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Anger Issues: Canon Formation, Class, and Queerness in Postwar British Literature

1. Canonising the 'Angry Young Men' as Working-Class Representatives

The general critical consensus that the 'Angry Young Men' did not exist as a conscious literary movement, functioning instead as a convenient label for the benefit of publicists and critics, did not prevent the selected authors it was applied to from dominating literary criticism during the immediate postwar era. In *Declaration* (1957), a collection of essays widely considered to be a manifesto for 'Angry' writing, the lack of a shared formal approach or political outlook is evident, and Doris Lessing admits to using 'Angry Young Men' for convenience rather than accuracy: "I use the phrase, not because I think it is in any way an adequate description, but because it is immediately recognizable" (Lessing 1957, 22). Sixty years later and this powerful adjective continues to define critical approaches. The British Library's website, while acknowledging the amorphous nature of the term, nonetheless describes the 1950s as 'the angry decade' (Buzwell 2017). The names John Osborne, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, John Wain, and Kingsley Amis are among those that repeatedly circulate in academic studies of the era. This synecdochal process, in which the works of specific authors are selected as the most representative of a fixed historical period, inevitably both shapes and limits an understanding of its literature. D.J. Taylor argues that the label "did more than impart phantom coherence to a group of writers whose members were in some cases scarcely aware of each other's existence […] [I]t both established a canon and effectively excluded large numbers of novels from critical consideration merely because they failed to conform to the prevailing orthodoxy" (Taylor 1993, 67). The process of canon formation is not a simple matter of taxonomy, but rather dictates how specific texts are both valued and revalued. This tendency is particularly evident when considering the relationship between 'Angry' texts and depictions of class identity.

The 'Angry Young Men' novels and plays were (and often still are) perceived as particularly representative and accurate depictions of working-class culture in postwar Britain, but this narrative relies on inaccurate assumptions about their authors and the limited range of class experiences presented in their work. Due to their social realist styles and the lower-class backgrounds of some of their authors, the texts were, as Susan Brook notes, "read as the authentic experience of the working class or lower-middle class" (Brook 2003, 23). The writers themselves contributed to this narrative; Alan Sillitoe, author of 'Angry' classic *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), argued that a middle-class reader could "take out a book and see in it either a mirror of himself, or someone he knows: he is fully represented in contemporary writing, while the man who works at the lathe is not" (Sillitoe 1961, 74). As well as situating representation in entirely masculine terms, Sillitoe establishes the validity of his own intervention by

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referencing a working-class occupation which matches that of his novel's protagonist. The assumed fidelity of such novels authenticated their class representations, and their shared focus on white, male, and heterosexual protagonists became the accepted standards for literary engagement with postwar working-class culture.

The criterion used to define this accuracy is, however, complicated by closer examina-tion of their authors and settings. Their narratives offer little consistency in terms of location, character or even thematic preoccupation; the 'Angry Young Men' protagonists include Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton, a lathe operator living with family in a Nottingham terrace; Joe Lampton from John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), a socially mobile council clerk in a middle-class suburb; and John Osborne's Jimmy Porter in the play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), a university-educated sweet-stall holder.[1] This diversity in settings, combined with the social backgrounds of the individual authors, undermines the idea that they were representative of a generalised lower-class experience. John Osborne had attended a private school, while Kingsley Amis and John Wain were university graduates with distinctly middle-class backgrounds. The authenticity of these texts in capturing postwar social changes is also called into question by the composition and publishing histories of the two most famous 'Angry' novels. Although they were both perceived to be indicative of their immediate social and historical context, *Room at the Top* (1957) is actually set in the late 1940s and had first been sent to publishers in 1951, while *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* had been written in Spain by an author who had not worked in a factory since the Second World War. The consistent element linking texts under the label of the 'Angry Young Men' then, becomes the centring of specific gendered, racialised, and sexual perspectives within lower-class narratives.

