ASTONISHING HUMANITY:

AN INTERSECTIONAL STUDY OF THE WORK OF CARSON MCCULLERS

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Literature

School of English, Drama and Creative Studies

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

June 2024

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an in-depth study of Carson McCullers's humanitarian concerns regarding marginalised groups, including African American people, workers, women, and queer individuals. Drawing on the theory of intersectionality, alongside other theories and concepts related to power, space, and identity, it examines the themes of spiritual isolation, identity confusion, existential crisis, and resistance within McCullers's novels published between the 1940s and the 1960s. It argues that multiple axes of oppression work together across interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural domains and shape the experiences of marginalised individuals. Four chapters of this thesis discuss various issues pertaining to identities and power dynamics: class stratification, racial discrimination, and gender troubles in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*; restrictive gender and sexual norms and existential anguish on an army post in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*; children's gender confusion and identity development in a heteropatriarchal society in *The Member of the Wedding*; and intersections of human biology and politics in *Clock Without Hands*. This thesis contributes to the study of McCullers by providing a comprehensive analysis of her sensitivity to the intersectional systems of oppression in mid-twentieth-century America, as well as her insight into the plight of marginalised groups and their diverse forms of resistance.

To all of you

who are battling along in life

and keeping heads above water,

well done!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my dear supervisors, Dr John Fagg and Dr Rona Cran, for their profound expertise, enlightening guidance, and inspiring comments throughout the journey of my doctoral research. I am also very grateful to them for allowing me to write from my home country in my third year and helping me get approvals for submission extensions. Without their support, patience, and encouragement, my thesis could not have reached its final shape.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to Dr Sara Wood and Dr Jimmy Packham who read my first-year progress panel written work and pointed out some important issues that I should address in my later writing. When I was writing other parts of my thesis, I always went back and reviewed the markers' report made by Sara and Jimmy. This helped avoid the same issues in the writings of the following chapters.

I must also acknowledge Dr Renfang Tang from the University of Hull, Dr. Yinghong Shang and Dr Cathy Jiang from the University of Warwick, for their supportive friendship. They not only offered me a listening ear when I felt depressed and lonely but also provided me with some academic support during my PhD study.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues at School of Foreign Languages, Nanjing Tech University, for their encouragement and help with my work at NJTECH. Their selfless help enabled me to dedicate myself to the three years research at the University of Birmingham.

Finally, my special thanks go to my family and relatives, including my mum, Qingyun Jiang, my husband, Li Ma, sister Ping Li, sister Qing Li, sister Lily Chen and my dear son, Rickie Ma, for their unwavering support and unconditional love.

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INTRODUCTION

Carson McCullers, 'one of the greatest postwar writers in America', was a bisexual woman, a white Southerner from the lower middle class, and passionate a civil rights activist.[1] Despite benefiting from the racial privilege as a white individual in the Jim Crow South, McCullers's own social marginalisation, shaped by her class, gender, and sexuality, deepened her recognition of societal differences and understanding of the plight of disadvantaged groups. This, in turn, compelled her to address multiple injustices with sensitivity, fairness, and profound empathy. Richard Wright, a renowned African American writer whose works confronted issues of race from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, highly valued McCullers's first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940). He praised her 'astonishing humanity', a quality that 'enables a white writer, for the first time in Southern fiction, to handle Negro characters with as much ease and justice as those of her own race'.[2] Wright's review highlighted McCullers's exceptional capacity for empathy and recognition of difference, especially in the context of her era, when many writers — particularly white writers — often failed to represent the marginalised voices of African American people. Building on this insight, my study suggests that McCullers's profound sense of humanity is not only evident in her portrayal of African American characters, as emphasized by Wright, but also in her depiction of the other oppressed groups, who are also trapped in their politically, socially, and culturally constructed identities of disadvantage. In addition, Sarah Schulman, an American writer and cultural activist, from a biographical lens, argues that McCullers's 'ease and justice' in dealing with her characters do not simply 'come from empathy' but rather from her own identity-related turmoil, especially as regards gender —

[1] Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter: A biography of Carson McCullers* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1977), p. 294.
[2] Richard Wright, 'Review: *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*', *New Republic*, 103. 6 (1940), p. 195.

'having an identity that history had not yet discovered.'[3] Evidently, McCullers's experience of being excluded as a social misfit nurtured her insight into difference and heightened her sensitivity to multiple forms of oppression. As McCullers claimed in her 1959 essay 'The Flowering Dream: Notes on Writing', 'I become the characters I write about. I am so immersed in them that their motives are my own.'[4] McCullers's open identification with her characters implies that her works are not only fictional creations but also processed versions of her personal experiences. In this case, some might argue that McCullers is writing about herself rather than demonstrating empathy for others, which could challenge Wright's praise of her 'astonishing humanity'. In response to this question, this thesis delves into McCullers's profound expression of humanity, illustrating that her portrayal of marginalised voices, while perhaps influenced by her personal experiences, reflects a broader understanding of human suffering and injustice, suggesting that her empathy transcends self-reflection and reaches out to those she depicts. By portraying the struggles of vulnerable characters, McCullers not only resonated with them but exhibited her intellectual and emotional growth in understanding of the intersecting forms of oppression, both historically and within her own era. It is noteworthy that, as a product of her time, McCullers inevitably held some conventional and biased attitude on race, class, gender, and sexuality. However, as will be discussed in the upcoming chapters, these limited views do not diminish her demonstration of human completeness, as her 'astonishing humanity' and profound sensitivity to intersectional identities shine through.

This study focuses on the experiences of marginalised characters in McCullers's four novels, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941), *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), and *Clock Without Hands* (1961), interwoven with discussions of her

[3] Sarah Schulman, 'White Writer', *The New Yorker*, 21 October 2016.
< https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/white-writer> [accessed 11 November 2022]
[4] Carson McCullers, 'The Flowering Dream: Notes on Writing', in *The Mortgaged Heart*, ed. By Margarita G. Smith (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), p. 277. Originally published in *Esquire*, December 1959.

1951 novella *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, her life experience as a misfit, main biographies of McCullers and her letters, short stories, and unpublished autobiography in the historical context between the 1930s and the 1950s. Drawing on the theory of intersectionality, as well as engaging with other theories related to identity studies, this thesis provides a comprehensive study of McCullers's exploration of power dynamics, intersectional identities, and overlapping systems of oppression, as well as her observation of different forms of resistance by the marginalised groups in mid-twentieth-century America. This research underscores McCullers's early awareness of intersecting systems of oppression, making a significant contribution to McCullers studies while tracing the evolution of intersectionality in the 21st century as a theory that has expanded beyond its traditional focus on African American women to include all marginalised groups and identities. In this thesis, the integration of intersectionality theory with other concepts related to identity studies creates a compelling framework for analysis. It not only provides a theoretical foundation for examining other writers through the lens of intersectionality but also encourages a comparative study of Carson McCullers's intersectionality in relation to that of other Southern authors, such as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor.

The first part of my introduction makes a brief review of the existing literature on McCullers, including traditional perspectives and recent scholarship of McCullers studies. The following part mainly explains my reasons for adopting an intersectional approach in this research. It first explores the origins and progress of the theory of intersectionality, McCullers's intersectional viewpoint (her proto-intersectionality), existing critical texts that have been written on intersectionality in McCullers's work, works by other Southern writers analysed from the lens of intersectionality. This part also establishes links between the theory of intersectionality and Foucault's concept of power in the study of identity. Furthermore, it explores McCullers's identity as a misfit and her sensitivity to the intersections of multiple forms of oppression that took shape in the context of the Jim Crow South. The third part calls for attention to McCullers's

observation of various forms of resistance against multiple layers of intersectional oppression. The fourth part explains the framework of the thesis and summarises the main points of each chapter. Finally, the last section highlights the significance of a comprehensive intersectional study of McCullers and the contribution of this project to both the studies of McCullers and the theory of intersectionality.

***

Existing perspectives on reading McCullers can be summarized as follows: Traditional realistic scholars often read McCullers's work through the lenses of autobiography (e.g., *The Lonely Hunter* by Virginia Spencer Carr, 1977), Southern regionalism (e.g., "Carson McCullers and the South" by Delma E. Presley, 1974), the Gothic tradition (e.g., "Revisiting the Southern Grotesque: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Case of Carson McCullers" by Sarah Gleeson-White, 1984), or the social background of the interwar period. Modern critics, on the other hand, focus on McCullers's quest for meaning in a heteropatriarchal society, employing theoretical and analytical approaches such as feminism (e.g., "A Feminist Reading: McCullers's *Heart is a Lonely Hunter*' by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1996), gender criticism (e.g., "Tomboys and Revolting Femininity" by Louise Westling, 1985), Marxist criticism (e.g., "Marxism in Carson McCullers' 'Strangled South' by Cynthia E. Call, 2002), and psychoanalysis literary criticism (e.g., 'Jungian Theory, Its Literary Application, and A Discussion of *The Member of the Wedding*" by Clifton Snider, 1984). In the postmodern era, interdisciplinary approaches informed by poststructuralist thought — drawing from the works of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and others — have emerged, offering fresh insights by combining multiple critical frameworks to reevaluate McCullers's exploration of identity and isolation. For example, Doreen Fowler in 'Carson McCullers's Primal Scenes: *The Ballad of the Sad Café*' applies Jacques Lacan's theory on identity to analyse key scenes in *The Ballad of the Sad Café*.

In 2016, *Carson McCullers in the Twenty-First Century*, a book edited by Alison Graham-Bertolini and Casey Kayser manifests the influence of McCullers's legacy in the twenty-first century. The contributors to this book re-examine McCullers's work and life with diverse critical theories, including feminist autobiography studies, comparative transatlantic readings, queer theory, disability studies, and critical animal theory, among which the theory of disability studies is particularly noteworthy. McCullers experienced illness or disability in her own life and depicted such experiences in her work. In her essay, "An "archaeology of [narrative] silence": Cognitive Segregation and Productive Citizenship in McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* ," Stephanie Rountree, through the lenses of disability studies and new historicism, analyses the marginalisation of Antonapoulos, a cognitively disabled person, illustrating 'how the practice of cognitive segregation to make way for the productivity of normative citizens that informed institutional practices in the 1930s still impedes disability politics in the twenty-first century'.[5] In a similar vein, Alexander Steele, uses disability studies as a lens to study McCullers's life and work. In his 2023 article 'The Curious Case of Carson McCullers: Appropriation, Allyship, and the Problem of Speaking for Others', he concludes that Carson McCullers's 'lived experience as a queer disabled woman became a key lens through which she both identified and put to work in her fiction, including her many portraits of impairment'. [6] In my thesis, though I do not explicitly employ disability studies as an approach to multiple identities, I underline the intersections of illness and queerness in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* in Chapter Two. There, I highlight the bizarre behaviors exhibited by individuals on the peacetime army post. I argue that McCullers's depiction of voyeurism, self-mutilation, kleptomania, adultery, animal abuse, and murder on the base

[5] *Carson McCullers in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Alison Graham-Bertolini and Casey Kayser 1st edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.ix.
[6] Alexander Steele, 'The Curious Case of Carson McCullers: Appropriation, Allyship, and the Problem of Speaking for Others,' *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 42 (2023), (3-4).

mirrors key features of prisons, retirement homes, and psychiatric hospitals, collectively representing a quintessential heterotopia of deviation.

In short, the recent scholarship on Carson McCullers reflects a broader trend in literary studies of her work through contemporary theoretical frameworks, thereby expanding our understanding of their relevance in diverse contexts. In addition to the research perspectives mentioned above, the theory of intersectionality — employed by some scholars and will be adopted in this research — illuminates the complexities of identity and the intersecting systems of oppression in America during the Jim Crow era.

***

The theory of intersectionality is one of the most important approaches to identity studies employed in this thesis. Why do I adopt an intersectional approach in my study of McCullers? Given that identity is the central theme around which all four chapters of this thesis revolve, it is essential to draw on approaches and concepts related to identity studies to provide a comprehensive framework for analysis. In his introduction to *The Handbook of Identity* (2011), Anthony Elliott highlights:

> the 'diversification of conceptual approaches, ranging from psychoanalytical theory and post-structuralism to post-feminism and postmodernism, is equally matched by the incredible diversification of approaches to the lived realities of identity-politics and to that end there are contributions contained within covering racial, ethnic, gendered, consumerist, cosmopolitan and global identities.

Building on existing research on identity studies, this thesis employs various theories and concepts to examine and illuminate the complexities of identity reflected in McCullers's character, such as Freud's study on the ego and the id (in the analysis of Captain Penderton's repressed same-sex desire in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*), French existentialism (in examining adolescent characters' existential crisis), Sara Ahmed's concept of queer phenomenology (in exploring how Private Williams and Captain Penderton's spatial and bodily experiences are perceived and related to within a heteronormative framework in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*),

Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial identity development (in discussing the social factors that influence Frankie Addams's identity development in *The Member of the Wedding*), Foucault's concepts on power and identity (in exploring how different forms of power works together in the shape of individuals' position in the power structures), Judith Butler's concept of gender (in revealing gender troubles for both men and women in McCullers's novels), Charles Cooley's concept of Looking-Glass Self (in presenting how Frankie's self-awareness is affected by her social interactions with others). The adoption of these theories and concepts, along with the application of intersectionality theory in this thesis, offers a more comprehensive understanding of how intersecting social identities shape individuals' experiences and outcomes.

The lens of intersectionality, as a framework for understanding power, identity, and oppression, is a useful and effective tool to investigate the multiple identities of McCullers's marginalised characters. This approach also sheds light on McCullers's intersectional way of thinking and writing — her early sensitivity to intersectionality, evident in how her novels portray the struggle for equality, acceptance, and resistance against intersecting forms of oppression in the Jim Crow South. By applying intersectionality theory, I can conduct a thorough analysis of McCullers's intersectional thinking and writing — her proto-intersectionality. Additionally, my research opens the door to studying other writers through the lens of intersectionality and encourages a comparative exploration of McCullers's intersectionality alongside that of other Southern authors, such as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor.

Before delving into McCullers's intersectional awareness, it is necessary to trace the history and development of intersectional notions. According to American philosopher Kathryn T. Gines, 'the scholarly tradition and knowledge project of intersectionality' can be traced back to the Black feminist movement in the nineteenth century which was led by 'women and men

like Maria W. Stewart and W. E. B. Du Bois.'[7] Between the 1830s and the 1930s, many Black feminists made public speeches and wrote pamphlets and essays to identify racism, classism, and sexism, as the main forces of discrimination against African American women. Landmark texts in this period are Maria W. Stewart's 1832 speech, 'Why Sit Ye Here and Die?'; Sojourner Truth's famous 1851 speech, 'Ain't I a Woman?'; Anna Julia Cooper's 1892 book, *A Voice From the South*; and Du Bois's 1920 essay, 'The Damnation of Women'.[8]

From the 1930s to the 1960s, Black feminists and activists continued to call for attention to multiple forms of oppression faced by African American women, who were ignored or alienated within both the feminist movement and the Civil Rights Movement. For example, Mary Church Terrell in her 1940 book, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, stresses that African American women have 'two … huge obstacles to surmount' — sex and race.[9] Claudia Jones, from a Marxist perspective, analyses the gender issue in the African American community in her 1949 essay, 'An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman.'[10] In 1969, Mary Ann Weathers, a left-wing Black feminist, maintained that African American women's liberation responds to the liberation of all oppressed people.[11] McCullers's novels were written and published between the 1930s and the 1960s. Although there's no direct evidence to show that McCullers was influenced by Black feminists in this period, her creation of marginalised African

[7] Kathryn T. Gines, (now Kathryn Sophia Belle), 'Race Women, Race Men and Early Expressions of Proto-Intersectionality, 1830s-1930s,' in *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach,* ed. by Goswami, O'Donovan, and Yount eds., (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 14.
[8] Maria W. Stewart, 'Why Sit Ye Here and Die?' in *Maria W. Stewart: America's First Black Woman Political Writer*, ed by Marilyn Richardson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 45-49. This address was Stewart's second of her four public lectures. It was given on September 21, 1832, in Franklin Hall in Boston, Massachusetts, the site of regular monthly meetings of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. Sojourner Truth delivered the speech in Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851. There are different versions of Sojourner Truth' s famous 'Ain't I a Woman?' Speech. The popular version: Sojourner Truth, 'Ain't I a Woman' in *New York Independent*, published by Frances Gage, 23 Apr. 1863.
Another version: Sojourner Truth, 'On Women's Rights', in *Anti-Slavery Bugle,* rev. by Marius Robinson, 21 June 1851.
Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1892).
W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Damnation of Women,'(1920) in *Dark water: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).
[9] Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Washington D.C.: Randsdell, Inc., 1940), p. 29.
[10] Claudia Jones, 'An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman' June 1949, *Political Affairs*,53(1974), pp. 28-42.
[11]Mary Ann Weathers, 'An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force', in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought,* ed. by Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 158–62 (p. 158).

