MYTH IN ALAN SILLITOE'S SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING

APPROVED:

Jerry Don Vann
Major Professor

Diles Mitchell
Consulting Professor

H. Lee Haligary
Minor Professor

E. S. Clifton
Chairman of the Department of English

Robert B. Toulouee
Dean of the Graduate School
The purpose of this thesis is to point out the three levels of mythic structure contained in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, a novel published in 1958 by the British novelist Alan Sillitoe. The novel has been criticized almost solely in its role as a work dealing exclusively with the English proletariat; the critics have ignored mythic content in the novel, and in doing so have missed valuable meaning and structure which each myth adds to the novel.

Hugh Staples, in his article entitled "*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Alan Sillitoe and the White Goddess*," maintains that the structure of Sillitoe's first work is based upon the myth of the White Goddess, a deity worshipped in the ancient mythologies of early Western Europe. The myth, defined by Robert Graves in his book entitled *The White Goddess*, asserts that only with the aid of this mysterious female deity can man triumph in life. In accordance with this particular myth, Sillitoe's protagonist, Arthur Seaton, emerges as a victorious questor in the novel only after he gains knowledge of the complex feminine personality through his relationships with various representatives of the White Goddess.
A second myth whose structure may be discerned behind the action of Sillitoe's novel is the menacing myth of the machine. Predicted by social critics of the past, the myth of the machine concerns man overawed and overpowered by the huge machines he has created himself. Arthur Seaton conforms to the image of modern man who despises the machines upon which he depends. His struggle to remain a creative and separate individual in the face of industrialism becomes merely a futile effort at rebellion. Arthur Seaton, in the depressing light of a myth outlined primarily by Paul Ginestier in The Poet and the Machine, is overcome finally by the mechanized society in which he lives. He resigns himself to a life governed by mechanical forces he cannot control.

D. H. Lawrence, concerned about the industrialization of England and its effect upon modern man, developed a private myth in his writings by which his characters could escape the crushing force of the machine world. A nature lover and a sensualist, Lawrence advocated communion with nature and devotion to sensory experience as effective means by which one could remain a creative and significant individual in a world which placed its emphasis on commercial production rather than on individualism. In his intense love for being, in his passionate affairs with women, and in his unending resentment toward his mechanized existence, Arthur Seaton fulfills the qualifications Lawrence demanded in his characters, and in acting out Lawrence's own beliefs, Arthur exits from the novel a successful human being.
By interpreting *Saturday Night* and *Sunday Morning* according to the meaningful structures provided by the myth of the White Goddess, the myth of the machine, and the private myth of D. H. Lawrence, the reader is able to discover added value and significance often ignored by the critics of Sillitoe's novel.
MYTH IN ALAN SILLITOE'S SATURDAY
NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING

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Vicki Prather Wright, B. A.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1958, Alan Sillitoe published his first novel, which he entitled *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. The novel was ranked among others written by young traditionalists of the fifties and reviewed by critics as one of many novels dealing with modern industrial England and having as its hero a member of the British working class.1 In September of 1960, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* headed the "Best Sellers List" of the *London Sunday Times*; yet, for the most part, both American and British critics remained little impressed.2 Sillitoe's novel was reviewed, favorably and unfavorably, as a work which described the English factory workers' lives in the factory and in the factory-owned tenements. Sillitoe also vividly pictured their week-end celebrations which took place every Saturday night and ended in the calm dreariness of a Sunday morning preceding another monotonous week of toil in the unhealthy factory. Those critics who rejected this initial attempt at the novel by Sillitoe found fault with the overworked content of the novel, with the tendency toward violence of the protagonist, Arthur

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2Ibid., p. 27.
Seaton, and with the author's unsophisticated style, which undoubtedly was a product of his unsophisticated background.
The few who expressed favorable opinions about Saturday Night and Sunday Morning considered it an apt commentary on the British working class and a realistic picture of the thousands who inhabit grimy industrial towns which have formed a large part of the English nation since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. However, critics of Sillitoe with opposing views seem to agree upon one point concerning the novel; it should be criticized only in its capacity as a simple novel of the British proletariat. By disregarding the possibility that Sillitoe's work might possess more than a single surface level of meaning, the critics and readers of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning have failed to recognize the added depth, meaning, and structural value which appear before one's eyes when the novel is regarded in the light of its several possible mythic levels of interpretation. Three principal myths appear more probable than merely possible in the novel, and each adds its separate mood and symbolic outcome to the action of the work. These myths, the myth of the White Goddess as interpreted by Hugh Staples, the myth of the machine, and the private myth created by D. H. Lawrence, have been ignored, almost without exception, by the critics endeavoring to gain insight into Sillitoe's novel.

Rubin Rabinovitz is helpful in giving Sillitoe his place alongside other writers of the fifties, those often called
"the angry young men." These men rejected the experimental methods of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf and were encouraged to write about social change occurring in England at the time.3 Rabinovitz is also able to find a literary niche for Sillitoe's first work, terming it a modern picaresque novel of much the same type as that which John Braine creates. Like several of his contemporaries, Sillitoe is said to be an imitator of nineteenth-century novelists in that, like the Edwardians, he too sets his stories in industrial England and deals with the British working class, their morality and the social changes for which they hope.4

Because such a great quantity of material has been written concerning the same subject with which Sillitoe deals, J.W. Aldridge finds little excuse for the literary existence of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning. Admitting that the author has indeed captured the mood of the "grey-faced factory-owned people"5 who inhabit the "grey-faced factory-owned tenements,"6 Aldridge maintains that Sillitoe has neither suggested a workable solution to the problems of the factory workers, nor even pointed an accusing finger at terrible social conditions. Because Sillitoe fails to campaign for needed social reform, Aldridge considers the novel worse than valueless.7 In his chapter "Alan Sillitoe: The Poor

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3Rabinovitz, p. 7.  
4Ibid., p. 16.  
6Ibid.  
7Ibid.
Man's Bore," Aldridge discusses briefly the fact that Alan Sillitoe left school at the age of fourteen to work in a bicycle factory with his father. Rather than seeing Sillitoe's early career as one which might give him added insight into the feelings of his characters, Aldridge deplores his lack of education and writes that Sillitoe's only value in the eyes of the reading public is "... something of the curiosity value of an exceptionally well-mannered circus-monkey who can play 'God Save the Queen' on a tin horn." In his criticism of the characters of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Aldridge types them as total and ineffective products of a deadening environment:

All that they think and do and want is determined by the exigencies of their class existence, including even their empty gestures of rebellion against that existence; hence, nothing they think is interesting; nothing they do finally is worth doing, and nothing they want will in the end be of any value to them.\(^8\)

In the *New Republic*, Irving Howe centers his criticism on one of Sillitoe's characters in particular, berating the author for creating a protagonist whose values are sometimes questionable in the eyes of the moral middle class:

Mr. Sillitoe's attitude toward Arthur is notably free from moral nagging or political exhortation; but it may be that in its hard-headed and undeluded way it is not quite free from sentimentality. It is an attitude which tempts the observer—in this case, the reader—to judgments... Should not this capacity of a novel for cozying the dominant moods of the moment be at least some cause for uneasiness?\(^10\)

The hero, Arthur, is criticized as well in The Saturday Review by James Yaffe, who accuses him of being much too cognizant of his own vital individuality to be what he is in the novel, i.e., an uneducated young factory worker of the amoral, unthinking working class. Yaffe writes: "Arthur seems to be doing his own thinking; he is much too conscious of his own unselfconsciousness, too aware, in a literary way, of what a vigorous young animal he is." Sillitoe is thus indicted for imposing his own literary consciousness upon a character who is unworthy of such a consciousness.

Luckily for Sillitoe, there are some critics who reflect the appreciation the English reading public has for Saturday Night and Sunday Morning. The New York Times Book Review, represented by Malcolm Bradbury, expresses approval of the artist's insight into the true spirit of the British proletariat. Bradbury gives credit to Sillitoe for catching

"...much of the mood of its present day working-class in England--its half-conscious spirit of rebellion, its exploitive laziness and noncooperation, its uneasy clever rogue and the army deserter, its sense of a distant, vague "they" which runs its life so it can never win."  

The novel is credited with being somewhat more of an achievement than many of its prototypes because, according to Gene Baro of the New York Herald Tribune, much of the

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action takes place inside the consciousness of the anti-hero, Arthur Seaton. Thus the reader is able to read the book as a working-class commentary while simultaneously delving into the mind of an individual human being through Sillitoe's talent for interior monologue.13

The *Yale Review* calls *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* a "distinguished novel"14 and mentions Robert Graves, British poet and student of world mythology, as one of Sillitoe's most encouraging fellow-writers. Sillitoe and his wife lived for six years on the island of Majorca, during which time Sillitoe and Graves became good friends.15 Knowing that Sillitoe was surely influenced for good or bad by Graves and that Graves has plunged deeply into the myths and religions of both Europe and Asia in order to define these myths and to exhibit their poetic influence, those commentators upon Sillitoe's first novel have, nevertheless, remained oblivious to the mythic content of the work. To date, Hugh Staples appears the only critic with enough bravery and poetic insight to venture one of the mythically based interpretations which are both possible and probable in relation to *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

14*The Yale Review*, XLVIII (September, 1959), 127-129.
CHAPTER II

CLASSICAL MYTH IN SATURDAY NIGHT

AND SUNDAY MORNING

In the summer of 1964, Hugh Staples' article "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Alan Sillitoe and the White Goddess" appeared in Modern Fiction Studies. It remains the only article giving Sillitoe's novel any credit for its mythological content. Staples has no argument with Sillitoe's previous critics, who label Saturday Night and Sunday Morning as a novel of the British working class; he simply wishes to assert his view that this book has a much broader literary scope than had been heretofore suggested. Staples considers Robert Graves a decided influence upon the novel and writes that

... although a great deal in the novel may be taken as both implicit and explicit proletarian criticism of the Establishment and its works, the central idea is deeper and more universal; it is a dramatic analysis, on an essentially comic level, of the immemorial rhythms of birth, life and death that Robert Graves maintains are the theme of "all true poets" from Homer to the present day.\(^1\)

That the novel is realistic enough to be considered a valid commentary on the British working class and at the same time a study of modern man is not paradoxical in the least.

\(^1\)Staples, p. 171.
Alan Sillitoe is quite aware of the relationship between myth and reality and asserts that each is intrinsically related to the other. Staples quotes Sillitoe's statement that "realism is necessary all the way, because it is only out of realism that myths grow to be broken down again in time by more realism, thus keeping up the stimulating flow of artistic progression." Two myths stand behind the realism of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning according to Hugh Staples: the ancient fertility myth and the myth of the White Goddess.

Arthur Seaton symbolically portrays the king-questor who must be born, experience a violent struggle with an older rival, win his battle, undergo death, and triumph through a rebirth into a new and better life. Sillitoe uses the fertility myths found in The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer as a basis for his modern quest-story. Staples writes that

... the basic outlines of these myths seem to represent for Sillitoe a scaffolding by means of which he can impose a sense of order upon the apparently dehumanized life of the factory and the chaotic revel of Nottingham night-town.  

Arthur is presented by these myths with a "set of values" toward which he should strive, as well as a "set of moral criteria against which he can be judged."

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2 Ibid., p. 171.
3 Ibid., p. 172.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Arthur Seaton's experiences gain value, meaning and order as one compares them to those of the ancient questor through the juxtaposition of the fertility myth with the action of Sillitoe's anti-hero. It is not surprising that the *New Republic* described the novel as "a series of vignettes, like a succession of movie stills without much continuity or climax," as it judged the work only in its capacity as a novel of purely social comment.

Staples explains the logical division of the book into two parts. The first twelve chapters are grouped under the title of "Saturday Night." In a passage noted by Staples as significant in relation to the theme of the novel, Sillitoe describes Saturday night as "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." In his allusion to the "Big Wheel of the Year," Sillitoe gives an obvious indication of mythic content in his novel. Mythically this "Wheel" represents the "annual cycle," the cycle of the four seasons of the year. It is analogous also to the cycle of man's existence: birth, growth, struggle, and death. Through use of this symbol,

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6Howe, p. 141.


9Ibid.

