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## Abstract

This paper will examine excerpts from a range of Alan Sillitoe's prose fiction, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) and short stories from the collection *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1958), via a comparative exploration of the texts' representations of Midlands English demotic. The narrative discourse traces a link between the experience of the Midlands English working classes represented and the demotic language they speak; the narrators have voices redolent of registers rooted in 1950s English working class life. The texts also contain different methods of representing their protagonists' consciousness through the demotic idiolects that they speak.

Sillitoe's is a novelistic discourse which refuses to normalise itself to accord with the conventions of classic realism, and as such prefigures the ambitions of many contemporary writers who incline their narrative voices towards the oral – asserting the right of a character's dialect/idiolect to be the principal register of the narrative. The paper will demonstrate this thesis through the ideas of Bakhtin, and through an analytical taxonomy derived from literary stylistics. It aims to propose a model which can be used to analyse and explore any fiction which has been labelled as 'working class', and asserts that such an approach leads to a more principled characterisation of working class fiction (based on its use of language) than current literary-critical discussions based simply on cultural/social context and biography.

## Keywords

vernacular, narrative technique, Alan Sillitoe, narratology, stylistics

# **Midland Cadences: narrative voices in the work of Alan Sillitoe**

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## 1. Introduction

"All this 'it's grim oop north' sort of stuff. Well, it was a joke once, but we've got to the stage where the working class has been turned into a cliché and it deserves a lot better."

Melvyn Bragg's comments on the depiction of working class characters in contemporary culture (Kennedy 2014) are surprising in that they were considered newsworthy. As Kevin Duffy (2014) has argued, literary fiction is still often considered to be the record of the middle classes written by the middle classes. This paper sets out to examine the work of a writer who refused to accede to this paradigm, and will propose a critical model with which the narrative methods of so-called working class writers can be analysed. The model will focus on the ways in which their work deviates from literary-stylistic norms; it is attested here that such an approach can provide a more principled characterisation of 'working-class' fiction than current literary-critical discussions based simply on cultural/social context and biography. To exemplify this, the paper will examine the use of a particular variety of English, the Nottingham vernacular of the 1950s, in the work of Alan Sillitoe, and to frame this with reference to notions of 'the carnivalesque' as advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin in his work on Rabelais (1984a). It will focus principally on examples from his short story collection *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1958) and the novel *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (1964), the latter made famous by the 1960 film of the same title starring Albert Finney. The critical infrastructure to be put to service in this exercise is drawn specifically from the work of Bakhtin and, more generally, from the fields of stylistics (especially in terms of discourse presentation) and its intersections with narratology, especially Genette (1984), Simpson (1993), Fowler (1986) and Uspensky (1973). The specific question to be explored relates to Sillitoe's challenge to prevailing (and at the time his work was being published, dominant) notions of the literary, and perceived 'proper' forms for literary discourse. This challenge takes the form of a writing against the perceived centre of this dominance, and Sillitoe evolves an intriguing and, indeed, sophisticated narrative methodology in order the more effectively to meet it. This methodology combines different narrative voices, blended into a new and heterogeneous whole, and drawn from the twin agencies of author and character, and also from both internal (i.e. thought) and external (i.e. narration and speech) sources. Simpson's (1993: 43) summary of an interpersonal typology of narrative modes will be especially useful in anatomising this blend.

A second, problematic issue arises from the first: the perplexing question of so-called 'working-class fiction' (with which Sillitoe's work is often associated)<sup>1</sup> as it relates to constituency, authorship and readership. As already mentioned, literary critics have posed the question in terms of social context, of author versus reader. In other words, can we define working class fiction according to who it is written by, or is it better to focus on who it is written for? For example, Hitchcock (1989) provides an appropriately malleable definition of the genre as follows:

Working-class fiction is writing by working-class writers; proletarian fiction, however, can be considered the work of class-conscious members

of that social stratum with a particular class-specific political program. Socialist fiction too displays a political commitment, this time as a product of writers who may well be other than working class. Such crude distinctions do not make working-class fiction apolitical, but suggest its political aims are not simply a reflection of class destiny or consciousness. To theorise such writing requires an approach that goes beyond reflectionist theories of class content, and also avoids a heavy reliance on suspect models of authorial intentionality. (3)

It will be argued here that the pitfalls which Hitchcock identifies in a class-based (socio-cultural) approach to analysis are all circumvented by a principled stylistics-based approach. We avoid 'reflectionist theories of class content' by focussing rigorously on linguistic patterning, narrative method and narratological classification, using evidence from the former in the service of the latter. Furthermore, we avoid 'reliance on ... models of authorial intentionality' by focussing on the text, its language varieties and how its stylistic features are foregrounded against literary norms. Thus, this paper aims to identify and deconstruct the 'political aims' of Sillitoe's fiction in a manner which acknowledges their working-class context, but finds the characteristic imprint of this context in the narrative discourse itself. It is hoped that the results of this analysis will answer Hitchcock's implicit challenge, and provide a workable universal model with which to anatomise fiction of a similar type.

