the 20<sup>th</sup>) the narrative voice is always in standard English, it becomes difficult to maintain the idea that such written differences were a purely geographical marker. The quote from Dickens on the previous page can be seen to contain many more features which could be classified as dialect rather than accent; however, if we look at other characters such as Sam Weller in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) with his typical (we are led to believe) London habit of interchanging his “v”s and “w”s, or Pip and Joe in *Great Expectations* (1861) and the differences in their

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<sup>36</sup> See *The Widow at Windsor*, p.92 (n.).

speaking styles, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a regional accent, or rather a non-standard accent and grammar, (Joe Gargery's English, for example, is not immediately identifiable as anything other than "incorrect") is usually the mark of a working-class character, which usually presupposes that the character is uneducated and frequently comic. It is unusual, not to say impossible, in Dickens or Kipling at least, to see a character display the linguistic flexibility of code-switching that Hardy attributes to Tess (p.97) and, by extension, to many other working-class people who had passed through the new education system.

Elementary education was now the norm rather than the exception, and this naturally led to a desire for the possibilities of continuing the process which had started. This thirst for learning led to some important developments, such as the founding of Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1899, to provide educational opportunities for those who had few or no qualifications, and the setting up in 1906 of the Workers' Educational Association, an organization which was to prove long-lasting and influential in English life, providing classes for workers usually on a part-time basis in areas such as literature, politics or economics (Craig 1980: 184). As mentioned earlier, there were any number of institutes, colleges and societies which could offer some education to working men (and they were usually only for men), and the Mechanics' Institutes, for example, gave a training in scientific principles. In this context it is noteworthy that Jude aspires to the classical studies typical of the privileged institutions of the period, the public schools and ancient universities. Though Hardy always denied any autobiographical content in *Jude the Obscure*, the struggles of the self-educated man are common to the writer and the character (Page 1980: 41-43), and despite the publication date of 1895, Jude seems to have been born before the Education Act took effect, as was Hardy (though Hardy's personal

background enabled him to have more education than Jude). In Jude's case, however, the content of the self-education which is aspired to shows no modern influence at all, despite the founding of the new "Metropolitan" universities, such as London, established in 1858, Manchester or Leeds and others in 1881<sup>37</sup>, and though Jude is living in the age of Darwin and Mill, there is nothing which shows that he is aware of this. Similarly, his personal environment is sketchily drawn, and Page says:

...we are invited to accept the portrait of Jude as that of a working man, yet we rarely see him either at work or involved in a life-style or a culture which genuinely reflects his occupation or his socio-economic status ... one seems to detect also a kind of indifference – manifested, for example in the perfunctoriness, the absence of living detail, in the descriptions... the world in which Jude and Sue move is one with remarkably little solidity or circumstantiality (Page 1980: 46-47).

We never see Jude at work in the book: at most there is an occasional mention of a job he has done or is about to do, but how he earns his living is given no importance by Hardy, and we never see a workmate or employer of Jude's. In financial terms, it is clear that Jude is a worker, albeit a skilled worker, earning a workman's wage, which is an important factor in his thwarted ambitions to study at the University, but again we are given practically no details of wages and costs in the daily life of the people in the book. This lack of detail regarding the life of the characters is arguably a result of the focusing on Jude's obsession with education, but it also affects their language. Page says that: "...what we find in the long dialogues between Jude and Sue is ...a bookish and remorselessly earnest exchange of views in the language of the debating society...What Hardy offers as spontaneous, informal speech ...is simply impossible to accept on those terms" (Page 1980: 53-54). Jude is presented as a worker with a thirst for education, a type recognizable enough to enable Hoggart to talk about "middle-class intellectuals with strong social consciences...[who] have for a very

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<sup>37</sup> *New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. XI.* (1962).

long time tended to see every second working-class man as a Felix Holt or Jude the Obscure” (Hoggart 1971: 14). It would seem from the book, however, that the education which is the ambition of the autodidact is possible only at the cost of losing his spontaneity and naturalness, and the rootless Jude is trapped between the high culture which is not his and the popular culture which he seems never to have enjoyed.

D.H.Lawrence, as the son of a miner, has often been thought of as a working-class voice, which in some ways he was. However, he succeeded in escaping from the predestined life of following his father down the pit, and through the means of scholarships he achieved what Jude could not, a university education. As a beneficiary of the educational reforms, Lawrence studied the modern curriculum (he won prizes for mathematics, French and German while at Nottingham High School) and eventually qualified as a teacher, which was his route out of the constraints of working-class life. Writing of Lawrence and his early life, Williams says:

...his first social responses were those, not of a man observing the processes of industrialism, but of one caught in them, at an exposed point, and destined, in the normal course, to be enlisted in their regiments...It is only by hard fighting...that anyone born into the industrial working class escapes his function of replacement (Williams 1985: 202).

It would seem that Lawrence was aware of this from a very early age, and his conviction that industrialism was responsible for the degradation both of the physical environment and of the spiritual state of those who were trapped by it echoes many earlier writers:

The blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements wet and black. It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beast had, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling (Lawrence 1961: 158).

This could almost be Dickens on Coketown, though Lawrence's view is less personal and more aesthetic, and in his escape from his "function of replacement" Lawrence was in no doubt as to what he was escaping from. In his most autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), much of the repulsion that Paul Morel feels for his surroundings and the lives lived in them is based on aesthetic grounds (we are told that his children find Mr. Morel "disgusting" and "dirty" (Lawrence 1983: 143) ), and it is significant that he chooses to escape through art rather than another intellectual pursuit. The contrast in the book is between Paul supported by his mother, who had been a teacher and thus represents a more middle-class way of life, and his miner father, who is the inarticulate, eventually despised, working man, who is baffled by and distrustful of books. Thus:

But in turning to the intellectual life, Paul, unlike Jude, necessarily turns his back on an established and substantial culture – the working-class culture of mine, pub, neighbourhood and chapel (Walter Morel sings hymns when he is happy, or drunk). Paul's motivation is in part at least physical, the revulsion of the gentle and physically weak boy away from the robust intimate naked world of the colliery workers (Page 1980: 51).

The social roles are delineated much more finely in Lawrence's work than in Hardy's, and if Jude seems to develop speech habits which are more in keeping with a sermon than with natural conversation, the Morels reveal the subtle gradations proper to the location, and the differing and changing status of the various members, such as Mrs. Morel's more middle-class speech showing occasional influences from her husband's regional English, as when she tells her husband: " "Goodness, man, don't be so lachrymose." This wounded him slightly, but still he continued to feign sickness. "I wouldn't be such a mardy baby," said his wife shortly. Then he was indignant" (Lawrence 1983: 62). We also see Paul's early recognition and assumption of the "correct" English and the differences it entails, as when he refuses to go any

more to collect his father's wages: "They're hateful and common, and hateful, they are, and I'm not going any more. Mr. Braithwaite drops his "h's", and Mr Winterbottom says "You was" "(Lawrence 1983: 93). While Lawrence shows his intimate knowledge of working-class life, his works in general are more concerned with the psychological interplay of the different members of a family or a group, and while class and class differences are central to a lot of his writing, the area of work itself is mostly left to the imagination of the reader, though both Paul and his mother are necessarily conversant with the details of Mr. Morel's earnings which, incidentally, seem to be on some sort of shared productivity basis rather than straight wages. In *Sons and Lovers* Walter Morel is sometimes persuaded to tell his children stories of "down pit", but he prefers to talk about the idiosyncrasies of the pit-ponies rather than the work itself, quite naturally in the context, and so the world where Morel spends most of his time is relegated to a dimly-perceived almost fantastic world. Paul and his mother obviously know exactly what the work entails, and their mutual rejection of it as a possible future for Paul is based on knowledge and not ignorance, just as it was for Lawrence and his mother, and perhaps for this reason there was no need to describe in detail something which was so clearly an end to be avoided rather than something worthy of respect or emulation. *Sons and Lovers* also reveals the ambiguous attitude towards education which was and is common among working-class men. On one hand, someone who tries to get an education, to "make something" of himself, is admired and respected. On the other hand, there is a feeling that education, based on the high culture, has little relevance to real life, and Walter Morel's distrust of books is a common attitude. Education is also firmly placed in the feminine sphere of influence, as can be seen in the Morel family, and for Hoggart this

is one more aspect of the process of separation from the predominantly male working world which the “scholarship boy” undergoes:

...his detachment ...is emotionally linked with one more aspect of his home situation – that he now tends to be closer to the women of the house than to the men. This is true, even if his father is not the kind who dismisses books and reading as a “woman’s game”. The boy spends a large part of his time at the physical centre of the home, where the women’s spirit rules...The man and the boy’s brothers are outside, in the world of men; the boy sits in the women’s world (Hoggart 1971: 295).

The feminization of education was due, to some extent, to economic factors. Since girls were worth less than boys in the labour market, they could often continue their education longer, since the financial cost was relatively less. This early division of roles often continued, and thus schooling was, and still is, usually seen as very much part of the mother’s duties, a consequence which served to deepen the divide between high culture and the working class. In short, both Hardy and Lawrence had much to say about many aspects of working-class life, but the question of the work itself is still conspicuous by its absence.

One book which did show the world of work, and laid bare the relations underlying capitalist production, was *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, which was first published in April 1914, some five years after the death of its author Robert Tressell, an Irish painter and decorator whose real name was Robert Noonan. The pen-name Tressell is itself a pun for painters, since Tressell = trestle. It appeared in a heavily-edited form, and its initial impact was soon diffused by the outbreak of the First World War. It was subsequently re-edited a number of times, although it was necessary to wait until 1955 for it to be published in the form in which it had been written by its author. It has sold over a million copies over the years, and is as

relevant now as when it first appeared.<sup>38</sup> It shows the life of a painter and decorator and the conditions under which he and his workmates worked and lived at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Williams calls it “this first successful working-class novel” (Williams 1983: 247). The philanthropists of the title refers to the workmen themselves whom the significantly-named main character, Owen, a socialist, attempts to educate in socialism.<sup>39</sup> Owen tells his workmates that they are “donating” their time and effort to make their boss richer, and this philanthropy is at the heart of the profit system, since if they were paid what they really earned, the boss would have nothing and they would have a better standard of living. Though sometimes overly didactic, the book expounds socialism in a clear, practical manner, and one sees the hardship suffered by the men and their families both when they are working for inadequate wages and when work is not possible, because of bad weather, for example. Much of the book shows the men at work, being forced to do shoddy work to save the employer money, something which many of the men, considering themselves craftsmen, find hard to accept, and under the constant threat of being discovered in unpermitted activities such as smoking or chatting, which could lead to the sack, and consequent starvation. Throughout the whole book the instability of the workers’ jobs and thus the financial situation of their families is a constant tension in their lives, and the reader is informed of the desperation of poverty, not least among those who are actually working. Owen tries to explain why this is so, giving what Hunt calls “a bastardised form of Marx’s theory of surplus value” (Hunt 2004: xvi), which Owen calls “the Great Money Trick” (Tressell 2004: 244-262). Tressell shows the men as accepting the system, and although they recognise that they are unfairly

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<sup>38</sup> For Noonan’s life and the history of the book see: Hunt 2004: xxiii-xxvii.

<sup>39</sup> Williams also writes that the title of the speech he gave as the Tressell Memorial Lecture, “The Ragged-Arsed Philanthropists”, is “the title which, it’s a fair guess, would have been preferred if there hadn’t been the restrictions which Tressell mentioned in his short preface” (Williams 1983: 239)

treated, the passivity which the system has engendered in them makes the prospect of action or change impossible. Owen tries to argue them into a more realistic view of their situation, but their acceptance of the dominant ideology, in as much that they believe that as working men what they receive corresponds to their place in society, and their fear of losing what little they have, preclude any positive action, and in the book Tressell reserves as much anger for these timid victims as he does for the society which has made them like this:

*They were the enemy.* Those who not only quietly submitted like so many cattle to the existing state of things, but defended it, and opposed and ridiculed any suggestion to alter it. *They were the real oppressors* – the men who spoke of themselves as “The likes of us”...He hated and despised them because they calmly saw their children condemned to hard labour and poverty for life, and deliberately refused to make any effort to secure for them better conditions than those they had themselves (Tressell 2004: 41-42).

The passivity of the majority of the workmen in the book, and their acceptance of their situation, can be seen as a proof of the successful dissemination of the dominant ideology, and one identified vehicle for this is the popular press; newspapers are seen to be read and quoted as a source of authority in the political arguments which Owen encourages and directs, and in keeping with the Bunyanesque nomenclature which Tressell uses (prominent businessmen of the town are called Didlum, Grinder and Sweater, the local M.P. is Sir Graball D’Enclosedland) the foreman Crass reads the *Daily Chloroform* and *The Obscurer* (Tressell 2004: 15), letting us know what Tressell and, by implication, Owen, think of the dominant mass medium.

The work and conditions shown are those of employees of a small independent building company rather than a large industrial concern, in a small town named Mugsborough (a thinly-disguised Hastings, where Noonan lived), but the basic relationship of employer/employee is the same, and the poverty of the workers and their families is described in a realistic way which avoids over-dramatizing. This was

different from previous novels (such as the aforementioned industrial novels) in that the social background is not a cohesive working-class society such as a mill town or mining valley:

Rather, Tressell gives us the kind of gradated social hierarchy and non-industrial setting which was in fact the more typical experience of the Edwardian working class. The reality for millions was that of a fragmented, localized pattern of employment which actively mediated against the development of any broader class loyalty...What Tressell...provided was a more truthful, far less romantic picture of the proletariat: individuals disorganized, brutally disciplined and at the same time hopelessly isolated (Hunt 2004: xii).

In cinema terms the book could be called a “sleeper”, in that it seems to have had a very limited effect at the time of publication, but it has somehow survived over the years and probably enjoyed more success as time passed than when it first appeared. Again, as with a film “sleeper”, much of the success of the book seems to have been due to word of mouth. Hunt describes how it was recommended, lent and borrowed in socialist, trade union and working environments, especially on building sites and among painters (Hunt 2004: xxv-xxviii), and Brendan Behan, who served several years as an apprentice painter, relates in *Borstal Boy* (1958) how he and another Borstal inmate, also an apprenticed painter, shared a common familiarity with the book:

He was a painter outside too. A fifth-year apprentice and two years ahead of me. He'd been in the Tech in Blackpool, and did the Second Year City and Guilds examination the year I did my first. He was born in the pot, like myself, for his father and his grandfather were painters. He was a good singer like most painters, my own family included, and the first book he'd ever heard tell of was the painter's bible, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell...It was our book at home, too, and when my mother was done telling us of the children of Lir and my father about Fionn MacCumhaill they'd come back by way of nineteen sixteen to the *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* and on every job you'd hear painters using the names out of it for nicknames calling their own apprentice “The Walking Colour Shop” and, of course, every walking foreman was called Nimrod, even by painters who had never read the book, nor any other book, either (Behan 1990: 292-293).

What is interesting here is how the book, “the painter’s bible”, arrived to its readers: in the case of Behan’s English fellow-prisoner and workmate, who was also “born in the pot”, it was his first book, and it is clear that it was part of the home and working background, as it was for Behan, rather than coming from the world of formal education. For Behan’s family it was a continuation of Irish national culture and politics, and for both of them, although they were only apprentices, it was a fixed part of the working world. The fact that painters unwittingly adopted nicknames from the book is an indication of its popularity among the people about and for whom it was written, while Hunt quotes an unnamed Labour Cabinet Minister in 1997 naming it as the most politically influential book in her life (Hunt 2004: vii), thus giving an idea of the spread of the book both in temporal and social terms. In the introduction to a paperback edition, Sillitoe wrote in 1965: “...the novel finally transcends class warfare in its evocation of pure tragedy, for it is as realistic a description of the human jungle as has ever been made. Whatever else one says, it is one of the finest of English novels” (Sillitoe 1975: 146).

Williams, while praising the book as previously quoted (p.106) draws attention to what he calls “The orthography of the uneducated: all that torturing of the already tortured nature of English spelling, to indicate that somebody’s pronunciation is not standard, not educated” (Williams 1983: 254), a point which has already been mentioned regarding Kipling and Dickens. Owen and his family all speak, according to the spelling, standard English, as does Barrington, the middle-class activist. The other workmen, and the “Brigands” or “Forty Thieves”, the people who run the town through the Council or through business, are represented as speaking non-standard English, and if Tressell’s purpose in doing so was to show that the brigands were essentially ignorant people, despite their pretensions, it could be said that he was

successful. However, this same technique also shows the workmen to be equally ignorant, and so the tension in the book is not only between employees and employer, but also between conscious and unconscious, or educated and uneducated, workers.

Williams says of this contrast that:

It is part of a textual strategy which is not necessarily entirely conscious but which is so regular that it can't be accidental. It is in one sense repeating a standard prejudice of English middle-class writing, but within a broader strategy which is the whole point of the book. For he is saying that it is terrible for people to have to live like this when they are doing useful and good work, and could do more useful and better work in different circumstances (Williams 1983: 255-256).

He goes on to say that this ignorance can be seen as an inevitable result of the system in which the men are living and working, which keeps them imprisoned in their ignorance, one possible reaction to which is pity, and Owen occasionally expresses this emotion. Another reaction, however, is: "...to say: "You *are* a prisoner, and you'll only get out of this prison if you admit it's a prison. And if you won't call it a prison, I will, and I'll go on calling it a prison, come what may." This strength, this challenge, is the lasting quality of Tressell's book" (Williams 1983: 256). It is this challenge against the men's self-satisfied ignorance which most ignites Owen's anger, but it is also the hope that these people can be educated which stimulates Owen in his ultimately fruitless, though not hopeless, task, and no doubt has been responsible for the book's continuing popularity and influence. It remains, however, an isolated phenomenon in literary terms, and Noonan's death naturally precluded any chance of building on its relative success.

The aftermath of the First World War brought disappointment and disillusion to the working class in England. The promises made during and just after the war, of which "a land fit for heroes to live in"<sup>40</sup> is probably the best-known, were not kept, and the

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<sup>40</sup> A promise made by the coalition government under David Lloyd George which was returned in the 1918 elections. Source: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) Access date: 17.5.2006

twenties saw the industrial and mining crises of the beginning of the decade followed by the General Strike in 1926 and the stock-market crash and consequent slump in 1929. The optimism caused by the election of the first Labour government in 1924 was shown to be misplaced, and the focus moved from work to the lack of it, and unemployment became a major theme of English life. “In June 1921 it [unemployment] passed two million and, though it then fell again, never went under a million between the wars” (Taylor, A.J.P. 1975: 195). According to Hobsbawm: “The Victorian economy of Britain crashed in ruins between the two world wars... “Economic decline”, something that economists argued about before 1914, now became a palpable fact” (Hobsbawm 1999: 185).

During the late twenties and early thirties a number of novels were published which attempted to reflect the changing face of England, in which the emphasis of the working-class activism had changed from the call for better wages and conditions (though this naturally did not disappear from the agenda) to the right to work. The process could be said to have begun with the end of the First World War and the subsequent fall in demand for military production and the return to the labour market of the millions who had been lucky enough to survive. By this period, of course, Britain was far from being the only industrialized country, and increasing competition from the U.S.A., Japan, Germany, France and other European countries had cut into what had once been almost a monopoly of industrial production, particularly in the heavy industries such as steel or shipbuilding. In this atmosphere the reaction of the owners of British industry was the same as it has always been – the maintaining of profits at any cost, and the General Strike of 1926 was initially caused by the mine-owners` intentions to impose a longer working week and a cut in wages. The miners went on strike not to improve their conditions but to try and preserve what they had,

and they were joined by many other unions who saw this as a kind of test case.<sup>41</sup> Needless to say, the strikers eventually returned to work, and pay cuts, longer hours and “speeding up” became widespread in many industries, and with unemployment rising rapidly there was little room for manoeuvre. A case in point is Jarrow, in the north-east of England. Once a busy steel and shipbuilding town, it had seen shipyards close in the late twenties and early thirties, and in 1931 it had an unemployment rate of 80%, which changed little in the following years. Among the numerous protests in Britain which sought both recognition of the situation and proposals for dealing with it, probably the one which received and continues to receive the most attention is that known as the Jarrow Hunger March, although the name given by the marchers was the Jarrow Crusade, among other reasons to differentiate it from other hunger marches organized by the Communist Party. Whichever name is preferred, the march retains a potency in English folk imagery<sup>42</sup>, one which has since been evoked many times, not least in the unemployment protests of the 80s and 90s. In 1936 some 200 men marched from Jarrow to London, attracting great attention along the route, to hand in a petition to Parliament with some 90,000 signatures calling for the provision of jobs and also with the specific aim of protesting against a proposed cut in unemployment benefits. Despite the huge attention, and frequent support from unexpected quarters, that the marchers received, they had little tangible success, and only the Second World War gave a boost to flagging British industry.<sup>43</sup>

Of the various novels written at the time, perhaps the most successful both then and after was Walter Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole* (1933). Initially it did not make much impression, but it was dramatized by Greenwood and W.Gow and the success

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<sup>41</sup> See Taylor, A.J.P. 1975: 308-316 for the General Strike.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Price had a top-ten hit with *Jarrow Song* in 1974. Source: alanprice.absoluteelsewhere.net  
Access date: 20.5.2006

<sup>43</sup> See [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) for the Jarrow Crusade.

of the play stimulated sales of the novel. It was also filmed in 1941, with John Baxter as the director, and was a commercial success, somewhat surprisingly in wartime Britain perhaps, but it seemed that wartime censorship was relaxed enough to allow the themes of unemployment, union activity and prostitution.

As could be guessed by the title, the book deals with the effects of unemployment in a fictional town based on Oldham, Greenwood's home town, and many of the scenes and events (such as when a protest march is broken up by the police) were based on reality. First published in 1933, when unemployment in Britain was practically 3 million, it signals "a radical change in that a strong condemnation of unemployment and poverty is added to the interest in the life of a working community" (López Ortega 1980: 101). Even when all the members of the Hardcastle family, the focus of the novel, are working, poverty is the norm of the household, and when Harry and his miner father lose their jobs, it is naturally exacerbated. Harry and his sister Sally, the only person in the family still working, are both unable to marry because of poverty, and since Harry has his dole stopped because of the hated Means Test (introduced in 1931), he cannot get married even on the dole. For the first time work was considered by the workers as a necessity, not only for the usual reason of earning money to live, but also as being one of the few means of self-expression and self-respect open to them, and apart from the obvious drop in income and living standards produced by unemployment the deepest hurt is felt on a personal level by the men who are now impotent in the face of superior forces; an example of this is Mr. Hardcastle, who is eventually unable to condemn Sally's becoming the mistress of the rich Sam Grundy, since any life offered by Grundy is better than the one that he has been able to offer his daughter. Indeed, life only improves for them when Grundy, who is rich through illegal bookmaking, uses his influence to get Harry and his father

jobs with the municipal bus company, thus underlining the corruption inherent in the system and the essential uselessness of protest in the context of the power structure of the time. The novel also shows some of the employers' tricks to keep wages down, such as employing "apprentices" on apprentice wages from the ages of fourteen to twenty-one, and then sacking them when they were old enough to earn a full wage, which is what happens to Harry.<sup>44</sup> The indignities and suffering of unemployment are described in detail, as are the various forms of resistance to it, and we see the parallel economy of the poor: the moneylender, food and clothes bought on credit, illegal betting, clothes and other objects pawned on Monday to be taken out on Friday (payday), and the impossibility of ever saving money. Greenwood gives a picture of a conscious, organized working class, especially in the form of the activist Larry Meath, whose efforts are now mainly directed towards the right to work as a basic condition of society. Work is indisputably better than no work, and manual work is seen as equally superior to the school or the office. Harry, even though he has been offered a clerk's job on leaving school, wants to work in the factory because an office job is somehow less manly. When he sneaks away to the factory to apply, he is wearing his office clothes:

He felt ashamed of himself, slunk along by the walls trying to make himself inconspicuous. All these men and boys wore overalls; *they* weren't clerks, they were Men, engaged in men's work. Sullen obstinacy mingled with rebellious desperation stirred in his heart. "They ain't getting me clerking," he muttered (Greenwood 1993: 19).

This male pride in physical work, and indeed in the industrial process itself, which is now presented as something awesome in its size and magnificence, represents a

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<sup>44</sup> In Sillitoe's *Key to the Door* (1961) Brian Seaton displays the folk memory of the working class when he shows himself aware not only of his own exploitation in post-war England, but also that of previous generations, saying how, during the depression: "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 a harrowing exercise in near starvation" (Sillitoe 1990: 249).

drastic change from the earlier images of the factory as a frightening, gloomy place of suffering. From Greenwood one gets the impression that, for the workers, to be involved in something as important as steel-production, for example, was vital to their sense of identity despite or even because of the toil and danger, and though the basic antagonism between worker and employer remained unchanged there could be a shared sense of achievement:

The foundry! What a place! Steel platforms from which you saw great muscular men dwarfed to insignificance by the vastness of everything:...a rushing, spitting river of flames that was molten metal...slowly the ladle swung, revolved, white-hot...slowly it swung, twenty tons of molten metal to the moulds...the metal brimmed the lip to fall, splashing off a teeming fountain of heavy, quick-dying sparks like a Catherine-wheel...A magnificent, inspiring sight; made you feel proud of being identified with the great Marlowe organization (Greenwood 1993: 48-49).

A.J.P.Taylor calls the book “one of the few genuinely “proletarian” novels written in English” and says its only rival is *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (Taylor, A.J.P. 1975: 436), and there are a number of similarities between the works of Tressell and Greenwood. In both books poverty, even in times of work, is a constant grim presence, never entirely absent even when momentarily dormant. Employers are only interested in extracting the maximum profit with the minimum outlay, and there is no sense of responsibility or loyalty to the workers. Larry Meath, in Greenwood’s novel, has much in common with Owen in Tressell’s, and he gives what is basically an explanation of “the Great Money Trick” (see p.106) in similar terms and with a similar technique, drawing a diagram, to those used by Owen (Greenwood 1993:182-4). Meath has more success in his attempts to stimulate the workers, or the unemployed, to action, and for this he is, if not actually killed, helped into death by the police. Both books are, eventually, pessimistic, but they both show a belief in the underlying strength of the working class, and it is this which offers any hope that may

be gleaned. *Love on the Dole* begins and ends with the figure of the “knocker-upper” waking Mrs. Hardcastle on a rainy Monday morning, and the description of a tired Mrs. Hardcastle trudging to the backyard to get coal; the only difference is that there is a generation between the first (Harry’s mother) and the second (Harry’s wife) Mrs. Hardcastle, and the stubborn continuation of life lived under often desperate conditions is seen in the weary resignation and determination of the women.

López Ortega mentions a number of other novels written in the early and middle 30s which share the basic themes of Greenwood, such as *Harvest in the North* by J.L.Hodson, (1934), *The Shipbuilders* and *David and Joanna*, by George Blake (1935 and 1936), some novels set in mining towns, such as *Times Like These* by Gwyn Jones and *Cwmardy* by Lewis Jones (1936 and 1937) and what is perhaps the only other work to survive from these novels, *A Scots Quair* by Lewis Grassie Gibbon, a trilogy which started in 1932 with the publication of *Summer Song*. Apart from the works of Greenwood and Gibbon, the others seem to have disappeared to wherever books go when they are no longer read or printed; while *A Scots Quair* undoubtedly owes much of its continuing existence, if not popularity, to the fact that it described some of the changes effected by industrialism in a specifically Scottish environment, Greenwood’s work seems to be the beneficiary of the luck of the novel’s adaptation to other forms rather than any inherent superiority in style or content to those mentioned above, and none of the writers repeated the success of these first works. López Ortega says of these novels:

The story is never limited to the description of an individual effort, but to a collective one. The setting of these tales is that of an entire community, and if the stress is laid upon the suffering of the people, it is because the time in which they were living – one of deep social transformation and conflict – is also one of distress. Moreover, although these first novels may tend slightly to emphasize impotence and defeat, there is always present the insight into a deep and hopeful sense of solidarity. This vision replaces the pious commiseration which sparked the Victorian social reform novel (López Ortega 1980: 103).

The difference between the “pious commiseration” of the Victorian novelists, writing from the outside, as opposed to the solidarity detected by López Ortega in the 30s novels, written from inside the communities depicted, shows that the working class was beginning to produce its own literature in response to the vicissitudes which it was undergoing, and also that such literature could find a place in the market, otherwise it would not have been commercialised. This possible development, however, was cut short by the Second World War.

The only other English pre-war writer to be mentioned is George Orwell, who occupies a unique position in the area of working-class literature. He was not from the working class, yet he wrote with an informed anger of the living conditions that they endured, most notably in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, published in 1937.<sup>45</sup> This was the first meticulously-detailed book which described the housing, wages, diet and finances of a town where a third of the population was out of work, and this first contact with the working class was something which made a deep impression on Orwell, who was a newly-professed Socialist at the time. This interest for and on behalf of the workers stayed with him for the rest of his life, and led him to join in the Spanish Civil War in the following year. The book itself was strongly criticised on various grounds and by different people: Orwell’s socialism was far from orthodox, and he received as much criticism from the left as from the right, among other things for comments such as : “...most middle-class Socialists, while theoretically pining for a classless society, cling like glue to their miserable fragments of social prestige” (Orwell 1976: 153). He was also accused of sentimentalising working-class life, such

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<sup>45</sup> “Orwell’s integrity...makes him for Sillitoe “the best English writer by far to come out of the thirties.” And he finds Orwell’s work still relevant because “the slums and dilapidated slave-barracks described by him...are still standing, only now there is a TV set in each one and food (of a sort) on every table” (Atherton 1979: 54).

as when Hoggart charges him with giving “a touch of the noble savage” to his account of working-class education (Hoggart 1974: 41). Whatever the criticisms, however, there can be no doubting Orwell’s sincerity, in this or his other writing, and Hoggart says of Orwell’s honesty that: “It means the sense of detail and verisimilitude which allowed Orwell to create atmosphere in much the same way as Defoe and Cobbett... We mean also by Orwell’s “honesty” his training himself to get rid as far as possible of the expected, the social-class response” (Hoggart 1974: 46). In the works where he has made a deliberate choice to live among the lowest levels of society, as in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), and in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he reacts to the physical conditions of the environment as a man of his social class could be expected to react, but he is able to observe himself reacting in this way, and able to analyse the reasons for such responses. His pre-war fiction is perhaps now the least regarded of his work, and in his depiction of those who, like himself, were from the lower-upper-middle class (see p.27) and felt constrained by the limits which their position imposed on them, it is possible to foresee themes which later became evident in his life and work. Writing of the main character of *Burmese Days* (1934), Eagleton says: “In the case of Flory, then, we have Orwell’s earliest working of tensions and contradictions which remained painfully unresolved throughout his career as a writer. Flory can neither accept, nor disengage from, the “normality” of a hated social system” (Eagleton 1974: 17-18). Orwell’s hatred of the social system led him to become a socialist, and to fight in the Spanish Civil War against the Fascist uprising. His experiences in Spain transformed his doubts of orthodox socialism into a conviction that Communism was as dangerous as Fascism, and Bott says: “As Wordsworth’s faith in the French Revolution was shattered by the tyranny of Napoleon, so Orwell’s hopes in the Russian Revolution were dashed by what he had

witnessed in Spain” (Bott 1958: 12). His attitude to Stalinism is clear in *Animal Farm*, published in 1945 when criticism of Russia was acceptable now that the war with Germany had ended, and the manipulation of language by the ruling class in the book (an aspect given even more prominence in *1984*) is indicative of Orwell’s distaste for theory and dialectics. His socialism was, in a way, peculiarly English, and his sympathies were always with the working man who, while usually not an orthodox Marxist, “does remember that Socialism means justice and common decency” (Orwell 1976: 154). His analyses of English life and the English class system, many of which were written as part of the varied wartime propaganda effort, show his understanding for and frequent frustration with the structure that, despite the differences, he described as a family:

It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of the family income. It is a family in which the young are generally thwarted and most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. Still, it is a family. It has its private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks. A family with the wrong members in control – that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase (Orwell 1982: 53-54).

This personalized view of England is the view that best fits with Orwell’s political beliefs, and though his writing rarely offers any specific solutions, he consistently thought that while there was much in England that was worth saving, much indeed that could not be altered since it was so much part of the national character, the situation with its injustice and abuses would never change until the right members of the family gained control, and these were of course the workers on whom everybody ultimately depended. The second and third chapters of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, when he describes his visit to a coal-mine and the work of the miners and the conditions of their employment, and then translates this “superhuman” job into wages and living standards, remain as one of the few detailed pictures of manual labourers and their

lives from the inter-war period (Orwell 1976: 19-31). Orwell, as a member of the comfortable middle class, says that while modern life, in 1937, depended on the miners doing this work in these conditions:

...we should prefer to forget that they were doing it. It is so with all types of manual work; it keeps us alive, and we are oblivious of its existence...For it is brought home to you, at least while you are watching, that it is only because miners sweat their guts out that superior persons can remain superior” (Orwell 1976: 31).

Orwell was always a committed observer more than a participant in the class struggle, but his ability to stand outside his own class beliefs and sympathize with the workers on whom all levels of society depended make him a writer who is still read and discussed.

To sum up this first part, as regards the literary depiction of the working class it can be seen that at the time of the Second World War, though industrialism had been established in England for well over a hundred years, very little had been written which reflected the experience from the point of view of the worker, and even less which directly reflected the actual work itself, as Orwell says in his comment (p.90) on the “hole” in English writing. The books and writers mentioned can be said to show some aspects of the working-class experience, and there are undoubtedly other works which have not survived the passage of time, but nevertheless a hole is probably the best description of what can only be seen as a deliberate ignoring of the lives of the majority of the population whose work formed the foundation on which was built the structure and prosperity of the society that ignored them.

In more general terms, there was now universal adult suffrage in Britain (though not yet in Northern Ireland), and some advances had been made in the areas of education, health and housing and, despite the hated Means Test, unemployment no longer meant starvation; however, the economic differences between the classes were

still pronounced, and though a labourer's situation had probably improved somewhat from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a reading of *Love on the Dole* or *The Road to Wigan Pier* would show that any improvement was in many cases negligible.

The commonality of experience, however, had succeeded in creating a working class which was, while far from homogeneous, conscious of its position and functions in English society; it was able to identify itself both in terms of its shared internal characteristics, and also in terms of its shared opposition to the ruling classes, in short along the lines of *us* and *them*. The working class had also managed to create its own institutions and organizations, usually in the face of determined if not brutal opposition by the official structures, and this fundamental opposition had always been a crucial factor in the creation of the class system in England. Apart from the formal working-class institutions such as trade unions, however, the urban working classes had also developed a way of life which, despite the material restrictions forced on them, served both to alleviate some of these restrictions and also to differentiate them from the middle and upper classes. This way of life, which would soon be called culture, was also a site of conflict and resistance, in which the working class expressed its own ideas and values which were naturally different from those of other classes. An alternative history had also developed, with names such as Peterloo or Jarrow, and heroes such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, which helped to keep alive the memories of the struggles which had been necessary to gain whatever progress had been made.

Culture in the sense of artistic production, which was still the most usual meaning, had by this time come to be identified with the dominant classes, and for the working class was either a matter of irrelevance, as something which had no connection to their lives, or a cause of hostility, as a vehicle for the ideology which they were

suffering and resisting. Though working-class activism had mostly been in the more clearly-defined spheres of economics or politics, it was also evident that there was another dimension to the struggles which, though less specific, can be seen as operating in what could be called the human or individual sphere, as expressed in the quotes from Thompson (p.20-21 of this thesis) regarding the imposition of the “methodical” way of capitalist life, or the workers’ fears that “they wish to make us tools”; it is this aspect of working-class life which has been, in my opinion, largely ignored in any appreciation of Sillitoe’s work, and which is best described by the word culture.

## **PART TWO: THE BOOKS**

### **2.1 WARTIME AND POST-WAR ENGLAND**

The many and varied effects that the Second World War had on Britain are still a matter of considerable debate, but some things are undeniable. Much more than the first war, it affected all the people, not only the armed forces. The bombing of towns and cities put the whole population at risk and, using a common phrase, A.J.P. Taylor says: “This was a people’s war” (Taylor, A.J.P. 1975: 727). Furthermore, the shared dangers helped to produce a sensation of common interests which had not been felt in the first war, when the war could be envisaged as something isolated from the daily life of all but the men fighting it; moreover, the system of rationing and the shortages of many basic goods ensured that the hardships were spread more evenly throughout the whole population.

While patriotism was naturally resorted to as a prime motivator, any official propaganda had to appeal to a working class which had seen their efforts go unrewarded twenty years previously, and this more cynical distrust could no longer be countered by the simple call on national instincts, particularly since the nation in question had done little for the people to whom it was now appealing to defend it. The evils of Fascism made it easy to define what the people were fighting against, but the question of what they were fighting *for* was rather more complicated, and much effort was put into attempts to clarify this. Kumar says:

The Second World War demanded a mobilization of moral resources every bit as much as physical resources. Morale was crucial, and this called for a major and unprecedented effort of “education for citizenship” – an effort applying as much to the largely conscript army as to the civilians of the home front. The Coalition Government...put its weight behind a programme of cultural mobilization the like of which had never before been seen in this country (Kumar 1983: 19).

He goes on to mention some of the official initiatives which were made responsible for this education for citizenship: the Entertainments National Service Association (E.N.S.A.) for the troops; the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.) for the civilian population; the Crown Film Unit, a part of the Ministry of Information, which gave sponsorship and thus a welcome stimulus to the cinema; the Army Education Corps and the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (A.B.C.A.) which promoted social and political discussion among the troops; the B.B.C., which expanded from having 4,000 staff in 1939 to 11,000 in 1941. All of this “brought the state into an active involvement with culture – in the Arnoldian sense – to a degree far surpassing any earlier concern” (Kumar 1983: 25). Apart from the government’s intervention in cultural production, there were also significant movement in the private sector, such as the increased popularity of publications like *Picture Post*, which was selling over a million copies a week at the height of the war, and numbered among its contributors Shaw, Wells, Tom Driberg and Bertrand Russell, and *The Daily Mirror*, both of which were blamed by Conservatives for their defeat in the 1945 election; there was a stream of Penguin Specials, which offered cheap reprints of older titles, and the Left Book Club, directed by Victor Gollancz, and the Searchlight series from Secker and Warburg (which included Orwell’s aforementioned *The Lion and the Unicorn*) helped to maintain an alternative political focus for both wartime and the eventual peace. (See: Kumar 1983: 18-31, for the information above.) For Marwick, the fact that it was very much a “people’s war”, with civilians, partisans and resistant movements united against Nazism, led to a feeling that art should come back to the people rather than isolating itself in the dominant abstruse modernism of the period, and the C.E.M.A. was the chosen organ for this:

Wars quicken the pulse. That small, but potentially influential, group of people who think about these things at all, thought it important to show that in fighting Nazism, Britain was fighting for the finest in European and British cultural traditions. Against the hostility of reactionaries and “realists”, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was established as an agency for subsidizing the arts (Marwick 1991: 14).

The arts provided for were the usual representatives of the high culture, with music, theatre and opera being performed throughout the country, and many of these cultural offerings were extremely popular with all sectors of the community, such as Myra Hess’s now famous lunchtime piano recitals in the National Gallery in London (Marwick 1991: 14). One result of the war was the large displaced or in-transit population, a potential audience for any type of entertainment, especially if it was cheap or free. This breaking of the traditional price discrimination allowed many forms of high culture to be experienced for the first time by many people, and the democratization of art went hand-in-hand with the general loss of deference in wartime Britain. The activities of the C.E.M.A. and other official bodies could indeed make it seem as if the Arnoldian hopes for Culture as the solution to the problems of society were finally being realized. A.J.P.Taylor says:

There was a genuine will to bring the best of everything to the people, and the people on their side raised their standards. Patriotism and the Brains Trust, fighting the Nazis and lunchtime concerts were different expressions of the brief period when the English people felt that they were a truly democratic community (Taylor, A.J.P. 1975: 668).

Marwick supports this idea when he says that the composer Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears the tenor, who returned to Britain in 1942 from America,

...were not alone in feeling that Britain in wartime was undergoing a cultural renaissance...It is not inaccurate to speak of a raising of consciousness in wartime, among the workers, among women, and indeed among some members of the various sections of the middle classes (Marwick 1991:14).

However, it should not be assumed that government support of the arts was equivalent to government control. Orwell wrote in 1945:

The British government started the last war with the more or less openly declared intention of keeping the literary intelligentsia out of it; yet after three years of war almost every writer, however undesirable his political history or opinions, was sucked into the various ministries or the B.B.C., and even those who entered the armed forces tended to find themselves after a while in Public Relations or some other essentially literary job. The Government absorbed these people, unwillingly enough, because it found itself unable to get on without them. The ideal, from the official point of view, would have been to put all publicity into the hands of "safe" people...but since not enough of these were available, the existing intelligentsia had to be utilized, and the tone and even to some extent the content of official propaganda have been modified accordingly. No one acquainted with the Government pamphlets, A.B.C.A. lectures, documentary films and broadcasts to occupied countries which have been issued during the war imagines that our rulers would sponsor this kind of thing if they could help it. Only, the bigger the machine of government becomes, the more loose ends and forgotten corners there are in it (Orwell 1958: 113-114).

Not only writers but film-makers, painters, photographers and other artists found their services called for since, to make a documentary for instance, it is necessary to employ people who have experience in the field, and it is also necessary to give them a certain amount of autonomy. No organization can ever be omnipotent, and the unprecedented growth in the official cultural apparatus (as mentioned above, the B.B.C. almost tripled its staff in the first two years of war) and the general inevitable growth of bureaucracy caused by the war could not help but create the "loose ends and forgotten corners" Orwell speaks of. This situation would make the encoding/decoding process and the imposition of the desired ideology even more subject to alteration than Hall described (p.82). Owing to the sheer impossibility of controlling every stage of the process, the first break in the chain is seen to come in the primary step of transferring the conceptual to the concrete, from the source to the agent, before the message is even transmitted. One influential and clear example of this unexpected and undesired diversion of the original intention was the Army

Bureau of Current Affairs, the A.B.C.A. mentioned by Orwell and Kumar. As well as printing educational and explanatory pamphlets, the A.B.C.A. organized lectures and talks for the troops, debating such topics as the meaning of democracy and the expectations for the post-war world.<sup>46</sup> The pamphlets, and the numerous service newspapers, often written by the soldiers themselves, were of course subject to censorship, but in the selection of news, cartoons and photographs they revealed and reflected the thoughts, preoccupations and attitudes of the soldiers who were the readers.<sup>47</sup> More than the printed material, however, it was:

... the fact that discussions on current affairs had become a regular activity in military life which represented the major qualitative change: the army, until then the stronghold of traditional social hierarchies, invited the “soldier-citizen” to reflect on the changes taking place and encouraged him to give his opinion on the future shape of the world.<sup>48</sup>

It is, and was at the time, generally acknowledged that the servicemen’s votes were crucial in the Labour election victory of 1945, and the Conservatives held the A.B.C.A., among others, largely responsible for this<sup>49</sup>. The irony is obvious, and this officially-backed but officially-disapproved encouragement of the military proletariat to claim the “square deal”<sup>50</sup> which was the most frequently-voiced desire as the reward for victory can be seen as a clear demonstration of the difficulty in transmitting an ideological message.

The immediate post-war period, with the aforementioned Labour victory in 1945, has often been seen as the long-deserved victory of the working class. While Britain

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<sup>46</sup> It would be interesting to imagine the effect such talks might have had on Kipling’s Ortheris, Mulvaney and Learoyd, for example.

<sup>47</sup> Winston Churchill, then Prime Minister, famously tried and failed to withdraw from publication an A.B.C.A. pamphlet which was devoted to explaining the merits of the Beveridge Report, the founding document of the Welfare State. This and other information about the A.B.C.A. is from the article *Service Newspapers during the Second World War*, Janie Mortier, available on the website for La Reunion University, France: [www2.univ-reunion.fr](http://www2.univ-reunion.fr). Last access date: 18.1.2007.

<sup>48</sup> Mortier: [www2.univ-reunion.fr](http://www2.univ-reunion.fr)

<sup>49</sup> Mortier: [www2.univ-reunion.fr](http://www2.univ-reunion.fr)

<sup>50</sup> Mortier: [www2.univ-reunion.fr](http://www2.univ-reunion.fr)

was still suffering from the economic ravages of six years of war, with rationing still in place and many basics of life being hard or impossible to get, there was nevertheless full employment, in fact the shortage of labour had led to the active recruitment of immigrants from Europe and the colonies to fill the vacant positions as the work of reconstruction went on. The establishment of the Welfare State was under way, the government seemed to be operating on socialist principles, and the continuing hardships at least seemed to be shared fairly among the whole population. The square deal, which had previously been expressed as “Justice”, was believed by many to have finally arrived, thus putting to rest the fears that, as had happened after the First World War, the returning soldiers would be thanked with a pat on the back and sent home to go back on the dole. Sinfield says:

In the 1930s there seemed to be three kinds of future: fascism, communism and welfare-capitalism – a rejigging of capitalism to make it fairer. These three fought it out between 1939 and 1945. Welfare-capitalism won in Western Europe; on the right as well as the left it was agreed that a return to prewar conditions must be prevented (Sinfield 1997: xx).

One thing which I hope has become clear is the consistence of the expressed aims of the working class, not for any radical changes in the structure of society but simply for a fairer distribution of the rewards of their work, a square deal, in fact. The means of achieving this were also consistent with the historical attitudes shown during the one-and-a-half centuries of industrialism, which had always been to work within the system, and much of the struggle had been for the right to participate more fully in the existing democratic process rather than dismantle or replace it. Despite the often-expressed bourgeois fear of “anarchy”, and the conviction that the workers were innately violent, “...the most remarkable facts about the British working-class movement, since its origin in the Industrial Revolution, are its conscious and

deliberate abstention from general violence, and its firm faith in other methods of advance” (Williams 1985: 133).

Indeed, throughout history the working class had been the victims of violence much more often than the instigators (see p.37 for Thompson’s description of life as a battleground), and as the restrictions of war were gradually eased as the 40s moved into the 50s, Britain seemed to have finally, peacefully (in domestic terms), attained some sort of economic, social and political equality. After twenty years of poverty sandwiched by two wars in which the working class had fulfilled its role of fighting and dying in great numbers, “it seemed for a while at least as if egalitarian philosophies might effect fundamental changes in the structure of society” (Kumar 1983: 15). The enforced mixing between the different classes in the war, which continued in the armed forces, at least, with compulsory National Service, was seen to have eliminated many of the more glaring inequalities of British society. The Conservative return to power in 1951 made little difference, and the policies which could be characterized as welfare capitalism were maintained, with the prevailing political mood being one of “consensus” (Marwick 1991: 16), a frequently used term which echoes Gramsci’s idea of “negotiation”, and Day says that this consensus “was based on the belief that governments had a responsibility to ensure that the poverty and unemployment of the 1930s did not recur” (Day 2000: 2). With the shortage of labour, wages naturally went up. “Average weekly earnings for industrial workers rose 34 per cent between 1955 and 1960 and 130 per cent between 1955 and 1969; average earnings of middle-class salaried employees rose 127 per cent between 1955 and 1969” (Marwick 1991: 69). This increase in spending power was accompanied by a drop in the price, in relative terms, of the products of the new technology, such as television sets, washing machines and vacuum cleaners, all of which were becoming

increasingly common in even working-class homes. It seemed that the material benefits of capitalism were being extended to all sectors of society, and Hill says: “There can be little doubt that the key to understanding Britain in the 1950s resides in the idea of “affluence”, of a nation moving inexorably forward from post-war austerity and rationing to Macmillan’s soap-flake Arcadia” (Hill 1986: 5).

However, this affluence was by no means either stable or absolute. Despite the rise in incomes and the apparent abundance of consumer goods, the economic base on which the new prosperity was secured was far from solid. The erosion of the Empire and its markets, the reluctance of all parties to acknowledge Britain’s changed role in the world, the commitment to an international political and military role and the concomitant disproportionate expenditure on defence, the level of investment and economic growth which was low by world standards, and the unwillingness to devalue sterling all led to a series of crises which in turn led to increased taxation and a slowing-down of home demand. Britain’s economic growth had looked impressive in isolation, but when it was compared to that of competitors such as Germany, France or Italy it looked very poor. Also, while the full employment which was being enjoyed, the rising wages, and the increased availability of consumer goods seemed to indicate a more equal society, at the same time they helped to disguise the persistence of inequality and its continuing connection to a class system. Hill, from whom the argument above is taken, quotes various sources which give figures that reveal a different reality. In 1962, 1% of adult society had 10% of total post-tax incomes, while the richest 5% enjoyed much the same income as the poorest 50%. In 1959–60, 88% of taxpayers owned only 3.7% of private wealth while the richest 7% owned 84%, and these figures showed very little change from the early 1950s (Hill 1986: 8-9). The relations of capital had not changed, and the new prosperity of the working

class was only relative to the former poverty. In the figures given by Marwick above, it can be seen that the earnings of the middle and the working classes rose almost equally over the period 1955 to 1969, which means that the difference in earnings stayed the same. The ownership of the means of production was in the same hands as before, and most people were still dependent on the weekly wage, something which had been shown to be notoriously unreliable in the past.

If the structure of industrial production had changed very little, appearances to the contrary, the means of cultural production had also shown few signs of change. The cultural apparatus of post-war Britain, despite the apparent broadening of both supply and demand which had taken place during the war, seemed to revert to the *status quo ante*, and in the field of literature “most of the writers of the earlier post-war period were, on the whole, still writing comfortably within the basic conventions of the traditional English novel” (Phelps 1983: 418). Phelps goes on to categorize the novelists into groups: those who failed to make the transition to the post-war world, such as Rex Warner, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley or Rosamund Lehmann; others, like Ivy Compton-Burnett, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh or L.P.Hartley continued to write successfully, and others such as Joyce Cary assumed a prominence which they had not achieved with their earlier work (Phelps 1983: 417-429) (Marwick 1991: 20-24). In the theatre: “Most popular were J.B.Priestley, Somerset Maugham, Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan” (Marwick 1991: 25). Much literature dealt with the recent war, as could be expected, and many novels were published which were written by the rank-and file soldiers, giving the view of the role of the troops in the conflict, but the work which seems to have survived best is Evelyn Waugh’s *Sword of Honour* trilogy: *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955) and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961). It is written exclusively from the point of view of

the officer class and, likening his work to that of Olivia Manning and Anthony Powell, D.J.Taylor says:

Almost without exception, the heroes of the post-war *romans-fleuves* ...are emasculated, ineffectual, fatally upper-class figures, carefully deployed to mock the prospect of a better post-war world...[Waugh's] "common man" characters – Trimmer in *Sword of Honour*, Hooper in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) – are invariably repellent prefigurations of a post-war archetype (Taylor, D.J. 1994: 14).