American women characters echoes the intersectional perspectives of early Black feminists. As will be discussed in my chapters, Portia Copeland in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Susie in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, Berenice Sadie Brown in *The Member of the Wedding*, and Verily in *Clock Without Hands,* are all portrayed as servants to white families, oppressed not only by white racists but also subjected to discrimination within the African American community. Gines used the term 'proto-intersectionality' to signal methods used by early Black feminists in 'identifying and combating racism and sexism, [which are] not only defined as separate categories impacting identity and oppression but also as systems of oppression that work together and mutually reinforce one another.'[12] This term helps define the earlier, informal, or implicit understandings of how multiple forms of identity and oppression intersected before the term 'intersectionality' was coined and fully theorized. As a white writer, McCullers's depiction of the intersection of racism and sexism in her African American female characters exemplifies the ideas and practices of 'proto-intersectionality' highlighted by Gines.

Going into the 1970s and 1980s, Black feminists and activists, though without specifically applying the term *intersectionality* until 1989, used a predate intersectional lens to understand the relationships between identities and oppression and laid a theoretical foundation for the establishment of intersectionality theory. As Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian organisation active in Boston from 1974 to 1980, claims, 'we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions.'[13] They highlighted, once again, the idea of overlapping systems of discrimination. Employing previous Black feminist scholarship, Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor and pioneering scholar of critical race theory, coined the term 'intersectionality' in her 1989 paper, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,' through which she highlights the interconnected nature of race,

[12] Gines, p. 14.
[13] Library of Congress of United States, Washington, D.C., *The Combahee River Collective Statement* (2015) www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028151/ [accessed 29 September 2022].

class, gender, and other social categories. [14] As Audre Lorde, a member of the Combahee River Collective, argues in *Sister Outsider*, 'There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.[15] Building on Lorde's argument, Crenshaw points out, 'a single-issue framework for discrimination not only marginalises Black women within the very movements that claim them as part of their constituency but it also makes the illusive goal of ending racism and patriarchy even more difficult to attain.' [16] She and other contributors developed the theory of intersectionality into a well-established theoretical framework that articulates how different social categories (race, gender, class, etc.) interlock and create distinct experiences of power and oppression.

It is important to note that early intersectional scholarship concentrated predominantly on African American women's experiences of multiple discriminations, particularly intersections of racism and sexism. This raises the question of whether intersectionality is limited to a theory addressing the identities of African American women specifically, or if it is a broader theory that pertains to marginalised groups in general, initially represented by but not exclusive to African American women, or a theory of identity applicable to all categories of people. As Jennifer Nash, a scholar of gender, sexuality, and feminist studies, argues, 'In its emphasis on black women's experiences of subjectivity and oppression, the intersectional theory has obscured the question of whether all identities are intersectional or whether only multiply marginalised subjects have an intersectional identity.'[17] Patricia Hill Collins, an African American sociologist, responds to these questions by claiming that intersectionality is 'far broader than what most people, including many of its practitioners, imagine it to be' and proposes to develop intersectionality as a critical social theory that 'can address contemporary social problems and the social changes needed to solve

[14] Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140 (1989), 139–67 (p. 152).
[15] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), p. 138.
[16] Crenshaw, p. 152.
[17] Jennifer C. Nash, 'Re-Thinking Intersectionality', *Feminist Review*, 89 (2008), 1-15 (p. 9).

them'.[18] In *Intersectionality*, a recent book jointly written by Collins and Sirma Bilge, the focus expands beyond African American women to encompass a wider range of marginalised identities across diverse social contexts, thereby enriching the study of identity and oppression in the twenty-first century.[19]

Although the term intersectionality was coined decades after McCullers's novels were published, the concept of intersectionality and texts on overlapping systems of discrimination can be used retrospectively to illuminate her sensitivity to intersectional identities or her proto-intersectionality. McCullers's novels, rather than focusing on African American women's suffering under multiple oppressions as those early Black feminists did, exhibit a broader engagement with intersectional identities of marginalised groups. Compared to the well-rounded protagonists in McCullers's novels, such as African American men and white individuals with mixed privileged and unprivileged identities, her African American female characters are often relegated to secondary roles and stereotyped as inherently servile to white families. This limited depiction of African American women can be regarded as a form of literary marginalisation and may evoke a question about McCullers's humanity and justice in handling female African Americans characters. However, from a different perspective, this can be interpreted as a deliberate narrative technique aimed at implicating Black women's disadvantaged status within the Jim Crow society. Additionally, McCullers depicts various queer characters, such as John Singer in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, a Jewish disabled silverware engraver, Captain Penderton in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, a white high-ranking officer, Cousin Lymon *in The Ballad of a Sad Café*, a physically deformed man, and Jester Clane in *Clock Without Hands*, a white teenager from an upper-class family. With nuance and ambiguity, McCullers presents the repressed same-sex passion of these characters and demonstrates her sensitivity to the intersection of gender and

[18] Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social theory (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), p. 2.
[19] Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), p. 71.

sexuality. These examples suggest that McCullers's 'proto-intersectionality' — which extends beyond the early Black feminists' focus to explore a broader range of intersecting identities — aligns with the intersectional approach adopted by contemporary theorists such as Collins.

Most critics address identity and oppression in McCullers's works primarily in a single-issue framework, separately discussing the race, class, gender, and sexuality dimensions of experience. For instance, Panthea Reid Broughton in 'Rejection of the Feminine in Carson McCullers's *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*' (1974) reveals the repression of feminine power in a male-dominated society by noting that the loneliness and isolation of Miss Amelia, who is portrayed by McCullers as 'a dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man', stem from her failure to perform normative femininity.[20] Another literary critic, Nancy B. Rich, in her 1977 essay, 'The "Ironic Parable of Fascism" in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*', discusses separate race, class and sex struggles of different vulnerable groups and attributes these issues to 'the failure of democracy' in 1930s' America. The government is compared to a 'deaf-mute', which denies equal rights and social justice through default.[21] The above-mentioned articles were published in the 1970s when the Combahee River Collective began to raise the idea of interlocking systems of oppression. However, Broughton and Rich did not discuss the intersected injustices experienced by the oppressed people in McCullers's work, treating issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality as mutually exclusive. In her article, Broughton doesn't study the intersections of sexism, classism, and heterosexism in *The Ballad of Sad Café*. Likewise, Rich, when discussing race, class, and gender issues in the 1930s, does not draw attention to the intersectional oppression experienced by Portia, a lower-class African American domestic worker. Instead, her essay, relying on discussing experiences of African American men to reflect oppressions suffered by

[20] Panthea Reid Broughton, 'Rejection of the Feminine in Carson McCullers's *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*.' *Twentieth Century Literature.* 20 (1974), 33-43 (p. 43).
Also see Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe and Other Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), p. 2.
[21] Nancy B. Rich, 'The 'Ironic Parable of Fascism' in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*,' *The Southern Literary Journal*, 9 (1977), 108-23 (p. 109).

the entire race and applying the plight of white women to represent that of all women, typifies the naturalisation of a homogeneous social category criticised by early Black feminists.

Since the 1980s, increased attention has been generated by critics to the nuance and complexity of identity in McCullers's writing. For example, Rachel Adams's 1999 essay on gender and sexuality, 'Mixture of Delicious and Freak': The Queer Fiction of Carson McCullers, recontextualizes two of McCullers's books, *The Member of the Wedding* and *Clock without Hands*, by exploring the significance of two interlocking concepts, the freak and the queer. She elucidates McCullers's portrayal of 'queers' and 'freaks' as opposing normative behaviors and social distinctions, while also highlighting the intersection of gender and sexuality. Noticeably, Constante González Groba is one of the few critics, who have applied the intersectional approach to the studies of McCullers and her contemporary writers. In her 2005 essay, 'Carson McCullers and Lillian Smith: The intersections of gender and race in the Jim Crow South', González Groba argues that both writers show how '"blackness" and "whiteness" can coexist within individuals of both races, so too can femininity and masculinity be found equally within men and women'.[22] In her 2015 article entitled 'So far as I and my people are concerned the South is Fascist now and always has been', González Groba discusses racism in the South and its connection with gender oppression.[23] Another scholar, Chad M. Jewett, the author of the 2012 essay 'Somehow caught: Race and deferred sexuality in McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*', draws attention to the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality, arguing that Frankie's identity is 'defined by the forced racial separation and unwelcome physicality of white southern heterosexual womanhood or the queer gender-indefinability that threatens painful rejection'.[24] Despite González Groba's

[22] Constante González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and Lillian Smith: The intersections of gender and race in the Jim Crow South', *Journal of English Studies*, 5-6 (2005-2008), 119-39 (p. 124).
[23] Constante González Groba, 'So far as I and my people are concerned the South is Fascist now and always has been: Carson McCullers and the racial problem', *Atlantis*, 37 (2015), 63-80 (p. 63).
[24] Chad M. Jewett, 'Somehow caught: Race and deferred sexuality in McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*', *The Southern Literary Journal*, 45. 1 (2012), 95-109 (p. 96).

two essays underscoring intersections of gender and race to demonstrate the plight of African American women, they do not engage with how multiple factors — such as class, sexuality, disability, and age — complicate characters' experiences. Similarly, Jewett stresses the intersection of race and sexuality in his discussion, overlooking other aspects of identity. This can be seen as a limitation, particularly in an era when intersectionality has become a central framework in feminist and critical race theory.

Like González Groba and Jewett, who explored proto-intersectional elements in McCullers's work without explicitly engaging with intersectionality theory, some critics and scholars have adopted an intersectional perspective — though not the full framework of intersectionality — in comparative studies of works by McCullers and other writers. In 2014, Elizabeth A. Steeby published the article, 'Radical Intimacy Under Jim Crow "Fascism", in which she explores the intersection of race, sexuality, and political resistance during the Jim Crow era, focusing on the works and lives of Carson McCullers and Angelo Herndon, an African American labor organizer. Drawing on the methodology of queer of color critique and critical prison studies, Steeby examines 'the production of criminality beyond the familiar race/class axis to account for the role that gender and sexuality play in the maintenance of carceral states of governance and being'. [25] Another scholar, Rebecca Bush in her 2019 article, 'Woman, Southern, Bisexual: Interpreting Ma Rainey and Carson McCullers in Columbus, Georgia', examines the intersections of identity and culture in the lives and works of McCullers and Ma Rainey, the famous blues singer. Given that both McCullers and Bush were from Columbus, Georgia, Bush explores how their Southern roots and bisexual identities shaped their artistic expressions and influenced public perceptions. By examining these figures through the lens of their intersecting identities and their local context, Bush provides a nuanced understanding of how personal and

[25] Elizabeth A. Steeby, 'Radical Intimacy Under Jim Crow "Fascism": The Queer Visions of Angelo Herndon and Carson McCullers', *The Mississippi Quarterly*, 67.1 (2014), 127-150 (131).

regional factors contributed to their creative legacies.

The aforementioned critical texts have either explored limited aspects of human identity or focused on single-issue oppression within a single work by McCullers. This highlights the need to employ the theory of intersectionality for a comprehensive study of McCullers's Proto-intersectionality and her characters' multiple identities within a complex, multifaceted American society. It's important to note that while factors such as age and disability also play crucial roles in shaping experiences of power, privilege, and oppression, this thesis will focus primarily on race, class, gender, and sexuality to explore experiences of marginalisation. As mentioned earlier, I do not draw on disability studies theory in analyzing the complexities of identity, but instead highlight the intersection of illness and queerness in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. Additionally, I argue that in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Mick Kelly faces unfair treatment as a salesgirl due to her age, while in *The Member of the Wedding*, adolescent Frankie is subject to stereotypes that depict her as immature and rebellious. These factors, though not being highlighted, further illustrate McCullers's intersectional awareness.

A British transgender journalist and writer, Kay, posted an online article 'Carson McCullers: the First Great Intersectional Writer?' in her personal Substack, entitled Trans Perspectives on Culture, on July 29, 2023. In this article, Alexander underlines McCullers's completeness as a human being: a capacity for empathy and altruism at its deepest, a recognition of our oneness, and that we all contain multitudes. They insist that 'it's the intersectionality of her concerns that makes her so prophetic and puts her among the immortals.'[26] Alexander's argument closely aligns with the central findings of my study: McCullers's intersectional way of thinking and writing reflects her humanitarian concern with marginalised groups and contributes

[26] Kay Alexander, 'Carson McCullers: the First Great Intersectional Writer?', Trans Perspectives on Culture, Jul 29, 2023. <https://kayalexander.substack.com/p/carson-mccullers-the-first-great/comments>[accessed 4 April 2024].

to the exploration of multiple identities shaped by the intersecting forms of oppression. This thesis provides a systematic and comprehensive intersectional reading of McCullers's novels, exploring how her work enhances the understanding of power relations, identity formation, and injustices within the context of mid-twentieth-century America.

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As stated previously, an intersectional lens provides a framework for examining how multiple social identities are shaped within oppressive power structures. When applying this analytical tool to address injustices, a thorough consideration of power and power relations is essential. In addition to relying on theories of intersectionality, my study also draws heavily on Foucault's notions of power. Before elaborating on the power of inclusion and exclusion in relationships among individuals, groups, and society reflected in McCullers's novels, I will give a summary of Foucault's innovative analysis of power, which has inspired many scholars to connect the concept of power with intersectional theories.

Foucault centres his political philosophy on power. For him, 'Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'.[27] He sees power as something pervasive and ubiquitous rather than solely as an instrument of coercion or a 'sovereign' act of dominance over people with less power. As Richard A. Lynch explains, 'Foucault analyzed several different types of power, including sovereign power, disciplinary power and … biopower.'[28] In his 1976 book, *La Volonté de Savoir* (translated as *The History of Sexuality*), Foucault, besides describing sovereign power, a premodern form of power, as the right to '*take* life or *let* live', draws attention to two other modern forms of power termed respectively

[27] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 93. Reprinted as The Will to Knowledge (London: Penguin, 1998). Originally published as La Volonté de savoir (Histoire de la sexualité 1) (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).
[28] Richard A. Lynch, 'Foucault's theory of power', in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, ed. by Dianna Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 41.

as ‘disciplinary power’ and ‘biopower’.[29] He defines disciplinary power as ‘an anatomo-politics of the human body’, which conducts influence on individuals, while biopower is ‘a biopolitics of the population’, which exercises regulatory controls over the life of species.[30] More specifically, Foucauldian disciplinary power operates invisible controls over individual bodies through institutions using simple instruments, like hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and examination. Though bound up with disciplinary power, biopower regulates and intervenes in populations, species, or races throughout the state.

Based on Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality and inspired by Foucault’s concept of power, Collins develops a ‘domains of power framework’ — ‘the matrix of domination’ — for exploring how ‘intersecting oppressions are actually organized’ in the shape of the intersectional identities of the marginalised people.[31] The organisation of intersecting oppressions, according to Collins, is encompassed by the interactions of structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal domains of power. In the structural domain, as Collins states, ‘social institutions of a society … routinely discriminate in favor of whites and against everyone else’; in the disciplinary domain, ‘modern bureaucracies regulate race relations through their rules and practices, primarily surveillance’; in the cultural domain, ‘ideologies, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism, are constructed and shared’; and in the interpersonal domain, ‘social relations [are shaped] between individuals in everyday life’.[32] Collins’s domains of power framework offers nuanced grounds to understand power, connecting individual experiences of power imbalances at the micro level with broader power structures at the macro level. This approach, to some extent, helps clarify and develop Foucault’s notion about the omnipresence of power relations.

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[29] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volum*e I, p. 136.
[30] Ibid., p. 179.
[31] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 18.
[32]Patricia Hill Collins, *On Intellectual Activism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), p. 72.

Power is also omnipresent in McCullers's novels. Her display of the multiple identities of her characters manifests power relations within the different domains of power structures. For example, in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* McCullers weaves an invisible power system in which marginalised characters are confined within politically, socially, and culturally constructed class, gender, and racial boundaries set by privileged groups. Moreover, in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, the presentation of Penderton's identity confusion and repressed same-sex passion reflects the disciplinary and normalising power of gender and sexual norms. Further, in *The Member of the Wedding*, the conversations of the kitchen trio, Frankie, Berenice, and Henry, about their dreams of racial integration, gender fluidity, and sexual fluidity mirror and subvert the cultural domain of power — racism, sexism, and heterosexism in the 1940s. An example of the structural domain of power can also be found in *Clock Without Hands,* in which McCullers expands her focus on the individual identity crises in her previous novels to an exploration of American national identity in the mid-twentieth century. In particular, McCullers's depiction of her African American characters' experience of racism in this novel reflects state-sponsored racial segregation and illustrates how biopower works together with sovereign power and disciplinary power in controlling and governing human life.

