



Alan Sillitoe's *Snowstop*- A Means to an End

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Abstract:

Alan Sillitoe is a well known name in the 20th century literary arena. A British writer, Sillitoe was born on 4th March, 1928 in Nottingham, in a working class family. Right from childhood, he was exposed to poverty, troubles and turmoil that were offered by a merciless society that laid great emphasis on class. The troubled childhood gave Sillitoe an extraordinary advantage to look at life in all its gross manifestations. His pen knew no rest as he produced more than 20 novels, a trilogy, poems, screen plays, a novella, short stories, essays, plays, travelogues, compilations and an autobiography till he died in 2010.

Sillitoe declared his arrival on the literary scene in style with his first novel **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning** in 1958 and immediately in the next year that followed, he hit the nail on its head with his extraordinary story "The Loneliness of a Long Distance Runner". Sillitoe became an instant success and a name to reckon with. Many awards and accolades came his way and he won widespread appreciation for his creativity, his angry young man image, the portrayal of Nottingham and the portrayal of life in its gross manifestations during a career spanning more than six decades.

Sillitoe was forced out of school due to poverty and incessant misery at home. He donned the role of a factory worker as a 14 year old boy and his life's account is delineated in his autobiography **Life Without Armour**, published in 1995. Sillitoe never hesitates to subtly mix his autobiographical quintessence in his protagonists and a keen reader can never miss to reconstruct the life of Sillitoe through a reading of his novels.

Snowstop is a highly philosophical novel that draws itself away from the regular life of Nottingham and working class life that other novels try to portray. It is part of the class of novels that clearly demarcate themselves as novels that indicate the shift in the priorities of Sillitoe. His protagonist, for a change is capable of and willing to purge himself of the evils that he is capable of. **Snowstop** is among the class of novels, where a different Sillitoe is at work to convey the quintessential self in man.

Snowstop published in the year 1993 is one of the most remarkable novels of Sillitoe that deserves much praise and appreciation. It also invites much criticism, for it is not only the most contemporary, but also for its stand on moral and traditional values. It appears to be very well knit for its plot and is remarkably well composed as for its stylistic and narrative techniques. **Snowstop** captures all the problems, themes and the crux of the issues that have surfaced time and again in various novels of Sillitoe. It appears to come as a comprehensive statement of Sillitoe's opinions on the matters of class, marriage, love and sex. It portrays the yearnings in man to escape from oppression, anxiety-ridden life, and the craving in man to understand

the core and contours of the human psyche. It also captures his desire to attain transcendence, realisation and resultant repentance, and his attempts to attain salvation and eternity.

Snowstop is a gory story of ‘weather victims’ who hope to return to their regular routine, once they are allowed a little bit of freedom by the blizzard; that seems to challenge the limits of human intelligence and consciousness. At least one among the motley guests at the magnificent The White Cavalier Hotel, hopes to reach mystical and mysterious ends, from where he can never be called back. The novel **Snowstop** portrays Sillitoe’s preoccupation with the weaknesses of humanity, the gruesome limitations that are imposed on man by nature, by divinity and by man himself. Man it is felt, is caught in the ‘monkey puzzle of Fate’ (p. 63) by Sillitoe’s protagonists and they always try to get away from the clutches of fate, oppression and anguished moments caused by wrecked marriage. They seem to find solace and peace through sexual union, but miserably fail to attain such a state. The human predicament of living in ignorance caught up between ambition and weakness of flesh and blood appears to wreck the psyche of man, and Sillitoe intends to show through the protagonist Keith Blackwell, that regeneration is possible only through conscious attempts with the body, mind and soul. He also might have at the back of his mind and highlights the importance of love, pure love and the need to have a life of sacrificial calibre.

The novel is remarkable for it is composed with all respect to unity of place, time and action. The human drama is portrayed in a refuge called The White Cavalier Hotel where different people get holed up driven by the wailing blizzard. The narrative starts with the account of the human drama somewhere late in the night on a Saturday evening and the climax brings the drama to an end at about eight o’clock on Sunday morning. All the characters start pouring forth in the hotel, in the snow bound Buxton situated somewhere in Derbyshire. They remind the reader of the characters in Chaucer’s **Canterbury Tales**, where different characters on a pilgrimage get locked up at Tabard Inn. In Chaucer’s work each pilgrim is asked to spin out two tales and the tales share their whims and eccentricities, passions and pride, weaknesses and spiritual yearnings. The tales stand a testimony to the excellent narrative and storytelling abilities of Chaucer.

The White Cavalier Hotel, with an air of Nineteenth Century; offered nothing less than the womb-comfort to all its guests till it is turned into rubble, by a lethal cargo. The novel relates the story of twelve people, nine men and three women who reach the hotel with a hope for a comfortable stay till they get out next morning in their successive missions. The story of the owner-cum-care taker of the hotel Mr. Fred appears no less interesting to that of the people, who are holed up in the hotel that is in turn entombed by the snow. The expository chapters bring out the artistry of Sillitoe, besides his story telling tactics. He is a storyteller first and foremost, besides being a writer with a mission and a purpose. There is an in built sense of urgency and pace in the narrative which mirrors the urgency of the characters to reach for a womb-comfort and also escape the thorny snow pelts. They also seem to attempt an escape from their own pricking conscience and goading past.

The guests at The White Cavalier Hotel include people of different professions, tastes, trades and class. Keith Blackwell, an educated young man of enormous riches, is a proud owner of BMW and he is ‘on the run’, to attain mythical places, but reaches the hotel with Eileen Chettle; a young girl of considerable beauty and charm. She stops him for a lift to escape from the hoary storm and incurable boredom. She too is on the run away from home, with the hope of a promising future and a key that can unlock her dreams. Aaron Jones, a man of riches with his own second hand book-dealing business, is out to deliver a set of books to a promising client but takes refuge in the hotel driven by the wailing blizzard. Alfred in his fifties is the owner of a transpiration firm, who reaches the hotel with his father. Percy Joseph in his eighties sat besides Alfred as a ventriloquist’s ‘rag-and-putty doll’ as Alfred hoped that his ‘geriatric dad’ may perish in the storm and no more is a bother.

People on the move towards the hotel also include Sally, a woman of stuff driven by an explicable urge in her exquisite Volvo to receive her husband at the airport who returns from a 'fruitful' business trip. Daniel, a middle-aged schoolteacher driving his dark blue Commer Van is forced to leave the vehicle on the roadside, to reach the hotel. He hopes for an early thaw so that his van reaches the Coventry before eight o'clock next morning. Tom Parson a union official in his fifties and Jenny Groves his 'secretary of a sort' reach the hotel besides the three wild ageing bikers Garry, Wayne and Lance about whom everything was curious.

Caught up in the worsening storm, all the guests reach the magnificently lit The White Cavalier Hotel, run by Fred, who had served as a sailor for a short stint. He receives a variety of perplexing guests, who were a matching to his own complexities and eccentricities. The guests at the hotel seem to provide an opportunity to Fred for introspection, as he appears to be metamorphosed towards the end of the novel.

All the characters in **Snowstop** get 'igllood up' in the hotel in their attempts to escape the perils of the snowstorm. The hibernation seems to provide them an opportunity to ruminate on a life that had led them to a cul-de-sac. They get a few lonely moments to look into their own psyche, and for some, it turns out to be a bitter conflict between the will and the spirit. The precarious human predicament, selfishness, bitter evils of class and rank, treachery and dubious inclinations towards a meaningless system – all seem to be the problems that occupy their thinking. Unaided by deep faith in God and religion and being unlatched from any stable love relationship they all seem to fly head-on into a juggernaut, till finally rescued by the sacrificial act of Keith Blackwell who in his attempts to rescue the lives of the inmates, finds salvation for himself. A thorough study of the novel reveals the attempts of Sillitoe; to lay bare the psyche of man in all its gross manifestations. The lives of the people in the hotel reveal all that is monstrous under the sun and the moon. They appear to be the automatons of the modern world, devoid of love, sympathy, affections and sacrifice. They are the victims of the ambition and they seem to be unhesitant to attain their materialistic goals. They seem to be people who are capable of sex but not love. As already discussed, the novels of Sillitoe show man in his futile attempts to get at the understanding of human psyche through mad sexual pursuit, which leaves him utterly frustrated and thoroughly dissatisfied. His protagonists try to get at the crux of the human life and a purpose, fed up by the vacuity that has set in life as they attempt to find themselves in the universal design and their predicament is rather puzzling. They seem to feel utterly impotent before the jugglery of fate, which seems to hold the key to their realisation and the final salvation.