2. The Influence of 'Anger' and Homosexual Representation

Although the 1950s may well have been 'the Angry decade,' its influence in consolidating dominant ideas about the scope of working-class representation has been pervasive. This very specific canon has contributed to the assumption that class is most perceptibly engaged in literature when it is explored through white, male, and heterosexual protagonists. Those texts which examine class from other gendered, racialised, and sexual perspectives are not perceived as sufficiently representative and are instead viewed as dealing primarily with alternative facets of identity. For example, Brook argues that, following the critical mythologising of the 'Angry Young Men,' literature "written by women and focused on women was not seen as dealing with political concerns, because it fell outside the recognisable 'angry' narrative" (Brook 2003, 32). This limiting of working-class re-presentation is suggested by the structure

1 Roberto del Valle Alcalá offers the following line of distinction for works mentioned here: "Although often misleadingly conflated with the productions of writers like Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Osborne, or John Braine under the convenient if rather vacuous label 'angry young men,' Sillitoe's early work is not concerned with the perceived effects of the blurring of class lines. Its subject matter is not the estrangement suffered by the upwardly mobile but, critically, the foregrounding of antagonistic subjectivities in determinate class contexts" (del Valle Alcalá 2015, 438).

of *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction*, which separates "Class and Social Change," "Gender and Sexual Identity," and "Multicultural Personae" into individual chapters and thus confines each area to distinct analytical categories (see Head 2002). This article focuses on three novels which, due to their explorations of the intersections between class, sexuality, and race, undermine the white, masculine, and heterosexual perspective centred by the 'Angry' canon.[2] The fact that all three novels are still male-centred narratives is not meant to replicate the misogyny implicit in the 'Angry' texts, but rather to demonstrate that even when novels focus on working-class men, they are still rarely considered 'class fictions' unless those men are also white and heterosexual. Andrew Salkey's *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960), Gillian Freeman's *The Leather Boys* (1961), and Rodney Garland's *Sorcerer's Broth* (1966) were all published after the supposed 'Angry decade' of the 1950s but they highlight the difficulty of escaping the long shadow of 'Angry' writing and the ideas about working-class identities that it embedded in postwar culture more broadly.

If 'Angry' writers are used as the most reliable chroniclers of postwar social experience, then homosexuality among the working classes is presented as an embarrassment to its generally masculine character. The historical presence of male same-sex desire in working-class culture has been noted by, among others, Matt Houlbrook, Helen Smith, and Richard Hornsey, but desires and sexual encounters did not always articulate themselves as a distinct sexual identity – partly because homosexuality was primarily associated with middle- and upper-class men (Hornsey 2010; Houlbrook 2005; Smith 2015). Helen Smith notes that the emphasis on such men in historical, sociological, and literary accounts of homosexuality "meant that working-class men, men without a clear sexual identity and men outside the capital […] were largely overlooked, thus leaving a significant gap in our understanding of male sexuality" (Smith 2015, 5). 'Angry' writing itself, lauded as a particularly accurate re-presentation of working-class experience, implied that homosexuality was alien to most lower-class men. In *Room at the Top*, protagonist Joe Lampton enters a 'pansy pub' and converses with a man who bears all the stereotypical features of a 'quean' including dyed hair, scent, feminine address ('dear'), and frequent giggling. Joe articulates his

2 The essay defines intersectionality in the terms outlined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the influential works cited below. Crenshaw originally used the term to examine the specific gendered and racialised experiences of Black women, but she also argued for its broader use as a tool for understanding various interlocking facets of identity: "By tracing the categories to their inter-sections, I hope to suggest a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable. While the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color" (Crenshaw 1991, 1244-1245). This article further approaches the term 'race' as referring to a social construct with powerful and pervasive material and ideological effects, using Paul Gilroy's definition as a basis: "'Race' has to be socially and politically constructed and elaborate ideological work is done to secure and maintain the different forms of 'racialization' which have characterized capitalist development. Recognizing this makes it all the more important to compare and evaluate the different historical situations in which 'race' has become politically pertinent" (Gilroy 1987, 35).