While discussing power relations between the oppressed people and the oppressors within interlocking systems of power in McCullers's novels, I also explore her demonstration of various forms of resistance. In Volume I of the *History of Sexuality,* Foucault discusses the relation between power and resistance, noting that 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.'[33] This statement highlights that resistance exists within the structures of power. On this basis, multiple power relations shape multiple forms of resistance, while different forms of resistance,

[33] Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I,* p. 95.

inturn, reflect different power relations. As will be discussed in the upcoming chapters, various forms of resistance also reflect the growing class, racial, gender, and political consciousness of the oppressed people. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* McCullers presents her characters' passive resistance as a response to marginalisation and oppression, as illustrated by John Singer's suicide and Dr Copeland's unfulfilled plan to organise a peaceful protest march on Washington D. C. Additionally, Frankie's escape from home in *The Member of the Wedding*, Verily's departure from her white employer in search of fair wages and better welfare, and Sherman's move into a white community in *Clock Without Hands* all exemplify McCullers's portrayals of everyday forms of resistance. As Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson suggest, everyday resistance is 'an *activity* in a dynamic interaction with *opposition* to power'.[34] Examining subtle and routine actions of resistance by McCullers's characters helps understand the network of power relations in the American South and the awakening of race, class, and gender consciousness among oppressed people in the mid-twentieth century.

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Having clarified the theoretical foundation of my study, it's necessary to investigate how McCullers's sensitivity to the intersections of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism took shape in the context of the Jim Crow South. To do so, I first delve into McCullers's complex love-hate relationship with the gendered, racialised, and heteronormative South — the geographical setting of all her novels.

According to Eleanor Clark, an American writer, McCullers once told her at Yaddo, an artists' colony in Saratoga Springs, New York, 'I must go home periodically to renew my sense of horror.'[35] The 'sense of horror' indicates McCullers deep resentment toward the long-term

[34] Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson, ''Everyday Resistance': Exploration of a Concept and its Theories,' *Resistance Studies Magazine*, 1 (2013), 1–46 (p. 2).
[35]'Eleanor Clark to Virginia Spencer Carr', letter,15 October 1973, quoted from Virginia Spencer Carr, *Understanding Carson McCullers* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), p. 9.

devastation oppression of marginalised people in the stagnant Deep South. However, as McCullers writes in 'The Flowering Dream', 'No matter what the politics, the degree or non-degree of liberalism in a Southern writer, he is still bound to this peculiar regionalism of language and voices and foliage and memory.'[36]This remark demonstrates her awareness of the close connection between a Southern writer and the South and her ambivalent feelings toward her hometown of Columbus, Georgia. McCullers left Georgia for New York at age 17, but she never entirely cut ties with the South. Physically, she may have refused to return to the South, 'the landscape of her agony', but psychologically, she remained connected with it, bound to the 'language and voices and foliage and memory' of the South. Her inspirations for writing, her creations of grotesque Southern characters, her depictions of Deep South settings, and her concerns with class distinctions, sexual discrimination, racial segregation, and homophobia are all closely connected to her relationship with the South.

Many critics explore McCullers's liberal conscience or guilt as a white Southerner by analysing her depiction of the experiences of African Americans facing state-sponsored racial discrimination and segregation in the South. According to González Groba, McCullers 'was deeply aware of the guilt of southern whites concerning the oppression of blacks' and 'was one of the first white writers in the 1940s to relate the South's racial practices and politics'.[37] He analyses the plight of African American characters by exploring their racial relationships with white characters in McCullers's novels. He states that in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Dr Copeland 'actively fights for the civil rights of his race, yet paradoxically blackness draws him close to the whiteness that oppresses him', while in *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers's depiction of Frankie, Berenice, and Henry connects 'racial oppression with gender oppression in

[36] McCullers, 'The Flowering Dream', p. 284.
[37] González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and the racial problem', *Atlantis*, 37 (2015), 63-80 (p. 63).

the context of the reactionary South of the 1940s'.[38] He continues his analysis of the racial dynamics between Sherman and Judge Clane, Jester Clane, and J. T. Malone in *Clock Without Hands*, focusing on 'the tragic consequences here, for both whites and blacks, of polarised conceptions of blackness and whiteness.'[39] González Groba's arguments stress on the importance of examining McCullers's prehistory intersectional approach to race, gender, and sexuality issues in the South during the Jim Crow era. In essence, McCullers's deep connection to the South, her sensitivity to various forms of injustice, and her proto-intersectionality enable her to reflect a white conscience in her portrayal of African American characters.

McCullers's characterisation of women, in a large measure, also manifests her criticism of gender inequality in American Southern culture. In *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens,* Louise Westling reads McCullers in the context of works by two of her contemporaries, Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor. She argues that all are located in a complex Southern 'heritage of love, guilt, and fear': 'Welty celebrates the power of women, finding within a matriarchal Southern culture a source of mythic power, while McCullers and O'Connor represent the feminine much more ambivalently'.[40] McCullers's ambivalent attitude toward women lies in her way of presenting the plight of the white female characters. She demonstrates the socialization of gender stereotypes in her depiction of boyish girls, such as Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding*, who have to conform to socially constructed gender roles and learn to act like Southern Belles. McCullers also indicates the price of challenging gender norms through her portrayal of Miss Amelia in *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, who, as Westling observes, 'is destroyed by an alliance of vengeful males who punish her impertinence'.[41] The 'vengeful males' (Cousin Lymon and Marvin Macy) can be regarded as guardians of gender

[38] Ibid., p. 63.
[39] Ibid., p. 63.
[40] Louise Westling, *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: The Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), p. 1.
[41] Westling, p. 5.

norms in a patriarchal society. Because of their boyishness or mannishness, Mick-like girls or Amelia-like women are labelled as freaks or outcasts in the normative discourse of gender identity and when they attempt to challenge the norms, the patriarchal forces destroy their lives and dreams. It is important to note that Westling, like many critics in the 1980s, evaluates works by white women writers, including those by McCullers, from the viewpoint of a white woman critic and mainly concentrates on the struggles of white woman characters, without attending to how gender, race, and class intersect to shape the experiences of African American women characters. Adding to the study of McCullers's white women characters, this thesis brings to light the oppressed lives of her African American woman characters as well and examines how intersectional systems of injustice shape their experiences on the socio-political margins.

McCullers's portrayal of African American women demonstrates the influence of the Black Mammy stereotype during the Jim Crow South — a loyal, submissive, cheerful domestic servant for a white family, who occasionally takes the role of surrogate mother to the white children of the house. To indicate the complexity of the marginalised position of African American women, McCullers creates nuances in presenting the servile roles of these characters. Portia in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* feels proud and pleased to work for a white family and never argues with Mrs Kelly about her delayed and underpaid wages. In *Reflections in a Golden Eye,* Susie, Captain Penderton's cook, who always stays in the kitchen as a selfless and silent helper to Lenora, wife of the Captai, is depicted as a supporting character to white protagonists. Verily, a servant of the Clanes *in Clock Without Hands*, who blames Sherman for breaking racial etiquette, manifests her internalised racial inferiority. Compared with Portia, Susie, and Verily, Berenice — who is portrayed as a nurturer and teacher of white children — plays a bigger role in *The Member of the Wedding.* Repeatedly instructing Frankie to date a 'nice little white boy beau', Berenice shows

her submission to racialised social norms in a white-dominant world.[42] Moreover, McCullers emphasises Berenice's role as a victim of sexism in the description of the domestic violence in her fourth marriage. Crenshaw claims that African American women are 'multiply-burdened' and thus injured most by standing at the crossroads of 'gender and race traffic.'[43] As will be stressed in my chapters, between the 1930s and the 1960s, African American people were excluded from the labour movement, and, meanwhile, African American women were alienated within both the feminist movement and the Civil Rights Movement. In this sense, being victims of racism, classism, and sexism, McCullers's African American women are 'multiply-burdened.' Their marginalised position is complicated and subverted and exceeded, which can be seen more clearly and exactly through the lens of intersectionality.

McCullers's social misfits and outcasts also exhibit intersectional identities within the overlapping power structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As Alison Sperling argues, McCullers's novels are populated with non-normative bodies: 'the queers, the freaks, the "deaf-mutes", the "dwarf" and the "giant", the drunk, the sick, the half-blind'.[44] In particular, by including 'the awkward female adolescent' (represented by Frankie and Mick) into her taxonomy of the non-normative, Sperling's concept of 'freak temporality' — rooted in theory of queer time — illuminates the ambiguous identities of young girls navigating the transition from childhood to adulthood.[45] In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler examines how the power of heterosexual hegemony forms the 'matter' of bodies, sex, and gender.[46] Departing from Foucault's regulatory power notion, Butler argues that normative social discourse is based on power relations and controlled by dominant groups who construct social codes in society and set body boundaries.

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[42] Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), p. 73.
[43] Crenshaw, p. 152.
Note: Focusing on intersections of gender and race in her early intersectionality theory, Crenshaw, as discussed elsewhere, means to highlight 'multiple grounds of identity'.
[44] Alison Sperling, 'Freak Temporality: Female Adolescence in the Novels of Carson McCullers', *Girlhood Studies*, 9 (2016), 88-103 (p. 89).
[45] Ibid., p. 89.
[46] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*(New York: Routledge, 1993), p. ix.

Therefore, according to the politically, socially, and culturally constructed discriminatory norms during the Jim Crow era, McCullers's non-normative characters generally fall into two types: those who have abnormally developed bodies are categorised as freaks, while those whose bodies deviate from gender or sexual norms are either not defined or are vaguely defined as queers. As a bisexual female writer who stands at the crossroad of sexism and heterosexism, McCullers experienced bewilderment, fear, and loneliness in the search for identity and acceptance in her life and presented these feelings in the depiction of freak and queer characters in her novels.

Queer theory has attempted to redefine and destabilise categories of sexuality in light of post-structuralist theory since the early 1990s. Lori J. Kenschaft's 'Homoerotics and Human Connections: Reading Carson McCullers "As a Lesbian"' is perhaps the most important essay written to date on the study of McCullers's queer characters, in which she interprets McCullers's themes of spiritual isolation and queerness from the perspective of gender studies.[47] In a similar vein, Adams investigates two 'deviant bodies'— the freak and the queer — in *The Member of the Wedding* and *Clock Without Hands.*[48] 'The queer', as Adams puts it, 'refers loosely to acts and desires that confound the notion of a normative heterosexuality', while 'freaks are beings who make those queer tendencies visible on the body's surfaces.'[49] Adams stresses McCullers's 'vague but suggestive' use of the term 'queer' in the homophobic Jim Crow South and her creation of 'freaks' based on American sideshow culture in the mid-twentieth century. Based on this research, I analyse McCullers's vague language in giving implicit descriptions of non-normative characters. In *The Member of the Wedding*, six-year-old gender-fluid child John Henry covers 'the walls with queer, child drawings'[50]. Meanwhile, in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*,

[47] Lori J. Kenschaft, 'Homoerotics and Human Connections: Reading Carson McCullers "As a Lesbian"', in *Critical Essays on Carson McCullers*. ed. by Beverly Lycon Clark (New York: Hall, 1996).
[48] Rachel Adams, '"A Mixture of Delicious and Freak": The Queer Fiction of Carson McCullers,' *American Literature*, 71 (1999), 551-83 (p. 554).
[49] Ibid., p. 552.
[50] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p. 5.

Captain Penderton, who has intense same-sex feelings for a junior soldier, Private Williams, is compared to 'a shattered and dissipated monk' in his 'strange, coarse wrapping', after he shoots the Private, who is found peeping at the Captain's wife in her bedroom.[51] In John Henry's case, McCullers uses 'queer' as an adjective to mean 'strange' or 'odd' and to define bodily non-normative people. Similarly, she uses words with a similar meaning to 'queer', like 'strange,' in describing Captain Penderton's feeling when encountering Private Williams naked in the forest. Other words, such as 'peculiar', 'weird', 'odd', 'oddities', or 'different', are also used to modify her 'queer' characters to indicate features of socially and culturally unaccepted bodies and behaviours.[52]

As another important approach to the study of identity, queer theory has long been engaged with intersectionality, giving rise to the notion of queer intersectionality, a framework for recognising diverse experiences of queer people based on race, class, gender, and sexuality. As Darren Rosenblum states,

> Queer identity is intersectional, since most queers face multiple aspects of discrimination, as women, as people of color, as poor people, as cross-gendered people, and as sexual subversives. The multiplicity of the discrimination that queers face is thus greater than anti-lesbian and anti-gay discrimination.[53]

This statement underscores the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by queer people and reinforces my previous argument about the necessity of expanding the application of the intersectional lens to the study of all identities. Jennifer Nash, in her 2014 essay, 'Institutionalizing the Margins', points out that 'nowhere has the call for more intersectionality — and an attention to more intersections — been more profoundly developed than in the field of queer intersectionality'.[54] Queer intersectionality not only helps understand gender fluidity and

[51] Carson McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), p. 85.
[52] McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye,* the word 'strange' appears on p. 33, p. 41; 'peculiar' on p. 23, p. 42, p. 44, p. 55, p.67, p.73, p.79; 'weird' on p.24; 'oddities' on p. 82.
[53] Darren Rosenblum, 'Queer Intersectionality and the Failure of Recent Lesbian and Gay Victories,' *Law and Sexuality* 4 (1994), 83-122 (p.89).
[54] Jennifer C. Nash, 'Institutionalizing the Margins,' *Social text*, 32.1 (2014), 45-65 (p. 50).

sexuality diversity but also shed light on the intersections of various power structures, including racism, sexism, homophobia, and heteronormativity.

The concept of queer intersectionality provides a valuable lens for analysing Lily Mae Jenkins — an African American queer person. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, Lily Mae, though depicted as a background character, appears as a pivotal character to add information about queer people and reflect the overlooked and isolated situation of the marginalised groups. Lily Mae first appeared in McCullers's 1938 'Outline of *The Mute*' but was removed from the published version of her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. As Betty E. McKinnie and Carlos L. Dews maintain, McCullers's removal of Lily Mae manifests 'her response to the South's homophobia and its strict demands of gendered behavior', given that in 1940, when the novel was published, homophobic American society 'would not tolerate a story of sexual transgression both in the telling of the story of the transgression (by McCullers in the act of writing the novel) and in the record of the transgressive (in the depicted life of Lily Mae Jenkins).'[55]

During the period of writing *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers and her husband Reeves moved to New York, a city in which she was able to find a community more open to ideas of nonnormative sexualities. As McKinnie and Dews note, McCullers found her sense of belonging in New York, where she 'experienced an acceptance of her lesbianism or bisexuality' in her active involvement with 'a wide range of friends from international artistic, musical, and literary circles'.[56] This sense of belonging met her need to be included and accepted as a member of a group; it was the 'we of me' that Frankie yearns for in *The Member of the Wedding*. This positive experience of being included might have pushed McCullers to revive Lily Mae in *The*

[55] Betty E. McKinnie and Carlos L. Dews, 'The Delayed Entrance of Lily Mae Jenkins: Queer Identity, Gender Ambiguity, and Southern Ambivalence in Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*', in *Southern Women Playwrights: New Essays in Literary History and Criticism*, ed. by Robert L. McDonald and Linda Rohrer Paige (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2002), p. 87.
[56] McKinnie and Dews, p. 92; p. 94.

Member of the Wedding to urge readers to question intolerance of same-sex love. Six years later, Lily Mae's resurrection in Berenice's casual talk in *The Member of the Wedding,* together with McCullers's depiction of the 'half-seen' 'dark double shape' of two African American boys, embracing each other in a lane, indicates small changes in the hidden and invisible status of queer people in mid-twentieth-century America, and in McCullers's willingness to explore them in her writing.[57] To sum up, viewing McCullers's queer characters through the prism of queer intersectionality provides a way to study underprivileged people in an analytical framework for understanding identity and oppression, as well as a further insight into McCullers's 'astonishing humanity' and her contribution to raising the visibility of marginalised groups.