Sillitoe's preoccupation with the past of the man shows his conviction that a man is what his past is made of. The past seems to hold the key to the door of the predicament of man, and seems to nurture a panacea for the maladies, that haunt man. Sillitoe's protagonists either look at their childhood at the brink of youth, or look at their past, either distant or immediate, to search for the reasons that make up their predicament. Sillitoe seems to be writing with a strong conviction that the past of a man is indispensable and ineradicable and that only the past can give reasons for the present and the solutions thereof.

Peter Granby in **Out of the Whirlpool** looks at his past that seems to him more pallid and lifeless, and yearns for a change into a better being. The 'dazzling light' of revelation makes him settle for a life of contentment and wisdom. Brian Seaton, the protagonist of **The Open Door**, towards the end realises the utter vacuity in his life and his commissions and omissions in the death of poor Lillian. Towards the end, he is haunted by the sins perpetrated on Pauline, Rachel, Lillian and Nora Middleton. He decides to move towards the 'open door' and 'out of the whirlpool' of selfishness and sexual promiscuity towards creative writing, and a life of name, recognition and fame. In **Last Loves** too one can see George and Bernard being driven to the sites of their youth not just literally but metaphorically haunted by the past that is full of crime, bloodshed, sin and inhumanity- all for the sake of attaining purgation and redemption.

Keith Blackwell in **Snowstop** too seems to suffer from the same perils of the past that was too bloody and perilous, and he intends to “get to where he didn’t know where” (p. 17), Ruminating on a life that had led him into the cul-de-sac of an endless swamp of ambition, marital anguish, futility and sin, he intends to reach a place from where ‘he could not be brought back’ (p.52)

The wailing blizzards seem to be no less diabolic than the diabolic cargo that each motley guest seems to carry at the White Cavalier Hotel. It is not merely the diabolic cargo of their past that they so heavily carry, but one among them carries a lethal cargo of explosives set to go off at eight o’clock next morning. They all reveal their present and recollect their past that is artistically exploited by Sillitoe to portray life in its bare nudity. Keith is a representative of the rich middle class which enjoys all the pleasures that money offered. He was busy with the wheeler dealing on telephone, semaphoring across the halls of money. He had everything with him except marital bliss and peace in life. He is on the run as he has killed his wife. Keith who had been a soldier for a brief stint, had his own disastrous childhood and to top it, a disastrous marriage. He yearns for loneliness, haunted by his conscience that told him that he had the least reason to live after perpetrating the gruesome sin of murdering his wife, though unconsciously.

Aaron Jones’ past seems no less miserable than his present. He feels that all was well till his neurotic sister Beryl, joined him. She had left her husband and both being the victims of wrecked marriage; indulge in falsifying signatures and reproducing classics with the forged autographs of the great authors. He is caught in the hotel not just by the perilous blizzard, but by his own fears for the future. Alfred and Percy Joseph present themselves as the strange son and the father locked in a curious love-hate relationship. Alfred had his own troublesome childhood with no ample scope for a proper development because of his father ‘who had gaffered him since birth’. (p. 44)

Sally is a ‘woman of stuff’ and wild imagination. She is fond of life and all its delicacies, besides she had a passion for novelty, recognition and belongingness. One can understand from her yearnings that boredom and emptiness in both marital and sexual life seem to haunt her. Her dominant husband Stanley is no more of a concern for her, as she yearns to find a “personable man so quick in understanding he would play up to it, and off they would blithely go to have fuck after fuck in an anonymous hotel room, so well matched as never to part” (p. 20). One can look that the vacuity that has set in her marital life which had driven her to a state of confusion and loss.

One may note that Jenney Groves the middle-aged secretary of Tom Parson is deserted by her husband, and she had joined the dogsbody of the Union Office to which Tom Parson was the official. She hopes to do away completely with her past, which had left indelible scars on her personality. Tom Parson is a corrupt union official, who had spent away two thousand quid that belonged to the union. He is a victim of domestic disharmony and is haunted by the incurable itches of middle aged lust. Fred, the proud owner of the hotel had served a short term as a sailor and thus had the worst habit of swearing for which is why his wife Dorris had left him. He is ambitious and makes efforts to evade tax and appears to judge the people by their dress and class and thus ill-treats the waitress Enid at the hotel. Enid hopes for a good life with her boy friend, and a job because of her secretarial course and knowledge of computers. The three unemployed bikers, with their bawdy style and rough disposition contribute much to the movement of the plot and they all seem to undergo an oceanic transformation towards the end of the novel.

Sillitoe packs up a lot of action in a remarkable style in a short span of time as Daniel divulges about the explosives through what may be termed as the heart’s out-pouring to Sally, during their brief sexual encounter. Keith in dire need of a chance for redemption takes up the responsibility of rescuing the other inmates of the hotel. Daniel, Sally, Garry, Percy and Parson perish where as Keith dies in the explosion during his attempts to push off the Trojan Horse- the van containing the explosives. The novel ends on a note of hope, when a rescue chopper arrives. The survivors aspire for a sunny day and hopeful future as it begins to thaw and the ‘Big Dipper’ appears on the horizon.

Sillitoe presents a series of characters that are peculiar and seem abnormal. The characters in **Snowstop** present the face of the humanity that had not been allowed a natural development, which is capable of wrecking life. He attempts to portray the innate ability in man to perpetrate sin, and messes with the life that is 'valuable'. In his utter carelessness, man seems to indulge in sin being negligent of the spirit and salvation. He is devoid of an inner strength to stand up to life and lead a purposeful life as he appears to be a victim of ravished childhood and wrecked marriage. A look at the sort of childhood that they all had experienced accounts for the eccentricities of the characters in **Snowstop**. One can observe that the theme of ravished childhood appears to be a recurrent theme in the novels of Sillitoe.

If one goes to analyse the personality of Daniel and the reasons for the oddities and eccentricities in his personality one can find that it is the natural reaction of Daniel for the sort of childhood that was handed over to him. The love of his father was denied to him as he was arrested by the police for embezzlement at the bank. Young Daniel's life became miserable as there were no more toys and his mother stopped him playing with the street kids treating him as harshly as if she were his father. Daniel feels that he is 'coddled' because of his childhood that sent him through a mindless 'education'. His mother intended him to work where no temptation could ruin him. But Daniel looks at it in a completely different way and feels that such a pendulum had robbed him of knowing about himself till after she was dead.

Sillitoe presents Daniel with precision and care to make clear the picture of the man who is robbed of his natural development. It is interesting to look for a parallel in the works of William Golding. Golding looks at man in **Pincher Martin** as:

"... a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked cover of parchment..." (p. 190)

Sillitoe looks at man as a victim of flesh and blood, capable of making sin, wrecking life and cause maximum hurt to humanity and life. In psychological terms all the responses to the present seem to come from the past and Daniel strongly believes that: "Out of the past all answers come. Only the past tells you what you are, and how to act in a crisis. Pure faith and hardness of purpose make it unnecessary to distinguish between good and evil" (p. 148). Daniel is degenerated into a monster of evil because of the inner vacuity, which he mistakes for 'pure faith' and such a confusion added to the fear of death makes him utterly mindless of good and evil. He reminds the reader of the witches in the play Macbeth, who strike the key note of the play: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair". (p. 53)

Daniel looks up to his childhood as a major disaster that has robbed him of his natural development. The vision of his dead father groping in the dark coffin reinforced his conviction to defy his mother as he always longed for his dead father that his mother had robbed off. He is filled with hatred for his mother who had brought him up according to the rules of emotional predators. One can look at the pain of Daniel for the loss of innocence and ravished childhood that was meted out to him by his mother who had made him an automaton-devoid of any emotion and humanity. He hates her for her shark like possessive way and he had always tried to prove otherwise. She had yearned to make him an anti-thesis to her husband:

"But he became even more of what she had in mind, a **caricature in fact**, to prove to himself that he at least had some independence". (emphasis added) (p. 92)

One can see the terrible urge in Daniel to betray his mother at all costs. Even as a child, he was all hatred for her and laughs at her idea in giving him a name from the Bible. She gave him the name as Daniel, a man who had found God's favour, so that he would lead a life of righteousness and propriety. It is interesting to observe the reaction of Daniel as a child when his mother made him to vow to lead a good life. His inner voice always urged him to the opposite because: "Having been born he could have given no other response". (p. 141). Daniel strongly believed that he was clearly on the Lucifer's side because that

was marked and starving. Garry with all contempt concludes that all such men were bastards and the only way to face the world would be to grow himself into a “king sized bastard” (p. 170), to keep men in their place. He believed that if there was no justice in the world one had to make it for one’s self. He opines that all men were bastards and the women who moved with such men were bitches. With utter hatred for his mother and stepfather he had decided to grow himself into a king-sized bastard to guard himself from the cruel world of selfishness.