10Ibid., p. 161.
Sillitoe implies that his protagonist is essential man, who must undergo the various cycles of life's experience as he witnesses the changing seasons of the year. To Arthur Saturday night is the time of the week when "piled-up passions were exploded"\(^{11}\) and the

... effect of a week's monotonous graft in the factory was swilled out of your system in a burst of good will. 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.\(^{12}\)

The first twelve chapters include the "symbolic birth, growth and death"\(^{13}\) of the questor. In these chapters, Arthur is introduced as an extremely immature youth of twenty-two who is interested only in sexual escapades with as many women as he thinks he is able to handle, and who, at the end of the first section, loses his sense of identity when he is badly beaten in recompense for his sexual irresponsibility. Actually, Staples believes that the action of the first chapter indicates symbolically what will happen to Arthur's mythic existence in the rest of the novel. Arthur is challenged to a drinking contest by an older man and beats his rival by several pints. During the course of the contest, however, Seaton has become so intoxicated that he suffers both a literal and mythic fall from good fortune when he stumbles drunkenly down the stairs at the White Horse Pub. At the end

\(^{11}\)Sillitoe, p. 4. \(^{12}\)Ibid. \(^{13}\)Staples, p. 174.
of his fall, Arthur sinks into a literal and mythic unconsciousness and remains curled up like a "giant foetus"\textsuperscript{14} at the bottom of the staircase.\textsuperscript{15} Awakened by an anxious waiter, the new-born hero imbibes more alcohol at the bar and is forced to leave the pub in dishonor after vomiting over a man and a woman. He is saved from total disgrace when he returns to the home of Brenda, a married woman with whom he is presently involved, and she arrives to care for him maternally and also welcome him into a sexual heaven.\textsuperscript{16} The last three books, in the section entitled "Sunday Morning," portray Arthur experiencing a "symbolic rebirth and rededication to the cyclical ritual."\textsuperscript{17}

Helpful also in defining the role of time in \textit{Saturday Night} and \textit{Sunday Morning} in its relation to myth is Hugh Staples' explanation that

\ldots on the metaphorical level, time plays the same double role in the fortunes of the hero as does the three-natured Goddess, and it is for this reason that Sillitoe has organized the action of his novel against the panorama of the calendar.\textsuperscript{18}

Time is measured by Arthur by the seasons, by week-days and week-ends, and finally by the factory clock and the pub clock.\textsuperscript{19} Seasonal changes actually indicate how the questor is progressing. He is introduced in the novel in autumn,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}Sillitoe, p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Staples, p. 174.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 173.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 173.
\item \textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
grows to the height of his sexual power in October as he promenades through Goose Fair with Brenda on one arm and Winnie on the other, and is beaten by the soldiers and dies symbolically in late November, the season in which all life ceases. Rebirth occurs on Christmas Day at Aunt Ada's when Arthur sees Jane hit Jim, and Jim's blood symbolically revitalizes the approaching season of spring. Arthur is now able to renew the life cycle he has begun by marrying Doreen in this new and fertile season. Thus,

as the zodiac runs its course, Arthur is gradually, but progressively, made aware of the truth that actions have consequences, and that society will ultimately hold him responsible for them, wiggle and squirm as he may to avoid being held accountable.

Because of the influence of Robert Graves, Sillitoe has placed the myth of the White Goddess next to the myth of the fertility god in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Graves believes that Western civilization was once basically a matriarchal society ruled by a feminine deity whom he calls the White Goddess. This goddess, says Staples, is a "representation of what might be called the three stages of woman--as virgin, matron and old woman. The White Goddess in some of her manifestations helps the hero-king, and in others she is antagonistic." Staples gives credit for Sillitoe's understanding of the White Goddess to his friend Robert Graves and

\[20\text{Ibid.}, p. 179.\]
\[21\text{Ibid.}, p. 175.\]
\[22\text{Ibid.}, p. 176.\]
\[23\text{Ibid.}, p. 172.\]
his book *The White Goddess*. Graves defines her as the primary European deity, a triple goddess in charge of the underworld, of the earth, and of heaven, and he maintains that the language of true poetry still centers around this Muse.\(^\text{24}\) Latins, Celts, Greeks, Cretans, Assyrians and many other races worshipped the White Goddess, who was the goddess of grain and fertility, often called Diana, Ceres, Demeter, Persephone, or Alphito. As goddess of the Barley cults in which the ritual of kingly-castration was observed, Diana, one name for the White Goddess, often is depicted as carrying a golden sickle signifying the castration which brings fertility. Graves asserts that "Albion," the first recognized name for England, derives from the word "albina," whose actual meaning is the "White Goddess," originating from the "Danaan Barley-Goddess of Argos."\(^\text{25}\)

The three personalities of the goddess—virgin, matron and crone—are related to the three phases of the moon. Graves connects her title to the lunar phases when he says: "I write of her as the White Goddess because white is her principal colour, the colour of the first member of her moon trinity."\(^\text{26}\) As the "Triple Goddess" is related to the three stages of the moon, so she is represented in Sillitoe's

\(^{24}\)Graves, pp. 319-320.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., p. 67.

\(^{26}\)Ibid., p. 70.
novel by Doreen, Brenda, and Aunt Ada, who symbolize the three stages of woman. Each stage is necessary to the development and achievement of the hero-king, Arthur Seaton.\(^27\)

Brenda, the wife of one of Arthur's fellow factory-workers, represents the matronly side of the White Goddess which is symbolized by the full moon. She is the source of Arthur's mythic education, for, as well as being Arthur's comforter and lover, Brenda is the cause of the painful beating which Arthur suffers, and which forces him reluctantly to realize that irresponsible conduct may result in unfortunate and painful consequences. The beating destroys Arthur's self-image, leaving him frightened and powerless for a time. As a priestess of the Goddess, as the sickle-wielding Diana, Brenda is rightfully the one to castrate Arthur mythically, in order to restore fertility to the land. Yet Arthur is not the only one who is symbolically sterilized, for when Brenda becomes pregnant with his child, it is instead the goddess who suffers as she performs a home-style abortion by drinking great quantities of gin while sitting in a tub continually supplied with hot water. Staples calls this scene which Arthur witnesses "a hilarious parody of Graves' account of the 'cauldron-ritual' in The White Goddess." The cauldron scene is an example of one of many initiation ceremonies Arthur must

\(^27\)Staples, pp. 172-175.

\(^28\)Ibid., p. 177.
undergo before he reaches manhood. The scene is a

d... parody of the Eleusinian mysteries. Here everything is backwards: instead of a dramatic fertility rite, we have an anti-climatic drinking orgy whose purpose it is to put an end to a life already begun... He escapes the tragic fate of Pentheus, only to suffer the comic hangover of the bacchanal, yet Sillitoe has once again introduced mythological over-tones--this time ironically--to reinforce his theme and to suggest an extra dimension to his comedy.29

It is Aunt Ada, the mythical old crone, to whom Arthur turns for advice when he learns that Brenda is carrying his unwanted child. Aunt Ada represents all three aspects of woman. She is the eternal Earth-Mother who welcomes all men into her heart, her household, and even into her bed. Arthur describes her as "a woman of fifty-odd dressed in a grey frock, with a face attractively made-up,"30 and he notes significantly that "a mask of age"31 was imposed upon a once plump face. As Arthur enters the house, Ada removes

... her gaze from the burning heart of the coal-fire that acted like a crystal ball in which she saw a past whose incidents however black could never be anything but fascinating now that they had buried themselves behind her.32

Staples affirms the fact that "it is as the third aspect of the Triple Goddess--crone, layer-out, priestess-prophetess--that she principally functions in the novel."33 It is in the home of Aunt Ada also that Arthur is symbolically reborn through the action of his cousin Jane. Having been beaten

29Ibid.
30Sillitoe, p. 74. 31Ibid. 32Ibid. 33Staples, p. 176.
badly by two men as a result of his illicit liaisons with Brenda and Brenda's sister, Winnie, Arthur loses his former air of bravado, fearing now the risks of life which he had often before recklessly encountered. On Christmas Day, Ada kisses her Negro guest, Sam. Several minutes later, in the midst of this love-filled atmosphere, Jane hits her husband on the head with a beer-mug. Concerning this event, Staples writes:

Thus in the space of a very few minutes, Arthur has witnessed the operation of the White Goddess, in the persons of Aunt Ada and Jane, acting as mother, lover and crone, and just as Jim is symbolically beheaded (mysteriously, because Jane refuses to divulge her motive for attacking him), so Arthur is magically revived from his lethargy. The White Goddess' choice of Jim as victim is only another of her inexplicable actions. It is to Arthur that, with the gush of blood from the gash on Jim's forehead, comes the feeling of being "strangely and joyfully alive, as if he had been living in a soulless vacuum since his fight with the swaddies." Although Jim's wound and Arthur's rebirth are obviously symbolically related, Staples makes no attempt to fathom the workings of the inscrutable deitess.

Doreen, although not technically a virgin, comes closer to the real thing than any of the other prominent female characters in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, and it is in the role of virgin that she represents the White Goddess in


35 Sillitoe, p. 219.
the novel. Arthur must give in by submitting to Doreen in marriage before he can triumph in life, for the god-hero cannot accomplish his goals without the help of the White Goddess, according to Robert Graves. Since woman is the source of all life, man is ultimately dependent upon her for success in life. By marrying Doreen, Arthur commits himself to the cycle of life which is represented by the Goddess. Realizing that risk is a necessary and exciting part of life, Arthur becomes unafraid to join himself legally to Doreen, to undertake the risks of life with a woman, and to participate in what Robert Graves calls "the one story and one story only."  

As questor-king, Arthur Seaton gropes toward one goal in the novel. Staples sees this goal as an understanding of the complexity of the female personality. At the beginning of his mythic journey, Arthur radically divides women into two categories of opposite extremes. He perceives women as either all good or all bad. Brenda represents the women of one category, for she is loving, warm, forgiving, and sexually attractive. Sillitoe writes in his novel that

Arthur, in his more tolerant moments, said 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.

36Staples, p. 176.  
37Ibid., p. 181.  
38Ibid., pp. 175-176.  
39Sillitoe, p. 41.
The other category contains women like Mrs. Bull, the vicious, obese guardian of the factory-yard. Included also in the latter division are women like the female army officer who apprehends a drunken man who unfortunately breaks a plate-glass window in her formidable presence. Arthur classifies the type of women who

... wouldn't let you be nice to them, women with battle-ship faces and hearts as tough as nails, who rattle a big fist at you and roar: "Do this, do that, do the other or else"--and you could try all you liked to be kind to them, but they wouldn't have any of it... They were the sort of women who thought you were barmy if you tried to love 'em and they just didn't understand what love was, and all you could do was end up by giving them a smack in the chops.40

However, by the end of the novel, Arthur arrives at a more complete understanding of the female personality, the threefold Goddess, and realizes that many different sides of woman are able to be contained in one feminine individual. He reaches the awareness that, like the White Goddess, woman can be both destructive and creative.41 Arthur has tried to escape the responsibility of his actions throughout the novel, but Staples asserts that "the symbolic figure of the White Goddess, as she is represented in the figures of Brenda, Aunt Ada, and Doreen, functions to make sure that he does not escape his fate."42

By examining Saturday Night and Sunday Morning with both the ancient fertility myth and the myth of the White Goddess

40 Ibid., p. 42.
41 Staples, p. 175.
42 Ibid.
in mind, Hugh Staples has shown the novel to possess a depth and significance previously ignored by Sillitoe's critics. The novel can be understood with enjoyment and added awareness of possible meaning on the level suggested by Staples, yet it must not be assumed that Staples' interpretation is the only mythic level on which the novel may be read.
CHAPTER III

THE MYTH OF THE MACHINE IN SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING

Unlike the myth of the White Goddess synthesized by Robert Graves from the mythologies of ancient matriarchal societies, the myth of the machine was created by men of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who had no use for the gods and goddesses of antiquity. These men wished to place their faith instead in the inhuman machines of their own creation. Indeed, social critics at the beginning of the Industrial Age indicated the development of a new mythology oriented around the power of mechanical force rather than the erratic whims of supernatural beings:

Karl Marx, heavily committed to material progress, announced that any mythology was bound to be incompatible with the results of the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, the distance was vast between Mount Olympus and the city of Manchester. Yet when Ralph Waldo Emerson visited Manchester in 1848, he clairvoyantly noted that a modern mythology would have to be mechanical, industrial, parliametary, commercial, and socialistic. . . .