fundamental sense of difference from the man and speaks of him with a detached, objective gaze: "[P]ansies only use pubs for picking up boy friends. They don't booze themselves, any more than you or I would if surrounded by bedworthy women who might be had for the price of a few drinks" (Braine 1957, 223). The "you or I" of Joe's address forges a heteronormative consensus between narrator and reader, distancing both from any affinity with homo-sexuality. The 'Angry' authors themselves often contributed to this narrative outside their fictions; Kingsley Amis, for example, mocked socialists interested in legalisation of homosexuality and argued it would be absurd to present the idea to working-class men (Amis 1959, 276). The texts chosen for this paper demonstrate that there was working-class homosexual representation in novels of the era, potentially challenging the heterosexual norm of 'Angry' writing. However, the narratives themselves depict characters who struggle to align their class identities with their sexual and/or racialised identities in a manner that suggests the tensions, limitations, and negotiations required when representing working-class experience after the 'Angry Young Men.'

3. Racialising and Classifying 'Anger' in *Escape to an Autumn Pavement*

'Angry' writing was not only focused primarily on white characters but was also moulded into a form of literary nationalism. In the critical anthology *Protest* – an attempt to align the values of the 'Angry Young Men' with the Beat movement in the US – John Holloway argued that, with 'Angry' texts, "English writing, for good or ill, is reverting to some of its more indigenous traditions" (Holloway 1959, 327). 'Anger' is thus linked to the past, suggesting it is impervious to social change, and the term 'indigenous tradition' implicitly expresses a nationalist perspective. Texts which emerged from outside this narrow de-finition of the 'nation,' or which queried its stability and relevance in light of colonialism and immigration, thus undermined the structures that validated 'Angry' writing as reflective of contemporary working-class experience. Andrew Salkey's *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* is one such a text; it challenges the biases within the Angry canon through its focus on the intersections between race, nation, class, and sexuality.

Salkey's protagonist, Johnnie Sobert, is, as a result of the British Nationality Act of 1948, a British citizen, but the novel examines how the delineations of nationhood are policed by racism and xenophobia. During an argument with his bartender colleague, Biddy, Johnnie informs her that arrivals from Jamaica are indeed British citizens and not 'foreigners.' She becomes irate and angrily retorts: "In a minute you'll ask me whether the American is a foreigner or not. And I'll say, No! N-O! […] He's the part of us that's made good. The youngest in the family sort of thing" (Salkey 1960, 33). Biddy's recourse to terms of familial affiliation implies kinship between what she regards as predominantly white nations, constructing 'Britishness' as a trait which traverses national, but not racialised, boundaries. Any sense of class solidarity between Biddy and Johnnie is superseded by a nationalist rhetoric that reinforces a racialised/racialising coloniser/colonised boundary. This interaction is indicative of the broader relationship between Salkey's novel and its literary context, in which the

literary nationalism associated with the 'Angry' texts precludes both Salkey and Johnnie from a claim to reflect working-class experience.

The majority of 'Angry' texts tended to ignore the significance of race and nationality in the representation of working-class identities, allowing their racialising delineations to go unquestioned. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur's family welcome Sam, a West-African man, into their home with a combination of affection and amusement, which Matthew Whittle argues is "to challenge the view of black African migrants as unwelcome in predominantly white working-class communities" (Whittle 2015, 84). As Stephen Ross has noted, however, the implication that the encounter is a complete novelty for the family ignores the presence of a growing black community in Nottingham throughout the 1950s and offers a racially homogenous representation of working-class culture (Ross 2019, 40). Salkey's novel provides a stark contrast to such fleeting representations, instead engaging with the racialising context of postwar Britain which included the widely reported Caribbean arrivals on the HMT Windrush in 1948, the Notting Hill race riots of 1958, and extensive social and institutional discrimination. The text begins with a brief list of identity markers divided from one another with punctuation: "The name's Sobert. Johnnie Sobert. Jamaican. R.C. Middle class. Or so I've been made to think" (Salkey 1960, 15). The final line, with its abrupt interrogative approach, foreshadows the subsequent narrative as Johnnie's race, nationality, class, and sexuality intersect with one another during his ex-periences in postwar Britain and undermine the stability of his identity.