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It's worth noting that some scholars and critics have employed the lens of intersectionality to analyse works by other Southern writers. For example, Beauty Bragg in her 2008 essay, 'Intersections: Race and Gender Ideologies, Flannery O'Connor and Alice Walker', explores the intersections of two authors' themes of sin and redemption and issues of race and gender.[58] In his 2008 essay, 'Colored Man: The Ambiguous White Male Body in "Parker's Back"', Charles Andrews argues that O'Connor stages a "confrontation between theological emphases on spiritual and incarnate deity" that draws attention to race and gender embodiment as key markers of masculine authority.[59] The analysis focuses on the way in which Parker's tattoos — a symbolic coloration — make visible a matrix of race, class, sex, and gender identity that is usually rendered invisible through its dominance. In doing so, this essay contributes to a growing body of work on

[57] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding,* p. 61.
[58] Beauty Bragg, 'Intersections: Race and Gender Ideologies, Flannery O'Connor and Alice Walker', *Flannery O'Connor Review*, 6 (2008), 56-58.
[59] Charles Andrews, 'Colored Man: The Ambiguous White Male Body in 'Parker's Back"', *Flannery O'Connor Review*, 6 (2008), 70-80(70).

O'Connor concerned with "greater consideration of gender as a crucial part of her aesthetic".[60] However, this essay, different from my study of McCullers, emphases the religious reading of O'Connor's work which has been an obstacle to the kinds of intersectional analyses that this work exemplifies. Moreover, Rebecca Nisetich, in her 2017 essay, 'When Difference Becomes Dangerous,' points out that 'Years before Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term, Faulkner implicitly understood how "intersectionality" worked.' [61] She draws attention to Faulkner's 'distinct layering of identity categories and explorations of difference'.[62] Hence, she adopts the theory of intersectionality in the analysis of the dynamic relationship between whiteness and queerness in Faulkner's 1932 novel, *Light in August.* She highlights that 'intersectionality theory enables us to see how identity categories shift and change as power dynamics shift and change. In this sense, my thesis shares similar purpose with this article in fostering understanding of the representations of difference and power.

In addition to the intersectional reading of works by Southern white writers, critics and scholars also explore African American writers in an intersectional lens. South African scholar, Samantha Schreiner in her 2019 essay, 'Naming, Identity and Intersectionality in Toni Morrison's *Sula*, *Beloved* and *Mercy',* employs intersectionality as an analytical tool to examine Morrison's application of naming as a functioning part of an individual's identity and examines characters' quest for identity and security through attachment to a godlike other.[63]In Chapter Three of my thesis, I also discuss the role of naming in declaring authority and ownership over one's body by engaging with Erikson's interpretation of the relationship between identity and naming. Different from Schreiner's focus, which highlights intersection of blackness and queerness mirrored by the

[60] Ibid., p. 70.
[61] Rebecca Nisetich, 'When Difference Becomes Dangerous: Intersectional Identity Formation and the Protective Cover of Whiteness in Faulkner's Light in August', *The Faulkner Journal*, 31.1(2017), 43-66 (43).
[62] Ibid., p. 43.
[63] Samantha Schreiner, 'Naming, Identity and Intersectionality in Toni Morrison's Sula, Beloved and A Mercy', *English Academy Review*, 36:2(2019), 38-48 (p. 39).

power of naming, my chapter elucidates the adolescents' identity development by exploring McCullers's characters' name changes. In addition, W. P. Maiecki, Alexa Weik Von Mossner, and Maigorzata Dobrowolska, in their 2020 article, 'Narrating Human and Animal Oppression: Strategic Empathy and Intersectionalism in Alice Walker's "Am I Blue?"' analyse Alice Walker's short story, 'Am I Blue?'. Through the lenses of strategic empathy and intersectionalism, they explore the parallelly depiction of the exploitation of animals and the experiences of marginalised humans, underlining the story's broader criticism of systemic oppression and the need for a compassionate, interconnected approach to social justice. This article provides a new angle to analyse theme of intersectional marginalisation in Southern writers' works — Critical Animal Theory.

As a single-author chronological study, this thesis provides in-depth analyses and insightful interpretations of McCullers's themes of loneliness, power dynamics, identity, and the quest for belonging, which not only enriches the study of her novels but also contributes to broader theoretical discussions about intersectionality and social justice, as noted above. What's more, this study spares limited space for making a comparative study of McCullers's unique contributions and those of her contemporary Southern writers within the context of a predate study of intersectionality. Therefore, it is both meaningful and essential to extend this intersectional analysis of McCullers to include her contemporary Southern writers, thereby highlighting their shared commitment to humanity and justice. It is hoped that this research will not only enrich the existing scholarship on Carson McCullers but also inspire further scholarly reexaminations of the works of McCullers and her contemporaries, alongside the historical contexts in which they lived.

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This thesis contains four chapters, investigating complex power relations, intersectional identities,

and multiple oppressions in McCullers' four novels. I do not dedicate a chapter specifically to her novella, *The Ballad of Sad Café,* in order to allocate more space for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality in McCullers' four full-length novels. However, this novella still plays an important role in my research and is referenced where relevant across the four chapters.

The first chapter delves into power relations and identity in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. Drawing on the theory of intersectionality and Foucault's concept of power, I investigate how imbalanced power relations among different social groups give rise to multiple and intersecting forms of oppression in 1930s American South. Through analysing the interpersonal power relationships among the five main characters in the novel, I examine their experiences shaped by class, gender, and racial identities. The experiences of the marginalised protagonists pertinent to historical facts and events illustrate the ubiquitous surveillance and the normalising power of the ruling class. I underline that McCullers's characterisation of Jake Blount, a radical skilled worker, reflects the poorly performed Industrial Union and the CPUSA's disconnection from grassroots activists in the early twentieth century. Additionally, I explore McCullers's revelation of deep-rooted systemic racism in the South and her profound concern with the issue of internalised racism among African Americans. Furthermore, my examination of experiences of Portia and Daisy Copeland further enriches the discussion on role of the overlapping systems of oppression in the shape of the multiple identities of African American women in the early twentieth century.

Chapter Two, 'Power, Space and Body in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*', applies an intersectional lens to analyse power relations and identity construction in *Reflections in a Golden Eye.* I start the chapter with an analysis of the 'network of gazes' on McCullers's fictive army post in the context of heteropatriarchal mid-twentieth-century American society and her ambiguous description of the main characters' hidden gender and sexual transgressions. Then, drawing on Foucault's concept of power and space, I probe the influence of heteronormativity in

1930s America by examining characters' repressed desires and their existential anguish under the oppression of disciplinary observation and normalising power in the barracks. To elucidate the regimented nature of McCullers's peacetime army post, I compare the lifeless enclosed barracks to a Foucauldian heterotopia of deviation, a space with features of a prison, a retirement, and a psychiatric hospital rolled into one. Meanwhile, I interpret the reservation surrounding the army post in the novel as a utopia, a space, according to Foucault, with 'a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society,' in which characters are temporarily free from the control of disciplinary and normalising power in the barracks. [64] By comparing the Captain and the Private's sexual disorientation and confusion in the barracks with their unleashed pleasure-seeking nature in the woods, I highlight the intersectional identities of these characters shaped by four domains of power: structural, cultural, disciplinary, and interpersonal.

The third chapter offers a biographical study of *The Member of the Wedding*, in which I mainly explore the cultural domain of power through discussing the connection between McCullers's life-long search for identity and the identity formation of Frankie, her 12-year-old protagonist. In addition to exploring how McCullers has woven elements from her own life into the novel, I analyse the interplay of biological, psychological, and social forces in Frankie's development. This includes highlighting Frankie's sense of exclusion due to her rapid physical growth in the novel's early chapters, her feelings of disillusionment from her struggle to find a sense of belonging in the middle sections, and her emerging sense of hope, self-recognition, and social acceptance by the end of the novel.

My last chapter delves into the structural domain of power by analysing connections between human biology and politics (biopolitics) reflected in *Clock Without Hands.* In this novel, McCullers expands her interest in depicting individuals' intersectional identities to a broader

[64] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1(1986), 22-7 (p. 24).

observation of American national identity. According to Foucault, biopower works together with sovereign power and disciplinary power in controlling and governing human life.[65] Through examining Sherman Pew and other African American characters' experiences of racism in *Clock Without Hands,* I investigate how structural racism undermines American democracy by excluding the nonwhite population with double standards on human rights. In addition to examining the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture and racial segregation in pre-Civil Rights America, I discuss the interplay between various forms of resistance and the increasing political consciousness among marginalised groups in the novel. By analyzing Sherman Pew's everyday resistance and discursive challenges against white supremacy, I argue that Sherman's fragmented, individual acts of resistance lack organization and are insufficiently visible to effectively counter the deep-rooted and more organised institutional racism prior to the Civil Rights Movement, which saw the rise of widespread collective resistance against state racism. The last section of this chapter draws attention to the white liberal conscience embodied by two white liberal characters in the novel, Johnny Clane and Jester Clane. They reflect McCullers's white liberal ideology and offer insight into the role of white liberals in the Pre-Civil Rights struggles.

[65] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003). p. 250.

CHAPTER ONE

A Jail Without Walls: Identities and Power Relations in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

'It was better to be in a jail where you could bang the walls than in a jail you could not see'.[66]

Carson McCullers's debut novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* is set in a Southern mill town in the late 1930s, when Americans were struggling to walk out of the shadow of the Great Depression and when the Civil Rights Movement was still in its early stage, workers' strikes and labour actions ebbed and flowed, women's fight for equal rights was overshadowed by the need to overcome the economic crisis, and queer people were still seeking a sense of belonging and forced to conceal their true identities within the confines of prejudiced societal norms.[67] In this context, McCullers addresses issues of race, class, and gender in the 1930s American South by writing about the plight of marginalised people, such as African American people, poor labourers, women, and queer people, who, as outlined in my introduction, were trapped in interlocking systems of oppression. As Foucault puts it, power 'reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives'.[68] Power not only shapes individuals' bodies, minds, and experiences but creates intricate power dynamics among individuals and groups. The study of power relations shows that long-standing misused power or unequally distributed power among individuals and groups will lead to different dimensions of oppression. This chapter examines how intersecting power structures of class, race, and gender work simultaneously in shaping the identities and experiences of marginalised individuals in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and how

[66] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p. 148.
[67] Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940). Further references to this novel in this chapter are given after parentheses in the text.
[68] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 39.

these people resist oppressive social norms and systems in the 1930s America in which the novel is set.

In the outline of *The Mute* (later published as *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*), McCullers summarised the novel as a 'story of five isolated, lonely people in their search for expression and spiritual integration with something greater than themselves'.[69] In this novel, McCullers not only portrays her characters' quest for self-discovery but highlights their multiple identities, intricate power relations with others, and, more importantly, their aspirations for social change. As shown in my introduction, an intersectional framework highlights how power relations influence people differently based on their multiple identities. To provide an insight into power relations, oppression and resistance, and the complex interplay of identities within capitalist societal structures, this chapter primarily employs an intersectional approach, as well as a Marxist analysis of identity-based oppression, to analyse the troubled lives of the main characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and the uneven power relations among them. It first delves into McCullers's sense of humanity, reflected in her left-leaning political stance and the proletarian and anti-fascist elements in her novel. Following this, based on investigations into the dynamics of the labour movement, the experiences of African Americans in the pre-Civil Rights era, and the evolution of the feminist movement in early twentieth-century America, the succeeding three sections of this chapter explore how intersecting forms of oppression shape the experiences of the marginalised characters in the novel and offer a retrospective study of McCullers's 'proto-intersectional' awareness — her sensitivity to intersections of class conflicts, race problems, and gender issues.

[69] Carson McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*' in *The Mortgaged Heart*, ed. by Margarita G. Smith (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), p. 125.

McCullers's leftist political stance: *'Go Left, Young Writers!'*[70]

In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, McCullers depicts multiple social injustices and expresses a deep empathy for marginalised groups. The main characters of the novel are predominantly working-class individual, who struggle at the bottom layer of the capitalist power structure in 1930s America. The main plot revolves around John Singer, a 'deaf-mute' Jewish-American silverware engraver, and his interactions with four other major characters — Benedict Mady Copeland, an African American lower-middle-class doctor, Biff Brannon, a self-employed small businessman, Jake Blount, a radical skilled worker, and Mick Kelly, a boyish girl from a lower-middle-class white family. In Part One of the novel, Singer enjoys a peaceful life with Spiros Antonapoulos, another 'deaf-mute', until Antonapoulos falls ill and is sent to an insane asylum by his cousin. Singer later moves into a boarding house run by the Kelly family, where he has interactions with the other four main characters and gradually becomes their confidant, even though he doesn't understand their troubles. At the close of Part Three, Singer commits suicide after receiving the news of Antonapoulos's death. Following Singer's death, the other characters gradually set aside their aspirations and come to terms with the reality. Dr. Copela nd departs for the countryside due to an illness, regretful at not being able to awaken his people's racial consciousness. Jake also leaves town as he receives no response from the mill workers to his calls for actions against the capitalists. Mick, impacted by her family's financial crisis, is forced to give up her musical aspirations and becomes a salesgirl at a ten-cent store. Biff contemplates human struggle, humanity, and love at his café late at night at the end of the novel. In addition to portraying five main characters from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, McCullers creates several additional lower-class characters, including Portia Copeland, a domestic servant of the

[70] Michael Gold, 'Go Left, Young Writers!', *New Masses*, 4 (1929), 1-2 (p. 1).
Note: Michael Gold (1894 – 1967) was the penname of Jewish American writer Itzok Isaac Granich. Mike Gold was a pseudonym used by Michael Gold in his writing career.

Kelly family, William Copeland, a server at Biff's New York Café, and Mr Kelly, a small watch-repair businessman. In depicting her characters' experiences of injustices, encompassing economic oppression, racial discrimination, and gender inequality, McCullers conveys her left-wing political stance and sensitivity to the interconnected nature of oppression.

McCullers's profound humanitarian concern for marginalised people stems from her leftist ideology, particularly influenced by the relatively widespread influence of communism during the 1930s. Her interest in communism can be traced back to her early years. In her unfinished autobiography, *Illumination and Night Glare*, McCullers writes, 'I was a great believer of the Communist Party when I was seventeen, although I never joined it, and eventually, I became disenchanted with the workings of the Communists also.'[71] Historically, in 1934, when McCullers was 17, there was a growing discontent among Americans due to massive unemployment and nationwide economic instability, engendered by capitalism. The Great Depression deepened conflicts between workers and capitalists and led to a resurgence of leftist and communist activism. The Communist Party USA (CPUSA) had drawn many American liberal intellectuals with its promises of equality, social justice, and a better world, igniting people's hope to tackle both economic inequality and various forms of oppression in the capitalist system. For example, Michael Gold, the editor of *New Masses*, a magazine of socialist politics, claims in his well-known article 'Go Left, Young Writers,' that 'The best and newest thing a young writer can now do in America, if he has the vigor and the guts, is to go leftward.'[72] Notably, announcing that 'the New Masses has been slowly finding its path toward the goal of a proletarian literature in America', Gold developed his magazine into a platform for young liberals and left-wing writers to write about the plight of working-class people and other marginalised groups.[73]

[71] Carson McCullers, *Illumination and Night Glare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, ed. by Carlos Dewes (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), p. 139.
[72] Gold, 'Go Left, Young Writers!', p. 2.
[73] Ibid., p. 2.
As Michael Folsom notes in his 1972 book, *A Literary Anthology*, 'The American currency of the term "proletarian literature"

Although McCullers didn't publish in the *New Masses* or other Marxist-oriented publications, she nonetheless read Karl Marx and had personal connections with some communists and members of left-wing political circles, in addition to her teenage engagement with CPUSA. In various ways, McCullers responded to Gold's advice and went 'leftward' in her writing.

Virginia Spencer Carr's biography of McCullers specifies McCullers's interactions with some intellectuals with progressive political views, such as Gypsy Rose Lee, a famous burlesque entertainer and writer with left-wing affiliations, W. H. Auden, an English-American poet who was associated with various leftist causes and organisations, and Richard Wright, who was associated with the Communist Party between the 1930s and the 1940s.[74] In particular, McCullers's life-long friend, Edwin Peacock, a civil service officer at Fort Benning, and her husband, Reeves McCullers, a writer and aspiring Marxist, are likely to have more directly influenced her beliefs and political stance. Peacock, who was '[a]ttuned to the anticapitalistic fervor of the early 1930s, … urged [McCullers] to read such social protesters as John Dos Passos, Erskine Caldwell, John Steinbeck, and James T. Farrell'.[75] In *Illumination and Night Glare*, Carson explains why she, at the age of eighteen, was attracted by Reeves: 'he was the best good-looking man I had ever seen. He also talked of Marx and Engels, and I knew he was a liberal, which is important, to my mind, in a backward Southern community.'[76] Josyane Savigneau, a French biographer of McCullers, also notes, 'Reeves McCullers was a man of progress' whose 'taste for ideological debate and … curiosity about politics during the 1930s' doubtlessly 'had a great influence on the maturing young woman who became his wife'.[77] Under the influence of communist beliefs and leftist politics, McCullers consistently used her pen and her influence as

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can be dated from the publication of [Mike Gold's 1921 essay 'Towards Proletarian Art'].'
Also see Michael Folsom, ed., *Mike Gold: A Literary Anthology* (New York, International Publishers, 1972), p. 62.
[74] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, pp. 118-20; 116; 127-28.
[75] Ibid., pp. 36-9.
[76] McCullers, *Illumination and Night Glare*, p. 165.
[77] Josyane Savigneau, *Carson McCullers: A Life* (Boston: Houghton, 2001), p. 186

a writer to combat inequalities in the South.