Waugh's attitude to the potential and perceived decline of post-war England was extreme - D.J.Taylor speaks of his "almost pathological snobbery" (Taylor, D.J. 1994: 15) - but by no means unusual, as will be seen later. The prevailing point of view reflected the social background of the writer, and all of the above-named writers were, according to Marwick, from the upper class, except for Waugh, who "succeeded in socializing himself into that class" (Marwick 1991: 20). Against this background, it is ironic though not surprising that the two most internationally famous novels of the period, and the two most political, were the work of a renegade old Etonian son of the impoverished upper class: Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949). The fact that Orwell could be published and enjoy success can be taken as another example of "negotiation", and the way in which a work or writer seen as subversive is subsumed into "respectability", as noted in the earlier quote by Jameson about Modernism (p.60), while maybe not frequent is by no means exceptional. Sinfield gives the more recent case of Irvine Welsh, who in *Trainspotting* (1993) rants against "fat rich festival cunts" yet a few years later could be seen reading his work at the Edinburgh festival he had maligned so recently. "The Festival has even more to congratulate itself on when it co-opts such a critical voice. But then, Welsh, like any writer, has to get his work into circulation" (Sinfield 1997: xxv). This is an instance of how negotiation works in a capitalist society, since if Welsh or any other writer wishes to be read, his work has to be published, distributed and bought (the only other possible

channel at the moment, the Internet, has as yet had very little impact on this process) and thus he must make some accommodation with the system.

Notwithstanding the success of Orwell's books (which finally gave him some financial security) it would seem that literature was still something produced by, for and about the upper and middle classes,<sup>51</sup> and the situation in other fields was similar. Culture still generally meant high culture, even if this was not always recognized at the time. During, and particularly after, the war, the fear was frequently expressed by the bourgeoisie that the growth in bureaucracy attendant on the creation of the welfare state and the necessary reconstruction of a Britain which was still suffering the effects of six years of war, coupled with the election of a Labour government with an avowedly socialist agenda, would result in some kind of Soviet workers' state, a grey republic in which the leisured classes would have neither the time nor the money to produce and enjoy what was undoubtedly "good" culture. Kumar reports how: "Angela Thirkell spoke for all the middle and upper classes of her latter-day "Barsetshire" when she pronounced in her novel *Peace Breaks Out* (1946) that, with the Labour victory of 1945, "the Brave and Revolting New World came into its own" " (Kumar 1983:16). Many of the powers assumed by the government during the war (censorship, for example) impinged directly on cultural production, and the various government actions at the end of the war, such as the mutation of the C.E.M.A. into the Arts Council, and the establishment of the B.B.C. Third Programme, both in 1946, or the legislation in 1948 which enabled local councils to raise sixpence in the pound (2.5%) to fund local cultural enterprises (Marwick 1991: 14, 63) seemed to presage the continued official intervention in the area of culture. Sinfield quotes writers such as Elizabeth Bowen, Cyril Connolly, T.S.Eliot or Angus

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<sup>51</sup> It is significant that even Orwell, in *1984*, depersonalises the working class to the level of "Proles" (Orwell 1979: *passim*).

Wilson who echoed Angela Thirkell on the threat the anticipated and feared changes represented to their way of life, which they mostly sincerely felt to be of value not only to themselves but to society as a whole, and goes on to show how Nigel Nicolson described his parents, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson:

...they both believed that the world they knew and loved would be irreparably broken by the war. They saw in it the end of *les douceurs de la vie*...They thought that their past life of literature, Bloomsbury, “the purchase of books and pictures and the unthinking enjoyment of food and wine”, a large garden and sufficient servants, was now “an obsolete tradition”. They feared the permanence of the new vulgarity which the war had introduced (Nicolson in Sinfield 1997: 45).

Nicolson’s parents represented the upper-middle-class intellectual life summarized in the word “Bloomsbury”, who did not have to choose between buying books or having enough servants, but could do both. The idea of the civilized individual, in the original 19<sup>th</sup>-century meaning, was in many ways the ethos of Bloomsbury, and civilization obviously includes the creature comforts as well as the intellectual stimulation provided by culture, and since the two go together, one is not given more importance than the other. The Nicolsons would have been considered, and considered themselves, as natural members of one of Leavis’s minorities, responsible for making and/or recognizing the authoritative aesthetic judgements, and both were active in intellectual and literary circles of the day. Their reaction to the upheaval of war shows that attitudes had changed little, and the threat to their way of life is seen as both economic and cultural, and in destroying the economic base the new order would also be destroying the valuable culture formed and protected by such people.

However, the fears of the intelligentsia proved to be groundless. The distribution of the wealth of the country did not change, as has been seen, and the idea of culture as artistic production also remained the same. Sinfield says that, for welfare-capitalism, culture was “...one of the good things (like economic security and health-care) that

the upper classes have traditionally enjoyed, and is now to be available to everyone” (Sinfield 1997: 51). The new government’s position was clarified somewhat when one of the first acts of the new Arts Council was to turn what had been a commercial operatic venue, and then a wartime dance hall popular with servicemen, into the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (Marwick 1991: 36), and the current situation is not very different:

Still, now just as then, the lion’s share of cultural funding is distributed within a metropolitan-based elite world of “National/Royal” institutions which serve up a diet of “official” high culture (highly conventional forms of opera, ballet, etc.) which has little to do with most peoples’ lives (Morley and Robins 2001: 176).

The new Third Programme of the B.B.C., which still had a monopoly of the radio services, was soon seen as the home of high culture, and there were now three radio services, the Light Programme, the Home Service Programme and the Third Programme. According to Marwick: “The audience research which the B.B.C. had pioneered shortly before the war treated the audiences for these three services as synonymous with working-class, middle-class and upper-class, respectively” (Marwick 1991: 63). During the war, says Kumar, “The B.B.C. was encouraged to become in effect a Ministry of Culture” and “emerged from the Second World War covered in glory...In 1945, nationally and internationally the B.B.C. was at the peak of its prestige, as unassailable as the monarchy” (Kumar 1983: 19, 31), and the monopoly which it enjoyed made it synonymous with radio, and thus the only broadcasting medium in the immediate post-war years. Though the Reithian objective of education was retained, with the “cunning idea that the innocent listener, encountering as it were automatically throughout the day both light and serious matter, would gradually and imperceptibly “improve” ”, in fact “there were Light Programme devotees and there were Third Programme devotees, and both seemed

happy to go their own way in relative ignorance of each other” (Kumar 1983: 32). Though the high culture was available to all, it seemed that only the few chose to avail themselves of it, thus belying not only Reith’s ambitions, but also those of Arnold and Leavis

In fact, the moneyed classes could now enjoy their culture even less expensively than before, since it was frequently subsidized, as with the B.B.C. Not only did they benefit as consumers, but also as producers. The people mentioned by Orwell (p.126) who had been recruited during the war naturally found themselves in a similar position after the war, and with the expansion of B.B.C. television and radio services, the resumption of normality in the theatre and other arts, and the mushrooming of new official or semi-official cultural organizations, there were a lot of opportunities for work both on the creative and the administrative side. Sinfield says that “...the leisured upper-middle classes retained control of high-cultural institutions well into the 1950s” (Sinfield 1997: 47), and the influence of this cultural oligarchy remains strong in all walks of British life to this day. The extension of higher education also provided work for a lot of people, and thus the grip on cultural capital seemed to have been no more weakened than the grip on economic capital.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, some changes were taking place in British society. Although the differences between the classes had stayed more or less stable, there was now, largely owing to increased educational opportunities and the urgent need for educated technical and administrative workers, more possibility of social mobility than in the past. This often manifested itself in the upward mobility of working-class children who were now able to receive a prolonged education and join the ranks of the professional salaried classes, “those few bright working-class children who escaped

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<sup>52</sup> Nigel Nicolson, in a continuation of the quote above (p.134), went on to say that his parents’ lives did not change at all after the war.

through the grammar schools and universities” (Kumar 1983: 389). Hoggart, himself an example of the upwardly-mobile professional, gives a rather sad picture of someone caught between two classes but belonging to neither, who goes through the world with an obscure sense of insecurity and shame: “Even if he achieves some culture, he finds it difficult to carry it easily, as easily as those who have not had to strain so much to get it” (Hoggart 1971: 303). This is probably true for some people, but it is difficult to generalize about what was fast becoming a sizeable group in Britain, and moreover a group which represented a significant purchasing power. Hobsbawm argues that in the post-war period, the classes became polarized into two groups, those who could take advantage of the new conditions and those who could not, although there were exceptions:

Just because social mobility was now rather easier, at least for boys good at passing examinations, those who could not take this “meritocratic” road upwards found themselves permanently doomed to stay at the bottom... Yet in fact affluence and technological change produced new social groups whose behaviour showed that they could not be simply identified with either [the mobile or the immobile]: the “intellectuals” and the young (Hobsbawm 1999: 275).

By “intellectuals” Hobsbawm refers to the same people whom he calls “brain-workers” in a continuation of this quote, that is the non-manual workers. These new educated sons of the working and middle classes cut across the traditional class lines, as did the other group mentioned, the young.

With the post-war baby boom, England in the 50s had a young population, but this in itself does not explain the attention which youth received from the media, social commentators and government, and Marwick talks of “the power of, and preoccupation with, *youth*” (Marwick 1991: 69). Youth, of course, had always existed, but the difference now was that youth was sharing in the general affluence, and so constituted an important sector in the consumer market, particularly in the area

of entertainment. Films and music, both heavily influenced by America, were the preferred cultural products, though radio was still popular and television ownership was no longer a rarity or a preserve of the rich. Fashions like the Teddy Boys, “the first real post-war working-class youth culture in Britain and the first fruits of the new economic power of the teenager” (Kumar 1983: 40); the incipient popularity of rock and roll which was first experienced in Britain in the cinema, with films such as *Rock around the Clock* in 1956, a film which provoked riots in many cinemas where it was shown, riots which were generally blamed on the Teddy Boys, (Sinfield 1997: 152); a perceived rise in crimes of violence, “new social problems – a rising crime rate, juvenile delinquency...” (Sinfield 1997: 247) and the media attention all helped to fuel the idea of a youth culture which was hedonistic, promiscuous, affluent and dangerous (Hill 1986: 12-13). Youth culture was also seen as transcending traditional social divisions, and thus presented a cultural as well as a social threat: “Central to the imagery of the “affluent teenager” was the idea of a dissolution of old class barriers and the construction of a new collective identity based on teenage values” (Hill 1986: 11). Although “teenage values” still sounds like an oxymoron to me, and although the complaint of age against youth is as old as history, the difference was that now these people had the money to make their preferences felt in the market. The young were seen as the most extreme examples of the consumerism which was rampant in all sectors of society and which, through both its methods of mass production and its manifestations such as advertising, seemed to be aiming deliberately at the lowest common denominator. The Americanization or commercialization (the terms were often almost synonymous) of mass culture was a particularly worrying aspect for many people, and was attacked by both the guardians of the high culture, such as Leavis, and by people such as Hoggart, who saw it as a threat to the traditional

working-class culture: "...at present the older, the more narrow but also more genuine class culture is being eroded in favour of the mass opinion, the mass recreational product and the generalized emotional response" (Hoggart 1971: 280).

While Hoggart decried this mass culture in Leavisite terms, phenomena such as the meritocracy and youth, while not having much effect on the basic class structure, nevertheless helped to change some attitudes and details: "The vogue for "classlessness" was somewhat spurious, but the very advocacy of the notion altered the old indicators of status: "posh cockney" replaced the plummy Oxford accent" (Marwick 1991: 69).<sup>53</sup> These changes could be noticed in the wider range of regional accents being heard on the B.B.C. or in British films. Despite such cosmetic changes, however, the class divisions in English society showed few signs of real change. The affluent young were working young. The middle-class young, with their longer period of education and the tendency to investment rather than pure consumption, following the bourgeois lifestyle of "deferred gratification" (Haywood 1997: 100), did not share in the habits or the spending patterns of the working class (Hill 1986: 14). Phenomena such as the Teddy Boys were clearly working class in origin, as were later manifestations like the Mods and Rockers, the skinheads or the Punks (Kumar 1987: 40).

Apart from the internal changes in English society, there were two international events which also had a great influence. The first was the Suez invasion, in October/November of 1956. Responding to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, Britain and France, co-operating with Israel, invaded the Canal Zone, with the professed intention of preserving the security of the canal in the situation of the state of war between Egypt and Israel which was planned to start simultaneously.

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<sup>53</sup> The upper-middle-class Mick Jagger is a prime later example.

Despite the early military gains, a ceasefire was arranged after only one day as a result of American pressure, (American elections were being held one week later, something to which President Eisenhower gave priority). After a condemnation of the action in the United Nations, again under American pressure, and a run on sterling which could only be stopped by an American-supported loan from the I.M.F., the British forces withdrew and persuaded France to do likewise, with the last troops leaving Egypt shortly before Christmas. Both at the time and for many years afterwards the whole affair was seen as a blunder of huge proportions on all fronts, militarily, politically, diplomatically and financially. It is probable that if Britain and France had continued the military action, with Israel attacking Egypt in the Sinai, the canal would have been taken, thus presenting a *fait accompli* to the world. As it was, Nasser's position was strengthened, the Anglo-American relationship was seriously damaged, and world attention was diverted from the Soviet invasion of Hungary, something which was assisted by the loss of the moral advantage of the West over the Suez affair. On the home front, however, the greatest effect was to show once and for all that Britain was no longer a world power, but was dependent on America:

Britain had in fact served notice to the world that she was no longer a great power. This should perhaps have been apparent beforehand, but it was still fairly easily overlooked and until 1956 Britain was still able to live off much of the political credit she had accumulated during the war. After 1956, however, this was simply no longer possible (Sked and Cook 1993: 136).

The most immediate change was Eden's resignation as Prime Minister, officially on medical advice, though there can be no doubt that there was enormous pressure on him to go, not only from his political enemies (though the Opposition had supported the British action) but also from within his own party and even, it has been suggested, from Eisenhower. The politicians in particular and the "establishment" (then a relatively new word) in general were seen to be both hypocritical and incompetent,

and he was the most obvious sacrifice to be made. He was succeeded by Harold Macmillan, one upper-class Tory replacing another.

In the longer term, however, the more profound change seems to have been to the national psyche, with the loss of prestige in the international arena leading to a questioning of Britain's role in the world, and the indignity of the withdrawal raising doubts as to the real motives behind the action. This disillusion no doubt prepared the British for the decolonization of the sixties, and any lingering Imperial fantasies or nostalgic delusions as to Britain's world status were finally dispelled by Suez.<sup>54</sup>

The other major international event of 1956 was the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which was almost simultaneous with Suez. The crushing of the Hungarian uprising, coming as it did after the death of Stalin and the hopes of liberalization raised by Krushchev, was a blow to British and European communists. They had traditionally paid allegiance to Russia as the home of communism, despite the reservations about the Stalinist repression. The role of Russia in the war against fascism helped to maintain their enthusiasm, and they could finally point to what could be considered as signs of a more human regime, one which could be defended without the diverse and often devious rationalization which had previously been necessary. The brutal demonstration of Soviet control meant, for many, the destruction of their ideals, and members left the party in droves. This is often seen as a tragedy for intellectual leftism, probably the most influential political tendency in the cultural circles of the day, and the cessation of any type of left-wing activity. However, Sinfield says, "The opposite is the case: there was a release from the crippling ideological manoeuvring which allegiance to Stalin had imposed, and very gradually from the Cold-War stigma...At this point an independent left became feasible" (Sinfield 1997: 237-8).

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<sup>54</sup> For the Suez invasion/crisis/debacle see: Clarke 1997: 260-263; and Marwick 1996: 100-101.

The birth of new magazines such as the *New Reasoner* (1957), later to merge into the *New Left Review* (1960), or of new organizations such as C.N.D., are examples of the diverse left reaction to the new situation.<sup>55</sup>

That there was a change in the field of literature from the mid-fifties is unquestionable, and how much is owing to coincidence, how much to international events and how much to internal changes in British society is open to argument. Until the mid-to-late fifties English writing was remarkable for its lack of political interest and commitment. The political consensus produced by the blend of welfare-capitalism and cold-war ideology seemed to be reproduced in the arts, where, according to Hill, it produced “a conformist and contented intelligentsia” (Hill 1986:20). Sinfield concurs when he says:

...most noted writers did not see or want, until the late 1950s, a political dimension in their work...This was owing partly to the notion that the welfare state had instituted all the changes necessary for the good society (including the education of the likes of themselves); and partly to the difficulty in discerning a left position not contaminated with Stalinism (Sinfield 1997: 234).

## **2.2 THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN**

This complacency did not last long, however, and the events of 1956, the influence of the youth culture and the growth of a deracinated upwardly-mobile educated professional class all contributed to create the phenomenon of the “Angry Young Men”. This was a term invented by the media and applied to a disparate group of writers who were quite different in background and style, but the name nevertheless stuck, and is still used today despite the frequent rejection of the label by many, not least the writers themselves. If it were necessary to give a specific time for the emergence of this grouping, or at least the coining of the name subsequently applied

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<sup>55</sup> For the invasion of Hungary, see: Clarke 1997: 259-263.

to it, if we can accept it as a group for the sake of argument, that time would be 1956; in May of that year John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in London, and later that same month Colin Wilson's *The Outsider* was published. " "Angry young men", particularly Osborne and Wilson...but also the "new" novelists and many associated with the Movement, became the centre of media attention" (Marwick 1991: 29). The Movement referred to was a name coined by the magazine *The Spectator* to refer to a group of poets whose work was first heard on B.B.C. radio in 1953 and 1954, and who subsequently published two collections in 1955 and 1956. Among others it included Philip Larkin, John Wain and Kingsley Amis. According to Marwick, these poets had "determined to make a clear and explicit stand against modernism, internationalism, neo-romanticism and the exclusiveness of upper-class bohemia" (Marwick 1991: 26). Day says:

The work of this group was part of that tension between metropolitan and provincial values which was another context for the problem of culture in the late 1950s. What was at issue was metropolitan artifice against provincial authenticity, formal experiment against traditional form and the grand theory against the empirical fact. There was also the matter of class. Movement writers were predominantly *petit bourgeois*...Although [the movement] defined itself against the established middle class, it aspired to join them, hence the ambiguous attitude of movement writers to "high" culture: on the one hand they were scornful of its pretensions, on the other they were respectful of its achievements...The Movement aimed to replace the Modernism of the metropolis with a distinctively English art of irony and understatement (Day 2000: 12).

Amis's *Lucky Jim*, generally considered to be one of the key "Angry" texts, was published in 1954, and Wain's *Hurry On Down* had come out the previous year (1953), some years before the performance of *Look Back in Anger* and the publication of *The Outsider*. If British society had been changing, and the cultural production had been changing with it, there had still been nothing which provided a focus for this

new young vaguely left-leaning literature, until the creation of the myth of the angry young men:

What this myth did was not so much identify any real grouping as create one by fabricating together earlier writers such as Amis and Wain, and to some extent John Braine (whose first novel, *Room at the Top*, appeared in 1957 but who had prior connections with the Movement), the new ones such as Osborne, Wilson and then Stuart Holroyd (whose *Emergence from Chaos* was published in 1957) and the fictional characters themselves (in particular Amis's Jim Dixon and Osborne's Jimmy Porter). A contrivance it may have been but one with a peculiarly potent cultural reference (Hill 1986: 21).

Given the timing of the publication of the defining works, Suez and Budapest were a vindication rather than a cause of the disenchantment of these writers. They were seen as representing the new sons of the welfare state, - "The Movement was the expression of welfare capitalism" (Day 2000: 13) - educated at the new "redbrick" universities (see the quote from Sinfield above on p.142) though none of Osborne, Braine or Wilson had been to any sort of university, and Wain and Amis had studied at Oxford. Their bodies had been cared for by the National Health Service as their minds had been by the state education system. They were also seen as representing in some way the disaffected youth of Britain and the left-liberal intelligentsia, in short, any grouping which was against the status quo. In a contemporary comment, the reasons for their anger are enumerated:

They are angry because England is still riddled with class-consciousness, because the Establishment still rules, because the English upper and middle classes tend to be ignorant, insensitive philistines, because English films are ghastly, because the English theatre means *The Reluctant Debutante* and *Dry Rot*, because the Conservative government is ineffectual if not actually dangerous, because the English Elite, who should after all be educated, would rather read *The Tatler* than *The Spectator*, and because the attitude of the English towards such venerated traditions as Royalty, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the B.B.C. etc. is unhealthy and in every way sickening (Donaldson in Hill 1986: 22).

Besides the obvious Anglocentric view, one point to notice is the fact that except for the brief and general reference to the Conservative government, all of the other targets

of anger are cultural rather than political, and in this the angry writers were much closer than was perceived at the time to other, older writers who were expressing similar fears of cultural decline, even if the targets were sometimes different.

The myth of the angry young men was as little grounded in reality as the myth of affluence, though both were widely believed at the time. Although the characters were seen as rebels against the constraints of society, the underlying ideology is one of acceptance and compromise with society, as pointed out by Day (p.143). Jim Dixon, for example, is more preoccupied with getting a good job (something which he succeeds in doing, as private secretary to an aristocratic businessman) and having sex with and eventually marrying an upper-middle class girl, than with the politics of the day or the type of education which he received or is now helping to propagate. *Hurry on Down* (1953) also finishes with the offer of a contract for the provincial hero, and in *Room at the Top* (1957) Joe Lampton resorts to the time-honoured method of impregnating and marrying the boss's daughter to gain entry into the ranks of the rich.

Jimmy Porter is probably the angriest of the angry young men (Wilson's work was much more intellectual in its scope, and the novels of Wain and Amis were semi-comic, if not picaresque) but his anger seems to be generalized against the world at large rather than any specific aspect of society, and Hill quotes Amis as saying: "When we shop around for an outlet, we find that there is nothing in stock, no Spain, no Fascism, no mass unemployment ...perhaps politics is a thing only the unsophisticated can really go for" (Amis in Hill 1986: 23). This attitude is echoed by Jimmy Porter when he says: "I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for any good causes any longer. We had all that done for us in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. There aren't any good, brave causes left" (Osborne 1960:

84). This sense that “ideology was dead and government was accordingly a purely pragmatic affair” (Day 2000: 13) resulted, according to Holloway, in what he calls:

... *minimal affirmation*...perhaps even so, runs this way of thinking, there can be located some limited area of experience that has value, or some modest and unambitious conception of goodness which can as it were be insured against undermining. Writer after writer has in fact pursued this possibility, this hope for a secure if even a limited “solution”. *Look Back in Anger*...is almost a caricature of the position (Holloway 1984: 82-83).

He goes on to say that for the post-war generation the old values such as patriotism, manners, public service and so on are now absurd, yet there are no new values or allegiances to take their place, thus Jimmy Porter’s anger, and that of other writers, is a result of the frustration caused by the inability to reconcile the conviction that life must be significant and meaningful with the inability to identify the significance (Holloway 1984: 83). This common lack of political engagement is mirrored in many ways in the similarities between the protagonists of Amis’s and Osborne’s works. Both Jim Dixon and Jimmy Porter have been educated at a new university, as has Wain’s Charles Lumley, and both are culturally literate in the high culture. John Russell Taylor’s words on Porter serve equally well for Dixon: “...socially adrift, in rebellion, or at least reaction, against the social and educational system which has helped to shape him, and determined, whatever he does, not to act in the way “they” might expect him to act” (Taylor, J.R. 1968: 15). In terms of class we are told that Jimmy Porter’s father was a worker (though his mother was of a higher class) and Jim Dixon’s background remains unclear, though we know he has a “flat northern voice” (Amis 1984: 9), so they can both be seen as undefinable in class terms. Though they both work, we do not see them doing so, since Osborne’s play takes place exclusively on Sundays, while Jim Dixon is never seen actually giving a class, though much of the book takes place in the university where he works. In *Lucky Jim* it can be said that

Jim's professional situation is much more dependent on the social relations he has with the other members of the department than on his abilities as a teacher, an activity which we do not see in the novel. This is an essentially middle-class view of work, in which social acceptance takes precedence over any supposed professional abilities, and Jim's final triumph is due to personal connections above all. Both his and Jimmy Porter's anger at society is inchoate and undirected at any particular target or event, and Dixon's loathing of the pretentious Welch is again more personal than professional or political.

One thing they and other angry characters share, however, is a pronounced misogyny, in which women are portrayed as not only weak but also somehow weakening. After bemoaning the lack of good causes, Porter says: "No, there's nothing left for it, me boy, but to let yourself be butchered by the women" (Osborne 1960: 85). In *Lucky Jim* the main female character, Margaret, is presented as neurotic and manipulative, having attempted suicide (which attempt is later shown to have been an aspect of her manipulation rather than genuine), and one of the main themes of the novel is how Dixon can free himself from her emotional blackmail and her "*unmanning* (my italics) questions and confessions" (Amis 1984: 11). When he finally manages to do this and, at the end of the novel, realizes his ambitions by going to London with a new job and the socially superior Christine, thus completing his revenge on the Welch family, the only information which paints any type of picture of Christine as a person rather than simply as a symbol of Dixon's success is that "Christine was still nicer and prettier than Margaret, and all the deductions that could be drawn from that should be drawn" (Amis 1984: 247). Osborne's work ends with Alison, Porter's wife, returning to him, but for Porter to agree to this she must first demonstrate her acceptance of her worthlessness and her position of subordinacy: "I

want to be a lost cause. I want to be corrupt and futile!...Don't you see! I'm in the mud at last! I'm grovelling!" (Osborne 1960: 95). Only after this can Porter express what we have to assume is his love for her, and this is expressed not in adult terms but in baby-talk, and the play ends with the two reconciled not as equals but as a bear and a squirrel. It would seem, then, that the only definite target for the anger which was the focus of so much of the media attention was women. While Osborne, more than others, seemed to rail against the state of the arts (in his case the theatre) and what Lindsay Anderson called, referring to the object of Osborne's protest, "...the steady draining away of the vitality from what we may call the cultural left, its increasing modishness, and its more and more marked aversion from emotional simplicity and moral commitment" (Anderson 1968: 189), the common thread which runs through all the angry work is the exaltation of the virtues of virility and masculinity and the attack on women in general and those qualities associated with women: snobbery, pettiness, superficiality and materialism. Contemporary critics saw this as an attack on these qualities as reflected in society, and hence the view of these writers as social critics, but later commentary differs: "For if the object of attack is effeminacy so the virtues and style of character are those of masculinity. To this extent the Angry Young Man phenomenon was working over a more generalized cultural anxiety around the question of male identity" (Hill 1986: 25). The growth of consumerism, something usually placed in the feminine, domestic sphere, the ever-growing presence of women in the workplace and their occupation of traditional male roles (which had started in the war and continued afterwards), and the resultant loss of male status all helped to produce the reactionary figure of the vehemently heterosexual hero who is a defining mark of this period.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Rebellato, however, sees definite homosexual undertones in *Look Back in Anger*, and says:

With the inclusion of *Room at the Top* (1957) in the grouping, and then Sillitoe's first books in 1958 and 1960, the criticism of society was seen as being expressed more in terms of class. Braine's Joe Lampton is from a working-class background, from a provincial town, heterosexually active, and striving to move out of the working class. All of these qualities helped his identification with the other angry heroes, and his status as the first clearly working-class character was also in keeping with the times. Writing of the years 1957–1964, Sinfield says: "Through every medium and discourse – novels, plays, autobiography, sociology, political analysis, film – it was suddenly vital, especially on the left, to write about the working class" (Sinfield 1997: 253). Though Joe Lampton is from the working class, however, he is determined to leave it for a higher one. He used his time as a prisoner of war to study accountancy, which has allowed him to enter the professional world, and in this he is also typical of his time, since Haywood says: "The intellectual character of "Angry" and working-class authors belongs essentially to the prewar tradition of the autodidact" (Haywood 1997: 100). As in the works of Amis or Wain, the book ends with the hero being offered a better job, though in Lampton's case he has had to give up his married lover, who then kills herself, and marry the boss's daughter, whom he has made pregnant. Despite his expressed contempt for the bourgeois life and values, they are what he aspires to, and finally achieves. We occasionally see him at his work as an accountant in the Town Hall, and we also see something of the background which he wants to leave behind. His parents were killed by a bomb in the war, when he was an adolescent, after which he was brought up by an aunt and uncle. We are told that his father was a workman: "He was a good workman; too good a workman to be sacked and too outspoken about his Labour convictions to be promoted" (Braine 1970: 94).

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"...throughout the play, Jimmy's relationship with Cliff borders on flirtation" (Rebellato 1999: 222).

This type of worker, too dangerous, which is to say too intelligent or insufficiently indoctrinated, to promote, yet too valuable to sack, can be seen in such characters as Tressell's Owen (p.105-9) or Greenwood's Larry Meath (p.113-6), and it is clear that as a child Joe was exposed to his parents' views which valued solidarity more than financial rewards, the moral more than the material: " " Your father would starve before he'd sell himself for a handful of silver." "Mind what Ah say, Joe. There's some things that can be bought too dear" " (Braine 1970: 94-95). After his parents' death, however, it would seem that his ties to the past soon weaken, and despite his aunt's and uncle's doubts about his relationship with the rich, beautiful, boss's daughter Susan, which are expressed in terms of distrust of Joe's social ascent ("What good's a girl like that to you? Get one of your own class, lad, go to your own people" (Braine 1970: 90) ), his determination to get both the rich girl and the corresponding lifestyle overrules any personal or political qualms. Haywood writes: "*Room at the Top* is a fantasy about social mobility in the years of "austerity". It is possible that its publication was delayed until its portrayal of acquisitive lust and working-class "politics of envy" seemed to reinforce the myths of affluence and the sexualised Angry Young Man" (Haywood 1997: 99).

Two other novels which are usually included in the angry/working-class fiction of the late 50s/early 60s are *A Kind of Loving* by Stan Barstow and *This Sporting Life* by Davis Storey, which were both published in 1960, and enjoyed critical and commercial success, success which was repeated with the film adaptations. Inasmuch that their authors were from a working-class background, both being miners' sons, and that the books are both narrated in the first person by a young provincial working-class man, they were much more similar to Sillitoe's work than to that of the earlier angries, and no doubt Sillitoe's success had eased the way for them. However, while from a

working-class background, both Barstow's Vic Brown and Storey's Arthur Machin are moving away from it. Vic's father was a miner, but he now has a supervisory position at the pit. Vic's elder sister is a teacher, and her wedding to another teacher, who is from a middle-class background, opens the book. Vic's younger brother Jim is a bright teenager and a good student, and there are hopes that he will eventually qualify as a doctor. Vic himself left school early, and now at the age of twenty works as a draughtsman for a local firm, though he later leaves to work in a record shop. Vic and his family are examples of the new meritocracy mentioned by Hobsbawm (p.137), who have the abilities to take advantage of the post-war educational opportunities and so rise to a higher class. Even Vic, who is the disappointment of the family, went to a grammar school and was a good student, and now has a technical rather than a manual job. The book focuses more on the relationship between Vic and Ingrid, whom he is obliged to marry when she becomes pregnant, just after he realises that he no longer loves her, but the background is drawn with some detail. We see Vic at work, both in the drawing office and in the record shop, and his comfortable home life shows a relatively prosperous, upwardly mobile working-class family.

Storey's Arthur Machin, however, is seeking to escape through sport<sup>57</sup>, one of the few options open to working-class men. He works in a factory, but we never see him at work, only at "play", though for him rugby is far from being a game. He sees it as a possible route to wealth, or at least to some contact with a better lifestyle, and is prepared to hurt and be hurt in pursuit of this. The book focuses on his rugby and his relationship with his landlady, Mrs. Hammond, with whom he seems to be in love, though the relationship is difficult, to say the least. His work life is ignored, and his social life revolves around the rugby club. He is not from the area where he lives, and

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<sup>57</sup> The role of sport will be discussed more fully later, in relation to *LLDR*.

he seems to have few ties outside his immediate environment; if he has a family we know nothing of it from the book, and this situation reinforced the idea of Machin as a rootless individual with no links to any group or class.

Both *A Kind of Loving* and *This Sporting Life* were filmed, which confirmed their place in the grouping of books and films, and they were seen as the latest examples of the fashionable working-class literature. Though seen then and now as examples of the more working-class part of the spectrum of new writers, having more in common with Braine or Sillitoe than with Amis, for example, both books share the central characteristics of the angry works: they deal with dissatisfied young men who want to move to a higher social and economic level, and this can be achieved through means other than work, particularly personal relationships. Arthur Machin spends a lot of time cultivating the directors of the club, and Vic is given a job and possible share in the record shop, a business which is expanding thanks to new consumer patterns, mainly owing to his relationship with the owner. Women cause complication, and both Ingrid and Mrs. Hammond, in different ways, curtail the desires and freedom of the men. While the characters are clearly from the working class, this is given little prominence, and the only problematical class difference shown in *A Kind of Loving* is that between Vic and his socially-pretentious mother-in-law, and this difference is perceived rather than real. In *This Sporting Life* Machin occasionally has contact with a different, richer lifestyle, and this only serves as a spur to his desire to emulate the wealthy men with whom he has a peripheral relationship. In short, while these two books did continue, in many ways, the type of fiction written by Sillitoe, they reveal attitudes which are closer to other writers' than to his.

Far from the rebels which they were supposed to be at the time, the angry young men are now seen to have put forward a basically conservative agenda, one which

sought to protect the male protagonists from the increased prominence of women and the social changes which were seen to be taking place. Looking back after some fifty years at these works, their contemporary labelling as radical or shocking says more about the dominant production of the time than the inherent values expressed in the works themselves. Stuart Holroyd seems to have disappeared, and the other writers whose careers continued with more or less success, such as Amis, Osborne, Braine or Larkin, were all identified with increasingly conservative political views as they got older. Writing of Braine, Martin Amis said: “Braine is now established as the most wild-eyed and querulous champion of the literary right, a more colourful turncoat by far than either Conquest, Osborne or Amis” (Amis 1993: 231). Though Braine may have been more colourful than the other “turncoats” mentioned, and unmentioned, it would seem that the anger did not long outlast the writers’ youth. None became an Angry Old Man, though Amis and Larkin could be described as Grumpy Old Men, which is something quite different.

The works now seem in general curiously tame and lacking in any real denunciation in social, economic or political terms of the society they depict. In fact *Look Back in Anger* gives a good example of how intermeshed with the cultural apparatus the work was. Firstly, it was performed at the Royal Court Theatre, one of the newly-subsidized theatres. Secondly, despite the myth that it was an instant success, the reality was otherwise. It received critical attention at its opening, but:

...it continued to play at a little below break-even figures until something rather interesting happened, The (English Stage) Company agreed to let an act of it be shown on television (something normally done only when a play is doing so well nothing can harm it or so badly that nothing can come to it but good). And at once takings leapt up, nearly doubling in two weeks (Taylor, J.R. 1968: 16).

The fact that the most important work in English theatre in years achieved success through the welfare-capitalist system of subsidized culture, and with the help of the

newest medium of communication, illustrates well how a cultural product moves and is moved by the parallel developments in society.

Whether or not the Angry Young Men were really representative of a coherent literary movement (and all of the supposed participants denied it strongly) the fact remains that the media invention found a ready public response to the oversimplified lumping together of what was a diverse number of works and writers, and as such the angry works can be seen as a symptom rather than a cause. There is no real condemnation of society, as has been stated before, and the upwardly-mobile protagonists are the exemplars of Hoggart's scholarship boy, happy to have joined the middle classes and concerned to protect their hard-won gains. Women are a distraction from the real business of life, and their influence should be guarded against, and the pursuit of money earned through socially acceptable means is considered to be a natural goal. This generation, who had grown up with the ubiquitous war stories in films, television, comics and books, but had not fought in the war themselves, have been seen as personally and socially insecure, fruitlessly looking for a "good, brave, cause" in which to prove their manhood, but finding nothing but domestic dramas and a decadent culture to protest. Though often viewed as representing the working class, the characters and authors were (with the exception of Colin Wilson) from the middle class, and their preoccupations reflect this. Work has little or no place in the narrative, and the general ambition is to achieve a comfortable standard of living. Nevertheless, the success of the works was symptomatic of a change in English literature at the time. Phelps says: "Behind the work of this group of writers was a kind of defiant little Englandism, a reaction against the cult of foreign experimentalism...and an assertion that the English fictional tradition provided all the nourishment needed to rejuvenate the novel"

(Phelps 1987: 432). As has been argued by Holloway (p.146), these writers were searching for meaning and values to replace the old ones which they had rejected. The high culture was one of the things which now seemed absurd, such as when Jim Dixon recognizes a song as “some skein of untiring facetiousness by filthy Mozart” (Amis 1984: 63), which is significant as much for his familiarity with Mozart as for his opinion of the music; however, the traditional working-class culture was equally something to escape from, as it was for Joe Lampton, which leaves the characters in a cultural void. Perhaps the conscious anti-modernist attention to detail was the only response possible, and this deliberate narrowing of the focus of the works can be seen, as Day sees it, as a turn to culture as it was being defined by Hoggart and Williams: “The achievement of the Movement was to confer a sense of cultural worth on the ordinary things of life” (Day 2000: 13). In this way the Angry writers were an expression of the time, and Marwick gives a more generous verdict when he writes that after the publication and success of *Room at the Top* in 1957, which he sees as the last Angry book: “The Movement was dead, but it had expressed a coherent point of view...The Angry Young Men had always been something of a media invention, but beneath the fantasy there were genuine stirrings in British culture” (Marwick 1991: 32). Regardless of the worth of the works themselves, they had a definite impact at the time, and Osborne’s success, for example, helped both directly and indirectly to give opportunities to other new dramatists such as Delaney, and the popularity of novelists such as Wain or Braine undoubtedly paved the way for someone like Alan Sillitoe.

### 2.3 ALAN SILLITOE

Whatever the reality of the Angry grouping, it created a propitious atmosphere for the appearance in 1958 of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* by Alan Sillitoe. Sillitoe was born in Nottingham in 1928, one of five children of an illiterate tannery worker who suffered spells of unemployment in the depressed inter-war years, conditions which caused great hardship to the family, to such an extent that Sillitoe's mother sometimes prostituted herself to provide money. He left school at the age of fourteen and went to work in various factories before joining the Royal Air Force in 1946 as a radio operator. On leaving the R.A.F. he was diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis and spent over a year in hospital, for the most part practically immobile, which was the usual treatment at the time. It was during this period that he started to read voraciously, and also started to write in a haphazard fashion. When he was discharged he was granted a small disability pension and, determined to live on this, he left England in 1952 with the American poet Ruth Fainlight (whom he was later to marry), to live first in France and then in Mallorca, mostly because life was cheaper there, to begin a new life as a writer. Living frugally on his pension and the occasional sale of a story or translation, he continued writing prose and poetry for six years, the vast majority of which was unpublished. While in Mallorca he became friendly with Robert Graves, also a resident of the island, and it was a remark by Graves that he should write a book set in Nottingham that eventually decided him to write what became *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, incorporating much previously-written material.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> For biographical information see: *Life Without Armour* (1995: London: HarperCollins) Sillitoe's autobiography; "The Long Piece", in *Mountains and Caverns* (1975: London: W.H.Allen), which deals with his early life and efforts to become a writer; *Raw Material* (1972: London: W.H.Allen), a

Since then Sillitoe has published more than twenty novels, some ten collections of short stories, a number of plays, screenplays of four of his own works,<sup>59</sup> about twenty books of poetry (some in collaboration with Ruth Fainlight and Ted Hughes) travel books, books for children, and essays. However he is still best known for his first two books, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, both of which were successfully filmed. While still active at the age of 79, his position in contemporary English literature is somewhat anomalous, and as I have argued in the Introduction to this thesis, he seems to remain outside the mainstream of English letters, and I have also suggested some possible reasons for this. His political beliefs have remained uncompromising and often unfashionable,<sup>60</sup> something which probably does not favour his acceptance by the literary establishment, and the identification with his first two works would tend to place him in another, now long-past, period.<sup>61</sup> As previously stated, consideration of his work seems to be limited to *SNSM* and *LLDR*, and this has helped to place him firmly in the angry/working-class groupings of the late 50s/early 60s. Head, for example, (Head 2002: 53-65) or Earnshaw (Earnshaw 2000: 53-54) both review British fiction from the post-war

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fictionalised account of his background and family; or reference works such as *Contemporary Novelists* (1996: Ed. Susan Windisch Brown. Detroit, U.S.A: St.James Press)

<sup>59</sup> Apart from his first two books, his second novel *The General* (1960) was filmed in 1968 as *Counterpoint* (produced and distributed by Universal, director:Ralph Nelson), starring Charlton Heston, with Sillitoe credited as one of the three scriptwriters, though it is doubtful how much, if any, of the final script is actually his; the title story of the collection *The Ragman's Daughter* (1963) was filmed in 1972 (prod: Harpoon Films, distrib: 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Fox, director: Harold Becker) with Sillitoe as the only credited writer. Source: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) Access date: 7.6.2006

<sup>60</sup> His Zionist views have never been in step with liberal feelings, for example, and he came out in favour of the present war with Iraq. Source: [books.guardian.co.uk](http://books.guardian.co.uk) Access date: 1.6.2006

<sup>61</sup> He has, however, recently featured in the news in connection with the success of the Arctic Monkeys, a group from Sheffield, whose best-selling first album was "Whatever people say I am, that's what I'm not", a quote from Arthur Seaton in the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* which is itself an adapted quote from p.138 of the book. In an interview on his reaction to this renewed attention, Sillitoe also revealed something of his own work: "I'm from Nottingham, which is a very similar place to Sheffield and I can recognise their accents and their background. I think that reflecting their background is what lifts them above other groups – if you localise with sufficient integrity, you achieve universality." Source: [independent.co.uk](http://independent.co.uk) Access date: 30.5.2006. The second part of this comment is, I feel, significant in any appraisal of Sillitoe's work, and explains his repeated use of Nottingham as a background.

period to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and both mention only Sillitoe's first two books. This is in no way intended to disparage these critics, and indeed I shall quote from both later, but is rather an indication of the common opinion regarding Sillitoe. Hitchcock describes the cultural dynamics of the late 50s/early 60s, as exemplified by the new literature and accompanying Free films, as a "cultural event", limited to a particular time and place, and says: "It is the workings of the cultural event that allow us to trace not only the rise to prominence of Alan Sillitoe, but also his speedy marginalization in the British literary scene" (Hitchcock 1989: 2). Simply put, Hitchcock argues that when the cultural event was seen to have run its course, Sillitoe was similarly seen as a writer whose relevance had ceased. Although some critics do mention other works, the general impression given is that either he has been inactive for the last forty years, or that he has failed to produce anything worthwhile in that time, an impression which I hope will be shown to be false. Some identification with the 50s/60s is inevitable, since it was a time of change in both the social and the literary fields, and the filming of the works undoubtedly helped to fix in the minds of many the idea that his best work was done in these years. However, it would seem that not only his best work but practically his only work is now inevitably limited to these two books, which could be seen as ironic in that his latest novel *A Man of His Time* was published in 2004, which represents a (published) writing career of 46 years.<sup>62</sup> This latest book deals with the figure of Sillitoe's (and Arthur Seaton's) grandfather, Ernest Burton, who appears in fictionalised form in a number of Sillitoe's works. Set in the Nottingham area and featuring several of the characters who have appeared before, such as Arthur, Derek and Brian Seaton, it can be seen as another link in the chain of inter-connected Nottingham novels which represent a significant

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<sup>62</sup> I confidently predict that 2008 will see an upsurge of interest in Sillitoe, since the year will see both the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *SNSM* and Sillitoe's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday if he is, as we hope, still alive.

minority in Sillitoe's production. In an interview given in 2004 at the time of the publication of *A Man of his Time* he said: "I've always had the *comédie humaine* of Balzac in mind. I will eventually delineate the dozen or so novels in their order and say: this is a *comédie humaine* set in Nottingham. It's a literary ambition, that".<sup>63</sup>

To have literary ambitions, or any ambitions, at the age of 76 is, to say the least, impressive, and is a tribute to his energy if nothing else. Melvyn Bragg said that Sillitoe has "endured, undaunted by changes in literary fashion"<sup>64</sup>, and it is this last word which may help to explain some of the lack of attention which he experiences (one gets the feeling that Sillitoe does not "suffer" this lack). Head speaks of "fantasy and magic realism [and] its position of pre-eminence in much critical discussion" (Head 2002: 3). This can result, he goes on to say, in the fact that an interest in Bakhtinian carnival and its departure from realism, for example, has led to Angela Carter's status:

...of (by some margin) the most-written-about post-war British novelist. If the number of academic theses devoted to an author were to be taken as a reliable measure of the author's relative importance, Carter would emerge as the single literary giant of the period. One may legitimately wonder whether or not Carter is being used to illuminate the theory, rather than vice versa (Head 2002: 3-4).

Writing of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Head says: "Carmen Callil and Colm Tóibín suggest that, were the novel written in French, "Arthur Seaton would be an existentialist hero and the book an essential modern text". There is an implicit critique of critical fashion, here, which carries some weight" (Head 2002: 66-67). It would seem that, after his initial success, Sillitoe's realism has not been fashionable, and given that the vast majority of his work is in the realist tradition, the abstract/allegorical setting of his second novel *The General* (1960) and the surreal *Travels in Nihilon* (1971) notwithstanding, his resistance to changing literary and

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<sup>63</sup> Source: books.guardian.co.uk Access date: 1.9.2006

<sup>64</sup> Source: books.guardian.co.uk Access date: 1.9.2006

critical trends is probably responsible for the simplification of what is a significant body of work, both in terms of volume and variety. Assessing his work as a whole in 1991 (since when he has published five novels, an autobiography, poetry, essays and short stories), Barker says:

Through point of view, a colloquial prose style, and faithfully rendered settings, Sillitoe skilfully demonstrates that environment shapes not only character, but moral and social standards as well...Sillitoe stands as the rare example of a storyteller who, although rooted in the tradition of working-class fiction, has broadened the scope of his vision to encompass universal, even mythic, themes and conflicts. For this reason, Sillitoe ought not to be classified as simply a “working-class” writer, but as an artist skilled in rendering a mature vision of human beings struggling to control their destinies and define themselves through meaningful action (Barker 1991: 1227).

In a similar vein, Hanson says: “Sillitoe is a writer who describes the condition of individual human beings and their struggle for self-awareness with such power and elegiac sensibility that they become representative of all individuals, regardless of class, in their struggle for emotional survival” (Hanson 1999: 164). It is noteworthy that both Barker and Hanson use the word “struggle”, and this is one of the major themes in Sillitoe’s work, that of the individual struggling to maintain his or her individuality and dignity against the forces which seek to nullify these basic human qualities.

Sillitoe himself has always rejected the label of “working class”, insisting on his freedom to write about people of whatever background:

I had never intended to restrict my imagination by writing only about those who worked in factories or came from Nottingham. For reviewers and journalists to refer to me as “working class” or “of the working class” was as much a misconception as roping me into the “angry young man” corral. It was even worse in the United States, where ex-Marxist subliterate interviewers used those dreadful words “prole” and “proletarian” in their articles (Sillitoe 1995: 264).

It is undeniable, however, that many, if not the majority, of Sillitoe’s characters and locales are from the working class, though frequently the original setting serves merely as a starting-point. (Arthur Seaton’s brother Brian, who later becomes a

television script-writer, is an example of this.) This preference for the known environment has undoubtedly led to his classification as a working-class writer, no matter how inaccurate or unnecessary this classification may be, and is another reason for the lack of attention he receives, since, according to Day, “Class has been ignored in literary studies for the last twenty years” (Day 2001: 18). He says that recent attention has been focused on gender, race, region and sexuality, but in his view all of these questions are intertwined with class, since “Class provides an account of the origin of inequality from which other forms of oppression arise” (Day 2001: 18). If class has been ignored, then Sillitoe has also been ignored, even though his work long ceased to concentrate on questions of class, if it ever did. In 1979, some twenty years after the publication of *SNSM*, Atherton wrote: “It may be that in the long run Sillitoe’s early working-class fiction will be eclipsed by later, more mature work. But that is a question for readers twenty or more years hence to answer, when there is likely to be a much larger body of work on which to make an assessment” (Atherton 1979: 43-44). It would seem, unfortunately, that despite the “much larger body of work” this re-assessment has not taken place, and the original opinions of Sillitoe as a writer still hold sway.

Sillitoe himself seems to take his popular reputation with a wry sense of humour, and in *The Death of William Posters* (1965) he wrote:

Myra smiled, though thanked God for the voting Labour masses that still seemed to inhabit the north: cloth-capped, hardworking, generous and bruto, or that was the impression she got from reading a book (or was it books?) called *Hurry on Jim* by Kingsley Wain that started by someone with eighteen pints and fifteen whiskies in him falling downstairs on his way to the top (Sillitoe 1965: 166).

## 2.4 SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was an immediate success, and both the work and the writer were accepted as being the latest example of the angry young men (Earnshaw 2000: 53). Arthur Seaton was seen as coming from the same mould as Amis's Jimmy Porter or Braine's Joe Lampton, and there was no doubt about his heterosexuality. He was fashionably working class, and though his rebellion is as undefined as that of Jimmy Porter, his experience of the world, at work, in the army and with women, gives him an authority lacking in Jim Dixon, for example. As has been argued, there had been very little written by and about the working class, and Sillitoe said: "I hadn't read many novels set in the life I was writing about" (Sillitoe 1975: 37). He mentions *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Sons and Lovers* and *Love on the Dole*, all of which have been mentioned above, and none of which was contemporary, and goes on to say:

The sort of working men portrayed in England by the cinema, or on radio or television, or in books, were either criminals, servants, or funny people...Writers not born into such a life perpetuated those cliché ideas because it was easier to write to such ready-made formulae, and because they felt it was socially desirable to do so. Those who *were* born into it (what few there were) often did the same because they looked on their past either with scorn or shame, finding, as they climbed the so-called social ladder, that each rung under their feet was made of the solidified mores that despised the sort of life they had come from (Sillitoe 1975: 37-38).

The first part of this passage echoes Orwell's earlier quote about Dickens's working-class characters (p.91), and reveals the dearth of realistic portrayals of genuine workers which had existed until then. The picture given of the upwardly-mobile writer coincides with Hoggart's social climber, and also with the previously-expressed idea of society assuming the successful writer into its ranks and into the ideology (here called "mores"). Sillitoe also wrote: "I wanted to write a novel about a

working man who, though not necessarily typical of the zone of life he lived in, belonged to it with so much flesh and blood that nothing could cause him to leave it” (Sillitoe 1975: 37). Arthur Seaton does not fit any of the previous stereotypes of the working man, and he is firmly fixed in his world with none of the desire to escape it shown by the Angry heroes. Stevenson calls him “one of the fifties’ more genuinely angry young men” (Stevenson 1986: 128), and there is no striving for escape to a higher social or economic position as happens in other works of the period. On a larger scale, his world is Nottingham, and the city and its surroundings play an important part in the book. Rather than place the action in a fictional town, as in Amis’s *Lucky Jim*, or leaving the location anonymously “a large midland town” as in Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, we are told the names of the pubs where Arthur drinks, many of them real pubs in real locations; the districts and landmarks of the town are shown and named (Radford, Slab Square, the Castle); the geography of the area is mentioned (the River Trent, which has traditionally been the dividing line between north and south England, the neighbouring Derbyshire hills); Lincoln is understood to mean the prison rather than the town, and the speech is a modified form of the Nottingham dialect.