Salkey maintains a consistent narrative focus on the racialising elements of postwar class identity in a manner largely absent from 'Angry' texts. Racialised discrimination and class inequalities are mutually reinforcing factors in Johnnie's life – his racialisation precludes him from employment in higher paying occupations which limits his socio-economic conditions. Despite his wealthier origins, Johnnie becomes a member of the working classes and discovers the extent to which class identity is predicated on racialised hierarchies. Johnnie's neighbour, Gerald Trado, is a lower-class man who aspires to a middle-class identity through knowledge of the kind of highbrow culture that Johnnie already possesses, but their supposed racial difference produces antagonism rather than affinity. Trado's racist bigotry is presented not as incidental to his class identity, but rather as a key component of it; as Nadia Ellis notes, "Trado does not feel that he can afford to bond with Johnnie, insecure as his own class status is" (Ellis 2015b, 67).[3] His ambiguous identity embodies the social changes outlined by Richard Hoggart in his influential analysis of working-class culture in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957):

3 As tenants in the same building, Johnnie and Trado are in similar financial situations, but Trado uses racialised language to articulate a clear difference between them; he pointedly tells Johnnie: "There aren't many houses in Hampstead that would have your kind; you know that don't you?" (Salkey 1960, 24). Johnnie's emphasis in this same scene on Trado's explicit signposting of his cultural and intellectual knowledge within his own home (including the prominently placed copies of literary periodical *Horizon* and numerous Penguin Books), reiterates the notion that Trado's projection of a specific class identity and his racist bigotry are closely intertwined.

> We are likely to be struck by the extent to which working-class people have improved their lot, acquired more power and more possessions, but especially by the degree to which they no longer feel themselves members of 'the lower orders' […] a change, towards a culturally 'classless' society is being brought about. (Hoggart 1957, 3)

Salkey's depiction of the character Trado highlights that 'classless' does not mean 'raceless' and foregrounds the importance of racialisation in the construction of class identities – and social mobility – in order to emphasise the intersectional processes of identity formation.

It is not only Johnnie's racialised and class identities that the novel presents as overlapping in ways that shape his social experience; both are complicated by his emergent same-sex desire within the narrative. That desire, explicitly woven into the plot, sets the novel apart from canonical examples of Black-British writing during the era which stress the heterosexual masculinity of protagonists in a manner similar to the 'Angry' authors; Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), for example, features a scene in which Moses jokingly flirts with a "pansy" while "all the time he want to dead with laugh" (Selvon 1956, 99). Nadia Ellis argues that the continued association of homosexuality with white and privileged men, combined with the presumed heterosexuality of black migrants, left "the black queer figure shadowy, unformed, at just the moment when the white 'homosexual,' as a clearly defined subject, was coming into view" (Ellis 2015a, 896). The publication history of Salkey's novel highlights a similar tendency to ignore the specificities of Johnnie's narrative; David Ellis states that the original edition by Hutchinson featured a sleeve note which claimed "[i]t is stimulating to find a West Indian hero wrestling with a problem of his own sexuality instead of being buried exclusively in the problems of his colour and exile" (Ellis 2013, 224). The failure of the first publishers to consider that Johnnie's experience of his sexuality is mediated by race and nationality, rather than superseding these concerns, is indicative of a wider tendency in literary culture that reduces explorations of identity to a singular facet.

Johnnie's struggle to acknowledge his same-sex attraction reflects the dearth of similar narratives in which Black characters explored and expressed their homosexual desires. When Dick tells Johnnie he believes him to be homosexual, Johnnie informs him that he's "on the wrong track" while his narratorial comment states that the denial "sounded feeble and positively stupid; yet it was a try" (Salkey 1960, 185). Johnnie's reticence in labelling his sexual identity is a consequence of the historical and literary context of Salkey's novel, with mainstream narratives depicting homosexuality focused overwhelmingly on white middle-class protagonists with financial security and social privilege. Johnnie and Dick eventually move in together, a process which Ellis describes as "a form of middle-class companionate queer cohabitation most legible in the wake of the Wolfenden debates, which enshrined a 'respectable' form of bourgeois male homosexuality" (Ellis 2015b, 60). Johnnie's growing discomfort with this arrangement is produced partly by Dick's desire for Johnnie to define himself more overtly as a homosexual, with little awareness that, due to class, nationality, and race, Johnnie might have a different relationship to his sexuality. His eventual decision to leave Dick is a broader rejection of the form and expression of same-sex desire that he represents, which precludes Johnnie both because of race and class.