Marriage, love and sex seem to be the allied and recurrent themes in the novels of Sillitoe. A majority of his characters are rendered either violent or destructive, or philosophic and suicidal because of a wrecked marriage. One can see Brian Seaton going after many women in his attempts to get to know his own ‘self’, as his marriage with Pauline is broken off because of lack of understanding and love in the novel **The Open Door**. Marriage devoid of a strong sense of love in **Last Loves**, leads to frustration and tension. One can see the life of George wrecked beyond repair because of the marital anguish and lack of love and understanding between his wife Gladys and himself. Even Bernard is a victim of marriage and he seeks relief through his sexual affairs. In **Leonard’s War**, Leonard too is rendered futile and a useless comic figure because of his thwarted attempts to establish a strong bond of love with Sophie.

One can conclude that wrecked marriage seems to be a key factor that had played havoc with the lives of many of the characters in Sillitoe’s novel **Snowstop**. They all seem to suffer from lack of faith in a strong relationship. Their lives seem to be devoid of love and affection, riddled with passion and obsession for sex. Like wastelanders, they enjoy making love, but are incapable of pure love. Their love ends up with mere “salt sex”, as Sammy Mountjoy in Golding’s novel **Free Fall** puts it. They exchange the sexual pleasures “like handing over a bag of toffees” (p. 91). Jenny aptly observes that the reason for their disastrous lives is: “Bloody Marriage” (p.42), where as Keith feels that his escape was necessitated by an uncontrollable panic to escape the city, his work, even him self – not only his wife.

A thorough study of the novel reveals the utter vacuity and an “appalling emptiness” (p. 183) that has set in the relationship between Sally and her husband. Even after eighteen years of marital life they remained strangers and she felt that they were married for ‘so long’ that made Stanley confess: “We disagree so much that we get on like a house on fire” (p. 22). Except the mere zodiacal coincidence, they had nothing to bind them together and one can see the perversity that has been caused by the emptiness in their lives, when Sally feels that she cared more for her Volvo than her husband. Their marital relationship seems to have degenerated into a mere sexual relationship as after every reception Stanley rushed her to the home and such “extreme randiness ... induced her ... to put the tube of K-Y Jelly” (p 20). Thus she searches for a personable man who will care for her and respect her tastes, preferences ideas and attitudes.

Jenny’s definition of marriage seems to be perfected by Sillitoe, which gives the true meaning of such a union in life. Jenny feels that two people can make life less arduous by the marriage of true minds though she appears quick to acknowledge it as ‘an offensive and defensive alliance’ (p. 53). But the betrayal of Raymond appears to have robbed off her peace and confidence in men. One can come to know that Raymond had left Jenny in the lurch as he asked her to get aborted when she got pregnant and later had deserted her. Jenny repents her abortion and felt contempt for Raymond who had deceived her. One can see the emptiness in her life when she goes to bed with Lance so that “making the past with Raymond seem less important which, she thought, was nothing short of brilliant” (p. 128). Daniel too seems to be a victim of anguished marriage. Instead of the familiar relaxation, his marriage was degenerated into a contest and mutual insult and spite. It brought him nothing except “wagons of doom” (p. 64), before she left him forever.

As Keith Blackwell indulges in a recollection of his past, one gets a peep into his turbulent marriage with Gwen. He repents that: “Nuance and telepathy had over the years been replaced by the venom of belligerence, when his determination to say nothing invariably ended in a spiritual bloodbath. Such

anguished battles were not part of his temperament but had ... harried him to become someone he was not ... (p. 118). Instead of tender love and delicate affection, their relationship was riddled with contempt and spite. They were two poles apart seethed in doubt in the absence of any loyalty. What began as love between them had ended in murder and, Keith repents his unforgivable surrender to the dark animal side of his passion when he allowed himself to bang her head to the banister, till she faded into death. One can see the pitiable condition of Keith, when his wife who had made him believe that the child was his, confessed to him in a grievous moment of their fight at a later stage, that she bore the child of her boyfriend.

Tom Parson too seems to suffer from anguished marriage as his wife had an obsession to do away with everything that was old. Aaron Jones and his sister Beryl, seem to hold a relationship that people suspect it to be incestuous. He sums up the marital life of his sister Beryl and himself in very clear terms that no husband had been good enough for her, and he had been good enough for no wife. They lived as a "perfect couple" (p. 12), which made his villagers, consider them a married couple than a brother and a sister.

It is interesting to note that Fred had spoiled his marital life by involving himself in an affair with a maidservant from Nottingham and his wife Doris had left with one of their cooks to live separately. One can see how Doris had helped Fred to set up the hotel and how she had toiled and moiled to keep Fred in good status, but it is Fred's foolishness and disloyalty that had wrecked his life for which he repents very much.

It is interesting to find that the characters of Sillitoe mistake lust for love and passion for affection. They tend to become obsessed with sex and in the process they wreck their affair, beyond repair with more damage done. A keen reader can never miss at the attempts of Sillitoe's protagonists to look at sex as a means to understand or to 'know' the other partner. They tend to conclude that sex is a means to get at the core and contours of the other to "understand" the 'self' and through such enlightenment; they intend to look at their own selves. In the process, one may observe that the characters are left frustrated and dejected because, sex need not always necessarily lead to a proper conjugal bliss, love and understanding. One may look at Brian Seaton in **The Open Door**, attempting to understand Nora as he yearns: "to be her" but every time realises "that she was so far away" (153). Unlatched from any strong faith, deep love and tender care, Sillitoe's protagonists merely end up in making love. More often than not they exchange love as a bag of toffees. One can see a majority of the protagonists of Sillitoe confessing their ineradicable passion for Sex. Nora in **The Open Door**, tells Brian "I'm flesh and blood as well" (p. 151), echoing the words of Tom Parson in **Snowstop**, who tells Jenny "I'm only flesh and blood" passion as he craves for "ten minutes with her. But ten real minutes" (p. 79). One may be reminded of Paul Morton in **Down from the Hill**, who tells himself that he is after all a being of flesh and blood. They seem to be attracted to the opposite sex so naturally, with least hesitation. Brian tells Rachel in **The Open Door** about his deserted wife Pauline, when she questions whether he ever loved her:

"I was a sack of iron fillings spilled around a magnet, got caught in the lines of force, and couldn't escape. Same with her. We were young and I loved her, though I don't think. I was in with her At that age you do things by instinct". (p. 116)

It is interesting to observe that a curious change seems to overtake Sillitoe's treatment of love and sex towards the later novels. In **Last Loves** and **Leonard's War**, Sillitoe seems to offer radical definitions through his treatment of love and sex. It is interesting to note that a remarkable change seems to overtake many guests iglooed up in the hotel as a strange urge drives many of them to pair up among themselves. Garry observes that such a coupling had turned the hotel into a Texas whorehouse. Eileen and Keith make love and they present a perfect example of love achieving understanding trust through sexual union. Unlike the protagonists of the earlier novels, Keith does not hesitate to make love for the fear of "getting a girl into trouble" (passim). One may see that a majority of the protagonists of Sillitoe resort to French letters so that

they do no ‘get a girl into trouble’, a catch phrase with many of them. One may note that Brian Seaton in **The Open Door**, marries Pauline, merely because he got her pregnant, and Arthur in **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning** encourages Brenda to go ahead with abortion through hot bath and hot gin.