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter exhibits some characteristics of 1930s proletarian literature, such as its Southern mill town setting, portrayal of working-class characters, and descriptions of individuals' experiences amidst economic hardships of the Great Depression, as well as their struggles for social justice in an oppressive capitalist society. Leslie Fiedler, a renowned American literary critic and writer, defines *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* as 'the last of the "proletarian novels", a true Depression book', highlighting its success in exhibiting 'the tension between public hysteria, proper to an age of social protest, and private anguish, proper to the sensibility of its author'.[78] To some extent, Fiedler captures McCullers's political sensitivity and class consciousness, which are fundamental elements of proletarian literature. However, this novel was not classified as a proletarian novel by contemporary critics of McCullers. For instance, Chester Eisinger, the founder of American Studies at Purdue, in his 1963 book *Fictions of the Forties* contends that '[a] peripheral matter in this novel is the way in which Mrs. McCullers treats social problems.'[79] Stressing that McCullers's novel does not make a deep exploration of social issues, Eisinger's understanding of proletarian literature is similar to Mike Gold's interpretation of Proletarian Realism. According to Gold, who is widely accepted as the 'Father of Proletarian Literature', Proletarian Realism 'deals with the real conflicts of men and women who work for a living. It has nothing to do with the sickly mental states of the idle Bohemians, their subtleties, their sentimentalities, their fine-spun affairs.'[80] In summary, he criticises the romanticised and emotional depictions in working-class novels and suggests writings grounded instead in the harsh realities of industrialisation and the struggles of the working-class. Conventionally, most works by renowned proletarian novelists in the early twentieth century, for example, *A World To Win* (1935) by Jack Conroy, the *U.S.A. Trilogy* (1930-1936) by John Dos

[78] Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion Books, 1960), p. 453.
[79] Chester Eisinger, *Fictions of the Forties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 251.
[80] Folsom, p. 206.

Passos, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by John Steinbeck, *World's End* (1940) by Upton Sinclair, and *Native Son* (1940) by Richard Wright, concentrate on working-class individuals' experiences of socioeconomic and political inequalities, and the daily struggles or collective actions of the proletariat, such as protests, strikes, or revolutionary activities. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Jake and Dr Copeland, two political agitators, are not portrayed as central characters like those characters in typical proletarian novels, such as Larry Donovan in Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited.* Additionally, the narrative does not develop around these agitators. In describing parallelly various socioeconomically marginalised individuals' emotional and psychological experiences, interpersonal relationships, and identity formation rather than collective political engagement in the revolutionary struggles for social justice, this novel does not explicitly align with traditional proletarian works.[81]

In a unique way, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* reflects the impact of labour activism and social changes in the 1930s. According to Anthony J. Badger, a British specialist in twentieth-century American history,

> The 1930s more and more seemed a heroic golden age of labour activism. Workers seemed to be part of an anti-capitalist mass movement: industrially militant, tackling employers head-on in ferocious strikes; politically radical, responding to Communist and Socialist leadership, and acting as a powerful force for social justice in the Democratic Party.[82]

However, unlike typical proletarian novels that reflected the 'golden age of labour activism' in the 1930s by depicting workers' active role in the capital-labour conflict from a macropolitical perspective, McCullers's novel explores personal experiences of grappling with capitalist system of oppression. As Wilson Kaiser maintains, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is 'an exploration of

[81] In this context, socioeconomically marginalised groups include the working-class, the lower-class, and the underclass people. The terms overlap in describing socioeconomic disadvantage and differ in the severity of economic hardship, access to resources, educational attainment, and social mobility. c the most marginalised group, facing significant barriers to improving their economic and social conditions, whereas the lower class and working class encompass broader socioeconomic ranges with varying degrees of stability and opportunity.

[82] Anthony J. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-40* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), p. 118.

the intimate, private experiences through which micropolitics operates'.[83] This novel does not show open fights between the capitalists and the labours or any united revolutionary actions against oppression. Instead, it presents individual reactions to injustices and class stratification in this novel, as well as their evolving class consciousness and different forms of resistance within the power structure of a Southern mill town. Some critics and scholars, in addition to Fiedler, also understood the proletarian elements in McCullers's novel in a broader sense. Joan S. Korenman in her 1976 article, 'Carson McCullers's "Proletarian Novel"', observes the novel's display of subtle and intricate issues related to socioeconomic matters by discussing the novel's 'setting, characterization, and plot development', which, she states, 'are all shaped by McCullers' disapproval of materialistic values and often reflect, too, her objections to capitalism'.[84] González Groba also notes that McCullers in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* 'expresses a strongly proletarian sympathy and denounces the oppression of American capitalism'.[85] In this novel, McCullers not only depicts marginalised proletarian characters and the impact of class division on power relationships but delves into human conditions in the Jim Crow South during the Great Depression, addressing issues such as poverty, labour exploitation, economic turmoil, social injustice, and spiritual isolation. Accordingly, her broader exploration of identities and power relations extends far beyond the scope of proletarian literature.

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter not only manifests proletarian novels' concern with the plight and disunity of workers and poor labourers, which will be discussed in due course, but also contains some elements of anti-fascism in the delineation of characters' reactions to the pervasive threat of fascist ideology and actions. As three academic historians, Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, illuminate in *Encyclopedia of the American Left*,

One of the most important and certainly the most popular policies of the post-1920 Left,

[83] Wilson Kaiser, 'The Micropolitics of Fascism in Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*', *Genre*, 47 (2014), 285–307 (p. 290).
[84] Joan S. Korenman, 'Carson McCullers's "Proletarian Novel"', *Studies in the Humanities, 5*(1976), 8-13 (p. 8).
[85] González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and the racial problem', p. 66.

> antifascism made possible in the late 1930s and World War II years an unprecedented coalition of Left sympathizers, from middle-class intellectuals to blue-collar immigrants. For a short time, it brought Communists a respectability they had not previously sought, and which would remain out of their grasp afterward.[86]

The last sentence of the quotation indicates the short-lived respect for Communists among leftists more widely in the late 1930s. Notably, following the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939, a nonaggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, there grew a sentiment of disillusion shared by many left-wing intellectuals, including McCullers. As will be discussed in the upcoming sections, McCullers's disenchantment with Communism is evident in her narration of the unsuccessful struggles of Dr Copeland and Jake, who dogmatically employ Marxist theories to address class and race issues and fail to recognise the gap between communist ideals and their real-world applications.

McCullers intentionally incorporates particular dates in her fictional plots to build connections with specific real historical and political events. She sets the novel between the spring of 1938 and August of 1939, a period when the Great Depression was approaching its end and the influence of Nazi Fascism continued to intensify, pushing WWII to the brink of eruption. For example, Part Three begins on 'August 21, 1939, Morning', two days before the pivotal moment in history when Stalin agreed to Hitler's proposal to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (281). McCullers demonstrates the nuanced responses of different characters to the rise of Nazi Fascism on an everyday level, which mingles the fear of fascism with personal experiences of oppression. Jake perceives the depth of socioeconomic inequality in American society and stresses, '[a]t least one-third of all Southerners live and die no better off than the lowest peasant in any European Fascist state' (255). Dr Copeland understands fascism as a form of racism and maintains, 'So far as I and my people are concerned the South is Fascist now and always has been. […] The Nazis

[86] *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, ed. by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas 1st edn (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990), p. 46.

rob the Jews of their legal, economic, and cultural life. Here the Negro has always been deprived of these' (257). Mick's Jewish neighbour, Harry Minowitz, also expresses his concerns about the expansion of Nazi Fascism and foresees America's potential tendency towards developing into a 'Militant Democracy or Fascism' (210). In an interview, McCullers publicly defined *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* as 'an ironic parable of Fascism,' connecting her characters' experiences of oppression with 'the nature of government, the failure of democracy, and the condition of freedom' in 1930s America, specifically the South.[87] As Kaiser maintains, 'the characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* engage fascism through the diffuse matrix of emotion and experience that comprises their specific world.'[88] In other words, the main characters' reactions to the expansion of fascism and various forms of social injustice are influenced by their individual experiences and identities shaped within the broader historical, cultural, and political context.

To illustrate the diverse experiences of marginalisation among people during a period of economic and political turbulence, McCullers employs a tripartite structure, with most chapters in each part (except for the chapters focusing on the relationship between Singer and Antonapoulos) respectively narrated from the point of view of four characters, Mick, Dr Copeland, Jake, and Biff, who represent different marginalised groups in the novel. To highlight their different sufferings, the novel, as McCullers explains in the outline, adopts 'five distinct styles of writing — one for each of the main characters who are treated subjectively and an objective, legendary style for the mute', to present 'the inner psychic rhythms of the character from whose point of view it is written'.[89] McCullers's use of the third person narrative in this novel, providing insight into the characters' inner world, helps examine the connection between individuals' experiences and social injustices. In addition, she describes interrelations between

[87] Oliver Evans, *The Ballad of Carson McCullers* (London: Peter Owen, 1965), p. 43; Rich, p. 109.
[88] kaiser, p. 290.
[89] McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*', p. 125.

characters as 'the spokes of a wheel — with Singer representing the center point'.[90] This wheel-like relationship structure serves to present the characters' plight in a parallel style, as Joseph R. Millichap notes, 'allow[ing] Mrs. McCullers to consider those particular social ills which plague her characters: Blount provides a connection with economic exploitation, Copeland with racial prejudice, Mick with the alienation of youth'.[91] The sections below, resonating with key concerns of proletarian literature and anti-fascist writings during the tumultuous 1930s, will explore main characters' struggles within socio-political context of mid-twentieth-century America, delving into themes of classism, racism, sexism and homophobia.

The power system of class stratification: 'The world was divided into two classes, the poor and the rich'[92]

McCullers's view on class is shaped by her left-wing political stance within the 1930s social and political context. As Korenman maintains, 'The novel's setting offers us early and frequent evidence of the political cast of McCullers' thinking.'[93] McCullers's understanding of the Marx's concept of class division is reflected through speeches by Dr Copeland and Jake Blount, two followers of Marxism in the novel. At the Christmas party of the African American community, Dr Copeland interprets Marx's notion of class to his people: 'He said that the world was divided into two classes, the poor and the rich' (161). The original text of this — 'Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat' — was declared by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the opening section of their 1848 political pamphlet, "The Communist Manifesto".[94] In this

[90] Ibid., p. 125.
[91] Joseph R. Millichap, 'The Realistic Structure of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 17(1971): 11-17(p. 12).
[92] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 161.
[93] Korenman, p. 8.
[94] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), trans. by Samuel Moore (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 220.

social class division, the capitalists control the means of production, while workers sell their labour to make a living. Marx and Engels emphasise the class conflicts arising from the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletariat within the capitalist system. Besides introducing Marxists' fundamental idea of class struggle in a capitalist society, Dr Copeland also notes that

> [Marx] did not divide the world into Negroes or white people or Chinese — to Karl Marx it seemed that being one of the millions of poor people or one of the few rich was more important to a man than the color of his skin (161).

Copeland's words underscore Marx's examination of class issues, which holds that people's economic class status matters more than their racial identity. Jake and Dr Copland, both apply Marx's class theory to address oppressions and exploitations experienced by different groups of marginalised people — African American people and white workers. This detail, as will be explored in the next section, demonstrates McCullers's observation of other forms of oppression, such as racism, based on Marx's binary framework of class.

In the opening pages of the novel, McCullers describes the layout of a typical southern mill town: 'On the main street there were several blocks of two-and three-story shops and business offices. But the largest buildings in the town were the factories, which employed a large percentage of the population (5). She then describes the economic and emotional condition of the workers: 'These cotton mills were big and flourishing and most of the workers in the town were very poor. Often in the faces along the streets, there was the desperate look of hunger and of loneliness' (5). The striking contrast between 'big and flourishing' factories and poor workers with a 'desperate look of hunger and of loneliness' indicates the large profits accumulated by factory owners and the economic plight and mental distress experienced by workers. According to Carr, McCullers 'had become increasingly aware of what she considered the weaknesses of her country's capitalistic system' after 'view[ing] with distress the squalid conditions and

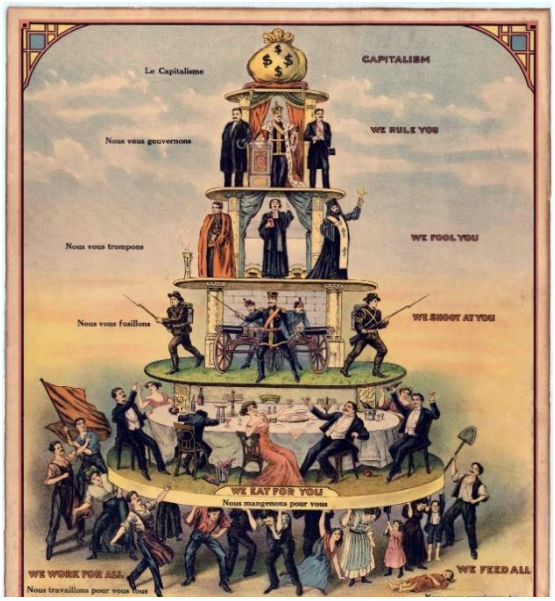
pervading hopelessness among the people of the mill district' in her hometown.[95] These 'squalid conditions and pervading hopelessness' in the mill district are illustrated in the novel:

> The streets became narrow and unpaved … Groups of dingy, hungry-looking children called to each other and played games. The two-room shacks, each one like the other, were rotten and unpainted. The stink of food and sewage mingled with the dust in the air (53).

The poverty, hunger, and poor living conditions of working-class families give a glimpse of the plight of working-class people, which not only establishes the setting of the novel but exhibits McCullers's proletarian sympathy and understanding of class division.

The 'Pyramid of Capitalist System' — an American socialist propaganda caricature published in 1911 in the *Industrial Worker*, an IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) newspaper — vividly illustrates the hierarchical system of capitalist rule in the twentieth century and is aligned with Marxist critiques of class inequality and exploitation (see Picture 1).[96] As laborarts.org describes,

> At the top of this pyramid sits the ruling class of the state, right below which stands the religious leaders, preaching and entreating the working masses to accept their ordained fate. The police and militia on the next tier enforce the obedience and protect the capital from 'the people.' Beneath the military sit the bourgeoisie, who exploit the toilers and profit from their labour power. At the bottom are the workers and other labourers who produce all things fundamental to human life and keep the continuation of this system.[97]



Picture 1. 'Pyramid of Capitalist System'

This powerful political cartoon, satirically presenting the hierarchical power structure of capitalist society, illustrates the inherent oppressions and injustices in a capitalist society. At the bottom

[95] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, pp. 118-20; 116; 127- 28.
[96] IWW: Industrial Workers of the World is a labour organisation founded in Chicago in 1905 by representatives of 43 groups. The IWW union in the US was a prominent labor union known for its radicalism and activism during the early twentieth century.
[97] IWW, 'Pyramid of Capitalist System', in Nedeljkovich, Brashick and Kuharich, *Industrial Worker*, (Cleveland: The International Publishing Co., 1911).
Also see IWW, "Pyramid of Capitalist System" [online]
<https://www.laborarts.org/collections/item.cfm%3Fitemid=428.html> [accessed 31 August, 2023].

layer of this structure stand male and female workers and other labourers, including child labourers, supporting the whole capitalist system. Their painful facial expressions sharply contrast with the merry faces of people in the upper tiers. This visual representation of a multi-layered class structure provides a useful framework for exploring class hierarchies and multiple layers of oppression that isolate and suppress 'the working masses' in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

According to the Pyramid of Capitalism, five principal characters in the fictional small mill town are posited at the bottom layer. People's class status influences their personal and social identity. McCullers describes their different residential districts: Biff lives upstairs above his café on the main street; Mick resides with her big family and about seven boarders in an old three-storied house on the north side of town, a poor white district; Singer rents one room from the Kelly family; Dr Copeland rents a house 'built solidly of brick and stucco' in a 'Negro section', where other houses 'in the neighborhood had a miserable look' (61); Jake settles down in the mill district. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* describes 'the measures to be taken when the plague appeared in a town' at the end of the seventeenth century, including 'a strict spatial partitioning', ubiquitous 'observations', and 'a system of permanent registration', which work together to constitute a 'compact model of the disciplinary mechanism'.[98] The separation of the main characters' residential location in McCullers's novel echoes the 'spatial partitioning' measure noted by Foucault, which metaphorically indicates that everyone is confined to his/her social layer and is prevented from crossing the boundaries. During the Great Depression, social mobility was further limited by class solidification and economic decline. Considering that the five protagonists in the novel, portrayed as representatives of lower-middle-class whites, self-employed small businessmen, skilled workers, and middle-class African Americans, are not the

[98] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195-96.

poorest or the most vulnerable people in society, they still hope to change their status and make their way up. However, they are all confined by class boundaries (including Dr Copeland, who also faces Jim Crow housing segregation), and all of them face the threat of becoming poorer during the Great Depression.