4. Angry or Ambivalent? Masculinity and Same-Sex Desire in *The Leather Boys*

Gillian Freeman's *The Leather Boys* is also focused on homosexual characters in a lower-class context and, like Salkey's novel, is rarely to be found in discussions of postwar class fiction. The publication history of the novel demonstrates that the class of the characters was always as important as their sexual identities; publisher Anthony Blond wanted a "Romeo and Romeo novel with working-class gay protagonists" and tasked Freeman with writing it (Freeman 2014, front matter). The novel borrows considerably from the tropes of 'Angry' writing by featuring disaffected working-class men who remain distrustful or cynical towards the supposed benefits of postwar affluence, and it is precisely this literary heritage that informs its depictions of same-sex desire. *The Leather Boys* undermines the heterosexuality of the 'Angry' canon to some extent while reinforcing its emphasis on masculinity, creating an ambivalence even as it subverts expectations.

The narrative trajectory of *The Leather Boys*, in which Dick and Reggie move from sexual attraction to a romantic relationship, was likely influenced by the numerous middle-class novels about homosexuality published in the 1950s and their frequent emphasis on domestic monogamy. And yet, Freeman depicts same-sex desire as emerging from within their own social context, as opposed to the tendency, particularly evident in Rodney Garland's *The Heart in Exile* (1953) and Michael Nelson's *A Room in Chelsea Square* (1958), to imply that lower-class men became involved in homosexual relationships due to the presence of a wealthier partner. *The Leather Boys* instead presents a working-class subculture as the foundation for its representation of same-sex attraction. Dick and Reggie do not learn about their desires from an enlightened middle-class lover or from a medical journal in their father's study, but it is produced from their own activities and interactions. It is specifically their involvement in a lower-class youth subculture that allows Dick and Reggie to explore and express their sexuality. Participation in the biker gang provides the stimulus for their initial attraction to one another and the motorbike itself becomes a crucial symbol for covertly expressing their homoerotic desires. Riding together produces a physical intimacy between them that would otherwise be impossible in public: "Dick put his arms round Reggie's waist and held him tightly as they accelerated fiercely away" (Freeman 1961, 17). The motorcycle also serves a metaphorical function within the narrative, mapping the alternative trajectory of same-sex desire. Its ability to subvert conventional traffic emphasises its purpose as a (literal) vehicle for a homosexual relationship: "That was the joy of a bike, nothing really held you up. At traffic lights you were the first away, in traffic jams you threaded your way to the top of the queue and then left it behind you" (Freeman 1961, 58). Freeman's novel thus 'queers' dominant under-standings of working-class representation during this era, locating various sources for same-sex desire within the typical domain of 'Angry' literature.

The placing of homosexual men as protagonists, rather than peripheral characters, in *The Leather Boys* provides an alternative to the 'Angry' novels, but Dick and Reggie still articulate their same-sex desire in terms which suggest they are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with it. Dick's confusion is shaped by an understanding of homosexuality limited to individual acts, rather than the manifestation of an orientation:

"Men did do things with other men when they were randy, everyone knew that. It didn't mean they felt anything special though" (Freeman 1961, 71). The acknowledgement that such practices are common in working-class contexts ("everyone knew that") relies on a restriction that such acts do not become "anything special" in terms of a specific identity or lifestyle. Reggie likewise struggles to align his feelings with the terms for male homosexuality, suggesting their lack of resonance for him as a lower-class man: "He thought, why should I feel like this over Dick, I'm not queer. But perhaps he was, if he felt as he did, although it had never happened before" (Freeman 1961, 74). The characters' struggle to align their desires with dominant conceptions of homosexuality lies partly in a belief that it would require rejection of a working-class masculinity.