One may observe that a majority of Sillitoe’s protagonists attach excessive importance to orgasm – the result of an intense sexual passion that Sally calls ‘divine urge’ (p. 114). Sometimes they feign an orgasm to assure the partner that they love him or her sincerely. A keen reader may also observe that, more often than not Sillitoe’s protagonists take pride in their physical prowess and their backbone, which melts into a fiery storm during an intense orgasm. It can be observed that men indulge in a divergent thinking, as they deliberately go on a tour-de-force of meaningless thinking, only to prolong the sexual act, or what they term it as “to hold it for long” (passim). They look at such an act as a means to please their partner, or to prove their physical strength and thereby satisfy their own hubris. One may understand the mere futility of such ideas, as such an act of sexual union, ends up in ‘unloosing’ the passion, than end up as a soul saving act of bringing the consciousness together.

In the novels **Out of the Whirlpool**, and **The Open Door**, Sillitoe artistically employs geographical imagery to portray the conscious attempts of his characters to move over land and post to prolong the sexual act. But it is interesting to observe that they miserably fail to achieve the very purpose of such a union. They fail to understand each other, as they are unlatched from any sense of belongingness and love.

The reader may get a peep into the empty lives of the characters in **Snowstop** in their blind passion and craving for mindless sex. Eileen recollects her sexual encounter with her lover Trevor who had deserted her. She narrates its nature as “... just bang-bang-bang and off to his pubs and car sales in Dreamland. You might as well sleep with the cat for what good it did” (p.34). The words capture the attitude of both Eileen and Trevor towards each other and their attitude towards sex. Even Lance and Jenny Groves indulge in the sexual union but Lance wonders at his failure to get at the ‘self’ of Jenny, even after the sexual act. Jenny’s words come as a blow to the attempts of all such young men who look at sex as a means to understand the ‘self’ of a person. Devoid of love, one may never really attain the real pleasure through sex, Jenny rebuts: “What a quaint notion that you could get to know someone at all by going to bed with them. ‘And you do know me, you don’t want to know me’” (p. 244). Her words reveal that love is that ability that makes one completely understand a person, sympathise with all the weakness and appreciate the positive aspects. Love facilitates the union of the body, mind and the soul. The brief sexual encounter between Enid and Aaron is the meanest of all, as she demands sexual pleasure from Aaron, fit to be her father in age. One can see Enid’s mindlessness in such a move as she intends to go for it, not out of love but to express her gratitude when Aaron offers her a job.

One may find a total transformation taking over Keith providing him enough inner vision and the love of Eileen acting as a soothing balm on his seared heart. He also musters enough courage to proceed with his quest for redemption, and attainment of a purpose for which he had craved all through his life. Eileen observes an element of violence in him, driven by passion, anger and frustration but once he experiences the tender feeling of love and soothing effect of sexual union, he becomes a lot more matured and philosophic. “He felt benign, in his own world” (p. 118), and wishes to get some flowers for Eileen in such a snowstorm. One may find the marked difference in Keith as he lay by her side, not wanting to smash the place to pieces any more, and that make him feel that he also might be in love with her. They attempt to get to know each other, but realise that they were:

“... far from being empty-minded, but of love and goodwill towards each other (that rarest attitudes between men and women) they could become devoted because it was no effort to be so.” (172-173)

Both Keith and Eileen exchange some fine and delicate feelings of love and deep trust. Eileen offers to bear a child from Keith immersing Keith in a pleasant surprise for such an unsolicited devotion at such a time of his life. She echoes the words of Jenny through her version of “Knowing and not-Knowing”, when Keith questions as to what she knew about him and his past:

“I don’t care about knowing you. What does that matter? I love you, don’t I? Anyway, what do you know about me? But you said you loved me I just love you, and that’ that” (p. 220)

She draws the curtains forever, regarding the confusion about knowing-and-not-knowing as a prerequisite for love, but she emphasises the fact that it is love that is the prerequisite for any relationship to last long.

It is interesting to note that Eileen offers to have a baby with Keith and it reminds the reader of Gloria, who yearns to have a baby of George to attain complete womanhood. Such ideas of Gloria in **Last Loves**, and Eileen in **Snowstop**, reminds the reader of Sillitoe’s poem meant for his wife Ruth Fainlight. Ruth entered his life when he was haunted by loneliness and purposelessness and in a fine expression of tender love, Sillitoe writes of the purpose of womanhood and aspirations of a woman in the poem “Ruth”, from his collection of poems **A Falling out of Love** (1964):

Ruth in a sea of alien wheat
Smiled at the price of flour and bread
Then bargained by the Golden field
For cloak, a husband-may be a child-
A triple necessary shield
To meet **the value of maidenhood**” (p. 120)
(emphasis added)

Even after his confession of guilt and murder, Eileen continues to love Keith, providing him the inner strength necessary to go ahead. If one goes to look at the sexual union of Daniel and Sally, one may come to know that it is more due to attraction and a passion for variety.

One may find similarity between Sally and Jenny as they go to bed with Daniel and Lance respectively. It is meant to avoid any memory of their husbands that seemed brilliant for both. Sally enjoys intense sexual pleasure with Daniel, and finds herself lucky ‘to find someone who had been so taken with other matters that he had forgotten the divine urge’ (p. 114). In what Sally considers ‘the old bite of sadness after sex’ (p. 110). Daniel becomes very serious and philosophic and reveals his mission – ‘Operation Stromboli’, his association with the Cause and the van containing the high explosives that would wipe all of them. He thanks her for the happy end to his life and one may understand the power of self-introspection that Daniel gets bestowed after the taste of love extended by Sally and the glorious pleasure after the satisfaction of the divine urge. One may venture to say that the love of Sally had given Daniel enough strength for self-realisation and scope for repentance. He experiences a vacuity ‘which was still nearer to happiness’ (p. 114), through his sexual union with Sally.

Sillitoe artistically externalises the inner conflict, once Daniel makes the revelation about the explosives. One may note the external storm driving a group of people into a refuge of the hotel and then to the refuge of their own inner psyche. They all indulge in an intense recollection of the past and their own commissions and omissions for their predicament, thereby giving the reader an opportunity to get at their psyche. But it is interesting to note that as Sally divulges the external danger the crisis seems to get externalised. One may also find the characters imputing their own motives to the external elements. They seem to impute motives to blizzard and the cold wind. One may find a lot of physical action taking place in the novel once the revelation is made. Garry and Wayne wreck the hotel as Fred rejects to supply more drinks and the animal power of youth becomes evident in a bizarre incident when they wreck the magnificent peacock and put lot of things into fire. Fred becomes a badger bag in the hands of Garry and

Wayne and before they end up throwing him into the fire, Keith and Aaron Jones rush to the rescue of Fred. It is interesting to note that the odd forces come together in the face of the danger, as Daniel sneaks into the dark attic in the ceiling through the trap door. The search begins for him; lead by Keith who appears to be the leading spirit in the so-called republic of catastrophe. The fear of death in man is portrayed excellently by Sillitoe through their feverish search.

After a thorough study of the novel **Snowstop**, one can come across an excellent portrayal of the conflict between the will and the conscience among the characters. Through stream of consciousness technique, Sillitoe makes clear the inner battle between the will and the spirit of the characters. The ravished childhood- being the chief culprit in their lives, his characters suffer from a lack of positive response to the situations that arise in life from time to time. One can find such a conflict being necessitated by the dichotomy and split that the characters entertain in their minds. Daniel comfortably nurtures the split in his personality till he is driven to the lonely attic, where he is endowed with lonely moments that bring him face to face with his inner self. There is a long battle between his conscience that distances him sufficiently from the Lucifer's mark and the reader will be surprised to find cold tears on the cheeks of Daniel.