The first section of this paper will invoke the work of Mikhail Bakhtin – with some reference to his use of the term *carnavalesque* (Bakhtin 1984a: 1-58) – to provide an ideological context for the texts' narrative method. Secondly, it will analyse excerpts from the short story collection *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, primarily as a comparative exercise in relation to the novel. Thirdly, longer textual extracts from *Saturday Night*, *Sunday Morning* will be analysed in terms of discourse presentation, focussing on their use of 1950s Nottinghamshire demotic in relation to Standard English at the time. Finally, these stylistic observations will be discussed in the light of Bakhtin's conceptions of the carnivalesque in an attempt to show how Sillitoe's 'working-class' narrative method constitutes a politicised rebuttal of the notion that a standard written English is the 'proper' form for literary discourse – whilst stopping somewhat short of the logical endpoint of that journey. The various extracts have been selected on the basis that they are characteristic of the wider narrative method of the story/novel in question (and of Sillitoe's work in general), and hence serve as paradigms from which wider conclusions about Sillitoe's technique can be drawn.

## 2. Bakhtin's Carnival and Spivak's Subaltern

Sillitoe's work, especially the novel *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*, is replete with a certain dynamism and spirit – a will to rebellion and revolt – which accords in striking ways with Bakhtin's (1984a) conception of the *carnavalesque* as articulated in his work on Rabelais and on (as he envisaged it) the gallimaufry-like discursual patterning of the novel as genre. The text's portrayal of the protagonist Arthur Seaton also brings to

mind Gayatri Spivak's (1988: 271-313) concept of the *subaltern*, the oppressed, marginalised and (crucially) *silenced* figure of postcolonial literary criticism, denied a right to language. Thus, in accordance with similar insights made within postcolonial studies (e.g. Perera 2014), Sillitoe's narrative discourse can be viewed as positioning itself in opposition to the 'centre of power' which, indeed, many incarnations of dialect in literature seem to write against (either covertly or overtly): the southeast of England, and the so-called Standard English approximately associated with it.

Bakhtin's use of the term carnivalesque is, characteristically, complex and wide-ranging, and has many manifestations. However, for the purposes of this paper its most appropriate explorations are to be found in *Rabelais and His World* (1984a), and subsequently in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984b). In both these works, Bakhtin emphasises the tradition of popular, folk humour in the grotesque aspects of the writings of Rabelais which he traces to a 'folk spirit', a dissident, anti-authoritarian and subversive strand of medieval and Renaissance culture which found its expression in events like May Day celebrations, modern carnival, Bacchanalian excess and working-class riots.

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed.' (Bakhtin 1984a: 10)

Bakhtin sees the authentic roots of narrative polyphony, or multivoicedness,<sup>2</sup> in this carnival folk spirit, which refuses and runs contrary to the monological discourse of authority immanent within standardised languages of the 'centre of power', be that authority the Church, the Law, or, in Bakhtin's case, the excesses of Stalinist political oppression. Against this official language of the centre arises a Babel-like cacophony of voices and discourses which compete with and feed from each other in a complex and ever-evolving discursal system. Bakhtin suggests that discourses of authority and suppression are defeated, or, at the very least, challenged by the spirit of the carnival, connected as it is to the erotic, the chaotic, the disordered, the grotesque, the anarchic, and the inherently untameable. In Saussurean terms, carnival is both a signifier and a signified. It can be the object of representation (in Sillitoe's work, the sodden night in the pub, the illicit sex, the fighting), but also, crucially, the *means* of representation – for our purposes, the text and its narrative method: for Sillitoe, the demotic – prohibited – cadences of vernacular Nottingham English ranged against its standard, southern, dialogic adversary.

The link between these two aspects of carnival – the inherently-rebellious aspects of popular culture and the conventions of style and narrative technique – could be defined as follows: so-called classical realism and its modes of representation came to be associated with what Vice refers to as the 'specular' (1997: 182) or transparent, aspiring to a form of objectivity and narratorial covertness, and, by inference, with discourses of authority: the hegemony of the standard English, third-person, past tense narrative voice

which intones ‘THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED. THIS IS HOW IT WAS.’ We see through the windowpane of the heterodiegetic narrative voice, straight into the fictional world which lies beyond. Simpson (1993) and Fowler (1986) characterise the apotheosis of this kind of narrative mediation as *external type C*, ‘perceived of intuitively as objective, neutral and impersonal’. (Simpson 1993: 41).<sup>3</sup>

The carnival, in its infiltration of both the object and the mode of representation, attempts to show this assumption about how narrative fiction works to be false. It infects the pseudo-specular, standard English narrative discourse with the demotic vernacular of both its objects and its subjects or constituency: characters and readers. The transparent window of classical realism is shown to be anything but; it is distorted, or even shattered, by the irrepressible carnival spirit of the represented subaltern, embodied by its demotic voice. Much of Sillitoe’s writing embodies this tendency, then, and through its deployment of the demotic functions as a direct challenge to conventional assumptions about the nature of literary language and how it mediates the world. As will be seen, close stylistic analysis can expose these assumptions for what they are: misplaced.