The book is the story of Arthur Seaton who is, when the story opens, twenty-one, and who works in a factory as a lathe operator and lives at home with his parents and brothers. Though it is not written in the first person, the book focuses on him and he is present in practically every scene, and the reader is privy to his thoughts and opinions. He is indubitably the protagonist of the story, and we follow him over a period of roughly two years, at work and at play. When the story opens he is having an affair with a workmate’s wife, and he later starts a simultaneous affair with her sister, who is also married. He drinks (in the opening scene he falls downstairs in a pub, having

taken part in a drinking contest, and vomits over a middle-aged couple), he fights, and he is eventually beaten up by two soldiers, one of whom is the husband of one of his married lovers. In the second part of the book he spends more time with a young woman he has already met, and the book ends with the prospect of marriage and “settling down”, hence the title which gives the two opposing ideas of enjoyment and responsibility. Martin Amis, writing about his father Kingsley, interestingly says:

I always thought that Alan Sillitoe’s first novel should have been called “Saturday Night and *Monday Morning*”. It is about self-gratification versus work, whereas the Saturday night / Sunday morning axis does in fact set the rhythm for a great deal of my father’s stuff: self-gratification versus self-examination and self-reproach and (often) self-hatred (Amis 2000: 331).

This is an interesting idea from Amis, and the book opens with the section entitled “Saturday Night”:

For it was Saturday Night, the best and bingiest glad-time of the week, one of the fifty-two holidays in the slow-turning Big Wheel of the year, a violent preamble to a prostrate Sabbath. Piled-up passions were exploded on Saturday night, and the effect of a week’s monotonous graft in the factory was swilled out of your system in a burst of goodwill. You followed the motto of “be drunk and be happy”, kept your crafty arms around female waists, and felt the beer going beneficially down into the elastic capacity of your guts (p.9).

The “bingiest glad-time” is later contrasted with the “monotonous graft” when Arthur calls Monday “Black Monday...because the big grind was starting all over again”(p.24).<sup>65</sup> Work plays a major part in the book, with seven out of the sixteen chapters (chaps. 2,4,7,9,12,14 and 15) taking place at least in part in the factory where both Arthur and his father work, which is never actually named but is instantly identifiable as the Raleigh bicycle factory, which was and is synonymous with Nottingham, just as the “tobacco factory” is identifiable as Player’s. The Seaton

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<sup>65</sup> This gives a clear example of how industrialism and the working practices associated with it have substituted Black Monday for the pre-industrial Saint Monday. Belchem writes of “pre-industrial wage-work, such as that of journeymen craftsmen, whose ineradicable taste for not starting the week’s work until the Tuesday (“Saint Monday”) was the despair of their masters” (Belchem 1999: 63-64). See also: Thompson 1968: 338.

family enjoys the new affluence, and in the figure of Arthur's father, Harold Seaton, we are given an illustration of the changes caused by the war. He is now happy, with money in his pocket and time to relax:

...and he deserved to be happy, after all the years before the war on the dole, five kids and the big miserying that went with no money and no way of getting any. And now he had a sit-down job at the factory, all the Woodbines he could smoke, money for a pint if he wanted one, though he didn't as a rule drink, a holiday somewhere, a jaunt on the firm's trip to Blackpool, and a television-set to look into at home. The difference between before the war and after the war didn't bear thinking about. War was a marvellous thing in many ways, when you thought about how happy it had made so many people in England (p.27).

The change in lifestyle was, indeed, for Harold Seaton and his family and millions of others "a marvellous thing". For probably the first time in his life he has stable employment, and for someone of Arthur's age, entering the labour market just after the war (leaving aside the obligatory interruption of military service) work and affluence are now an accepted part of life. Arthur has the money to contribute to the family budget, to go out to the cinema or the pub whenever he wants, and to buy clothes. He has "a good hundred pounds' worth" of clothes (p.66) of which he is proud, and the only change in his circumstances he can foresee is marriage, something which he does not yet envisage as a real possibility. Superficially, the Seaton family could be seen as the embodiment of Macmillan's famous phrase "most of our people have never had it so good" (Macmillan in Hill 1986: 5). However, it has been shown that the affluence in which the Seatons were participating was relative, and despite his clothes and his family's television, Arthur's house still lacked a bathroom, or at least there is no evidence of one in the novel. Arthur washes in the scullery, and puts his expensive clothes on over "soiled underwear" (p.66), and for Brenda's abortion, a "zinc bath" is brought in "from the coal-house" (p.85); he also shares a bed with his brother Sam (p.24), and in the 1959 election campaign the Labour politician Barbara

Castle said: “Mr. Macmillan has boasted that the TV set is the badge of prosperity. In the back streets of Blackburn the TV aerials are there all right; what we lack are thousands of decent houses to put under them” (Castle in Laing 1997: 13). Arthur is conscious of the improvement in his standard of living, but he is also conscious that the relations of production have not changed. He works, as do all workers, for the money and through necessity, and as long as the wages are good and allow him his lifestyle of self-indulgence, and as long as the work is mentally undemanding and allows him to think while he is working, he is prepared to accept his lot. This is not to say, however, that his acceptance is whole-hearted, or that he believes in the ideology which is offered to him, that of the contented worker sharing in the national prosperity. His attitude could best be described as a state of truce between himself and “them”, a truce that he is not willing to break unless he can see a possibility of victory. “But if they said: “Look, Arthur, here’s a hundredweight of dynamite and a brand-new plunger, now blow up the factory,” then I’d do it, because that’d be something worth doing. Action” (p.40). He occasionally envisages some type of armed uprising, such as when he is doing his 15 days of compulsory military training, and while practising shooting he says: “I know whose faces I’ve got in my sights every time the new rifle cracks off. Yes. Those bastards that put the gun into my hands” (p.132); from the top of the Helter Skelter at the Goose Fair “he was wondering how many columns of soldiers could be gathered from these crowds for use in a rebellion” (p.165), and he fantasises about blowing up the “sneering” castle with “a thousand tons of bone-dry TNT” (p.72). However, while he can imagine such a situation, the time is not yet ripe. In Sillitoe’s trilogy *The Death of William Posters* (1965), *A Tree on Fire* (1968) and *The Flame of Life* (1974), the main character, Frank Dawley, decides to play a more direct role in the political field, and ends up

running guns to the F.L.N. rebels in Algeria. Arthur may have been more inclined to such a course in the more politically active 60s, but he can see no immediate possibilities of worthwhile action.

His world is a limited one, and he has no contact with “them”, only with their representatives, employees like him, whose interests are those of the owners, that is, to ensure production at as high a rate of profitability as possible. Arthur works hard and is proud of this, but knows that because of the piece-work system even if he worked harder he would not necessarily earn any more money, so he has calculated the optimum balance of effort/reward for himself. “So you earned your living in spite of the firm, the rate-checker, the foreman...” (p.32). The truce is seen in his relations with Robboe, the “gaffer”, the boss, the foreman:

Arthur and Robboe tolerated and trusted each other. The enemy in them stayed dormant, a black animal stifling the noise of its growls as if commanded by a greater master to lie low, an animal that had perhaps been passed on for some generations from father to son on either side (p.42).

Althusser would say that whether wages are good or bad is immaterial, the result is the same: “How is the reproduction of labour power ensured? It is ensured by giving labour power the material means by which to reproduce itself: by wages” (Althusser 1970: 63). This is what Williams called “the function of replacement” (p102), and in this Arthur is fulfilling his function by following his father into the factory, which means that in this case at least, the capitalist system has worked. Viewed in these terms, the Second World War could be seen as first and foremost an economic necessity rather than a struggle between competing political ideologies: if it were not for the war, Harold Seaton would have been lost as a functioning labour unit, and his children would also have ceased to have any value, either having died through malnutrition or related causes or having been lost to the world of extra-societal

activities, crime, which is practically the only means of survival for the poor when the world of work is inaccessible.

Arthur has reached his own compromise with the world of work, and having seen the effects on his father and others of the pre-war unemployment and the accompanying calls for the right to work, he accepts both the necessity and the consequences of what is seen as a natural, if not always desirable, activity. The description of his job is detailed and technical, giving a realistic picture of what a factory worker actually does all day, something which was probably a mystery for many people, and we are shown the noise, dirt and danger of the shop floor, something which, it has been argued, had been given little or no importance in English literature up to this point. Holloway says that:

...in the years after 1945, a significantly new kind of work-fiction becomes prominent in the literary scene...working life depicted here lies in the great bureaucratic institutions of the modern city - government, the law, and also higher education...since the actual work...is too intricate, too confidential (at least in wartime) and simply too boring, to display at large to the general reader, the novelist writes about the personal relations between colleagues at work, rather than about the detail of the work itself, or about its long-term ends (Holloway 1984: 103-104).

He mentions such writers as William Cooper, C.P.Snow and Kingsley Amis, and *Lucky Jim*, as has been argued, can be seen to reflect this type of novel in which the work done is conspicuous by its absence. *SNSM* shows the work that Arthur does, and the passage (pp.30-31) which describes Arthur arriving at the factory on Monday morning and setting up his lathe to start the day's and the week's work was called by Craig: "...the first passage I know of in our literature (nearly two centuries after the first power-loom was patented!) which evokes a factory worker's experience from the inside with the finesse that writers have given to all others in the human range" (Craig in Hitchcock 1989: 65).

As has been mentioned, Arthur is proud of his ability to perform hard, physical work, and when he first meets Doreen he refutes her accusation that he spends all day in the factory talking to women on the grounds that “I’ve got too much work to do” (p.151). In this he reveals what Atherton calls “...the self-image held by the majority of British working-class men...an attitude of mind characterised by intense pride in physical labour and the presumption that the rest of society is dependent on this labour for its very existence” (Atherton 1979: 100). This attitude has already been mentioned with relation to *Love on the Dole* (p.114), where the superiority of labourers over clerks is taken for granted, or with Orwell’s portrait of miners and the recognition that society depends on their superhuman labour for its creature comforts (p.120). This idea that the physical worker literally supported the rest of the country is a basic concept in working-class thinking, and a character in “The Other John Peel”, from *The Ragman’s Daughter* (1963) says to his friend and workmate: “We work in a factory, don’t we? Well, we’re the backbone of this country, but you see, Bob, there’s too many people on our backs. And it’s time they was slung off” (Sillitoe 1966: 39). I have shown, I believe, that this is an attitude which goes back to the beginning of industrialism, if not further, and we shall see other examples of it in Sillitoe’s work. We are also shown the physical consequences of this manual labour which provides Arthur with the money to live as he does. He mentions his “broad, calloused hands”<sup>66</sup> (p.60), being “round-shouldered from stooping day in day out at his lathe” (p.66), how “you got fair wages if you worked your backbone to a string of conkers on piecework” (p.27), and how he has to have a day off work because of the “sickness brought on by too much breathing of suds and grease in the factory” (p.48). These

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<sup>66</sup> In “The Bike” from *The Ragman’s Daughter* (1963) the narrator says: “I saw a picture once about a revolution in Russia...and they lined everyone up and made them hold their hands out...Anyone whose hands were lily-white was taken away and shot. The others were OK. Well, if that ever happened in this country, I’d be OK” (Sillitoe 1966: 98). This physical malformation can thus be seen to function as a badge of mutual recognition.

results of the work he does correspond to Foucault's idea of the "docile body", in which docile has the literal meaning of trainable or teachable, "the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces" (Foucault 1981: 136). Arthur has been working in factories since the age of fifteen, and given that his work is repetitive, performing the same limited number of movements many thousands of times a week, the physical consequences are inevitable and, from the point of view of his employers, desirable, in that his body has adjusted to the tasks it must perform. Foucault says that "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault 1981: 136), and although the relations of capitalism are different from those of the army or schools of which he was writing, the objectives are the same. One of the first and most graphic illustrations of this effect of physical moulding in modern industrial production is, of course, Chaplin's *Modern Times*,<sup>67</sup> now seventy years old, and in Arthur's time these methods were still in place. With increased automatization, it has to be said, Arthur's job is probably now being done by a robot or other machine, one of the aspects of Arthur's world which now gives it historic interest. Though it seems that he does not have to suffer the regimentation of an assembly line, the production process started by Ford in the U.S.A. at the beginning of the century, this process was becoming more and more common in Britain, particularly as the factories themselves became bigger and bigger to turn out in increasing numbers the cars, televisions and other visible symbols of affluence. Ford's, as the pioneer of mass production, was also known as one of the most rigidly controlled workplaces, where every aspect of the work and the worker was supervised and any infraction punished. Craig quotes an American book on Ford's written in 1948:

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<sup>67</sup> *Modern Times* (1936). Director: Charles Chaplin.

Ford men, before long, became noted for their ingenuity in circumventing the ironclad law against talking at their work...One highly intelligent artisan invented a type of "Ford speech" all his own. He learned to talk like a ventriloquist. After spending ten years in Ford's service, this man became the laughing stock of his wife and friends, for the habit of talking out of the side of his mouth without moving his lips became ungovernable; he began to talk that way unconsciously, at home or in the most casual conversation with someone outside after working hours. "Fordization of the face" was once the rule among all men at work, inasmuch as humming, whistling or even smiling on the job were, in the judgement of Ford service, evidence of soldiering or insubordination (Benyon in Craig 1980: 150).

While in these cases the physical distortion is in defiance of rather than in subordination to the working practices, the end result is the same, resulting in deformations such as Arthur's hands. Like the Ford workers, too, Arthur is one part of a whole process, making one small piece which is then taken away to be assembled into the finished product, so that he can have no satisfaction of producing something himself. At this stage of industrialism, the 19<sup>th</sup> century fears that "they want to turn us into tools" (p.21) can be seen to have been fully realized, and it would seem that the employers had finally put into practice Owen's recommendations on the care and treatment of the "vital machines" (p.39). Arthur does not have to suffer the monitoring and repression of the Ford workers, possibly because the unions had more power in Britain than in the U.S.A., but his putting a dead mouse under a female worker's drill (p.31) is an example of the kind of (mis)behaviour which may once have been possible in a factory but which was becoming less and less tolerated. Nevertheless, his body is becoming adapted to the demands of the work, without his consent though not without his knowledge, and if in later life his body can no longer function efficiently there will be a replacement available, not that this will be any compensation to Arthur, of course. However, he is still young, and he pays little heed to the future, with the belief in his own immortality characteristic of youth: "The factory did not matter. The factory could go on working until it blew itself up from

too much speed, but I, he thought, will be here after the factory's gone" (p.45). As said previously, he takes pride in his ability to work hard, and even defines himself through his work, and he knows his worth to his employers. On pay-day Robboe gives him his wages, which are higher than most, and Arthur says: " "I earn it. Every penny on it. You can't deny that." Robboe had a genuine respect for hard work. "I'm not saying you don't. But just keep it quiet" "(p.61). When Robboe leaves, however:

Truce time was over. The enemy's scout was no longer near...Friday afternoon was a time when different species met beneath white flags, with wage-packets as mediators, when those who worked in the factory were handed proof of their worth, which had increased considerably since the above-mentioned cat-and-dog ideas had with reason taken root (p.61-62).

The vocabulary used in this excerpt is particularly indicative of Arthur's beliefs. "They" are not only the enemy, they are a different species, and even though the wages he earns have increased significantly, the enmity is old and justified, and the relationship has not changed in any basic way. In fact, in the book, we do not see "them" at all, only their "scouts", and one notable aspect of *SNSM* is the self-referential view of the working class which is given, a view which was very different from most previous images which had generally been mediated through the interposition of the middle and upper classes, such as the officers/men division of the many books and films about the war, which was still a common topic in 1958 and for many years after.<sup>68</sup> The "case study" approach usual in sociological works and the aforementioned fascination with and writing on the working class at the time generally showed an attitude of *de haut en bas*, and even as sympathetic a reporter as Orwell, for example, still remained a reporter rather than a participant. Sillitoe's picture echoes Raymond Williams's idea of the:

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<sup>68</sup> Although, with the passing of time and the ageing of the participants, this fascination seems to have finally ended, and more recent English writers have turned to the more distant First World War for inspiration. Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (1996) is a good example of this.

...close, even closed, community...where you are simultaneously a working man or woman, a member of a working-class family in the simple, descriptive sense, but also a member of a working-class community...and then within that very intense, often one-track community, the problem of class, which would in more mixed communities be subject to much more complex interpretation, arrives enmeshed with what is also your identity as the people of that place and the people of that region, for you belong simultaneously, over the whole range (Williams 1983: 245).

Arthur's community is just as exclusive as Jane Austen's, for example, since we do not see representatives of any other social group or class, yet the inner workings of the society, as they affect the people whose work supports this society, are clearly shown in the descriptions of the work done and the way in which the rewards are spent. O'Connor says that: "...the novel itself actually shapes experience: understanding of connections between individuals and the political, social and economic structures of history...The novelist is defining the society rather than merely reflecting it; defining it in novels" (O'Connor 1989: 68-69). In a similar vein Hitchcock says: "Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* should not be read as an effect of class change; rather it is a cultural component of that change" (Hitchcock 1989: 22). In giving his picture of working-class life Sillitoe helped to show that the people involved are real people and more than just the usual stereotypes he argued against, as in the previous quote (p.162), and the details of their daily life help to define them both in their own terms and by contrast with other social groupings. This was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the frequent use of the word "shocking" in contemporary opinions of the book, and part of the shock for the middle-class reader was probably to read a book which not only featured a working-class protagonist, but also showed a complete lack of interest in the other classes. Sillitoe said:

My main concern was to show that, while in one sense a certain section of those who worked in factories had their earthly bread, they had by no means been shown any kind of worthwhile spiritual bread...Having been some time out of England, I didn't know of Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* – which pointed out more or less the same thing...Those who see Arthur Seaton as a symbol of the working man and

not as an individual are mistaken. I wrote about him as a person, and not as a typical man who works at a lathe (Sillitoe in Hill 1986: 203).

While Arthur is indubitably, if not defiantly, individual he is also a working man, and this is as much a part of his personality as his family background. His assumptions, attitudes and morals have been shaped by the life he has had and the people who have shared his life with him, and if one point of Hoggart's book was that the working class have not been offered any "worthwhile spiritual bread", the corollary is that the working class have had to depend on themselves, in this as in other areas of life, to create a culture and network of associations that can help both to alleviate the practical hardships and to provide the non-material necessities that can be summarized as spiritual. In this sense the Seatons can be seen as examples of a particular type of person (as can practically any character in any realist novel) but this does not mean that they are symbols of a class, rather that they have shared a common history and still share common living conditions, the "zone of life" mentioned by Sillitoe.<sup>69</sup>

Apart from the all-important world of work, many of the features of working-class life mentioned by Hoggart, which form the cement of the community, can be seen in the activities of Arthur and his family. The language used in the book, for example, while giving a modified version of the Nottingham dialect, reflects the social as well as the geographical zone to which Arthur belongs. Hoggart says that, despite the effects of the mass media "...if we listen to working-class people at work and at home we are likely to be struck first ...by the degree to which working-people still draw, in

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<sup>69</sup> It should be noted here that there is some "blurring" of time in the novel, probably due to Sillitoe's absence from England for some years. Though published in 1958, many features and internal references are more in keeping with the early fifties, or even the late forties. Arthur's cousins, for example, would seem to be slightly older than him, yet they fought, or rather didn't fight, in the war, which is always understood to be the Second World War. This would now logically make them around forty, practically a different generation to Arthur, but this is not the impression given in the book

speech and in the assumptions to which speech is a guide, on oral and local tradition” (Hoggart 1971: 27). He gives a number of examples of this (including “a slice off a cut cake is never missed”, referring to the sexual ease of some married women, especially apposite for Arthur) and we see many other similar phrases. Throughout the book Arthur frequently says “It’s a fine life if you don’t weaken”, a phrase still heard, which reflects the struggle necessary to survive and even the precariousness of existence for the working class, but he also frequently inverts it to “It’s a hard life if you don’t weaken”, conscious of the struggle which he feels he is engaged in and the attractions of acquiescence. Jack tells Arthur “I’ve got my way and you’ve got yourn”, Arthur is habitually evasive because “It pays to keep your trap shut” (and his lies are a continuing feature of the book, in fact he lies for enjoyment, not only through necessity), a religious couple are referred to as “the Bible-backs”, Arthur tells Jack to leave some space for him to sit down with “Mek room for a rabbit-arse”, the usual term of affection is “duck” or “my owd duck”, a loud person is a “pan-mouth”, and Arthur is at his most eloquent when angry and insulting someone, as when he excoriates a woman who helped the police to arrest a drunk man: “...she’s a bitch and a whore. She’s got no heart in her. She’s a stone, a slab o’granite, a bastard, a Blood-tub, a potato face, a swivel-eyed gett, a Rat-clock” (p.113). As well as expressing what can be seen as knowledge gained by experience, such language helps to keep alive the oral traditions, of a class or of a place, and is more important in its form than in its content inasmuch that it can help to strengthen the sense of community more than impart information.

Language, like everything else, changes with time and in *Birthday*, which was published in 2001 and continues the story of the Seatons with Arthur now retired and his brother Brian aged almost seventy, we see that nowhere and nobody is immune to

change. Arthur, commenting on a hearty meal they are about to eat, says: ““It’s real fucker’s grub.” Brian relished his use of the old lingo” (Sillitoe 2001: 65).<sup>70</sup> What Brian calls the “lingo” is basically what Hoggart calls the oral tradition, something which now exists in a different form.

Apart from the speech, we are given information about practically every aspect of the Seaton’s lives. They read the *Daily Mirror* on weekdays and *The News of the World* on Sundays, and occasionally the *Football Post*, in contrast to Jimmy Porter, who reads the “posh papers”. The only books mentioned are the youngest brother Sam’s schoolbooks, and Arthur says that he has read the St. Crispin’s Day speech from *Henry V*, after having seen the film about six times. Arthur’s parents watch television (something which Arthur despises) seemingly indiscriminately, and they all listen to the radio, again seemingly indiscriminately, and hear everything from a Bach concerto to old-time waltzes. They also make music, or at least sing, and it is the old songs rather than the new American-influenced hits that they prefer. They go to the cinema often, and actors such as Boris Karloff, Laurence Olivier or Abbott and Costello are mentioned by name, and it seems that war films and westerns are popular.

In terms of daily consumption we see that smoking is a universal habit, and the usual brand is Woodbine, which was the cheapest. The people drink lots of strong, sweet tea, and though their eating habits do not seem to reflect the affluence visible in other aspects of life, “a special pay-day treat of bacon and beans” (p.62), or “a tea of sausages and tinned tomatoes” (p.169)<sup>71</sup>, special events such as Christmas were celebrated with more lavish meals and plentiful drink. Lunch was sandwiches eaten at

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<sup>70</sup> The Seaton talent for invective is still alive, however, and Brian, now a television script-writer, refers to “every proud-arsed bullshitting bowler-hatted toffee-nosed publisher with his rolled umbrella, idly indulging in his parasitical occupation for a so-called gentleman” (Sillitoe 2001: 167).

<sup>71</sup> This, incidentally, would confirm the middle-class conviction that the working class lived off tinned food.

work, and fish and chips were always available. Again, in comparison to pre-war poverty and wartime and post-war rationing, this seems more than adequate to Arthur and his family, and we are told (p.128) that as children Arthur and Fred went to a “dinner-centre” which offered free dinners to poor children, and they seem to suffer no ill effects from their diet.

Going out, for Arthur at least, is almost synonymous with going to the pub, and much of the book’s action takes place in pubs: chaps. 1,3,4,5,6,7,9,10,12,14,15, 11 out of 16 chapters feature a pub or a club, and Arthur having a drink, or several.<sup>72</sup> He drinks what some people would consider to be a lot, and in the opening scene considerably more than a lot (but it was free), but since he can pay for it this is not considered strange or reprehensible by him or anyone else. Hoggart says:

On the one hand, drinking is accepted as part of the normal life, or at least of the normal man’s life...Drink is “alright”, is “natural” in moderation...On the other hand, the man who does not drink at all is a bit unusual – most working-class people would not ask for a majority of men like that, whatever the perils of drink (Hoggart 1971: 95-96).

Since the major peril of drink for the working class has always been economic ruin, through spending money on what has always been an expensive commodity in Britain, and missing work because of the after-effects of alcohol, Arthur as a young single man with no responsibilities can drink with a clear conscience, and even be admired for his capacity: “ “Drink?” Brenda’s friend exclaimed. “I’ll bet you can’t drink like young Arthur Seaton there” ” (p.10). Drinking can also be seen as an act of defiance, against the “respectable” norms of society. In Brendan Behan’s well-known phrase, talking of the poor, working-class area where he grew up, he said: “To get enough to eat was regarded as an achievement. To get drunk was a victory”.<sup>73</sup> Pubs

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<sup>72</sup> Atherton counts twenty-six real pubs mentioned by name in the early Nottingham fiction (Atherton 1979: 71).

<sup>73</sup> Source: theater2.nytimes.com Access date: 1.2.2007

were not only for drinking, though, and we see how they were an integral part of social life. Arthur's first meetings in the book with both Doreen and Winnie take place in pubs, and he also bumps into his Uncle George, not to mention one of the soldiers who beat him up. In the opening scene of the book we are told that it is "Benefit night for the White Horse Club, and the pub had burst its contribution box" (p.9). This type of club scheme was and is still common, whereby small regular contributions are periodically shared out, or sometimes raffled. For the financially-harassed working class this was a form of saving, and is mirrored in the existence of Christmas clubs and other forms of low-level finance, often the only type available to the poor (see p.114 for similarities with *Love on the Dole*). Besides the Benefit night, there is a group of the pub football supporters' club, and people are singing, so the pub on this Saturday night is the centre of a number of different activities, all of them communal and all of them lubricated by drink, needless to say. Arthur also goes to the Athletic Club, and in the absence of any visible athletic activity this can be assumed to be a working-man's club, since there people meet to carry out the same activities as in the pub, namely to drink, play darts or chat, and the family take the visiting Sam to the Railway Club, where they play Housey-housey, now known as bingo. Writing in 1957, Hoggart says: "There are today well over three thousand separate working-men's clubs, with a total membership of more than two million" (Hoggart 1971: 151).<sup>74</sup> One attraction of these clubs was that they were generally cheaper than the pubs, but this was not the only reason for their popularity which continues to this day. There were usually other activities (in *SNSM* there will be a darts tournament, and bingo is played) and many provided entertainment at the weekends. There were many

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<sup>74</sup> Haywood says that for the working class: "The separation of leisure and politics, best seen in the splitting of the tavern or coffee-house (once a major venue of radical meetings) into the pub (for drinking) and the Working Men's Club (for drinking and meetings) was a major loss" (Haywood 1997: 15).

women members, since the clubs were often considered more “respectable” than pubs, and Brenda uses the club as an alibi for meeting Arthur. In short, drinking is seen to be frequently peripheral to other social acts, and in Nottingham or any other British town there was no shortage of places to go.

Gambling is also considered a popular working-class activity (though by no means limited to the working class) and the post-war success of the football pools bears witness to this, since it is one of the cheapest forms of gambling. Arthur bets on the horses and seems to win more than he loses. His Uncle George presses him for a tip, and takes his advice seriously since he has won money in the past from Arthur’s knowledge or luck. Luck is an important concept in the working-class attitude to gambling, and Arthur says, after telling Jack about a win on the horses : “Mostly I’m lucky and all...I’m superstitious and I believe in luck” (p.35). Hoggart argues that the aim of gambling is not simply financial; it can be a social event in the forms of raffles or draws or bingo, and for someone like Arthur who is knowledgeable it can be one of the few available forms of self-expression, something which wins him respect from others. What is more:

...in a life so materially limited one is led to hope for the sudden chance of fortune from heaven. But it is also rooted in a supernaturalism which has survived centuries, and is still enjoyed, not as a make-shift for the rewards which have not yet come, but because it makes life more interesting (Hoggart 1971: 139).

Gambling is seen, it can be said, in a similar way to drink. Someone who refuses the chance of a “flutter” is not really trusted, is not a sport, or is suspected of meanness, a cardinal sin for the working class. The middle-class view of both activities, of course, has always been one of censure, viewing them as a confirmation of the fecklessness of the working classes, who could live well on their wages if they did not persist in

spending money on such reprehensible activities.<sup>75</sup> This is probably quite true, and if Arthur were to spend less on his clothes and his drinking, his family could probably afford a materially-higher standard of living. This is to ignore, however, the human fact that some form of enjoyment is a psychological necessity, for the poor as well as the rich. Sillitoe said: “If a family doesn’t throw some money away each week on fags and the pictures they may go under quicker than if they do. Their morale cracks, and they end up either in the poor-house or the looney-bin. This is a reason for the so-called fecklessness of the poor: a visit to the pictures is often better than a hot dinner” (Sillitoe 1975: 76).

The portrait given of Arthur and his family can thus be seen as an exhaustive depiction of working-class life as it was lived in a post-war industrial town such as Nottingham. One thing which does not form any part of this life is the high culture. Despite the availability of the officially-sanctioned culture through the radio, television, libraries or subsidized performances, the disengagement from or disinterest in this type of artistic production was, for many people, absolute, and the Seatons are no exception to this. Such a reaction can hardly come as a surprise. If Arnold saw culture as something for only “the highly-instructed few” (p.56), and Leavis considered that only “a very small minority” (p.62) were capable of appreciating the high artistic/literary culture, the consequent exclusivity would naturally engender feelings of disinterest in the excluded majority, “those who’d rather go bowling than own a van Gogh”, in the words of the American writer Nelson Algren (Algren 1973: 82).

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<sup>75</sup> This attitude has always been the official attitude as well. The archaic licensing laws in Britain were introduced to protect the working classes from their own incontinence, as well as to ensure full production, and gambling was exclusively in private hands, though taxed, until the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994, it being felt that a government has no business in encouraging people to lose their money. Even so, the philanthropic aims of the National Lottery are still emphasized almost as much as the possibility of becoming rich overnight.

Fiske writes of the concept of distance: “Distance is a key marker of difference between high and low culture, between the meanings, practices, and pleasures characteristic of powered and disempowered social formations. Cultural distance is a multidimensional concept” (Fiske 1992: 154). This concept of distance operates on many levels, he goes on: there is the distance between the art object and the reader/spectator, which privileges an aesthetic sensibility with claims to universality, and also encourages an attitude of respect or reverence for the work as a work of art; this aesthetic distance also divorces the experience of the art work from its historical conditions, thus again reinforcing the supposedly transcendent universal values inherent in the work; this ahistoricity produces a distance from the body, which is what binds us, according to Fiske, to our historical and social specificities, and so the cheap and easy pleasures of the body are distanced from the more cerebral pleasures of the mind; there is the distance from economic necessity, since the separation of the aesthetic from the social is possible only for those who are free from material constraints, and so this critical and aesthetic distance is “finally a marker of distinction between those able to separate their culture from the social and economic conditions of the everyday and those who cannot” (Fiske 1992: 154). Arthur does not, and gives no signs of wanting to, separate his culture from his daily life. His pleasures are generally the pleasures of the body, although while at work or fishing he uses his time to think, but this activity, while cerebral, is not in itself cultural. The distance between the people in the book and the high culture is an unbridgeable chasm, although some stray examples do filter through to their lives. We see the family listening to a Bach concerto on the radio, or wireless, which it was still called at the time, for example, but we are also told that it is part of the programme *Family Favourites*, a popular programme broadcast on the Light Programme (the working-

class radio station) which played requests (p.197); in the only other scene which features the wireless, Mrs. Seaton is listening to old-time waltzes (p.102), so it seems that there is little active discrimination in what is heard. The only other example of high culture mentioned in the book is Shakespeare, and his work has come to Arthur through the popularising medium of the cinema. The fears expressed of the mass culture by many people, that it would drive out the high culture, would seem to have been realised, and the only exposure to the “good” culture which the working class is seen to receive is almost accidental, and never intentional. This cultural vacuum can be seen to operate omnidirectionally, in that if the high culture had failed to make any impression on the lives of the characters, a similar lack was perceived in terms of the traditional working-class culture, as depicted by Hoggart. As previously noted, Hoggart expressed his fear that the older, more organic working-class culture, culture as a way of life which had its roots in the reaction of the English working class to industrialism, was being supplanted and weakened by the pressures of mass culture:

My argument is not that there was, in England one generation ago, an urban culture still very much “of the people” and that now there is only a mass urban culture. It is rather that the appeals made by the mass publicists are for a great number of reasons made more insistently, effectively, and in a more comprehensive and centralized form today than they were earlier; that we are moving towards the creation of a mass culture; that the remnants of what was at least in parts an urban culture “of the people” are being destroyed; and that the new mass culture is in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing (Hoggart 1971: 24).

Sillitoe, and other writers of the period, were seen as depicting the new youth, caught between the old and the new. Linking Arthur Seaton with Arthur Machin, the protagonist of Storey’s aforementioned *This Sporting Life* (1960), D.J.Taylor says that their:

...increasing affluence is distancing them from some of the consolations of poverty. Like the majority of working-class fictional characters of the period, they are on the move between an older, communal life and a newer individualism: transient,

restless and dissatisfied. It would be an exaggeration to say that the working-class novels of the 1950s simply illustrate the Hoggart thesis, for there are many ways in which they contradict it, but the connection between the two is very strong. Their message – that affluence or any form of social advancement is likely to have a destructive effect on fundamental patterns of ordinary life – is in any case identical to Hoggart's (Taylor, D.J. 1994:126).

Apart from the awful condescension of the phrase “the consolations of poverty”, I disagree with Taylor and his view of Arthur Seaton as an exemplar of Hoggart's deracinated worker. Arthur's life is a communal life founded on the traditional close-knit bases of the working-class community: home, family, neighbourhood, work and town/region. Haywood writes of the growth of the urban working class and:

...the evolution of amenities, leisure pursuits and cultural activities that gradually emerged into a distinct way of life...Conspicuous icons of this way of life are the extended family, the terraced street, the local factory, the pub, football match, sporting paper, race track, music hall, Sunday stroll and holiday excursion (Haywood 1997: 14)

Arthur's life is seen to revolve around these traditional activities and locales of working-class life, of which Hoggart also wrote, and Hoggart's fears that this life was disappearing are shown to be unfounded, at least as far as Arthur is concerned. His cultural consumption seems to be limited to newspapers, the radio and the cinema, none of which was a new medium at the time, and none of which is shown to have any effect on him, and his attitude to television, the newest and most pernicious of the instruments of mass culture, is one of contempt: “Television, he thought scornfully...they'd go barmy if they had them taken away. I'd love it if big Black Marias came down all the streets and men got out with hatchets and go in every house and smash the tellies” (p.184). In general, I feel that Arthur and his family are much closer to the constructed urban life “of the people” mentioned by Hoggart on the previous page than to the supposedly transient characters of whom Taylor speaks. Apart from the increased affluence, Arthur's life is probably little different from his

father's, and there is no sign of any generation gap between Arthur and his parents. He is a part of the neighbourhood (he is gossiped about by Mrs. Bull), and is obviously known in the pubs he frequents, and shows no signs of the absorption into the undifferentiated mass culture which was seen as the greatest danger to culture, whether defined by Hoggart or Leavis.

The theme of alienation is one which has often been a focus in considering the angry works, Sillitoe's work in more general terms, and particularly with reference to Smith and Arthur (see, for example: Atherton 1979: 21ff; Vaverka 1978: 37; Hanson 1999: 82-120; Hitchcock 1989: 65ff; Sawkins 2001: *passim*). All these writers agree that Arthur's conditions of life, and particularly his job, repetitive and dehumanising, cannot but produce in Arthur a state of estrangement and dissociation from his function and surroundings. Vaverka says: "A major psychological consequence of the harsh surroundings and uncreative labour process that involves Arthur is to be found in his state of alienation... Years of such work cannot help but stifle Arthur's mind in relation to the potentialities he may have" (Vaverka 1978: 37). The reification of the worker, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century fear which had been realized, as has been mentioned, must necessarily produce alienation, and in much criticism of *SNSM* a common view is to see Arthur a rebel, alienated from society,<sup>76</sup> a view which Arthur himself shares: "Once a rebel, always a rebel" (p.202).

His attitude to work has already been mentioned, as have the results. While it is true that his work is mechanical, he is able to take pride in his ability and strength, and in performing his strenuous labour he feels that he is contributing to something wider than himself, and is relatively satisfied with his earnings. In fact, the working class accepts work as a natural part of life, it is the unequal enjoyment of the benefits

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<sup>76</sup> See: Atherton 1979: 110-116, for reviews of *SNSM* at the time of publication.

which is the major cause of complaint. Sillitoe, in “Poor People” (1964) wrote: “You have to go on working, of course, work until you drop (*that’s all right, you have to work, expect to*) (my italics) but isn’t there an abundance that, if shared out, would be enough for me, for everyone? (Sillitoe 1975: 78) Though conscious that the rewards of his efforts are not distributed fairly, I feel that to label Arthur as alienated in the area of work is something of an exaggeration, particularly when he is capable of saying: “But listen, this lathe is my everlasting pal” (p.202). This is not to say, however, that he exhibits no signs of alienation from the society in which he lives. He is, as we shall see, consistently hostile to any and every organization which attempts to order his life for him, and his resistance to this imposition is founded in and expressed through his working-class culture, the only avenue open to him which allows him to express his full personality.

If, as Barthes said (p.79), the bourgeois culture permeates every aspect of life, it is equally fair to say that the working-class culture is present in every aspect of Arthur’s life, and to paraphrase Sillitoe’s quote (p.163) he belongs to his zone of life with so much flesh and blood that he is an indissoluble part of it. He is embedded in the culture which surrounds him, that of the urban working class, and this is true of the majority of Sillitoe’s characters, even those whose material circumstances change. Paul, the main character of *Down From the Hill* (1984) is now a writer for television (the same profession as Brian Seaton) but started life in a factory. “The only habit which betrayed his class origins – if there was such a thing – was that when with other people at a concert or a party he liked to wear a suit instead of jeans, sweatshirt, sneakers and, maybe, a beard” (Sillitoe 1984: 184). This shows both the persistence and the detail of cultural habits: it is not only a question of dress, but how and when clothes are worn, such as when Arthur dresses up to go to the pub (p.66).

While the physical environment is of sub-standard housing, noise and pollution, nevertheless the people have, over time, made it their own, as when Arthur and Fred are returning from their pub-crawl: “The maze of streets sleeping between tobacco factory and bicycle factory drew them into the enormous spread of its suburban bosom and embraced them in sympathetic darkness” (p.116). In winter, Arthur feels that “...each dark street patted his shoulder and became a friend...Houses lay in rows and ranks, a measure of safety in such numbers” (p.166). Atherton observes that : “The milieu of post-war municipal housing projects known as “estates” remains outside Sillitoe’s portrayal of working-class life. His characters continue to inhabit the more primitive, ageing, back-to-backs near the factories, where their living conditions are essentially the same as they were before the war” (Atherton 1979: 66). The working class had been condemned to live with each other, in their own identifiable districts, since industry started to change the face of England, and it is no surprise that they made a virtue of necessity and claimed these districts for themselves, familiar and welcoming. It was this more traditional form of life with which Sillitoe was familiar, and which was still the reality for the majority of the working class in post-war Britain. Despite the overcrowded living conditions, however, Arthur actively seeks out the company of his peers in his social life, since all life is shared with those around him, as when he enters a half-empty pub: “He did not want to go alone, and had expected to find some of his friends at the bar. To be alone seemed a continuation of his drugged life at the lathe. He wanted noise, to drink and make love” (p.170). It is in the historical shared experience and the culture arising from it that Arthur and others find both security against the forces which oppress them and also demonstrate, by their refusal to adopt the way of life laid out for them, their rejection of and resistance to these forces. This culture, which had evolved over more than a century,

is both a personal and collective affirmation of identity, and although the people are of course individuals with their own differences, their common beliefs and way of life militate towards a common identification, a sense of belonging. Arthur may well be alienated from the dominant society in the form of official bodies and capitalist working practices, but to depict him as alienated from his own class, as many critics have done<sup>77</sup>, is in my view a grave mistake. It is his own class, in fact, which provides him with any spiritual bread that he may receive.

As has been pointed out, his contact with the high culture is non-existent, and in this case it can be seen as a deliberate act on the part of the cultural elite, since the role of culture as a social differentiator has already been discussed. Class differences are maintained by all classes, and Behan in *Borstal Boy* (1958) gives an example of this when writing of the only middle-class lad in the Borstal, and the different relationship which he had with the other predominantly working-class inmates: “But Ken they would never accept. In a way, as the middle-class and upper-class in England spend so much money and energy in maintaining the difference between themselves and the working class, Ken was only getting what his people had paid for” (Behan 1990: 232). If Arthur is alienated from the high culture, it has to be said that this alienation is not a product solely of his disinterest. Any fortuitous contact with the high culture would have come from B.B.C. radio, probably the Light Programme, and Arthur doesn't watch television, although his parents seem to be entranced by the new medium. We are not given any information as to which television programmes they watch, but it is highly probable that they watch the new (1955) commercial channel, I.T.V., rather than the B.B.C. which was, and still is, seen as the natural home of high culture on television. The previously-mentioned reference to Sam's

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<sup>77</sup> See D.J.Taylor above, or : Day 2001: 182; Vaverka 1978: 41.

schoolbooks is the only direct reference to school in the novel, and where or how Arthur was educated remains a mystery. The family read the newspapers and do crosswords, so they are obviously literate, but even so there is no evidence of Arthur's life before he went to work. For him and many others, school, one of the main channels for transmission of the high culture, is something to leave as soon as possible, a compulsory distraction from the real world. When he first meets Doreen, talking about her work she says: "I've worked there for four years now, since I left school." I thought so, he said to himself. Nineteen" (p.150). For Arthur the calculation is automatic: Doreen left school at fifteen, the minimum age at that time, so she is now nineteen. The possibility that she stayed at school past the statutory period is not even considered, and the whole area of academic education is a blank area in the book. The foreman Robboe, for example, has studied at night-school, and is now a qualified worker, but this is in the practical world of work, and is a different matter. After the reference to his books Sam the schoolboy disappears from the story, and with him any further contact with the world of education.<sup>78</sup>

Whatever the education that Arthur has received, it has failed to have any lasting effect in the cultural area. Bach is received with the same enthusiasm, or lack of it, as the old-time waltzes which Arthur's mother listens to on the radio, while *Henry V* impresses Arthur as much for the evocation of the excitement of violence as for any literary worth or cultural significance, whereas for Doreen the film is memorable because she thinks Laurence Olivier is handsome. They have no contact with or interest in the high culture, and though they would probably accept at its own worth any manifestation of it that might happen to come their way, they have no desire to

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<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to note here that in *SNSM* the three brothers are Sam, Arthur and Fred. In *Key to the Door* (1961) they are Sam, Arthur and Brian, who is also the main character of *The Open Door* (1989). By *Birthday* (2001) they are Brian, Arthur and Derek, who also feature in *A Man of His Time* (2004). They are always Seatons, and the internal continuity is strong and detailed, but the third Seaton brother is something of an enigma.

actively seek it out. In short, not only is there a lack of culture in Arnoldian or Leavisite terms, there is also more importantly a lack of the cultural deference which was considered a keystone of the general class deference that should properly be shown by the working class to its social superiors. For Arthur “the best that has been thought and said” is not something to be found in books, it was something which was transmitted orally from generation to generation, such as the true relationship between the workers and the employers revealed in the earlier quote (p.167) showing Arthur’s relationship with Robboe. The distance between Arthur and the high culture would seem to be as great as it is permanent.

The “officially” acceptable myths of working-class culture have no greater importance for the people than the high culture. Nottingham is historically the home of Robin Hood who, as everybody knows, robbed from the rich to give to the poor. Sillitoe gives a more realistic view of the legend and its acceptance:

The idolisation of Robin Hood went out centuries ago. If it hadn’t would school books still tell of him?...Robin had an unofficial monopoly of wealth by being forcibly able to tax the rich. There is a saying in Nottingham: “Robin Hood? Robbin’ bastard, more like.” He ended up becoming one of the king’s men (Sillitoe 1975: 79).

For the working class, culture was something which grew naturally from the people themselves rather than something imposed by the organs of society, and Arthur’s disaffection encompasses any type of organization. He is against anyone who tries to tell him what he should do or how he should feel or think, and he subscribes to no creed except his own, which is one of self-interest that extends to his family and possibly a few friends and neighbours, but no further. This was another aspect of the book which shocked, or if not shocked disturbed, a number of commentators, particularly those of a political bent. The difficulty or impossibility of categorizing Arthur and his family in a convenient pigeonhole was resented on the left as much as

it was on the right. As a young, intelligent, thinking worker who was participating in the post-war affluence, he was just the sort of person to appeal to all political movements as a prime target for recruitment. According to the classic Marxist philosophy, Arthur is an exploited worker and is conscious of this, and should be working on his own behalf and on behalf of others to bring about a change in circumstances to replace the exploitation of capitalism with a fairer system. For the right, probably Conservative, political interests (the extreme right has never attracted any significant support in England, and even less after six years of war against Fascism), Arthur is the skilled working-class man who was the base of the Conservative election victories in the 80s and 90s, intelligent enough to put his own interest ahead of any romantic ideas of class solidarity and thus reap the benefits of the resulting prosperity. For the Labour party, as a working man he should be a natural Labour voter, enjoying as he does the benefits of the welfare state and all its consequences. It would also be natural for him to be a union member, working as he does in a large engineering factory. However, he neither feels nor wants to feel included in any kind of grouping, and though he reserves the right to revolt at any time, the time is not yet ripe. He shares with the upper and middle classes the dislike of the increased bureaucracy contingent on the creation of the welfare state and post-war reconstruction, and sees the financial base of this, namely income tax and National Insurance, as one more imposition of the rich on the poor. His rebellion lacks a specific target, and this was one perceived similarity between him and the angry young men, but could be described as against organized society and its functionaries in general rather than any specific class enemy, and indeed, like Tressell's Owen, he reserves as much scorn for those whom he considers to be docile members of the working class (and in the book Jack often characterizes these people) as he does for

those whom he sees as more direct representatives of “them”. This is not to say that he is unthinking, however, and there are numerous passages which give an indication of his attitudes:

Once a rebel, always a rebel...Factories sweat you to death, labour exchanges talk you to death, insurance and income tax offices milk money from your wages and rob you to death, ...the army calls you up and you get shot to death...They shout at you from soapboxes: “Vote for me and this and that”, but it amounts to the same in the end, whatever you vote for ...But listen, this lathe is my everlasting pal, because it gets me thinking, and that’s their big mistake because I know I’m not the only one. One day they’ll bark and we won’t run into the pen like sheep...That fat-bellied union ponce’ll ask us not to muck things up. Sir Harold Bladdertab’ll promise us a bigger bonus when things get put right. Chief Inspector Popcorn will say: “Let’s have no hanging around the gates there.” Blokes with suits and bowler hats will say: “These chaps have got their television sets, enough to live on, council houses, beer and pools – some have even got cars. We’ve made them happy. What’s wrong? Is that a machine-gun I hear starting up or a car backfiring? Der-der-der-der-der...(p. 202-203).

From this we can see how far Arthur’s enmity extends. The targets for his anger include: work, the welfare state, the military, the police, unions, the aristocracy/ruling class/owners in the shape of Sir Harold Bladdertab, and the middle-class bureaucrats in their suits and bowler hats. The only representation of society missing is that of religion, and this is an irrelevance for Arthur. He boasts: “I’ve never been in a church in my life. I ain’t even been christened” (p.147), and in this he is similar to Sillitoe, who says in his autobiography that he “had grown up even below the religion line” (Sillitoe 1995: 163). It would seem that by now religion had ceased to play any part in the lives of many, if not most, working-class people.

It is illuminating to compare this list with that given earlier (p.144) in which Donaldson enumerates the causes of the anger of the angry young men. While the latter mentions almost exclusively vague cultural targets, Arthur gives specific political and government bodies, in some cases with a name and physical description. Perhaps the most significant part of his diatribe, however, is the last part where the

bowler-hatted middle class asks what is basically the same question as one hundred years before: “ We’ve made them happy. What’s wrong?” Since the poverty and atrocious living conditions associated with the early stages of industrialism are now assumed to have been consigned to history, this question could just as well be rephrased: “What more do they want?” It is the question of this non-material, non-political vacuum which had previously been met with the answer “Culture”, and which Sillitoe had been addressing when he spoke of the lack of any “worthwhile spiritual bread”, and this is where Arthur’s rebellion is seen to be lacking in terms of any constructive ideas as to what he is fighting for and not only what he is fighting against. There would have been no shortage of answers to this, depending on the ideology of the respondent, and of course many people would still give the answer “Culture” to the questions both of what was missing in Arthur’s life now and what should be the basis of any new society. The only clue we are given in this passage by Arthur himself is when he says that “One day they’ll bark and we won’t run into a pen like sheep”. Although the working class now had the hard-fought-for right to vote (in a representative parliamentary system) and the financial recompense necessary to maintain a minimum standard of living (with reservations, some of which have been mentioned) they were still the ruled rather than the ruling, the paid rather than the payers, and it is this which for Arthur makes everything else secondary. The various people and bodies mentioned are the enemy not so much because of *what* they are telling him to do, but simply by virtue of the fact that they want to order his life for him, and it is this which Arthur resents. The fact that the entities and individuals mentioned are, in theory, Arthur’s representatives rather than his bosses serves only to add irony to the situation. It is clear who his enemies are and, by implication, what they believe, which can be summarized as the dominant ideology, since the message

that Arthur receives is that he should be an obedient sheep. Although we are not given any specific examples as to how this message reaches Arthur and his family, though television is strongly suggested as a prime vehicle for pacification in the case of his parents, there can be little doubt as to the content of the message. In *SNSM* this message is implicit, but in *Trainspotting* (1993) for example, a book which Sinfield explicitly compares to *SNSM* (Sinfield 1997: xii-xiii), the main character Renton summarizes capitalist, consumerist society's offer as: "Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting on a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin' junk food into your mouth" (Welsh 1994: 187). Renton chooses to use heroin as a rejection of the life which is offered to him in the language of advertising; Arthur has no option which is as clear-cut (alcohol for Arthur is a diversion or a pastime rather than a necessity or a lifestyle as heroin is for Renton and the other addicts in Welsh's novel) but his rejection is just as instinctive, despite his acceptance of work as a necessary evil.