It is interesting to observe that Daniel contributes to the horrors of the Cause not out of any strong conviction but merely to betray his mother. One can find his sub-consciousness working always to check him from entering such a path, but he had ignored all such warnings, considering that he was predestined by fate for such a purpose. If one goes deep to probe the inner psyche of Daniel-the villain of the piece, one may find a strange combination in him of a human with an 'obviously fragile spirit' and a rogue who has worked for destruction with no motive. Daniel seems to be a psychopath, who is degenerated to such a state because of his own conscious attempts to subvert all the ideas and ideals which his mother had tried to enforce on him. It is interesting to note that the bitter struggle in Daniel in the lonely attic leads him to wisdom, though momentarily as he questions himself about his act that had brought them at the doorsteps of death:

"Would it be evil, to let it happen to them all? Some could live another fifty years, but what was that compared to eternity?" (p. 140)

It is interesting to observe the way the words are employed by Sillitoe to portray Daniel sitting in the dark attic for his readers. He reports his posture as, "squatting simian like" (p. 140), to hint at the thinking man in Daniel. Daniel is bestowed with 'clear consciousnesses' on the lonely attic and there is a fine portrayal of the inner dichotomy and conflict between the will and the spirit. At a juncture he also feels that the snow had saved his soul by burying the van of explosives and rendering it completely harmless. Daniel looks at his life as an endless quest and an attempt to solve the dilemma as to know 'why he was on earth' (p. 148). He lived with the knowledge that what he did was nothing less than evil and he was on Lucifer's side when he inflicted death on many innocent people after an intense search of his psyche he concludes: "You did evil because the world would not extend its love to you, but that was because you had no love in you for the world, and so could only go through life consumed and consoled by evil" (p. 141). One may also look at the utter vacuity in the life of Daniel in the absence of love, affection, belongingness, purpose and a stable love relationship that could guide him to a purposeful life. He feels that he was "an automaton who nevertheless felt the joy of being evil, which he could not give up because to do so would empty him of any reason for having been born" (p. 140). In spite of the realisation and self knowledge Daniel sticks to his choice of the evil because he had already made a choice, and allows his will to have the final say, thereby damning himself eternally:

“His inexplicable spirit took him through the blizzard, when the border between his transcendental state, and the reality of wet clothes clinging around even colder flesh became indistinct, he rekindled the light by an act of will, pure will, the victory of the will” (p. 218)

Sillitoe, in what can be termed as a fusion of beauty and art, describes the bitter battle between the body, mind and soul in Daniel and the choice of evil that he makes ultimately. He prefers eternal damnation merely to be on the side of the evil and staggers to perdition finally uttering ‘*hic jacet*’ when the blast sends vibrations to Daniel like a dog shaking of water, and he perishes finally falling into the vortex of screams.

Keith Blackwell, in turn offers a picture of complete relief from the world of crime created by Daniel. One may find a type of genuine guilt haunting Keith since the crime, and he appears sincere in his “adventure of redemption” (p. 185). He flees home possibly to commit suicide, but finds his car as a cocoon to protect him ‘to stop his spirit spreading so extensively into nothingness that he would lose all idea of himself’ (p. 18). The reader may find a kind of mild defence put up by Keith at the ‘searing spirit’, which repeatedly told him that he had the least reason for wanting to live. Later he realises that the crimes committed were a price that had to be paid.

A keen reader may find the attitude of Keith to the report of the crisis by Sally. When she divulges that a van of explosives may put an end to their existence; Keith walks to her as if she were holding a prize for him. He takes up the opportunity to work out towards the ‘final plan’. With the help of Lance and Wayne, Keith proposes to move the van to a safe distance. Once the rescue work starts, the three excavate, shift, stack and stamp with their boots though the spades provided by Fred were barely enough to fight the ‘elemental malice in the heart of the blizzard’ (p. 201). All through his efforts Keith repents for the loss of life that he had indulged in. It is interesting to note the transformation in proud Keith, as he takes up the responsibility for the death of Garry because he feels that he had played God in unleashing the bikers on Daniel. He strongly believes that “Time punishes, because once a crime has been done there’s no calling back the good days, the score only wiped out when you die yourself” (p. 245).

One may find a strange sense of respect and love that Keith attaches to life, during the course of his attempts to push the van to a safe distance. When Lance and Wayne propose to put Daniel to death, Keith intervenes and his words come as a shock to many of the inmates. He plays a Parson in his words by attaching spiritual importance to life. He does not intend to do anything that is detrimental to life:

... every life being precious, mine included. Even his, who got us into it. Though he never knew a moral twinge in his life, he’s as **valuable** as the rest of us ... (p. 174) (emphasis added)

He looks at life as too precious and valuable as he realises that a “killer lived with his internal injuries, never able to atone by bringing back the one whose life had been wasted” (p. 245). One may find Keith completely transformed towards the end as he appears to be purged of his hubris, and his guilt driving him to seek redemption through death. One may find the concept of humiliation purging the evil in man and the theme of retribution as an important theme in the novel. Through humiliation, guilt and suffering, Keith emerges as a fine spirit of sacrifice working to save the lives of the inmates at the hotel. One may find even a whale of transformation overpowering Garry towards the end of the novel. Garry who comes before the readers as a roughneck, quite careless of life, elders and death seems to change towards the end as speaks the language of a humble spirit. He encourages Lance and Wayne to help Keith to remove the van and he feels that the three of them are actually responsible for the possible catastrophe. When he speaks such words, Keith observes an inexplicable streak of agony and pain and feels glad that the candles had been so low on ‘illumination of his suffering’. Garry tells his friends:

“We’ve got to stick together We’ll shift that snow.... We didn’t have so many tools when we moved the van before, did we? If we wreck the place we’re on that **Daniel’s side**. We got the van here, didn’t we? Well then, we’ll get it away again”. (p. 187) (emphasis added)

There is a clear sign of humiliation and pain purging Garry of all his pride, wrath, hatred and his recklessness. He seems to become more responsible and eager not to identify himself with Daniel-who was clearly on the Devil’s side. One can venture to say that the major theme of the novel is the theme of redemption and regeneration.

A thorough study of the novel may also hint at the clear intensions of Sillitoe to show man as a victim of hubris. Endowed with monumental ego, man again and again seems to find himself in an irrevocable state of wretchedness- a state of consciousness or realisation where truth appears only in case the ego is mollified. Keith, Daniel, Parson, Alfred, Aaron, and Fred all seem to be victims of hubris that they fail to get at the realities of life till they get humble and pious.

It is interesting to note that a majority of them undergo enormous transformation towards the end. It is not just Keith who undergoes transformation, but almost all of the characters tend to look at the positive side of life in the face of death and the explosion. Parson dies of heart attack but not without repentance. Aaron intends to return to his routine life and Alfred is completely mollified. Jenny Groves after undergoing the terrible experience of a night ‘dying and being born again’, proposes to do away with all the ‘make-up’ and return to her parents. Garry dies of humiliation and pain, but not before showing the signs of enlightenment. Fred proposes to send flowers to Doris and writes to her welcoming her back into his life. Enid the waitress too decides to return to her parents and lead a meaningful life. It is only Daniel and his accomplice Sally who perish in the inferno of a ‘shrieking blizzard” (p. 141). Sillitoe intends to show that man can attain salvation if he works in nobility and humiliation, helping the fellow human beings. It is Lance who aptly voices his concern for a transformation but the reader can find enormous confusion in his words because the experience was completely new to him:

“I’ve got to get out of this, though I can’t say what **this** is, except it’s everything and I’ve been in it all my life. I’ve only enjoyed being in it because there was nowhere else to be, but it’s finished, because I know I don’t belong, and out to find somewhere else. I don’t know where that **else** is, either, but I’ll get there soon. Garry’s dead and gone, and there’s no one left at where I am, but I would want to skedaddle in any case, otherwise I’ll fly head-on into a juggernaut and die like Garry if I don’t escape from this foggy pothole I’ve been too long”. (sic) (p. 262)

Ambition and a desire for a comfortable life seem to grip the modern man, which makes him run for the stars. Man completely overpowered by the taste of the comfortable and luxurious life seems to be running after a seemingly no-win situation. One may look at the deliberate attempts of Sillitoe to emphasise the fact that ambition leads man only to purposelessness and inhumanity and it is a life of purpose and completeness that one should aspire for. Keith, who possibly had a life of emptiness and loneliness as a kid, had developed fancy for money, power and position. His desire to make money and more money seems to be part of his attempts to lead a life of recognition, name and fame. The very fact that he drives his BMW makes him feel very happy and it is also his way of looking down upon the world, which includes his selfish father and mindless wife – Gwen. The changing cash register appeared to him as if “... the Monalisa was stripping off and getting dressed and stripping off again” (p. 3). Money placed him in a class that secured him all the warmth, comfort and respect that he most wanted.