Apart from the districts where the five characters reside, there are 'rich parts' and 'slums' in this town. McCullers chooses several characters to observe these two areas to show the sharp contrast between the living conditions of the rich and the poor. Since none of the five main characters has interactions with people from the 'rich parts', the exact life of the rich remains unseen (though not unheard). Mick sneaks into rich families' yards on summer nights to listen to music because every house in the 'rich parts' owns a radio, which her family can't afford. However, the luxurious life of the rich is beyond the reach of her vision, and she can only access the boundary between the rich and the poor by sitting under 'beautiful shrubbery' near the window. The situation in the slums is also seen through other characters' eyes. Jake visits the slums and views 'a strip of wasteland bordered by rows of rotted shacks, and somewhere near a mill, a cotton gin, or a bottling plant' (130). Dr Copeland and Singer visit 'two-room shacks that housed as many as twelve or fourteen persons' and witness people who were 'helpless while an old man strangled with pneumonia' (115). Cramped living spaces and sickness without medication vividly evoke the miserable living conditions of the slum dwellers. As the story approaches its end, the Kelly family has lost their house and they are 'mighty near as poor as factory folks'; 13-year-old Mick becomes a child labourer by working as a sales girl at a ten-cent-store; Biff's 'business [is always] losing money'; Jake has been broke for a long time; and Dr Copeland has to stop working because he is seriously ill with tuberculosis and 'there is not a good hospital for him to go here because he is black' (204; 194; 299). In short, there is less upward mobility in the novel than there is a downward tendency. The protagonists, as representatives of the lower middle class and working poor, are standing on the edge of becoming members of the

underclass.[99]

Jake is characterised as a working-class intellectual and an itinerant agitator, who travels from one town to another to spread the truth about capitalist exploitation and to organise labour protests. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher and political theorist, introduces the idea of the 'organic intellectual'.[100] 'Organic intellectuals', unlike 'traditional' professional intellectuals 'whose position in the interstices of society has a certain inter-class aura', stand for 'the thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class'.[101] The working class, as Gramsci points out, is capable of developing from within its ranks its own organic intellectuals, who 'are defined on the one hand by their role in production and in the organisation of work and on the other by their "directive" political role, focused on the Party'.[102] Jake plays the role of an organic intellectual of the working class in the novel, actively contributing to the mission of awakening his coworkers' class consciousness and defending the interests of the workers. In a similar vein, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, an American labour leader and activist, delves into the lives and activities of labour agitators in the 1930s and notes that the work of the agitator is 'a long process of stimulation, a long process of creating in [workers'] class spirit, class respect, class consciousness'.[103] Flynn's argument not only underlines class consciousness as a key concern among the agitators, along with other factors related to class identity, but indicates the challenges they might encounter in helping workers find their position within the hierarchical capitalist society. As will be elucidated below, Jake faces challenges and

[99] The term underclass is employed by sociologists such as Dennis L. Gilbert to describe the most disadvantaged socio-economic demographic with the least access to scarce resources. Gilbert proposed a class system in America with six distinct social classes including capitalist class, upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class, working poor and underclass.
Refer to Dennis L. Gilbert, *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality* (London: SAGE Publications Inc., 2018), p. 334.
[100] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 3.
[101] Ibid., p. 4.
[102] Ibid., p. 4.
[103] Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 'The Truth about the Paterson Strike' in *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*, ed. by Joyce L. Kornbluh (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), p. 217.

constant failure in his effort to stimulate class consciousness among his fellow workers in the mill town for both personal and external reasons. In narrating Jake's experiences, McCullers underlines the challenges faced by grassroots agitators in spreading the truth about capitalist exploitation including economic hardships, anti-communist sentiment, limited access to education, and internal division.

McCullers's characterization of Jake calls attention to the autodidactic political views held by some grassroots agitators and their impractical actions during the Great Depression and the post-war era. Jake is portrayed in two different ways: as a drunkard and as a radical socialist. When drunk, he often behaves like a desperate prisoner trapped in a cell, 'butting his head against the side of this brick wall and hitting with his fists'; when sober, he reads books by 'Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen and such writers as them' and agitates workers to protest (22; 59).[104] The more he reads about the hidden truth of exploitation, the angrier he becomes at some workers' ignorance of the capitalists' 'poisonous lies' (256). In the novel, Jake is always drunk and pays on credit at Biff's café and as a result, Biff's wife, Alice, regards him as a troublemaker, calling him a 'sponger' and 'a bum and a freak' (12). Jake's drinking serves as an outlet for his discontent and frustration, which, as discussed, stems from his inability to instil class consciousness in his fellow workers. It is worth noting that Marx and Veblen held different views on solving conflicts between capitalists and workers. Veblen, a reformist, turned to Darwinism and 'used the Darwinian concepts of gradual and cumulative change'.[105] However, Marx, a revolutionary, assumed that workers, through rational thought, would comprehend the contradictory nature of capitalism and inevitably want to overthrow it. In a sense, the contrasting economic and sociological perspectives of Marx and Veblen may also be a factor that generates Jake's confusion

[104] Thorstein Veblen's *Engineers and The Price System* (1919) contributed to the rise of the technocracy movement in the United States in the early 1930s for dealing with the crisis of the Great Depression and outlined a plan for a 'soviet of technicians', advocating the transferal of power from capitalists to engineers and skilled workers.
[105] Idus Murphee, 'Darwinism in Thorstein Veblen's economics', *Social Research*, 26.3 (1959), 311–24 (p. 315).

and frustration. Further, McCullers reveals the partiality of Jake's self-taught knowledge of Marxist theories through his statements about capital, surplus value, and exploitation. Jake emphasises the wealth gap between the mill owners and the workers caused by capitalist exploitation in a talk with Singer: 'The bastards who own these mills are millionaires. While the doffers and carders and all the people behind the machines who spin and weave the cloth can hardly make enough to keep their guts quiet' (58). Jake criticises the gap between poor workers and rich capitalists but does not straighten out the root of this economic inequality. McCullers illustrates his dogmatism in another conversation between Jake and Singer: 'I know every word printed on every page. To begin with, I like words. Dialectic materialism — Jesuitical prevarication — Jake rolled the syllables in his mouth with loving solemnity — "teleological propensity"' (59). Marxist ideas, with their complex theoretical foundations, require a certain level of education and intellectual engagement. Due to his limited education, Jake can remember set phrases of communist ideology but does not grasp the deeper meaning of the theories, which weakens his ability to promote social changes.

Besides noting Jake's inadequate background knowledge and anachronistic political beliefs as a grassroots agitator, McCullers stresses his impractical practices in spreading Marxist ideas and organising strikes. Jake is described as a radical who advocates ardently that America needs reform:

> I've done things that when I look back at them they don't seem rational. Once I started an organization myself. I picked out twenty lint-heads and talked to them until I thought they *knew*. Our motto was one word: Action. Huh! We meant to start riots — stir up all the big trouble we could (133).

Jack's methods of resistance have proved to be irrational. In a simple logic, Jake perceives engaging with the labour movement as starting 'riots' and making 'big trouble[s]' in the workplace. After the setback of his first labour organisation, he begins to 'go round telling the truth', like an evangelist (136). He writes radical signs, like 'Workers! …When Will We Unite

and Demand Our Share?' or sends pamphlets and letters (341). However, Jake's anachronistic political propaganda proves to be of little avail because his fellow workers lack the necessary educational background to understand complex Marxist concepts and some, like most Americans during the period, are overtly and increasingly anti-communist. As one of the mill workers stresses, 'If there's anything I hate worse than a nigger it's a Red. […] He oughta be in jail. That's where. The Red Bolshivik' (244). The hostility among the workers against Communists is one of the challenges that undermines Jake's efforts to get support for his ideology in the workplace. This also shines a light on the ineffective role of labour organisations in inculcating Marxist ideas in the minds of workers. As Badger notes, the Unemployed Councils led by the Communist Party 'had little time to educate politically their clients' and 'remain narrow cadre organizations that do not have day to day contact with the masses'.[106] He further points out that Communist Party USA, for example, added few party members because of their work with the jobless. The radicals found it difficult to sustain the organisation. Less than six months after the notable March 1930 demonstrations, Communist officials were reporting that 'organized councils are almost non-existent' and 'the Unemployed Councils are dying out'.[107] Further, as Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes underline, '[a]t its height in 1939 the American Communist Party had only 100,000 members.' [108] In this context, Jake is potentially facing a significant problem of 'narrow cadre organizations', like those itinerant radicals in the American South during the 1930s. He tells Singer about his lack of contact with Communists: 'You can bum around for years and not meet Communists. Around here there's no office where you can go up and say you want to join — and if there is I never heard of it' (132). Jake's words further illustrate the poor performance of union organisations and the disconnection of the CPUSA with grassroots activists, which have driven

[106] Badger, p. 40.
[107] Ibid., p. 40.
[108] Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself (New York: Twayne Publishers. 1992),

Jake into a cul-de-sac where he is unable to join a revolutionary mass movement of industrial workers and finds no solution to realise his political aspirations. McCullers' portrayal of Jake illustrates both internal (personal) and external (societal) challenges faced by workers in their struggle against capitalists, which connects this novel to broader socio-political movements of the 1930s, particularly the American Communist Movement and the American labour movement.

Jake's vain efforts to unite mill workers to fight for equal rights also reflect the historical decline in the militancy of local grassroots protests towards the end of the Great Depression. In *Poor People's Movements*, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward explore several protest movements in the United States that erupted among lower-class groups between the 1930s and the 1960s. In a chapter about the Industrial Workers' Movement, they bring to the forefront the external and internal factors that caused divisions among workers:

> These divisions had their roots in features of the American economy and in the characteristics of the American working population, as well as in deliberate practices of employers designed to exacerbate divisions in order to turn workers against each other. [109]

During the Great Depression, employers' strikebreaking tactics made workers turn against each other and undermined their protesting power. In the later pages of Part One, McCullers illustrates the disunity among mill workers in the town by describing a conversation between Jake and three mill workers. When Jake asks them, 'You ever have any strikes here?', a tall man answers, 'They had one of these here strikes around six years ago' (57). Then another worker with a 'sore on his mouth', explains the workers' appeals and their loose organisation in the strike: 'Well — they just quit work because they wanted twenty cents an hour. There was about three hundred did it. They just hung around the streets all day' (57). Using 'they' instead of 'we', these mill workers separate themselves from those workers who struck for better pay six years ago, indicating that

[109] Frances Fox Piven & Richard Cloward. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Random House, Inc.,1979), p. 99.

‘they’ are no longer employed at the mill. Then the second worker describes the mill owners’ countermeasure against the strike: ‘So the mill sent out trucks, and in a week the whole town was swarming with folks come here to get a job’ (57). McCullers reveals the identity of three workers as strikebreakers by having one of them (the tall man) assert, ‘I was one of those who came in on the trucks’ (57). She then describes three workers’ responses to Jake’s denunciation of capitalist exploitation with ‘laughter and catcalls’ (58). Having strikebreakers discuss the ultimately fruitless strike with a detached and suspicious attitude, McCullers highlights the disunity and futile communication among mill workers, driven by capital: significant obstacles for grassroots agitators like Jake in organising protests and strikes.

As explained previously, class stratification, rooted in people’s socioeconomic status, structures social relations and determines who holds privilege and power over others. The ‘Pyramid of Capitalist System’, the propaganda caricature presented earlier, can be seen as a binary system, in which ‘the working masses’ stand at the bottom layer, supporting the whole capitalist system. Notably, among the oppressed groups in the novel, there are power distinctions based on factors such as education, occupation, race, gender, and social status. In an ironic touch, McCullers describes, in a dream Singer has, an imagined hierarchical power structure, denoting unbalanced power dynamics among McCullers’s marginalised characters based on their pursuit of spiritual sustenance rather than conventional power relationships. At the end of Part Two, Singer sees in his dream some people kneeling at a pyramid of stone steps:

> Antonapoulos kneeled at the top of these steps. He was naked and he fumbled with something that he held above his head and gazed at it as though in prayer. He knelt halfway down the steps. He was naked and cold and he could not take his eyes from Antonapoulos and the thing he held above him. Behind him, on the ground he felt the one with the moustache and the girl and the black man and the last one. They knelt naked and he felt their eyes on him. And behind them there were uncounted crowds of kneeling people in the darkness (186).

According to the context, ‘the moustache’ in Singer’s dream stands for Jake, ‘the girl’ for Mick, ‘the black man’ for Dr Copeland, ‘the last one’ for Biff, and the ‘uncounted crowds’ for other

socioeconomically disadvantage people in the novel. All of the five main characters, as well as Antonapoulos, posit on the bottom tier of the pyramid of the capitalist system. Among them, Antonapoulos, an illiterate and disabled Greek immigrant with no marketable skills, is among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable characters in the novel. Ironically, in Singer's dream, Antonapoulos, who kneels at the top tier, holding something (possibly a religious icon) and praying, seems to exercise power over those in the lower tiers, including Singer, who crouches at the midpoint of the steps looking up at him, and other characters, who represent different disadvantaged groups, kneeling behind 'deaf-mute' Singer on the lower steps. By describing how people with weaker power idolise those people with the least power, McCullers outlines the power dynamics among the main characters, which is reversed from a typical hierarchical power structure based on class distinctions in a capitalist society. On the surface, the inverted power relationships among the characters mirror the main characters' imaginative spiritual dependence on one another, particularly their quest to find a vessel for emotions and ideas. However, beneath the surface, the reversal indicates the slim hope that they have in realising their dreams and aspirations.

The imaginary pyramid-like power structure in Singer's dream, as well as the wheel-like relationship structure centred around Singer, serves to demonstrate power dynamics among the main characters and highlight their idealistic spiritual reliance on less powerful individuals. As McCullers argues in the outline of the novel:

> There is a deep need in man to express himself by creating some unifying principle or God. A personal God created by a man is a reflection of himself and in substance this God is most often inferior to his creator.[110]

Singer, who is physically more vulnerable than other characters, is fancifully imagined as a God-like figure by people in the town: some assume that 'he knew the ways of spirits come back from

[110] McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*', p. 136.

the dead'; 'A certain piece-worker claimed that he had worked with the mute at another mill somewhere else in the state'; the rich include him as a rich man and the poor consider him as 'a poor man like themselves' (191). As Sarah Gleeson-White maintains, 'That Singer uses Antonapoulos as his mirror, as a blank canvas, is enhanced by the fact that Singer both writes and busily signs to Antonapoulos although he knows that the latter can neither read nor understand sign language."[111] Antonapoulos is a non-responsive mirror or a 'blank canvas' to Singer, while Singer, according to Delma Eugene Presley, is 'a dead god' to other characters.[112] Presley observes that 'those who trust in [Singer], who believe in the redemptive potential of communication, deceive themselves' since Singer 'does not understand a single word they say'.[113] Pointing out the townspeople's self-deceiving imaginations about Singer's power, Presley reveals the futility of communication between Singer and the other characters. Due to Singer's deaf-mutism, people project onto him their own needs, much like Singer idolizes Antonapoulos. This understanding of Singer's role in the novel follows McCullers's explanation of Singer as 'the symbol of isolation and thwarted expression'.[114] By highlighting Singer's deaf-mutism from the very beginning of the novel and subsequently depicting his inability to comprehend or respond to other characters' confessions, McCullers interweaves her theme of the futility of communication with that of spiritual isolation.