Dick and Reggie's ambivalence in expressing their attraction to one another is thus rooted in its perceived incompatibly with their class identity; although homosexuality is depicted as emerging organically from within working-class culture, the heterosexual masculinity associated with that culture constrains the boys' response to their own desires. After their first sexual encounter, Dick nervously questions whether he and Reggie have transgressed normative gender roles: "I mean we don't want to put on lipstick or anything like that, do we?" (Freeman 1961, 76). This repudiation of ostensible effeminacy is under-lined with greater emphasis later in the text in which, almost as a parallel to Joe Lampton's encounter with a 'quean,' Dick visits a shipyard and meets a group of flirtatious and flamboyant men: "[T]hree of them wore suits and satin ties and the other was in jeans and an open-necked shirt, his fingers covered with cheap rings […] Dick could see he had powder on his face and a metal bracelet on his wrist" (Freeman 1961, 108). They "have a chorus of giggle and shrieks" upon hearing Dick's name, refer to him as "dear" and joke about sexual assaults aboard ships (Freeman 1961, 108). Dick feels no sense of class solidarity with these other men despite the fact that, historically, 'queans' were predominantly working-class (see Houlbrook 2005, 140). Instead, like Joe Lampton, he is keen to articulate distance: "He had never thought of his relationship with Reggie as being homosexual, he hadn't labelled it or questioned it. It wasn't like this. They would never be like these men" (Freeman 1961, 109). Any affinity that Dick might feel with them as fellow homosexuals is also negated because they do not meet the standards of 'masculinity' that he feels the need to embody. Dick and Reggie's relationship emerges from a working-class context, but it also remains invested in a notion of masculinity, common to the 'Angry' texts, which produces a continual ambivalence about the queer desire that it represents.

5. A Queer Anger: Performing Class in *Sorcerer's Broth*

Rodney Garland's *Sorcerer's Broth* (1966) is a little-known novel that, when it is critically discussed, is primarily analysed for its depiction of homosexuality. It should be considered a working-class fiction, however, despite the fact that its protagonist, Don Apps, despises his class background and those around him. Indeed, it is precisely because of his sexuality that the main character has such an ambivalent relationship with his class identity. Don's narrative is full of anger, but it is one turned inward at his own working-class origins and the text suggests this is partly because his homosexuality

precludes his ability to identify with and claim a lower-class identity. As such, it suggests the enduring resonance of circumscribed ideas about class and sexuality amplified by the 'Angry' texts.

The novel's focus on the intersections of class and sexuality is signalled by its narrative structure, which subverts one of the most common tropes in postwar novels about homosexuality. Cross-class relationships are a recurring element across a range of gay novels of the 1950s and 1960s; Angus Wilson's *Hemlock and After* (1952), J.R. Ackerley's *We Think the World of You* (1960), Martyn Goff's *The Youngest Director* (1961), and David Storey's *Radcliffe* (1963) all centre middle-class protagonists who are romantically and/or sexually involved with lower-class men. This narrative dynamic often leads to working-class men being discussed, observed, and pathologised by their higher-class partners. Dr. Tony Page, in *The Heart in Exile*, suggests a range of possible reasons for sexual attraction to lower-class men that incorporates the physiological (the muscles developed from manual labour), the sociological (because of the 'simplicity' of the working man), and psycho-analytical (the working classes are more likely to engage in homosexuality because they have fewer anal fears) (see Garland 1953, 73).[4] These diagnoses manipulate prominent medical, legal, and political discourses in order to present working-class men as objects of desire for the (implicitly middle-class) homosexual subject. Don's role as protagonist and narrator thus suggests a desire to closely examine how working-class homosexual men, usually marginalised in narratives of same-sex desire, navigate assuming an identity so inflected by privilege and wealth.

Alan Sinfield, in *The Wilde Century*, argues that Oscar Wilde's infamous trials defined homosexual identity in specific class terms for late Victorian Britain: "the image of the queer cohered at the moment when the leisured, effeminate, aesthetic dandy was discovered in same-sex practices, underwritten by money, with lower-class boys" (Sinfield 1994, 121). Don seeks to embody the role of the sophisticated, cultured, and aesthetic model of homosexuality in the Wildean vein, but doing so requires him to distance himself from his working-class origins. His verbosity, witticisms, and pretentiously displayed knowledge of art and literature are built upon class snobbery. His dislike of 'common' people is closely implicated with his homosexuality as demonstrated by his assertion that "[i]f one has an artistic soul and temperament then one is apart from the hoi polloi. I've been surrounded by the hoi polloi ever since I can remember. And the hoi polloi, which includes my sister May, calls me effeminate, and far worse words at times" (Garland 1966, 6). Don's desire to adopt a persona which signals his homosexuality is thus presented as at odds with his class identity. Although Don spends much of the novel in a relationship with the significantly wealthier Ray, the most significant cross-class relationship in *Sorcerer's Broth* is internalised within Don himself. He is torn between a class identity that seems hostile to homosexuality and a sexual identity rooted in a different class context.