Aaron Jones too is no exception to the charms of the mammon. He had left his job in a laboratory and the money that his early retirement brought made him rich to buy a house and build his own business. “Living from one bank statement to the next, he no longer worried about the significance of life ...

Existence had become too real to question why he was on earth” (p.11). One can see the futility of life in the word of Aaron as he had made all attempts to suppress his consciousness. On the suggestion of Beryl, he had taken to falsifying signatures of the great authors on their texts and such forgery, not only did fill his coffers, but also stuffed his idle moments which otherwise were as tormenting as death. For Aaron it seems to appear that earning a living was the most important activity of life.

Even Sally’s ‘action man’ Stanley found no time for his wife, as he was busy earning for a comfortable life. One can observe that Alfred too is a man of ambition and had craving for all the comforts of life. He waits for the death of his father, to inherit his property and build a house for his daughter. One can see that, Percy is neglected by his children who were averse to take up his responsibility being busy in their own materialistic life. It is interesting to observe that Alfred had taken up the trade of his friend Jack Smythe and had chased him out of business.

One can see the ambitious yearnings of Paul in the sub-plot, reaching satanic standards to make money. Paul, Bill and Charlie are brought in the sub-plot by Sillitoe to possibly rescue Daniel, when he falls unconscious and to record the effect of the explosion as all the characters cuddle up somewhere for survival. The trip on a Commer van is stranded in the blizzard and they rescue Daniel besides they help the movement of the plot. Paul seems to be very ambitious and appears a die-hard believer that money must be made by hook or crook. He comes out with a plan to traffic drugs by stuffing dead bodies with the white powder and move them to Great Britain from Morocco. Using a refrigerated van he proposes to use the dead bodies for drug trafficking. He is greedy for money and status and his friend Charlie mocks at his crooked ‘cock-eyed scheme’ (p. 252) of stuffing corpses with drugs to make money.

A study of the novels of Sillitoe reveals that he is a great master of style and technique. His stylistic techniques are not merely ornamental, but are inextricably intertwined into the plot, so as to heighten the aesthetic appeal and serve the purpose of Sillitoe’s design. He employs dream sequences to replace stream of consciousness and the dream sequences bring out the core and contours of the inner psyche of his characters. They bring out the gulf between the dream life and actualities as experienced by the characters and account for the conflict or the tension that causes the actions of the protagonists. **Snowstop** appears to be replete with an account of dreams as experienced, narrated, or recollected by various characters. They throw light on the inner personality of the characters and their ambitions, fears and conflicts.

Sally’s dreams and dream-like visions seem to be bringing out her yearning for freedom and love. Utterly neglected by her husband Stanley, she craves for love, affection, dignity and recognition. She is haunted by loneliness and her dreams mirror even the vacuity in their sexual and marital life. Her dream-like visions lead her to a false door behind the bookcase and she found a hall of people dancing, inebriated by delicious wine, men and women dancing to the frenzied music in maniac licentiousness. She yearns for strange hands stroking her adequate breasts and subtle fingers finding every orifice, till her voice joined others in orgasmic chorus. She yearns to partake of such an orgy, and her dreams aptly capture her yearnings for sexual satisfaction and soothing touch to the body, mind and soul.

Daniel’s dreams are the best described lot and they artistically bring out the suffering and his reactions to them rather heighten the irony. He always had dreams, but they were something very much personal and rather were inexplicable. He had a “ ... terrible recurring nightmare which he would never be able to describe to anyone” (p.28), and it seems to bring out not only his confused state of mind regarding crime, guilt and his justification, but also mirror his fear over the result of such a wretched life. It is interesting to note that his wife Evelyn had always made demands to know his dreams as she opined that ... if you don’t dream you had no spiritual life, implying that you were an inferior person” (p.28). He feels that even the mildest of his dreams could never be mentioned to her.

Towards the end, Daniel becomes a cripple and in the company of Paul, Charlie, and Bill, he feels that his dreams were similar to their dreams. The similarity of their crookedness makes him wonder “whether he was dreaming their talk, or **redreaming their dreams**” (p. 249) (emphasis added). Their satanic dreams of stuffing corpses with drugs to make money match with his own terrible dreams of causing bloodshed and death. His dreams seem to come from the vortex of crookedness, agony, fear and frustration.

Garry an aging biker, presents himself as down to earth realistic, matter of fact and earthly because of his ideas, language and his actions. He appears to be a rude working class member; full of hatred for the rich middle-class and his hatred is typical of a working class member. But once Alfred offers him to plumb his house which he plans to build for his daughter, Garry dreams of becoming rich, with his own office, a gorgeous secretary and posh house for himself. There would be a Harley in one garage and a BMW state-of-the-art bike in the other. The dreams portray to the extent of getting his old mother out of “the damp rat trap in the valley and buying her a proper set of teeth” (p.176). His vivid pictures that are built up too quickly bring out his desire to escape the clutches of poverty and suffering.

Once Garry is wounded, he bleeds enormously, and just before he breathes his last, his dreams and their complexity, present Sillitoe as a master sculptor of characters, their motives, dreams and fears. Garry’s last dream appears to be richly symbolic and thickly laid down to mirror the anxieties of Gary besides the spiritual and philosophic necessities of the individual soul. The dreams are in consonance with the change that had overtaken Garry during his bleeding and the anguish that he had experienced, after he gets wounded by a slate flung at by Daniel. One can observe Garry being pious, responsible and mature, as he takes up the blame for the plight of the inmates of the hotel. He feels that he had driven the danger to the gates of the hotel, which seems to put an end to their lives. His experience of the dream is worth noting as he falls unconscious after the injury caused by Daniel. In his dream he finds himself in a house and “It was the coldest house he had ever been in, though there was bright blue sky at every window. He climbed a spiritual staircase to see what was on the next floor but funnily enough couldn’t go any further because some steps were missing Then his breath was torn out like a flame, and when he tried to jump to where the steps began, instead of backing down like a sensible lad, he felt, and kept on falling” (p. 225). Such a dream sequence not only just mirrors the anxiety over the gulf between his ambition and actuality, but also lays bare his fear over his fall. The spiritual vacuity is very much clear, as there were some missing steps and the jump signifies his fear over the jump into the vortex of sin and the possible degeneration. He encourages Lance and Wayne to push aside the van, and fears that they would be on Daniel’s side if they wreck the place.

A serious study of the novels of Sillitoe shows his conviction that fate inevitably guides human life and more often than not man is held for a ransom by the fate. Sillitoe believed that choices have to be paid for in life and particularly wrong choices and the choices which fate makes in some one’s life. A majority of his protagonists look at Fate as being responsible for their status and it gives them the necessary strength to fight life. Sally finds fate responsible for her marriage with Alfred, as she was drawn towards him like a moth towards a flame because of the flame of zodiacal coincidence. Daniel blames Fate for having pushed him on to the path that he had chosen and thus could fight the issues as his sub-conscious laid out. Keith, with a strong sense of good and bad, trusts that he was made to walk into the scene of crime laid down by the fate. Sillitoe lays a lot of emphasis on the role of fate in the life of a human being. Fate seems to strongly restrict the attempts of man, curtail his powers and ruthlessly subvert all the efforts of man. Sillitoe harps on the ‘money-puzzle of Fate’ (p. 63) in the life of man.

A keen reader may understand the attempts of Sillitoe, to personify the blizzard and the elements of nature to aptly describe the predicament of man. One may look at the pathetic fallacy deliberately employed as the characters impute their motives on to the snow, blizzard and the elemental malice. The blizzard and the venomous winds seem to question the abilities of man challenging his consciousness and

limitations. It also seems to be an extended metaphor to hint at the predicament of different characters and the bitter struggle in the psyche of different characters. The snowstorm appears to them as an element of Fate that pursued to a geographical area rendering them completely impotent. They are made to surrender to it and a majority of them look at the snowstorm as variously as God, as death and as Fate. Daniel looks at the 'white-out' of the snow that is far fetching and sprawling as the "whitest probity" (p. 30), referring to death. Keith believed that 'even a blizzard has its charms' (p.172), because it offered him a chance to work out his salvation, but the blatant howl of the blizzard, comes as a shock when he opens the window, his guilt and repentance seem to influence his opinion of the blizzard " ... behind the wind there was discordant singing, like a woman wailing her heart out, calling him" (p. 186).