## 2. The Forced Isolation of the Long Distance Runner

The principal reason for including analysis of stories from Sillitoe’s collection *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is to act as a point of comparison with the novel to be discussed subsequently. Indeed, to begin with the ‘title story’, there is nothing particularly deviant about its narrative method, which makes use of a homodiegetic narrator:

So there I am, standing in the doorway in shimmy and shorts, not even a dry crust in my guts, looking out at frosty flowers on the ground. I suppose you think this is enough to make me cry? Not likely. Just because I feel like the first bloke in the world wouldn’t make me bawl. It makes me feel fifty times better than when I’m cooped up in that dormitory with three hundred others. No, it’s sometimes when I stand there feeling like the last man in the world that I don’t feel so good. I feel like the last man in the world because I think that all those three hundred sleepers behind me are dead. They sleep so well that I think that every scruffy head’s kicked the bucket in the night and I’m the only one left, and when I look out into the bushes and frozen ponds I have the feeling that it’s going to get colder and colder until everything I can see, meaning my red arms as well, is going to be covered with a thousand miles of ice, all the earth, right up to the sky and over every bit of land and sea. So I try to kick this feeling out and act like I’m the first man on earth. And that makes me feel good, so as soon as I’m steamed up enough to get this feeling in me, I take a flying leap out of the doorway, and off I trot. (Sillitoe 1958: 9)

The oral register of this narrative voice should be obvious immediately. The first sentence begins ‘So there I am’, mimicking common features of oral storytelling (Fludernik 2013),

and it is directed at a presumed narratee (in this case, the implied reader),<sup>4</sup> signalled through the deictic second-person pronoun ‘you’. Note also the use of the present simple tense commonly signifying oral rather than written narration, and, as Stanzel terms it (1986: 141), the presence of a teller- rather than a reflector-character. The distinction is significant in its emphasis on the idea of *telling*, of narration as an activity rooted in oral discourse, and thus, in the demotic. This is born out by the opening word ‘so’, which is also characteristic of oral storytelling (González 2004: 151-162).

The extract is also replete with modality, and it will be useful to use Simpson’s (1993: 75) narrative modal grammar to discuss this. In Simpson’s terms, the narrative type is A Negative (A-ve) (59), ‘a predominantly first-person mode of narration from the point of view of a participating character’, dominated by epistemic modality (‘I suppose’, ‘I think’, ‘I have the feeling’) and perception adverbs (‘I feel’, ‘I feel like’). Comparative structures based on modality are also characteristic of A-ve: ‘I try ... to act like I’m the first man on earth’. A-ve narratives relay the sorts of uncertainty, insecurity and self-questioning that often occur at key stages in the progression of homodiegetic narration; they could signal the character-narrator reaching an epiphany, for example. Further, the positioning of epistemic and modal markers is a key method of representing the cognitive processing involved in understanding that sentence; i.e. as the markers are *pre-posed* (positioned before the proposition), any events subsequently described are brought firmly within the scope of the modal operator. Uncertainty and speculation are foregrounded throughout.

There are also many examples of demotic lexis – *shimmy* (from *chemise*), *bloke* and *bawl* – along with common oral idioms: *not likely*, *kicked the bucket*, *cooped up*, *I don’t feel so good* and *steamed up*. In terms of structure: note also the use of ‘no’ for cohesion and emphasis, and the torrential series of clauses separated by commas, graphologically and grammatically deviant in an attempt to simulate the narrator’s flow of thought. Bakhtin terms this kind of simulation *skaz*, a term discussed in detail by Ėjxenbaum 1975, Vinogradov 1980 and Schmid 2005: 56–76. *Skaz* is a form of narration taking the characteristics of oral speech. Thus, it embraces demotic and dialectical features as a matter of course.

...in most cases *skaz* is introduced precisely for the sake of *someone else’s voice*, a voice socially distinct, carrying with it precisely those points of view and evaluations necessary to the author’ (Bakhtin 1984b: 191)

Crucially, then, *skaz* is a device employed by the author for the sake of the voice of someone else – a character – and the voice is ‘socially distinct’, i.e. it is an attempt to occupy and inhabit an alternative point of view. It is type A-ve, but influenced by the character’s distinctive idiolect. Put simply, Sillitoe adopts the voice and perspective of his narrator.