Emerson was right in his supposition, for along with the machines, factories, and industrial complexes which have sprung up over the face of the modern earth, the myth of the machine has been growing steadily more menacing in its significance for modern humanity. Since the beginning of the

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Industrial Revolution in the middle of the nineteenth century, men have subjected themselves to a progressively greater extent to the machines originally created to remove the burden of body-breaking labor from their backs. As more and varied types of machinery were created by imaginative people, the original scheme to avoid work through use of these machines was discarded. As men saw what huge amounts of products and wealth they could acquire with these metallic creatures, they became enslaved to their own creations and, in turn, bound others to these mechanisms with promises of easy money and an easy life in which one no longer had to depend on fickle mother-earth for sustenance. The machines could do all with only a little attention from their human patrons. Man learned to harness nature to run these machines, and in so doing, he began to play the role of God as he created metal servants, using fire and water to operate these metallic marvels. Fire was once the symbol of the imagination and creativity, originating in the sun, which was considered in primitive ages to be the symbol of unity and completeness. "Today," says Paul Ginestier, author of The Poet and the Machine, "the product of the fire's controlled energies is the machine, and this results in a withering repetition likely to brutalize humanity." Water, traditionally regarded as the symbol of

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fertility, was converted into electrical power. This force operated the machines finally responsible for sterilizing the imagination of man as he worked day after day at one machine, performing one pattern of monotonous movement.

The greatest loss, perhaps, caused by the age of industrialism, is the loss of spirituality in the human beings who began to worship the factories as gods who supplied mankind with every conceivable kind of material manna. Ginestier writes of this loss: "Man cannot seek to become God with impunity. The more he understands nature and dominates matter, the greater becomes the gap between his knowledge and his moral evolution." And as moral evolution became stunted, the men of the machine became more and more like wily animals trapped by the factories to be employed more as beasts of burden than as intelligent beings. In their devotion to materialism, men ignored the matters of the heart and of the spirit, and as they moved further from these things, they abandoned the traditional method of salvation which had sustained their forefathers for almost two thousand years.

Comparing men of today and yesterday in their relation to deity, Ginestier feels that modern man is infinitely more pathetic:

If ancient and modern man both feel themselves to be the playthings of a power beyond themselves, modern man has, in addition, the feeling of having created this power, of being physically capable of ridding himself of it, but

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5 Ibid., pp. 67-68.  
6 Ibid., p. 38.  
7 Ibid.  
8 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
of not having the moral strength to do so. We inflict upon ourselves a sort of perpetual punishment from which springs the latent masochism of our age analogous to that of the flagellant monks of the Middle Ages; but we do not have even any more the prospect of gaining salvation from our suffering.9

Thus, man sentenced himself to a hell on earth, as well as in after-life, perhaps, for he created his own hell in the form of capitalistic industrialism. As industrialism increased at a tremendous rate of speed, very much like a runaway automobile traveling downhill with a helpless driver at the wheel, so man's unhappiness with his situation increased; yet he remained too materialistic and morally weak to apply the brake.

With the loss of the ability to trust in a being greater than the machines man created, the ability to function as responsible, intelligent human beings disappeared also. Now machines were expected, ridiculously, to take over the mental processes, as well as the physical, which formerly characterized the Homo sapiens. Of modern man, Ginestier writes that "in the machine age he seems to lose even his intellectual integrity, which he sacrifices on the altar of the new god."10 The factory, in itself, was innocent, yet men corrupted it by substituting it for their old god. Finding their new god at times irresponsible and uncaring in its commercialism, society railed against it for lacking impossible spiritual attributes. "Men have unjustifiably wanted to raise it to the level of a

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 32.
church, and now they reproach it for not being worthy of such a designation. Through this sort of misuse the factories have been transformed into gigantic beasts which devour the bodies and souls of the men who throw themselves at its grimy feet in hope of material salvation. Civilization no longer produces individuals of great moral strength. Industrialization negates the need for heroes in its demand for subservient masses required to wait upon the machines. Paul Ginestier predicts the ultimate failure of a society which places its greatest value on the mechanical mass called the "community" rather than on the single creative and emotional entity known as the "individual."

We are heading for disaster physically as well as socially. We have the hint of the failure of civilization in the transfer of individual worth to a deification of the community, a kind of supreme and hidden being to whom we are valued only in proportion to our mechanical output.

The myth of the machine, therefore, deals with man who "has become only a number, a tiny part of the monster-machine which he has created and which crushes him spiritually." Mankind feels itself humiliated in the face of unattractive, unthinking machinery which performs the jobs of men in one-tenth the time and with almost one hundred per cent accuracy. In their humility men hate the machine-god, but as a whole they remain unable to escape from its service.

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11 Ibid., pp. 155-156.
12 Ibid., p. 43.
13 Ibid., p. 41.
14 Ibid., p. 20.
Alan Sillitoe's novel is estimable in that it possesses more than the single mythic level of interpretation which Hugh Staples ascribes to it; it can be understood also in relation to certain modern created myths, both public and private. Looking back at Staples' explication of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, one sees that the action of the novel reconciles itself pleasurably in Arthur's acceptance of the complex feminine mystique (the White Goddess), evidenced by his marriage to Doreen at the end of the story. The conclusion is a happy one in which boy gets girl, and by this union, the cycle of life is once again renewed. Arthur Seaton learns a great deal in his dealings with the White Goddess, and with her help, he emerges from the novel a triumphant hero.

Because of the variety of mythical significance in Sillitoe's work, however, Arthur may be regarded instead as victim rather than victor when the frightening myth of the machine is revealed on its own separate plane of meaning in the novel. Rather than a triumphant questor-king, on the level of the machine myth Seaton becomes an example of modern man struggling to achieve and maintain his individual identity in a negative industrial society. As the limited plot of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* develops through the often violent experiences of the protagonist, Arthur is slowly but methodically defeated. In his futile attempt against the machine, he fails to achieve an existence free from the evils which characterize the rest of his mechanized environment. Depending upon the monster he wishes to
destroy, Arthur remains unable to overcome or transcend his factory-oriented fate.

Like the modern man whom Ginestier describes, Arthur is devoid of religious belief, relying completely upon his own strength and cunning to save him from any harm life might inflict. Again and again throughout the novel, Sillitoe's protagonist denies his need for a spiritual god. As Arthur regains consciousness after falling down the stairs in the White Horse Pub, he drunkenly mumbles "Christ," and the waiter attending him cheerlessly remarks, "He won't help you." Remembering the air-raid shelters in which he was forced to take refuge as a child during the Second World War, Arthur often speculates upon the results of a future world holocaust. If America were ever foolhardy enough to bomb Russia, then, thinks Arthur, "You could say ta-ta to everybody, burn your football coupons and betting slips, and ring-up Billy Graham. If you believe in God, which I don't. . . ." Speaking confidentially to a bar maid in one of his favorite pubs, Arthur scoffs at the Catholic Irish who fight violently among themselves each Saturday night, yet attend mass faithfully on the following Sunday. "'That's their way,' he remarked, 'but it ain't mine. I've never been in a church in my life. I ain't even been christened.'"

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15 Sillitoe, p. 6.  
16 Ibid., p. 7.  
17 Ibid., p. 23.  
18 Ibid., p. 156.
Arthur is lacking in the requirement of ancient myth which demands that its hero be in constant companionship and/or conflict with nature. He feels the need of such a relationship, as evidenced by his Sunday afternoon fishing jaunts to the nearby canals. However, opportunities for a continuous communion with nature are rare in an industrial England whose once-beautiful countryside is marred with the black, grimy projections of factories.

Unlike primitive man, who was unaware of the passage of time, and to whom the concept of age was unknown, modern man is anxiously aware of each minute as it slips elusively through his frantic fingers. Concerning this unfortunate development in the meaning of time to man, Ginestier writes: "Time flowed imperceptibly; now its continuity is chopped up for us by mechanical devices. Sensitive spirits were always suffering from this at the beginning of the machine age." Arthur, although born well into the age of industrialism, is similar to the "sensitive spirits" mentioned by Ginestier, for time is disjointed in Arthur's consciousness and separated into various fragments possessing connotations of good or evil.

Since most of Arthur's waking life is spent standing at his lathe in the bicycle factory where he works, time is often related to the factory. The week is divided into the five working-days and the two days of respite, the week end.

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19 Ginestier, p. 70.  
20 Ibid.
of the days making up these time-units have a special significance in their relation to the plant. Arthur refers to Monday as "Black Monday," the day when he says that "... you felt your head big from boozing, throat sore from singing, eyes fogged up from seeing too many films or sitting in front of the television, and feeling black and wicked because the big grind was starting all over again." By Wednesday, Arthur is "broken-in like a greyhound," accustomed to his labor like a trained animal. Friday is pay day, the day when the machine-god rewards his servants with the money for which they enslave themselves. Following Friday comes Saturday with its hysterical 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." On Saturday nights, the men and women of the working class fervently attempt to escape the monotony of their lives in the factory. Deprived by machinery of creative opportunities, they give vent to their pent-up energies by drinking heavily, shouting loudly, fighting violently and loving passionately. Yet, Ginestier maintains that in these frantic attempts at gaiety, they are simply continuing the mechanical rhythm imposed upon them by the machines which they tend eight hours out of every working-day. "The factory and the street" of our modern civilization have

21 Sillitoe, p. 19. 22 Ibid. 23 Ibid. 24 Ibid., p. 4.
25 Ginestier, p. 15. 26 Ibid., p. 150.
created a need in man for noise, and Ginestier writes that "still better adapted to the satisfaction of this need are the amusement parks and dancehalls which continue the frenzied work-rhythm after work is through." Arthur is no different from the average man who must satisfy this need, and he rarely misses a chance to envelop himself in the intoxicated, shouting crowds who fill the pubs each Saturday night. Sunday, to Arthur, means a day for recuperation from the night before, a day on which he can often remain isolated from crowded society by removing himself to the nearest canal to fish.

The separate days are, for the most part, an obscure blur passing swiftly through Arthur's consciousness. Working in a factory five days a week in an industrial town which excludes nature and her metamorphoses, Arthur finds that "only a calendar gave any real indication of passing time, for it was difficult to follow the changing seasons. . . ." and only on the week ends is Arthur able to notice the "transitional mechanisms of each season." A good example of the modern man who fears old age in its destructive effect upon his money-making productive ability, Arthur, at twenty-two, already feels that a great deal of time is behind him and pushing:

27Ibid.
28Sillitoe, p. 137.
29Ibid.
Time marches on, he thought. Before we know where we are, Goose Fair will be here, with dark nights and a stone-cold winter, and everybody filling their Christmas clubs for chocolates, pork pies, and booze. I'll be twenty-three in December. An old man soon.\textsuperscript{30}

Sitting in pubs after work in the evening, Arthur hears the bar-maids calling "Time! Time, please everybody,"\textsuperscript{31} and the sound is hateful in his ears.

The passage of time is especially evil in its relation to the women in Arthur's young life. Upon first meeting Sillitoe's anti-hero, the reader learns that he is having an affair with a married woman, and as the week end reaches eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, Arthur is forced to leave her bed and house before her husband returns from the races which he attends each week end. Later, Arthur is involved in two love affairs simultaneously, and as the seasons overtake him, so do his lovers' husbands. Time plays a third cruel game on Arthur, for when trying to make Doreen's initial acquaintance in a pub, he desperately notices that it is "... twenty-five minutes to closing time, and the sands were running out."\textsuperscript{32} The sands of Arthur's single, creative life do, indeed, run themselves out in the novel, for with the passage of time, he becomes more involved with Doreen, an involvement which encourages Arthur to accept the mechanized society he has sworn to defy.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 163.
  \item \textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 162.
  \item \textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 158.
\end{itemize}
Throughout *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, the image of the machine, or synonymously, of the factory, as an ogre of evil intelligence is developed. This same being supports an entire dependent civilization, furnishing its servants with the necessities and a few luxuries of life. To gain these temporal prizes, Arthur and thousands of others of the British proletariat render themselves subservient to the monster they worship, some in bitter resentment, some willingly. Like most of their fellow workers, the Seatons live close to their place of employment in drab, crowded tenements belonging to the factory. They are never free from the sight of the ugly, unhealthy cluster of buildings in which they labor, for the factory is the center of the housing complex in which they live, just as it is the center of the lives which it simultaneously supports and corrupts. Arthur and his father are only two of the many who must confront the beast of mechanization every morning. Sillitoe describes vividly the bestial impression which the factory engraves upon Arthur's mind as he and his father leave for work on a Monday morning:

Once out of doors they were more aware of the factory rumbling a hundred yards away over the high wall. Generators whined all night, and during the day giant milling machines working away on cranks and pedals in the turnery gave to the terrace a sensation of living within breathing distance of some monstrous being that suffered from a disease of the stomach. Disinfectant suds, grease, and newly-cut steel permeated the air over the suburb of four room houses built around the factory, streets and terraces hanging onto its belly and flanks like calves sucking the udders of some great mother.\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\)Ibid., pp. 22-23.
Whereas in classical myth, earth appeared traditionally as the symbolical mother as she gave of her abundance to men, Sillitoe has transmitted the matriarchal image to the factory, portraying the factory, however, as a malevolent step-mother who represses and subjugates her adopted sons and daughters in the unworthy cause of materialism. She nourishes her real children, the machines, by sapping their human step-brothers of strength, imagination and vital individuality, threatening them with material insecurity if they refuse to obey her stern commands. Prodigal children have no place in the family of industrialism. The fate of anyone foolish enough to reject such a heredity is indeed frightening, for as Ginestier asserts, "Driven out by the productive machine, the individual ceases to be able to justify his existence." 