As mentioned, Arthur would have been a member of a union: "To be employed as a manual worker in any major British industry was almost certainly to be a member of a trade union...union membership among working-class males must have been a good 80 per cent throughout the period since the war" (Marwick 1982: 163-164). The unions were still closely allied to the Labour Party, providing much of the party's finance, and were probably the most powerful working-class organization in England. In the book, though, the only reference is when Brenda can get away to meet Arthur at the Goose Fair because Jack "had stayed in to do the pools, check the union dues and enter them in his ledger" (p.159). Identifying union activity with Jack, relegating it to second place after the pools, and Jack's missing the Goose Fair with Brenda to do it

all give us a clear idea of Arthur's attitude to unions. In terms of party politics, the only information we get apart from insults of politicians in general is that of a neighbour who "sent his son to join the Scouts and always voted Liberal" and was thus "a traitor to the solid block of anarchistic Labour in the street" (p.126-127). The only time Arthur has ever voted he did so fraudulently (probably because he was underage at the time) using his father's voting card, and he voted Communist, "...because I thought the poor bloke wouldn't get any votes. I allus like to help the losin' side" (p.36). Throughout the book, in fact, he reveals a sympathy for Russia and Communism. After his hypothetical blowing-up of the factory he says "I'd bale out for Russia or the North Pole where I'd sit and laugh" (p.40), but it would seem that his sympathy for the Soviets is primarily a reaction against the official antagonism of the period rather than a real identification with the political system, a natural identification with the underdog more than a reasoned belief in the principles of Communism:

Do you think if I won the football pools I'd gi'yo'a penny on it?...Not likely. I'd keep it all mysen, except for seeing my family right...I don't believe in share and share alike...I like to hear 'em talk about Russia, because it's interestin', but when they say when they get into government everybody's got to share and share alike, then that's another thing. I ain't a communist, I tell you. I like 'em though, because they're different from those fat Tory bastards in parliament. And them Labour bleeders too (p.35-36).<sup>79</sup>

From this we can see that the main reasons for his admiration of Russia and Communism are that "it's interesting" and "different", but when it comes to egalitarianism his loyalty extends to his family and himself. He is as opposed to what has been called the "high" working-class culture, that is to say the world of left-wing politics or union activity, as he is to the high artistic culture, and this attitude is often

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<sup>79</sup> One thing to note here is the difference between the descriptions applied to the two main parties, which are by no means identical in terms of connotation, though they may be in terms of intensity. A fat bastard is not the same as a bleeder, though they may be equally despicable.

founded on a class-based distrust which is evident in a number of other works by Sillitoe. In *The Open Door* (1989), for instance, a Communist Party activist says:

All them middle class boggers want us to work in factories so's they don't have to do it. You can't blame 'em, but that's why all the party members from the bourgeoisie go on about the noble working class, and what a hero Stakhanov was for tripling production in a single shift. I'll bet his mates wanted to murder him for showing them up as slackers (Sillitoe 1989: 291-292).

More recently, a character in "A Matter of Teeth" in *Alligator Playground* (1997) upsets "the well-heeled liberals of Hampstead" by saying: "I think socialism's a wonderful idea, but not when it's used as a device by the middle classes to keep the workers in their place" (Sillitoe 1998: 164). Such ideas had previously been articulated in *The Storyteller* (1979). Ernest Cotgrave, the storyteller of the title, earns his living as a raconteur (definitely not a comedian) in pubs, clubs and once at a university, where he confuses and angers the middle-class left-wing students by refusing to conform to their image of a "worker". When he is accused of betraying the working class, he responds:

If it existed I'd betray it, because let me assure you that no-one among those you lump together as a "class" would blame me one little bit...The reason it bothers you is because in your class-raddled hearts you realise that I no longer know my place...I can't mull on revolution. If a revolutionary situation came about you'd use all those whom you call working class to do the fighting, because in a revolution (and the civil war that's part of it) at least eighty per cent of the dead are of that class you are supposed to love...And when the revolution was over you'd make sure that those who were left called themselves working class for the rest of their lives and kept their places so that they'd know exactly where they belonged...Those who rebel, against both Marxist and pop-capitalist culture, only escape by becoming something other than what they would normally have been if they had been left alone...The workers want a rest. They're not bone-idle. They're soul-weary. They want a full life – like me, like you. Their resources have been, and are being more than ever, squandered by the better-off. The workers have had enough of everybody, except each other. They've been kept in their place too long, and now the lid's off. And they've been kept in their place by you as much as by others, because you can only offer an authoritarian system which will keep them in their place just as firmly (Sillitoe 1980: 129-132).

Though the authoritarianism is sometimes identified with Russia, where Cotgrave says strikers are shot and the prison camps are full, it is not restricted to the Soviet form of socialism but is rather seen as a normal feature of any socialist state, either existing or hypothetical. Whether the state is capitalist or socialist, production must be maintained and increased, which means that for the workers in the factories their lives are no different. This realistic view given by Cotgrave, who says that he escaped from the factory at twenty, as anyone would do if they could (Sillitoe 1980: 131), is received with great hostility by his audience, but the truth of what he is saying makes refutation difficult if not impossible. This also explains why any type of armed rebellion is, for Arthur, not a feasible option at the moment: sacrificing himself simply for a change of boss is not worthwhile, so while he is prepared to imagine a violent confrontation with the ruling class, he is not ready to become one of the working-class casualties of the change of regime.

In an essay on Che Guevara, Sillitoe wrote: "...for many people from the middle class, taking up the cause of Marxist revolution is only another form of imperialism" (Sillitoe 1975: 124).<sup>80</sup> D.J.Taylor, writing about what he sees as the working-class novels of the 1950s, comments in a similar vein:

The deracination of the average working-class protagonist seldom led him to a direct political statement. As an examination of later, more conventional English fiction will show, this tended to be the prerogative of the radical middle classes. But then the class struggle in this country has nearly always been superintended by forces other than those it was immediately intended to benefit (Taylor D.J. 1993: 128).

Though the superintending members of the middle class to whom these statements could apply would, of course, strongly disagree with them, Arthur and many others would identify with them immediately. Ernest Cotgrave's remarks illustrate what is an

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<sup>80</sup> He does not accuse Guevara himself of this attitude. The essay quoted was a by-product of a script which Sillitoe prepared, at the request of Guevara's widow, for a filmed biography which was, eventually, not produced.

accepted fact for Arthur, that no matter who you vote for, it makes no difference. If the political action should move outside the parliamentary system to the level of violent revolution, it makes no difference. Whatever the politics, the working class will continue to fulfil its functions: to kill and be killed in times of war (80% of the dead in the civil war or revolution mentioned by Cotgrave) and to work itself to death in times of peace. Although Lenin was referring to wars between capitalist nations when he gave his famous definition of a bayonet as “a weapon with a worker at each end”<sup>81</sup>, events in Russia, Cuba or Nicaragua, to give but a few examples where the conflict was between ideologies rather than nations, have shown that it is always workers and peasants fighting workers and peasants. The image of an army of workers fighting an army of top-hatted members of the upper class is fantastic in all senses of the word. When Cotgrave says “...the workers have had enough of everybody except each other”, he is also saying that the workers do not trust anybody except each other, since everyone else, of whatever ideology, sees them only as something to be exploited. The idea of Stakhanov as a hero of the working class is as false as that of Robin Hood, and thus the ideas are equally worthless. Though the ideology represented by each of them, and the interests behind the promotion of the ideologies, may be radically different, the desired end result is the same. Presaging Cotman’s comments on Marxist and pop/capitalist culture (p.195) Sillitoe in 1960 said: “Both Marxists and advertisers have this much in common: to them the ordinary people are “the masses” and not individuals” (Sillitoe in Atherton 1979: 55). It is the concept of addressing “the masses” which causes Cotman’s, Sillitoe’s and Arthur’s rejection of the address, rather than the content of the message being delivered, even if this message is being delivered by those who are supposedly working on behalf of

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<sup>81</sup> [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org) Access date: 6.6.2006

Arthur. In his autobiography, talking about the Labour election victory in 1945 and the imminent arrival of a supposedly egalitarian society, Sillitoe says: "I did not quite understand what was meant, never having felt anything except equal, at least. To be told I was equal was as impertinent as being informed I was not" (Sillitoe 1995: 86). The sentiment, if not the articulation, could easily belong to Arthur Seaton.

Arthur's contempt for politics of all stripes does not mean, however, that he is oblivious to what is going on in the world around him, and there are numerous references in the book to the national and international situation. His present affluence does not blind him to Britain's real economic instability, and his factory is "boosting post-war export trade and trying to sling pontoons over a turbulent unbridgeable river called the Sterling Balance" and "it was no use saving your money year after year. A mug's game, since the value of it got less and less" (p.27-28). His attitude to money is also influenced by the international situation. He is living at the time of the Cold War, and besides producing the aforementioned sympathy for Russia (on the basis that "my enemy's enemy is my friend") the threat of nuclear war makes any preoccupation for the future ultimately futile, and his attitude of "spend it while you can" was actually encouraged for short-term political ends. At the end of the book, looking forward to his new life with Doreen, Arthur thinks:

So it looked as though they'd be all right together, he thought, as long as a war didn't start, or trade slump and bring back the dole. As long as there wasn't a famine, a plague to sweep over England, an earthquake to crack it in two and collapse the city around them, or a bomb to drop and end the world with a big bang. But you couldn't concern yourself too much with these things if you had plans and wanted to get something out of life that you never had before (p.218).

The economy and international politics are for Arthur as life-threatening and uncontrollable as plague or famine, and as distant, but this does not mean to say that he is ignorant of them. The only possible attitude is that of ignoring them and trying

to live one's life as well as possible despite the worst attempts of humanity or nature to hinder this. Elsewhere he argues with his brother Fred, who is "fluently comparing Korea to Libya" (p.108); he is asked to "sign a paper against what's happening in Kenya. As if I cared!" (p.132); he frightens his Uncle George by recounting the effects of nuclear radiation (even though Uncle George is mostly worried about the effects on the vegetables he grows in his market garden) (p.173); and his cousin Johnny is currently in the British Army in the Gold Coast, now Ghana, and sends an African friend to visit Aunt Ada's family when he is in England for a training course. In short, the actions and effects of what could be called the slow ending of the British Empire and the fast-growing influence of the American Empire are familiar to the people in the book, even if they manage to produce few feelings of involvement, in Arthur at least.

The effects of colonialism at home in England receive less attention. Sam, the African soldier, is treated with courtesy and hospitality, though also as a rarity since he is the first black person most of the family have ever seen. Irish navvies (labourers) are shown as violent drunks, although they go to church on Sundays, and Arthur dismisses them as "hard-headed bastards with no feelings"(p.146). Nevertheless, he and his cousin Bert help a drunk Irishmen home to prevent his being arrested, having found him lying in the street, though Bert takes his (empty) wallet as a matter of course (p.82). This is an example of class feeling, in this case manifesting itself as a common enmity towards the police, outweighing any other considerations, such as questions of nationality or race. If Bert and Arthur steal his wallet, at least they first took him home; these two apparently contradictory actions pose no ethical problems for the two men, and they have no difficulty in separating the general from the particular. Mrs. Greatton, Doreen's mother, lives with a "Bombay Indian" who never

speaks because he speaks no English, and Arthur thinks that he looks lonely and should go back to India “to be with his pals” (p.212). These representatives of British colonialism are presented as disparate individuals who seem to have ended up in Nottingham more or less by chance (although they have all come to work) and although Arthur treats them as he treats most other people, there is no attempt to connect them with a larger pattern. There is a certain irony here, since in August 1958, the year of publication of *SNSM*, Nottingham was the scene of the first race riots in Britain, something which sparked off similar riots in Notting Hill in London days later. These riots started with attacks on Afro-Caribbeans by white working-class youths, which would suggest that there was a sufficient immigrant presence to offer a target. Marwick says:

One may perhaps detect something of a class division in the way in which the British reacted towards the question of immigration. Those in governing circles were still very much influenced by the notion of Britain’s great imperial heritage...Those in the working-class and lower-middle class...were more aware of the disruptions and strains brought to their own everyday lives (Marwick 1990: 167).

Since in 1958 immigrants had been coming to England for a number of years, and since an industrial town such as Nottingham would attract many of them, the absence of any non-white people in the book except for Sam and Chumley the Indian seems strange. This could perhaps be an example of the blurring of time mentioned earlier, since in 1958 there would probably have been some immigrants working in the factory alongside Arthur, whereas five or ten years earlier this may not have been the case.

It can be said, then, that Arthur feels no involvement in the British Empire, even though he has served in the army and still has to do his fifteen days’ training every year. We do not know where he served, which could be another instance of the

blurring of time,<sup>82</sup> but there is no mention of his having seen combat. His cousins, however, Aunt Ada's sons, are of an age to have served in the Second World War, and their reaction to this was to desert as and when they could, in between spells in military prison, often receiving help from the Seatons. Harold Seaton is proud of having evaded conscription by faking bad eyesight, and at the Christmas party the cousins joke with Sam about having been in the RCDs: "Sam asked what regiment the RCDs were. "The Royal Corps of Deserters" Bert boomed across the table. "We're all going back into that regiment as soon as a war starts, ain't we Arthur" " (p.198-199). His cousins, who are older than him, can be taken to represent the extra-legal working-class life, those whose disagreement with society takes a tangible form and who suffer the consequences of their overt rebellion, a theme which is dealt with at greater length in *LLDR*.

Arthur's cousins, or Smith, can be seen as openly rebellious, but despite various comments to the contrary, not least Arthur's own declaration of "Once a rebel, always a rebel" (p.202), I feel that Arthur's rebellion is always potential rather than actual. The book shows his hostility to politicians, to the high working-class culture of political and union activity and to the capitalist bosses, and the world of artistic culture is irrelevant to his life. He seems to have no interest in the mass culture which so frightened cultural commentators, and is generally content with his life given the conditions by which he is circumscribed. He would like to see a change in these conditions, but is unwilling to risk himself, or allow others to risk him, in what would be simply a change of master. There are no flies on Arthur! Given that any aspect of the official, dominant life is a cause of either indifference or hostility for Arthur, the

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<sup>82</sup> Sillitoe served in Malaya, fighting the Communists in what was called "the Emergency".

only consolation is in the communal working-class life, and the book demonstrates that Arthur is an active, relevant member of his family, locality and class.

As previously mentioned, many of the angry works ended in a compromise with the existing state of affairs, but for Smith and Arthur there will be no compromise, although in *SNSM* the question remaining at the end of the book is how much Arthur's forthcoming marriage will change him. Even so, the success of the angry writers undoubtedly facilitated the publication and success of *SNSM*, and the changes in culture and society which were taking place in Britain in the mid-fifties provided a favourable background for the novel's appearance. Whether these changes were anything more than apparent is, however, open to argument, and in *The Collector*, published in 1963, John Fowles, who can clearly be taken as representing the "high" culture in this and other works (*The Aristos* (1964) for example) gives some of the reasons why people were shocked. In the novel a young upper-class woman, Miranda, is kidnapped by a young man who has won a large sum of money on the pools (a class indicator) and thus can indulge his fantasy. The woman is an art student from a wealthy family, whereas the man, to whom she refers as Caliban (like her own name, a cultural indicator) is a clerk in the town hall (as is Joe Lampton) and thus an example of the new technocrat/bureaucrat/classless class. He is physically unprepossessing, and has "one of those funny inbetween voices, uneducated trying to be educated. It keeps on letting him down" (Fowles 1963: 122). The woman is provided with books to read, and is able to keep a diary during her captivity, and she writes:

I've just finished *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. It's shocked me. It shocked me in the same way *Room at the Top* shocked me when I read it last year. I know they're very clever, it must be wonderful to write like Alan Sillitoe. Real, unphoney...But it isn't enough to write well (I mean choose the right words and so on) to be a good writer. Because I think *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is disgusting. I think Arthur Seaton is disgusting. And I think the most disgusting

thing of all is that Alan Sillitoe doesn't show that he's disgusted by his young man...I hated the way Arthur Seaton just doesn't care about anything outside his own little life. He's mean, narrow, selfish, brutal. Because he's cheeky and hates his work and is successful with women, he's supposed to be vital...This has shocked me because I think everyone now except *us* has this selfishness and this brutality...there's nothing to hold back the New People, they'll grow stronger and stronger and swamp us...No, they won't...Because of people like Alan Sillitoe (it says on the back he was the son of a labourer). I mean the intelligent New People will always revolt and come across to our side...We want something better than just money and keeping up with the Joneses...But it's a battle...They're all around...If Arthur Seaton saw a modern statue he didn't like he'd smash it. But Caliban would drape a tarpaulin round it. I don't know which is worse. But I think Caliban's way is (Fowles 1963: 230-231).

This passage is highly illuminating for many reasons, one of them being the continuity of the fears expressed by Miranda with the same fears expressed by the cultural elite during and after the war, as in the earlier quote of Harold Nicolson (p.134). "They" will swamp "us", "they're all around", and the New People will triumph through sheer weight of numbers if nothing else. This will mean the destruction of "us" and our culture, either destroyed by the brutal Seatons or hidden away by the Calibans, the social climbers, the uneducated trying to sound educated. This attitude of "the barbarians are at the gate" seems to have remained unchanged for over twenty, or over a hundred, years, only that the enemy is not now called the mob but the New People. This of course begs the question of how the working class can be considered new, but perhaps what is new is not the fact of the people themselves but their new visibility and assertiveness. Just as Arthur has no contact with anyone outside his own zone of life, Miranda could equally well have lived her life surrounded by people only of her own social class. Atherton says: "In spite of mixing in the universities and occasional infiltration by Joe Lamptons, the middle and upper classes in England remained largely ignorant even in the mid-fifties of working-class conditions, attitudes and aspirations" (Atherton 1979: 20). She has at least read both Sillitoe's and Braine's works, and has probably seen the films. As has been shown,

there was very little working-class literature in England until the fifties, and the two books she mentions are perhaps the clearest picture of working-class life and ideas. Since they were both successful and she is an educated and “cultured” young woman she has read them, and it is quite possible that this was her first real contact with the working class. Like the Nicolsons, her primary fear is of cultural more than political or economic revolution, and even though the fears of Nicolson’s parents were shown to be groundless, the fear is still real. Her judgement that “it isn’t enough to write well... to be a good writer” bases her criticism in non-literary terms, revealing the influence of Leavisite or Arnoldian ideas, since it privileges the social content of the work at the expense of any purely textual values.

Another similarity to earlier writers is her conviction that “our” way of life is inherently superior. “We” want something more than material things, we are more spiritual and altruistic, as opposed to Arthur’s “little” life, which again harks back to the idea that high culture was something of value to society as a whole. The proof of this is that the intelligent New People, of whom Irvine Welsh could be a modern example, come across to our side since they clearly recognize the superiority of the ideology they are being offered. (I would be interested to know Alan Sillitoe’s reaction to his recruitment to the elite.)

A further point to note is that the other work mentioned is *Room at the Top*, the only Angry work which featured a working-class protagonist with an active sex life, if we can accept both the existence of the group and the inclusion of this work in the group. The book shocked Miranda in the same way that *SNSM* shocked her, so she obviously found points in common in the two works. Her reaction to *SNSM* and to Arthur is that they are disgusting, a curiously personal term in the context. Coupled with her use of the word “brutal”, it would seem that there is something personal,

probably physical, which she finds disturbing in Arthur. The brutality is a common attribute of the new people, but what exactly disgusts her in Arthur is not made clear, though it is possibly explained by the word “cheeky”. In such a diatribe (brutal, selfish, disgusting, and so on) it sounds innocuous, but coupled with the phrase “hates his work and is successful with women” it can be understood that the underlying fear is that the working class no longer know their place, the same fear with which the storyteller Cotman charges his middle-class audience (p.195). This place is obviously in a factory providing the economic base for Miranda, and others, to enjoy the cultured life, but if they forget this and become cheeky or impertinent they are both endangering the financial system and failing to show the requisite respect for their betters. The juxtaposition of cheeky-hates work-successful with women could also reveal the unspoken argument that the New People may become so impertinent that they will want to be successful with women *from other classes*, as happens in *Room at the Top*. Although Miranda does not accept Arthur’s vitality, probably preferring to see it as evidence of brutality, his success with women is definitely something which disgusts her, and the physicality of the working class is, and always has been, one of their more threatening aspects for the bourgeoisie, expressed in the historical vocabulary we have seen, such as brutish, raw, crude and so on.

In general, then, the sentiments expressed by Fowles through his young female protagonist can be seen as the ideological response of Arthur’s “them”, although she naturally calls them “us”. Many of the ideas expressed are the same as those expressed over a hundred years before, and even the vocabulary (brutal, mean) reflects the same almost instinctive distaste for the mob or the masses. They are numerous, they are the enemies of the good culture (which now interestingly includes modern sculpture), they are sexually predatory and profoundly unspiritual, and Arthur

Seaton and his like are the physical embodiments of all these threats to a valued and valuable way of life. As in the past, the elite response is on a cultural rather than political or economic level, naturally. If in the past it was easier to look for a cultural solution to the condition of England rather than seeking political and financial emancipation, now that the working classes are receiving all the benefits of the affluent democratic society the only threat that remains is to the culture. “We” want something more than just money (something easy to say when one has it in abundance), and Miranda’s discourse is a succinct summary of the principles underlying the ideology which Arthur is fighting against. Arthur should not only work, he should like his work as well, he should not womanize, he should appreciate modern art, he should concern himself with the world and other people, and he should show the proper deference to his betters, particularly the last point.

In keeping with the idea that the dominant ideology should and does pervade every aspect of life, Miranda extends her ideological discourse to include even Arthur’s sex life, since his success with women is definitely not seen as a point in his favour. In this as in other areas he exhibits the same indifference to the respectable norms, and at the end of the first drunken Saturday night of the book he says:

“Couldn’t care less, couldn’t care less, couldn’t care less” – in answer to questions that came into his mind regarding sleeping with a woman who had a husband and two kids, getting blind drunk on seven gins and umpteen pints, falling down a flight of stairs, and being sick over a man and a woman (p.17).

The phrase “couldn’t care less” is repeated several times in the novel, always referring to his affairs with first Brenda and then Winnie. For him married women are fair game, and if a wife is prepared to be unfaithful to her husband this is largely the fault of the husband. There are two types of husband, “those that looked after their wives, and those that were slow” (p.44) and Jack is definitely one of the slow ones,

who are a majority. We also find out that Arthur discovered this when he was seventeen, and since that time has been “making hay while the sun shone” (p.44) usually with married women “who don’t get much love, who have slow husbands” (p.45). He does not seem to be concerned about the moral aspects of his affairs and his only worry is being caught by a jealous husband. The fear of social censure does not appear in his thoughts, and Hoggart says:

I do not mean to suggest ...that working-class people are sexually more licentious than others: I think it doubtful whether they are. But sexual matters do seem nearer the surface, and sexual experience in the working classes is probably more easily and earlier acquired than in other social groups (Hoggart 1971: 98)

If one compares Arthur with Jim Dixon, for example, it can be seen that there is much truth in this statement. This is not to say, however, that he is completely amoral in these matters. He thinks it unlikely that Jack suspects anything, and even less so that Jack would confront him, which is “a mistake on his part, for if ever he did Arthur would give Brenda back, which was one of the rules of his game” (p.44). To say that he feels that he is providing a social service would be a gross exaggeration, but he clearly feels that by offering enjoyment, sex and love (in his terms) he is giving something which Brenda and others are lacking in their lives. Both Brenda and Winnie are several years older than him, and are more than willing participants in the affairs, so if there is any manipulation it could be said that the older married women are as manipulative as Arthur. In fact, on the night he meets Doreen he has earlier met Brenda and Winnie in a pub by chance, but leaves to go home. It is obvious to him that they are surprised to see him and are “out for a night on the batter” and when he later meets Winnie again, he asks: “ “Where’s Brenda?” “She got fed up and went home.” He detected the lie. “Who did she go home with?” ” (p.145-153). Since he ends up going home with Winnie, having made a date with Doreen for the following

night, it can be seen that there is among the three little fidelity even in their infidelities. Brenda and Winnie are just as prepared as Arthur to indulge in extra-marital affairs, and if he is not available they have no hesitation in finding someone who is. Brenda, in particular, seems to be remarkably blasé about the affair. Arthur often spends the night in her house and even has a close relationship with one of her sons, yet as long as Jack does not actually find Arthur in the house she is unconcerned about her husband's discovery of her unfaithfulness. In fact, in one scene Arthur leaves by the front door as Jack comes in through the back (p.23). Winnie is more worried than Brenda about the neighbours hearing her with a man, and word getting back to her soldier husband, and since it is eventually he and his friends who beat Arthur up, her worry can be seen to be well-founded.

The major difference between the women in the novel, however, is that between the two married women and Doreen, a difference which is one of the main contrasts reflected in the title. For Arthur, even before he meets Doreen, there is a world of difference between going out with a married woman for a good time and going out with and eventually getting engaged to and marrying a young single woman, which is what happens with Doreen (although we do not actually see the marriage). Although the ages of the women are slightly different, with Doreen being nineteen, Winnie twenty-five and Brenda about thirty, the biggest difference is their marital status. Brenda and Winnie do not work, or at least there is no indication of this. Brenda has two young children, so it could be considered more understandable, but Winnie is younger and childless and the only reason for her not working would be that she is married, and so following the traditional British pattern, which cut across class barriers, that a woman gave up work on marrying or on the birth of a child. In fact, being able to maintain a household without sending their wives out to work was a

source of pride for many men, as well as being a sign of a good husband. The main character of “The Magic Box”, collected in *The Ragman’s Daughter* (1963), insists on his wife’s leaving work when they get married, “because he loved her” (Sillitoe 1966: 64). Though his wife later regrets this decision, it nevertheless reveals an attitude which was at one time common, that a man should be capable of providing for his family on his own. Doreen, on the other hand, still lives at home with her mother, and works in a factory, which for a young single woman is perfectly normal. This strict division between married and single women could be another example of the blurring of time mentioned elsewhere, since one of the major changes in post-war Britain was the increasing participation of women in the labour market: “Thus the number of women in employment rose from 6,620,000 in 1947 to 7,246,000 in 1951 and 7,650,000 in 1957. Between the two census periods of 1951 and 1961 the proportion of married women working outside the home likewise increased from 1 in 4 to 1 in 3 (Hill 1986: 16). By the 60s “a greater proportion of women than at any time since the war were going out to work” (Marwick 1990: 115). Much of the current affluence and consumption was concentrated in the domestic sphere, with new affordable appliances such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners being clearly targeted at female consumers. Since the manufacture of these products was a much lighter process than the older heavy industries, women could do the work as efficiently as men, and usually at a lower wage, so in a perfect capitalist circle they were working to pay for the goods which they were producing. If Brenda and Winnie do not work, they represent something which was becoming increasingly rare, and though we do not know what Doreen will do after she marries Arthur, there is no mention of her stopping work. Since the young couple will initially live in her mother’s home, as do Vic and Ingrid in *A Kind of Loving*, (still a common solution for the working class in

the 50s and 60s, with the continuing housing shortage in England), the assumption is that economic necessity or advantage will favour the continuation of two wages, although Arthur may well prefer the more traditional arrangements. Marwick says:

The position of women in society, and therefore within the family, had been changing since the beginning of the century, and the changes had been greatly accelerated by the Second World War. However, the basic principle of a differentiation of roles as between husband and wife prevailed, with a wife's tasks clustering round her function as a homemaker and child-rearer, just as a husband's clustered round his function as principal breadwinner (Marwick 1990: 69).

The clearest example of this in the book can be found with Arthur's parents; Mrs. Seaton stays at home, prepares the dinner ("tea" in working-class families) for the men when they come home from work, looks after Arthur when he is off work sick, and is generally in charge on the domestic front. Now that her husband and son are working, she is spared the more arduous work of managing the home on an inadequate budget, something which she doubtless experienced in the pre-war days of unemployment, when for men like Harold Seaton an important part of the "big miserying" was the knowledge that they were not fulfilling their allotted role of breadwinner. Arthur is very much his parents' child, and despite his adventures with married women (a slice off a cut cake...) he expects different behaviour from his own wife, if and when he gets married:

If ever I get married, he thought, and have a wife that carries on like Brenda and Winnie carry on, I'll give her the biggest pasting any woman ever had. I'd kill her. My wife'll have to look after any kids I fill her with, keep the house spotless. And if she's good at that I might let her go to the pictures now and again and take her out for a drink on Saturday. But if I thought she was carrying on behind my back she'd be sent back to her mother with two black eyes before she knew what's happening. By God she would (p.145-146).

These sentiments are voiced after leaving the two sisters in a pub, when they have made it obvious that they are "out on the batter" but not with him. The irony of his double standard is compounded when, in the next pub he visits, he tells the barmaid

that he will never marry, and then meets Doreen for the first time (p.145ff). The juxtaposition of the two married women who are unfaithful with him and to him and the young single woman of his own age sets up the contrast of the choices which he is about to make in his life, another clear reference to the dichotomy of the title. His attitude towards women can be called traditional, with all the paradoxes that the word implies. Married women are good for a safe sexual affair, but his wife cannot be a woman of this type or she will be beaten and returned to her mother. If she fulfils her duties well she will be allowed some leisure time, but only in the company of her husband. Despite this view of marriage, the common opinion has it that single women are intent on capturing or tricking men into marriage, and then domesticating them, eliminating what they see as bad habits. Doreen tells Arthur: “ “You drink too much”, “Only one then”, “You get your own way all the time”, “You think you´re the cock of the walk,” she said, implying: “But I´ll tame you, you see if I don´t” ” (p.207-208). We are told that “Doreen, at nineteen, was afraid of being “left on the shelf” ” (p.155) and she is proud that with her friends now she too can talk about her “young man” even though she is not engaged, which is a definite change in status since “to have a young man was all very well, but it didn´t mean, not by a long chalk, that you were going to be married” (p.155). While Doreen is looking ahead, interested in a more formal arrangement with more commitment, eventually leading to marriage, and she thinks Arthur will make a good husband, being kind, attentive and a good worker (p.155), Arthur is much more dubious. He likes her and finds her attractive, enjoys the freedom of openness of going out without having to beware of irate husbands, but “he realized that, by going out with a single girl he may one day – unwittingly and of course disastrously – find himself on the dizzy and undesired brink of the hell that older men called marriage” (p.156). Virginitv in a woman was no longer a pre-

requisite for marriage and we are told that Doreen is not a virgin (p.185), but she does not have sex with Arthur until he is definitely her “young man”, and in contrast to his relatively casual love-making with Brenda and Winnie the sex is seen by both of them to represent a definite step in their relationship. Marriage as such is never discussed openly between them, but simply assumes an inevitability until he says: “I’d like to live with you” (p.214) which is understood by both to be a proposal of marriage, living “in sin” not being an alternative worthy of consideration. Arthur’s and Doreen’s views on marriage were and still are common at all levels of society, but the presumption that women want to get married and men do not does not necessarily imply that the relationship was unequal from the start: “Arthur held her murderously tight, as if to vanquish her spirit even in the first short contest. But she responded to him, as if she would break him first. It was stalemate” (p.215). Their relationship is presented as antagonistic on both sides, and for Arthur this is no different from any other relationship. At the end of the book he says : “And trouble for me it’ll be, fighting every day until I die. Why do they make soldiers out of us when we’re fighting up to the hilt as it is? Fighting with mothers and wives, landlords and gaffers, coppers, army, government” (p.219).

The fighting rarely takes a real physical form in the book, and though he expresses a willingness to “bash” or “thump” men and women, the only person he actually harms is the gossip Mrs. Bull, and for that he uses an air-rifle. The scene ends in comic farce, and Mrs. Bull is described so unpleasantly that it is difficult to feel sympathy for her. Rather than being portrayed as something which is visited by men on women, violence is seen as something which can erupt anywhere at any time, a more or less natural reaction. Doreen says: “ “My God, if we weren’t in a pub I’d crack you one, a good one as well.” “I bet you would, Doreen Greatton. I’d like that

too. But I'd crack you one back. You know that, don't you?" " (p.208) At the family Christmas party Jane, Arthur's cousin, hits her husband with a beer-glass for something he has said, opening a deep cut on his head, and Arthur later thinks that "if any woman had bashed him as Jane had bashed Jim he would have thumped her back" (p.203). Although he is in two fights in the book it could be argued that neither is his fault, and it seems that for him violence, particularly against women, would only take the form of retaliation to violence offered. It is implicit that his father hit his mother, since Harold Seaton is capable of a "deep melancholic rage that chose its victims at random" (p.26) but with the more comfortable life the family now enjoys, and with Fred and Arthur now adults, the house is "more or less peaceful" (p.26).

According to Marwick:

Middle-class folklore had it that everywhere working-class husbands lorded it over their wives, treating them with brutality and violence...It is important to remember that violence had always featured in a proportion of marriages in all stations of life, and that it had been very prevalent in poorer working-class areas before the First World War, where poverty, bad housing, frustration and drink produced a vicious combination (Marwick 1990: 68).

This may well be a description of Arthur's parents in the past, but the changed material circumstances and the more general changes in society were beginning to have an effect in the 1950s, and to continue the passage quoted above: "...while, of course traditional male attitudes persisted, there were examples in working-class homes of husbands sharing in duties formerly thought of as the wife's alone" (Marwick 1990: 68). Though it is hard to imagine Arthur ever wearing an apron, for example, it is equally hard to imagine Doreen accepting the brutality and violence which had been, and still was, the lot of many women, not only in the working class. It is perhaps this brutality of which Fowles's Miranda accuses Arthur: if so, her

accusation would be based on this middle-class folklore and Arthur's potential rather than actual brutality.

In short, Arthur could definitely be described as a chauvinist, but I feel that it would be inaccurate to call him a misogynist. He thinks of women mostly in terms of sex, but the sex in the book (which is always implicit) seems to be enjoyable and reciprocal, something mutual. He thinks that: "...women were more than ornaments and skivvies; they were warm wonderful creatures that needed and deserved to be looked after, requiring all the attention a man could give, certainly more than the man's work and a man's own pleasure" (p.44). Haywood, commenting particularly on Winnie but expanding his comments to other fiction of the time, in which the portrayal of women is far from enlightened, says:

Yet there is no doubt that the emphasis in working-class texts of this period (and the "kitchen sink" film versions) on men and women enjoying sex, helped to break down some of the remaining barriers of Victorian prejudice against sexual frankness in cultural representations of contemporary British life (Haywood 1997: 104-105).

There is, in *SNSM*, none of the distaste or contempt found in Osborne's and Amis's work, for example, and the women in *SNSM* are as self-assured and tough as the men.<sup>83</sup> One cannot imagine any of the women in the book grovelling as Jimmy Porter's wife does, and their reaction to his insults and browbeating would probably be to hit him with the iron. Furthermore, when Arthur spends his leisure time in company it is always in the company of women, apart from his family in the shape of his brother or cousins, and we do not see him with one male friend. If the life described in the book is a battle, then in the subordinate battle between the sexes there is no quarter asked and none given on either side, and Brenda and Winnie are shown as stronger characters than their husbands. In fact Arthur seems to be the only one

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<sup>83</sup> One of the chapters in Hanson's book is entitled "Sillitoe's Defiant Women" (Hanson 1999: 120), and a number of his works have a strong female protagonist.

who is physically punished for the affairs, the wives having to suffer only a stricter vigilance. In the final chapter of the book, which gives us Arthur's thoughts while fishing, he compares himself to a fish which has been hooked, in his case by Doreen and marriage. However, this by no means signifies an end to his previously carefree life, and: "Maybe it was only the beginning of something better...If you went through life refusing all the bait dangled before you, that would be no life at all" (p.217).

Arthur's relationships with the women in the book have been taken as another expression of his discontent with the system,<sup>84</sup> and this may well be true, though I personally think that a strong interest in sex on the part of a 21-year-old man is hardly exclusive to the working class. Day thinks that "Arthur rejects the values of his community, for example, "settling down" " (Day 2001:182), though again I feel that I have argued that his attitude to marriage is common in all classes. Expressing a common view, and his disagreement with it, in which I share, Atherton says: "Surprisingly, there was general agreement in the original reviews that at the end of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* Arthur Seaton ceases to rebel and accepts whatever rule society imposes on him" (Atherton 1979: 114). Many critics have taken his forthcoming marriage to Doreen as some form of compromise with the system, as made by the angry heroes, but on the last page of the book he is still capable of predicting that he will be "fighting every day until I die" (p.219), and in the passage quoted above Arthur can be seen to look on his marriage as the possible start of a new phase of his life, an adventure, rather than simply a form of curtailment.

In short, Arthur's attitudes towards women are quite in keeping with his attitude to life in general. If Doreen became pregnant, for example, instead of Brenda, I think it certain that Arthur would accept his responsibility and marry her, since this was the

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<sup>84</sup> Atherton says that in the original reviews Arthur was most frequently described as "a rogue" (Atherton 1979: 113), a term which would seem to consider his actions, particularly his sexual activity, as illicit, but also shows some sympathy, if not admiration.

accepted norm at the time, and despite much comment to the contrary, I have argued that Arthur is in fact an integrated part of his community and subscribes to the same ideology as those around him. Any hostility is directed against those people or institutions which he sees as part of the controlling apparatus, and this hostility is shared by his limited circle of family and friends, as when his mother says that paying taxes to politicians is like “feeding pigs on cherries” (p.32). His culture, which is an intrinsic part of his life and that of those with whom he lives, serves for him and others as a bulwark against the dominant ideology to which he is subjected, and he shows no sign of altering his beliefs in the future.

## ***2.5 THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER***

Sillitoe’s second book was published in 1959, one year after the publication of *SNSM*, and was an immediate success, no doubt helped by such factors as the success of the first book and the continuance of the myth of the angry young men, which had shown itself to be an effective marketing device whatever its merits as a literary classification. The book was a collection of short stories, eight in total, with the title story being much the longest, forty-seven pages in the original. The stories are all set in Nottingham among the working class, although in a number of the stories there is more of an emphasis on the emotional life of the participants than on their lifestyle or background. The story *LLDR* itself, which was also filmed (1962), is the story of Smith (we are never told his first name) and his time spent in Borstal, with the climax of the story being the race in which he takes part and which he deliberately loses. Smith is the long-distance runner of the title, and the loneliness first refers to the feeling he has while on his early-morning training runs, when “I feel like the first and

last man on the world” (p.8). The story is divided into three sections, with the first and third parts dealing with his training while in the Borstal and the thoughts he has while running, and the middle section showing the crime he committed and how he was caught, as well as his home life with his parents and five brothers and sisters, and later with only his mother and siblings after his father dies. Until the death of his father it would seem that his life was not so different from that of the Seatons. Both he and his father worked in factories, and though we do not know exactly what his father did we are told by Smith that “I sweated my thin guts out on a milling-machine with the rest of them”, but “my dad died from cancer of the throat, and mam collected a cool five hundred in insurance and benefits from the factory where he’d worked, “for your bereavement,” they said, or words like that” (p.20). We are also told that his father was politically active, since Smith mentions “...the comrades my dad was in until he couldn’t do a stroke anymore and had no breath to argue with” (p.29). We are also told that Smith has previously been in Remand Homes (p.16), and that relations between his parents were far from peaceful, with:

...the rotten life mam led him ever since I can remember, knocking-on with different men even when he was alive and fit and she not caring whether he knew it or not, and most of the time he wasn’t so blind as she thought and cursed and roared and threatened to punch her tab, and I had to stand up and stop him even though I knew she deserved it (p.49).

The Smith family would seem to have more in common with Arthur’s cousins than with the Seatons, though the difference is small. Nevertheless, the working class was and is not homogeneous, and there were a number of fine distinctions. Marwick says:

Historians have argued that for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the distinction between “respectable” working class and “rough” working class was at least as significant as that between the working class and the lower middle class. After 1945 this does not appear to be the case (Marwick 1990: 47).

Though the distinction may have assumed a lesser importance after the war, this is not to say that it disappeared entirely. Since one of the major distinctions between respectable and rough is the question of involvement in crime, what is clear in the story is that with the compensation for the death of Mr. Smith, life changes for his son and widow. After six weeks of not working, and spending money freely, Smith is less than keen to return to the working life, and when he goes out with his friend Mike on a foggy night it is not to look for a job. It is implicit that this is not the first time that he and Mike have stolen something, and his mother's attitude to the policeman who comes to question him is also that of someone who is used to contact with the forces of the law. The family also appears to be poorer than the Seatons, even before the death of the father temporarily elevates them to a state of affluence, though both parents and Smith himself are all working. In contrast to Arthur's costly clothes, Smith doesn't have an overcoat (p.23), and while he is being questioned by the policeman he demonstrates his lack of money by pushing his fist through a hole in his shirt (p.33). *LLDR* is much less concerned with showing the details of working-class life, but the living conditions would seem to be similar to those more clearly delineated in *SNSM*, and the language and attitudes also show little difference. Smith's father, for example, shows the traditional working-class distrust of and distaste for hospitals and doctors:

But I'm still thinking of the Out-law death my dad died, telling the doctors to scat from the house when they wanted him to finish up in hospital (like a bleeding guinea-pig, he raved at them)...They tried to tell him he'd want some drugs but he didn't fall for it, and only took the pain-killer that mam and I got from a herb-seller in the next street (p.50).

For the working class the hospital was the place that you went to die, and since Mr. Smith knows that he is going to die anyway, he can see no point in going. In *A Man of His Time* (2004), the blacksmith Burton refuses to go to hospital after an accident at

work: “He had never been to a hospital before, and wouldn’t go now. “You always come out worse than before you went in,” he said” (Sillitoe 2005). Although the welfare state had removed the financial burden of hospital treatment, the suspicion that “they” don’t do something for “us” without an ulterior motive is clear in Mr. Smith’s attitude (he thinks that the doctors are only interested in using him as a guinea-pig) and he has more faith in the traditional remedies than in modern drugs. Hoggart says that “There is little time for “doctoring”:...the long wait or a disinclination to keep on troubling the doctor (and something of a doubt that he can really do much to help) ensure that most times nothing is done” (Hoggart 1971: 47). The Smiths share this view of doctors and medicine, and for Smith his father’s death is in its honesty an “out-law” death, and as such admirable.

One aspect of life which has greater significance in *LLDR* is consumerism, of which television is both the example and the motor. The first reaction to the wealth they receive is to spend it, since “Now I believe, and my mam must have thought the same, that a wad of crisp blue-back fivers ain’t a sight of good to a living soul unless they’re flying out of your hand into some shopkeeper’s till, and the shopkeeper is passing you tip-top things in exchange over the counter” (p.20). Everyone in the family gets new clothes, there is a twenty-one inch television, a new carpet since the old one was stained with the father’s final fatal haemorrhage, a fur coat for the mother, and a new bed for the mother to share with “some fancy-man” (p.20-21). The first spending spree costs less than two hundred pounds, less than half of the windfall, so for many nights the family sits watching television and eating (while the mother is upstairs on the new bed), and Smith says “I’d never known a family as happy as ours

was in that couple of months when we'd got all the money we needed" (p.21).<sup>85</sup> This situation was not to last, however, and it is the desire to prolong this happy state of affairs that sends Smith out robbing, "Because it's surprising how quick you can get used to a different life. To begin with, the adverts on the telly had shown us how much more there was in the world to buy than we'd ever dreamed of when we'd looked into shop windows..." (p.21). Once the family has the money to take their place in the ranks of the consumers they do so with enthusiasm, and their information on what to buy comes from the adverts on television, which demonstrate the power of the new medium:

And the telly made all these things seem twenty times better than we'd ever thought they were. Even adverts at the cinema were cool and tame, because now we were seeing them in private at home. We used to cock our noses up at things in shops that didn't move, but suddenly we saw their real value because they jumped and glittered around the screen and had some pasty-faced tart going head over heels to get her nail-polished grabbers on to them or her lipstick lips over them, not like the crumby adverts you saw on posters or in newspapers as dead as doornails (p.21).

This passage must surely have gladdened the hearts of the new commercial television companies (and the family clearly watches I.T.V. and not the B.B.C.) as a demonstration of the use of the medium as a sales tool, especially in comparison with the "dead as a doornail" printed media. The television reveals the "real value" of the goods which now take on the "glitter" and glamour of the private screen, and on the basis of this comment it would appear that in this case there is no interference between the sender and the recipient of the message. The Smiths are told what to want and they want it, and if possible buy it too. Such an uncritical acceptance would seem to be more in agreement with the ideas of the Frankfurt School, for example, than with other theories. The ideology of consumerism is agreed with uncritically, and

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<sup>85</sup> It is interesting to note here that Smith says "all the money we needed" not "wanted", and their sudden wealth is, in comparison with real riches, very little indeed.

when the money runs out there is very little to show for it. The Smiths still rent the same house, the son still doesn't have a coat and the mother still goes to work, so there has been no long-term use of the money, no attempt at investment, and the only solution is to get more money to spend in the same way.

This acceptance, however, only applies to the adverts. The only programmes mentioned are the films, particularly the (mostly American) cops and robbers films. In these Smith naturally sides with the robbers, hoping that for once they'll get away to spend the loot. It is mostly in these films, when the police are chasing the robbers and a policeman makes a speech about "getting his man" that the boys of the family turn the sound down, something which sends the family into fits of laughter.

It was best of all though when we did it to some Tory telling us about how good his government was going to be if we kept on voting for them – their slack chops rolling, opening and bumbling, hands lifting to twitch moustaches and touching their buttonholes to make sure the flower hadn't wilted, so that you could see they didn't mean a word they said, especially with not a murmur coming out because we'd cut off the sound (p.22).

The Smiths' playing with the television is their way of resisting the power represented by the police or politicians, by turning them into objects of ridicule rather than the wished-for objects of respect. It is also a good example of the diversions possible in the encoding/decoding process, and for Smith the television is "the box of tricks" (p.25), something which offers opportunities for active play and manipulation, rather than what had already been termed "the idiot box", in front of which people sat passively absorbing whatever images and whatever ideology was offered. That the family found entertainment in watching television is indisputable, but the manner of the entertainment was surely not what was intended by the programme makers.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> John le Carré gives a similar example from Thailand. Since there is no sound equipment in the country areas "local actors made the voices, and invented whatever plots came into their heads. He remembered John Wayne with a squeaky Thai voice, and the audience ecstatic...they were hearing an imitation of the local mayor who was a famous queen" (le Carré 1981: 412).

We see in the story how television, for all the Smiths, becomes a part of their life, in contrast to Arthur and Brenda, possibly due to the time difference between the books. Arthur's and Smith's reactions to the medium can be seen as exemplifying the aforementioned (p.81-82) work by Hall on the encoding/decoding process in television discourse (Hall 1993: 90-103). Hall maintained that from the time a message is composed (encoding) to the time it is received and digested (decoding) there are numerous influences at work, such as the discourses and technologies of a specific medium. Also, since the reception of the message is as much an active, intentional event as its transmission, and an audience is not homogeneous but composed of different groups and individuals, there will always be various interpretations of the message, so that the message received is not always the message the sender intended to produce, such as when the Smiths laugh at the soundless politicians or policemen. Though, in theory, this could mean that the number of interpretations is practically infinite, the use of commonly-learned and accepted codes helps to predetermine the possible readings, and although these cultural codes cannot totally limit the meaning, the message is composed within a system dominated by them:

Connotative codes are not equal among themselves. Any society's culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classification of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order...The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into dominant or preferred meanings (Hall 1993: 98).

Hall's use of "preferred" reflects Gramsci's idea of hegemony (pp. 82-85), and thus rejects the idea of a direct imposition of ideology, substituting the status of a preference rather than a forced acceptance. The work of encoding, therefore, is to attempt to set some limits to the process of decoding, to try and ensure that the various interpretations will take place within the limits of the preferred definitions.

Hall posited three broad positions from which the process of decoding can be constructed. Firstly, there is the preferred position, in which the viewer accepts the message wholly within the terms of reference in which it was encoded. Needless to say, this is very rare, and the negotiated position is probably the most common, in which the viewer generally accepts the dominant version but can make a more negotiated reading for local or personal conditions, a course of action which naturally contains many contradictions. The third position is the oppositional, in which the viewer understands the message being transmitted but places it in a different frame of reference, producing a reading opposite to that which was intended (Hall 1993: 101-103). These ideas draw on ideas earlier expressed by Hoggart (p.75) or Thompson (p.76), both of whom emphasized that the working class has historically resisted the imposition of ideology, and Hall's insistence on the polysemy of the media text and the ideological basis of even the most "natural" sign had, as has been mentioned (p.78) great influence on later thought on the connection between ideology and media. If we look at the decoding of television as practised by the Smith family, what is clear is that the negotiated position, the most common, does not exist for them. The adverts are accepted wholly within their own terms of reference, Hall's preferred position, whereas the political broadcasts and the films mentioned (cops and robbers) are accepted in a completely different, oppositional, frame of reference: "I always hoped they [the robbers] would end up free to blow the lot, and could never stop wanting to put my hand out, smash into the screen (it only looked a bit of rag-screen like at the pictures) and get the copper in a half-nelson so's he'd stop following the bloke with the money-bags" (p.22). Smith's opposition to the preferred reading takes the form of sympathizing with the criminals, the anti-societal elements, or ridiculing the representatives of the forces of law and order, the police and politicians, through the

device of rendering them literally speechless (p.22). This refusal to compromise, or negotiate, is at the heart of Smith's battle with authority, and explains his actions in *LLDR*. His tactics of resistance to television recall a study performed by Ang about the reactions of viewers to the American soap-opera *Dallas*, which was an enormous international success in terms of audience numbers. Regarding the responses of the viewers, she said: "It emerges from their letters that they use a wide variety of defence strategies: one tries simply to internalise the ideology of mass culture, another tries to negotiate within its discursive framework, and yet another uses surface irony" (Ang 1998: 272). Though none of these attitudes to a prime example of mass culture reflects exactly Smith's reaction, they do show some of the myriad possibilities. Smith's manipulation of the technology would seem to be more in keeping with what Fiske calls "popular cultural capital":

This popular cultural capital consists of the meanings and pleasures available to the subordinate to express and promote their interests. It is not a singular concept, but is open to a variety of articulations, but it always exists in a stance of resistance to the forces of domination...Power is not, according to Foucault, a one-way force, from the top down...Television participates in both...models of power-pleasure. It exerts the power of surveillance, revealing the world, spying out people's secrets, monitoring human activity, but an integral part of this power is the resistance, or rather resistances, to it. The two-way nature of power means that its resistances are themselves multiple points of power...Play, besides being a source of pleasure, is also a source of power. Children's "play" with television is a form of power over it (Fiske 1998: 509).

Though Smith is not chronologically a child, the element of play is an important aspect of his resistance to the ideology, and helps to achieve the shift in the balance of power from the medium to the audience.

This play, as in children's play with television, frequently takes the form of parody, of which there are many examples in the story: when Smith and Mike go out to see what they can steal, "we whistled "the Teddy Boys Picnic" to keep us warm" (p.23), as opposed to the well-known children's song "The Teddy Bears' Picnic"; describing

the robbery, Smith says: “ “I came, I broke, I entered,” like that clever-dick Borstal song” (p.26); he says of the policeman who comes to question him: “Borstal Bernard in nicky-hat, Remand Home Ronald in rowing-boat boots, Probation Pete in a pit-prop mackintosh, three-months clink in collar and tie (all this out of a Borstal skiffle-ballad that my new mate made up...)” (p.31). This type of parody is also present in *Noah’s Ark*, another story in the collection of *LLDR*. Two boys, Colin and Bert, cousins, coming home from the fair,

...sing loudly a song that Bert’s father had taught him:

We don’t want to charge with the fusiliers  
Bomb with the bombardiers  
Fight for the racketeers  
We want to stay at home!...

We don’t want to fight in a Tory war  
Die like the lads before  
Drown in the mud and gore  
We want to go to work ...

Then...swinging along to the tune of Rule Britannia:

Rule two tanners  
Two tanners make a bob  
King George nevernevernever  
SHAVES HIS NOB (p.115-116)<sup>87</sup>

There are a number of significant points in these songs: the childish parody of the patriotic songs is clear, as are the anti-war sentiments of the first, which has been handed down from father to son, and harks back to the First World War, something which we will later see in *LLDR*. The war, or war in general, is seen as a creation of the Tories, and though the boys sing this song “parrot-fashion” (p.115), it can be seen that there are alternative versions of the dominant ideology, and alternative vehicles of transmission. Smith and his family playing with the television is comparable to

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<sup>87</sup> As a boy, I also sang a parody of *Rule Britannia*, with different words but with a similar degree of obscenity (or what counted as obscenity for an eight- or nine-year-old boy, as in the story).