However, note also that there are figurative moments in the discourse too, which seem poetic in intent: the alliterative phrase ‘frosty flowers’, along with the metaphor source of the ice a thousand miles high covering the land. Fludernik (2013) sees this tendency toward the figurative as a potential mimetic defect of *skaz*:<sup>5</sup>



[Skaz] at times undermines the mimetic quality of the represented discourse by having a naïve peasant narrator resort to inappropriately elevated diction, e.g. the register of the legal or administrative elite. It must be noted that the evocation of orality in literary texts is just that: an evocation or stylization produced by highlighting the most striking features of oral language. What counts for narrative purposes is not a faithful copy of the ‘original’ utterance in all its linguistic detail, but the effect of deviation from the norm through quaintness, informality, intimacy, lack of education, cultural difference, class ascription. The simplifications and exaggerations of the linguistic features of orality and/or register therefore serve the purpose of facilitating identification, stereotyping, “local color,” or *effet de réel*.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, while there are certainly demotic features in this narrative voice, we also find more conventionally writerly registers. (This ‘defect’ will be returned to in the second half of this paper). However, the direct discourse of the short story, mediated in turn by the homodiegetic voice, is more obviously demotic; at times, indeed, it attempts to represent the sound of a non-standard register through deviant orthography. However, ‘d’you’ and ‘P’raps’ seem more representative of standard elided spoken speech, whilst ‘Ain’t’ is certainly dialectical.

‘How d’you know, you loony sod?’ (24)

‘Ain’t it off Alfreton Road?’ (28)

‘P’raps not, but I was *looking* at it...’ (29)

This orthographic deviation appears only in direct discourse, then, and not as part of the homodiegetic narrative voice. This separation is significant, and will also be returned to in the second half of this paper.

A second story from the same collection, ‘Saturday Afternoon’, exhibits exactly the same narrative features (A-ve):

Well, that’s where the rest of us get our black looks from. It stands to reason we’d have them with a dad who carries on like that, don’t it? Black looks run in the family. Some families have them and some don’t. Our family has them right enough, and that’s certain, so when we’re fed-up we’re really fed-up. Nobody knows why we get as fed-up as we do or why it gives us those black looks when we are. Some people get fed-up and don’t look bad at all: they seem happy in a funny sort of way, as if they’ve just been set free from clink after being in there for something they didn’t do, or come out the pictures after sitting plugged for eight hours at a bad film, or just missed a bus they ran half a mile for and seen it was the

wrong one just after they'd stopped running - but in our family it's murder for the others if one of us is fed-up. I've asked myself lots of times what it is, but I can never get any sort of answer even if I sit and think for hours, which I must admit I don't do, though it looks good when I say I do. But I sit and think for long enough, until mam says to me, at seeing me scrunched up over the fire like dad: 'What are you' looking so black for?' So I've just got to stop thinking about it in case I get really black and fed-up and go the same way as dad, tipping up a tableful of pots and all.

Mostly I suppose there's nothing to look black for: though it's nobody's fault and you can't blame anyone for looking black because I'm sure it's summat in the blood. But on this Saturday afternoon I was looking so black that when dad came in from the bookie's he said to me: 'What's up wi' yo'?' (1958: 105)

Epistemic modality is foregrounded once again ('they seem happy', 'I suppose', 'I'm sure'), plus comparative structures: 'as if they've just been set free'. The register is also oral, signalled by the demotic question tag 'don't it?', the use of slang terms such as 'clink' and the dialectical 'summat'. Note also the incantatory effect of the repetition of 'black', 'black looks' and 'fed-up'. Finally, orthographic simulation of the sound of dialect speech is again confined to direct discourse: "'What's up wi' yo'?'".

In summary: there is nothing especially experimental about Sillitoe's narrative technique in this early collection of stories. The narrator is distinct from the author, and tells his story to some extent in his own voice, aside from the rhetorical flourishes referred to by Fludernik above. As a *skaz* narrative, this voice makes use of the cadences of spoken English in its narrative voice and in the direct discourse of characters. In Bakhtin's terms, it exhibits carnivalesque features in its method to the extent that it refuses Standard English, the voice of English Literature, but it is by no means the first piece of narrative fiction to do so. Indeed, one need only glance through a few pages of Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800/2008) to see a nineteenth-century example of the same technique. In Sillitoe's later novels, however, the narrative methodology becomes more sophisticated, nuanced and experimental.

### 3. Saturday Night, Sunday Morning

In this his most famous novel, Sillitoe draws on his experience as a worker at the Raleigh factory in Nottingham to craft a realistic representation of working-class life in the English Midlands during the 1950s. In comparison to extracts from the short stories discussed in section 2, the narration this time is heterodiegetic, and therefore cannot be treated as *skaz*. This is significant, because it indicates that ownership of the narrative voice has passed from a character to a narrator. In Fowler, Simpson and Uspensky's (1973) terms, it is inclined predominantly towards internal type B (Simpson 1993: 40): 'an "omniscient" narrator who claims knowledge of what is going on in characters' minds'. This indicates that the narrative discourse of this novel is more authorial, inclined

away from the mimetic aspirations of *skaz* towards a diegetic function. However, as will be seen, the effect of Sillitoe's technique in this text is more nuanced and complex than that, and often combines type B with long swathes of direct thought presentation.