As Arthur enters the factory on Monday morning, he is "swallowed by its diverse noises." At the end of the hall, he spies the heart of the machine-monster, the motor, which Sillitoe compares in appearance to "a stranded whale," a subtle allusion, perhaps, to the ancient leviathan which customarily symbolized evil in Old Testament biblical myth. As the machines come to life under the direction of the factory workers, the men themselves strangely seem to lose their

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34 Ginestier, p. 36. 35 Ibid., p. 35.
36 Ibid., p. 37.
human characteristics and assume the mechanical, unthinking aspects of the machines which they operate. Arthur, leaving the factory one afternoon, is aware of this strange phenomenon and mentally observes:

The minute you stepped out of the factory gates you thought no more about your work. But the funniest thing was that neither did you think about work when you were standing at your machine. You began the day by cutting and drilling steel cylinders with care, but gradually your actions became automatic and you forgot all about the machine and the quick working of your arms and hands. . . .39

As the body adapts itself to the functioning of the machine, Arthur says that the mind is allowed to escape into a "compatible world of pictures that passed through your mind like a magic lantern, often in vivid and glorious loony-colour."40 Standing at the various pieces of electricized equipment, the men resemble zombies living in the realm of the subconscious rather than alert human beings.

The main conflict in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning occurs on the battleground of a conscious and aware Arthur Seaton struggling to defeat a subconsciousness conditioned by a materialistic civilization in which the machine has been god for almost an entire century. It is an unequal battle in which Arthur fights with his mental and physical powers against the loss of awareness and responsibilities to real life, a loss which Ginestier maintains always accompanies submission to the machine.41

39Ibid., p. 35.  
40Ibid., p. 36.  
41Ginestier, pp. 171-172.
Throughout the novel, Seaton persistently maintains that the machine world (which includes the government responsible for allowing and encouraging such a valueless society) will never claim him, yet Sillitoe continually indicates the opposite. Connecting his protagonist often with images of the various types of machines which characterize his environment, Sillitoe suggests strongly that Arthur is too related to this type of industrial society ever to escape its grasp.

As Arthur falls down the stairs at the White Horse Pub in the initial chapter of "Saturday Night," he is described more as a motorized vehicle than as a man. Sillitoe writes of Arthur: "A high octane fuel of seven gins and eleven pints had set him into motion like a machine, and had found its way into him because of a man's boast." The "iron-faced" youth reflects a day later on his crude behavior at the pub, and his memory functions "like a beneficial propaganda machine." Again Arthur is symbolically compared to a mindless machine of some sort, for as he waits outside a pub, "He turned toward the hedge in a half-circle, as though he was a vehicle steered by another person." As he and his brother, Fred, sit in a pub one cold winter evening, Arthur is struck in the leg by a dart thrown amateurishly by a rude and boisterous youth. Arthur refuses to return the

42 Sillitoe, p. 4.
43 Ibid., p. 7.
44 Ibid., p. 9.
bloody dart until its user supplies an apology. With no
apology forthcoming, Arthur sets about to punish his unfortu-
nate abuser in a fight which is described more as a faulty
extension of the factory than as a creative act of anger:

Fred was always amazed at the way a fight started; a
defective machine was set in motion and you knew it was
going to break itself up unless you ran to the switch
and stopped it. But at such moments he became too
interested in the movement toward destruction, and the
machine turned into a twisted mass of nuts and bolts on
the floor.46

Having easily mastered the use of his lathe as a young
boy, Arthur is able to make his machine yield a greater pro-
duction than that required by his employers, the vague
"they"47 to whom he often resentfully refers. He is careful,
however, to produce an assigned quota only, for if the rate-
checker discovers anyone producing at a faster-than-average
speed, the worker's pay-rate is automatically reduced to in-
sure an equal pay check for everyone. Priding himself on his
cunning ability to deceive the rate-checker, Arthur is angry
nevertheless that the factory forbids him to work at the
height of his money-making ability. By impressing the quality
of sameness upon each of its employees, the factory thereby
denies the right of individual achievement and, therefore,
dispels the need for the hero which Arthur consciously wishes
to be.

As the action of the novel develops, Arthur Seaton be-
comes a perfect example of man unsuccessfully defying the

46 Ibid., p. 111. 47 Ibid., p. 221.
world of the machine, shaking a puny fist at the gigantic beast which has held him captive since birth. When Arthur dares to do more than fist-shaking in defiance, the omnipotent creature he hates quickly overcomes him, doing so time and time again until this would-be hero learns that the only completely safe outlet for his frustrations against society is in angry, boastful speeches.

He progresses from small acts of rebellion to larger, more mechanically destructive deeds. By working at a top speed level of performance and producing his quota quickly, he is able to work at an easy pace for the rest of the day, reserving time for himself in which he can flirt with the girls and indulge in idle talk with his comrades at the factory. He refuses to drink the tea furnished by the plant itself, preferring to bring from home his own thermos of the hot, sweet drink. Even after his personal protestations about the factory tea bring results in the form of a more drinkable liquid, Arthur spurns the free offer from the factory and ostentatiously sports his private home-brew at break.

To the high priest of the machine-god, Arthur presents a taciturn, antagonistic exterior. The foreman of the factory, Robboe, is high on Seaton's list of most-hated personalities. Arthur's antagonism toward Robboe manifests itself even in the days of his early servitude as a messenger boy. Sent weekly by the foreman on an errand to a pharmacist
across town, Arthur finally becomes curious about the contents of the mysterious envelope which he has always returned unopened to his master. Opening the package and discovering contraceptives inside, Arthur announces his find gleefully to the entire factory, causing Robboe to be the brunt of many future jokes.

Robboe, a hard worker, has given himself up in complete devotion to the god of the machine, and, as his name suggests, possesses many of the qualities one might expect in a robot. He is quiet, with "rubbery lips, and one hand always in his pocket fiddling on a micrometer. Robboe kept his job because he was clever at giving you the right answers." 48 Although Robboe and Arthur are on opposite sides of the altar, trust exists between them. Describing the relationship between the two men, Sillitoe indicates the level of animality to which man has been brought by industrialization:

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. 49

Both defer to the same higher power, the power of the machine. The difference between the two, and a difference which Arthur is unable to realize, is simply the differing degrees of acceptance which each man possesses in regard to this monster. The only time for complete truce between these

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48 Sillitoe, p. 38
49 Ibid., p. 39.
"opponents" is Friday afternoon, pay day, when the foreman gives the money-hungry men their due.

A second personage representative of the worst of the industrial society in which Arthur is ensnared is Mrs. Bull. "The round full face of Mrs. Bull, the flattened nose, thin wide lips, and short greying hair, made a permanent gargoyle at the yard end, a sardonic fixture to everybody that passed." As the self-assumed guardian of the comings and goings of the plant workers, Mrs. Bull is eagerly receptive to any chance scraps of scandal which the laborers accidentally let fall in her greedy presence as they enter or leave the factory. Once possessing these bits of news, Mrs. Bull generously circulates her knowledge, and her "malicious gossip traveled like electricity through a circuit, from one power-point to another, and the surprising thing was that a fuse was so rarely blown." However, a fuse is blown one afternoon when Arthur clumsily bumps into Mrs. Bull, and she retaliates by letting him know that she is aware of his illicit affairs with married women. Angered at the lack of privacy in a world where one's most intimate relationships are somehow public knowledge, Arthur revenges himself by wounding the obnoxious face of Mrs. Bull with lead, shot from an air rifle which he aims from the window of his room. He remains triumphant over this female symbol of the factory.

50 Ibid., p. 61.  
51 Ibid., p. 124.
for when the police arrive, summoned by the outraged Mrs. Bull, no air rifle is to be found, and Arthur emerges from his misdeed unpunished by the machine-god whom he has subconsciously defied.

Ginestier writes that "the automobile is the most notable example of a machine ceasing to be purely functional and assuming a personality, which . . . very often superimposes itself on its owners." In a second and more violent episode than the preceding, Arthur once more exhibits his wrath at a civilization which has allowed the machine to become more valued than a human being. Walking home from a pub with his brother, Arthur is struck down by a small car driven by an irate and intoxicated member of the upper class. The driver, obviously feeling the strength of a powerful engine at his control, inhumanly berates his victim for stepping into the path of his forceful machine. The idea to turn the car over, to upset this black bit of life-threatening metal, occurs to Arthur and Fred simultaneously. In a joyful effulgence of brotherly cooperation, the two brothers rock the automobile to and fro while its owner retires coward-like to a nearby doorway. The act of destruction against the machine-god, contained in the metal frame of the car, brings to both men feelings of relief and of effective manhood:

Though locked in a revengeful act they felt a sublime team-spirit of effort filling their hearts with a radiant light of unique power and value, of achievement and hope.

52 Ginestier, p. 97.
for bigger and better things. The weight was enormous at first, then became lighter and lighter, until the car was held gently, like a butterfly, on a thread, a perfect point of balance that made them want to laugh and cry-out and roar like ecstatic warriors, and they would have done so had it not meant the ruin of their project.53

The two "warriors" gleefully behold the car as it crashes onto its side and remains in helpless passivity. Once overcome, the machine loses its terrifying facade of evil and appears to the triumphant brothers "quiet and dignified, four wheels poking decoratively from its chassis, like a mule that, after a hard day's graft, settles down in the stable to rest."54 Again Arthur defeats the offspring of the monster and escapes free from punishment, carrying away from the auto only a sense of justice and renewed human potency.

As time progresses, however, the fate of the individual in the grasp of a mechanized society becomes more and more pronounced, and Arthur takes a two-week leave from work to attend a training session at army camp. To Arthur, the army is an even more destructive and hated force than the factory, for while he at least receives good wages for his enslavement to the lathe, he acquires absolutely no benefit from this military organization which blatantly imposes its depressing massive will upon his own weaker volition. Outwardly subservient, his consciousness is a seething mass of violent thoughts directed at the obscure "they" responsible for his

53 Sillitoe, p. 122.
54 Ibid.
brief period of isolation from the outer world.

Much as he escapes the factory by dreaming at his lathe, Arthur uses his agile imagination to make his stay at the army camp bearable. The greatest pleasure is achieved by imagining himself as the destroyer of each and every authoritative member of his society, using the weapons which the army thrusts into his hands to annihilate those whom he hates:

When I'm on my fifteen-days' training and I lay on my guts behind a sandbag shooting at a target board, I know whose faces I've got in my sights every time the new rifle cracks off. Yes. The bastards that put the gun into my hands. I make up a quick picture of their stupid four-eyed faces that blink as they read big books and papers on how to get blokes into khaki and fight battles in a war they'll never be in--and then I let fly at them. Crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack. Other faces as well: the snot-gobbling gett that teks my income tax, the swivel-eyed swine that collects our rent, the big-headed bastard that gets my goat when he asks me to go to union meetings or sign a paper against what's happening in Kenya. As if I cared!

Practice at the shooting range is the only pleasurable time of the day to Seaton, who mentally substitutes those beings who hold the "whip-hand" over him for the board at which he is actually shooting. He enjoys immensely the sound of bursting bullets around him, for by closing his eyes, he is able to picture the officials of the world experiencing a violent death, an event which he knew "was impossible, yet."