Colin and Bert singing, they are exerting power through popular cultural capital, which is in direct opposition to the power of television and other manifestations of the forces of domination.

The idea of resistance is the central theme of *LLDR*, and in this it shows a major difference between Sillitoe's first and second books. Both Smith and Arthur Seaton divide the world along the lines of "them" and "us", a division which, while universal, varies according to the definitions of the two groups and who is giving the definition.

For the working class:

"They" are "the people at the top", "the higher-ups", the people who give you your dole, call you up, tell you to go to war, fine you, made you split the family in the thirties to avoid a reduction on the Means Test allowance, "get yer in the end", "aren't really to be trusted", "talk posh", "are all twisters really", "never tell yer owt" (e.g. about a relative in hospital), "clap yer in clink", "will do y' down if they can", "summons yer", "are all in a click (clique) together", "treat y' like muck" (Hoggart 1971: 72-73).

The relationship between the two groups is clearly dominant/subordinate, or powerful/powerless, and the power is exercised in every aspect of life. Common phrases like "aren't really to be trusted" or "treat y' like muck" are not simply vague clichés founded on class prejudice but expressions of a realistic assessment of those who can send you to war or to prison, can give you money or take it away. Hoggart goes on to say that in England the attitude to them is not generally violent, that the English "them" is not the "them" of secret police and disappearances, and the primary attitude is "not so much fear as mistrust: mistrust accompanied by a lack of illusions about what "They" will do for one" (Hoggart 1971: 73-74). Sillitoe gave a similar definition in "Poor People", in 1964:

"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, stop for you now and again at pedestrian crossings, can't look you in the eye, read the news on wireless or television, hand you the dole or national assistance money; the shopkeeper, copper, school-teacher,

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 poison (Sillitoe 1975: 78).

Sillitoe’s and Hoggart’s definitions can be said to be broadly similar, though Sillitoe perhaps gives a wider and yet more personalized description of “them” (“can’t look you in the eye”) and their agents. The last part of Sillitoe’s comment, however, is revealing in that it shows that the poor (and, as has been noted, he avoids any classification by class) reserve their greatest enmity not for “them” but for people who have accepted “their” system of values, and thus by accepting the dominant ideology have rejected the working-class ideology and culture, such as Jack in *SNSM*. After Smith and Mike rob the bakery, they decide to hide the money so as not to arouse suspicion, since:

...even in a street like ours there are people who love to do a good turn for the coppers, though I never know why they do. Some people are so mean-gutted that even if they’ve only got tuppence more than you and they think you’re the sort that would take it if you have half the chance, they’d get you put inside if they saw you ripping lead out of a lavatory, even if it wasn’t their lavatory – just to keep their tuppence out of your reach (pp.29-30).

Arthur’s and Smith’s definitions of “them” would be practically identical, though Arthur includes the “them” of the world of work, and their attitudes also show little difference. The main difference is that while Arthur lives in a state of undeclared truce, biding his time, Smith lives in a state of open warfare, in direct conflict with the dominant class and the dominant ideology which he characterizes as “In-law blokes like you and them, all on the watch for Out-law blokes like me and us” (p.10). Arthur and Smith could be seen to represent the subjects of what Althusser called the Ideological State Apparatuses (I.S.A.s) and Repressive State Apparatuses (R.S.A.s) (Althusser 1971: 72-102). These apparatuses function in the interests of the state,

which is itself a manifestation of the ruling elite, and for a Marxist like Althusser the main objective is economic. If wages are the means by which the workers may reproduce, the I.S.A.s are the means by which the dominant ideology is reproduced:

...the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression (Althusser 1971: 65).

It could be said that the I.S.A.s have succeeded with Arthur. He works hard and regularly, he is productive and pays the usual taxes and is a functioning element in the capitalist system. He participates in the current ethos of consumption (his clothes, his drinking) and he is doing nothing to change the present system in terms of political or organizational activity. In Althusser's terms the I.S.A.s have achieved the required result, which is:

...the subjects "work", they "work by themselves" in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the "bad subjects" who on occasion provoke the intervention of the (repressive) State apparatuses. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right "all by themselves" i.e. by ideology. They recognize the existing state of affairs, that "it is really true that it is so and not otherwise", and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, ...etc. (Althusser 1971: 101). (For de Gaulle read politician or government).

The difficulty with Althusser's argument comes with the question of the "submission to the ruling ideology". This has signally failed to take place with Arthur, as has been shown, and although he works and is reasonably satisfied with his working conditions and wages, he is in no doubt as to his relations with "them" and his position in society. He is obedient to the boss because his job depends on this, but in no way does he feel subservient or obedient to the government, organized religion or conventional morality. Althusser mentions a number of I.S.A.s: the churches, schools, trade unions, political parties, the high culture and so on (Althusser 1971:

73). As regards all of these Arthur is blatantly uninterested or actively hostile. Arthur says “There are no flies on me” (p.27), and he refuses to be taken in by what he sees as attempts to fool him, since: “What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (Althusser 1971: 89). Both Arthur and Smith would agree that they see the world as it really is, and not as “they” would like them to see it, and though their reactions are different they are both clear as to what they are reacting against. In an interview in 1985 Sillitoe discussed the difference between the two:

The thing is they are very different people, Smith and Arthur. Arthur is basically not a criminal type. He may have something against society but he doesn't carry it off to the extent of letting go all his reserves of energy and self-respect and drifting into petty crime. He believes that he has a certain dignity and the price of dignity is to sell his labour for a reasonable wage and then he can look the world in the face and have a good time without feeling guilty. Smith is a much more complex character, I think (Sillitoe in Hanson: 1999: 39).

Althusser's theory of the I.S.A.s and R.S.A.s was one of the first attempts to bridge the Marxist base and superstructure. Inglis says: “These apparatuses were formally detached by Marx from the motions of the economy as “superstructure” built upon the mechanical drive of capital...Althusser hitched the two together again” (Inglis 1993: 83). The gap between the obedience to the practical norms and the contempt for the ideological norms is now explained by Gramsci's idea of negotiation, (even though Gramsci was writing before Althusser). Like Althusser he recognizes that force is the last resort for the parliamentary democracies, but the space of negotiation and the idea of consent rather than submission enable someone like Arthur to separate his outer from his inner life, and continue to function as part of the system while simultaneously disagreeing with it. Both Althusser and Gramsci agree, however, on the existence of the R.S.A.s, whatever the name. Gramsci calls them “the armour of

coercion” (Gramsci 1998: 215), and says: “The Law is the repressive and negative aspect of the entire positive, civilising activity undertaken by the state” (Gramsci 1998: 216). If disagreement with the system spills over into overtly illegal acts, and illegal is a term that is defined by the legal system, one of the I.S.A.s, then the state has organizations to halt and punish the illegality. One example of this in *SNSM* can be seen in the different responses of Arthur and his cousins to the question of conscription (also known as the call-up, or compulsory military service). We know that Arthur has served his time in the army, and still has to complete two weeks a year of training. We also know that his cousins were called up in wartime, and deserted and were subsequently imprisoned on a regular basis. Given that the war pushed the level of official propaganda to unprecedented heights (or depths), the lack of patriotic spirit shown by the R.C.D.s shows a total lack of effect of the ideology on the cousins (we are never told exactly how many there are or their names, ages, etc.) and they seem to accept the consequent imprisonment as something inevitable yet bearable, almost an occupational hazard.

In *LLDR*, set as it is in a Borstal, the agents of the R.S.A.s, namely the police and the Borstal authorities, especially the governor, play an important role in the story. Borstals, named after the village in Kent which was the location of the first of these institutions, existed from 1902 until 1982, and were intended to provide imprisonment and training for young offenders from the age of 16 to 21. They were, ironically, organized along the lines of an English public school with the inmates, usually referred to as “lads”, divided into houses each with a housemaster, usually an ex-serviceman. Punishment was usually corporal punishment with the birch being the official form, though other unofficial forms such as a strap or gym-shoe were common, not to mention a simple beating by the warders. Much information about

life in Borstal can be found in the autobiographical *Borstal Boy* (1958) by Brendan Behan, who was sentenced at the age of sixteen to three years in Borstal, for I.R.A. activity (he was arrested with explosives in 1939).<sup>88</sup> Short trousers were part of the uniform, something which was always resented by the prisoners, (“like a bleedin’ Boy Scout” is a phrase which is repeated throughout Behan’s book) and this was done deliberately to break the sense of dignity of the lads, many of whom were no longer teenagers, some even being married with children, and as part of the general ethos of subordination to discipline. In *LLDR* we are given practically no information about the daily life of the Borstal, since for Smith the life is something which he has heard about from older friends and relatives and so there is nothing that surprises him. He would give the same answer given by a friend when asked how much he hated life in the army: “ “I didn’t hate it,” he said. “They fed me, gave me a suit, and pocket money, which was a bloody sight more than I ever got before, unless I worked myself to death for it, and most of the time they wouldn’t let me work but sent me to the dole office twice a week” ” (p.15). Since life in the Borstal, which we are told occupies a “crumbly manor house” (p.8), is reasonably bearable, there is no need to describe the food or the regime, and the story concentrates on Smith’s thoughts about the reasons and effects of his incarceration rather than its conditions. Borstal does not change his relationship with the system, it clarifies it. “What it does is show me what they’ve been trying to frighten me with”. It is as if, he says, he were “rushing up to thump a man and snatch the coat of his back” when the man “whips out a knife...That knife is Borstal, clink, the rope”. Remand homes are not really the same, at that level it is still “like kittens, like boxing gloves, like dobbie”, but now “by sending me to Borstal they’ve shown me the knife, and from now on I know something that I didn’t know

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<sup>88</sup> For information on Borstals see also: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

before: that's it's war between me and them...I know who my enemies are and what war is" (p.16). He has been shown the real face of the State punishment system, and he knows that after Borstal there is prison and possibly, eventually, execution if he continues to fight his war. Official wars, with uniformed armies, are for him nothing more than a form of suicide for those who volunteer or allow themselves to be conscripted. He has in the past considered suicide, and he decided that the easiest way would be to wait for a war and enlist, but this feeling did not last.

But I got past that when I knew I was already in a war of my own, that I was born into it, that I grew up hearing the sound of "old soldiers" who'd been over the top at Dartmoor, half-killed at Lincoln, trapped in no-man's-land at Borstal, that sounded louder than any Jerry bombs (p.17).

Smith's subversion of patriotic war vocabulary mixed with the names of notorious prisons rather than of famous battles echoes the earlier comment about parallel histories. If Peterloo and Tolpuddle represent feats and heroes of the working class in the political field, then Dartmoor (a prison originally built for Napoleonic prisoners of war and still in use)<sup>89</sup> represents the no less heroic feats of resistance of the criminals, who are fighting the same war but on a different territory. It is interesting to note that the words used, "over the top", "no-man's land", are associated with the trench warfare of the First World War rather than the more recently-fought Second. One reason for this could be that the Great War, as it was called at the time, saw much greater losses than the later conflict, and those losses were mostly among the rank and file, the working class.<sup>90</sup> For Sillitoe, the war was a deliberate act on the part of the ruling class, and he says: "If Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, the British class war was fought out on the Western Front with real shells and bullets. The

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<sup>89</sup> Source: [www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk) Access date: 28.2.2007

<sup>90</sup> In the First World War 662,000 soldiers and 41,000 officers died. In the Second, 326,000 military personnel and 62,000 civilians died.  
Sources: [www.military-genealogy.com](http://www.military-genealogy.com); [www.secondworldwar.co.uk](http://www.secondworldwar.co.uk) Access date: 20.11.2006

old men of the upper classes won” (Sillitoe 1972: 113). He goes on to say that the difference between officers and men, governing and governed, them and us, was a consequence of the Great War. Before the war people thought that some kind of unity might have been possible, and the soldiers’ volunteering to fight was an affirmation of this, a way of saying yes to the possibility of a better future. Their hopes were betrayed, however, and the disastrous handling of the war and the callousness of the high command resulted in the destruction of the volunteers (and Britain did not introduce conscription until 1916, two years after the outbreak) and the loss of more than just a generation, since:

...the masses who joined up were people who had been perfected by more than a century of the Industrial Revolution. In one sense they were indeed the flower of mankind: intelligent, technically minded and literate, men of a sensibility whose loss sent England as a country into a long decline. When they died, as nearly a million did, they took their skills with them. Such people were thrown away with prodigal distaste because they were coming to the point of stepping into their own birthright (Sillitoe 1972: 113).

Sillitoe is not the only one who traces the start of the decline of England as a world power to the First War. Vera Brittain wrote that the post-war problems were inevitable, since “the first-rate were gone from a whole generation” (Brittain 1978: 260). She was concerned more with the “officer class”, whereas Sillitoe was writing about what he considered the wilful destruction of the heirs of those pre-industrial artisans who represented for Thompson, as previously quoted, “the most distinguished popular culture England has ever known” (p.20). In a tribute to the unknown soldiers, Sillitoe writes in *Raw Material* (1972):

...the casualty lists on this day or perhaps at some other time might have included the following group of names – though it was never sure whether they were killed, wounded, or simply missing:

L/Cpl John Cade	7 <sup>th</sup> Buffs
Pte Robert Hood	11 <sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters

Pte Edward Ludd	5 <sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters
Sgt William Posters	7 <sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters
Cpt George Swing	7 <sup>th</sup> Royal West Kent
Pte Richard Turpin	1 <sup>st</sup> Essex
Cpl Walter Tyler	2 <sup>nd</sup> Essex

Their demise was not reported in *The Times*, though in their disappearance they were not divided (Sillitoe 1972: 105).

This is a list which parodies (again) the formal lists of the dead in the giving of rank, name and regiment. It names those who never figure in the public monuments, who appear in the standard histories as romantic footnotes, if they appear at all, but whose names are still identifiable as being in some way against the established order. The fact that three of them are assigned to the Sherwood Foresters reveals both the geographical origins of the men and also reflects, in the context of the war, the horrific losses suffered by the regiment at Gommecourt when “Blinds were drawn in every Nottingham street” (Sillitoe 1972: 104).

Historically, Wat Tyler and Jack Cade were the leaders of revolts in 1381 (the Peasants’ Revolt) and 1450 (Jack Cade’s Revolt), and are both naturally corporals. Ned Ludd and Captain Swing were both legendary or fictional leaders of anti-industrialist protest (Luddism and the aforementioned “Last Labourers’ Revolt” of 1830) in whose names various actions were carried out, and although Ludd was frequently called General Ludd or King Ludd, he is here given a private’s rank, while other acts were always assigned to “Captain” Swing.<sup>91</sup> He is the only officer in the list. The only purely fictional character is William Posters, and Sillitoe had already written the novel *The Death of William Posters* in 1965, so this is by way of being a

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<sup>91</sup> It is possible that Ned Ludd existed, as a simple boy who inadvertently broke a new machine in his master’s workshop in Nottingham, and thus gave his name to the deliberate breaking of machines.

semi-private joke. The name comes from the notices which were often stuck on walls or hoardings in England which, to prevent unauthorized advertising, warned: *Bill posters will be prosecuted*. These invariably drew the graffitied response: *Bill Posters is innocent!* In his book and the following two which make up the trilogy, William Posters serves for Sillitoe as the essential working-class man, forever prosecuted and forever innocent. The final two names, Robin Hood (despite comments by Sillitoe elsewhere cited) and the highwayman Dick Turpin, are the criminals, the outlaws of the group, with as much right to be included in the honour roll as anyone else. “In their disappearance they were not divided” since they have all suffered from the lack of attention and respect afforded to them by the official histories. I would venture to say that even now all of the names would ring at least a vague bell of recognition in most English people, with the exceptions of Posters and Swing, and if Sillitoe’s uncle went over the top at Gommecourt, there is little difference between his action and Smith’s being trapped in the no-man’s land of Borstal, except that Smith has chosen his own war and enemy.

Smith’s lifelong familiarity with the stories of the “old soldiers” and the list of the patriotic anti-heroes show the persistence of the oral tradition for the working-class. Denied mention in the official histories, knowledge is passed on and down, as we have seen with events such as Peterloo or Tolpuddle (p.35). In *SNSM* the hostility between them and us has been “passed on for some generations from father to son on either side” (p.42) and in “Noah’s Ark” from *LLDR* the boys’ anti-war song is “a song that Bert’s father had taught him”(p.116). More recently, and yet more distantly, in *A Man of His Time* (2004) Ernest Burton passes Nottingham Castle on the train, in 1887, and thinks:

Fifty years or so ago it was set on fire, an old codger told him who’d seen it as a youth, one of thousands cheering the rioters, the sky all flame when not blotted out

by smoke. “I watched the fire till it started to rain, then walked home. Some of those who stayed were caught, and hanged.” The Duke of Newcastle got twenty-one thousand pounds to have it built up again, so the poor paid for the bonfire out of their own pockets. All the same, it must have been a treat to see it go up (Sillitoe 2005: 6).

This recognition and repetition, by Burton and Sillitoe, of the folk memory of the Chartist riots helps to maintain the alternative history, seen from the point of view of the rioters, who inevitably paid for their actions. The history does not necessarily have to be accurate, and in *The Death of William Posters* (1965), the main character Frank Dawley romanticizes the mythical Bill Posters:

Bill has been infamous in these streets for generations, bandit Posters, as well known or maybe scorned and scoffed at as Robin Hood, justly celebrated in that hundred verse “Ballad of Bill Posters” recited for generations in Nottingham streets and pubs...His existence explains many puzzles. Who was General Ludd? None other than the shadowy William Posters, stockinger...Who set fire to Nottingham Castle in the Chartist riots? Later, who spat in Lord Roberts’ face when he led the victory parade in Nottingham after the Boer War? Who looted those shops in the General Strike? No one has ever proved it, but the ballad sings of it, and historians may make notes for future conjectures (Sillitoe 1965: 17-18).

If this ballad did not really exist, one can only say that it should have, and the events in working-class history mentioned, from Luddism to the General Strike, are given a personalized and heroic tinge by their embodiment in the bandit Posters. More recent history is also viewed by Sillitoe with a sceptical eye, and in *Key to the Door* (1961) Churchill is mentioned:

“He saved England though, didn’t ‘e’?” Frank Varley called from a few feet away. “You reckon so?” Brian answered. “It was him and his gang as turned hosepipes on the hunger marchers before the war.”  
“Old Fatguts was saving his own neck” Albert said, “not ours. He didn’t give a bugger about us. It was all his bleeding factory owners he saved...” (Sillitoe 1990: 366).

Churchill is referred to as “Old Fatguts” throughout the book, and the image of him as the leader who “saved England” is given little credence by the young conscripts who

are Brian Seaton's companions.<sup>92</sup> The alternative, unofficial, largely oral history of the working class, which Sillitoe, by recording it, has done so much to consolidate, is an essential part of the culture. It is naturally opposed to the high, dominant history, the history of kings and politicians, and shows the determination to conserve the memory of what is real, rather than what "they" tell you is real. If it were not for the old soldiers of Dartmoor, Smith might have fallen fighting in a war for "them" rather than being involved in his own war on his own terms.

As far as Smith is concerned his war is open and declared, on both sides. He has some respect for his adversaries, indeed in some ways they are not so different from him, but the ideas, which is to say the ideology, of the two sides make peace impossible: "If only "them" and "us" had the same ideas we'd get on like a house on fire, but they don't see eye to eye with us and we don't see eye to eye with them, so that's how it stands and how it will always stand" (p.8). The In-laws and the Out-laws are natural enemies, and Smith's only advantage to set against the organizational and numerical superiority of "them" (characterized by the governor in the story) is his greater cunning and his greater honesty. He acknowledges that this may sound funny, coming from a burglar, but he insists that he is and always has been honest, more so than the governor, "...because I know what honest means according to me and he only knows what it means according to him"(p.15). To the governor, being honest means settling down to a menial, steady job, which for Smith is the same as death, not being alive. According to his principles, if he were in charge he would not bother with Borstals or prisons "to put all the cops, governors, posh whores, penpushers, army officers, Members of Parliament in; no, I'd stick them up against a wall and let them

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<sup>92</sup> I do not know if the comment about Churchill and the hunger marchers is true or not; similarly I do not know the truth of something which I have always believed, having heard it when young, that Churchill wanted to call in the troops to shoot strikers in the General Strike of 1926. Despite the propaganda, Churchill was never popular with the working class.

have it, like they'd have done with blokes like us years ago, that is, if they'd ever known what it means to be honest" (p.15). The hypocrisy of the system adds insult to injury, and in his dealings with the governor Smith parrots/parodies the official discourse in a mood which is a mix of incredulity and ridicule, such as when the governor says to him at their first meeting: " "If you play ball with us, we'll play ball with you." (Honest to God, you'd have thought it was going to be one long tennis match.)" (p.9-10) Just before the race when the governor asks him how he feels about the possibility of becoming a professional runner, he replies: " "It'd suit me fine, sir," I said. "Good lad. Good show. Right spirit. Splendid." " (p.40) For Smith, losing the race is the only honest course of action, since to win would be to accept the governor's definition of honesty, to subscribe to the ideology and accept the place in life which has been chosen for him. Head says:

Smith has an unshakeable conviction concerning the integrity and honesty of his refusal to conform, to become the governor's "prize race horse" (p.12), and the story's celebration of this "honesty" goes beyond a confirmation of predetermined roles. The governor is not interested simply in the rehabilitation of Smith; rather, he wants the glory that winning the Prize Cup will bring (p.39). It is this hypocrisy, this concealed use-function, that Smith resists (Head 2002: 55).

What most angers Smith is the governor's refusal or inability to recognize his individual humanity: "And I'll lose that race, because I'm not a race horse at all, and I'll let him know it...By Christ I will. I'm a human being and I've got thoughts and secrets and bloody life inside me that he doesn't know is there, and he'll never know what's there, because he's stupid" (p.13). By losing the race he strikes back at the governor in the only way he can: "And so I'll hit him where it hurts a lot, and he'll do all he can to get his own back tit for tat, though I'll enjoy it most because I'm hitting first, and because I planned it longer" (p.46). Of course the governor does get his own back by giving him the worst jobs for the last six months of his sentence, but Smith's satisfaction and the support of the other lads make the time bearable, and the final

irony is that he gets pleurisy as a result of his exertions and thus escapes conscription, so “I lost the governor’s race all right and won my own twice over” (p.53). The only honesty on the part of “them” which we see in the story is when the police detective sends a policeman to the Smiths’ house at four o’clock in the morning to remind them that they have to be in court at half past nine. “It was the finest bit of spite I’ve ever heard of, but I would call it honest, the same as my mam’s words were honest when she really told that copper what she thought of him and called him all the dirty names she’d ever heard of, which took her half an hour and woke the terrace up” (p.43). Such open enmity is understandable, and the relationship between the police and criminals, cops and robbers, is at least one which seems to be understood by both sides. The police are the representatives of the R.S.A.s, the first contact with the system and a familiar figure to Smith: “ I’d seen him before: Borstal Bernard in nicky-hat...But I straightened my shoulders to look into his illiterate blue eyes – like I always do with any copper” (p.31). The rules of the game are clear to both, and it is also clear which side makes the rules:

“Listen, my lad,” he said, like the dirty bullying jumped-up bastard he was, “I don’t want too much of your lip, because if we get you down to the Guildhall you’ll get a few bruises and black-eyes for your trouble.” And I knew he wasn’t kidding either, because I’d heard about them sort of tricks. I hoped one day though that him and all his pals would be the ones to get the black-eyes and kicks; you never knew. It might come sooner than anyone thinks, like in Hungary (p.33).

The reference to Hungary is the only reference to the wider world in the story, and as such is significant. Possibly reflecting the change in left-wing thought which had been caused by the Soviet invasion of Hungary (see p.141-142), Arthur’s idea of Russia and Communism as a liberating force has been transformed, in Smith, into the basic idea of rulers and ruled, and so Smith is naturally on the side of the rebels. The policeman’s threats are at least honest, and the police as the first level of the state

criminal machinery are the ones who do the dirty work, and in many ways could be seen as the labourers of the system, starting the process which will take the “product”, in this case Smith, to further stages in the system. However, it is made clear that they are representatives of something which is much bigger than the individual and that they have more resources to call on if necessary. We first see this in the governor’s initial meeting with Smith: “And when the governor kept saying how “we” wanted you to do this, and “we” wanted you to do that, I kept looking round for the other blokes, wondering how many of them there was” (p.10). The policeman is the same: “They always say “We” “We”, never “I” “I” – as if they feel braver and righter knowing there’s a lot of them against only one” (p.32). The policeman and the governor are right, of course, and the “we” is Smith’s “them”, including not only the others in their own particular branch of the government, be it the police or the Borstal service, but also all the others whom they represent, the In-laws who feel that the law is something to be upheld and enforced, and who feel that the system is if anything too lenient on criminals. Both contemporary and later criticisms of *LLDR* have said that if Smith has gone back to prison,<sup>93</sup> which seems probable at the end of the story, then it is because he has continued to steal, and good riddance. This is by no means an unreasonable attitude, found in all classes. Indeed, since it is the working classes who suffer most from crime, there would be little sympathy for Smith from many working-class people, even though it seems that he burgles businesses rather than houses. Still, it is his chosen field of combat and he is prepared to accept the consequences of his actions. One of these consequences is the increased supervision and control of his life. Apart from remand homes and Borstal, he undergoes the frequent questioning by the police who suspect him of the burglary even though they have no proof. He is known

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<sup>93</sup> See Atherton for reviews of *LLDR*, in which the word most commonly used is “delinquent” (Atherton 1979: 118-120).

to them, and in this he bears out Foucault's comments on individualization. In other societies, feudal for example, it is only the elite who are individuals.

In a disciplinary regime, on the other hand, individualization is "descending": as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized; it is exercised by surveillance rather than ceremonies, by observation rather than commemorative accounts (Foucault 1981: 193).

I would disagree with Foucault only in his stating that the question of individuality is either/or. In society now the rulers are still individuals, in many cases taking on the status of "stars" (some politicians, judges or members of royalty, for example) and this has not changed. With increased bureaucracy and technology, however, it has become possible to focus on specific individuals to a much greater extent than before, and thus the previous list of the unmentioned (rather than the unknown) soldiers can be seen to be composed of people who have gained a "descending" individuality rather than one gained through "ceremonies or commemorative accounts".

Smith has come to the notice of the authorities and thus is no longer an anonymous member of the masses but a faulty element in society, and so merits extra control and surveillance. He sees this as a natural part of the efforts of "them" to restrain him, and will continue to resist because he feels that they are dead while he is alive.

I'd rather be like I am – always on the run and breaking into shops for a packet of fags and a jar of jam – than have the whip-hand over somebody else and be dead from the toenails up. Maybe as soon as you get the whip-hand over somebody you go dead. By God, to say that last sentence has needed a few hundred miles of long-distance running (p.14).

This theme of life and death is a recurring one in the story, and the death spoken of is usually identified with the In-law life, the comfortable legal life which the governor wants Smith to follow when he leaves Borstal as an honest man. The opposite is, of course, life, and this for Smith is less easily defined, but has much to do with his

continued refusal to become honest on the governor's terms, and since he often feels most alive while running and thinking, his refusal to win the race is a logical conjunction of the two ideas, since the two concepts of honesty are expressed through the running, which means different things and has different aims and effects for Smith and the governor. By performing a supervisory function in the system the governor has accepted the false honesty and has also accepted moral and emotional death. Throughout the story Smith ponders on the difference between the apparently successful publicly-recognized governor and himself, and always finds that he prefers his own concept of honesty and life, since it is better to live than die. Contrasting himself with the governor, he says: "I'll win in the end even if I die in gaol at eighty-two, because I'll have more fun and fire out of my life than he'll ever get out of his" (p.13).

This idea of "life" beyond its purely biological sense was one which had great resonance at the time. For Rebellato:

Life is the crucial word. It is part of a cluster of terms that are distributed equally through the works of the New Left and the New Wave: the variant forms, "live", "living", "alive", the antonyms "dead", "death", the synonyms, "vital" and "vitality", and the related term "feeling" (Rebellato 1999: 21).

He traces the origin of the use of the word with this force to Leavis, whose influence was felt and noted in such writers as Hall and Hoggart and in playwrights such as Osborne or Wesker, all of whom recognized the virtues of life. Death was seen to be both a constituent and the result of the underlying malaise in society, which was reflected in the individual death of feeling and on a larger scale in the decline and death of England. Rebellato says:

This is what Osborne means by saying that "anger" is not *about* anything. The political force in *Look Back in Anger* lay not in the targets of Porter's anger, *but in the anger itself*, the experience and spectacle of someone, caring, feeling, living (Rebellato 1999: 31).

One difference between *SNSM* and *LLDR* is in this question of being alive or being dead. It is not a question which Arthur thinks about much, possibly because he himself is so alive that he assumes everyone is, except possibly the “slow” husbands (p.44). For Smith it is one of the things he thinks about while running.<sup>94</sup> The centrality of the life or death theme in *LLDR* could also be due to the fact that it was finished after Sillitoe moved back to England with the success of *SNSM*. If, as Rebellato suggests, this question was important in literary and political circles, and thus in England in general, it would not be surprising if Sillitoe was influenced by the spirit of the time. The main difference between Smith and Arthur is that Smith gives a specific reason for the death which is the negation of life: you die when you “get the whip-hand over somebody”, when you can control other people’s lives, in short if you are one of them or their agent. In this diagnosis Smith shows what was perhaps the biggest difference between his story and the other works grouped as angry, and *LLDR* was a confirmation of Sillitoe’s place in the group for many critics. For most of the angry writers, the problem of spiritual life or death was an inner question, and Jimmy Porter’s treatment of his wife, for instance, is in order to spark some reaction from her, no matter what it may be. For Smith and Arthur, however, the lack of life is not a part of them or of anyone they know. It is something which “they” are trying to impose on them, and which they either ignore (in Arthur’s case) or actively fight against as does Smith. This condition which they are resisting is called death by Smith, but it could also be called ideology. They both equate the style of life which they are being urged to assume with subservience and conformity. Arthur does conform outwardly to the usual practical conventions of life, for reasons already

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<sup>94</sup> One of the common ironies is that both Smith and Arthur indulge in their most dangerous subversive activity, thinking, while engaged in what is work for Arthur at his lathe, and punishment/training for Smith, running.

given, while Smith sees himself more as the active soldier, but neither agrees or intends to agree with the ideology they are offered. Any negotiation is external only, and they both keep their real thoughts private. This is the fatal flaw in the systems of surveillance, since “They can spy on us all day to see if we’re pulling our puddings and if we’re working good or doing our “athletics” but they can’t make an X-ray of our guts to find out what we’re telling ourselves” (p.10). It was perhaps this revelation of the private thoughts and beliefs of two stereotypical working-class men, the factory worker and the criminal, which caused the greatest consternation.

When first published in 1958, *SNSM* “shocked and scandalized the cultural establishment” (Sinfield 1997: xii), and the reaction was repeated a year later with *LLDR*. If anything, the reaction was stronger to the second book, of which the title story was and is the most discussed, since at least Arthur was fulfilling a praiseworthy role by working in a factory, whilst many critics were not able to sympathise with a common criminal and thought that Smith deserved anything he got. Haywood says of Sillitoe: “Unlike most other working-class fiction of the period, he is refreshingly uninterested in the themes of social mobility, education and breaking away. The social trajectory of many of his characters is in the other direction – a descent into criminality and disaffection” (Haywood 1997: 105). The second part of this comment is more true of Smith than of Arthur, but the general sentiment can serve for both, not to mention other Sillitoe characters.

In *The Broken Chariot* (1998), Sillitoe gives the story of Herbert Thurgarton-Strang, an upper-middle-class 17-year-old who runs away from his public school at the beginning of the Second World War and ends up in Nottingham, where he is befriended by Isaac, an elderly Jewish working-class intellectual. On Isaac’s advice he takes on another identity and becomes Bert Gedling, a lathe-operator in a factory.

The world in which he finds himself is completely beyond his previous experience, but he soon appreciates and becomes accustomed to it: “But Herbert liked the glow of homeliness in the streets, the beer-smelling fagstink of friendly pubs, and the mateyness of the blokes at work. He was captivated by the logic of machinery, of how its many parts worked, fascinated by the certainty of construction and the usefulness of its application” (Sillitoe 1998: 49). As Bert, he goes to pubs, gets drunk occasionally, goes out and has sex with girls and becomes not only a workman but a man, earning a wage and supporting himself, and the work itself is an important part of this transformation. He later writes a novel about life in a factory, which is successful, and after a period of having fun fooling the literary world by giving an exaggerated impersonation of a working man, he resumes his original identity as Herbert. There are moments of near-schizophrenia in the novel, but Herbert/Bert is generally able to handle his split life, and when the time comes to discard his Bert personality, Sillitoe gives the final dialogue:

“It’s got to be done, though,” Herbert sighed.  
Bert changed his tone. “Ye’re not going to leave me, are yer?”  
“Afraid I’ll have to.”  
“Well, I shan’t cry about it. Good luck to yer, is all I can say.”  
“You’ve been a good sport, Bert. I’ll never forget you.”  
“You wain’t be half the man you was before.”  
“Oh, I think I will. In any case I won’t need to be” (Sillitoe 1998: 275).

Though Herbert leaves Bert behind, he has been enriched by his experience as a worker, and feels that he has other, deeper resources to draw on than would have been the case if he had simply lived the life which was expected of him. This escape to, as opposed to the more usual from the working class, reveals the complexity of life as lived by those with whom Herbert would normally have had no contact at all. Apart from his accent, the most obvious marker, he has to change not only his habits, such as his table manners, but also his most basic conceptions and prejudices if he is to fit

in and be accepted. Once he has managed to do this he becomes part of the community and finds, in the warmth of belonging, something which he has never experienced before. Herbert's social transformation does not result in the criminality or disaffection mentioned by Haywood above, but it would definitely be construed as a descent by most people; it is also clear that for Herbert/Bert the defining and redeeming features of working-class life are to be found in the relationships and practices of the community, in short, in culture.

This aspect of culture is less visible in *LLDR*, since Smith's descent into Borstal means that we see little of his social life. His sex life is limited to one reference, when he talks about what he and his friend will do when it is finally safe to spend the money from the robbery: "Mike and me would be off to the coast in a few weeks time having the fun of our lives, playing at penny football and latching on to a couple of tarts that would give us all they were good for" (p.37). Whether this is pure adolescent bragging or a realistic appraisal of the joys of a trip to the seaside is impossible to say, but despite the lack of any other information and despite his youth, sex seems to hold no mysteries for Smith, and this attitude reflects the "earlier and easier" working-class experience mentioned by Hoggart (p.207). At the moment, though, Smith is more occupied with other things, and since it seems that incarceration of one type or another is a risk he is prepared to accept as an inevitable part of his private war, it may well be that sex for him is of secondary importance, though this is not to say that it has no importance at all. In the title story of *The Ragman's Daughter* (1963), Sillitoe has his main character say: "While as a youth I went out with girls, I used to like thieving more" (Sillitoe 1966: 10), and this preference of activities would seem to serve equally well for Smith.

Obviously, while Arthur and Smith both accept that they are in a war against “them”, they have different ways of expressing this posture. Smith, as we have seen, considers himself to be in a state of open conflict, and he looks on his crimes as the only possible way for him to strike back. He uses the time in Borstal to plan future crimes, and he says he “grew perfect in the razor-edges of my craft for what I knew I had to do once free” (p.54). The use of the word “craft” is interesting, having as it does several meanings. The logical one in the context is that of a learned skill, usually in a professional area, and in his efforts to become a craftsman we can see that Smith considers his burglarizing to be as much a skilled trade as any other, something which one can study, practise and advance in. It can be said, and indeed often has been said, that for Smith and others Borstal serves as an apprenticeship,<sup>95</sup> and his crimes after leaving Borstal are of a different level in terms of both money and “professionalism”. He is at the start of his career, and he seems quite certain that he has chosen it himself and intends to follow it. That this choice places him at odds with society and its guardians is completely logical, and whether he is at war because he is a criminal or vice versa is the question of the chicken and the egg.

Tony, however, the main character and narrator of “The Ragman’s Daughter”, who could quite well be a middle-aged Smith, is more articulate about his criminal activities. Now married with children, and working at a steady “honest” job, he looks back on his youth when he was a burglar, and says that his enthusiasm for stealing started at a very early age. “The first thing I stole was at infants school when I was five” (Sillitoe 1966: 8). He explains that he stole the play money the children were given, and later says: “Once, an uncle asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I answered: “A thief ” ”(Sillitoe 1966: 9). Tony stole more for the excitement, it

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<sup>95</sup> “College” was, and possibly still is a common slang term for prison, at least in London, usually among those who had been.

would seem, than for the monetary value of the goods, since much of what he stole was thrown into the river, and possessions mean little to him. He says:

What I'd like, believe it or not, is to live in country where I didn't like thieving and where I didn't want to steal, a place where everybody felt the same way because they all had only the same as everyone else – even if it wasn't much. Jail is a place like this, though it's not the one I'd find agreeable because you aren't free there. The place that fills my mind would be the same, but being free as well they wouldn't want to nick what bit each has got. I don't know what sort of system that would be called (Sillitoe 1966: 10).

In this passage Tony's ideas are seen to be somewhat more elaborated than those of Arthur or Smith. The latter two are clear about what they are reacting against but, as has been stated, neither of them articulates any positive version of a future to replace the society with which they are at odds. Tony, possibly owing to his age and maturity, is able to imagine at least some of the features of a system which would make thieving unnecessary, and while freedom and equality are common slogans of just about every political movement, it is clear that none of the present varieties on offer encompasses his aspirations; "the place that fills my mind" is as much a mental or ethical state as a political or economic one, and connects to Sillitoe's comment about "worthwhile spiritual bread" (p.173).

"Craft", however, can also mean cunning, as in crafty, and this is an essential factor in Smith's life: "Cunning is what counts in this life, and even that you've got to use in the slyest way you can; I'm telling you straight: they're cunning and I'm cunning" (p.7). The fact that the enemy is as cunning as he is makes it even more essential that his skills include a large element of cunning, that there is craft in his craft, since "...them bastards over us aren't as daft as they most of the time look" (p7). He has learned respect for his enemy, and he knows that if he is to continue in his trade he will have to improve; if not he will join the fallen or lost in Lincoln and Dartmoor, and just as a soldier or worker undergoes training, he is using his time in

Borstal to hone his skills. In many ways he is doing exactly what he should be doing, using his time to think and change, so that when he leaves Borstal he will go back into the world having been improved. He fulfils these expectations completely, except for the fact that his idea and the governor's idea of improvement are totally different.

Although *SNSM* was published first, Smith could be seen in many ways as a younger version of Arthur (as well as of Tony), if Smith had decided to give up crime on leaving Borstal and had got a steady job, holding his rebellion in reserve for a better opportunity. There is little or no ideological difference between the two, and the differences in lifestyle are more a question of age than anything else. Both men were accepted by commentators at the time as representing the working class, and the short time between the publication of the two books helped to strengthen the perception of the similarities, as well as fixing the idea in many people's minds of Alan Sillitoe as a working-class writer, with some sort of membership in the angry young men group. Though there is much less lived detail in *LLDR*, one obvious cause of which is the difference in length between a story and a novel, Smith is as much a member of the working class as is Arthur. His attitudes towards the police, work, politics, and the "in-laws" reveal his identification with a wider community, and though we are shown nothing of his day-to-day life in Borstal, it is clear that the other lads share his ideology. After he loses the race he says: "...the boys caught on to me losing the race on purpose and never had enough good words to say about me, or curses to throw out (to themselves) at the governor" (p.53). The line between "them and us" in Borstal or a similar institution is always very clear, and though we are never told the background of the other inmates, it is implicit that the Out-laws are from the working class, and stories of Borstal and prison form a part of working-class lore, as has been seen with Smith himself.

Behan is more explicit, and relates how, even though he was a member of the I.R.A. and thus officially considered both dangerous and a foreigner, he was closer to the other inmates than the previously-mentioned English middle-class prisoner:

But I was nearer to them than they would ever let Ken be. I had the same rearing as most of them; Dublin, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, London. All our mothers had all done the pawn – pledging on Monday, releasing on Saturday. We all knew the chip shop and the picture house and the fourpenny rush of a Saturday afternoon, and the summer swimming in the canal and being chased along the railway by the cops (Behan 1990: 232).

From this we can see how the culture was stronger than any differences of region or politics, for Behan and implicitly for Smith. As has been stated, Smith feels very little necessity for solidarity with anyone else, preferring to be “a long-distance runner, crossing country all on my own no matter how bad it feels” (p.52). Nevertheless, he says: “I’m not hard-hearted (in fact I’ve helped a few blokes in my time with the odd quid, lie, fag, or shelter from the rain when they’ve been on the run)...If my heart’s soft I know the sort of people I’m going to save it for” (p.18). It is clear that the sort of people who will receive his help are the outlaws like him, and it is equally clear that these people come from the same background. The story finishes with these words: “And if I don’t get caught the bloke I give this story to will never give me away; he’s lived in our terrace for as long as I can remember, and he’s my pal. That I do know” (p.54) For Smith the prime qualification for trust is having lived in the same zone of life with someone for a long time, and friendship follows. The shared experience is what inspires the friendship, and this experience can be called culture.

Unlike Arthur, Smith deserves the name of rebel, and he is prepared to take the consequences. His rebellion is against the society in which he lives, but is expressed in ideological more than economic or political terms: “...they don’t see eye to eye with us and we don’t see eye to eye with them”. Smith’s ideology has come to him

through his culture, the culture of the outlaws, and he feels that in continuing his struggle he is forming part of a long history of working-class resistance. Though the daily mechanics and practices of this transmission of culture are less evident in *LLDR* than in *SNSM*, it nevertheless underlies Smith's actions and beliefs.

Before moving on to the next section, which will deal with the films, I would like to conclude my consideration of the books by showing how I have tried to fulfil some of the objectives stated in the Introduction. Although the emphasis has naturally been on the first two books, I feel that it is now clear that Sillitoe's *opus* goes far beyond these early works, and that he has maintained a consistency of viewpoint and attitude which renders them introductory rather than definitive. His immediate identification with the Angry grouping, while to some extent inevitable, if only for reasons of chronology, has nevertheless obscured his later writing and what I consider to be his importance in English literature for the last forty years, and I have offered some possible explanations for this. There were doubtless many factors at play in the initial success which he enjoyed, some of which will be mentioned in the next section, but it has to be recognized that the Angries had at least created a literary atmosphere which was conducive to both the publication and acceptance of *SNSM* and *LLDR*, despite the important differences between these two books and the Angry works as a whole. As stated, I believe that these differences lie primarily in the area of culture, specifically working-class culture, and in this Sillitoe can be seen as having filled, and having continued to fill, the "hole" in English writing which has always been the depiction of the working class, with the few notable exceptions mentioned.

Even in the very short list of writers who have written about the working class without making them objects of humour, pity or scorn, he differs in that he usually writes about the working class at work, whereas most of the previous production, such

as the Chartist literature or *Love on the Dole*, had tended to focus on workers in times of unemployment or unrest. With the notable exception of Smith, Sillitoe's workers usually work, as Arthur does, and this defining activity is given an importance in his work which had been lacking in English writing up to that time, and probably since. His depiction of the way of life and the thoughts and feelings of people who had previously been ignored was also undoubtedly a factor in the reactions of shock which greeted his first books. I have argued, I believe, that these two aspects, the way of life and what can be called the ideology of Sillitoe's characters, are the two central concepts in Cultural Studies, and that it is in the area of culture that Smith, Arthur and numerous others both encounter and contest the constraints which are inherent in the society in which they have been accorded their place and function.

Though it is highly unlikely that it was Sillitoe's intention, *SNSM* and *LLDR* can each be taken to exemplify one of the aforementioned aspects of culture. In *SNSM* we see life as it was lived by a young working-class man in a particular place and a particular time, namely in a provincial city in post-war England. His work life, his home life, his social life and his sex life are all shown in detail, and it is in this self-contained description of an industrial worker enjoying a rare period of relative prosperity that the reader can find one of the few examples in English literature of a working-class way of life free from the most urgent exigencies of poverty. *LLDR*, as mentioned above, has less space to devote to Smith's daily life outside Borstal, and thus the question of ideology receives more attention. This is not to say, however, that there is no attempt to show the way of life in *LLDR*, or that Arthur is completely devoid of ideology in *SNSM*. It is impossible to separate these two questions from each other, and though there are differences between Arthur and Smith, they can be seen to represent the same culture, albeit with a different focus. One common feature

of this culture is a strong, often stubborn, individuality, which is in keeping with Sillitoe's oft-voiced assertion that he can only write about individuals, and his continued rejection of the categorization of people in terms of class.

Sawkins's words on Smith serve equally well for Arthur: "There is...a strong sense of human dignity, integrity and endeavour. The voice is often bleak, but there is a corresponding tenderness, a faint hope" (Sawkins 2001: 226). Both are at odds with the society in which they find themselves, but both are determined not to be ground down by the superior forces of "them". The acceptance of the ideology which they are offered would no doubt make their lives easier, as it has done for Jack or the Governor, but for both the young men this would be a betrayal, and not only of themselves. The ideology which they have imbibed, and which opposes them to the dominant ideology, is the reaction not only of an individual, but also of a class with over a hundred years of history, if not more. This history produced a culture in which both Arthur and Smith, not to mention a host of other Sillitoe characters, share, and by which they are sustained in their opposition. They have chosen different forms of expressing their hostility to the ruling minority, but there is little basic difference in their reactions, and both have made a conscious choice to live as they do. Arthur's hedonism and Smith's thieving were, and probably still are, censured by the "In-laws", and thus the proof of the effects of their rebellion is the reaction it produces in those who would wish to limit these excesses. They are both concerned to maintain the dignity and integrity which Sawkins mentions above, and it is in this determination not to surrender that they find their victories. Jack's advice to Arthur is the same message that Smith receives from the Governor: "You won't knuckle under, Arthur. If you did you'd enjoy life" (p.190). Arthur and Smith reject this offer of a comfortable conformity to the In-law standards, refusing to knuckle under, even if this

means that their lives will be necessarily more difficult. They will survive intact or die in the attempt, like the countless others whom Sillitoe, writing in *A Man of His Time* (Sillitoe 2004: 375) of the three Seaton brothers, now verging on old age, called “the unkillable poor”.

## PART THREE. THE FILMS

### 3.1. POST-WAR AND 50s BRITISH CINEMA

The films of both *SNSM* and *LLDR* were successful, but to understand the significance of the films one has to consider a number of other questions, such as the state of British cinema at the time, which is really to say the 1950s. Although both films were released in the 60s according to the calendar, the 50s are usually considered a “long” decade. Jameson says : “...for what we call the sixties – which may be said to have begun (slowly) in 1963, with the Beatles and the Vietnam war, and to have ended dramatically somewhere around 1973-5 with the Nixon shock and the oil crisis...” (Jameson 1998: 74). This dating is agreed with by Larkin in his well-known *Annus Mirabilis*, written in 1967:

Sexual intercourse began  
In nineteen sixty-three  
(Which was rather late for me) –  
Between the end of the *Chatterly* ban  
And the Beatles’ first L.P. (Larkin 1988: 167)<sup>96</sup>

As with other forms of cultural production such as the theatre or the novel, cinema in the early fifties was characterized by a continuing preoccupation with the war, the success of the same people who had been dominant before the war, and the concentration of the means of production in the hands of a small group who could control both the production and distribution. Though Rebellato argues that the state of the theatre, for example, was nowhere near as moribund as post-angry critics painted

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<sup>96</sup> It is noteworthy that two such different writers as Larkin and Jameson both cite the cultural event of the Beatles as a seminal date, thus proving that culture shapes as well as is shaped by history.

it, he does not deny the domination of the business by a small number of individuals, particularly Binkie Beaumont, and “the Group” headed by Prince Littler (Rebellato 1999: 54-6). One aspect in which the cinema was different, however, was in the fact that the market was dominated by the Americans, a domination which had existed for many years. Another difference was that the cinema did not share in the general affluence; in fact the opposite was the case, and it was the affluence which enabled people to enjoy other forms of leisure activity, particularly the rise in television ownership, which caused a drastic fall in cinema attendance during the 50s: “... in 1951 cinema admissions were 1,365 million; by 1960 they were down to 501 million and still falling” (Hill 1986: 35). The televising of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 is generally taken to be the single event which most boosted the popularity of the new medium, and the arrival of commercial television two years later consolidated its position. There were various attempts by the film industry to reverse this trend, but they were to prove fruitless, and any changes in the product itself were dependent on the structure of the industry and how it was trying to face up to the new competition. This structure had been determined by:

...the developments of the 1930s and 1940s when the film industry had evolved from small-scale entrepreneurial activity towards large-scale oligopoly through a process of horizontal and vertical integration. In this respect it was typical of British industry in general, whose response to the depression had been the maintenance of profits through the elimination of competition (Hill 1986: 37).

Helped by the imposition in 1927 of quotas for the distribution and exhibition of British films, the process of the acquisition of cinemas by production and distribution interests resulted in a situation whereby at the end of the Second World War the British film industry was effectively a duopoly. The Rank Organization owned two of the largest cinema circuits, the largest film distributor and the majority of studio space. The other major group, the Associated British Picture Corporation (A.B.P.C.),

owned the other principal circuit, the second most important distributor and also had its own studio space. Far from losing most with the drop in audiences, the decline in numbers helped to concentrate the business even more into the hands of the big two, as smaller chains and independent cinemas went out of business. One proof of this can be seen in the fact that Rank's profits remained stable, or even rose, throughout the 50s despite the fall in audiences. However, the profitable sectors were distribution and exhibition, not production, which under the pressure of falling admissions and the lifting of the 75% import duty on American films in 1949 had been gradually tapering off to such an extent that for the year 1960-1961 only six out of eighty-one British films were Rank or A.B.P.C. productions. Coupled with this, and the increasing diversification of both groups into other leisure fields such as bingo, dance-halls, television (A.B.C. television) or electronics (Rank Xerox), there was an increasing tendency for the major groups to pass the responsibility for the production of films to independent production companies, many of which were formed by actors, writers and directors. The majors rented them studio space and provided some, usually a small share, of the finance, a process which had already been under way in Hollywood for some years. Another source of money was the National Film Finance Corporation, an official body first established in 1948 to loan money to British producers and distributors. Originally intended to be a temporary measure, its life was extended in 1949 and again in 1957, and its influence can be seen in the fact that from 1950 to 1957 it loaned money to 366 of the 730 British quota films released as first features on the three principal circuits. However, the main effect of this change in the production process was simply that the majors no longer had to risk their own money by backing films whose commercial prospects were uncertain. The process of distribution and exhibition was still in their hands, and since the raising of finance

usually required a distribution agreement of some kind, films were often made on a shoestring, with actors or directors investing their own money or agreeing to deferred payment, and there was frequently a long delay between a film's being finished and its actually reaching the screen. Naturally, a financially successful film made things easier for its makers the next time, and the international success of some independent films started to attract American finance to British production, but it was still a precarious business. (The information above is from : Hill 1986: 37-42).