Percy Joseph occupies very little space in **Snowstop**, but is effectively used by Sillitoe as a mouthpiece to voice his concern on many issues. Sillitoe exploits the character of Percy to dump his criticism on various issues in the novel. Percy Joseph, possibly the only man who had a perfect life of completeness and blissful domestic life; appears to be a wise critic, a commentator and a philosopher to the core throughout the novel. He is considered a useless old bore by his son Alfred, but the reader may fall in love with him for the occasional tit-bits that Percy throws now and then to come down heavily on various characters. When Tom Parson tries to submerge all his problems in excessive booze, and tries to put an end to his life through intoxication Percy tells him: "God gave you life, and only God can take it away, and you're seeking refuge in the product of the heathen Bacchus. He won't help you, no matter how much you might think so" (p. 146).

One may find the philosophic words of Percy when he gives a sermon like speech to his son, making it clear that one's father can never be a pest for one's children. Percy's death has got a ring of mystery added it to his outpourings just before his death as he utters: "I'm not going ... I don't know where I'm coming to" (p 197). He attains eternity out of a quite happy and contented life.

Snowstop is not merely a profoundly philosophic novel that deals with life, death, spirit and salvation, but it is highly contemporary and Sillitoe portrays the contemporary England with all its problems, complexities, social and political issues. One may understand that Sillitoe made his presence felt in the literary arena as a working-class writer, and since the publication of **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning**, he has penned many novels and short stories that deal with the working-class problems. He lays bare the meaninglessness of class and rank and emphasises the need for practical socialism. Acerbic criticism is targeted towards the rich middle class that pampers itself in pride and prosperity.

Sillitoe believed that class-consciousness in England was a way of life and that class was the very breath and life spirit of the English people. Keith Blackwell comes from the upper strata of society and is looked at by one and all, with respect and hope. He is a matter of hope for Eileen and even Fred looks up to him as a redeemer when the crisis deepens. In the beginning of the novel Keith shows signs of pride and appears a victim of class-consciousness. Fred looks up to him as the only gentleman guest at the hotel, but feels sorry that he is very discourteous towards him as he "hadn't got a by-your-leave or smile of gratitude in any corner of his vocabulary. **Such types** hadn't much altered since the old days when, as a lad of fourteen, he had cleaned the boots left outside their doors, and got his rabbit-arse kicked by the gaffer if each one didn't glow like the moon" (**emphasis added**) (p.55). Fred himself has come from a poor family, and looks up to people like Keith as proud and discourteous, but looks down upon Eileen and Enid. His dubious role portrays him as utterly snobbish, class-conscious and as a middle-class 'wanker' in the making. He looks at Eileen as a tart, picked up by Keith for satisfying his lust which he looks at approvingly and considers Enid "a stuck up bitch" (p. 55). As a middle-class employer, he makes himself part of that class which looks down upon the working-class. "You couldn't chuck **them** out these days ... because they never stayed long" (**emphasis added**) (p. 55). It is interesting to note that he creates sufficient distance between the two classes. In the early novels of Sillitoe one can look at the antipathy of the poor towards the rich, who condemn the rich middle-class and all forms of authority.

Sillitoe's working-class protagonists look up to work as a luxury and take pride in an expression of their physical prowess through work. Lance in a typical working-class style looks at Keith as a "posh Shagbag", from London with "lily-white hands" (p. 208), and takes the spade from his hands to dig the snow to make way for the van. Garry too is critical of the rich middle-class and the way they roam over in their BMWs.

BM-fucking-Ws I've shit 'em. Only posh fuckpigs are around on BMWs – bleeding Middle-class Wankers." (p. 67)

All of Sillitoe's protagonists in his working class novels and short stories look up to work as their prerogative and they take pride in doing work. They feel that is their domain to work and particularly hard work. Even Lance intends to clear the snow with the help of spades, than allowing Keith to do the work. Fred derives blissful joy in doing work and particularly serving the rescue team after their efforts to dig the snow and move the van. He experiences joy that was beyond words. "He had never known what happens was, only that if he worked he was not unhappy. Work was a luxury-especially in this situation ..." (p. 227).

It is interesting to note a complete upheaval of transformation taking place even the way words are used by Sillitoe when he talks about 'work', in terms of spirit. Keith intends to draw the energy needed for work from "an untapped abundance in everyone still, that last black rock of reserve" (p. 226), when his 'physical self' fails to move the "Trojan Horse". As the issue of life and death becomes irrelevant, he concludes sweat saves blood, and tells himself:

"Work the body and you saved the spirit, which in turn looked after the body, and so you guarded both. In other words, treat every problem with care. Lavish it with time as well as mental labour, then sweat over it by digging into all the possible whys and wherefore." (p. 201) (sic)

Though Keith refers to his own attempts to attain salvation through the body, there is a reference to work in terms of the spirit and that stands out as a proof positive to show that there is a marked shift in the attitude of Sillitoe in his later novels. Fred tells himself that if one was sincere with one's work then one can challenge the god Almighty himself. If one were ready to work and sweat one's body ten even the God of Israel would appreciate one's efforts. He concludes that:

"You could always find a place in God's favour if you were working" (p 233).

The novel *Snowstop* being highly contemporary, one may find Sillitoe making many passing remarks on the contemporary England and the Thatcher's era, that is looked at with no more positive hope, as his characters in the early novels look up their Tory rulers. The contemporary problems of power-cuts and the irresponsible attitude of the telecom staff towards the services they provided are hinted at. Garry refers at the menace of adulteration that was rampant in England. His Four Star Brandy tastes bitter for him and he feels that it was adulterated and utters: "The bastards would water tit milk if it came out of a can" (p. 68)

Sillitoe also pays bare the problems of unemployment, corruption, evasion of taxes, irresponsible attitude of the Council authorities to the problems of the public, and other score of gangrenous problems that haunt the contemporary England. Tom Parson pooh-poohs the Country Council for being unprepared for the eventualities of bad weather. The roads got blocked very year and the blizzard caused inexplicable damage to the public life. In the face of the callous recklessness of the country-council, Keith feels that as a taxpayer, he deserved the better and his money was not being put for the social cause. "Society was run for the common good: good for him, good for them, good for everybody, and you had better think that way, otherwise it was back in to the trees, the undergrowth a tangle of Tory aspidistras" (p. 52).

It is interesting to observe that Sillitoe makes a hint at the failure of Scargill strike; thanks to the diplomacy and intelligence of Margaret Thatcher. Sillitoe artistically captures the agony of the miners and the callous coldness of the rich towards the working class. Lance refers at one of his friends, Ken who had to sell his car to make both ends meet. One may also come to know that a majority of the miners, who worked down the pit, had to lead a miserable life because of the strike and they could not even afford vinegar. Lane terms the Scargill strike as a ‘real fuckpig killpig of a strike’ (p. 60) that put them to miserable life.

In the novel *Snowstop* one may also look at the problems of unemployment and exploitation at the work place. Through Eileen and Enid Sillitoe captures the hard labour that even women were put to, to support life. Eileen laments that: “There ain’t much work to go around anymore. What world are you living in?” (p 138). She questions the very system and the efficacy of the machinery that was responsible for her plight and the world that showed her an empty hand. One may also look at the plight of Enid employed in the hotel in spite of her training at a secretarial college and knowledge of computers.

Sillitoe seems to be unrepentant in his criticism of English class structure and life style; time again. He heaps an avalanche of criticism on English snobbery, class structure, vainglory and emptiness. He also takes them to charge for their idleness. He waxes eloquent in his pungent criticism on the idleness of the English. Eileen bitterly criticises men for being ‘bone idle’ (p. 138), and Aaron Jones feels proud of his idleness as recognises himself as English to the core. As Keith, Wayne and Lance work out in the biting snow, he feels that he was against such a thing as they were impotent to be anything besides: “The besetting sin of English was idleness ... may be that makes me more English than most” (p 195).