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55 Ibid., p. 141.


57 Sillitoe, p. 148.
Accustomed to spending his evenings in the bed of his mistress or in the pleasant atmosphere of a pub, Arthur finds the nights in the barracks filled with other unfortunate "blokes" unbearable, and he escapes the camp nightly through the skillful manipulation of a pair of wire cutters. Coming back late one night, Arthur is caught in a menacing thunderstorm, its terrific crashes of sound seeming to declare frighteningly his approaching doom. Upon returning to his bunk-house in a high state of intoxication, Arthur assaults an officer who angrily commands that Arthur be tied to his bed. Unaware of all that has happened to him, Arthur awakes the next morning to find himself totally immobile, for his "limbs were securely fastened to the frame of his bed." With an attitude which seems uncharacteristic of one who has manifested mentally such an uncompromising hate, Arthur accepts his captivity with an attitude of indifference and sleeps the remainder of the day, undisturbed by the bonds strapping him to his bunk. He neglects even to verbally protest against the forces which have rendered him ridiculously helpless. In Arthur's apathy appears the futility of fighting against a society ruled by the omnipotent machine, represented in this case by the army officer who has him bound.

Back from his fifteen-days' absence, Arthur finds his mistress, Brenda, cold and indifferent to his advances.

58Staples, p. 178.
59Sillitoe, p. 149.
Angered and confused at her behavior, he empathizes mentally with her husband, who he decides must be mistreated by this woman even worse than he himself is: "If I ever 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." Since the beginning of Sillitoe's novel, Arthur has been conducting a covert and passionate affair with Brenda, the seductive wife of a fellow factory worker named Jack. A mysterious feeling of kinship with Jack often possess Arthur, who, paradoxically, continues his relationship with Brenda while resenting her for deceiving her husband. As he leads her to a place of love-making, Arthur intentionally inflicts pain on the object of his desire, and "he felt it was because there was something about her and the whole situation that made him want to hurt her, something to do with the way she was deceiving Jack." For some inexplicable reason, Seaton is unable to "weigh-up" Jack's personality, a fact which bothers him as he prides himself on being able to judge others of the masculine sex through this personal method of evaluation which he calls "weighing up." Jack "was of the same sort as Arthur, never pretended otherwise, and he might normally have weighed him up like a shot, but somehow the essential ramifications of Jack's character eluded him." Significantly, the only

60 Ibid., p. 155.  
61 Ibid., p. 49.  
62 Ibid., p. 40.  
63 Ibid., p. 31.
other person Arthur fails to weigh up is himself. Although Jack, as the potentially irate husband of the woman whom Arthur is illicitly wooing, should logically be avoided by Arthur, Arthur is magnetically drawn to this man who, according to Arthur, represents the opposite of all that is Arthur Seaton. Unlike his younger friend, who believes in the fickleness of Lady Fortune, Jack unimaginately asserts, "You either win or you don't. I don't believe in luck." Yet Jack tells Arthur later that he is lucky to escape punishment for using the elder Seaton's voting ticket in the last election.

For months Arthur plays at cat-and-mouse in dangerous conversations with Jack, often inquiring as an interested friend of the family about Brenda and the children, wondering each time if he has given himself away in his cockiness. Yet Jack remains friendly in a somber fashion, the opposite of the gay and glib Arthur, who never seems to care about any of the things in life which Jack takes so seriously. Having a drink on Arthur at the White Horse, Jack remains lethargic and unresponsive to the younger man's attempt at conversation, and Arthur fears once more that Jack has discovered his relationship with Brenda. Jack, if aware that such an affair exists, evidently does not find it of enough interest to warrant comment. However, as the perfect caricature of industrialized

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64 Ibid., p. 31.
man, Jack immediately perks up as men around him begin arguing about the attributes of the various national soccer clubs. As he becomes heatedly involved, giving his opinions concerning the merits of different players, Jack sadly personifies the typical modern man who, says Ginestier, initially substituted the machine for individual labor and subsequently substitutes the machinery of commercial sports for personal participation in simple games once enjoyed by all. Laments Ginestier:

We have seen the manner in which modern man seeks to avoid spiritual contact with himself; through commercial sports he avoids at the same time bodily contact with others. He conquers or yields through the intermediary of another, whom he pays to play in his stead. He derives a feeling of pleasure or pride with no effect to himself. The action is his by proxy only.65

Arthur is disgusted at the zeal with which these "robots" speak of men related to them only through the media of their television sets and local theatres, and he leaves Jack animated for once in sporting conversation.

Jack unknowingly provides greater opportunity for Arthur to indulge in a pastime which he himself has little interest in, i.e., making love to his wife. Sex has little attraction for the man devoted to the frigidity of steel machinery, a fact which Brenda confirms to Arthur, confiding that she and Jack have not slept together as husband and wife in a long time. When Robboe places Jack on the night-shift, the employee is grateful for the extra money he receives, caring

65Ginestier, pp. 142-143.
little that his wife will be left to her own means of amusement five nights out of every week. Needless to say, Arthur is glad to take his place in Jack's bed. Brenda can hardly be blamed for her infidelity to a man who prefers the oily touch of an engine to the delights of the flesh. Jack is, indeed:

...a dull dog whose very lack of creativity and consequent dedication to a life of passivity—watching racing, filling in his pools and entering up the union dues—drives his own neglected wife to revolt and to seek in her affairs with Arthur some of the satisfaction she fails to get from her marriage...66

As Jack's character is further developed in the novel, he fits ever more closely the description of modern man who willingly bypasses the basic realities of life in service to materialism and to the god of the machine. Jack is an aspiring Robboe, hoping to achieve a position of importance in the factory through hard work and sacrifice. He is exactly the type of man who Arthur boasts he will never become, yet the magnetism between the two men suggests that they are not so radically opposed as Arthur would like the world to believe. In his sexual liaison with the wife of his alter ego, Arthur attempts to destroy the possibility that he too might one day be an eager eunuch in service to the sexless machine-god.

As Jack neglects his wife in devotion to the factory, Arthur abandons her temporarily in service to a bureaucratic

government, and he too is cuckolded by the love-hungry woman. Winnie, Brenda's gypsy-like sister, gladly invites Arthur into her bed on the same night in which Brenda ignores him, and he congratulates himself on his good fortune. As well as the simple joy which the act of sex affords him, Arthur subconsciously receives added pleasure from his relationship with Winnie, for her husband, Bill, is a bona fide member of the British army. As he symbolically shakes his fist at the world of the factory through his affair with Brenda, Arthur also thumbs his nose at the militia by taking Winnie, the wife of an army man, to bed.

For some time Arthur manages to keep the sexual appetites of both women satisfied. As October arrives, bringing with it Goose Fair and carnival time, Arthur promenades proudly around the fair grounds with a feminine conquest on each arm. The fair grounds are filled with the crowds of thousands of factory workers seeking to lose themselves in noise and light and plastic gaiety. As the dancehalls and pubs of modern society allow man to continue the rhythm imposed upon him by the machine at which he works, so, says Ginestier, do the carnivals of today provide a horror-filled environment in which man is unable to rest from a frantic pattern of movement. He describes carnivals such as Sillitoe's Goose Fair as "a machine which runs to no purpose, a factory with many people that produces nothing at all." Explaining in greater
detail the primeval nature of carnival crowds, Ginestier writes:

We have the machine alone foisting itself on us to satisfy a need for rhythm and frenzied escape in the crowd of industry's servants. In the collectivized rhythm, the masses discover their "mana" or artificial stimulus, whose difference from the "mana" of primitive tribes in their celebrations would be insignificant, if the so-called "civilized" crowds were not under the constant control of the police. This is the sign of a regression the real extent of which is difficult to measure.69

Unfortunately, Arthur Seaton is one of "industry's servants" who seeks an "artificial stimulus" which will add new life to his depleted store of vitality. He is the most frantic of the frantic, as he terrifies riders of the spook-house train, fights the cloth image of a skeleton in the tunnel, and laughs like a madman as he hurries his female companions away from this potential scene of disaster. Surrounded again by a sea of faces, he secretly kisses Winnie and then Brenda, taking needless chances that the other will see and become angry. Sitting at the top of the "Helter-Skelter,"70 Arthur bravely wonders to himself "how many columns of soldiers could be gathered from these crowds for use in a rebellion."71 Emerging from the slide, Arthur finds himself in the presence of Jack and Bill, malevolent priests of a deity now angered by the brash actions of this disrespectful and irresponsible youth. Arthur, who only seconds before had imagined himself a leader of troops rising in violence

70 Gillitoe, p. 176.
71 Ibid.
against the society which Bill and Jack represent, escapes temporarily by unheroically losing himself in the crowds of Goose Fair.

Meeting Jack in the factory on the Monday after the episode at Goose Fair, Arthur lamely absolves himself from guilt by explaining that he had met Brenda and Winnie by accident at the carnival and had innocently volunteered to share a few rides with them. Jack is apparently pacified, for a month passes in which Arthur, like an animal running happily to the end of the rope tied around its unsuspecting neck, becomes more self-assured than ever in his freedom. His time is limited, however. Leaving a pub one Saturday evening in late November, the over-confident young miscreant is pulled roughly into an alley and beaten mercilessly by Winnie's husband and a second army "swaddie."\(^{72}\) The fight marks the turning point in Arthur's life. For days afterward he remains in bed, recovering from his injuries and trying to deal with this violent experience which has taught him that he is not as free from society and its responsibilities as he would like to believe. After his beating, Arthur is more like the other men of his cause-and-effect society.\(^{73}\) He is no longer a free, creative entity who defies "weighing up," but a typical man who has experienced the violent retribution which society executes upon those who refuse to conform to its rules of iron. Lying

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\(^{72}\)Ibid., p. 167.

\(^{73}\)Osgerby, p. 222.
in bed, Arthur "undergoes a kind of spiritual death and resurrection . . . ."\textsuperscript{74} and "on the third day he rises to life again, and although at present he does not appreciate it, he is a changed man."\textsuperscript{75}

Back at the factory, after a week's leave of absence, Arthur cuts his hand at the lathe and starts toward the first-aid station. He discovers Jack en route in a lonesome hall of the factory and, unobserved, watches this man who has assimilated the qualities of the methodically relentless machines which he supervises: "He struck the match slowly, and lit-up with care, so that the cigarette, now that Jack had set his mind to lighting it, didn't stand a chance. It was a slow and efficient operation, like all his other jobs."\textsuperscript{76} Watching the newly-promoted chargehand light his cigarette, Arthur suddenly realizes that Jack is the one responsible for letting the swaddies know of his whereabouts on the night of the beating. His delayed punishment, therefore, is merely the result of another of Jack's "slow" and "efficient" operations. Like the cigarette, Arthur is helpless before the anger of a mechanistic deity served so well by disciples like Jack. He confronts Jack with the accusation, hating him, yet unwilling to destroy this man so closely implicated with his own changing nature. Evading the charge, Jack answers mildly, in the unfeeling voice of

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., p. 222. \textsuperscript{75}Ibid. \textsuperscript{76}Sillitoe, p. 204.
one who receives his life-force more from electrical currents than from blood like that dripping slowly and symbolically out of Arthur's hand onto the floor, "You're too much of a troublemaker, Arthur. You're too violent. One day you'll really cop it. And you'll ask for it as well." Incensed at what he considers further threats from this ally of the machine, Arthur responds, "And you're too narrow-gutted ever to get into trouble." The voice of the machine, however, continues persuasively in the words of Jack, who urges Arthur to "knuckle under" as he himself has so obviously done. Arthur, well on his way to an unconscious acceptance of Jack's advice, nevertheless protests against his fate and admonishes Jack: "You've got your life and I've got mine. You stick ter your managin' and the races, and I'll stick to the White Hoss, fishin' and screwin'!" Yet even as he speaks, the pattern of Arthur's life is changing to mold itself more perfectly to that of the machine.