To return to the question of the product itself, Richards says: "In ethos and outlook, in technique and approach, mainstream 1950s films were essentially conservative, middle-class and backward-looking" (Richards 1997:147). According to Sinfield, such films reflected the commercial taste of the dominant organizations, and "...these preferred heavy dramas about how a stiff upper lip won the war, and Ealing comedies projecting a fantasy of community spirit within traditional structures" (Sinfield 1997: 232). I feel Sinfield is a little unfair to the Ealing films in this quote. While it is true that the comedies, which are now regarded internationally as classics of their kind, frequently continued the ethos of Ealing's wartime films by presenting an England that was quaint and untouched and should be kept that way, both during and after the war there was in the films an explicit criticism of authority, as in *The Foreman Went to France* (1942) when the hero's blind trust of figures in authority almost destroys his mission, since every one he meets is revealed as a Nazi collaborator, and there is a similar outcome in *Went the Day Well* from the same year. The post-war comedies also typically involved the fight of the little man against corporate or government bureaucracy, and whatever the truth of Sinfield's opinion, the films found some

resonance with the audience and said something about the national identity which still seems to strike a chord.<sup>97</sup>

One aspect of the Ealing production which is often overlooked, though, is the making of several films which could be seen as the first steps of British film into the area of social drama, such as *The Blue Lamp* (1950) or *I Believe in You* (1952), both of which dealt with delinquency in working-class youth, from the point of view of the police and the probation service respectively. While still a long way from social realism, there nevertheless was some attempt to show working-class life, particularly the criminal aspect, from a sympathetic viewpoint, and these films were also successful.

Mention must also be made here of two other, later, series of films which, in some ways, also went against the dominant tendencies of the time. *Carry on Sergeant* (1958) was the first of the twenty-nine *Carry On* films, which spanned the years from 1958 to 1980, and enjoyed great commercial success. “In 1959, the year in which *Look Back in Anger* and *Room at the Top* were released, *Carry on Nurse* was the most successful British film at the box office” (Cooke 2000: 145). Richards says:

The series deployed a talented cast of farceurs repeating in a variety of settings a familiar repertoire of sketches, jokes and characterizations derived from music-hall skits and routines and from the saucy seaside postcard world of Donald McGill, a world of fat ladies, and overflowing bosoms, nervous honeymoon couples and randy jack-the-lads, chamber pots and bedpans. They constitute a twenty-year act of defiance against every canon of taste, decency, decorum and responsibility but they operate in territory mapped out in the 1930s and 1940s by the likes of Frank Randle and Max Miller<sup>98</sup> (Richards 1997: 165).

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<sup>97</sup> *The Ladykillers* was remade by the Coen brothers in 2004, and Charles Crichton, the director of many Ealing comedies such as *The Lavender Hill Mob* or *The Titfield Thunderbolt*, was persuaded out of retirement in 1988 to direct *A Fish Called Wanda*, one of the most successful British comedies in the last twenty years.

<sup>98</sup> Both were successful music-hall (and radio and film) comedians noted for their vulgarity. Source: [www.screenonline.org.uk](http://www.screenonline.org.uk) Access date: 25.6.2006

While obviously acting as a subversive force in cultural terms, based as they were on the popular forms of the music hall, they are now also seen as operating on other levels. Frequently set in official organizations such as the army (*Carry on Sergeant*, 1958), a National Health hospital (*Carry on Nurse*, 1959), a new Secondary Modern school (*Carry on Teacher*, 1959) or the police force (*Carry on Constable*, 1960)<sup>99</sup> they “...introduced...a subversive attitude towards forms of authority and an anarchic disruption of state institutions...While the other new tendencies in British cinema exerted pressure from more subordinate, marginal positions, the *Carry On* films were busy subverting from *within* the dominant culture (Cooke 2000: 45).

The other British series which started at more or less the same time was that of the Hammer horror films. Starting in 1957 with *The Curse of Frankenstein*, the gothic horror films which Hammer produced enjoyed great success for some ten years (although the company continued to produce less successful films of various genres for many years later). Richards says that: “In particular they celebrated their anti-heroes’ single-minded gratification of their desires” (Richards 1997: 166). Peter Cushing as Doctor Frankenstein manically pursuing his experiments against all opposition, or Christopher Lee as Dracula sinking his teeth into a willing young female neck (and sex was always an important component of the films) are enduring images of the Hammer style.<sup>100</sup> “Initially symbols of a ruthless and exploitative upper class, they soon became transformed into the heroes of an era of sex, style and “anything goes” ” (Richards 1997: 166). Again, the initial appeal of the films has diverted attention from what Cooke, for example, sees as their deeper significance:

Although apparently unrelated, there is a link here with the other late 1950s developments in British cinema. While the Hammer horror films are far removed in form and content from the “kitchen sink” and “social problem” films of the time

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<sup>99</sup> Source: [www.carryonline.com](http://www.carryonline.com) Access date: 25.6.2006

<sup>100</sup> Source: [www.screenonline.com](http://www.screenonline.com) Access date: 26.6.2006

the common factor they all share is an awareness of a changing constituency as far as the cinema audience is concerned (Cooke 2000: 144).

Cooke goes on to say that as affluence facilitated more home-based leisure patterns, a new predominantly younger, working-class audience sought in the cinema that which could not be seen on television, and so films about youth, music, sex and the supernatural provided an escape from the conformism and complacency of the home life of their parents, and of the status quo in the mainstream British cinema (Cooke 2000: 144-145).

Despite these signs of change, however, it would seem that for much of the decade the British cinema was as stagnant as other cultural fields, and that the owners of the means of production were even less inclined to take risks that could lose money. However, if the fabrication of the Angry grouping was symptomatic, at least, of developments in British writing and theatre, there was a similar evolution in British cinema.

### **3.2 THE FREE CINEMA**

One major difference was that the film-makers grouped together in the Free Cinema movement had given themselves the name rather than having it applied to them by the media, and they had defined some common ideals and objectives. If the genesis of the angry group can be dated to May 1956 with the première of *Look Back in Anger*, then the birth of Free Cinema took place three months earlier, when the National Film Theatre in London showed a programme of three short films: *Together*, directed by Lorenza Mazzetti, *O Dreamland*, directed by Lindsay Anderson, and *Momma Don't Allow*, directed by Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson, with the

programme curated by Reisz. The printed programme contained what amounted to a manifesto for the group which contained phrases such as : "...a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and in the significance of the everyday...No film can be too personal. The image speaks. Sound amplifies and comments. Size is irrelevant. Perfection is not an aim. An attitude means a style. A style means an attitude."<sup>101</sup> All the films had been financed by the British Film Institute's Experimental Production Fund, and shot cheaply using mostly hand-held cameras on black-and-white film. Though none of the directors was comfortable with the term "documentary" to describe the films, they are basically documentaries of working-class people, although Mazzetti's work does have a very thin story-line. *O Dreamland* shows people at the popular amusement park of this name in Margate, a traditional seaside resort town for working-class Londoners, and *Momma Don't Allow* was shot in various jazz venues in London, with the young audiences dancing and listening to the music. The same directors made other similar documentaries in the following years, usually with institutional (the Post Office) or commercial/philanthropic (Shell, Ford) backing, and there were a number of other Free Cinema programmes at the N.F.T.<sup>102</sup>

There had been for many years, going back to the 1930s, a strong documentary tradition in British film, often financed by public bodies such as the Post Office or the Central Office of Information, and the work of the Free Cinema was influenced by this tradition both in the choice of subject matter, which often featured the routine of people at work and the social interaction of the workers, and in the style, which tended to favour a minimalist commentary and frequently used music that had little obvious relationship to the images. The two prominent figures in this field were John Grierson, who was involved in over fifty documentaries between 1930 and 1950,

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<sup>101</sup> Source: [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk) Access date: 23.5.2006

<sup>102</sup> For information on the Free Cinema, see: [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk) Access date: 23.5.2006

usually as producer, and Humphrey Jennings, who made fewer films partly because he died young but also because he was involved in many other activities such as photography, theatrical design and poetry.<sup>103</sup> The Free Cinema group were happier to acknowledge their debt to Jennings than to Grierson:

For Anderson, the key term in Grierson's definition of documentary ("the creative treatment of actuality") was "creative" rather than "actuality"; ...It was thus Humphrey Jennings, of all the 1930s documentarists, that Anderson, and also Reisz, most admired, in so far as it was Jennings who was as much "stimulated by the purely aesthetic potentialities of the medium as by its propagandistic power". Two interlinked ideas were critical to this emphasis upon the "aesthetic": a) the importance of the role of the artist and b) the conviction that the best "realist" art should not remain at the level of mere reportage but should transform its material ...into poetry (Hill 1986: 128).

The documentaries made by the Free Cinema film-makers tended to focus on working-class people at work and at play, and as often happens with new artistic movements their work was influenced by new technology. In this case it was the development of a new type of film which allowed the filming of interiors without special lighting, and thus in *Every Day Except Christmas*, for example, (1957, directed by Anderson and produced by Reisz) almost all of the filming takes place inside Covent Garden market, and the early-morning gloom is an important part of the atmosphere, particularly since work starts at midnight and the idea of some people working while the majority sleeps is central to the film. Many of the aspects of the British documentary tradition are apparent in this film: the minimal commentary, in this case spoken by Alun Owen, an actor whose almost hushed tones and soft Welsh accent help to reinforce the idea of a separate night-time world; the importance given to work and the idea of the interdependence of society – "We all depend on each other's work as well as our own – on Alice and George and Bill and Alan and Sid and all the others who keep us going" as the narration says at the end of the film; the lack

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<sup>103</sup> For Grierson and Jennings see: [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk) Access date: 23.11.2006

of intrusion of the camera in filming, and the absence of direct to-the-microphone speech (a technique which has recently become very popular in British television documentaries, where it is known as the “fly-on-the-wall” style) which theoretically renders the process of filming invisible to the people being filmed; and also the emphasis on the collective rather than the individual effort, in which the work of particular people is seen as a part of the overall task, in this case getting the fruit, vegetables and flowers into the shops for the people to buy as their day starts and the market day ends. Another significant Free documentary is *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, directed by Reisz in 1959, the year before he directed the film of *SNSM*, and which centres on a council housing estate in Lambeth, London, and the youth club attended by the young people of the estate. Again, the importance of work is stressed, “work has to be done”, and also the affluence prevalent at the time: “luckily, work is easy to find”, and one youth says he would expect to spend 15 guineas on a suit which would last him eight months. Where the poetry can be found or if it can be found will be left for later, but one common theme in the films is the culture/way of life which is shown. In *Every Day Except Christmas* work and the people who do it are dignified, but in *O Dreamland* and *We Are the Lambeth Boys* the work shown is frequently boring and repetitive, and the culture as entertainment, especially in Anderson’s *O Dreamland*, is presented as cheap, artificial and in the case of the young people dancing to records in the youth club, American influenced. The contrast between the traditional working class of Covent Garden and the new leisure activities of the mechanized commercialised consumers harks back to Hoggart’s ideas of the destruction of traditional activities and the substitution of consumerism, a theme which is also present in the film of *SNSM*. In *We Are the Lambeth Boys* we see that the paternalistic Warden of the club attempts to provide some intellectual stimulation

by holding debates and discussions during which the members can express themselves on a range of topics, and these debates seem to be popular, but they seem to be only a prelude to the dancing which is the most attractive activity offered by the club. One obvious omission in these films, particularly in the area of leisure activities, is the pub. This is perhaps less surprising for the youth club, though all of the young people shown would have been old enough to get served, even if illegally, but to show Covent Garden without its pubs, which famously opened at 3 a.m. for the market workers (and innumerable others) seems a definite choice on the part of the director. Whether this was on aesthetic, or even puritanical, grounds is impossible to know, but if we contrast the part that pubs play in Arthur's life with their absence from these films, the authenticity of the documentaries is called into question, at least for anyone who was familiar with the old Covent Garden. Another omission is any mention of the wages and working conditions of the workers who appear in the films. Work is shown, especially in the market, and also in *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, but there is no information given as to whom the people are working for or how much they earn for the hours they work. With the teenagers there is some discussion of what a good job is and the differing prospects each of them has, but the work itself is not questioned, indeed "work has to be done", and the importance of the work for society as a whole is stressed over the individual conditions and claims of the workers. While the films focus on the working class, the viewpoint is clearly exterior, a situation which has been shown to recur many times in English cultural production.

At the end of the 50s, then, there were a number of different strands running through British cultural life, specifically in the cinema: the success of the angry works, the rise of independent film production and the existence of a group of filmmakers committed to a realist style of film focused on the working class. These came

together in the shape of an independent production company called Woodfall which had been started by Tony Richardson and John Osborne on the financial basis of the money Osborne had made from *Look Back in Anger*, and whose original aim was to make a film version of the play. Richardson had directed the play, and Osborne was able to insist that he should direct the film as well (Hedling 1997: 180). Despite the success of the play, the film experienced problems of finance and distribution, as was to be expected at that time, and only the interest of Richard Burton, then under contract to Warners, helped to guarantee the completion of the film and its subsequent release. The film was relatively successful, and the next Woodfall production, Osborne's *The Entertainer*, starring Laurence Olivier, experienced fewer production problems, although distribution was still a headache and it was only released, after several months' delay, on the secondary National circuit. The company's next project was *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and despite the usual problems of raising finance and achieving distribution it eventually opened in London and surprised everyone by enjoying enormous success, and Woodfall's next two films *A Taste of Honey* in 1961, directed by Richardson, the screen version of Shelagh Delaney's play, a work which might not have been seen had it not been for the success of *Look Back in Anger*, and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* were relatively easy to make and distribute.

Woodfall is probably the best and most successful example of the independent producers although there were many others, and on a closer look it can be seen that, despite the reputation of innovation, what they did was to film the angry works. They usually worked closely with the authors of the original works who in many cases worked on the script of their own novel or play, as in *Look Back in Anger*, *The Entertainer*, *SNSM*, *LLDR* and *A Taste of Honey*. *This Sporting Life* was filmed in

1963, produced by Reisz and directed by Anderson, and though it was not a Woodfall production, they followed the usual practice of having David Storey write the script of his novel. *Room at the Top* had been filmed in 1959, directed by Jack Clayton, and *Lucky Jim* in 1957, and apart from the last mentioned, which the Boulting brothers had chosen to make as a farce, in all the other cases the film tried to maintain the mood and spirit of the original. The other area in which *Lucky Jim* was an exception was that it was the only one of the above-mentioned films to be given a “U” certificate, whereas all the others were given an “X”, that is they could be seen only by adults. This category had been introduced by the British Board of Film Censors in 1950, but the big two distributors had adopted a *de facto* policy of screening hardly any “X” films for most of the 1950s, since with the conservatism characteristic of them they still clung to the idea of the cinema as family entertainment. However, the appointment of John Trevelyan as chief censor in 1958, and the increasing leniency resulting from his appointment, gave some advantage to the British industry over the American, which was still operating under the Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, by which:

Explicit limits were set on the length of allowable kisses and prescribed that no open-mouth kisses could be shown. No nudity or explicit sexuality was allowed, such things as prostitution and drugs could not be portrayed, criminals had to be punished, and religion and the church could not be criticized (Kellner 1998: 355).

The scene in *SNSM* when Arthur and Brenda wake up in bed together, for example, would probably have been impossible to show in most American cinemas, strongly implying as it did not only sex but adulterous sex. As in the book, the sex in the film of *SNSM* is always implied rather than explicit. This more relaxed attitude, which also frequently involved consultation between the censor and the film-makers during the actual shooting, meant that British film-makers were able to broaden the range of themes they could treat, such as working-class realism, more explicit sex, and horror.

The independents were well-placed to take advantage of this, and Woodfall providing the realism and Hammer providing the horror are two clear examples. While for a long time it was a truism in the film industry that an “X” certificate meant financial ruin for a film, the financial success of films such as *Room at the Top* and *SNSM*, which was “the third biggest box office success of 1961, and second most successful British film after the doubtfully categorised *Swiss Family Robinson*” (Hill 1986: 45) helped convince the majors that “X” films could be profitable. Perhaps there was also a belated recognition that one way to combat the competition of television was by emphasizing the differences between the two media, and one way of doing this was by showing scenes in the cinema that could not be seen on television, as Cooke suggests above (pp.260-261). Whatever the reason, economic self-interest won out over any lingering moral qualms, and both Rank and A.B.P.C. started to produce and distribute “X” films, giving one more example of innovation being subsumed into the dominant elite.

The Free Cinema, while still making documentaries, had established a theoretical basis for their work firstly with their films, of course, but also with a number of articles published in influential journals like *Sequence* and *Sight and Sound*. Their awareness of European cinema, particularly French, had been shown in the programmes curated by them in the N.F.T. between 1956 and 1959 which had included, apart from their own work, films by Truffaut, Chabrol, Tanner, Polanski and Borowcyk. The New Wave in cinema originated in France in 1959, the “miraculous year”, and the coincidence of timing, coupled with the more international outlook of the Free Cinema, led to some attempts to link the two. Wollen says:

It has been argued that the “Angry Young Men” films of 1959-1963 were the “British New Wave”, rather than the “*Jeune Cinéma Anglais*” as the French, who certainly ought to have known, dubbed it at the time. Yet surely to call these films New Wave is both inappropriate and misleading (Wollen 1996: 240).

He goes on to argue that the New Wave was closely linked to the idea of the *auteur*, and the only Free director to whom this term could possibly be applied is Anderson, and even then it would be to stretch the limits of the definition. Also, a basic idea of the New Wave was the primacy of film over literature or theatre and, as has been related, the Free Cinema feature films were simply screen versions of previous written works, often employing the same writers. Furthermore the explicit Free objective of realism ran counter to many of the aims of the New Wave, which was placed clearly in the modernist tradition, so in general the attempts to compare the two had little real basis in fact. It seems that the term Free Cinema is the name that has stuck for the British movement, and is now used to refer to the feature films as well as the documentaries.

Woodfall, as previously stated, was by no means the only independent producer at the time, but it was probably the most successful and the most emblematic. It brought together what were considered the newest movements in literature (both fiction and drama) and film, and in many ways the Free feature films can be seen as a kind of swansong. Since both the literary and film movements petered out as the 60s came in, with the writers either not enjoying as much success or starting to treat different themes in their work, and with the independent film producers going out of business or being swallowed by the American studios, the films represent the encounter of two movements which soon afterwards disappeared from British cultural life. The films also represented perhaps the end of that British cultural production which could be called post-war, since with the passage of time and the coming of age of the post-war baby boom the war started to lose some of its importance for the new generations.

This is not to say, however, that the war ceased to have any relevance at all.<sup>104</sup> In the films of both *SNSM* and *LLDR* the war still casts a shadow over the people and their world, and this was not something that really changed until the advent of the “swinging London/60s/Beatles” phenomenon.

### 3.3 FILM ADAPTATION

Surprisingly, given the fact that adaptation is as old as cinema itself, critical attention in this area is a relatively recent phenomenon. Undoubtedly, technological developments such as video and, later, D.V.D. greatly facilitated the viewing and re-viewing of films, something which had not previously been possible for most people. In *Novels into Film* (1957), “the first full-scale academic analysis of film adaptation in America” (Naremore 2000: 6), a book which Aragay calls “hugely influential” (Aragay 2005: 12), the author George Bluestone describes his methods:

Essentially, the method is a way of imposing the shooting-script on the book...The method calls for viewing the film with a shooting-script at hand. During the viewing, notations of any final changes in the editing were entered on the script. After the script had become an accurate account of the movie’s final print, it was then superimposed on the novel (Bluestone 1957: xi).

Leaving aside the question of the validity of reducing a primarily visual product to a written text, this method now seems to us, with our freeze-frame, slow-motion, “making of” and other marvels, unbelievably clumsy. Nevertheless, Bluestone articulated some of the basic ideas of adaptation studies, particularly the differences between the two media of novel and film. Attacking many of the common assumptions made regarding films of books, which can be summarized as reflections

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<sup>104</sup> For anyone growing up in England in the 50s and 60s, the war was still a presence in the comics, the films, the television programmes, which now could include the earlier war films, and the conversation of the adults: as a child in the late 50s/early 60s “pre-war” was part of my vocabulary and could be applied to things as diverse as cigarette cards, books and biscuits.

of the basic idea that “the novel is a norm and the film deviates at its peril”

(Bluestone 1957: 5), he goes on:

What is common to all these assumptions is the lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but relatively homogeneous, conventions to another; that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium. Finally, it is insufficiently recognized that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is from architecture (Bluestone 1957: 5).

With this comment, Bluestone encapsulates what has eventually emerged as the central point of view of adaptation studies, that film and text are essentially different; this is contrary to the original and enduring idea of the novel as the “norm” by which any subsequent film must be judged, particularly in the question of how much it “deviates” from the original, an idea usually referred to as fidelity. Aragay explains it thus:

...a binary, hierarchical view of the relationship between literature and film, where the literary work was conceived of as the valued original, while the film adaptation was merely a copy, and where fidelity emerged as the central category of adaptation studies. The discourse of fidelity has exercised a firm, persistent grip within the field of adaptation studies (Aragay 2005: 12).

There are many reasons for this privileging of the novel. According to Bluestone (1957: 6-7) and Naremore (2000: 4) the early film industry was consciously popular in tone, deliberately seeking the mass market, but later started to adapt classic novels in order to appeal to the middle-class audience, and thus increase its perceived legitimacy.<sup>105</sup> The raising of the status of cinema continued with the introduction of sound in the 30s and 40s, which expanded the audience to include the middle and upper classes, and also with the birth of television in the 50s, which became the new mass entertainment, automatically elevating cinema to a comparatively more elite

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<sup>105</sup> This desire to raise the cinema from the level of entertainment to one of art should not obscure, however, the financial interests of adaptation: “Best-selling novels have offered their film adapters two major commercial advantages: proven appeal and a “pre-sold” audience. And critical acclaim often follows” (Hawkins 1993: 124).

position. It is after this time that film departments started to appear in universities in Britain and the U.S.A. These generally evolved out of English departments, and the bias in favour of literature and the written word, as the expression of the sovereign Author, a view which was still current, not unsurprisingly remained as the dominant idea in film and adaptation studies until the late 1970s (For this information see: Aragay 2005: 11-16).

There were, however, in the 80s, a number of writers who challenged the fidelity argument on various grounds. Andrew, in a seminal essay first published in 1980, asserts that adaptation is essentially a cultural practice and should be considered as such:

...adaptation, although a tantalizing keyhole for theorists, nevertheless partakes of the universal situation of film practice, dependent as it is on the aesthetic system of the cinema in a particular era and on that era's cultural needs and pressures. Filmmaking, in other words, is always an event in which a system is used and altered in discourse. Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse, but not an unthinkable one. Let us use it not to fight battles over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual artworks. Let us use it as we use all cultural practices, to understand the world from which it comes and the one towards which it points (Andrew 1984: 61).

This cultural viewpoint expressed by Andrew helped to move adaptation studies in the 1980s away from the strict text/film fidelity debate, as did the increasing influence of post-structuralism and the consolidation of the predominance of audiovisual forms of cultural production in industrial society. In 1996 what Aragay calls "The single most important monograph on adaptation to emerge in the 1990s" (Aragay 2005: 23), McFarlane's *Novel to Film*, continued the process of "unsettling the primacy of fidelity as a major criterion for judging film adaptations" (Aragay 2005: 23). The assessment of a film on the basis of how scrupulously it transfers to the screen the different elements of the prior text cannot, McFarlane concludes, usefully serve as a reliable criterion for evaluation. At best it helps to give a loose designation of a

certain kind of adaptation. He criticizes the vaguely-defined objections of the “fidelity critics” and says, with particular reference to negative reactions to the adaptation of

*Daisy Miller*:

What their dissatisfaction comes down to seems to be a sense that the illusion of reality created by the film does not coincide with their perception of the illusion of reality created by the novella. They write as though the latter were somehow *fixed* and that it is merely obtuse of the film-maker not to have noticed this and reproduced it in the new medium (McFarlane 1996: 164).

It is highly doubtful if complete fidelity is ever possible, unless the original work is written in cinematic style, in which case it would properly be called a screenplay rather than a novel. The insistence on fidelity also supposes that a book has a single transferable essence or kernel which can be recognized and delivered on film. However, there is no such essence, and if poststructuralism has shown one thing it is that a book has as many readings as there are readers; it is an open not a closed structure, and McFarlane, continuing the quote above, gives examples of films which were praised and damned by different critics on grounds of fidelity; thus the competing “perceptions of illusion”, while being to some extent a logical personal reaction to an adaptation, hardly form an objective basis for criticism.

This is not to say, however, that fidelity as a concept disappeared from the agenda in adaptation studies. Naremore, in 2000, bemoaned the continuing preoccupations and limitations of current theory:

Even when academic writing on the topic is not directly concerned with a given film’s artistic adequacy or fidelity to a beloved source, it tends to be narrow in range, inherently respectful of the “precursor text,” and constitutive of a series of binary oppositions that poststructuralist theory has taught us to deconstruct: literature versus cinema, high culture versus mass culture, original versus copy. Such oppositions are themselves the products of the submerged common sense of the average English department, which is composed of a mixture of Kantian aesthetics and Arnoldian ideas about society (Naremore 2000: 2).

Echoing the earlier comments by Andrew in calling for a widening of the focus of adaptation studies, he goes on to say:

I would suggest that what we need instead is a broader definition of adaptation and a sociology that takes into account the commercial apparatus, the audience, and the academic culture industry...In addition to expanding the kinds of texts we take into account, we need to augment the metaphors of translation and performance with the metaphor of intertextuality (Naremore 2000: 10, 12).

While reaffirming the importance of the cultural significance of film adaptation, Naremore also mentions those areas which are now receiving more attention. Aragay, incorporating recent ideas in translation theory, gives an account of the present status and preoccupations of the field of adaptation:

The “visible” translator “refracts” the source text...a view of translation which no doubt chimes in with current debates within adaptation studies around notions of authorship, originality, fidelity and intertextuality, and with recent views of adaptation as recreation or rewriting rather than reproduction” (Aragay 2005: 30).

It would seem that fidelity, while still retaining an important position in any discussion of adaptation, something which is natural if not unavoidable given the subject matter, is (finally! thankfully!) no longer the sole or central criterion by which a film is to be judged. Although, like the poor, it will no doubt always be with us, it need not be at the cost of other, equally valid, considerations.

The question of authorship mentioned by Aragay has always been closely connected to the idea of the primacy of the literary text. Bazin noted in 1948 that:

The ferocious defense of literary works is, to a certain extent, aesthetically justified; but we must also be aware that it rests on a rather recent, individualistic conception of the “author” and of the “work,” a conception that was far from being ethically rigorous in the seventeenth century and that started to become legally defined only at the end of the eighteenth (Bazin 2000: 51).

Bazin is often seen as a precursor of adaptation theory, and this article “Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest” raises many points which were to figure in later debates. Despite his apparent adhesion to the fidelity criterion as manifested in this quote, he nevertheless denotes what has always been both a crucial factor in the defence of

fidelity and a point on which it has been contested. The question of the identity of the author, an identification which is, in Foucault's phrase, "the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual" (Foucault in Sheen 2000: 7), and the visualization of this individual's descriptions or ideas, are central to much of the criticism received by particular adaptations and by the cinema in general. The inherent differences between the two media also make some differences inevitable: "Each medium has its own specificity deriving from its respective materials of expression. The novel has a single material of expression, the written word, whereas the film has at least five tracks: moving photographic image, phonetic sound, music, noises, and written materials" (Stam 2000: 70). The substitution of words by images has also served as a basis for that criticism of cinema as an art-form which was and still is an intellectual if not class-based rejection of the idea that a film can be the intellectual equal of a book. This bias is as old as film itself, and despite the efforts of Hollywood to work with the authors of the originals (in the 30s writers such as Shaw, Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Steinbeck all worked in film, usually adapting their own work) what can be seen as merely a prejudice of high culture against popular culture nevertheless persists. If it were nothing more than prejudice it would be a relatively trivial matter, but for Sheen it is much more:

But adaptation makes it clear that what we are dealing with is something of a historical crisis. The transition from page to screen articulates a radical discontinuity. It effaces the presence of the intellectual in the production system, even as the text itself effects a switch from invisibility to visibility (Sheen 2000: 7).

Since, as I have argued, the idea of the gifted individual has been central in the creation and defence of high culture since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whether this person is called an artist, a man of culture, an intellectual or a critic, the "effacement" of this remarkable individual in the film-making process represents an attack on the values

which accorded him or her the position in the first place. Sheen says: “The way adaptations produce not just animosity, but incoherent animosity, suggests that what is at stake is institutional definitions and identities rather than textual forms and contents” (Sheen 2000: 3). Rentschler quotes Kluge as saying:

Film history seems to demonstrate that literary adaptations always have less to offer than literature. Looking at results alone – these are two different media and for this reason their ability to produce expressive richness lies in different areas – does not show the way out. One must above all go back to the common root of films and books: that is telling stories. People tell a story about something. They do this in an epic, a dramatic way, or in forms not specifically categorizable, always according to the circumstances. This is the *process* (Kluge in Rentschler 1986: 1)

Q.D.Leavis in 1932 distinguished between writers such as Dickens or Reade who were for “the man in the street” (and the serial publication of Dickens’s work allowed his work to be read by lower class subscribers) and others such as Eliot and Trollope, who were for the educated reader. Leavis equated Dickens and his readers with the cinema audience as being uneducated and immature:

Dickens...discovered...the formula “laughter and tears” that has been the foundation of practically every popular success ever since (Hollywood’s as well as the best seller’s). Far from requiring an intellectual stimulus, these are the tears that rise in the heart and gather in the eyes, involuntarily... though an alert critical mind may cut them off at the source in a revulsion of disgust (Leavis, Q.D. in Dennett 2000: 56).

This opinion of Hollywood was shared, naturally, by F.R.Leavis, who wrote of how films “involve surrender, under conditions of hypnotic receptivity, to the cheapest emotional appeals” (Leavis, F.R. 1998: 15); this anti-film stance was and still is not unusual among the intelligentsia, and can be explained by the concept of distance as outlined by Fiske (p.181) in which the simple, physical reaction is contrasted, as it is by Q.D.Leavis, with the considered intellectual response. The contrast between the supposed emotional response which is deliberately sought by films and the “intellectual” “critical” assessment of the “alert” mind, paradoxically resulting in a

visceral response of revulsion and disgust, was perhaps most clearly delineated by the Leavisites, but they were by no means the only critics to attack the cinema as a medium on this basis. The diffusion of the individual discourse of the author into the more generalized discourse of an apparatus, and furthermore an apparatus of mass communication, represents a fall in status of the gifted man or woman, and particularly a fall in status of the written word. Critical hostility to this change is often cloaked in the words “subtle” or “subtlety”, and though it is never clearly explained of what the subtlety consists and why the film does not express it adequately, there is no doubt that subtlety lies in language not image. Sinyard writes of the reaction to David Lean’s *Passage to India* which was criticised for, among other things, failing to capture the Forsterian subtleties of the original:

There is no doubt that part of the critical hostility shown to the film in this country was due to two main causes: a literary sensibility amongst critics that was far more developed than a cinematic sensibility (something which has bedevilled British film criticism over the years); and a reverence for Forster as a literary icon...I have to say that although there are many qualities I admire and identify in Forster as a writer... “subtlety” has never been one of them (Sinyard 2000: 148-149).

It would seem that the superior subtlety of a written work is independent of the individual work in question, and Sinyard’s first point may help to explain this conviction. If a critic feels able to judge a book but not a film, each on its own terms, then it is hardly surprising if a film adaptation is judged on the basis of the book and is found wanting. Commercial realities also play an important part, and it is highly probable that most people seeing a film adaptation have not previously read the book, a fact which further weakens the primacy of the source text and author. McCarthy says: “[Film] eschews monogamy with an author’s singular voice for a film crew’s collaborative vision, plus panders to the bigger pay-off at the box-office than the bookstore” (McCarthy 2005: 125). If the first reception of the work is via the screen,

and many very popular films have been made from books that few people have read and even fewer remember,<sup>106</sup> this can have the effect that the enduring images or characters of a classic novel are in fact not found in the novel, or found in a different form, and thus the idea of primacy is something which can shift according to people's perceptions and experience.<sup>107</sup> How many people identify Conrad's Kurtz with Marlon Brando, or *Brideshead* with Castle Howard? A film has to give a specific visual depiction of something or somebody that was previously only imagined, and it is naturally this concrete image which frequently dominates and displaces the less substantial mental picture. Andrew says of this basic difference between the media in the mechanics of showing and seeing:

Generally film is found to work from perception toward signification, from external facts to interior motivations and consequences, from the givenness of a world to the meaning of a story out of that world. Literary fiction works oppositely. It begins with signs (graphemes and words), building to propositions that attempt to develop perception (Andrew 1984: 54).

Connected with this rendering of the invisible into the visible is the issue of performance. Judgement of the fidelity to the original has usually been based primarily on the narrative elements of the text and film, and Andrew said: "The analysis of adaptation, then, must point to the achievement of equivalent narrative units in the absolutely different semiotic systems of film and language" (Andrew 1984: 55). While his point of the different means of signification is undoubtedly valid, the narrative unit of character is always mutable by the less-easily defined aspect of performance. Martín says:

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<sup>106</sup> The prime example of this is Hitchcock, who usually took a novel as his starting point but frequently chose novels which were practically unknown at the time. Leitch argues that this was a conscious strategy on Hitchcock's part, as one of the means of ensuring his identification as the author of the film (Leitch 2005: 108-116).

<sup>107</sup> I remember reading in a newspaper the conversation between two American teenagers coming out of a cinema showing one of the spate of Austen adaptations of the 90s, with one of them asking: "Has that Jane Austen made any other films?"

The obsession for considering the analogies and differences between novels and films as *narrative texts* has obscured the basic fact that whenever a novel is adapted for the screen it is transformed into a *dramatic text* – the screenplay – before it becomes a film proper, that is, drama performed before a camera. Film adaptation of novels, in short, is always dramatisation, and character plays a major role in this process (Martín 2005: 52).

As noted here, performance is often ignored as a feature of adaptation, even in fidelity-based criticism, somewhat surprisingly since performance can be seen as one of the key defining differences between text and film. Its importance, consequently, has started to receive more recognition, and Aragay states that: “Performance theory in the 1990s...also contributed to undermining the formalistic, binary paradigm within adaptation studies” (Aragay 2005: 27).

The theatre, however, like film a performance medium based on a written script, does not suffer the same derogation as an art-form as film does. Two possible reasons for this may be that, firstly, a play is usually an individually-produced original work, and so the writer can immediately be identified with his or her creation, avoiding some of the questions of authorship. Also, the theatre has not been a medium of mass communication for many years, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the higher cultural value accorded to the theatre reflects the rift between high and popular culture.<sup>108</sup> All the same, the increasing awareness of performance has been, as Aragay says above, another influence in adaptation studies, and a sign of the broadening horizons of the field.

Translation has been mentioned, and is a further example of the contact with other disciplines which has recently characterized the ever-wider outlook of adaptation studies. Cahir, in fact, in *Literature into Film* (2006), prefers to speak of translation rather than adaptation, since:

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<sup>108</sup> This higher value is not only cultural: the theatre is generally much more expensive than the cinema.

...the term “to adapt” means to alter the structure or function of an entity so that it is better fitted to survive and multiply in its new environment. To adapt is to move *that same entity* into a new environment...”To translate,” in contrast to “to adapt,” is to move a text from one language to another. *It is a process of language*, not a process of survival and generation. Through the process of translation a fully new text – *a materially different entity* – is made, one that simultaneously has a strong relationship with its original source, yet is fully independent from it (Cahir 2006: 14).

This insistence on the independence of the new version of the original is symptomatic of the loosening of the strictures of fidelity, of which Giddings gives an ironical, simplistic account, as implied in the first five words of the quote, when he says:

On the face of it, dramatising a novel for the screen is a simple matter. All that is required is the translation of what the novelist imagined and wrote in words, into moving pictures and sound. Few would expect exact translation – the precise and literal rendering of the original narrative prose. The art lies in finding the appropriate equivalent, the right style or tone, into which to recast the original. A translation does not replace the original (Giddings 2000: 32).

A translation, in this point of view, is a parallel rather than a substitute text, whether it is a literary translation or a film adaptation, and it is in the aspects which are emphasized or ignored by the translator that the arguments of fidelity are usually found. Though it is not the case with *Woodfall*, which was determinedly contemporary, questions of period often arise, and the question of whether to place a film in contemporary settings or to keep to the original and thus make a historical drama is one which still vexes film-makers, although given the “heritage industry” costume dramas made by British film and television in the last twenty years, perhaps the question is obviously not always so hard to answer. The different demands made of the reader of a novel and the spectator of a film naturally make a completely faithful adaptation impossible, and the length of a book as translated into images must either result in some kind of selection process or in a change of format, such as the

British television serials of works by Waugh<sup>109</sup>, Austen<sup>110</sup> or Eliot<sup>111</sup> in the last twenty-five years for example, whose length could never be encompassed in a normal feature film.

As adaptation has gradually moved away from the primacy of the fidelity criterion, so has translation. Aragay notes how in the 90s, the polysystems theory in translation affected adaptation theory:

Polysystems theory focuses on the way the target (translated) text actually functions in its context, and on how and why shifts of emphasis take place during the translation process. When applied to the study of adaptation, such an approach opens up some interesting perspectives that go far beyond the concerns with fidelity. Questions to be asked about the function of a film adaptation in its context include whether the adaptation presents itself as such and why; what is the adaptation's reception by the audience and critics, and how does it vary in time and space; and, above all, the study of the adaptation's intertextual universe (Aragay 2005: 24).

The question of intertextuality has recently assumed a greater significance, and McCarthy, for example, says: "To move beyond the conceptual impasse of origin and deficient copy, critics have begun looking to Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogics, or the notion that all texts are actually intertexts which quote or embed fragments of earlier texts" (McCarthy 2005: 126). This idea clearly has many applications in the area of adaptation, which necessarily involves at least one original or hypotext, the written work which the film adapts. Stam said:

Film adaptations then, are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin...Film adaptations can be seen as a kind of multileveled negotiation of intertexts. Therefore, it is often productive to ask these questions: precisely what generic intertexts are invoked by the source novel, and which by the filmic adaptation? Which generic signals in the novel are picked up, and which are ignored? (Stam 2000: 66-67).

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<sup>109</sup> *Brideshead Revisited* (1981), I.T.V. 11 hour-long episodes. [www.tv.com/brideshead-revisited](http://www.tv.com/brideshead-revisited)

<sup>110</sup> *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), B.B.C. 6 hour-long episodes. [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

<sup>111</sup> *Middlemarch* (1994), B.B.C. 6 hour-long episodes. [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

This idea has particular relevance to *SNSM* and *LLDR*, especially when one bears in mind Pardo García's reminder that intertextuality can "...replace the classical conception of adaptation as a one-way relation running from text to film...by a dialogue involving many shades and nuances, and running in both directions: not only from literature to film but also from film to literature" (Pardo García 2005: 239). As previously mentioned, Peter Hitchcock refers to the Angry/working-class fiction phenomenon of the 50s/early 60s as a cultural event, by which he means "...a cultural formation based on determinants that produce a group identification even if the "members" themselves are opposed to the terms or the very idea of a "formation" (Hitchcock 1989: 28), and I believe that both the common conception of this grouping and the writers' disagreement with it has been made clear. Hitchcock goes on to give an example of the two-way process mentioned by Pardo García, when he shows the interaction between the source Angry texts and the Free films:

Why the novels gained such great cultural capital was not so much because publishers took a risk on working-class writing but because they achieved wide popular appeal through film versions with paperback tie-ins....What was inadvertently discovered was that the working class watched films and read paperbacks in much greater numbers than they went to the theatre or bought or borrowed hardbacks...working-class consumers, and especially the young, made up a significant proportion of those who supported the projection of their lives on screen and in books. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *Room at the Top*, *A Taste of Honey*, *Look Back in Anger*, "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner," *A Kind of Loving*, *Billy Liar*, and *This Sporting Life* were all made into successful films and paperbacks (Hitchcock 1989: 38).<sup>112</sup>

The original success of the books led to the success of the films which led to the renewed success of the books and, according to Hitchcock, a broadening, in social terms, of the readership. This mutual reinforcement raises interesting questions of

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<sup>112</sup> This boosting of book sales by a successful adaptation was by no means new, and Bluestone gives a number of examples from the 50s and earlier (Bluestone 1957: 4). This can be true not only of the original work but also of texts, songs, food or other things mentioned in a film, and sales of W.H.Auden's poetry, for example, surged after one of his poems was read in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, as did those of E.E.Cummings after *Hannah and her Sisters*. Source: [www.holtunlimited.com](http://www.holtunlimited.com) Access date: 10.2.2007

authorship and primacy, which have been mentioned previously. It would seem that for many, if not the majority, the first exposure to the works was through the films, thus any subsequent reading would necessarily be influenced by the adaptation, so which is the original? Bluestone posed this question as early as 1957 when he wrote: “That is why, if one is asked, “How do you like the Greek *Electra*?” one must reply, “By whom? Sophocles or Euripides?” And, if one is asked, “How do you like *The Informer*?” one must reply, “By whom? O’Flaherty or Ford?” ” (Bluestone 1957: 90) Furthermore, the hypotexts of the film of *SNSM*, for example, are not only the novel but the other books considered to form part of the Angry group, no matter the validity or not of this grouping, and also the preceding Free films. It could also be said that Sillitoe’s first books were themselves hypotexts for writers such as Barstow or Storey (see pp.150-152), and thus the cultural event reveals the interplay among the Angry books, among the Free films, and between the two different media. Aragay and López state: “Not only is the “original” text intertextually inf(1)ected by other previous and contemporary texts and discourses, but it is necessarily...open to inf(1)ection by subsequent con-texts” (Aragay and López 2005: 203).

This view of the films as being inextricably linked with a number of other written and filmed works over, roughly, a ten-year period, encourages an analysis which goes beyond such questions as fidelity or authorship, an analysis which can best be described as cultural, and indeed Aragay speaks of “...literary studies, film studies and their *interface* (my italics) adaptation studies...adaptation studies may well turn out to be central to any history of culture – any discussion, that is, of the transformation and transmission of texts and meanings in and across cultures (Aragay 2005: 18, 30). Storey, citing the research on cinema spectatorship conducted by Jackie Stacey, gives:

...her useful diagram of the contrasting paradigms of film studies and cultural studies:

Film studies	Cultural studies
Spectatorship positioning	Audience readings
Textual analysis	Ethnographic methods
Meaning as production-led	Meaning as consumption-led
Passive viewer	Active viewer
Unconscious	Conscious
Pessimistic	Optimistic

(Stacey in Storey 1996: 69).

This schema helps to clarify the approach to my analysis of the films, which will naturally focus on them as adaptations, but not to the exclusion of other considerations. Stacey's summary of the cultural studies reading of film is, of course, consonant with the basic ideas of the field, particularly in her rejection of the idea of the spectator as a passive recipient of the popular product (see pp. 68-86). Her summation of the basic ideas of film studies would be more in keeping with the Leavisites' negative opinion of film (p. 276) in terms of the reception of mass culture; ironically, this view could equally well be read as an encapsulation of the Leavisites' ideas on the "correct" reception of literature (pp.62-65), a view which would confirm the argument, stated above, that their rejection of film was fundamentally an objection to the *process* in Kluge's terms (p.276).

The recognition of the differences between the media, and the destabilizing of fidelity as the central criterion, now allow the reader/viewer to see an adaptation as a work in its own right, with all that this entails, while naturally still retaining a connection of some sort to the source text. Martín says: "...screen adaptation should be understood as a critical reading expressed through the plastic beauty of the film screen rather than as a "truthful" reading in search of the poetry of the written word" (Martín 2000: 50), and this view would now seem to be a central concept in the field. I will give the last word on this question to Sillitoe, who wrote, possibly reflecting his

technical background: “The novel is merely a blueprint, while the film made out of it is something different” (Sillitoe 1995: 266), a metaphor which I have not come across anywhere else.

Before considering the two films in more detail, perhaps it would be useful first to consider some other questions, not least that posed by Inglis when he asks: “What is an adaptation of a novel for?” (Inglis 2000: 179) One obvious motivation is financial, and since both of the films were profitable for all concerned<sup>113</sup> this is not something which can be ignored; Hollywood, the epitome of the film business, is and always has been first and last a business, and by most indicators the most successful business in the world. Since its inception film has relied heavily on literary adaptations for its subject matter, and since both the Sillitoe books had been best-sellers, the adaptation to cinema was practically inevitable, though this is not to say that adapting a best-seller is a guarantee of financial success, as a brief look at any film industry will confirm.

For Woodfall, particularly, founded as it was by the actor and playwright John Osborne, the transposition to the screen of the plays and books would seem even more logical, since whether it was a question of a change from stage to screen with the works of Osborne or Delaney, or from page to screen with the works of Sillitoe, film is primarily a performance medium, as has been mentioned, something borne out by the continuing movement of actors, directors, writers and others between stage and screen. Whatever more material reasons there may be, however, we must assume that films are frequently made for the simple reason that the makers feel that they are creating a work of art, that they feel that what they have to say is important and valuable and that they want to communicate this to other people. The fact that the

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<sup>113</sup> The profits from *SNSM* enabled the producer, Harry Saltzman, to buy the rights to Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels and thus start the most profitable British film series ever (Sillitoe 1995: 270).

people involved in Woodfall and other independents risked their own money to make the films would seem to indicate that the financial motive was not the strongest or the only one (although they did eventually get a good return on their investment), and this basic desire to tell a story (see Kluge, p.276) must be seen as a prime motivating force for the process of adaptation.

The Free Cinema makers were also vocally political, and this was undoubtedly a factor in the choice of works they chose to film and the way in which they filmed them. As has been shown many times, art and politics are anything but mutually exclusive, and Lovell says:

The belief in social responsibility has been enormously influential on the British cinema. It is most often articulated in terms of the cinema having a serious relationship with society. As such its acceptance runs pretty much without challenge through the history of the British cinema from the 1930s to the 1990s (Lovell 1997: 236).

The theoretical base of the Free Cinema was as much concerned with its position and function in society as it was with purely cinematographic questions, and although this is more overt in the early documentaries, the feature films also reflect, to some extent, this serious concern, a concern which takes the subject-matter beyond purely adaptational boundaries. Given the artistic and historical background of the Free Cinema and the people involved, these films are now seen as going beyond the documentary/realist/working-class preoccupations of the time and are considered more and more to represent both a particular view of English society and a particular movement in English film. Among the reasons for this could be the fact that, as Vincendeau says, European cinema usually tends to be considered on national lines, and also that the designation of "movement" is often based on little more than chronological coincidence. There can be advantages to this, such as the increased distribution and availability of the films, either in cinemas or on television or

video/D.V.D. One major disadvantage, however, is that "...the desire to bracket films together inevitably homogenizes a collection of diverse works. A close study of films belonging to a movement reveals as many stylistic and ideological differences as it reveals similarities" (Vincendeau 1998: 444). Whether it is called the Free Cinema or the English New Wave (to distinguish it from the various other New Waves) the dozen (at most) films which were made over some six or seven years are now grouped together, and whether this is to the detriment of their makers and English cinema as a whole, or otherwise, is impossible to say.

### **3.4 *SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING, THE FILM***

What is undeniable is that the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is considered as one of the most representative of this grouping, as well as being one of the most profitable. It was released in 1960, produced by Harry Saltzman and Tony Richardson for Woodfall, and directed by Karel Reisz. Albert Finney starred as Arthur Seaton, Rachel Roberts as Brenda, Shirley Ann Field played Doreen, Bryan Pringle played Jack, and Norman Rossiter was Bert. The script was written by Alan Sillitoe. As could be expected given Woodfall's usual working methods the film is, in Wagner's terms, a transposition, that is to say that the novel is transferred to the screen with few or no changes (Wagner 1975: 222). There is some compression, almost inevitable in an adaptation of a novel due to questions of time, and one common method of compression is by cutting characters. In Stam's words, "Film adaptations have a kind of "Sophie's Choice" about which characters will live or die" (Stam 2000: 82). Thus Winnie disappears, and Brenda assumes proportionally more importance than in the book. Aunt Ada's "tribe" of cousins is reduced to one cousin,

Bert, who also appears more in the film than the tribe does in the book, becoming Arthur's usual companion and confidant. In general, though, the structure of the novel and its main characters are maintained. The focus remains on Arthur, and on the basis of the film he seems to be the only one of his parent's children living at home, though there is an implicit reference to a brother who has emigrated to Australia. Since the late 50s – early 60s were the peak periods of British emigration to Australia on the assisted passage scheme, this can be seen as one of the several indicators of time in the film as opposed to the novel. If there is in the novel a certain blurring of time, the film makes more of an effort to specify the period, for example through the titles of the films advertised (*Pillow Talk* 1959) or the presence of a young black man in the factory, an absence in the book which has previously been noted.

*SNSM*<sup>114</sup> was filmed in black and white, something which could be considered surprising in the light of the Free objective of realism, if it is accepted that the higher cost of colour film was not the only factor in the choice. However, far from lending reality to a film the effect of using colour was, and probably still is, the reverse of what one could logically expect. "Colour was widely used in cartoons, musicals, westerns and comedies where fantasy and spectacle were paramount. So, colour's function was not to create the illusion of the real, but to signify artifice, decoration, the cinema as story-teller" (Turner 1988: 21). Though colour had been widely used since the 30s, it was not until television converted to colour in the 60s that colour became the norm in film, and even now black and white seems to add "authenticity" to documentaries and some types of feature film, and has a similar effect in still photography. In *SNSM* it also helps to emphasize the difference between day and night, an integral part of the film. The film was photographed by Freddie Francis, who

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<sup>114</sup> I shall keep to the same abbreviation, specifying film or novel if necessary.

went on to become one of the most respected film photographers and cinematographers in the world, winning numerous awards, and even directing a number of films himself.

As has been mentioned, the film was given an “X” certificate and, as was the usual practice at the time, there was consultation between the makers and the censor throughout the production process (see p.267). Marwick says that:

The censors objected to four things in the original screenplay: “the slap-happy successful termination of pregnancy”; “*language*”; love scenes “too revealing”; and the violence of Arthur’s beating-up. In the film finally released, the alteration in the abortion episode is the most obvious single change: we are left in no doubt that the attempt with hot water and gin has failed (Marwick 1991: 78).

The music was performed and written by Johnny Dankworth, one of the foremost British jazz performers for more than thirty years who was also responsible for the music in *Darling*, *The Servant*, and some twenty other films, mostly British.<sup>115</sup> At this period in Britain, jazz was seen as an acceptable form of American culture. Coming as it did from the Black experience it was culturally and politically acceptable to the intelligentsia yet did not carry the same stigma of commercialism as rock and roll. Both Jim Dixon and Jimmy Porter are jazz fans (Arthur Seaton was probably not, and though we are told nothing about his musical tastes in the book, as a Teddy boy his tastes would probably tend more to rock and roll), and many other British films of the period (*Look Back in Anger*, *Alfie*) had a jazz soundtrack, not to mention *Momma Don’t Allow*, which is the title of a jazz song. The type of jazz favoured was “trad” jazz, and in the film there is an implicit contrast between the diegetic music in various scenes and the background music. The jazz-influenced score is more a reflection of the taste of the people by whom the film was made rather than the people about whom

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<sup>115</sup> Source: [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk) Access date: 4.5.2006

it was made. (For the relevance of jazz in the new left and the Free Cinema see: Sinfield 1997: 158-161, 260-264).