In another light, some critics examine the political allusions of the pyramidal structure in Singer's dream to uncover the relationship between the capitalist government and the disadvantaged individuals in the 1930s. For example, Rich suggests that 'the dream tableau … may … be construed to designate the democratic hierarchy' and maintains that 'Government in this parable, therefore, is represented by a deaf mute, and the instrument of oppression is the

[111] Sarah Gleeson-White, *Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 56.
[112] Delma Eugene Presley, 'Carson McCullers and the South,' *The Georgia Review*, 28 (1974), 19-32 (p. 28).
[113] Ibid., p. 28.
[114] McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*', p. 165.

sound of silence, an image which McCullers introduces in her opening chapter where no word is spoken.' [115] According to Rich, the deaf-mutism of Antonapoulos and Singer serves as a metaphor for the American government's passivity toward social issues. Antonapoulos is described as a lazy, selfish, and rude Greek American, who only cares about drinking, eating, and a 'certain solitary pleasure' (3). In Singer's dream tableau, Antonapoulos kneels at the top tier of the pyramid of steps, 'fumbling with something that he held above his head' (186). This 'something', Rich suggests, 'is the Constitution of the United States'. [116] In this sense, Antonapoulos represents the government. McCullers, in an ironic touch, thus underscores the government's indifference to the plight of the disadvantaged people by delineating Antonapoulos's deaf-mutism, self-centredness, and lack of interaction with other characters. By contrast, Singer, portrayed as an intelligent, patient, and understanding man, represents, according to Rich, 'the arm of government', who devotedly serves the government (Antonapoulos) and engages in the lives of common people. After Antonapoulos is sent to the asylum, Singer moves to live with the Kellys as a lodger; he eats his meals at Biff's New York Café, where he meets various types of people; he is invited to attend the Christmas party held by African Americans; he walks around the whole town, from the white workers' 'squalid' mill district to the Black community, and then from the neighborhoods of the rich to 'the four main business blocks'(169). However, Singer's limited understanding of human conditions prevent him from offering solutions to the social problems he inevitably encounters. For example, in his letter to Antonapoulos, he expresses his perplexity at why the other four main characters, who visit him at the same time that day, do not communicate with each other, sitting 'like they were from different cities' (184). Furthermore, Singer's mutism confines him to the role of a mere recipient rather than an active mediator of communication, which insinuates American

[115] Rich, p. 110.
[116] Ibid., p. 112.

government's ineffectiveness and indifference towards the needs of the socioeconomically disadvantaged masses in the 1930s.

Four main characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* articulate their class, racial, and gender problems to Singer, each focusing on their personal dreams and aspirations while remaining indifference to the plight of other groups. This wheel-like power structure reflects McCullers's awareness of the limitation of a single-axis framework for addressing diverse forms of oppression. According to Ashley J. Bohrer, 'a Marxist understanding of exploitation is founded on the binary opposition of capitalist and proletarian, making it incapable of thinking through the complex and nuanced organizations of exploitation and oppression.'[117] Jake's remark about the rich and the poor distinction, as noted at the beginning of this section, is grounded on Marxist binary structures which attribute all forms of domination to class oppression. However, social class is not, of course, the sole factor that influences people's experiences of injustice. As will be further analysed below, class status intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as race, gender and sexuality, which shape the experiences of the main characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

The intersection of race and class: 'And the Negro. Do not forget the Negro.'[118]

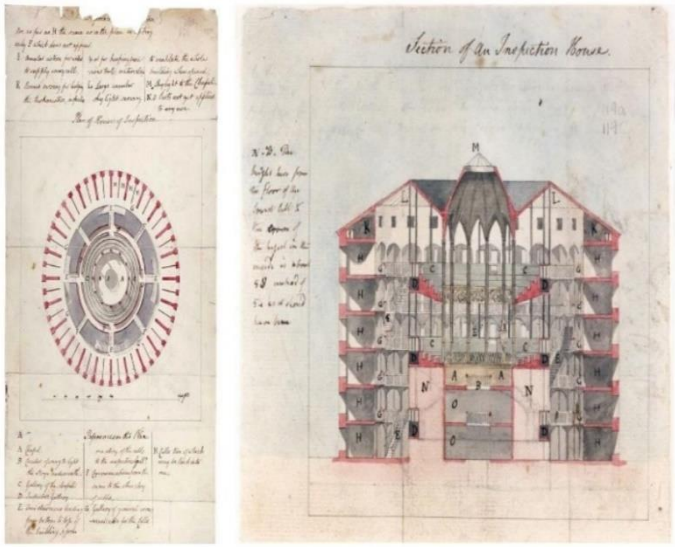
In 'The Twelve Mortal Men,' the coda of *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, McCullers pictures a chain gang working at the Forks Falls Road:

> The gang is made up of twelve men, all wearing black and white striped prison suits, and chained at the ankles. There is a guard, with a gun, his eyes drawn to red slits by the glare. The gang works all the day long, arriving huddled in the prison cart soon after daybreak, and being driven off again in the gray August twilight. […] Just twelve mortal men, seven of them black and five of them white boys from this county. Just twelve mortal men who are together.[119]

[117] Ashley J. Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality under Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2020), p. 159.
[118] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 257.
[119] Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café, and Other Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951), p. 176.

McCullers's metaphorical presentation of the confinement and integration of black and white prisoners in a segregated Southern town implies how poor whites and African Americans in the early twentieth century were bound together like inmates under similar repressions and exploitation. The coda is not closely connected with McCullers's themes of unrequited love and spiritual loneliness among individual characters in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* but rather exhibits her concern with broader aspects of racial relationships and the human condition. This resonates with Wright's praise of McCullers's 'astonishing humanity' in her empathetic portrayal of African American characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. This section concentrates on exploring how intersections of class and race shape the experiences of her African American characters, as well as the impact of pre-Civil Rights racial ideologies and the labour movement on characters in the fictional Southern mill town.

If the oppressed white and Black workers and labourers in the novel are like prisoners in a chain gang, McCullers's Southern mill town can be compared to a prison, a space with ubiquitous surveillance. Foucault compares modern mechanisms of power to Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, an annular building with an inspection tower at its centre from which each cell can be monitored. As he explains, 'Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls



Picture 2: The plan of the Panopticon Penitentiary (1791)

prevent him from coming into contact with his companions.'[120] In this structure, inmates in individual cells are separated from each other but exposed to thorough observations by the supervisor (See Picture 2).[121] Therefore, this panopticon creates a limited visibility environment where inmates can only be observed by the supervisor, while they are prohibited from communicating with one another. Speaking of ubiquitous surveillance in the novel, the courthouse sitting in the town centre has a similar function to the watchtower in a panopticon, which has supervisory power to oversee people constantly. The court is like 'a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned'.[122] The erection of the courthouse warns people about their constant supervision and punishments for law-breaking. Several characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* have a direct or indirect connection with the court. For example, Antonapoulos, before being sent to an insane asylum in Chicago, falls ill and commits many 'infringements of the law' (7). To keep Antonapoulos out of jail, Singer has to use 'all of his efforts and money' for bail and fines (7). In theory, courts exist to enact justice, to guarantee liberty, to enhance social order. However, between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the American Supreme Court continued to protect white supremacy at the price of violating African Americans' equal rights by enacting a series of racial segregation laws, known as the 'Jim Crow laws', among which the Plessy v. Ferguson verdict in 1896, for instance, upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation under the 'separate but equal' doctrine. In the early twentieth century racism kept growing and the 'Southern Way' became the 'American Way' in race relations.[123] Between the 1920s and 1930s, Jim Crow laws were elaborated and further expanded. In his Christmas speech, Dr Copeland articulates,

Today we are not put up on the platforms and sold at the courthouse square. But we are

[120] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (London: Penguin Books,1991), p. 201.
[121] Willey Reveley, *Plan of the Panopticon Penitentiary*, 1791, Bentham MS Box 119a, 121, University College London Special Collections, accessed 11 November 2023. https://www.myleszhang.org/2019/11/11/jeremy-bentham-panopticon-animation/
[122] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 173.
[123] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), p. 135.

> forced to sell our strength, our time, our souls during almost every hour that we live. We have been freed from one kind of slavery only to be delivered into another. Is this freedom? Are we yet free men? (160)

Dr Copeland's speech not only reminds his race, as well as readers, of the dark history of slavery but exposes the court's role in supporting enslaving African Americans before the abolishment of slavery in 1865 and the continuation of state-mandated racism in the Jim Crow era. Additionally, by emphasizing the exploitation and oppression in a new form of slavery in America and raising rhetorical questions from Dr Copeland's mouth ('Is this freedom? Are we yet free men?'), McCullers questions the principle of liberty in American democracy and brings to the forefront African American people's intersectional experiences of oppression, encompassing both class exploitation and racial discrimination during the 1930s.

Besides providing a visual representation of economic exploitation, The Pyramid of Capitalism displays power dynamics and elements of hierarchical surveillance in a capitalist society, in which 'the ruling class of the state', 'the religious leaders', 'the police and militia', and 'the bourgeoisie' hold the power of supervision over 'the working masses'.[124] In Singer's dream, four main characters and 'uncounted crowds of kneeling people in the darkness' are depicted as worshipers, kneeling at a pyramid of steps, all naked. The nakedness of all these characters symbolise the visibility and vulnerability of 'the working masses', who are under constant surveillance and exploitation by the oppressors.[125] The visibility of the objects of surveillance ensures the effectiveness of control by the guards, or 'the police and militia' in the capitalist power structure, who, acting in the role of defending class hierarchies, constantly observe 'the working masses', 'enforce the obedience and protect the capital from "the people"'.[126] To secure the dominance of the privileged class, different categories of people

[124] See IWW, "Pyramid of Capitalist System" [online] <https://www.laborarts.org/collections/item.cfm%3Fitemid=428.html> [accessed 31 August, 2023].
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

are observed and will be punished if they violate the rules. McCullers uses two examples of police brutality to illustrate how the police and militia during the Jim Crow era defended both the interest of capitalists and white supremacy in society. William Copeland and two other young African American men are 'convicted of assault with a deadly weapon' in a group fight and are 'sentenced for nine months hard labour' (119). Later, they are tortured by white racist guards in the camp because they try to escape. Portia describes William and his friends' experience of being maltreated:

> They taken all three of them to the camp and put them in this here ice-cold room. . . Willie and them boys lay there with their backs on the floor and their feets in the air. […] Their feets swolled up and they hollered there for three days and three nights and nobody come…They sawed off both our Willie's feet…he crippled for life now (218).

In the end, justice is not delivered for these African American prisoners because relevant prison guards are simply fired instead of being meaningfully punished for their abuse of power. Notably, McCullers's description of another case of police violence shows that William and his friends' experience is not discrimination against some individuals but an example of systemic oppression. In Chapter 9 of Part Two, the white Deputy sheriff beats Dr Copeland in the courthouse and throws him into prison simply because Copeland disobeys his order to leave the courthouse and insists on meeting the judge to seek justice for William. Intentionally choosing the courthouse as the place where racial injustice happens and the police and prison guards as those who openly abuse African American citizens, regardless of their innocence, McCullers emphasises the deep-rooted, institutional, and state-sponsored racism in the South.

Both the guards in the chain gang camp in the coda of *The Ballad of the Sad Café* and the deputy sheriff in the courthouse in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* stand for the repressive power that prevents groups at the bottom of the social structure from challenging those at the top. The main effect of the panoptic observation, according to Foucault, is 'to induce in the inmate a state

of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'.[127] With a sense of being constantly watched and afraid of punishment, the oppressed groups exercise self-discipline to avoid challenging the ruling class. William, as a victim of white judicial violence, does not resist the racists' violence by seeking justice for himself. When Jake visits William, asking for information about other victims and the names of the guards, William answers, 'Listen here, white man. It seems to me like you mean to get me into trouble' (249). Portia joins in the talk and explains,

> Less us quiet down, […] But they done also impressed it on him not to — I believe you understand what us means. Naturally Willie he scared. Naturally us means to be careful — 'cause that the best thing us can do. We already got enough trouble as is (249-50).

Portia's words — 'they done also impressed it on him not to' — indicate that after being warned by the white racists not to discuss the case, William gives up taking additional action to make sure the guards receive the proper penalty. In this situation, William's self-silencing out of fear of further persecution exhibits the enforced normalisation of repressive power in him.

However, repressive power can also bring about persistent resistance. Keeping silent, besides being a way to escape punishment, is also a form of resistance. Dr. Copeland, for instance, always stays away from direct interaction with white people: 'In the streets and around white people he would keep the dignity on his face and always be silent' (73). When white men call him 'Uncle' or 'Boy', two derogatory and offensive words that perpetuate racial stereotypes, on different occasions, Dr Copeland 'would not listen, but would walk, on with the dignity in him and be silent' (73). James C. Scott calls attention to hidden and discursive acts of resistance. Silence is included as a form of everyday resistance in his book, *Weapons of the Weak*. He discusses 'silence' and 'muteness' in several places in this book as a form of peasant resistance. Here is one example:

[127] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 201.

> For many forms of peasant resistance, we have every reason to expect that actors will remain mute about their intentions. Their safety may depend on silence and anonymity; the kind of resistance itself may depend for its effectiveness on the appearance of conformity; their intentions may be so embedded in the peasant subculture and in the routine, taken-for-granted struggle to provide for the subsistence and survival of the household as to remain inarticulate. [128]

Scott's statement highlights that the peasants' covert acts of everyday resistance are driven by their need for safety and survival. Similarly, Dr Copeland's deliberate silence towards racial discrimination on different occasions embodies a culturally-formed nonviolent way of expressing dissent among African Americans in the Jim Crow South when speaking out or engaging in a direct fight might be risky or useless. In Chapter 10, Part Three, Dr Copeland's visit to the courthouse to pursue justice for William marks a change in his methods of combating the pervasive racism from keeping silent to trying to argue with the white court in person. However, his intention to challenge the court is proved to be a risky and ultimately futile action, as he is beaten and imprisoned by the white sheriff without getting a chance to meet a judge. After Dr Copeland is freed from prison, Portia warns him: 'Father, don't you know that ain't no way to help our Willie? Messing around at a white folks' courthouse? Best thing us can do is keep our mouth shut and wait' (226). Portia's words not only underscore the internalised surveillance within the African American community but reveal the reality that, during the Jim Crow era, the predominantly white-dominated courts usually upheld white supremacy, depriving African American people of their opportunities to articulate and defend their rights.

McCullers portrays Dr Copeland as a reformist who has spent about forty years finding a way to 'Better the Position of the Negro Race in Society' (156). Notably, he is shown to be influenced by late nineteenth and early twentieth-century African American racial ideologies aimed at enhancing African Americans' status within the white-dominated American society. From Booker T. Washington's 'Atlanta Compromise' speech (1895) to Henry McNeal Tuner's

[128] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press,1985), p.134.

calling on migration to Africa, and W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of the 'Talented Tenth', influential African American leaders proposed pragmatic, non-violent solutions to racial conflicts, encompassing accommodation, emigration, and self-advancement. Du Bois, an African American civil rights activist, sociologist, and educator, emphasized on the role of African American intellectuals in leading the Black masses to improve their political, economic, and cultural status. He encouraged African American people to demand racial equality persistently and insisted that besides technical training, they needed to gain their full potential through higher education and cultivate leadership internally. In the novel, Dr Copeland, clearly following Du Bois's racial ideology, maintains that through education and self-improvement, African Americans will be able to rise above their low social status in the white-dominated racist society. Like Du Bois, who, in his early years, suggested using legal and political strategies to challenge racial discrimination, Copeland initially advocates self-discipline, rather than encouraging African Americans to challenge the racist system through violence. In addition, the CPUSA started to play an active role in leading African Americans to fight against racism in the early twentieth century. For example, the International Labor Defense (ILD), the legal wing of the American Communist Party, took on the case of the Scottsboro Nine to help them seek justice, which extended communist influence among broad masses of African Americans.[129] When depicting the development of the proletariat, Marx holds that 'the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat'.[130] Marx emphasises the necessity for the workers to come into power and to reconstruct society through revolution. Dr Copeland, like Jake, is also drawn to the principles, ideas, or beliefs associated with communist ideology. However, different from Jake, who advocates the motto of 'Action', signified by 'the razing of capitalism', Dr

[129] The Scottsboro Case: On March 25,1931, nine young men were arrested when they were pulled off a train as it arrived in Paint Rock, Alabama. Just two weeks later, in the nearby town of Scottsboro, the young men — who became known as the Scottsboro Boys — were put on trial and found guilty of rape. Eight of them were sentenced to death. Quoted from Sabrina Crewe and Michael V. Uschan, *The Scottsboro Case* (Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2004), p. 4.
[130] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 20.

Copeland is a mild reformist, advocating self-discipline and self-improvement (133). As he elaborates in a conversation with Jake:

> In the face of brutality, I was prudent. Before injustice, I held my peace. I sacrificed the things in hand for the good of the hypothetical whole. I believed in the tongue instead of the fist. As an armour against oppression, I taught patience and faith in the human soul (260).

Dr Copeland's remark demonstrates his non-violent principles in the face of injustice, and oppression, which, as mentioned elsewhere in this section, is illustrated by his forms of resistance throughout the novel, including his silence in the face of racial discrimination in public, his visit to the courthouse to seek justice for William through a legal strategy, and his method of political protest shown in his plan for 'a march to Washington' (260). In brief, highlighting Dr Copeland's reformist beliefs, advocating for gradual changes within existing social, political, and economic structures, and opposing violent overthrowing of the capitalist government through violent revolutions, McCullers offers a glimpse of African American intellectuals' typical strategies to combat racism during the Jim Crow era.