As a curvaceous priestess of the machine-god, Doreen Greaton makes certain that Arthur's conversion to the religion of industrialism will be a permanent one. On the evening of his return from training camp, having been snubbed by Brenda and prior to his lucky meeting with Winnie, Arthur meets a young, attractive girl who introduces herself in a

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somewhat overly-loud voice as "Doreen." Doreen, an employee of a local hair-net factory, explains in a friendly way that she lives with her mother on the Broxetowe Estate, evidently a government-owned housing project. Arthur learns in their first conversation that Doreen's idea of having a good time is seeing a motion-picture, and the couple agree to meet at the movie house on the following Monday. Although Doreen's interest in the movies is a seemingly innocent and certainly not unusual one, it indicates a typical lack of creativity which exists in the people of a modern civilization who allow machines to perform even their mental activities for them. Ginestier considers commercial sports and motion pictures equally devitalizing: "If we are spared the trouble of exercising our muscles thanks to the business of sports, thanks to motion pictures we are spared the trouble of dreaming. The screen dreams for us."81

Arthur actually does little to develop this dull relationship. The two meet occasionally to share a movie and exchange long good-night kisses, but the passionate Arthur is more interested in his exciting rendezvous with warm and wonderful Brenda and Winnie. Doreen, on the other hand, is delighted at the sparse attentions she receives from young Seaton, and eagerly tells the women at the factory every detail concerning her "young man."82 Arthur allows himself to be pressured into

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81 Ginestier, p. 143.

82 Sillitoe, p. 221.
taking "traditional Doreen" to Goose Fair, where he spends a safe, but unstimulating evening with her on the first night of the carnival. As he walks her home early, Arthur remembers a photograph he saw once of the Estate on which she lives: "a giant web of roads, avenues and crescents, with a school like a black spider lurking in the middle." The recollection is certainly not a pleasant one for Arthur, who little realizes that in a few months the drab maze of identical houses will be his new home. Arthur is only dimly aware of the dangerous situation he places himself in by dating Doreen, and although he realizes "... that, by going out with a single girl he may unwittingly and of course disastrously—find himself on the dizzy and undesired brink of the hell that older men called marriage..." he does not believe it will ever actually happen to him.

Fittingly, Doreen is the first person Arthur sees after he is beaten by the swaddies. She stands symbolically in the pub into which Arthur staggers, her presence welcoming him into a world safe from physical risk and free as well from creative life. As he lies in his room at home, recuperating from the fight, Arthur hears footsteps coming up the stairs, and Doreen enters, eager to take advantage of the young lion's helplessness. Arthur is discomforted by her presence, embarrassed that

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83 Ibid., p. 267.  
84 Ibid., p. 168.  
85 Ibid., p. 166.
this girl should see him in all his weakness: "When wounded
he liked to be alone in his lair, and he felt intimidated by
her visit, as if he would have to pay for this visit with his
life."86 In a sense, he does pay for this visit with his life,
for it is the turning point in his involvement with Doreen, an
involvement which grows deeper with every meeting from that
time on. Saturday nights of heavy drinking followed by
passionate lovemaking are exchanged for Saturday nights of
mild movie-going, and a few unsatisfactory embraces with his
new girl friend. Arthur is reduced to the level of a man who
has to argue with his mate for permission to enjoy one peace-
ful beer in a pleasant bar. One night after Arthur gains such
permission through a petty round of bickering, he sits in a
pub with Doreen and teases her about her recent abandonment
to him. Doreen is unabashed by his remarks, for she feels
assured of future dominance of this man who has weakened so
much already: "'You think you're the cock o' the walk,' she
said, implying 'But I'll tame you, you see if I don't.'"87

Arthur follows doggedly in the footsteps of his alter
ego. Upon a past occasion, Brenda told her young lover that
her husband, Jack, had once maintained, like Arthur, that he
would never marry. "You think you can go on all your life
being single, I remember he said, but you suddenly find out
you can't."88 After several consecutive Saturday nights of

86Ibid., p. 200. 87Ibid., p. 227. 88Ibid., p. 144.
movie-going and petting in Doreen's untidy living room, the words of Jack ring true for Arthur, and he proposes to Doreen.

Arthur was subdued, his mind blocked with questions and unsatisfying answers, fighting the last stages of an old battle with himself, and at the same time feeling the first skirmishes of a new conflict. But he was good in his heart about it, easy and confident, making for better ground than he had ever trodden on before.89

The creative, individual Arthur loses the battle with the other side of his personality, the side reinforced through the years by the iron will of a machine-oriented society. He prepares to begin a new conflict, the conflict of reconciling himself to the mechanical pattern of domestic existence which Doreen is sure to enforce. In the "easy and confident" feelings which Arthur has about the approaching marriage, in his self-satisfaction, Arthur appears finally as one who has been defeated by the age of the machine, and he is sadly determined to make the best of the age which has conquered him, an age in which Ginestier says

... everything is considered normal, natural. Man's desperate labor has supplanted nature and even replaced it. There reigns a perceptible atmosphere of nostalgia, but also complete calm and obstinate satisfaction before the irremedial.90

Arthur exits from Saturday Night and Sunday Morning pathetically trying to maintain his image as a serious troublemaker who will sooner or later have to be dealt with, fearlessly asserting that "there's bound to be trouble in store

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89 Ibid., p. 234.
90 Ginestier, p. 55.
for me every day of my life because trouble it always was and trouble it always will be."\textsuperscript{91} What Arthur fails to realize is that Doreen is, in all probability, the only person to whom he will mean trouble, and at that, only until she completes the domination she has already efficiently begun. Arthur affirms that "it's a good life and a good world, all said and done, if you don't weaken. . . ."\textsuperscript{92} However, after considering the novel in the light of the machine myth, Sillitoe's readers are able to see that his protagonist has, indeed, weakened, and they must scoff at Arthur's final boast that life is good "if you know the big-wide world hasn't heard from you yet, no not by a long way, though it won't be long now."\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{91}Sillitoe, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{92}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., p. 239.
CHAPTER IV

THE PRIVATE MYTH OF D. H. LAWRENCE IN

SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING

Alan Sillitoe is preceded in the history of English literature by one who made it his lifelong purpose to write against machine-oriented society. Reared in an ugly mining settlement by impoverished parents, D. H. Lawrence was deeply affected by the stark surroundings of his childhood and felt an intense need to disclaim the industrial movement responsible for such an unattractive environment.\(^1\) As he grew older, Lawrence became aware also of the destructive influence industrialization had exerted upon the minds and souls of the people who lived and worked in such environs.\(^2\) The problem of man existing in a regulated, mechanized society was one which remained extremely important to D. H. Lawrence, and, according to Mary Freeman, over a period of many years he consistently dealt with it in novels such as Aaron's Rod, The Trespasser, A Lost Girl and The Rainbow. Almost all of Lawrence's novels are concerned with the issue of the machine, confronting the enigma in varying degrees. Slowly, throughout these works, Lawrence evolved his own private myth, containing what he believed to be a workable pattern of action

\(^1\)Rudolphe, Louis Megroz, Five Novelist Poets of Today (New York, 1933), p. 192.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 201.
which would allow man to retain his individual integrity and to exist in the industrial world as an independent and creative human being. He favored men and women of the working class as his heroes and heroines, for they possessed the greatest warmth, a warmth needed to experience life in the way Lawrence believed it should be lived. As well as being a member of the working class valued so highly by Lawrence, Arthur Seaton resembles in many other ways characters created by Lawrence who are able to escape from the heavy wheel of industrialism. The attitudes and actions of Sillitoe's main character follow Lawrence's own set of beliefs so closely at times that Arthur might very well be mistaken for a typical Lawrencian hero.

Mary Freeman, author of *D. H. Lawrence: A Basic Study of His Ideas*, is helpful in determining the exact position which Lawrence took in relation to industrial progress. Lawrence believed that the machine was, in itself, an innocent source of unlimited good, but one that had been corrupted by man's mismanagement. Speaking of the machine, Lawrence wrote:

... I do honor to the machine and to its inventor. It will produce what we want and save the necessity for much labour. ... But to what pitiable misuse it is put!  

If the machine were used properly, it would let men

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work a few hours a day, a very few, whether it be at wheeling bricks, or shoveling coal into a furnace, or tending a machine. Let him do his work, according to his kind, for some three or four hours a day. Then let him have twenty hours for being himself, for producing himself. 4

Lawrence, often identified with "futurism" 5 and "fascism," 6 differed greatly in fact with each of these ideologies which proclaimed the machine to be the new god before which man should "prostrate himself in masochistic delight." 7 Lawrence, although a sensualist himself, could not agree with the futurists of his day who sacrificed themselves gladly to the power of mechanization in a "drive toward sensuous stimulation" 8 which brought them to the very "point of self-destruction." 9 The fascists devoted themselves completely to factories such as those which mutilated the beautiful English countryside, and Lawrence, a nature worshipper, hated these hideous man-made blemishes on the face of the British soil. 10 To avoid further misuse of mechanical power responsible for destroying man and nature alike, Lawrence advocated the destruction of the machine. 11

Had he been a real figure of flesh and blood, Arthur Seaton no doubt would have allied himself with Lawrence in a common hatred of the mechanical inventions which enslaved him.

4 Ibid., p. 426.
5 Ibid., p. 118.
6 Ibid., p. 200.
7 Ibid., p. 80.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 200.
11 Ibid., p. 111.
daily in the bicycle factory. Arthur, an unwilling servant to the machine, nevertheless realizes the meaning of his position as a factory worker and, like Lawrence, suggests destruction as the only completely efficient means of procuring a reasonable existence:

Factory and labour exchanges keep us alive and kicking--so they say--but they're booby traps and will suck you under like sinking-sands if you aren't careful. Factories sweat you to death, labour-exchanges talk you to death, insurance and income-tax offices milk money from your wage packets and rob you to death. . . . Ay, by God, it's a hard life if you don't weaken, if you don't stop that bastard government from grinding your face in the muck, though there ain't much you can do about it unless you start making dynamite to blow their four-eyed clocks to bits.12

D. H. Lawrence not only scoffed at, but deplored modern man's worship of science, for it was science he held responsible for the

. . . psychological debilitation resulting from specialization, the unspeakable living conditions imposed on the industrial proletariat, the mechanization and commercialization of our "recreations," and the misdirection of our greatest skills toward mechanized destruction.13

Lawrence blamed science also for its emphasis on reason, rather than on passion. He hated Christianity for its denial of the flesh as sinful, and he felt that science overly preoccupied itself with abstractions while ignoring the body,14 the center of "all sensuous experience."15

12Sillitoe, p. 220.
13Freeman, p. 109. 14Ibid. 15Ibid.
Arthur himself remains unconcerned by the scientific progress going on around him. The only use he has for the small bit of technical knowledge he possesses is as a weapon against his niggardly Uncle George. George doubly personifies the type of modern individual detested by Lawrence, for as well as being a crass materialist, interested only in profits from his poultry and vegetable enterprises, he "had a wild fear of scientific fact." Arthur attacks his kinsman's weakness by explaining the probable effects a future war would have on George's business. In the confident voice of one backed by the omnipotent power of science, Arthur explains to the dismay of his miserly relation:

If they drop an atom bomb a hundred miles away from Nottingham, even, it'll make all the soil dead so that you wain't be able to grow a thing. It kills all chickens as well. They call it radiation or summat.17

According to Mary Freeman, "If man would return to the flesh, if his thoughts were the expression of his whole being, Lawrence was sure he would have no need of heaven, anthropomorphic gods, or logical systems to support him." A confirmed atheist, Arthur Seaton seems to agree with such a philosophy. He negates the idea of God, resents all "logical systems" represented by the factory, the army, and the government, and he obviously prefers the world of the flesh to the world of abstractions denied by Lawrence. Arthur

16Sillitoe, p. 185.  
17Ibid.  
18Freeman, p. 232.
experiences life as a sensualist. As well as enjoying the flesh of his various female companions, he also enjoys his own body as a receptor of the "sensuous experience" which Lawrence considered vital to life. Arthur is introduced in the midst of a drinking orgy in which he swallows pint after pint of ale, enjoying the feeling of the "beer going beneficially down into the elastic capacity of his "guts."^19

Again and again Arthur surrounds himself with crowds of laughing, shouting human beings, happiest when the clamor of his fellow man fills his ears. Sillitoe writes of Arthur as one who has a genuine need to take pleasure in existence by means of the five senses and describes his protagonist with fitting sensual imagery in passages such as the following: "He walked towards Slab Square, his bones aching for the noise of a public house, wanting to lose himself in a waterfall of ale and laughter."^20

In accordance with the requirements of a Lawrencian character, Arthur Seaton has done well by leaving school at a young age, for formal education in our industrial society is merely an extension of the factory, an extension which can do little of importance if it does not teach a child how to survive in the jungle of industrialism. Lawrence was well aware of the typical situation of school boys like Arthur and of the futility of instructing industrial children in noble thoughts

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^19 Sillitoe, p. 4.
^20 Ibid., p. 155.
of a more elevated existence. Freeman quotes Lawrence who believed:

You can hardly keep a boy of ten years in the elementary schools, "educating himself" to be himself, "educating him" up to the high ideal of human existence, with the bottle factory outside the gate all the time, without producing a state of cynicism in the child's soul. . . . What you've got to do is to get a job, and when you've got your job, then you must make a decent screw. . . .21

Another aspect of machine-oriented society which both D. H. Lawrence and the fictional Arthur despise is the use of the machine for mass annihilation. Lawrence questioned man's ability to rid himself of the armaments he created,22 while Arthur dreams of killing the government officials, army officers and men of authority everywhere with the guns they force him to use. Lawrence's characters often express a hatred of war,23 while Seaton detests the militia which forces him to serve a government for which he has small respect. Arthur admires his cousins who deserted the army in the Second World War. He resembles Lilly, the protagonist in Aaron's Rod, for Lilly asserts that he would never involve himself in a mass conflict such as war. He says rather: "But I would like to kill my enemy. But not as a unit in a vast obscene mechanism. . . ."24 Arthur, certainly not a pacifist in any sense of the word, has enemies he would love to destroy, such as income-tax collectors, rent collectors, and labor organizers. But, like Lilly, he resents inclusion in the

21Freeman, pp. 99-100. 22Ibid., p. 109. 23Ibid., p. 123. 24Ibid.
huge number of men gathered in communal service to their country, for this negates his individuality, an individuality Lawrence believed was the only real basis of worthwhile human existence.25

"To Lawrence, nothing was more important than life,"26 and to live this life as it should be lived, men must discover their own unique selves.