Leaving aside the background music, however, the diegetic music heard in the film plays an important role in displaying the ideas of culture which are seen, and especially in showing the contrasting or competing ideas of popular culture and mass culture, a contrast which, as has been seen, was considered to be of great importance, not only by the Free Cinema. If the book was more concerned with showing Arthur's life as it was lived in all aspects, the film is often concerned to juxtapose the traditional working-class culture and the new consumer-based patterns, usually to the advantage of the former.

When Arthur is in the pub at the beginning of the film, for example, there are two bars shown. Upstairs, where Brenda and Arthur are, there is a skiffle group playing a recent hit song, "What do you want if you don't want money?" a title with an obvious significance. (The same song appears in *We are the Lambeth Boys*.) The group and the performance are not particularly good or bad, but the people in general are not paying any attention to them, being much more interested in the drinking contest which is taking place. Downstairs, and the relative location of the two performances could be taken to signify the current supremacy of the new culture, a group of people, in general older than in the upstairs bar, is gathered round a piano singing a traditional pub song, "Lily of Laguna". For Hoggart this type of singing was an integral part of working-class life, and he contrasts it with the "...endless, tepid glucose-and-water of...radio programmes for workers, which are not of the people, but of the world where things are done for the people" (Hoggart 1971: 151). This last is a crucial distinction, and the pub scenes clearly show the difference between genuine organic culture and the false commercial imitation, the difference between participants and

performers. Hoggart specifically mentions “Lily of Laguna” as an example of the type of song which was popularly sung, and which usually came from the tradition of the music-hall rather than folk music:

Thus working-class groups still sing some of the songs their grandparents sang. They do not sing any from before then; the oldest works in the canon date from the heyday of the great urban music centres. They would not be happy singing “My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean”, or “Johnny’s So Long at the Fair”, and they leave “Little Brown Jug” and “There is a Tavern in the Town” to the Scouts and students (Hoggart 1957: 158).

This rejection of the “officially-sanctioned” folk culture, suitable only for Scouts and students, echoes the earlier comment on the myth of Robin Hood (p.189), and both Sillitoe and Hoggart look on these attempts to provide a ready-made culture as being just as false as the commercial brand. The other time we hear singing is when Brenda is waiting outside Aunt Ada’s house while Arthur is inside explaining the problem of her pregnancy. She is shown against the background of a church, and we can hear a choir singing a hymn, reminding us that it is Sunday, just as the church bells remind us the first time we see Arthur and Brenda wake up together. Besides giving an example of the other most common type of participatory song, the sacred as opposed to the profane, this also reinforces the idea that abortion was generally considered a sin at the time, as well as being a crime. This is borne out in the later scene when Brenda tells Arthur that she has decided not to go through with the probably illegal surgical abortion which they had arranged,<sup>116</sup> and though she does not give any specific reasons her moral doubts, whether based on religion or not, are undoubtedly a major factor in her decision.

Elsewhere we see the scene in Doreen’s mother’s house when Arthur, Doreen, Bert and Carol are dancing to the radio, and the scene when Doreen and Arthur start to

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<sup>116</sup> The viewer is given this information so briefly and implicitly that it leads me to believe that this scene was added later, after the Censor had disallowed a successful abortion (see p. 289).

dance in the Seatons' house on the departure of the policeman with Mr. and Mrs. Bull, again to music from the radio. In both cases the music could probably be described as "swing", which is essentially jazz-based, and disregarding the likelihood of being able to hear this on the radio, which is to say the B.B.C., it would seem to be another case of the music reflecting the taste of the makers of the film. The other significant music is heard in the fairground scenes, when various types of music are heard. More than one song can often be heard simultaneously, realistically reflecting the cacophony of a fair. When Arthur is on the ride with Brenda, however, and he runs from the two soldiers, we hear music which seems to be something like rock and roll, thus reflecting what has already been mentioned as a common attitude at the time, that rock and roll represents the dangers of the new culture, especially the youth culture: sex, violence and immorality. Later, after Arthur has been caught and beaten up, we can still faintly hear music from the fair, but this time it is an old-fashioned barrel-organ type of instrument, and one could read this as the victory of the "real" music over the bloodied and beaten Arthur, the representative of the new, young, false product.

Similar comparisons are drawn in another aspect of the mass culture, namely the cinema. As in the book, going to the cinema is seen as a universal habit, and the first time Arthur meets Doreen they arrange to meet at the cinema. It is noteworthy that Doreen goes to the same cinema on the same day at the same time every week – the film being shown is seen as irrelevant. (They go to see *Pillow Talk*.) In the later scene with Doreen and Arthur in the park we hear that they have just been to the cinema again. Arthur also goes with Bert to kill time while Aunt Ada is trying to terminate Brenda's pregnancy. When he arrives at his aunt's house she says "the tribe" are "at the pictures", underlining the popularity of the cinema. Outside Aunt Ada's house,

however, are some advertising posters which we see a number of times as Arthur arrives, then as he brings Brenda in, and then as he talks with Bert, albeit very briefly each time. One poster is illegible, though it is possible to make out "...week", so it may possibly be for some promotional event. One can with difficulty be made out as advertising *The Bramble Bush*, a 1960 American film starring Richard Burton, (possibly a free plug from Woodfall as thanks for Burton's support for *Look Back in Anger*), and the film is showing at the A.B.C. cinema, one of the aforementioned "big two". The largest and only easily-read poster is advertising the Crazy Gang in a film called *Life is a Circus*, which was released in 1958.

The Crazy Gang was a group made up of three double-acts which rose to prominence in the 30s, and was essentially a music-hall troupe, although they also made films and television programmes. They were extremely popular in Britain for some thirty years, especially in the period spanning the war, and their act combined songs, an anarchic humour, and even some elements influenced by the circus.

The music-hall had been the most popular form of entertainment for the working class since Victorian times or earlier, pre-dating the cinema, of course, and other spectator events such as football. This is what Hoggart means by "the great urban music centres" (p.291) and the "heyday" was probably at the turn of the century by which time the halls had developed from being basically extensions of pubs into popular centres of entertainment in their own right, although the sale of drink was still the most profitable aspect for the proprietor. The 50s and early 60s saw the final throes of the music hall in Britain, and Osborne's second play, *The Entertainer*, (also filmed by Woodfall, in 1960, directed by Tony Richardson) deals with this theme through the character of Archie Rice, a failing music hall artist whose professional and moral decline mirrors what Osborne saw as the decay of moral and social life in

Britain. Although the music hall eventually became popular with all social classes in Britain, it was always primarily the quintessential working-class entertainment, and the entertainment staged and attitudes expressed were those, logically, of its main audience. Jones gives a number of figures and observations, with particular reference to London where the different work and living patterns led to the establishment of the first halls, whose popularity and success later spread to other parts of the country:

In the 1880s it was estimated that there were 500 halls in London...the 35 largest halls alone were catering to an average audience of 45,000 nightly...In general the music hall appealed to all sectors of the working class from the casual labourer to the highly paid artisan. Its importance as a social and cultural institution in proletarian districts was second only to that of the pub...It is clear that by the beginning of the twentieth century a new working-class culture had emerged in London...This culture was clearly distinguished from the culture of the middle class and had remained largely impervious to middle-class attempts to dictate its character or direction. Its dominant cultural institutions were not the school, the library, the friendly society, the church or the chapel, but the pub, the sporting paper, the race course and the music hall...Music hall was a participatory form of leisure activity, but not a demanding one...Music hall stood for the small pleasures of working-class life...Its attitude was *a little bit of what you fancy does you good* (Jones 1998: 68-71).

Though the effects of music hall could still be felt in England well into the 1970s and 80s (many popular television entertainers started their career in the halls and retained vestiges of this in their acts, the best example probably being Morecambe and Wise, with Charlie Chaplin being an earlier instance) television probably did even more damage to the music hall than it did to the cinema, and at the time of the film of *SNSM* it had practically ceased to exist.

In this context the prominent position of the poster for a film which is already a little out of date, on a double bill with *Geordie*, a British film from 1955, so even older, and furthermore a film featuring a peculiarly English act whose natural home was the music hall, in the same shot as a poster for an American film (albeit with a British star) but which is visually subordinate, would have suggested to an English

audience of the time the superiority of the home-grown popular culture but also the decline and archaism of this. The whole sequence – the tribe at the pictures, the posters, Arthur and Bert going to the cinema – is a clear indication that the preferred culture now is the mass-produced American-influenced one. We do see two other posters or notices, one which looks vaguely official and is much smaller and illegible, so unimportant, and one which is larger and legible but cut in half by the camera on every occasion that it appears. We can only read “...ecture” and “...dhall”. If we understand this to be “lecture” as the most probable word, with the juxtaposition of “Guildhall”, Nottingham’s Town Hall, it would seem that the only official or semi-official intellectual activity on offer is so irrelevant that it is not worth showing.

Almost inevitably, Reisz comments on the newest and most potent mass medium, television. It is not shown or mentioned much, but what is shown leaves little doubt as to the opinion of Reisz, and Arthur. The first time is when Arthur is eating his tea, while his father is watching television, and Arthur tells him about an accident in the factory (fictional of course) which happened because the man had gone blind in one eye through “watching television day in day out”. More revealing than the words themselves though, which could be just another one of Arthur’s stories, as it is in the book, is the expression on Arthur’s face as he watches his father watching the adverts on television, which is one of utter contempt. It is clear that the contempt is for the television rather than for his father, since the relation between the two men in the film, while not shown very much, seems to be close and respectful; in the scene when Arthur appeals to his father for an alibi for the shooting of Mrs. Bull, Mr. Seaton immediately and instinctively lies to the policeman and laughs about it afterwards, saying of the Bulls that “I hate noseey Parkers”.

Later, when Bert comes to visit Arthur while the latter is recovering from his beating, he passes through the Seatons' living room and, observing the blank screen, says: "What's up – the telly broken?", letting us know how deeply the habit has become engrained. In another scene, while Brenda is getting ready to go out with Arthur, Jack says to her that now he's working nights he is making more money, and so may be able to buy a television, and then Brenda "wouldn't need to go out so much". This places television firmly in the domestic, feminine sphere, along with the majority of the new appliances which were the visible symbols of affluence, and contrasting it with Brenda's nights out with Arthur shows it as something both limiting and boring, so logically approved of by the "slow" Jack. One cannot imagine Brenda trading her time with Arthur for an evening at home watching television (we are not told what happens to the children while Jack is at work and Brenda is out on the batter, but this is not explained in the book either), and while the medium had not yet invaded public spaces such as pubs and clubs the reaction to the increasing invasion of the home is clear. For Arthur television is a pacifier, not only of women like Brenda but also of people like his parents. When he and Bert are fishing by the canal in the penultimate scene of the film, Arthur says that it's better to fight than to end up like his mum and dad. Bert says, surprised, "They've got all they want." Arthur replies "Aye, they've got a television set and a packet of fags, but they're both dead from the neck up." He says that it is not their fault, but they belong to the group of those who have "had their hash settled for them", who have been defeated and so can be pushed around by "all the bloody gaffers", and television is something which helps to keep them docile. In short, then, while the Smith family are united in their enthusiasm for television, although their use of it is far from being purely passive, in the Seaton house there seems to be a generational and ideological gap expressed,

ironically, given the usual arguments between parents and children over television, in the figures of the older, defeated parents and the young son who is still fighting. If we take the opinions expressed on television with those already given regarding music and cinema, we can see that the makers' preoccupation with mass culture (as in the novel, books and reading material are practically non-existent, being restricted to the occasional glimpse of a newspaper) is similar to that expressed by Hoggart and others, that the new commercial culture is driving out the older more authentic culture, and the effect of this is to blunt the reactions of the recipients.

To return to Stam's view of the multiplicity of tracks available to cinema as opposed to the single track of the written word in a book, noise and phonetic sound are essential parts of *SNSM*, something which is not necessarily true for all films. The film opens with a general shot of the factory<sup>117</sup> and the first impression received is of the near-deafening noise of the machinery. This is true for all the factory scenes, and when the machinery is turned off for a tea-break, or Arthur moves away from his machine, the cessation of the noise is a physical relief. The workers have to shout to each other to be heard, and Arthur's conversations with Jack can only be held in quieter times or places. The noise of the factory is a constant condition of Arthur's work, and in the opening scene Arthur's counting "Nine hundred and fifty-bloody-five" and comment "No wonder I've got a bad back" give an immediate picture of the daily life of a factory worker: repetitive tasks carried out in arduous physical conditions which, as we see later, include the presence of rats. Since the nineteenth century, noise had been one of the principal components of the idea of the factory as

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<sup>117</sup> The factory scenes were shot in the Raleigh factory, and Sillitoe writes of going to the première of the film and of seeing "Albert Finney as Arthur Seaton working in the Turnery Department of the Raleigh factory, as if he too had been there since he was fourteen. The spot was the same I had stood on in that age, in another world, at another time, and certainly as someone else" (Sillitoe 1995: 268-269).

inhuman or infernal (see Dickens on Coketown), and in the film it is shown that conditions had changed very little in the twentieth century.

The factory is not the only place we hear noise however, which is logical given the stated Free objective of realism. There is almost always background noise throughout the film, either dogs barking, the sound of traffic, children playing, the sounds of the fair, church bells ringing as Arthur and Brenda lie in bed on Sunday morning, in short the sounds of the city. Just as noise is an integral part of Arthur's working life, so it is in his home and social life, and living as and where he does it is inevitable that the sounds of normal human activity form the aural background.

There are, nevertheless, two exceptions to the continuous use of diegetic sound. The first is when Arthur is beaten up by the two soldiers; the scene is shot from the middle distance, and is shot in almost total silence except for the occasional distant car passing. The visual violence seems somewhat stylised, especially in these days of close-up gore, and possibly this was a result of the censor's comments (see p.286), but the absence of sound gives the action an almost unreal quality. The second scene is when Arthur and Doreen make love (or start to) in her house. Although they have to keep quiet since Arthur has already pretended to leave and her mother is upstairs in bed,<sup>118</sup> the silence, again broken only by faint traffic noises, is unrealistic. Their lips move slightly, whether as part of the kissing or if they are speaking is impossible to tell, but we hear nothing. Why Reisz should suspend the norms of reality for these two scenes is open to argument.

One possibility, the most probable to my mind, is that these are two pivotal scenes in the film. After the beating-up there is a long break in the film with the screen staying blank for several seconds, and the next scene eventually shows Arthur in bed

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<sup>118</sup> Since we have been told that Doreen's mother is rather deaf, however, their caution does seem somewhat extreme.

recovering from his injuries. This repeats the break in the book between Part 1/Part 2, Saturday Night/Sunday Morning. Brenda (and Winnie in the book) are in the past, and the future is now with Doreen. In the second scene we see for the first time physical intimacy between Arthur and Doreen, and the implication is that their relationship has now moved to a different plane, again as in the book. Although there have been some casual references to engagement or marriage (Arthur says “I’ll buy you a ring one of these days” to Doreen when she comes to visit him while he is in bed recovering) this scene, which we assume is the first time they have sex, again signals a fundamental change in Arthur’s life from the previous irresponsible fun with a married woman to the serious business of getting married himself. Since these two scenes show what are the two most significant events in the very slight narrative structure of the film, namely Arthur losing Brenda and making a commitment to Doreen, it is possible that Reisz wanted to emphasize the scenes with his use of sound, giving a sense of isolation from the normal world and thus heightening their importance.

Another possibility is that this is an example of the “poetry” which was the aesthetic aim of the Free Cinema and which would move its work beyond mere reportage. Hill, among others, places this poetic content, about which he is sceptical to say the least, in the use of the camera and location, something which will be discussed later, but it cannot be denied that in his use of sound in these two scenes Reisz was trying to create an effect of some sort. What exactly this effect is can be defined only by the spectator.

The most frequent use of sound in a film is, naturally, the dialogue. As said before, the script was written by Sillitoe himself, thus much of the dialogue is lifted directly or with little alteration from the novel. The accents are, to this ignorant southern ear at least, generic Northern English rather than Midland or specifically Nottingham.

Sillitoe says: “The accents seemed hopelessly out of shape, but that shouldn’t have mattered, and no doubt wouldn’t to those who had no idea where Nottingham was anyway. If the accents *had* been right nobody would have understood a word” (Sillitoe 1995: 266). This lack of regional authenticity can be seen as less important, however, than the fact that the standard Received Pronunciation, the middle-class B.B.C. English, is not heard at all, something which at the time was still very unusual if not unheard-of in British films. Indeed, in most British films to this date a regional accent was usually a sign of a comic character or a subordinate, as in the many war films, and thus reflected the usual depiction of the working class, as noted in the previous quote from Sillitoe (p.162). *SNSM* attempted to create a specific community in a specific world which was self-contained and self-referential, and the homogeneity of the people’s speech played an important part in this creation.

Although the book is written in the third person, the reader is given access to Arthur’s thoughts and ideas, usually in the form of reported soliloquies. In the film these are expressed in dialogues, usually when he is talking to Bert. Reisz does, however, use the technique of voiceover in two scenes, and McFarlane says of this technique: “...one’s sense of the character to whom it is attributed is more likely to be the product of his involvement in the action directly presented than of his occasional comment on it” (McFarlane 1996: 16). In the scenes where we hear Arthur’s internal voice, however, there is little or no narrative action, and rather than a product of his involvement in the action I think that the voiceover is used to present an explanation of his involvement.

The first scene, at the very beginning of the film, is in the factory, and Arthur’s voice serves as a kind of declaration of principles, a presentation of himself and his relation to the work we see him doing, the people he works with and society as a

whole. Nothing is said that is different from the novel, but choosing to open the film by showing Arthur in the factory (as opposed to the pub scene in the novel), and giving his thoughts as the first spoken words we hear, makes it clear from the start that the film is about him, and thus it can be seen as necessary that we understand who he is and what his attitudes are. “Don’t let the bastards grind you down” is one phrase (so the “X” certificate is not in any doubt before the first minute has passed), and another is “I’m out for a good time – the rest is propaganda”. These and other phrases, mostly taken from the book, give a clear indication of his beliefs: the older generation have already been ground down, but this will not happen to him; people like Jack who want to “get on” are collaborating with the ideology and thus fooling themselves; he, and some others, will not be fooled, and the only logical reaction is to have a good time despite the propaganda which may frown on this attitude. Having established Arthur’s character and beliefs, the logical template for the rest of the film has been set, and further declarations and reactions from Arthur coincide with this logic.

The other example of voiceover comes at the beginning of the second, Sunday Morning, section of the film, while Arthur is lying in bed. Though there is a brief comment on the previous action - “Not the first time I’ve been in a losing fight, won’t be the last one either, I suppose” - the voiceover is basically an update of the first, though perhaps more personal: “A fighting pit-prop that wants a pint of beer, that’s me”, “I don’t know what I am”, or “Whatever people say I am, that’s what I’m not.” His reverie is interrupted by the arrival of Doreen, and thus the narrative of the second part of the film begins, having been introduced by Arthur. Since, as has been mentioned, the narrative structure of *SNSM* is very slight (at its simplest it could be summarized as: boy finishes with one girl, boy meets another girl) the distinction between the action and the character is not really applicable, since the action can be

seen more as an expression of the character rather than external events to which he reacts, and thus the voiceovers can be seen as a cause of the action more than a product of it. While the use of voiceover is one of the oldest techniques in film, Reisz's use of it here is not the most usual one of commentary on the action (a use which is most common in, but not restricted to, documentary), and he probably chose to use it as he does since it was the easiest and clearest way to adapt the internal expression which forms a significant part of the novel.

### **3.5 THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER, THE FILM**

In the story of *LLDR* over half of the text is given to Smith's internal soliloquies, and thus different tactics had to be used. The film was released in 1962, and was commercially successful, though not at the level of *SNSM*, and also enjoyed critical acclaim, though many critics tended to treat it as simply one more example of the angry/realist/Northern/working-class films of the period, and some contemporary reviews saw it as "A British film very much in the fashion", or complained that: "The hero is too prolier-than-thou" (Hill 1986: 213). Tom Courtenay starred as Colin Smith, Michael Redgrave as the Governor, James Bolam as Mike, Avis Bunnage as Mrs. Smith, and Topsy Jane as Audrey. Much of the praise was for Tom Courtenay (now Sir Tom) in what was his first film. He was an interesting choice (even though he and practically all of the other Borstal inmates were much too old for the roles they were playing, Courtenay being 25 in 1962) and both he and Albert Finney were instrumental in proving that leading roles were not the sole province of actors who were able to reproduce a middle-class English accent. In this aspect the films both reflected and promoted changes in the British cinema of the time. Writing of

representations of masculinity in the 50s cinema, Spicer maintains that the immediate post-war subversive representations gave way to a: “very male consensus...in the 50s. This consensus was represented by a caring and heroic professionalism which passed itself off as universal, effectively marginalising alternative forms of masculinity until the end of the decade, when that social formation began to break up” (Spicer 1997: 152). His use of consensus is in keeping with the prevailing political and social doctrine of the time, and this was reflected by the leading men of the period. The successful British actors of the 50s, according to Spicer, were men like Jack Hawkins and James Mason, Richard Todd and John Mills, and particularly Kenneth More, whose career

...faltered in the early 60s along with those of other 50s stars. They were replaced by pop stars like Cliff Richard, by Christopher Lee’s subversively sexual Count Dracula, and above all by working-class heroes. Working-class masculinity had been conspicuously absent from British screens in the 50s. Parts which had demanded the ordinary bloke as action man had been played by fading or second-drawer American stars such as Forrest Tucker. However, towards the end of the decade such roles were played by Stanley Baker... Baker’s tough, aggressive characters, confused about their social role, lead directly to the anti-heroes of the “New Wave” films such as Albert Finney’s Arthur Seaton (Spicer 1997: 151-152).

The selection of actors and actresses is always a difficult and important task, and in *SNSM* and *LLDR* the casting of two unknowns for the absolutely central roles (and Arthur and Smith appear in practically every scene of the films) was an audacious choice. Both Finney and Courtenay seized their opportunities and went on to enjoy extremely successful and consistent careers, and are both still alive and working at the time of writing; whether they could be described as stars is a moot point, however, though Finney was probably considered as one earlier in his career after *Tom Jones*. To the important question “What is a star?”, the novelist and screenwriter William Goldman gives the commonly-accepted Hollywood definition that: “A star is someone who *opens*. (When a movie begins its run and no one comes, people in the

business will say this of the movie, “It didn’t open.”)...A star may not guarantee you a profit...but they will absolutely be a hedge against disaster” (Goldman 2003: 12). Nevertheless, whatever their subsequent status may have been, at the time of the films Finney and Courtenay were unknown to cinema audiences and thus had the quality of a *tabula rasa*, with none of the signifiers attached to stars. Stars can be considered as semiotic signs and “particular well-known actors take already encoded meanings onto the screen with them, meanings which are also part of the audience’s cultural competencies” (Turner 1998: 199). This can be tested by the commutation test, a concept borrowed from early Barthes and more recently used to apply semiotics to the study of stars. “In the commutation test, one alters one component of a text’s signifiers and then examines what effect that change has on its signifieds. What if, for example, the character-performance signifiers created for the role of Scarlett O’Hara ...by Vivien Leigh had been generated by Bette Davis?” (Butler 1998: 352) Some of the “what ifs” are closer to reality than others, and Goldman speculates on the career Peter O’Toole might have enjoyed if Albert Finney had not turned down the leading role in *Lawrence of Arabia*, or Marlon Brando’s career if Montgomery Clift had accepted the part in *On the Waterfront*, which had been offered to him. “Finally, *Casablanca*. Would you have enjoyed that great entertainment as much with George Raft and Hedy Lamarr? Or Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan? They were all approached for the parts” (Goldman 2003: 14).<sup>119</sup> If Finney and Courtenay had swapped roles, would the films be different, and if so, how?<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> William Goldman (b.1931) is a novelist, playwright and screenwriter. He has written original scripts, e.g. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), adaptations of his own novels, e.g. *Marathon Man* (1975) and adaptations of other writers’ works, e.g. *All the President’s Men* (1976) and *Misery* (1990). In the book quoted, *Adventures in the Screen Trade* (1984), he gives an insider’s view of Hollywood, and such is the picture he gives of the process of film-making that it seems surprising that any films ever actually get made. In the last part of the book he gives a highly practical lesson in the techniques of adaptation. Resurrecting a forgotten short story of his, he writes a screenplay which he then shows to various respected film professionals (director, designer, editor, composer, etc.) for their comments. The book contains all three parts of this process (original story, screenplay and professional

It is impossible to say exactly what an actor brings to a particular role, and no doubt finance played a large part in the casting of the two films (the only established names were Rachel Roberts in *SNSM* and Michael Redgrave in *LLDR*: it is highly likely that the budget did not stretch to any more). What is beyond doubt, however, is that the new faces were seen as being a part of the new breed of regional working-class actors and also of the new British films, and thus their very lack of familiarity to the audience was seen as an advantage rather than a drawback.

The screenplay of *LLDR* was again an adaptation of his own work by Sillitoe, the usual Woodfall practice, and the film was directed by Tony Richardson. If *LLDR* as a book is more self-conscious than the book of *SNSM* (and we are told a number of times in the story that Smith is writing: "...what I'm scribbling down" (p.14), "...I can only think of these things as fast as I can write with this stub of pencil" (p.18), "...I'm going to give this story to a pal of mine" (p.54) ) then it can equally be said that *LLDR* is more self-conscious as a film. By the time of the making of the film such influences as the French *nouvelle vague* and European art cinema had become familiar in Britain, not least through the efforts of the Free movement. Richardson, like Lindsay Anderson, had also directed at the Royal Court theatre, and they had both utilized Brechtian devices which later became standard in the repertoire of art cinema (Hedling 1997: 180). Lovell says that:

In the late 1950s Brecht's work increasingly had an impact on British artistic culture. Crucially Brecht was a realist without being a naturalist – he believed that it was art's job to provide a "true understanding" but he didn't believe this could be achieved through a description of the surfaces of life (Lovell 1997: 237).

In contrast to Reisz, who shot *SNSM* in a way which could be described as broadly conventional, Richardson decided to use a number of techniques which can be

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opinions) and offers a fascinating and expert view of the mechanics of the transition from page to screen.

<sup>120</sup> Sillitoe has often said that he found it hard to accept Finney as Arthur Seaton (Elborough 2005: 12).

generally described as non-naturalistic, if not non-realistic. Hedling lists a number of these which he calls:

...ingredients that came to be typical of the European art cinema of the period: surrealist devices (in the shape of recurring instances of narration representing thought rather than spoken word), manipulations of time and space (continuous soundtrack over ellipses in the imagery), unclear relation between plot and story...separation of elements (the sudden foregrounding of weird diageitic sounds), anti-Establishment rhetoric...irony (Hedling 1997: 180-181).

All of these, in one form or another, are present in *LLDR*. The film begins, as does *SNSM*, with a voiceover, and it could be said that it serves a similar purpose in presenting Smith and his beliefs: "Running's always been a big thing in our family, especially running away from the police". However, while this is the only example of voiceover in the film, the general relation of the sound and image is such that the "manipulation" mentioned by Hedling is the norm rather than the exception. In scenes too numerous to detail, the sound either overlaps into the following scene (as when the sound of the riot in the canteen is heard for the first few seconds of the following meeting of the staff, when we are told everything is now quiet) or starts in the preceding scene (when we hear Audrey in the station café while the screen is still showing Smith running). This overlapping happens even more frequently with the music, which begins for the last few seconds of one scene and continues into the following scene with which it is associated, or continues from the scene which it accompanies and lasts for the first few seconds of the next. The silence used by Reisz is also used by Richardson in two scenes, when Smith is burning the pound note and when he has stopped running in the race. The image is also manipulated in four uses of fast-motion, probably for comic effect. These are when the lads, newly-arrived at the Borstal, start to strip when they see the muscle-bound Roach, when Colin and Mike steal the car, when they are running away after robbing the bakery and see a

policeman, and when the image of the politician giving a speech (with no sound) goes into fast-motion.

The written story is divided in three parts, with the beginning and end showing Smith in the Borstal, usually giving us his thoughts while he is running. The central part shows us his home life, with his father's death, the robbery and his arrest when the hidden money comes out of the drainpipe in front of the policeman. The film uses the technique of flashback, and it could be said that there are two parallel films, one showing life in the Borstal and the other Smith's home life. The first flashback is triggered when the governor says of Smith that "It's not hard to guess what sort of a home life that lad had", but after this his memories usually come while he is running, and though the two strands of the film are each told chronologically the connection between the flashback and the framing scenes is often slight or non-existent. This wilful breaking of the classic continuous narrative was by no means new (*Citizen Kane* is nearly all flashback) but the constant interleaving of present/past can be seen as a deliberate extension of the technique beyond the bounds of the story. This is again an example of the Brechtian influence (if Brecht can be used as a shorthand for any reaction against the conventional cinematic style), and writing of the French New Wave, and its adherents in Italy and Germany, for example, Kolker says:

The structural principle of this modernist, reflexive movement was complexity and mediation, a recognition that the film image and its editorial structure are not givens, certainly not natural, but the constructions of convention. And what is made by convention can be questioned and altered (Kolker 1998: 22).

Comparing the two films, it can be seen that *SNSM* was filmed in a way which was both realist and naturalist, using Lovell's definition given above (p.305), whereas *LLDR* can be seen as realist, in that Richardson is, we assume, trying to give what he

sees as a real picture of the people and world shown in the film, but the constant manipulation of sound, image and chronology preclude the classification of naturalist.

The anti-establishment rhetoric mentioned by Hedling (p.306) will be dealt with later, but the characteristic irony is present throughout the film, not least in the music. The music in the film was the responsibility of John Addison, who had already worked at the Royal Court and on other Free films such as *Look Back in Anger*, *The Entertainer* and *A Taste of Honey*. There are two main musical themes throughout the film: one of them, which is first heard when Smith is allowed out of the Borstal to run unsupervised for the first time, is jazz-influenced, as could be expected, with a saxophone as the principal instrument, and is repeated thereafter many times. The first time it is heard it is played joyfully (if it is understood that why or how a piece of music is joyful, sad, threatening and so on, is something which can be recognized but not explained, or at least not by me) but the subsequent times the mood of the theme changes, though the basic theme is always identifiable. It is often heard while Smith is running, and also while he is with Audrey, and is in Gorbman's terms an *ostinato*:

An *ostinato* is a repeated melodic or rhythmic figure, to propel scenes which lack dynamic visual action; a stinger is a musical sforzando to emphasize dramatically an action or a character's sudden strong emotion; mickey-mousing is the musical "imitation" through pitch and/or rhythm, of visual action (Gorbman 1998: 45).

This theme, while not being the only non-diegetic music in the film, is however frequently heard in some variation or other. (Richardson does not use stingers in the film, but two possible examples of mickey-mousing are the music when the Smith family are out on their shopping spree, or when Colin and Mike are walking away from the burglary and see the policeman.)

The other main musical theme is that of *Jerusalem*, the well-known English hymn. Blake's words deal with the legend that Jesus Christ visited Britain, or more

specifically England, during his three years of ministry, something which is not as totally beyond the bounds of possibility as is usually thought, given that the Phoenicians are known to have had well-established trade links with England, and that Jesus's uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, was a merchant.<sup>121</sup> The legend is often mixed with other legends or beliefs such as Camelot, Glastonbury, ley-lines and innumerable others, but the hymn itself is very well-known in England and is almost an alternative national anthem. It is associated with:

...English nationalism, anti-modernism, post-modernism, socialist ideals, and Christianity. *Jerusalem* is the official anthem of the British National Party, British Women's Institute, and historically was used by the National Union of Suffrage Societies....*Jerusalem*, along with *Abide With Me*, is always sung at the Rugby League Challenge Cup Final and both songs are known as "Rugby League Anthems". Since 2004 it has been played at the beginning of England cricket matches.<sup>122</sup>

Given its prominence in the film, it is worthwhile reproducing here:

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?  
And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among those dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my Arrows of desire!  
Bring me my Spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me Chariot of Fire!  
I will not cease from Mental Strife  
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land <sup>123</sup>

Apart from giving the title of *Chariots of Fire*, (which has always been considered a very "English" film) many other lines, such as "And did those feet in ancient times,

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<sup>121</sup> See: Sawkins 2001: 217.

<sup>122</sup> Source: en.wikipedia.org Access date: 5.6.2006

<sup>123</sup> Blake: en.wikipedia.org Access date: 5.6.2006

walk upon England's mountains green" or "among those dark Satanic mills" (an image of Industry which has been mentioned before) would be familiar to a large number, if not the majority, of English people, and particularly the final line, "In England's green and pleasant land". Given the resonance of the music for an English audience it cannot be considered as an *ostinato* in Gorbman's terms, and it inevitably functions as more than accompaniment, especially when taking into account the scenes with which it is heard.

The music is first heard in the opening sequence of the film, after Smith's brief monologue, and while the credits are playing. It is also heard at the end, while the scene freezes on the lads dismantling gas-masks, and in between it is heard with different variations while a warden is making a torchlit check on the lads in their beds, when Smith comes home and finds his father dead (which we have to imagine, the action taking place offstage), when four policemen come to search the house, and when both verses are sung by the lads at the end of the concert, during which we see parallel scenes of Stacy being brought back to the Borstal and thrown in a cell, with a warder preparing to inflict physical punishment on him. One has to assume that the intention is ironic; except for the death of Smith's father, the music is imposed over scenes of the Borstal and the police, the R.S.A.s who represent the enemy for Smith and the other lads, and in choosing to show these scenes as indicative of "England's green and pleasant land" Richardson is clearly drawing the comparison between the fiction and the reality for people like Smith. The inclusion of Smith's father's death could also, more indirectly, serve to strengthen the identification of Mr. Smith as in some way an enemy of the system, and although his death may not have been directly caused by the forces of control, *Jerusalem* could be heard in this case as a valedictory hymn for someone who had been as much a victim of these forces as his son.

The placing of much of the action in the Borstal, rather than in Smith's head, is probably a logical strategy in the adaptation of a story which is largely an interior monologue, if the film were not to consist largely of Courtenay running accompanied by a voiceover. However, this is only one of a number of changes made, and although the film remains basically a transposition, as previously stated, transferring to the screen the main elements of the text, there are a number of changes and additions. The story gives little information about the day-to-day life in Borstal, since this is seen as unnecessary by Smith, but in the film we see the lads working, playing, sleeping, eating and fighting, and the various members of staff performing their usual duties, which consist mostly of supervision. The style and discourse of discipline is military in tone ("Line up! Stand straight! Chest out!) and one of the first acts of the officials is to give Smith a number. However, if the discipline is military, the organization is that of an English public school, and the boys are divided into houses and told that they can be proud of their house; the staff are referred to as "housemasters" and we are told that Stacy is the "leader" of his house. Borstals, the army, mental hospitals and boarding schools are examples of what the American sociologist Erving Goffman called "total institutions", that is institutions where a number of similarly situated individuals live and work, cut off from wider society, and lead a formally administered life under the same central authority. The arrival of Smith and the other lads, when they are stood to attention, numbered and told to strip, is the first step into the system:

Admission procedures might better be called "trimming" or "programming" because in thus being squared away the new arrival allows himself to be shaped and coded into an object that can be fed into the administrative machinery of the establishment, that can be worked on smoothly by routine operations (Goffman 1961: 16).

These total institutions can be for the protection of those who are unable to protect themselves, such as orphanages or old people's homes; for those who are unable to protect themselves and also pose a threat, though unintentional, to society, such as mental hospitals or leprosaria; some institutions are to protect the community against intentional dangers, such as prisons or borstals; there are those whose rationale is to carry out better some specific work or tasks, such as army camps or boarding schools; and those which are retreats from the world, such as monasteries or convents. In modern society an individual tends to sleep, play and work in different places with different people, and the central feature of total institutions is that the barriers between these three spheres of life are eliminated. In Borstal or prison, for example, all activities are conducted in the same place, with the same people, under the same authority, operating to a rigid schedule and with the same theoretical plan designed to bring about the same theoretical objective. There is usually some system of reward and punishment, there are different adaptations available to the inmates, such as withdrawal, rebellion or conversion, and the numerous rules and regulations are designed to maintain the split between staff and inmates and thus to maintain authority (Goffman 1961: 3-124). The force of the Borstal scenes is to show and emphasize these aspects of the total institution, and in every scene set in Ruxton there is either the presence or the imminent threat of the presence of a warder. That there is a physical basis to the authority exercised, despite the governor's talk of co-operation, is shown by the looming presence of Roach the P.E. master and by the beating-up of Stacy, and in the canteen riot when the staff physically restrain the lads. In the first scene proper of the film, when the new inmates are arriving in the van and some lads are clearing a fallen tree from the road, the warder in charge of the work is seen to be holding what is probably a branch, but which at first glance has the appearance of a

whip. (And why is he holding a branch?) Nevertheless the governor, the supervisor rather than the perpetrator of physical punishment, as in the story, is the most visible representative of the Borstal and is clearly shown as Smith's antagonist, again as in the story.

One reason for the governor's prominence is the importance which he gives to the cross-country race and the cup that will be given to the winner. Though in the story the cup is given great importance, the governor seeing victory as a vindication of his beliefs and methods, in the film this importance is emphasized from the very beginning, and the prestige involved is even greater since the Borstal, now named Ruxton Towers, will be competing not against other Borstals as in the story, but against Ranley, a public school. This for the governor is: "A great step forward in our history – in Borstal history", and we are reminded of this regularly throughout the film. "We've got to win that cup!" One reason for the insertion of the public school in the film could be to increase the importance of the cup for the governor and so increase the depth of Smith's retaliation (for Smith) or betrayal (for the governor). It also allows the film to contrast the Ranley and Ruxton boys and parents on the sports day, and some of the shots, such as the Ranley boys running in line in white track suits followed by the Ruxton boys in dark shirts and shorts, or the two groups of parents and families, or the two groups of runners in the changing-room before the race, offer a visual contrast between those for whom England really is a "green and pleasant land" and those whose view would be different, to say the least.

Since *LLDR* was originally a short story, 47 pages in the original, the film was not forced to make a "Sophie's Choice" regarding the characters, and so Smith, his parents, Mike and the governor, who are the only important characters in the story, all survive in the film, and more or less intact. Smith's relationship with his mother is

more antagonistic than in the book, and Mike is given more prominence, but the more noticeable changes are in the new characters created for the film rather than in any alteration in the originals.

The most important of these is Audrey, Smith's girlfriend. Much screen time is devoted to her and Smith, usually accompanied by Mike and Gladys, and I must admit that I find it hard to understand what exactly she does in the film. She serves as an audience for the more philosophical and political of Smith's musings, and given his supposed age she could be the romantic "first love" whom he spends a lot of time thinking about while he is incarcerated. Her and Smith's reticence and awkwardness, especially when contrasted with the cheerful hedonism of Mike and Gladys, mark them both as more complicated or difficult characters, giving weight to the psychological reading of the film. Since in the story Smith's sex life is limited to the passage previously quoted, how he and Mike, when it was safe to spend the money from the robbery, would be "off to the coast...latching on to a couple of tarts" (p.37), it could be that Richardson decided to amplify this into a more serious and long-lasting relationship to fill some time and add another dimension to Smith's character (and it is unclear how the trip to Skegness was financed: given the chronology of the film it must have been paid for with the money from the insurance for Smith's father). Audrey could also be seen as a voice of reason, as when she says "I wish you wouldn't pinch things" or "Why don't you get a job?", thus adding to the various tensions surrounding Smith. In a study of the development of the depiction of women in 60s British cinema, Geraghty says that as the phenomenon of youth became established, there were various types of work done in fields such as psychology or sociology which presented youth as almost a separate species from the adult world:

Much of this work in the 50s focused on working-class young men and what was seen as their antisocial and sometimes violent behaviour. In so far as women

entered the picture, it was as adjuncts who attached themselves to such youths; and while there was concern about their sexuality, there was also the feeling that young women could, through their desire for home and family, be part of the process of settling their boyfriends down...In the late 50s/early 60s, however, the debate shifted from delinquency to pre-marital sex and the figure of the young woman came into greater prominence (Geraghty 1997: 154).

Audrey's role in the film, according to Geraghty's argument, can thus be seen as backward-looking, reflecting the misogyny of the Angry writers rather than the individuality of the women in *SNSM* (film or book) or the more sexually-oriented films of the later 60s. Though it is understood that Smith and Audrey have sex while in Skegness, their relationship is never shown as enjoying the casual physical familiarity of Mike and Gladys, and the little physical contact we see between them is, except for one scene, tentative, almost embarrassed. When Smith and Mike, in the stolen car, first pick up the two girls and drive out of the city and sit/lie down on the hillside, while Mike and Gladys are enthusiastically kissing, Smith and Audrey briefly kiss and Audrey breaks away, saying "I've got to go". This is consistent with her attitude until then, since she was less enthusiastic about the outing from the beginning, but it is also illustrative of her attitude in general, which is far from that of the sexually-liberated young women shown in later films. After spending the night together, their relationship seems a little less constrained, and the following day in the sand dunes they kiss with real passion, after Colin tells her that he has had sex before, but "not like last night". As in the film of *SNSM* it seems that the sex is both the expression and cause of a deeper commitment for both of them, and in a later scene Audrey shyly asks if Colin would like to come home with her, showing that she now feels able to take the initiative. Though love is not mentioned, Colin's strongest declaration being "I like you a lot", they are now boyfriend/girlfriend (their supposed

age precludes any mention of marriage) and as such Audrey now has the right to fulfil her role as the stabilizing force in Smith's life, as described by Geraghty above.

Another possible motive for the relationship is that, now that his home has been made uninhabitable by the presence of Gordon, his mother's fancy man (another new character, who is more than an individual personification of the various fancy men in the story), Colin now necessarily focuses more on the outside world and his own adult life rather than his position as his parents' child, and his own love/sex life is an indication of his new status as an adult. Fashion could also have played a part, and if the figure of the "mixed-up teenager" was now common in society as a whole and in film in particular (the aforementioned Ealing social dramas, *Rebel Without a Cause* in 1955, and it is noteworthy that *LLDR* has also been known as *Rebel With a Cause*<sup>124</sup>) then the teenager's female counterpart was also a common figure, such as Natalie Wood's character in *Rebel Without a Cause*, and Audrey's vague questions about the future are a cue for Smith's equally vague answers. In short, I fail to see the reason for the introduction of Audrey and the whole "boys and girls" narrative, if it were not simply an excuse to fill time and offer the opportunity for some nice photography at the beach at Skegness, actually shot at Camber Sands in south-east England.

The aforementioned Gordon is another new character with a certain significance in the film. In the story we are told that Mrs. Smith has always had other men, even when her husband was alive. This does not seem to have any effect on her children, and they are quite happy eating and watching television after their father's death while she is upstairs on the new mattress with "some fancy man" (p.21), and none of these men is ever even given a name. Gordon, however, appears before Mr. Smith dies, and already seems to have some degree of permanence in the house, and it is he

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<sup>124</sup> Source: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) Access date: 27. 5. 2006

rather than the insurance money who provides the television. His presence is clearly resented by Colin, and despite his appearance which places him in a slightly higher social class (his sports jacket, hat and bow-tie) and despite his pretensions (he says of the television that “It’s amazing how much you can save when you can pay cash”) it becomes clear that the television was stolen, and when he says that he’s never had any trouble with the police Colin says “You mean you’ve never been caught”, at which Gordon looks sheepish. He and Colin clash a number of times, such as when Colin and his mother come home from the factory with the compensation money to find Gordon already in the house. They argue when Gordon pushes the younger children out of the room, and Colin says “I’m the gaffer here”, and it is obvious that Colin sees his position as the new head of the house, taking over from his father, being usurped. He accuses his mother of bringing her fancy man into the house “Before me father was cold”, and in a later scene, when the policeman asks Gordon, who is in his vest, showing his more genuine self, if he is Smith’s father, he answers “No I’m bloody well not!” Gordon’s usurpation of firstly Mr. Smith’s and then Colin’s position as head of the family or “the man of the house” serves to increase Colin’s sense of isolation, separating him even from his family, and could be seen as an indirect motive for his directing his energies outwardly, to Audrey and crime. Hill, writing of the “New Wave” films, which is his preferred terminology and typography, says: “Even in those films ...where there has been an expansion or addition to the original, the logic of the motivation has been less complication than simplification of narrative motivation (the quarrel between Colin and his mother’s “fancy man” in *Loneliness*, for example)” (Hill 1986: 138). Since Mrs. Smith, when she breaks up the quarrel over the use of the television, tells Smith to get out “And don’t come back till you’ve

got some money”, and Smith and Mike then rob the bakery, Gordon can be seen as the immediate motivation for the robbery and succeeding events.

The association of Gordon with the television strengthens Smith’s obvious distaste for the medium, a similar attitude to that shown in *SNSM*. When the family, including Gordon, are settling down after receiving the money to enjoy an evening of television with beer (delivered) and food, Colin looks at them and at the television and goes to his father’s room, the outsider in the house, still true to his father’s memory. It is significant that, as in *SNSM*, what we see the family watching is an advert, in this case for a corset, complete with catchy jingle. When he and Mike are laughing at the silent, speeded-up gesticulations of the politician, Gordon comes in and turns up the volume, laying claim to the television and his position in the house, and also trying to end the lads’ diversion/subversion. Although these are the only scenes where we see the television being watched, the clearest view of the medium comes in the scenes when the family goes shopping: the scenes of the different shops are separated by a star symbol, the same symbol that was used on British television to signal the advertisements, and thus we see that television life is simply this: consumption.

In contrast to *SNSM*, the cinema does not appear, and the only time we hear the radio is when Gladys turns it on in the train to dance. Here, as in *SNSM*, one wonders at the chances of turning on the B.B.C., probably the Light programme, at that period, and chancing upon danceable music. Reading as an activity is non-existent, and the Borstal training is not seen to include any type of academic education. The only other activity which could be classed as cultural is the concert in the Borstal, which is another of Richardson’s innovations, compared to the story. It cannot be seen as unrealistic, however, and Goffman says that in practically all total institutions there are certain events, such as the Christmas party or open day, which assume the status

of ceremonies: “An interesting institutional ceremony...is the institutional theatrical” (Goffman 1961: 99), and Behan describes the concert in his Borstal as displaying many of the characteristics mentioned by Goffman, such as a mixed staff/inmate participation and the presence of outsiders (Behan 1990: 277-284); in this aspect the concert in *LLDR* is atypical, since the lads take no part other than that of audience. This concert, which has elements of the traditional village concert in which various people did “a turn”,<sup>125</sup> and also of the music hall, which usually combined a number of different types of act, is presented to the lads as a privilege which could be withheld, although the governor decides not to cancel it as punishment for the riot in the canteen, and no doubt anything which broke the monotony of the total existence was welcome. The lads, on their part, seem to enjoy it despite the fact that the acts we see (a bird-impersonator, a formal duet) have little relevance to the probable tastes of the teenage inmates. The audience reaction would also seem to owe much to the music-hall in that it is participatory and, while the comments on and to the performers are far from complimentary, the cat-calling seems essentially good-natured and a natural part of the proceedings, with no attempts at discipline or control by the warders. Goffman says: “In form these institutionalized get-togethers are characterized by a release from the formalities and the task orientation that govern inmate-staff contacts and by a softening of the usual chain of command” (Goffman 1961: 94). In general, the entertainment would seem to owe more to the home-made variety rather than the mass-produced, and even if it is not what the lads would have chosen for themselves, it would have been familiar to them, and the final singing of *Jerusalem* brings further echoes of the school assembly, another familiar event.

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<sup>125</sup> See *Cider with Rosie* for a description of the annual village “feast and entertainment” (Lee 1962: 196-202).

The singing, during which the camera intercuts Stacy's recapture and imminent punishment with panning shots of the lads, is enthusiastic and serious, and the song is clearly familiar to all. The most obvious interpretation is that this is a demonstration of the power of the Borstal: the lads are now confined, in uniform, and singing with gusto a song which combines the religious and the patriotic, two essential elements of the desired ideology which the prisoners have failed to imbibe in the past, for which lack they are now incarcerated, and which it is the function of the system to inculcate in them so that they can be returned to society as "good" subjects. The fact that the singing is mixed with the scenes of Stacy's recapture and imminent punishment would seem to confirm the omnipotence of the system, underlining the impossibility of escape.

It would also be possible, however, to see this scene differently, if the words themselves are taken literally. The second verse talks of the need to fight to re-create Jerusalem in "England's green and pleasant land", and the language is martial, mentioning the spear, sword, chariot, bow and arrow which are the symbolic spiritual and physical weapons which will be used to restore the country to its former blessed state. Although the mythical and patriotic aspects are usually now emphasized more than the religious, *Jerusalem* is and was primarily a hymn, and its singing is led by the vicar, and if it is heard as such it is possible to envisage the Borstal lads as the new generation which will undertake the task of spiritual regeneration in England, having to battle the combined forces of "them" in order to do this. While the idea of an armed troop of Borstal charioteers would doubtless send cold shivers down the collective spine of "respectable" England, this reading is more in keeping with the Smith of the story, and to a lesser extent the Smith of the film, although Smith in both cases is concerned only with his own rebellion and has no interest in proselytization. In short,

the interpretation placed on this scene would probably depend on the viewer's identification with and sympathy for either the *status quo*, as represented by the governor, the other staff and the Borstal, or the lads, who represent those who suffer under the system and who have rebelled in some way against it.

The shots of the lads singing the hymn, all cleanly-scrubbed and uniformed, all sitting up straight and facing the front, show the effects of the discipline to which they are subjected, and this discipline is practised primarily on the body. It is the body which positions us in a specific historical, social and geographical location (as Fiske says, see p.181), and given the difficulty if not the impossibility of exercising domination and supervision directly on the mind, as shown in the previous quote from p.10 of the story of *LLDR*, "they can't make an X-ray of our guts", the body is the obvious starting-point. For Foucault, this is a phenomenon which first became established in the eighteenth century, originally in the army and later in other institutions such as schools and hospitals:

The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body – to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces....There were several new things in these techniques. To begin with, there was the scale of the control: it was a question not of treating the body, *en masse*, "wholesale", as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it "retail", individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body. Then there was the object of the control: it was not or was no longer the signifying elements of behaviour or the language of the body, but the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organization; constraint bears upon the forces rather than the signs; the only truly important ceremony is that of exercise. Lastly, there is the modality: it implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement. These methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility, might be called "disciplines"...Discipline increases the force of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body...Discipline sometimes requires *enclosure*, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and

closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony (Foucault 1981: 136-141).

Mention has already been made of the effects of discipline on the different parts of Arthur's body, in the interests of utility, and of the military-sounding orders given to Smith and the other new lads in the film: "Chins in, chests out, arms by your sides!", which reflects the "retail" aspect, in Foucault's term, of the application of discipline to the body in all its constituent parts.