One may also look at the antipathy of Sillitoe’s protagonists as they give vent to their hatred towards the police, and the administration. Lance, Garry and Wayne feel that one should get justice on one’s own. Towards the end Lance and Wayne vent out their anger for all sorts of troubles the police put them in. One may also look at the attempts of Lance’s father trying to be good with the cops so that his son is let off from the clutches of the “old Bill” (p 72). Garry refers to the callous, cold-blooded attitude of the authorities who handed over the dole-money. He worked as a paperboy, a gardener and had been a lorry driver as he intended to avoid himself being on the dole.

“I’ve never been on the dole, and hope I never will. My brother was Whenever he went to collect his money he couldn’t find anywhere to park. When he got talking in the queue he found they sat watching telly all the week”. (p 144).

Sillitoe proves himself a master craftsman, by exposing the vacuity and the mindlessness of ideals like Communism in the absence of sincerity and true spirit to serve on the part of the human beings. In a veiled attack on Communism and the bogus messiahs, he intends to say that all that the people want is true and practical socialism than bombastic and high sounding ideals. Parson is portrayed as the advocate of communism, empty of sincerity and faithfulness.

The novel *Snowstop* is not only profoundly philosophic, but thickly laid out with many symbols and images that are inextricably interwoven into the narrative. Sillitoe has come of age in storytelling, but he does it more effectively with his complex symbols, imagery, metaphors and figures of speech. Besides the snow meant as an extended metaphor, pathetic fallacy is employed as potent means to highlight the power of Nature and man’s attitude to it. Sillitoe employs chain, window and the star as powerful and potent symbols. If one goes to look into the novel, one comes to know that the chain is referred to as a means of rescue and as an anchor for the supposedly slippery predicament and the psyche that tends to fly off into a juggernaut. Sally repents her failure to get the chains for car wheels, which were left to ‘rust’ in the carriage, and such a failure makes her fear that she may perish on the slippery lanes.

Keith Blackwell asks for a pair of chains to be put on the wheels of the Commer Van while making attempts to push the van off to the safe distance on the slippery snow. Though the chains supplied by Fred were small to hold the wheels, Keith prefers such chains to hold the wheels properly, so that an explosion is avoided. Finally the chains fit perfectly and the van is pushed off to a safe distance. Chains are meant to hold the wheels from slipping on the snow and are symbolic of the yearning of man to control his slippery predicament and his too slippery psyche that more often than not was led astray by temptations and wrong choices.

One may also look at the attempts of Sillitoe to employ the window as a perplexing symbol all through the novel. The window sometimes is used as an inlet into the world of proper understanding, purposeful life and enlightenment, whereas Daniel looks at it as a symbolic of death and 'white-out'. He feels that he deserved death and to be whitened as utterly as the window for the butcheries he had helped to bring out' (p 64), and such an image of the window matches when the explosion occurs and just before his black-out Daniel finds a light whiter than snow that filled both windows. For Sally the window brings the picture of past and her favourite house in France whereas for Parsons it shows the inferno of the blizzard. For some it brings out hope and light.

Keith finds the window as an inlet into his own inner psyche. For him it seemed that all windows were "squares of light" (p 231). The window is aimed to be a potent symbol to represent the will of man and a source of hope and realisation. The window as a symbol brings out the inner dichotomy, fears, confessions and true feelings of various characters.

In a delicately portrayed situation, Sillitoe intends the star to be a potent symbol, and it helps him to bring out the inner dichotomy in Keith. As a part of his 'final plan', Keith goes out to move the van and finds a lonely bright star with no others to fasten it to, which appeared as an astronomical trickster to Keith as two made a connection, three formed a pattern and four made a perfect picture, and the lonely star matched his loneliness, his desire to live and his hope for a promising life with Eileen. The disappearance of the star sometime later gives strength to him to move ahead and to attend to work with the 'inner fire' (p 218), urging him to go ahead.

Sillitoe employs the third-person point of view fused with God's-eye-view to get the intended effect in the story telling. He is a master craftsman and his craftsmanship becomes evident in the plot construction. With no incongruity what so ever, the story moves ahead to catch the interest and consciousness of the reader. Though the setting is the twentieth-century Thatcher's England, the human drama is so much general and universal, that the reader feels comfortable with the life in general. Interestingly, Sillitoe has also successfully distanced himself from Nottingham, to disprove the charge that he was comfortable only while delineating life from Nottingham background.

With least hesitation, one can say that Sillitoe's art has come of age. Though he deliberately suppresses the details of the fate of Sally as she follows Daniel, Daniels looks at Sally as the only link between the past and the future that came in his way of joining the mainstream of life and return to his teacher's slog. The death of Sally is artistically made evident to the reader through his technique of employing dream sequence. As Daniel falls in the rescue van, he falls asleep and in his dream he finds people coming to get him:

"...led by a woman with skeletal head and demented eyes, limbs bare and hands sprouting claws ... as if all the rage of the world was pouring from her hurt lips at his cruelty". (223)

Sillitoe in what may be termed as a fine expression of art and beauty makes clear the murder of Sally in the hands of Daniel.

It is true that the authorial intrusion by Sillitoe sometimes messes up with the understanding of the novel. In his eagerness to convey the intended meaning Sillitoe falters by attempting to reinforce his opinion on certain issues. Instead of allowing characters to enact the human drama, Sillitoe makes certain conclusive remarks that may leave the reader a little bit disturbed. To portray Daniel's introspection on the attic, Sillitoe employs stream of consciousness, but intrudes in-between to hint at the change that has overtaken Daniel because of the introspection.

One may also find Sillitoe being elaborate and more explicit in the novel when compared to his pithy and complex style in the novel **Last Loves**. It is interesting to note that the sub-plot which appears superfluous and as an appendage, is part of Sillitoe's design. Sillitoe adds the sub-plot with Paul, Charlie and Bill to report the explosion, as the characters in the main plot cuddle up to survive. It also throws light on the crooked ambition of the youth. The trio Paul, Charlie and Bill also rescue Daniel and come in handy for the writer to report the condition of Daniel and his subsequent death.

With least hesitation, one may say that Sillitoe has definitely matured as an artist and a writer. He comes before the reader as a committed writer. His story telling technique blended with the profound thought, make his novels worth reading. One may observe Sillitoe tending to be more philosophic particularly in the later novels as he adopts moralistic and traditional values in his approach to life. One may come to know that he deals with the 'spiritual man' towards the end of his career. He seems to deal with the physical man, factory, work, the external society and the war in the earlier novels where as he takes up the imperfect institutions, communism and the social evils to task in the novels that were penned between 1968 and 1985. As he moved towards the matured stage of his life, he appears to be more profound, philosophic and dealing with the inner psyche of man. He intends to talk about the soul, reformation of the individual, transcendence, quintessence, salvation and redemption in the later novels, even as his earlier themes of social ills, institution of marriage, love, sex and the theme of working-class life and the theme of reformation seem well intact. It is interesting to note that his characters tend to be more mature, soft and sophisticated than being vulgar and crude.

Snowstop seems to portray man as capable of wrecking life driven by ambition and passion as a magnificent refuge is turned into a house of death. Life is turned topsy-turvy in what seems to be 'the longest day' (p 109), as fate drives a majority of the guests at the hotel to go on a spiritual quest Keith seems to select his efforts of rescue, as 'a means to an end' (208) to attain salvation. Sillitoe intends to show that purgation and redemption can only show the open door to man. Even his women characters seem to undergo enormous transformation as they yearn to attain complete maidenhood through love, union and conception. They seem to be least hesitant to attain pregnancy, as they hope to attain fruition through love and fulfilment.

Sillitoe intends to show that man can never escape his own "Piranesi prison" (p 230) but will perish if he chooses free fall in his own free will. The epigraph added to the novel quoted from Sir Walter Raleigh, in **Snowstop** appears all the more relevant. The epigraph attached to the novel speaks volumes about the attitude of Sillitoe and the change in his attitude as one compares with the early novels. It is George Rhoads in **Last Loves** who gives the apt picture of life and human condition in the modern world of mindless consumerism, selfishness and futility of wars. One may note that George becomes existentialist in his attitude to life and realises the futility of life given up to meaningless pursuits.

O eloquent, just and might death! Whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded, what none hath dared, thou has done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawn together all the far fetched greatness, all the pride, all the cruelty and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, **Hic jacet** ..(sic)"

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