Given its subject matter, the register of the narrative discourse is appropriately concise; its economy and terseness is foregrounded, yet acutely descriptive:

He stuffed a packet of sandwiches and flask of tea into his pocket, and waited while his father struggled into a jacket. Once out of doors they were more aware of the factory rumbling a hundred yards away over the high wall. Generators whined all night, and during the day giant milling-machines working away on cranks and pedals in the turnery gave to the terrace a sensation of living within breathing distance of some monstrous being that suffered from a disease of the stomach. Disinfectant-suds, grease, and newly-cut steel permeated the air over the suburb of four-roomed houses built around the factory, streets and terraces hanging on to its belly and flanks like calves sucking the udders of some great mother. (Sillitoe 1964: 20)

The register here is more inclined towards Standard English, but also more lexically complex than in the excerpts from the short stories (e.g. 'generators', 'turnery', 'sensation', 'disease', 'monstrous being', 'permeated'). The semantic field of the excerpt is clear: it is replete with the language of industry, machinery and manufacturing ('generators', 'milling machines', 'cranks', 'pedals'). This is an industrialised world. It also includes more figurative features. Note, for example, the extended metaphor that takes as its source a giant but ailing monster (with 'factory' as target, 'monster' as source), and the dependency of the town upon it. The fact that this metaphor is significantly extended makes it, arguably, more symptomatic of writerly discourse than the orally-inclined demotic. All in all, then, this heterodiegetic type B narrative voice stands in sharp contrast to the *skaz* of the short story excerpts. It is closer to Standard English, and has a more explicitly written register through its use of extended metaphor and a complex semantic field as well as its explicitly descriptive function. It is conventionally authorial and diegetic. Following Short's (2007) updated taxonomy for discourse presentation, this section can safely be labelled as Narration (N); no character discourse is being presented, only that of the heterodiegetic narrator.

However, as the novel progresses, Sillitoe's narrative technique makes use of foregrounded methods of discourse presentation. These are introduced, it will be argued, in order to address an interesting and significant issue that was hinted at in the discussion of the two stories 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' and 'On Saturday Afternoon', and characterised by Fludernik as 'inappropriately elevated diction' (2013). To attempt to summarise it: the link between a person's language, or idiolect, and 'sensitivity' is often a misleading one. A character's sensitivity can be masked, or even belied, by that idiolect. To state the obvious for a moment: a character's habitual mode of oral expression may not necessarily be an indicator of the depth or complexity of their underlying personality. Sillitoe's narrative method attempts to take account of this fact.

Given, then, that the level of a character's articulacy, his or her 'way with words', need not be (*should* not be) a limiting factor in the writer's representation of that character, an important question needs to be asked: how can the writer most authentically represent a character while making use of that character's own demotic idiolect, or dialect? How can the writer make space for the character to speak *in their own words*, as it were, without being seen to intervene overtly, for example via heterodiegetic type B narration (in Short's terms, N), through direct discourse, or even through homodiegetic type A skaz, to 'speak' on the character's behalf?

Sillitoe's response to this challenge is to make substantial use of Direct Thought (DT). The method is cumulative, however; it builds in frequency gradually throughout the text, and has two incarnations: one direct, one less so. The following example from the novel will serve to illustrate this point:

It was Benefit Night for the White Horse Club, and the pub had burst its contribution box and spread a riot through its rooms and between its four walls. Floors shook and windows rattled, and leaves of aspidistras wilted in the fumes of beer and smoke. Notts County had beaten the visiting team, and the members of the White Horse supporters club were quartered upstairs to receive a flow of victory. (5)

This is standard N (Short 2007: 226), aspiring to objective representation of a scene. In Simpson's (1993: 64) terms, it is B(N)+ve: the narrator is in narratorial (N) rather than reflector mode, events are narrated from outside the consciousness of any of the characters and spatial deixis is used ('between its four walls', 'were quartered upstairs') to create a bird's-eye view or floating viewpoint. Like the first excerpt, the one includes metaphor; the Notts County supporters become soldiers, *quartered* upstairs awaiting the *flow of victory*. It should be pointed out, though, that SUPPORTERS ARE SOLDIERS is a frequent conceptual metaphorical archetype in popular sporting culture.<sup>7</sup> The style soon begins to alter, though:

For it was Saturday night, the best and bingiest glad-time of the week, one of the fifty-two holidays in the slow-turning Big Wheel of the year, a violent preamble to a prostrate Sabbath. (5)

Here, the novel's title is echoed in strictly figurative, metaphorical terms. The metaphor also invokes carnival, both in the image of the Big Wheel and in the Saturday night Bacchanalia juxtaposed against imminent supine religiosity. This short excerpt also contains alliteration (*best and bingiest*) and expressive neologism, in the last word of the previous example and in *glad-time*. The deontic and boulomaic modality symptomatic of B(N) type narratives (in the form of evaluative adjectives; Van Linden 2012) is also present: 'the best' and 'slow-turning', but now they indicate identification with *character* and a subjective, narratorially-overt perspective. Hence, this discourse corresponds to B(R)+ve: the narrative is mediated through the consciousness of a Reflector (R). This impression becomes stronger subsequently, as will be demonstrated in the next

paragraph. Further, the style of this narrative discourse is more conventionally ‘writerly’ when compared to the earlier short story; it exhibits linguistic features (metaphor, alliteration, overt narration) which are associated with creative use of language. To summarise, the heterodiegetic narrator is here aligned with the perspective of character, but does not ascribe to the mimetic ambitions of *skaz*. However, the tone shifts subtly again subsequently:

You followed the motto of ‘be drunk and be happy’, kept your craft arms around female waists, and felt the beer going beneficially down into the elastic capacity of your guts. [5]

Robboe kept his job because he was clever at giving you the right answers, and took backchat with a wry smile and a good face as long as you did it with a brutal couldn’t-care-less attitude and didn’t seem frightened of him. [33]

These are instances of the first incarnation: more direct. While not taking on explicitly the demotic discourse of the character, this passage, in its use of the deictic *you*, contains a Bakhtinian ‘sideways glance’ (Bakhtin 1981: 61) in the direction of character. This use of the second person pronoun is very different in effect to the ‘you’ of ‘The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner’; in that text, the ‘you’ is the narratee, or implied reader. Here, it is as if, rather than hovering above the scene in the manner of an all-seeing, omniscient god, the narrator is perched on the shoulder of his character. Note, for example, the use of ‘female waists’ (this is a male perspective). The voice comes from the protagonist Arthur Seaton himself (is B(R)+ve), but also, crucially, from *men like him*. The use of ‘you’ is an acceptable and common usage in the demotic, a replacement for the second-person ‘one’, associated with high status speech. Here, however, it corresponds in part specifically to Seaton’s inner thoughts, but at the same time, and more intriguingly, embraces a specific readership: the working-class constituency of which Seaton is a part, and for which Sillitoe wanted to forge a representational literary voice. In the second example, Robboe comes across as an archetypal character, the kind of person that members of Sillitoe’s target constituency would all know. The implication is clear: ‘We all know a Robboe, don’t we?’. Again, the reader is explicitly included in the processes of world-building. The narrator seems to be saying: ‘This is your world, novelised. Come on in.’

The device is both an explicit invitation into the story-world, then, and an appeal to the reader for empathetic involvement: in the terms of cognitive poetics and deictic shift theory (Duchan, Bruder and Hewitt 1995), the reader will perceive a deictic shift signalling/creating a world-switch from the text-world presenting Seaton’s consciousness to the actual-world of the reader and his or her community. In Stockwell’s terms (2002: 47), as a result of the deictic shift the reader moves from being a real reader to perceiving themselves in a textual role as implied reader or narratee: a ‘push’ into a lower deictic field. The narrative method, at one and the same time, reaches out to a particular constituency and attempts to universalise the everyday experiences of that constituency. In this process of universalization, of inviting (or insisting upon) empathy, it is possible

to find a further appeal: to accept Seaton, and others like him, as they are, warts and all. Seaton's experience of life has a wider resonance and significance which has been too often ignored in literature. Seaton's consciousness is the principal locus of focalisation, or *origo*, throughout the novel, but at times it shifts to a kind of collective class/community consciousness; thus, this method might be characterised as a hybrid of the homodiegetic perspective defined by Simpson as A-ve (signalled by modality and demotic language) with the third- and second-person, heterodiegetic narrative discourse features (past tenses, deictic displacement, coherence and so on) symptomatic of B-type narratives - a blending of the perspectives of character, narrator and reader. Indeed, Fludernik (1996: 226) characterises the hybridity of the method as follows:

...Second-person fiction destroys the easy assumption of the traditional dichotomous structures which the standard narratological models have proposed, especially the distinction between homo- and heterodiegetic narration (Genette) or that of the identity or non-identity of the realm of existence between narrator and characters (Stanzel).

To summarise thus far: the narrator attempts to align himself with character discourse by representing Seaton's inner thoughts, or consciousness, and then aligning these further with the experience of a wider community. The first method of doing so is the use of a deictic 'you' as discussed above, functioning simultaneously as a representation of Seaton's consciousness in an oral register as he might choose to articulate it, as a dialogic sideways glance at the reader, and, perhaps most interestingly, as an appeal to shared experience, to a target constituency. The second method (the less direct approach) is more redolent of DT, using a first-person A+ve voice, sometimes in its free form, at other times more mediated by the narrator using *verba dicendi*. Crucially, though, this DT remains rooted in Standard English; there is no attempt to write the Nottingham dialect, despite the orientation of the DT towards an oral register or *skaz*. Accordingly, then, there is no orthographic deviation – no rendering of demotic lexis phonetically in the manner of some of the DS from the short stories. Instead, evidence can be found of an attempt to capture the cadences of oral speech while sticking, for the most part, to standard orthographic norms:

Who would believe anyway that I was carrying on with his missis? One day he'll know, I suppose, but don't be too cocky, you cocky bastard. If you're too cocky your luck changes, so be careful. The worst of it is that I like Jack. Jack is a good bloke, one of the best. It's a pity it's such a cruel world. (29)

To contextualise this extract: it is surrounded on both sides by Direct Speech (DS) presented with inverted commas. There is no narrator's interjection (N) to signal that we are moving into DT (e.g. 'Seaton thought:'). The discourse simply shifts from N to DT, with no signposting. The rhythms of this DT are clearly of the demotic, of oral speech ('Jack is a good bloke, one of the best'), but the only concession to the *sound* of this speech is the spelling of 'missis'. There are slang/dialect terms such as 'cocky' and 'bloke', plus the usual second-person 'you' as a substitute for 'one', but the discourse remains within the realms of Standard English in terms of orthography. However, this is

presentation of thought, unequivocally, and the source of the discourse is Seaton's consciousness, and not the narrator or implied author.

Indeed, at times the use of DT in this novel approaches the extremely free-flowing, wide-ranging and less mediated discourse of, say, Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* (1924), although, unlike the approach of Joyce in large sections of that novel, this example includes a section of N: 'Arthur told himself as he set his lathe going'.

I'm just too lucky for this world, Arthur told himself as he set his lathe going, too lucky by half, so I'd better enjoy it while I can. I don't suppose Jack's told Brenda yet about going on nights, but I'll bet she'll die laughing at the good news when he does. I might not see her at weekends, but I'll get there every night, which is even better. Turn to chamfer, then to drill, then blade-chamfer. Done. Take out and fix in a new piece, checking now and again for size because I'd hate to do a thousand and get them slung back at me by the viewers. Forty-five bob don't grow on trees. (30)

With its description of what Seaton is doing as he thinks and ruminates whilst working away on his lathe, this excerpt is reminiscent of Bloom's pottering about the kitchen making breakfast at the opening of the chapter in *Ulysses* referred to as 'Calypso' (chapter 4), and is moving towards a form of stream-of-consciousness which combines mimesis and diegesis, 'showing' and 'telling'. At the end of this long passage, Seaton leaves work and there is a deictic shift, appropriately, and an accompanying shift in focalisation, to the universalising second-person:

The minute you stepped out of the factory gates you thought no more about your work. (31)

There *are* instances of phonetically-represented demotic speech in the novel, but they remain imprisoned inside what Joyce famously for this very reason called 'perverted commas' (Gilbert and Ellmann 1966: 99), as direct speech (DS):

"He's on'y twenty-one and 'e can tek it in like a fish. I don't know where 'e puts it all. It just goes in an in and you wonder when 'is guts are goin' ter go bust all over the room, but 'e duzn't even get fatter!" (6)

"I said I was as good as anybody else in the world, din't I?" Arthur demanded. "And I mean it. Do you think if I won the football pools I'd gi' yo' a penny on it? Or gi' anybody else owt? Not likely. I'd keep it all mysen, except for seeing my family right. I'd buy 'em a house and set 'em up for life, but anybody else could whistle for it. I've 'eard that blokes as win football pools get thousands o' beggin' letters, but yer know what I'd

do if I got 'em? I'll tell yer what I'd do: I'd mek a bonfire on 'em. ...”  
(28)

This method of discourse presentation at no point strays into the heterodiegetic voice (N), however, unlike the methodologies of some late 20<sup>th</sup>-century writers such as James Kelman and Alan Warner (Scott 2009). This restriction, bearing out Joyce's objection to the orthographical segregation of DS from N, has important ideological as well as methodological implications which relate to antiauthoritarianism, subversion and 'the right to write' in a particular voice.

## 4. Conclusions

Sillitoe's is a novelistic discourse which refuses to heed the norms of classic realism, identified in very general terms with the effect of external type C narration (Simpson 1993 and Uspensky 1973). This paper has identified the various stylistic features which achieve this goal, and also supplied some speculations as to the ideologies which underpin the method with reference to Bakhtin's concept of the carnival. At all times, there is an enlivening dialogic tension between the discourse of the two agencies of character and narrator, as can be seen in the examples discussed. This dialogism has two aspects. On one hand, it has an inherent and salient aesthetic quality and function. The 'realism' of the text, its process of mimesis, is effective precisely *because* its narrative register is rooted so firmly in the milieu which it seeks to represent. Its discourse is often (although, as has been shown, not always) 'earthed' by the 1950s Nottingham demotic of its base style, and as such is specifically tied to its subject matter. This process is abetted by the continual deictic shifts brought about by the use of the second-person 'you', which combines with first-person DT to give far greater scope for expression both to the sensibilities of the protagonist, and, further, to his wider community.

On the other hand, the method has an ideological function – what Bakhtin terms an 'internal polemic' (1984b). It asserts the right of not only the lives and doings of working class people in the regions of England (a carnivalesque *object* of representation) but also their *voices* (a carnivalesque *mode* of representation) to be a 'proper' subject of literature, without censure in either case: not censure of their actions, nor censure of their speech. Their lives and their voices constitute the very stuff of fiction, full of drama, comedy, tragedy, pathos. The novel need not be the inherently bourgeois form that Eagleton (2004) accuses it of being, neither in style nor in content.