Discovery of the self was regarded by Lawrence as essential but by no means easy. Somewhere under the mass of superimposed ideals and traditions it was there, the potentiality belonging to each individual and to him alone.27

In Arthur's inability to "weigh up" his own personality lies the indication that at least one of the goals which he seeks in the novel is a better understanding of his inner self. As he joins himself to nature in his fishing trips, as he makes passionate love to Brenda and to Doreen, and as he undergoes a vital death-rebirth experience, Arthur discovers the ways in which Lawrence directed his characters in a search for self-identification.

According to Lawrence, as a member of the working class, Arthur has a better chance for self-discovery than those of the upper class. Lawrence's favorite characters were "English miners,"28 who "share with his Italian peasants and Mexican peons the contact with the deep, unconscious being which in

25 Ibid., p. 126.  
26 Ibid., p. 239.  
27 Ibid., p. 127.  
28 Megroz, p. 215.
his view the superficially educated creatures of modern civilization have lost.\textsuperscript{29} These men and women are more likely to be in contact with nature than are members of the more elite divisions of modern society who give the greatest part of their attention to money-making machines. Lawrence always turned to nature in an effort to escape the ugliness of the world, and nature plays an important part in many of his novels.\textsuperscript{30} Concerning Lawrence’s \textit{The Rainbow}, Freeman writes that nature "takes its place as an active force and scatters the shadow of industrialism."\textsuperscript{31} As she mystically confronts a group of horses in a meadow one wet afternoon, Ursula, the heroine, becomes tremendously frightened of the natural forces which the animals represent to her.\textsuperscript{32} The experience is a terrifying one, but one by which Ursula realizes her own position in relation to the universe.\textsuperscript{33} Freeman writes that "Lawrence, like Ursula, looked to the future for a new concordance between man and nature."\textsuperscript{34} In \textit{The Trespasser}, Lawrence gave a glimpse of the type of reality which might be man’s salvation could it be sustained.\textsuperscript{35} Siegmund, the protagonist, is sick of his bourgeois existence and seeks a self-realization which might elevate his life to a new height of meaning and value:

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.} \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{31}Freeman, p. 38. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 47. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 48. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 30.
Taking his pupil, Helena, he goes for a week's vacation to the Isle of Wight. There, lying with her between the cliffs and the sea, he achieves a sense of dignity impossible in the tight, petty life at home. . . . Girl and nature fuse in a lyric splendor he has never known before this. . . .

But Siegmund is unable to make this a continuous moment, and he eventually kills himself because of this failure.\textsuperscript{37}

As Arthur journeys each Sunday to the canals outside of town, he, in an attempt which Lawrence had made himself, is trying to escape the ugliness of his industrial environment. As well as using the canals as a means of escape, Arthur is perhaps seeking a week end rebirth, for water is the symbol of life as well as of fertility since man is carried prenatally in water.\textsuperscript{38} Isolated from the crowds of factory workers which enclose him six days a week, Arthur is able to hear his thoughts, thoughts usually drowned by the noise of machinery. Alone with nature, he feels more the individual he is striving to be and explains this feeling to a friendly bar-maid:

\begin{quote}
I like being lonely sometimes. I feel good when I'm alone, because I live at home in a big family, and I work all day wi' thousands of other people, so being alone is a treat for me. There's nowt I like better than going out to the country on my bike and fishing near Cotgrave or Trowel and sitting for hours by myself.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Fishing allows Arthur a way of realizing his oneness while he communes with nature, a combination of circumstances which

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. \textsuperscript{37} Ibid. \textsuperscript{38} Ginestier, pp. 67-68. \textsuperscript{39} Sillitoe, p. 158.
gives him "an insight into the nature of a really worthwhile mode of life."40 He asserts that peace comes only when "sitting on the osier-lined banks of a canal waiting for a fish to bite, or lying in bed with a woman you loved."41 Arthur's two requisites for a worthwhile existence, namely, concordance with nature and passion engendered by love, are often combined by both Lawrence and Sillitoe to send their characters past the superficial barriers of life into a genuine depth of "deep unconscious being." Toward the end of the novel, Arthur and Doreen walk away from the grimy city into the country on a "timeless"42 Sunday afternoon "with its rare high clouds."43 The fertile green land contrasts meaningfully with the houses of the estate which "appeared drab and haphazard, as if sprinkled over the earth from a madman's lap."44 The coolness of a natural spring attracts the couple, symbolically beckoning them into a new and fertile union with life and with each other. As Arthur peers into the water, nature soothes and quietens his whole being:

Arthur's eyes were fixed into the beautiful earth-bowl of the depthless water, trying to explore each pool and shallow until, as well as an external silence, there was a silence within himself that no particle of his mind or body wanted to break. Their faces could not be seen in the water, but were united with shadows of the fish that flitted among upright reeds and spreading lilies, drawn to water as if they belonged there, as if the fang-like

40 Osgerby, p. 225.
41 Sillitoe, p. 141.
42 Ibid., p. 223.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
claws of the world would come unroll from their flesh if they descended into its imaginary depths, as if they had known it before as a refuge and wanted to return to it, their ghosts already there, treading the calm un-furrowed depths and beckoning them to follow.45

Doreen is for once quiet, and like Arthur, she falls under the mysterious spell of the life-giving liquid. Leaving the stream, they walk until they come to the "loneliest place of the afternoon,"46 and, as if guided by the murmur of the current they have just left and "drawn by a deathly and irresistible passion, they lay down together in the bottom of a hedge."47

Lawrence, no doubt, would have approved of such a nature-sanctioned union, for "to grip transcendental emotions in sensory experience was the goal toward which Lawrence moved in both life and literature and remained the objective behind each problem that he dealt with."48 He resented the idea that man gains his conception of the world through the mind only, for it was his view that the entire body was made as a receptor and that all experience is referred back to the body.49 He wished to create men and women who could rid themselves of stagnant, traditional relationships and meet each other as pure human beings minus ideological preconceptions and misconceptions.50

'creative' impulses are most consistently inhibited, they particularly needed this release."\(^{51}\) Therefore, it was about man's sexual and creative natures that Lawrence most often wrote. Sensuality must not be an end in itself, but merely a way to enjoy and realize one's present life to the fullest since, according to Lawrence, the earthly life is all that is given to man.\(^{52}\)

Freeman writes that in Lawrence's novel *The Lost Girl*, the heroine, Alvina, finds true meaning in the sensual life with Cicio, a very masculine, non-intellectual character. "In her relations with Cicio, Lawrence epitomizes his intuition that life is not in our ideals, but in our subterranean urges."\(^{53}\) Another of Lawrence's heroines, Lydia Brangwen in *The Rainbow*, is very different from Mrs. Morel of *Sons and Lovers*, who is unhappy all of her life because of her fall into a lower class through marriage to an English miner. Lydia, who comes from an aristocratic Polish family, is satisfied with her life as the wife of a British farmer, finding "Tom and Marsh Farm a perfect means of shrinking her impersonal and complex past to a sensuously comprehensible present."\(^{54}\)

A means by which man can fully experience and enjoy life, sex can be effectively used as well to rebel against a world filled with cold machinery responsible for the death of

\(^{51}\)Ibid.  
\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 58.  
\(^{53}\)Ibid., p. 119.  
\(^{54}\)Ibid., p. 38.
spiritual and sexual vitality alike. According to Mary Freeman, Lawrence conceived of a definite connection between sex and the rest of life, between individual honesty and social decency, and between warmheartedness and revolution. The very sensuousness of coition made it appear to Lawrence as the most appropriate symbol of life with which to defy a world obsessed by counters.

His call for warmheartedness in sex was a call to the slaves of a mechanized world, to all those who in the name of mankind dedicated it to death for a return to their own flesh and blood reality.

Arthur Seaton is a perfect example of the mechanized slave who succeeds in negating the devitalizing effects of a materialistic, industrial world through the sensuality of his nature. At his lathe in the bicycle factory, he dreams continually of his mistress, Brenda, and amid the din of the machines surrounding him, he is able to think of the love, as well as of the sexual enjoyment they share together. Across his consciousness flashes a picture of "taking Brenda by all that estate to a broken-down shepherd's cottage I've known since I was a kid and laying her on the straw and both of us so loving to each other that we can hardly wait."

Although dependent upon the factory for his livelihood, Seaton realizes that it is not the material things of life which count, but human relationships which we can experience most intimately in sexual union with a woman. Arthur thinks to

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55 Maloff, p. 100.
56 Freeman, pp. 220-221.
57 Sillitoe, pp. 34-35.
himself that the factory could rush headlong into self-
extinction without it affecting him in the least, for
remaining would be "Brenda and all women like her... the
sort of women worth their weight in gold."58

Like many Lawrencian characters such as Siegmund in The
Trespasser and Ursula in The Rainbow, Arthur often seems to
unconsciously prefer coition in the out-of-doors, seeking
perhaps to unite himself with the earth as well as with woman.
He divests himself of every trace of superficial society when,
like his primeval ancestors, he leads Brenda to a dark woods
to make love with only an overcoat separating them from the
vital earth beneath. Oblivious even to their own eternal
"unconscious being," "they forgot the cold soil and towering
trees, and lost themselves in a warm passion in the
comfortable silence of a wood at night, a wood that smelled
of primeval vegetation..."59

The relationship between Brenda and Arthur deteriorates
slowly, however, after Brenda becomes pregnant with Arthur's
child and is forced to perform an abortion on herself. Due
perhaps to her approach to new motherhood, she becomes more
maternally self-righteous, and on the evening before Arthur
leaves for army training camp, she accuses her lover of not
abiding by society's rules of right and wrong. As they walk
along in the country, Arthur kicks at the wheat growing close

58 Ibid., p. 42.
59 Ibid., p. 51.
to the road, and Brenda reproves him for his irresponsibility: "'It's wrong,' she said. 'You shouldn't trample it like that.'" Parallel the Lawrencian hero who is guided by his own creative urges and not by the regulations of society, Arthur replies, "What's wrong? I enjoy doing it. Besides, what does it matter?" In this conversation, Brenda represents the matriarchal dominance for which Lawrence bitterly resented women, and Arthur takes offense at Brenda's efforts at maternal correction. Lawrence conceived of women as being "poor in creativity even when rich in strength," and in his novels the male figures insist that their women devote themselves to perfecting the sexual relationship, rather than imposing their selfish, limiting wills upon man. Thus, when Brenda seeks to force her own conceptions of morality upon Arthur, she unconsciously destroys the spontaneity of the sexual bonds between them. Following their unpleasant conversation, the couple

... walked home under a bright moon, with a subtle note of gloom let loose in so perfect a parting, the beginning of a forlorn end that could be fought against but not defeated. ... There was a bitterness in their passion, tender words without roots, and sarcasms that threw affections down like a glove that both were in too much of a hurry to take up.

