

Helter skelter, topsy-turvy and 'loonycolour':
carnavalesque realism in 'Saturday Night and
Sunday Morning.

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HELTER SKELTER, TOPSY-TURVY AND 'LOONYCOLOUR': CARNIVALESQUE REALISM IN 'SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING'

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Abstract

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning has been reductively sidelined as “working class realism” where that term implies a mere reportage of grim reality. Such a view ignores the joyously subversive spirit alive in the novel. This essay argues that the “glorious loonycolour” of Arthur Seaton’s internal world has a transformative effect on external reality. Through Arthur’s consciousness, the pubs and fairgrounds of 1950s working class culture become a transgressive, carnivalesque site of inversion, an energetic, death-defying topsy-turveydom. Sillitoe, then, does violence to realism and allows us, if only temporarily, to see reality in a

different, and radically optimistic, way. At the same time, his version of the carnivalesque is less romanticised than Mikhail Bakhtin's, since he is alive to the dangers of containment which lurk at its heart. This awareness climaxes in Arthur's move towards matrimony, an institution which may contain his vitality or provide a new outlet.

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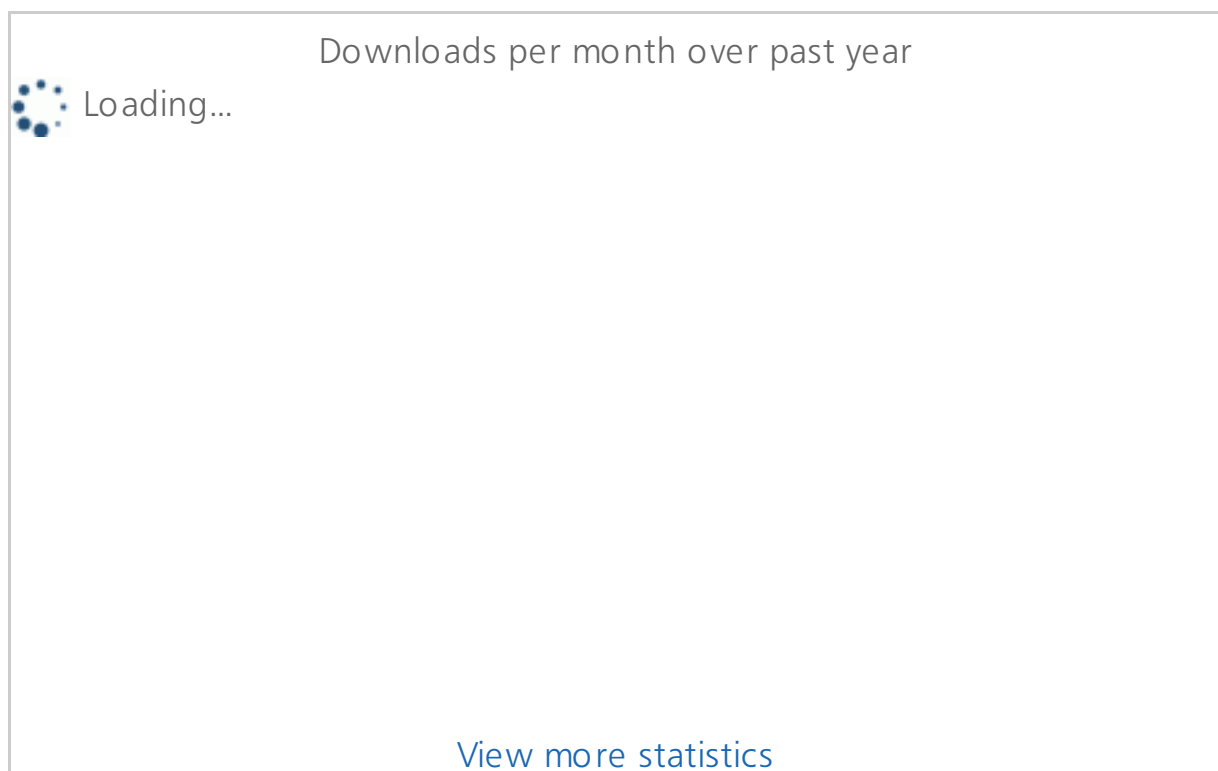
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