Don's ambivalent attitude towards his class identity, and his frequent attempts to repudiate it, bear some similarity to the thematic preoccupations of the most famous

4 Although this writer used the name pseudonym as the author of *The Heart in Exile*, it is unlikely to have been the same person. See Martin Dines (2013).

'Angry' novels. *Room at the Top* follows Joe's ascension to a middle-class lifestyle while *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* regularly depicts Arthur Seaton's apathy towards his community. It is the fact that *Sorcerer's Broth* is invested specifically in examining how Don's lack of class solidarity is informed by his homosexuality that makes Garland's novel fit so uncomfortably into a canon of working-class writing which centres the 'Angry' texts. Rather than focus simply on Don's aspirations to ascend from working- to middle class, *Sorcerer's Broth* instead interrogates class identity as a fixed concept and reliable indicator of socio-economic condition. Throughout the narrative, Don adopts various personas that mock specific class identities, naming his voices "old Etonian" or "University standard" (Garland 1966, 84; 116). This focus on the performativity of class identity is not simply an extension of Andy Medhurst's argument that class "is not just an objective entity, but also (and mostly?) a question of identifications, perceptions, feelings" (Medhurst 2000, 20). Instead, Don's ability to speak and act in a manner that makes him appear to be an entirely different class undermines the reductionist approach to representation in which characters are only considered to be 'working-class' if they conform to specific, often stereotypical, behaviours. Considering 'class' as a matter of identification as well as material reality allows for literary analyses that exhibit a more nuanced awareness of the historical and ongoing complexities of the British class system than the 'Angry' canon allows.

6. Conclusion

The novels analysed in this paper feature working-class protagonists who are clearly angry about a range of issues relating to their own social experiences in postwar Britain, but they cannot be 'Angry Young Men.' Indeed, they are rarely considered as representations of working-class identities at all because of the efficacy of a supposed literary movement that defined the scope of class representation in limited gendered, racialised, and sexual terms. *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* highlights the literary nationalism implicit in the 'Angry' canon and thus its exploration of racialisation within class and sexual identities destabilises the white and heterosexual focus which predominantly defines 'Angry' working-class writing. *The Leather Boys* highlights the difficulties of challenging pervasive definitions of working-class representation; it subverts the heterosexual focus of the most famous 'Angry' novels but reiterates their association with homophobic masculinity. Dick and Reggie experience same-sex desire from within their own lower-class subculture but struggle to articulate their desires in terms that reflect their idea of working-class masculinity, creating an ambivalence that remains unresolved at the text's conclusion. *Sorcerer's Broth* depicts a working-class man who can only express his homosexuality by identification with a class-specific dandy stereotype, humorously drawing attention to the claustrophobic strictures of classed representations. The need to expand our idea of the 'working-class canon' to include these texts because they make explicit the narrow scope of representation that defined the 'Angry' decade is complicated by the fact that their narratives tend to reinscribe the same exclusions; Johnnie, Dick, Reggie, and Don all find other facets of their identity interfering with their ability to claim a working-class identity. Interrogating and challenging an existing canon does not, then, necessarily lead to

radical alternatives, but rather to the discovery of works which, while clearly reflecting dominant ideas and ideologies, nonetheless offer a more nuanced and considered engagement with them than the established set of texts. Illuminating the contradictions and tensions within these texts allows us to question whether our contemporary understanding of 'class fictions' acknowledges the full range of potential representations or whether we remain limited by the enduring literary-critical conventions still canonically applied to the 1950s and 1960s.

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