A contrary interpretation should also be advanced, though. It could also be argued, that Sillitoe's unwillingness to allow orthographic deviation, imprisoned in DS, to leech into the narration (N) is a form of artistic cowardice. By submitting to the reign of the 'perverted' comma, Sillitoe acquiesces to one of the dominant norms of English literature: that Standard English is the only proper medium for literary narrative. Thus, he steps back from the line that other writers who followed him have been more than willing to cross (Scott 2009).



As Bakhtin's work and the above observations make clear, then, discourse is a highly social phenomenon, and especially so when placed in the socialised context of a particular class. When an utterance is taken out of its context, its phonetic aspects (its 'soundscape') are lost, along with significant facets of its capacity to communicate, to *mean*. Obviously enough, the oral manifestations of language are intrinsic to its utility. When this language enters the novel, as text, as written discourse, it is in the dialogic interaction between this particular discourse and its predecessors that meaning takes shape. This happens at the level of word, of clause, of sentence, of text and then of discourse. Says Bakhtin:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a solidly specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (1981: 276)

To pigeonhole Sillitoe's work as 'working-class fiction' is to commit a fundamental misprision because it isolates the text unnecessarily from its broader sociological context. It is also an often-unwitting attempt to enervate, or, in Bakhtin's terms, to *monologise*, that which is by its very nature dialogic. It categorises the better to isolate, removing the work from the essential context (other discourse, or *heteroglossia*) from which it takes its polemical effect.

The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects ... is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. ... These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its 'dialogisation' – this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel. (1981: 262-3)

Thus: it is the 'play' between the demotic and the other languages (heteroglossia) of the novel which constitute the text's power, not a single totality of discourse. These 'other languages' come from both within (e.g. the authorial voice immanent in that of the heterodiegetic narrator) and without (e.g. the discourse of the centre of power, the language of literature, Standard English). If this heteroglossic context is ignored, then the novel loses its creative energy, and, in some senses, its *raison d'être*.

So, rather than 'working class' (as some literary critics continue to dub this work), I would offer the term *carnavalesque*. It gives a more nuanced account of the interaction between these texts' language, content and context. I would also hope that this term and the stylistic analysis associated with it might serve as a replicable and principled model with which to approach other texts written in similar social contexts in order to measure the extent to which narrative methodologies seek to take account of their linguistic bases, avoiding the 'reflectionist' critical approaches discussed in the introduction. It would be

interesting to measure contemporary writing of this type by the same method, for example, the work of Ross Raisin and Benjamin Myers. Like Sillitoe's text, this writing embodies the spirit of the carnival, both in terms of subject matter and style. It is intrinsically seditious and subversive, and experiments with narrative techniques which later writers such as James Kelman (1994), Anne Donovan (2001), Irvine Welsh (1994) and and Jeremy Page (2008) were to take further. As Hitchcock writes (1989: 2), it is the existence of these voices in the context of a literary work 'that makes the governors of this world wince'. To leave the last word to Eagleton (2004: 7):

The novel was born at the same time as modern science, and shares its sober, secular, hard-headed, investigative spirit, along with its suspicion of classical authority. But this means that, lacking authority outside itself, it must find it in itself. Having shed all traditional sources of authority, it must become self-authorizing. Authority now means not conforming yourself to an origin, but becoming the origin yourself.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Johnson (1987) and, particularly, Hitchcock (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin sees polyphony as the primary and essential condition for the novel as genre, in opposition to the perceived *monologism* of, say, lyric poetry. See Vice 1997, especially chapter 3.

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that *all* so-called classic realist writing accords in linguistic terms to this model (type C), i.e. it is devoid of markers of modality. Rather, I wish to imply that we as readers will often *assume* that this is how narrative fiction works, and react to it accordingly. We accede willingly to authorial authority.

<sup>4</sup> See Booth 1983: 71-6 for detailed discussion of this term, which is used to define the agency of the author as viewed from the perspective of the reader (and as such, distinct from that of the 'real' author).

<sup>5</sup> See also my own *The Demotic Voice in Contemporary British Fiction* (Scott 2009) for detailed analysis of this issue, which I term 'The Morvern Paradox' after the eponymous protagonist of Alan Warner's novel *Morvern Callar* (1996).

<sup>6</sup> The phrase 'peasant narrator' seems unfortunate in this context; however, Fludernik is writing predominantly about a stylistic device of 19<sup>th</sup>/early-20<sup>th</sup> century Russian novels. Nevertheless, her observations on the effect of *skaz* hold true for 20<sup>th</sup>-century English ones.

<sup>7</sup> In the UK teams and supporter in both football and cricket are commonly referred to as 'armies' ('blue and white army', 'barmy army' etc.)

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