After Arthur returns from army camp, Brenda does not attempt to hide her temporary indifference to him, and he turns

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60 Ibid., p. 145.  
61 Ibid.  
62 Freeman, p. 24.  
63 Ibid., p. 150.  
64 Ibid., pp. 149-150.  
65 Sillitoe, p. 146.
to her sister, Winnie, to satisfy his sexual needs. In this experience there is little of the "warmheartedness" which Lawrence demanded in the sexual act; and in further mention of Arthur's continued relations with Winnie, Sillitoe injects no descriptive passages indicative of a saving emotion on either part of the couple. Although it is Brenda's spouse who informs Bill, Winnie's husband, of Arthur's location on the night of his beating, it is appropriately Bill who punishes Arthur for his sexual adventures. Saved symbolically from danger by his genuine feeling for Brenda, Arthur is chastised for indulging in a sexual relationship where only animal passion is manifested.

Lawrence despised the woman who loves possessively, and those who use their sex "to trap man in their own preconceptions."66 Doreen Greaton threatens to be this type of woman in many ways. Unlike Brenda and Winnie, she is at first unwilling to give herself sexually to Arthur until their relationship becomes more concrete, a situation which the free and creative Arthur wishes to avoid. Doreen tempts her boyfriend with passionate good-night kisses and embraces him temptingly in his own bedroom. When an aroused Arthur whispers an earnest "Come in, duck,"67 Doreen seductively replies, "Later, Arthur, later."68 Lawrence's "male characters insisted that their women defer to the purposes of

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66Freeman, p. 149.
67Sillitoe, p. 203.
68Ibid.
their husbands and lovers. . . ,"69 and Arthur follows this pattern, yet has a difficult time in doing so, for Doreen is both possessive and willful. She attempts to force Arthur to escort her to Goose Fair, while he, in turn, has no intention of spending the hilarious carnival time with "traditional Doreen."70 As he explains falsely to her why he can not take her on any night except Thursday night, Doreen intercepts his tale "Story for story, blow for blow."71 After Arthur defeats the girl in this battle of wills, Doreen retaliates for her unwilling submission, for "there was only one good-night kiss for him that night."72

Eventually Doreen submits herself to Arthur in "a deathly and irresistible passion"73 on the afternoon of their experience with the stream, and in so doing, redeems herself in "warmhearted" coition. The adjective "deathly" employed puzzlingly by Sillitoe in relation to their intercourse is clarified by Freeman, who writes that "procreation takes on the aura of a black mass in the face of disintegrating values and a world hurtling toward death."74 Yet Lawrence believed that "if sex is a plunge toward corruptive death, its aftermath is awakened life."75 According to the Lawrencian myth, Doreen symbolically blesses the vital

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69 Freeman, p. 149.
70 Sillitoe, p. 167. 71 Ibid., p. 169. 72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., p. 225.
74 Freeman, p. 66. 75 Ibid.
creative nature of her mate as she gives herself to him in sexual union, for Lawrence trusted that creativity was rooted in sexual fulfillment. After Arthur proposes impulsively to Doreen, both fall into a mystical trance in which "the weight of the world... had been lifted from them both and left them dumb with surprise." Although the proposal takes place in the Greaton's living room, Sillitoe describes the couple as breaking "through to the opened furrows of the earth." In this earth image, Sillitoe is suggesting that, through their mutual acceptance of one another, Arthur and Doreen are breaking through the bonds of a superficial, mechanized existence to ally themselves with real and meaningful life symbolized by the fecund soil.

Because Lawrence felt that to realize the importance of life one must also comprehend the significance of death, he began including mystical patterns of death and rebirth in his novels. The most vital factor in such a cycle was the moment of self-realization, sometimes referred to as a "crown" of experience. Such moments are in the potential grasp of every individual, and Lawrence professed in Fantasia to have known such moments himself:

76 Ibid., p. 149.
77 Sillitoe, p. 234.
78 Ibid.
79 Freeman, p. 53.
80 Ibid., p. 140.
When I say to myself: "I am wrong," knowing with sudden insight that I am wrong, then this is the whole self speaking, the Holy Ghost. It is no piece of mental interference. . . . When at last, in all my storms, my whole self speaks, then there is a fresh beginning, a new life adjustment.81

In The Rainbow, Ursula Brangwen faces spiritual defeat and symbolic self-annihilation in her confrontation with the horses, realizing that she signifies nothing in the face of overpowering nature. For days after this experience, she remains in bed, sick with brain fever. Regaining her physical strength, she lives still in a state of deathly apathy until the sight of a rainbow brings to her consciousness the revitalizing knowledge that the earth would someday have a "new architecture"82 and that "the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories"83 would be dissolved to make room for something better.

Arthur too is led to "an emotionally charged insight"84 such as that experienced by Ursula. Unaware consciously that he is about to undergo a ritual of suffering which will alter his entire life, Arthur dresses with more care than usual on the Friday night of this experience: "For some reason, he selected the finest suit of black and changed into it, fastening the pearl buttons of a white silk shirt and pulling on the trousers."85 Disappointed on the same night at the lack

81Ibid., p. 142.
83Ibid.
84Freeman, p. 140.
85Sillitoe, p. 194.
of usual activity at the White Horse Pub, Arthur leaves the
bar and begins to walk home when he is attacked by two men
in the darkness. The fight which follows between Arthur and
his antagonists is more than a fight between personal enemies;
it becomes a conflict between Arthur and the entire universe,
for "the world had shrunk for him to a struggle being decided
in the space of a few square yards, and his world was the
colour and hue of sombre purple."86 After the two men leave
Arthur badly beaten outside the White Horse, he staggers back
into the pub, where he encounters an anxious Doreen. Sillitoe
confirms the idea that the beating which Arthur has taken is
administered by an entire cosmos, rather than just by two
personal opponents of Arthur, for he writes of his pro-
tagontist: "... with a grin, he slipped down in a dead faint,
feeling the world pressing its enormous booted foot onto his
head, forcing him away from the lights, down into the dark
comfort of grime, spit, and sawdust on the floor."87

In the days following his defeat, Arthur lives in a
horrible world, his mind filled with confusing thoughts.
Describing his fallen hero, Sillitoe employs appropriate
imagery to suggest the symbolical death Arthur must undergo.
"For three days"88 after the fight, Arthur lies in a state
of semi-consciousness, more "like a dead dog"89 than a man.

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86 Ibid., p. 187.  
87 Ibid., p. 189.  
88 Ibid., p. 194.  
89 Ibid., p. 193.
While recuperating in bed, Arthur realizes that the beating he received at the hands of the "swaddies" represents something more significant in his life than mere physical defeat:

He lay back, pains burning his swollen eyes, his head aching as if his brain lay open to the sky. Thinking increased the pain, but he couldn't stop thinking now. He sensed that though he had merely been beaten up by two swaddies—not a very terrible thing, and not the first time he had been in a losing fight—he felt like a ship that had never left its slipway suddenly floundering in mid-ocean. He did not move his arms to swim, but gave himself up to rolling, buffeting waves and the stabbing sharp corners of jetsam that assailed him. The actual blows of the swaddies were not responsible for this, because by the fifth day, their effect had gone.  

Arthur is temporarily defeated, not by the blows from the "swaddies," but by the realization that "no place existed in all the world that could be called safe, and he knew for the first time in his life that there had never been any such thing as safety..." Like Lawrence's Ursula, Arthur remains in bed for many days after the fight, his brain consumed with a fever. Sillitoe compares him to a drowning man, waiting "unknowingly for the full flood to diminish and cast him unharmed onto dry banks, cured of brain-colic and free to carry on life where he had left it."  

But Arthur is never to resume his old method of existence, for on Christmas Day, he is reborn into a new pattern of life, free—not from sin—but from the fear of an unsafe world. Physically strong again, Arthur spends the Christmas holidays

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90 Ibid., p. 197.  
91 Ibid.  
92 Ibid., p. 194.
in the home of his Aunt Ada. On Christmas Day, he is witness to an event which makes possible the "new and unanticipated relationships" which Lawrence believed are the results of the moments he called "crowns." In the midst of Christmas Day celebration, Arthur's cousin, for no discernible reason, "struck her husband on his forehead with the beer glass, leaving a deep half-inch split in his skin." As Ursula reaches a revitalizing realization at the sight of a rainbow, Arthur is freed from the fear which inhibits him as he sees the red blood drop from the cut on Jim's face. As Arthur washes Jim's wound, "the cold water ran over his hand and woke him up. He pressed the cold, wet handkerchief to Jim's face, feeling strangely and joyfully alive, as if he had been living in a soulless vacuum since his fight with the swaddies." Although it seems strange that Arthur should experience his rebirth upon seeing Jim wounded, Sillitoe carefully explains this phenomena:

The scarlet gash in Jim's forehead and the tight-lipped frightened face of Jane at Christmas had showed him, as it were, through an open chink of light, that a man could rarely play for safety if he was to win in the end. . . . To win meant to survive; to survive with some life left in you meant to win.

Devitalized by the fear which came from the realization that no place was safe for daring fellows like himself, Arthur now sees that even the most cautious of men can be cruelly

93Freeman, p. 140.  
94Sillitoe, p. 218.  
95Ibid., p. 219.  
96Ibid., p. 222.
struck down, as evidenced by the plight of Jim. In a world which metes punishment to the prudent and rash alike, Arthur realizes there is no need to "go against his own grain of recklessness." Arthur's "new life adjustment" is evidenced in his steadier relationship with Doreen. No longer afraid of the risk involved in life, he does not fear risking entanglement with one woman and commits himself to Doreen, confident of his renewed ability "to tackle all obstacles, to break any man, or woman, that came for him, to turn on the whole world if it bothered him too much, and blow it to pieces." 

Surrounded by the factory, beaten by two army men, and threatened by female domination, Arthur Seaton sits fishing happily at the conclusion of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, still asserting that the world has not heard from him yet, "not by a long way." None of the experiences he has undergone in the novel have done anything to decrease his love for being, and he maintains in the end that "it's a good life, and a good world, all said and done." As Lawrence developed his philosophy, he

... felt increasingly that the very act of living fully had its own revolutionary potential, that perhaps the strongest current toward cultural regeneration lay in the men and women who would not allow, no matter what


100*Ibid.*
their condition, their zest for the acts which divided them from death to be destroyed or to ebb away. In his refusal to let civilization mold him into one of its apathetic thousands, Arthur Seaton remains a perfect example of the type of human being Lawrence believed would rejuvenate the world.

101Freeman, pp. 219-220.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Much of what the critics have written in regard to both Sillitoe and to his first novel may, indeed, be valid. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* has been described as a novel concerned with the British proletariat, a subject which has been dealt with in detail by many English writers. Arthur Seaton, the protagonist of the story, has been termed a violent young representative of the British working class, conscious of his place in an evil society. And Alan Sillitoe has been classified as one of the "angry young men" of the fifties who wrote about the social evils of their country at the time. Each of the above descriptions is accurate, yet limited.

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is, indeed, a novel about the English working class, but also a novel filled with definite mythical overtones. Arthur Seaton is a rebel, yet he also is the mythic questor searching for a goal. And because Alan Sillitoe is included in the literary group known as the "angry young men," this does not exclude the possibility that he may go beyond this classification as a young traditionalist of the fifties.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, Sillitoe has written a novel potentially possessing three different myths,
each of which adds its own separate meaning and structure to the simple plot of the book. Looking at the work through the eyes of Hugh Staples, the reader sees Arthur Seaton emerge as man aided by the female deity, the White Goddess, toward a vital understanding of the female mystique. One favoring interpretation of the novel on the basis of the machine myth views Sillitoe's protagonist as a pathetic victim of a society degenerating in its worship of the machine. Examining the action of the novel in the light of Lawrence's private myth, one realizes that Arthur, although a member of a corrupt civilization dependent upon the machine, achieves an earthly salvation by acting out a set of beliefs established by D. H. Lawrence as requisites for a worthwhile life. Using each or all of the myths as a guide in an interpretation of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, one finds meaning of far more value than that gained simply by examining the work as a comment upon labor conditions in post-war Britain. In his first publication, Alan Sillitoe has shown himself to be a novelist with far more to say about modern civilization than the critics have indicated by relegating him to the role of a social protestor.
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