A prison or Borstal is, of course, a prime example of enclosure, and the objective of punishment, though usually not explicit, can serve both to facilitate and harshen the practice of discipline. The incarceration of the body is the most basic form of control, circumscribing the range of movement to a specified area, and usually setting bounds of access even within that area. Although, as Foucault says, the target body is treated individually, the disciplines are typically practised on large groups of people simultaneously, and thus the question of physical space assumes great importance. Foucault said: "Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (Foucault 1993: 168). As regards space in terms of localization, a common feature of total institutions is the constant control of movement of the inmates: everyone must be in the right place at the right time, and failure to adhere to this rule is usually cause for punishment, such as when Stacy escapes; escape is the most blatant disobedience of the rules of space, and we see Stacy being (illegally) beaten up for his transgression, and it is taken for granted that there will also be punishment in the official sphere.

Space in a more personal sense is also a crucial question; since a total institution combines a voluntary or involuntary conglomeration in a limited area with constant supervision, the result is that solitude is impossible: "In general, of course, the inmate

is never fully alone; he is always within sight and often earshot of someone, if only his fellow inmates” (Goffman 1961: 25). Behan comments in the same vein, when he walks unsupervised from one side of the Borstal to the other, a distance of a mile and a half, unsupervised though never unseen: “It’s great to be on your own for a bit, in the sun, and in the country. That’s one thing you never were in Walton [prison]. Nor in any prison, I suppose. For all their solitary confinement you were watched and your every movement” (Behan 1990: 311). This supervision is implicit in the previously-quoted phrase from the story, “They can spy on us all day” (p.10), and so if privacy is impossible even in solitary confinement, it naturally assumes great importance, and the scene of Smith being allowed outside for the first time to run alone shows this: the symbolic opening of the gate, the other inmates drawn up in rank and file, looking on, the sun coming through the trees, the exuberant music and Smith skipping and jumping as he runs, his lying down and letting out a sigh of relief, all express the release from the institutional life and the accompanying surveillance, even though this release is understood by all concerned, including the audience, to be temporary. In fact, every time we see Smith training he is alone, and the camera often emphasizes this, showing him in long-shot against a background of trees or hills, contrasting the one moving figure with the empty landscape. In this context the loneliness of the title is something to be hoped for, a discrete physical condition, as when Smith in the book feels like “the first and last man on the world” (p.8), rather than the symbolic condition expressed in the voiceover at the beginning of the film, which is a paraphrase from the story (p.43), with Colin saying “You’ve got to run... running without knowing why...the winning-post’s no end”.

The governor's insistence on sport is in keeping with the aforementioned idea of power exercising control over the body. Bourdieu says that the spread of sport as opposed to games, which is a relatively recent phenomenon:

...doubtless results partly from the fact that sport was predisposed to fulfil, on a much larger scale, the very same functions which underlay its invention in the late nineteenth-century English public schools. Even before they saw sport as a means of "improving character" in accordance with the Victorian belief, the public schools, "total institutions" in Goffman's sense, which have to carry out their supervisory task twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, saw sport as "a means of filling in time", an economical way of occupying the adolescents who were their full-time responsibility. When the pupils are on the sports field they are easy to supervise, they are engaged in healthy activity and they are venting their violence on each other rather than destroying the buildings or shouting down their teachers (Bourdieu 1993: 346).

The governor clearly subscribes to these theories, and the similarities of Borstals to public schools has already been mentioned. In his introductory talk to the new inmates, he says: "Good athletics, sports, inter-house competition – we believe in all that." Later when watching the lads play football, he tells Brown that sport is a way of "channelling [aggression] in the right direction". When Brown ironically suggests "Mens sana in corpore sano?" the governor implicitly agrees that this is his aim, thus confirming his belief in the Greek and Roman ideal which had been the underlying philosophy of education in the Victorian public schools, and had probably been most explicitly expressed by Thring, the headmaster of Uppingham, and Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby and Matthew Arnold's father.<sup>126</sup> When he later suggests to Smith that he could become a professional runner, the governor is further fixing Smith in his social sphere, that of the working class, and reminding him that his only possession of any worth is his body:

A sporting career, which is practically excluded from the field of acceptable trajectories for a child of the bourgeoisie – setting aside tennis or golf – represents one of the few paths of upward mobility open to the children of the dominated

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<sup>126</sup> Source: [www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk) Access date: 28.6.2006

classes; the sports market is to the boys' physical capital what the system of beauty prizes and the occupations to which they lead – hostess, etc. – is to the girls' physical capital; and the working-class cult of sportsmen of working-class origin is doubtless explained by the fact that these “success stories” symbolize the only recognized route to wealth and fame (Bourdieu 1993: 347).

In the story, Smith rejects this possible route, saying:

They aren't going to get me on this racing lark, this running and trying to win, this jog-trotting for a bit of blue ribbon, because it's not the way to go on at all, though they swear blind it is. You should think about nobody and go your own way, not on a course marked out for you by people holding mugs of water and bottles of iodine in case you fall and cut yourself so that they can pick you up – even if you want to stay where you are – and get you moving again (p.44).

These thoughts come to Smith in the story while he is running the race, which he has already decided to lose. In the film, however, we are given the impression that he seriously considers the possibility of becoming a professional athlete, and this opening of an alternative future route for Smith is one of the main sources of tension surrounding him, a tension which is primarily individual and which Hill sees as a common thread running through the work of the Free films:

...there is an ideology of individualism cemented into the narrative form; it is the individual's desires and motivations which structure the film's forward flow...Thus, despite the surface rhetoric of class war occasionally mouthed by Colin...his trajectory through the movie is basically an individual one, with his final act of defiance explained “psychologically” by the death of his father...In contrast to the attempts of British wartime cinema to project a sense of collectivity on the screen...the more tightly wrought narratives and dominant central characters of the British “new wave” work against an expression of the collective experience of working-class life (Hill 1986: 138).

There is much in the film which supports Hill's argument. We see very little of Smith's relationship with his father, since the latter is dying, but Colin's attitude to this is different from the rest of the family. When he says to his mother “He'll be all right” she snaps: “Don't be daft”. His little sister asks: “When's Dad going to die, our Colin?”, and his answer, “He's not going to die”, is clearly wishful thinking, contrasted to the acceptance, if not callousness, of the others. We see him tuck his

father in, and later, after his death and the payment of the money, Mrs. Smith asks “What shall we do with it?” to which Colin answers “Burn it”. His mother’s reply is “You take after your dad”, and then Colin leaves the family (and Gordon) watching television to go into the empty bedroom (where we catch a glimpse of his father’s work boots) and set light to a pound note, in some sort of private ritual of commemoration. His vague left-wing political thoughts are ascribed to his father, and in the final flash-backs as Smith loses the race, his father’s voice is the last one heard: “I’m no bleeding guinea-pig”. He sees Gordon as usurping his father’s position, which should now be his as his father’s heir, (“I’m the gaffer now”) and he accuses his mother of bringing her fancy man into the house “before me father was cold”. (In fact she had brought him into the house while her husband was still alive.)

The psychological aspect is given greater weight by the presence of Brown, a new character in the film, who if not a psychologist has obviously received some form of training in the field. In the story this character is not even named, and merits only a few lines: “When I’m wondering what’s the best way to get a window open or how to force a door, how can I be thinking or have anything on my mind? That’s what the four-eyed white-smocked bloke with the note-book couldn’t understand when he asked me questions for days and days after I got to Borstal” (p.26). The governor’s attitude, as can be expected, is one of scornful condescension. When welcoming Brown and his familiarity with the “new-fangled theories”, he tells him that “Theories don’t always work out in practice”.

The beginning of Brown’s interview with Smith would seem to bear out the worthlessness of psychiatry and other theories, as opposed to the common-sense ideas expressed by the governor. Smith is caught between amusement and exasperation at the stupidity of the questions, as in the story: “Why are you here?” “I got caught.”

“What were you thinking about when you broke in?” “I wasn’t thinking about anything, I was too busy breaking in.” “Did you feel afraid?” “If I’d felt afraid I wouldn’t have broken in, would I ?” When Brown starts a word-association test, however, Smith becomes more uncomfortable: “Father.” “Dead.” “Your mother must be upset.” “Not really, no.” “Girl.” “Look!” “Have you got a girlfriend, Smith?” “What’s it got to do with you?” From this we are led to draw the obvious inference that when it comes to his private, as opposed to what we may call his professional, life, he is not so assured or at ease. He falls in with Brown’s exercise, (“Girl.” “Boy.”) and even starts to give what he thinks are joke answers, and the interview ends, but it is clear that some of the questions touched Smith in a way that he did not expect or want. In the next scene Brown and the governor are watching the lads play football, and the two professional approaches are sharply contrasted. Brown describes Smith as “complex” while the governor sees him as “high-spirited”. Brown’s ironic summary of the governor’s views as “mens sana in corpore sano” is met with “Better than some of that psychiatric stuff they chuck at us”. When the governor says that the way to cope with aggression is by “Channelling it in the right direction”, Brown says that perhaps “life is a bit more complicated than a football match”. We then see Smith take the ball from Stacy and score a goal, which can be seen as the start of his career as a runner, something which leads the governor to tell the sports master, “He might be useful to us, keep an eye on him”, and could also be seen as a vindication of the governor’s theories. This does not totally invalidate Brown’s comment on the complexity of life, however, and these scenes can be taken as the posing of the basic question of the film, that is if Smith will bear out the governor’s ideas or not. Since he does not, it would seem that at the end of the film Brown’s psychological theories are more accurate than the governor’s traditional common sense. However, Brown

disappears from the film after this scene, and it would seem that his function is only to introduce the psychological theme, since he plays no further part in the action, even in his supposed role as a housemaster. In fact the psychological aspect can be said to have been introduced even earlier. While the van is arriving with the new intake, one of the guards says “I sometimes wonder if I believe in this sort of set-up”, revealing at least some self-examination and self-doubt, apart from the more political questioning of the system. The question posed in the film is basically the same as that in the book, namely if Smith will continue his war with “them” in the shape of the governor. The difference is that in the book there is no doubt in Smith’s mind, or that of the reader, that he will maintain the state of war and lose the race, something which we are told after only seven pages (p.13). In the film, however, the dramatic tension comes from the uncertainty of Colin’s intentions, and his motivation for betraying either himself or the governor would seem to be individual, as stated by Hill above (p. 325), with a strong psychological basis in his family and sexual background, rather than his identification with any larger group of people.

When he first arrives at the Borstal he is much closer to the Smith of the book. In the van, another lad says: “Miserable sort of bloke, isn’t he?”; at the reception line-up we are told that “He wants teaching a lesson”; when told to: “Say “Sir” when you’re speaking to the Governor!” he re-states his name as “Sir Smith”; and when Stacy explains that the best way to survive and eventually leave Borstal is to co-operate, because “They’ve got the whip-hand”, Colin first wonders if Stacy is the governor’s assistant, and then, in words taken from the book, says that if he had the whip-hand he would put all the “coppers, governors, posh whores, army officers and M.P.s up against a wall and let them have it, because that’s what they’d like to do with blokes like us”. This is the only time in the film that Colin identifies himself with anyone

else, a fact which again serves to underline the aspect of individuality. In the book, Smith's external identification is vague, to say the least, but he does see himself as one of the Out-laws *versus* the In-laws, and his discourse is usually in terms of "us and them" rather than "me and him". The story, as has been mentioned, is singularly lacking in details of life in the Borstal, and this lack extends to information about Smith's relationship with the other lads. In fact, we are not even told the name of any other inmate. The film necessarily shows more of Colin's daily life, but even so, except for Stacy, his relationship with the others seems superficial, and it can not be said that he has any friends, although he is usually seen in the company of the three or four lads with whom he arrived. Once Colin starts running, however, the focus is on him as an individual. For the other lads, his running and the increased interest of the governor are reasons for good-humoured mockery: "You're going to be our champion runner", and "He [the governor] smiled at you! He smiled!" Colin takes this ribbing in good part, and there seems to be no difference between him and the others, in fact his running seems to make him almost an object of pity, as in the scene where we see Colin getting up before everyone else to go out running on a cold, damp morning. He joins in the joking, and implies that his running is only a part of his more general strategy: "The best thing to do is be cunning. I'm going to make them think they've got me house-trained". Meanwhile, the governor sees his policy bearing fruit, and his trust in Smith would seem to be having its desired effect, such as when he lets him out to run unsupervised (he says to Roach the sports-master: "You still don't trust him, do you?"), or when Colin escapes punishment for his fight with Stacy, or when we see that he has been upgraded from the workshop to the gardens. The doubts about Smith's possible collusion come to a head in the scene in the canteen when Mike appears in the Borstal, when we also learn that Smith is now "the daddy" of the house,

having defeated Stacy, primarily in terms of running. From joking about the benefits of professional running, “A bob a puff, running to a guinea a gasp”, “You can have a big Jaguar, with a fancy tart”, the conversation takes a different turn when one of the lads says to a surprised Mike, “He’s the governor’s blue-eyed boy now”. The tone of this remark is definitely not jocular, and Mike turns to Smith and asks: “Whose bloody side are you on all of a sudden?” Smith says nothing, and Mike turns away with a shake of his head and a look of disgust, while Smith continues to stare straight ahead, silent. Having posed the question and reminded Smith of his wider allegiance, Mike disappears from the Borstal, his function fulfilled, in a similar way to Brown, but the implication is that Smith has now decided whose side he is on, that of the governor. His refusal or inability to respond to his oldest friend and partner in crime, and his acceptance of Mike’s subsequent belief in his betrayal, make this the most logical conclusion. The only other possibility is that Smith is being so cunning that he is prepared to fool the other lads, even Mike, as to his real intentions, but there is no evidence of this attitude.

The race itself both heightens the uncertainty concerning Smith’s intentions and strengthens the individual/psychological aspect. The sports day itself is presented as an expression of official England, with all its representatives and representations present. Flags, army uniforms, cups and shields gleaming in the sun, the vicar, the governor giving the order to start the race with the Union Jack flying in the background, the presentation of the teams beforehand to the visiting dignitaries - “The coppers, governors, posh whores, army officers and M.P.s” – all emphasize the fact that the race has the importance that the governor has been claiming for it throughout the film, an importance which is not only personal but institutional. Smith’s auditory and visual flashbacks start almost immediately, the first one when we hear “Keep

those knees up, Smith”, and this is the introduction to a host of short mental scenes which we see as Smith runs, although as could be expected the relationship between the real time image of Smith running, the mental images and the mental sound is thoroughly mixed. Most scenes and words have already been seen and/or heard in the film; others are scenes which have not been shown so far, but could or must have been seen by Smith, such as the police tearing off the wallpaper while searching his house, conversations with Audrey, or his father’s dead face; Stacy getting beaten up could not have been seen by Smith, and has not yet been seen by the audience, and there is one scene of pure invention, when the governor says: “I can imagine no greater honour than for a man to represent Ruxton Towers at the Olympic Games”, “represent his country” in the original scene. These mental images are many and varied, intercut with scenes from the race and also the spectators back at the Borstal, and mostly very short. There are a number of the governor, of Colin’s home, of the police and of Audrey. She asks Colin, in an as yet unheard question, “I can’t understand why you’re always trying to run away from things. Why? Why, then?”, and we hear again the song from the advert, “Rolla Roy”. These can all be seen as a brief summary of Colin’s life up till now (or as much as we have seen of it) and also of the pressures surrounding him. The final scenes, however, have a greater and more direct relationship with the race and with Smith’s decision. Nearing the end of the race, when it is clear that he has won and it only remains for him to finish the last few hundred yards, he hears Audrey asking “What do you want to do, Col?”, sees the policemen in his mind, and stops running. He starts again after a few seconds, sees/hears the governor talking about representing Ruxton Towers in the Olympics, hears the governor talking about the need for trust over scenes of Stacy being beaten up, sees the beach at Skegness and hears Audrey saying “I wish we never had to go

back. Don't you?", and stops again. This pause is longer, interspersed with scenes of the consternation of the spectators, particularly the governor and the vicar. He eventually starts running again, and hears and sees, "He's the governor's blue-eyed boy", Stacy saying: "You'll learn", "Whose bloody side are you on?", the governor saying "You don't get anywhere without effort", and then a succession of very fast flashes of different faces: the police detective, the T.V. politician, the governor, his mother, his father's dead face, Mike, and finally Audrey, with the voice-over of his father shouting "I'm no bleeding guinea-pig". There is a fast cut to the silver cups and shields, and the last mental image we have is of the burning pound-note. He then stops, for the third and final time, and waves the Ranley runner past in an echo of the "After you" in the changing-room before the race. The end of the film is very short: the pattern of Colin's mental images of the succession of faces is repeated, a little more slowly, in the faces of the spectators shouting "Run! Run!" and the final shot of the angry governor and the smiling Smith, and the sound fades out over the scene of Smith standing alone, watching the crowd of spectators. In the last scene of the film Smith is back in the workshop, dismantling gas-masks, and it is clear that he is no longer anyone's blue-eyed boy, and the final frame is frozen as we hear the lads singing "Jerusalem".

The running of the race and Smith's memories/imaginings are clearly the climax of the film, with the last two minutes serving only as the *coda*. On a normal, first viewing, these images are so many and so rapid, particularly the final sequence, that the effect produced is almost subliminal, and it was surely the makers' intention to produce a general impression rather than a clearly-defined logical sequence. However, some things are clear: the first two times he stops, the last voice he hears is Audrey's, which is rather illogical since the narrative implies (hears Audrey – stops running)

that she is in favour of his rebellion, whereas in the film she has shown herself to be an agent of assimilation/capitulation, with her comments and questions: “I wish you wouldn’t pinch things”, “Why don’t you get a job?” One reading is that Audrey is not sufficient motivation for him to reject the route mapped out by the governor, and the final time he stops it is his father’s voice which he hears last, with the last image being the burning of the pound-note in his father’s memory. Even so, the images of Audrey and his father would place his motivation firmly in the sphere of the personal, and the stop-start-stop-start-stop of his running also strongly suggests that his doubts are only finally resolved by the image of his father. Needless to say, this sequence also reflects many of the aforementioned popular devices of the European art cinema (p.306), emphasizing the interior at the expense of the exterior world, and the importance of the mental images clearly underlines the psychological motivation for winning or losing. In short, I find it very hard to disagree with Hill’s view regarding the “ideology of individualism” evident in the film (p.325), a view which was shared by Kael when she said:

Sillitoe and Richardson by stuffing “poetry” in, with little innocent idylls of the fun of pinching a car, and wandering hand in hand at the beach with a playmate girl have destroyed the true poetry of the original conception – which was in the singleness of vision: a terrifying view of modern life, a madman’s view that forces us to see how mad we are...The pity is that the movie audience which might have been upset, forced to think out some of its attitudes towards theft and property and work and social organization, is instead reconfirmed in its liberal complacency (Kael in Hill 1986: 213).

Smith’s “singleness of vision” in the story has, I feel, already been commented on, and the substitution of this determination with the picture of a confused, vacillating Colin in the film, motivated by the death of his father and, in some vague way, by his girlfriend, in my opinion weakens the essential point of the original and, as suggested

by Hill and Kael, fatally dilutes the wider social dimensions by reducing them to a psychological, personal portrait.

### 3.6 THE FREE CINEMA AND POETRY

It is significant that Kael speaks of the poetry in *LLDR*, since one of the avowed aims of the Free movement was the creative treatment of actuality, the transformation of its material into poetry (see p.263). Hedling, writing about Lindsay Anderson, who was the most vocal theoretician of the group, says that: “The key notions in the Andersonian discourse were “poetry” and “poet”, metaphorically used to describe film art and the cinematic artist” (Hedling 1997: 179), and Anderson’s concerns were those of the other Free film-makers. Given the documentary background of the Free films, this desire for the poetic transformation represents what Lovell calls :

...one of the contradictions of the Free Cinema position. A central demand was that the cinema should be a medium where personal expression was possible; a film director should have the same creative scope that novelists, poets, composers and painters were supposed to have. But the demand for realism limited that freedom since the director was necessarily constrained by the nature of the world he was trying to represent (Lovell 1983: 101).

The influence of the French *nouvelle vague* and European art cinema has already been mentioned (p.306), and the subjective techniques used in *LLDR* are clear expressions of the manipulation of reality by the director or editor. Apart from such obvious instances, however, some critics located the personal expression which was the aim of the Free Cinema primarily in the use of the camera. Hill, quoting a contemporary review of *A Taste of Honey* which refers to the director, Tony Richardson, and the cameraman, Walter Lassally (the same team as in *LLDR*) as the “heroes” of the film, says:

Note how three of the central terms of the Free Cinema aesthetic are neatly interwoven. The “reality” of Manchester has been successfully “captured” but at the same time, transformed into an “unforced poetry”, the result of the film’s “real heroes”, the director and the cameraman. It is in this way that the tension between “realism” and “personal expression” is effectively resolved. For it is precisely through the production of a “realistic surplus” that the film marks the authorial voice; the signification of “reality” becomes, at the same time, the site of personal expression. It was because of such stylistic “manipulation” that a number of critics (including those attached to *Movie* such as V.F.Perkins) had objected to the British “new wave” films...the style and iconography employed by the British “new wave” is obtrusive; despite the claim to realism, the directorial hand is not hidden in the folds of the narrative but “up front”, drawing attention to itself and the “poetic” transformation of its subject-matter. The implicit statement, “this is reality”, is so transformed into a stylistic assertion of a controlling eye/I (Hill 1986: 132).

Hill goes on to argue, quoting numerous other critics whose views support his opinion, that the “realistic surplus” which he criticizes, the use of actions and especially locations which are non-functional and unnecessary to the development of the narrative, is most commonly typified by shots which tend to produce a de-humanization of the characters and “their subordination to aesthetics, their visually pleasing positioning as “figures in a landscape” ” (Hill 1986: 134). There are two ways, he says, in which this is done: the first is the aerial viewpoint of the city, which features in practically every Free film. In *SNSM* we see the view from the castle when Brenda meets Arthur, and the camera taking a roving, high-angle view of the city and the back yards before focusing in on Arthur in bed at the beginning of the second part of the film. We also see Arthur and Doreen, at the end of the film, on the hill where Arthur used to go blackberrying, with the city below them. In *LLDR* Colin and Mike drive the girls in the stolen car to a hill where they can look down on the city, where they talk about “getting out of this dump”. The effect of these scenes may be that argued by Hill and others, but I feel that there is another possible explanation, which is that these shots are used as a contextualization of the characters. The city seen is not identifiable as Nottingham, or at least not by anyone who is not familiar with it,

but it is seen as a large industrial town, with its factories, cars, trains and people, and yet with the countryside not too far away. It is not London, for example, and this can be seen as in keeping with the deliberate provincialism of both the Angry writers and the Free Cinema, and in *LLDR* the girls talk about escaping to London, a similarity with many Angry works; it is also in keeping with the strong sense of place and geography in the books, particularly if *LLDR* is considered in its totality as a collection of stories and not only the title story. Arthur's world is a very limited one, both socially and geographically, being mostly restricted to home, work and the pub, while we see even less of Colin's Nottingham, and thus these wider shots of the city help to remind the spectator that the characters do not exist only in their own circumscribed environments, that they are part of a larger community, and that no city is made up of only one neighbourhood or area. McFarlane writes of Barthes's classification of narrative functions into distributional and integrational functions, or functions proper and indices:

The former refer to actions and events; they are "horizontal" in nature, and they are strung together linearly throughout the text; they have to do with "operations"; they refer to a functionality of *doing*. *Indices* denote a "more or less diffuse concept which is nevertheless necessary to the story". This concept embraces, for instance, psychological information relating to characters, data regarding their identity, notations of atmosphere and *representations of place* (my italics). Indices are "vertical" in nature, influencing our reading of narrative in a pervasive rather than a linear way; they do not refer to operations but to a functionality of *being* (McFarlane 1996: 13).

The main indicators of place in the films are probably the accents, and a few spoken references to Nottingham, and so it is not illogical, in my opinion, to show the city in its entirety, thus placing Smith and Arthur in their geographical as well as social setting, bearing in mind that there are innumerable indicators of the latter categorization. Such scenes probably did no harm, either, to the audience numbers in the Nottingham area.

The second type of shot mentioned by Hill as an example of the de-humanizing camera is that shot which initially misleads the spectator as to the identity of the characters. Apart from examples in other Free films he mentions the final scene in *SNSM* when we hear the voices of Arthur and Doreen while seeing a long shot of a couple. "It is only when the camera pans left that it becomes apparent that the couple in shot are not Arthur and Doreen but another unknown and anonymous pair...the interchangeability of the couples is emphasized: the individual predicament is transformed into a general one" (Hill 1986: 137). There is a similar misleading of the spectator when we see two young men cycling along the canal, and the camera moves to show Arthur and Bert already sitting down and fishing. These scenes could perhaps support Hill's view, but there is a similar technique used by Reisz which is more common, in which the camera is fixed and the characters move into shot, rather than the camera moving. There is the scene in the park, for example, when we see a group of children playing football, and Arthur and Doreen enter the shot, or when we see a drunken man stagger out of a pub, and his path intersects with that of Bert and Arthur, or when we see from a distance Arthur waiting in the courtyard of the castle and Brenda enters the shot as she moves across to meet him. The type of shot is also used in reverse when the camera remains focused while the characters move out of shot, as when Arthur and Brenda go up to bed while the camera stays on the staircase, or when first Brenda and then Arthur move out of the doorway of the castle and the spectator is left with the framed view of the city. This technique, to me, seems to owe much to the theatre, inasmuch as the actors and actresses enter and leave the stage after the curtain rises and before the curtain falls. In theatrical terms one can say that Reisz is setting the scene, and even the "misleading" shots could be explained by this idea, since it is not uncommon in the theatre to have extras moving on or across the

stage before the entrance of the main characters. This type of shot is not used in *LLDR*, possibly because the mismatching of sound and image is so frequent that any further deliberate attempts at confusion were considered otiose, and any possible confusion arising from this manipulation concerns the division between Colin's interior and exterior world rather than the identity of the character. Nevertheless, Hill presents a forceful argument (Hill 1986: 130-140) that in the Free Cinema in general the emphasis on individuality, the deliberate privileging of location over character (although these two points are, to my mind, contradictory), and such themes as the sexuality of the working class, which is often illicit (as in *SNSM*, *Room at the Top*, *Look Back in Anger*) and shown more explicitly than the norm at the time, all have the effect of separating even more the observer from the observed, strengthening the authority of the camera, and thus reducing the realism to the typical viewpoint of the "privileged" documentary, much like the Victorian social explorer reporting on the exotic habits of the lower orders. All of this, says Hill, produces a disjunction "between character and the social relations they inhabit" (Hill 1986: 136), reinforcing "the common enough criticism of the "new wave" films that, although about the working class, they nonetheless represent an outsider's view" (Hill 1986: 132). It should also be noted here that, as Brown remarks:

Film history demonstrates that realism in British cinema has marked class boundaries. The notion that realist films could embrace characters of the upper-middle class and beyond has rarely been considered. Realistic characters in British films wear cloth caps, not top hats, though most of the chief industry personnel would have been far more at home in the Mayfair nightclubs and hotels that haunt British films, of the 30s and 50s especially, than in any eel and pie shop (Brown 1997: 191).

The nature of the film industry, even more than that of publishing, militates in favour of an external viewpoint of the working class, and there is doubtless much truth in Hill's argument, which in simple terms blames the directorial intentions of poetry for

this disengagement. Nevertheless, *SNSM* and *LLDR* are probably not the best films to illustrate this since both films, reflecting the books, give what is basically the single point of view of the protagonist, and in the books both Smith and Arthur reject any affiliation to a larger class grouping, though it must be said that Smith's outlaws are more likely to be found among the working class than in other levels of society. There may be evidence in the two films of this authoritarian and distancing use of the camera of which Hill and others accuse the Free films, but this evidence is not sufficient to be anything other than corroboratory, and the grounds of the accusations must be sought in the other films or in the Free work as a whole.

### **3.7 WORKING-CLASS POLITICS AND CULTURE**

As in the books, there are few references in the films to the high working-class culture of organized political associations and unions, with the possible exception of the Athletic Club in *SNSM* which, as in the book, is probably some form of working-man's club. As such, it is the logical location for the only comment in the film referring to this high culture, when Arthur goes into the club, with which he is clearly familiar, and says to an old man at the bar: "When's the next strike then, Tom?" Tom's answer, "There's nowt to strike about yet, lad", can be seen as acceptance and enjoyment of the current affluence and full employment, although the "yet" keeps open the option of a strike in the future. Tom's age distances his world of union activity from Arthur, but nevertheless Arthur would probably agree with Tom's opinion and, as in the book, he compares his present conditions with the pre-war situation and seems satisfied. At the beginning of the film he says of the older generation of workers: "They got ground down before the war and never got over it".

He will not be ground down, and refuses to subscribe to the myth of the “good old days”, conscious of the pre-war reality and determined that such conditions will not be allowed to return. When Robboe the foreman, who used to earn seven shillings a week, gives Arthur his 14-pound pay-packet and tells him not to tell anyone else how much he earns, or everyone will want a rise, Arthur says: “Well you could sack them then, couldn’t you, just like the good old days you were telling me about”. When recounting this later to Bert and Aunt Ada, Bert says that he threatened to split a workmate’s head open with his pick for talking about “the good old days”, and Aunt Ada agrees, saying: “Them were rotten days”, to which Bert adds “They won’t happen again”. As in the book, Arthur and Bert, and by implication other workers, are living in a state of truce, reasonably content with their material lives and conscious of the gains which have been made, while still aware that there do exist forces which may attempt to grind them down, and determined that any such attempts will be resisted.

The political ideas in *LLDR* are expressed more explicitly, and they are Colin’s father’s ideas articulated by Colin, though they cannot be said to form any coherent philosophy. We hear that Mr. Smith was a labourer and “Sweated his guts out for nine quid a week – we’d never had it so good”. Smith’s parents frequently fought, usually about money, and Smith says: “That’s how most people live – I’m beginning to see it should be altered.” Later, when he and his mother come out of the factory with the compensation money, Smith scornfully repeats the boss’s insincere praise of his father: “Served the firm well – like hell he did! I bet they’re glad this happened after the last strike.” When Audrey is pressing him to get a job, he says: “Maybe I will get a job. It’s not that I don’t like work, it’s that I don’t like the idea of slaving me guts out so the bosses get all the profits. It seems all wrong to me. My old man used to say

the workers should get the profits.” Audrey answers: “That’s what I think. I bet that’s what it’ll be like in the future.”<sup>127</sup> Colin says: “It will be if I’ve got anything to do with it. Thing is, I don’t know where to start.” From these scenes we know that Colin’s father was a politically conscious worker, and some of his ideas have rubbed off on Colin. How much effect they have had is open to debate, however, and Colin’s vague ideas, “It should be altered”, “I don’t know where to start”, while perfectly consonant with his supposed age, can not really be called considered in any way; since, unlike the book, it seems that he has not yet experienced the world of work and what he has been doing since he left school is a mystery; his father’s political thoughts, and the anti-materialism implied in the burning of the pound-note, would seem to be only one aspect of his influence on Colin, an influence which is seen as more psychological than political.

In the changing-room before the race, among complaints about their respective establishments, Gunthorpe the upper-class public-school boy, played by James Fox, says: “Maybe we ought to get together and join forces.” A Borstal lad says, jokingly, “That’s an idea. Bit of a revolution, eh?” At this there is a general cheer, and the name Castro can be heard, but it is only after this scene that the atmosphere becomes serious, when Gunthorpe and Smith meet as the two main rivals in the race. In general, then, although in the film there is some expression of left-wing political sentiments, their contextualization tends to reduce their importance to the level of Colin’s and Audrey’s teenage confusion: “What are you going to do?” “I don’t know, get a job, live.”

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<sup>127</sup> In my view, the lack of conviction, not to say lack of interest, in Audrey’s delivery of this speech renders the whole scene inconsequential, and is a prime example of the importance of performance. Audrey was played by Topsy Jane, who seems to have disappeared after appearing in *LLDR*, being credited after 1962 with only one television role in 1965. Source: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) Access date: 29.1.2007

While there is little evidence in the films of culture in the form of political activism, there is much information about working-class life, usually visual. The film of *SNSM* shows most of the information about Arthur's lifestyle that we receive in the book, and the fact that this information is generally visual rather than spoken is in keeping with the Free Cinema maxim that "The image speaks" (see p.262). We see him at work, at home, with his extended family, with his neighbours, in pubs and clubs, going to the cinema, going to the Goose Fair, cycling, smoking, fishing in the canal, and with Brenda and Doreen. We can appreciate the contrast between his expensive clothes and his house, and we see how much he earns to support his lifestyle of consumption and how much he gives his mother for his board. We are also shown some of the gradations within the working class, such as Doreen's mother's house, which is on a new housing estate and is more modern than Arthur's or Aunt Ada's houses, giving a visible manifestation of Mrs. Greatton's comment on Arthur that "He looks a bit rough", expressing the viewpoint of the respectable working class.

We do not receive as much information in *LLDR*, either in the text or in the film, since the greater part of the action takes place in the Borstal. One notable change in the film, however, and one which struck an intentionally contemporary note, is that the Smiths live in a prefab, as does Mike. These prefabricated houses, of which some 150,000 were erected in Britain in the post-war years, were originally intended to be a temporary answer to the post-war housing problem, and their projected life was 10-15 years; many, however, lasted much longer, and some are still in existence in Britain, in some cases despite the efforts of local councils to demolish them to make way for new housing. They were, and still are, popular with their inhabitants, representing as they did a more modern accommodation than was the norm at the time, with a bathroom and a fitted kitchen being standard features, something which was far from usual in

much working-class housing at the time (as in Arthur's case)<sup>128</sup>. Apart from his home life, however, and his father's traditional distrust of doctors, the film is more concerned with Colin's internal rather than his external world, as has been said, and in this more individual, private picture the film again follows the book.

The Free Cinema in general has been criticised for its portrayal of women, something which is not surprising given its literary basis of the misogynistic Angry works (see pp.142-156). The typical Free film is structured around a male central character, as is the typical Angry text, and the women who feature usually have a secondary role. Cooke says:

In numerous films the women's potential for independence is cut off when they become pregnant, usually because, like Arthur in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, the men fail to take any precautions in their pursuit of "a good time". Women are degraded and belittled in other ways too, not least through being shown as submissive and conformist in relation to the rebelliousness of their male counterparts (Cooke 2000: 147).

The pattern of an older, more sexually exciting married woman, eventually left for marriage with a younger eligible woman, is common to both *SNSM* and *Room at the Top*; in both films the older woman disappears, in *Room at the Top* through death and in *SNSM* Brenda, we assume, returns to her husband and thus out of Arthur's life. I have given my reasons for believing that, in the book at least, Arthur can be defended against charges of misogyny (pp.210-216). This defence is more difficult to make in the film, not least because the inevitable compression tends towards simplification, and thus many of the nuances of the relationships, such as the age difference and Brenda's and Winnie's serial adultery, are played down or omitted. Hill says of the "new wave":

In common with the writings of the "Angry Young Men" there was more than a streak of misogyny running through the films and a failure to acknowledge the

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<sup>128</sup> For information on prefabs see: [arts.guardian.co.uk](http://arts.guardian.co.uk) and: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) Access date: 14.1.2007

changing social and economic role of women in British society other than as consumers ...All too often they were content to abandon their female characters to the confinement of familiar and domestic and marital roles and even inflict a “punishment” on those who chose to stray beyond (Hill 1986: 174).

Doreen would seem to be the best example of the idea of women as consumers, obsessed with the material, external trappings of affluence, and Cooke points out “Doreen’s concern with her appearance and desire to own one of the new homes on the housing estate” (Cooke 2000: 147). It should be noted here that Brenda does not conform to this idea, since it is Jack who wants to buy the television, the prime symbol of the trivializing effects of consumerism, as a pacifier for Brenda, and it is she who is resistant. The Smith’s spending spree is, of course, enthusiastically led by Mrs. Smith, and Colin’s rejection of the television (provided by Gordon) and his burning of the money, place him unequivocally on the side of the older, male values as represented by his father. The second part of the quote from Cooke on the previous page concerning the “submissive and conformist” role of women would support the aforementioned idea (p.315) of Audrey’s fulfilling the role of the delinquent’s girlfriend as a “good influence”, persuading the young male into an acceptance of the dominant norms, and her insertion into the film would seem to be primarily to serve this function.

In conclusion, in keeping with both cultural and adaptational theory, the films have been considered primarily in the context of their being significant examples of the cultural production of a particular society at a particular time. This society was England in the late 50s/early 60s, a time which was still thought of as post-war, and the films reflect many of the questions considered important at the time of their making, such as class, sex, youth, delinquency and culture. Again, these films, as with any cultural artefact, were not only a result but also a contributing factor to the

changes in society which were taking place at the time. Haywood's opinion (p.214) has been mentioned, in which he asserts that the portrayals of sex in the films and books served to loosen many of the remaining Victorian taboos in British life, and on another front, Cooke says:

There are circumstances within which it is possible to see representations as progressive in spite of their limitations and apparent inability to suggest the possibility of change ...The "new wave" films can be considered progressive in the extent to which they "confirmed an identity" for working-class audiences in the late 1950s and in so doing contested the dominant middle-class image which was prevalent in British cinema at the time (Cooke 2000: 149).

This broadening, in social terms, of the representations of English life is more pronounced in Sillitoe's works, and the corresponding film versions, than in other Angry texts and their corresponding Free films; the social influence of these inter-related, mutually-influencing works, to borrow a term from Aragay and Lopez, has been mentioned, as in the quote from Hitchcock (p.282), and the continuing strong identification between the books and films of *SNSM* and *LLDR* would, apart from limiting attention to Sillitoe's first two works, also serve as a prime example of the intertextual relationship inherent in adaptation. Looking back on these films after almost fifty years, it can be seen that even if the supposed radicalism of the Free Cinema was not as much at odds with the dominant ideology of the time as was thought, their influence was nevertheless felt beyond purely artistic bounds.

Considering the Free Cinema in more strictly cinematic terms, the usual inclusion of *SNSM* and *LLDR* in this grouping of films indicates that they were, and still are, seen as representative of Woodfall and the realist tradition in British cinema, but they are among the later examples of the group. Though films such as *This Sporting Life* (1963), directed by Lindsay Anderson, are considered as continuing the wave of Free/working-class/ kitchen sink/provincial British films, it is my opinion that *LLDR*,

at least in terms of the evolution of Woodfall as a producer and Richardson as a director, represents a point of transition between the earlier Free films, with which I would include *SNSM*, and later works. The next film after *LLDR*, for both Woodfall and Richardson, was *Tom Jones* (1963), which in attitude and technique was deliberately anti-realist. The use of Art Cinema devices in *LLDR* has been mentioned (p.303-306), and Richardson's career can be seen as a move away from the conscious realism of his earlier films such as *Look Back in Anger* (1958) or *A Taste of Honey* (1961) to more extravagantly elaborated films like *Tom Jones* or *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968). Karel Reisz, as has been mentioned, directed *SNSM* in a more conventional manner, and this could well be because it was his first feature film and he was still under the influence of his earlier documentaries. His films following *LLDR* - and he was not prolific in his working life, six feature films spread over some twenty years - *Night Must Fall* (1964), *Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment* (1966) and *Isadora* (1968) show an evolution similar to Richardson. Lovell says:

The technique of *We Are the Lambeth Boys* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is sensitively orthodox. Generally the editing is invisible and its rhythms controlled, the lighting is balanced and camera positions unobtrusive. This orthodoxy, if not completely overthrown in the later group of films, was considerably loosened up. In accordance with one of the central tenets of realism - the artist should be a neutral observer - the presence of the director was not made obvious in Reisz's earlier films. In his later films the director's presence was more discernible (Lovell 1983: 101).

This increasing directorial intervention is not yet evident in *SNSM*, and this is one aspect which makes it, in my opinion, a more coherent film than *LLDR*. Sawkins says of *SNSM*: "As a sharp slice of working-class life the film came near to all that Colin Smith means by being honest" (Sawkins 2001: 223), and I feel that one reason for this honesty is that Reisz does not compromise his portrayal of Arthur. I have argued, I believe, that the Smith of the film differs in essence from the Smith of the book, a difference which tends to diffuse his rebellion and the reasons for it in the mix of

directorial intervention and psychological motivation. The Arthur shown in the film, however, is identifiable as the Arthur of the book, and the prediction of the end of the book, “fighting every day until I die” (p.219) is repeated in the last scene of the film. Having been reproved by Doreen for throwing a stone at the new houses where she hopes they may one day live, Arthur says “It won’t be the last one I’ll throw”, signalling his refusal to knuckle under, to Doreen or to the world at large.

Both films, nevertheless, seem to have survived the test of time, and are now seen as prime examples of a specific time in British cinema and British society, and *SNSM* in particular still manages to retain many of the features which made it such a success when it was originally shown, while other Free films, such as the film versions of Osborne’s works, now seem rather dated. An example of this is given by Lovell:

A few years ago, a teaching experience encouraged me to reflect on my attitudes to the British cinema. I saw *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* along with *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) and *Breathless* (1959)<sup>129</sup> as part of a day school for students. Most of those students hadn’t been born when any of the films were made and knew little about them. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was the one they most enjoyed. It had a simplicity and directness which was very attractive. In comparison *Rebel without a Cause* seemed sentimental and overwrought and *Breathless* clever-clever. The students’ response made me think how much British cinema has been underrated (Lovell 1997: 242).

A part of this “simplicity and directness” is obviously the responsibility of the director, but another part must be a reflection of the character, and Arthur’s unswerving individuality and rejection of compromise are a major constituent of the consistency of focus of the film. If this consistency was later dissipated under the influence of the more experimental cinema coming from France or elsewhere, this in no way reduces the importance of the Free films as social documents in a purely English setting, or as films in their own right. Lovell, in the article quoted above, gives a comment by the director Stephen Frears which contradicts the view of British

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<sup>129</sup> Original title: *À Bout de Souffle*, Jean-Luc Godard.

cinema as somehow deficient when compared to the French or Italian cinemas, for example, and could well offer *SNSM* or *LLDR* as supporting arguments (Frears in Lovell 1997: 235): “The great French film-maker, François Truffaut, once famously said that there was a certain incompatibility between the words British and Cinema. Well, bollocks to Truffaut”.

## CONCLUSION

The key words contained in the title of this thesis, work, working-class and culture, determined the form in which it has been written. All of these words are complicated, to say the least, and it was necessary to go back to the Industrial Revolution to examine how the radical and ineradicable changes in English society at that time produced both the reality and terminology which inform the books and films chosen. The world of Arthur and Smith had its genesis in events which had occurred more than a hundred years previously, as did their reactions to this world, and so the first part of the thesis gives an explanation of the background and a definition of terms.

The effects of industrialism, “the end of a thousand years’ life” in Lee’s phrase (p.23), were felt in every sphere of English society, and thus gave rise to a new vocabulary to describe the new conditions which had come into being. Production shifted from being small-scale, local and semi-autonomous, to being large-scale, centralized and heavily-regimented, and this transformation, accompanied by the increasing urbanization of the country, resulted in the creation of a large industrial working class which shared similar living and working conditions. Class itself, as has been argued, was a new classification which had been coined in response to the radical social changes which England was undergoing, and was a reflection of the phenomenon of an ever-growing number of people who identified themselves with others whose interests were generally similar to theirs. The interests of the working class were naturally to improve their working and living standards, and the fight to achieve this was long and arduous, and not always successful, it has to be said. An integral part of this struggle was the determination to gain some participation in the decision-making process, and the widespread agitation, protest and activism were

directed towards political as much as economic ends. One result of these reactions to industrialism was the birth of innumerable associations, clubs, societies and unions, active in different social and political spheres, which acted as a cohesive force among the working classes; another result of the enforced commonality of experience was the creation of a distinct way of life, with its own practices and attitudes, defined, as were the more overtly organized groupings, largely by its opposition to those who owned and governed the mechanisms of production and society.

Naturally, the creation of this new increasingly-vocal working class provoked reactions among those whose interests were different. These reactions were often violently repressive, seeking to stifle protest and confirm the working classes in their allotted position, but there were other opinions which sought different solutions to the social upheaval summarized in the “condition of England” question (p.38) posed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is at this time that culture is first mentioned both as an idea and as a possible solution to the ills of society, and the perceived importance of culture as a potential healing force against the excesses of industrialism has been shown to exert great influence in English intellectual life from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, from Coleridge to Leavis. However, the concept of culture was also a reaction to the increased democracy which had been one of the results of the aforementioned working-class activism, and it is an unavoidable conclusion that culture, whatever claims may have originally been made for it as a promoter of egalitarianism and as a universally-available panacea, became a distinguishing mark of class differences rather than a force to eliminate these fractures in society.

This use of culture as a badge of recognition and a reinforcer of deference was not really challenged until after the Second World War, when a number of British writers,

of whom Raymond Williams remains the foremost theoretician, started to examine the different meanings of the word and the uses to which it had been put. The previous definition of culture as a familiarity with a small number of generally-accepted artistic works, generally accepted by a small number of people, that is to say, no longer held sway, and thus culture now expanded to include any manifestation of a particular way of life. The question of the beliefs and ideas which formed the basis for a particular way of life, that is to say the ideology, also started to assume greater importance, and the ways and means by which different, usually competing, ideologies were transmitted and received became, and remains, the focus of much study in this area. The area of research which is now known as Cultural Studies forms the theoretical basis for this thesis, and various writers have been used both to establish this basis and to implement the theories in the examination of the books and films.

Before moving on to this examination, there is a review of the representation of the working class in English literature, from the formation of this class with the coming of industrialism until the Second World War. The conclusion is that there are very few examples of a knowledgable, sympathetic portrait of an English worker before Sillitoe, a view supported by a number of writers, not least Sillitoe himself.

The books themselves, in the second part, are first placed in their historical, social and literary background, which is to say a seemingly-prosperous post-war England, when the working class had apparently finally achieved a measure of political and economic stability and equality. The literary background is that of the Angry Young Men, and I have sought to show that while Sillitoe is usually included in this artificial grouping, an inclusion which simplifies a long and productive career, there are a number of significant aspects of his first two books which differentiate his work from that of other writers with whom he is often associated. These aspects, I have argued,

can be summarized by the word culture, and the culture shown is that of the English, urban, industrial working class some hundred years after the birth of industrialism. Sillitoe's depiction of how the people live their lives, and how they think about the world in which they live, make a number of conclusions possible: there is an identifiable working class, with its own culture. This culture, which includes the way of life the people experience and their ideology, is the product of the century's hardships which they had undergone; it is a culture which is primarily communal, based on shared experiences, and is expressed more in the pattern of habits and relationships than in the production of artefacts. The ideology they share is likewise something which has existed for a long time, and its transmission is usually oral, passed down from one generation to the next. The artistic high culture is now largely a matter of indifference, and the ideology disseminated by the ruling classes, the dominant ideology, is a cause of distrust and hostility. The working class identifies itself both internally, recognizing the common experiences and beliefs, but also externally, in opposition to the ruling class which has traditionally sought its own interests at no matter what expense, in short in terms of us and them. This historical enmity has given rise not only to this divergence of ideology, but also to an alternative history and mythology, oral rather than written, collective rather than individual, and usually celebrating the feats of the vanquished rather than the victors. Both Arthur Seaton and Smith embody these aspects of working-class culture, and if the focus is slightly different in each of the books, the world shown and the characters' reactions to it are nevertheless the same for both. The culture which Arthur and Smith share is, despite fears expressed at the time and since, recognizably the culture which had been the product of a long history of struggle, oppression and exploitation, and in these two books, not to mention many others of Sillitoe's works, it shows few signs of being

supplanted by the new mass, consumerist culture. The picture of the working class as easily-persuaded passive consumers of the dominant ideology, as transmitted through the new mass media, is seen to have little basis in fact, at least as shown by Sillitoe; though his characters frequently have little room for manoeuvre within the practical restrictions of their lives, they nevertheless refuse to accept the ideology which is the attempt to justify the structure of the society which is trying to keep them in their place.

Work is a central part of any definition of the working class, and in *SNSM*, for possibly the first time in English writing, we are given a worker's-eye-view of a factory and the activity that is carried out there. A number of critics of a more political bent have maintained that the work Arthur does, and the conditions under which he does it, must necessarily cause in him and others a state of alienation from society, and a deadening of the emotions and intellect. This is to misread both Arthur and the working class: he is alienated, in fact hostile, to the world of the owners and rulers, admittedly; however, he is far from alienated from his own society and his own culture, and to see him as somehow lacking in vitality is, in my opinion, untenable. Furthermore, work is shown to be, for Arthur and others, a necessary evil but nevertheless bearable, and sometimes even a source of pride or a means of self-expression. It is the distribution of the wealth produced rather than the work itself which is the problem, and it is this which has caused Smith to reject the "honest" In-law life, preferring his own brand of honesty. Smith, even so, is as much a member of the working class as is Arthur, and could well be a neighbour if not even a family member, one of his cousins for example, and the similarities between the two are much greater than any differences.

The third part of this thesis deals with the films of the books, and they are first placed in their context. This context is the British cinema at the time, in general, and the Free Cinema movement in particular. Mention has been made of the many close connections between the Free Cinema and the Angry literary works, and it is seen that these two adaptations are even more interwoven with their source texts than the usual adaptation. Apart from the fact that there was a very short time, two years, between the publication of each of the works and its film version, and the fact that Sillitoe wrote the script for both, there is the relationship with the other Free films and the Angry texts which tends towards a view of the cultural impact of these works as a whole rather than as individual films or books. While arguing that the films of *SNSM* and *LLDR* show significant differences to other Free works, and as in the books these differences are in the area of culture, it is nevertheless clear that the films were influenced by the previous Free works, and themselves influenced in turn later films. Though I have given my reasons for believing that *LLDR* is a less cohesive film than *SNSM*, they are both significant as cultural products of the time. Culture functions as both cause and effect, it is moved by and moves society, and this is something which can be seen in these two films, and the other Free works. Mention has been made of the films' contribution to the increased success of the books, and the wider readership, in social terms, which this brought about. In the representation of the working class in a time of relative prosperity the films also helped, by showing heroes who were firmly fixed in this class, both to establish the picture of an independent, assertive hero and, at the same time, break the monopoly on this type of role which had previously been the preserve of the middle class.

The fears for working-class culture in the face of the new mass culture are more evident in the films than in the books, reflecting the makers' preoccupations, both

artistic and social, but this does not mean that the picture of the characters' lives and ideology is significantly different from the books, simply that the methods used to show this reflect the differing systems of signification of a book and a film.

Finally, then, I feel that it has become clear that these works, both written and filmed, were important in that they demonstrated a number of points: they showed that there is a working class, and that one of the basic identifying signs of this class is its culture. It is this culture, in the senses of the way of life and of ideology, which both identifies them and sets them apart from the other classes. Williams says:

I can see that it is genuinely difficult for the English middle class to suppose that the working class is not desperately anxious to become just like itself. I am afraid this must be unlearned. The great majority of English working people want only the middle-class material standard and for the rest want to go on being themselves (Williams 1985: 311).

It is this "being themselves", which is to say living their lives as they want to and thinking as they want to, that draws the pressure of the establishment onto Arthur and Smith, and the struggle which both of them accept as part of their lives is the struggle to be themselves. I believe that one reason that these works have survived as they have is because both Arthur and Smith steadfastly refuse to become something other than what they are, and they are prepared to take whatever consequences may result from their refusal to compromise their essential personality.

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