In terms of racial responsibility, communist ideology, and the notion of elite education, Dr. Copeland shares similarities with Du Bois. Du Bois was a leading figure in the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People), an organisation made up of some white but mainly African American 'businessmen, social workers, teachers, writers, and journalists', to fight for Black people's political, educational, social, and economic equality and to eliminate race-based discrimination.[131] In his 1903 essay 'The Talented Tenth,' Du Bois states,

> The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.[132]

[131] Lauryn T. Minter, 'We Wear the Mask: Exploring the Talented Tenth and African American Political Philosophy in 21st Century Politics' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New Orleans, 2014), p. 88.
[132] W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Talented Tenth' in *The Negro Problem: A series of articles by representative American Negroes of today',* ed. by Booker T. Washington (New York: James Pott and Company, 1903), 31-76 (p. 33).

Du Bois's belief in the power of education and leadership of a selected group ('the Talented Tenth') aimed at inspiring African Americans to break the stereotype of Black inferiority constructed by white racists. Despite not being explicitly identified as an NAACP member, Dr Copeland preserves '[n]otes from the Association for the Advancement of Colored People' in his 'drawer at the bottom of the case,' which indicates his connection with this civil rights organisation (168). In a talk with Portia, Dr Copeland explains, 'I am always looking. I mean that if I could just find ten Negroes — ten of my own people — with spine and brains and courage who are willing to give all that they have' (67). Like Du Bois's emphasis that one in ten African American people should be educated to be leaders in different areas, Dr Copeland advocates to find a small group of intelligent and ambitious individuals from the African American community, providing them with higher education to help uplift the entire African American nation. However, Copeland is unsuccessful in his quest. Many factors lead to his fruitless attempts to find the 'Talented Tenth', as will be examined next, including his awareness of his own identity and African American children's limited accessibility to elite education in a racist cultural context in the 1930s. In a sense, the portrayal of Dr Copeland reflects McCullers's perspective on the limitations of Du Bois's approach.

Dr Copeland is depicted as a representative of middle-class African American intellectuals in the early twentieth century who struggled to maintain their cultural identity while simultaneously conforming to the dominant culture of white society. Copeland's intersectional cultural identities can be explained, in part, by Du Bois's notion of 'double consciousness'. As Du Bois observes in his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ' [o]ne ever feels his twoness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder'.[133] Du Bois's

[133] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Company 1903), p. xxiii.

concept of ‘double consciousness’ reveals what he felt to be African American intellectuals’ internal conflict and duality of identity, which can be employed to analyse Dr Copeland’s paradoxical attitude towards racism. He is consistently frustrated by the lack of awareness within the African American community and their submission to white supremacy. Meanwhile, he internalises whiteness without even noticing it himself. McCullers illustrates the internalised white supremacy among African American characters in the novel through a speech made by Dr Copeland’s father-in-law, Grandpapa, who places his hope for helping ‘sad colored peoples’ on Jesus Christ. Grandpapa prays that ‘he will place His holy hand upon our heads and straightway us will be white as cotton’ (125). The word ‘white’ carries a double irony in the Jim Crow context. On one hand, the white skin may implicitly associate 'whiteness' with the supremacy of the white race in a racially stratified society. On the other hand, the whiteness of cotton evokes memories of the enslaved African American laborers who worked in the cotton fields of the old South. According to Donna K. Bivens,

> [i]nternalized racism is the situation that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominant group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviours, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group’s power and privilege and limits the oppressed group’s own advantages.[134]

Regarding white as a superior skin colour and attributing African American people’s sufferings to their inborn Blackness, Grandpapa prays to God for a change of their skin colour to end discrimination and improve their social status. At Grandpapa’s unrealistic prayer and other people’s responses in agreement, Dr Copeland feels ‘the old evil anger in him’ and attributes the apathy of his people to the lack of education (125). As McKay Jenkins maintains, Dr Copeland is caught ‘between the uneducated world of his race and the impenetrable class of white

[134] Donna K. Bivens, ‘What Is Internalized Racism?’ in *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building* ed. by Maggie Potapchuk and Sally Leiderman (Silver Spring and Conshohocken: MP Associates, Inc. and Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2005), p. 45.

intellectuals'.[135] He can, of course, be included as one of the 'Talented Tenth' who have the aspiration and socio-intellectual status to improve African American people's social position — he is, after all, a doctor. However, being educated does not spare him of being denied medical treatment for his tuberculosis at 'a good hospital here' because 'he is black', being unable to seek justice for his son, Willie, who is maltreated by white guards in prison, and experiencing the violent abuse by the white police in the courthouse (184). A lack of education is a significant contributing factor but not the sole reason for discrimination against African American people. In Copeland's case, McCullers underlines that the 'color line,' which divides African Americans from whites on a political, social, and cultural level, discriminates against the former, regardless of their class status or educational background.

Besides spreading the truth about racial inequality within his community, Dr Copeland emphasises African American people's Black identity and self-discipline. Despite being Black, Dr Copeland consciously or unconsciously adopts norms and values that align more with the dominant white culture. For instance, he tries to adapt himself to white society by speaking hypercorrect English, though his wife and children speak African American (vernacular) English, the language spoken by 'their peoples before them' (68). He seems to be accustomed to racist culture in his daily life, so when Singer kindly lights a cigarette for him during their first encounter, he feels flattered as it's the first time he has been served by a white person — 'nothing like that had ever happened to him before' (79). As González Groba observes, '[Copeland] actively fights for the civil rights of his race, yet paradoxically his obsessive blackness draws him close to the whiteness that oppresses him'.[136] This argument reveals the contradictory element in Copeland's perspectives and behaviors — In his struggle, he unconsciously adopts certain aspects

[135] McKay Jenkins, *The South in Black and White: Race, Sex, and Literature in the 1940s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 169.
[136] González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and the Racial Problem', p. 63.

of the dominant white culture, creating a paradox where his fight against racism brings him closer to the source of that oppression. In addition, he internalized the biased and stereotypical interpretation of African American people as a 'lazy and obedient race' (emphasis added) and urges his children to 'thrust from their shoulders — the yoke of submission and slothfulness' by disciplining and improving themselves. When Dr Copeland is worrying about the hopeless suffering and extreme obedience of his people, his internalised whiteness, as well as that of his race, remains another problem awaiting ahead to be solved. As McCullers underscores in the outline of the novel,

> The great flaw in all of [Dr Copeland's] theories is that he will not admit the racial culture of the Negro. Theoretically, he is against the grafting of the Negroid way of living to the Caucasian. His ideal would be a race of Negro ascetics.[137]

Dr Copeland's adherence to 'Negro ascetics' is exemplified by his strict insistence that his family members should live simple and self-disciplined lives. Except for insisting that 'everything in the house must be plain and dark and indicative of work and the real true purpose', Dr Copeland does not allow his children to wear 'bright-colored, flimsy clothes' at school. He buys his sons 'black wool for trousers and fine white linen for shirts' and buys his daughter 'black woolen material for dresses and white linen for collars and cuffs,' and black wool for trousers and fine white linen for shirts' (70). These details illustrate his rejection of any integration of Black and white cultures. Dr Copeland's viewpoint, viewing African American culture through a lens that prioritises white culture, embodies his internalised whiteness.

With his ideal of 'Negro ascetics' and idea of elite education, Dr Copeland isolates himself from other African American people, including his own family. Separation from the masses can also be read as a factor that limits the effectiveness of Du Bois's notion of the 'Talented Tenth.' In his 1933 book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro,* Carter G. Woodson, an African American

[137] McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*', p. 136.

historian and educator, provides insights into the limitations in Du Bois's concept of the 'Talented Tenth'. As he argues, 'One of the most striking evidences of the failure of higher education among Negroes is their estrangement from the masses, the very people upon whom they must eventually count for carrying out a program of progress.'[138] In Woodson's opinion, elitism, creating a gap between the educated few and the less educated masses, hinders the progress of the whole African American population. McCullers presents a sharp contrast between Dr Copeland's high expectations for his four children and their enduring low socioeconomic status, which illustrates the ineffectiveness of Copeland's idea of elite education. He names his four children Hamilton, Karl Marx, William, and Portia after four famous persons: Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of the United States, Karl Marx, whose ideas laid the theoretical groundwork for socialist and communist movements worldwide, William Shakespeare, the great British playwright, and Portia, an intelligent, eloquent woman disguised as a male lawyer in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Copeland hopes that 'Hamilton would be a great scientist and Karl Marx a teacher of the Negro race and William a lawyer to fight against injustice and Portia a doctor for women and children' (80). However, Dr. Copeland finds it disappointing that none of his children go to college or become leaders. Hamilton and Karl Marx became farmers. Portia is a domestic worker for the Kelly family and William serves at Biff's Coffee shop. In his 1948 essay, Du Bois himself confirmed the necessity to 're-examine and restate the thesis of the Talented Tenth' and abandoned his earlier advocacy for elite leadership by emphasising 'the meaning and power of the mass of people'.[139] In the novel, when Dr Copeland reiterates his expectations of his four children to be people 'with these real true qualities and backbone', Portia responds, 'Willie and Highboy and me have backbone, …. This here is a hard world and it seem to me us three struggles along pretty well' (67). Portia's words highlight the particular hardship

[138] Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1933), p. 52.
[139] W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Talented Tenth Memorial Address', *Boule Review*, 15 (1948), 3-13 (p. 3).

that African American youth faced in a racist environment during the Great Depression. In another sense, her remark hints at the partiality of Dr Copeland's elitism, which relies on Black elites to uplift his race and excludes farmers, domestic workers, and other labourers from his category of race leaders.

The infeasibility of Dr Copeland's notion of elite education is also reflected in the portrayal of Lancy Davis, a talented 13-year-old African American boy, who has an aspiration to fight against racism but is unable to develop into a member of the African American elite due to his socioeconomic and racial identities. In an annual essay- writing competition, Davis writes down his ambitious career plan in his essay on a given subject 'My Ambition: How I Can Better the Position of the Negro Race in Society':

> First I wish to attend Tuskegee College but I do not wish to be a man like Booker Washington or Doctor Carver. Then when I deem that my education is complete. I wish to start off being a fine lawyer like the one who defended the Scottsboro Boys. I would only take cases for colored people against white people (156).

Davis's composition captures Dr Copeland's attention because of his desire to enter college and to fight for his people's equal rights. Davis wishes to attend Tuskegee College, the first institution of higher education for African Americans, founded by Booker T. Washington in 1881. He also plans to set up 'a Secret Organization of Colored Leaders and Scholars' and advocates that '[a]ll coloured people will organise under the direction of these picked leaders and prepare for revolt' (156). Davis's proposed organisation led by Black elites is much like the NAACP, founded by Du Bois and other African American civil rights activists. Furthermore, rather than becoming an educator like Booker Washington or a scientist like George Washington Carver, an African American agricultural scientist, Davis wishes to 'start off being a fine lawyer like the one who defended the Scottsboro Boys' and decides to 'only take cases for coloured people against white people' (156). The unjust trials of nine innocent African American youths might well, McCullers suggests, have sparked his ambition to become a lawyer to seek justice for African American

people. Davis's ambitions and aspirations largely make him a potential member of the 'Talented Tenth', someone with 'spine and brains and courage,' who Dr Copeland is looking for within his immediate community. However, Davis's potential to pursue higher education or assume a leadership role is limited by his socioeconomic background, racial identity, and traumatic experiences, which are, of course, interlinked. As McCullers narrates in Part Two of the book, Davis grows up in a single-parent household with his mother working as a washerwoman and his older sister as a domestic servant. Much like Dr Copeland's children, Davis also struggles in 'a hard world', where systemic racism and socioeconomic injustice coexist side by side. At the end of the novel, Davis neither enters college nor becomes a lawyer. Instead, he is reported by the local newspaper to have been killed during a fight between Black and white labourers. Dr Copeland's strict control over what his children wear, as discussed earlier, and Davis's death, can be regarded as metaphors for the futility of Dr Copeland's strategy to address race inequality — his overemphasis on education and leadership and self-discipline as the sole solutions to improve African American people's position in society, neglecting the crucial interplay between social, economic, and political factors, and, most importantly, taking no direct actions to help and support gifted young African Americans.

Davis's death in a fight between white and African American workers not only symbolises the fall of the idea of the 'Talented Tenth' but draws attention to racial tensions among the working masses. As Du Bois pointed out in *The Negro*, 'racism had been used to prevent black and white workers from exploring their common needs'.[140] During the Jim Crow era, the man-made 'colour line' separated white and Black workers and labourers racially despite their economic similarities. McCullers exhibits the conflict between these two marginalised groups by describing the 'frequent fights and quarrels' at the Sunny Dixie show (246). As McCullers

[140] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (New York: Cosimo Inc.,1915), p. 225.

describes, the show is situated on 'a strip of wasteland bordered by rows of rotted shacks, and somewhere near a mill, a cotton gin, or a bottling plant', and the main customers of the show are 'factory workers and Negroes' in the town (130). Hired as a mechanic by the owner of the show, Jake witnesses conflicts between African American people and poor whites, including the one that Davis is involved in. In a fight between a white girl and 'a colored girl by the ticket booth of the flying-jinny', Jake hears quarrels between the whites and the Blacks: 'No nigger going to put her hands on no white girl …' and 'You quit that pushing me. I ready to hit back even if your skin do be white' (242). These remarks indicate the tense relations between the two races and typify prejudices against African Americans. In this scene, racist poor whites strive to keep social norms based on white supremacy and racial segregation, which benefit them, while African American workers grapple to resist and fight back. As Marx highlights in *Capital*, 'Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded'.[141] Marx calls on communists and socialists to fight against political, economic, and social oppression and sheds light on the specially oppressed condition of African American people. Marx points out that the struggle for workers' equal rights is hindered when African American workers suffer from racial oppression. Although McCullers does not explicitly present how racism impacts the Labour Movement, she reveals this implicitly through the conflicts between white and Black workers, underlining the tense racial relationships and lack of unity among workers. Moreover, the newspaper attributes the group fight that caused the death of Davis and another African American worker to 'labor agitation'. In doing so, McCullers exemplifies a tactic employed by capitalists to undermine the power of the labour movement by exploiting the conflicts between white and Black workers.

In contrast to the depiction of Jake and Dr Copeland's individual struggles in the early chapters of the novel, McCullers portrays their first face-to-face communication in Chapter 12 of

[141] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (Penguin Books, 1990), p. 169.

Part Two to mark a potentially significant step toward unifying Black and white workers. Although both belong to oppressed groups in a capitalist society, Jake defends the rights of white workers, while Dr. Copeland, more understandably, only strives to improve the status of African Americans. They don't have any direct interactions until Jake visits Dr Copeland after learning about William's abuse case. In their long conversation, Jake questions the original founding principle of the country — 'the freedom, equality, and rights of each individual' and stresses capitalists' exploitation of workers' surplus value and the 'rotten and corrupt' system of capitalistic democracy (257). From a different angle, Dr Copeland talks about African Americans' bitter struggle for human rights, their poverty and lack of justice. His repeated reminders, 'Do not forget the Negro', reflect his complaint that African American people are excluded in the white-led labour moment (257). As Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris state in their 1931 book, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement*,

> To the white trade unionist the Negro is not merely an outsider trying to get into the union, but a social and racial inferior trying to force the white man to associate with him as an equal. And the Negro knows that the white worker wants to keep him out of the union not merely as a potential competitor but as a member of a race which must not be permitted to rise to the white man's level.[142]

The quotation illuminates the racial tensions that existed within the labour unions during the period. In one respect, African American people had to strive for inclusion in the fight against economic oppression, and in another, they experienced racial discrimination by white trade unionists and received no equal treatment and acceptance within predominantly white labour unions. In the outline of her novel, McCullers emphasises that during the Great Depression, a white worker, '[f]or the most part, … makes no effort to determine the causes of poverty and unemployment. His immediate resentment is directed toward the only social group beneath him

[142] Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 462.

— the Negro.'[143] This novel explores how deep-rooted racism estranges white and Black workers, through the narration of Dr Copeland and Jake's solitary fight for equal rights of their own race. Further, from the description of Jake and Dr Copeland's meeting, McCullers emphasises the necessity for white and African American workers and labourers to stand together in the fight against capitalist oppressors.

When delving into the significance of Jake and Dr Copeland's meeting, it is important to review the historical background. The existence of racism within the labour movements during the 1930s did not halt the gradual progress in expanding the class struggle to broader concerns related to racial equality. For instance, on March 6th, 1930, ten years before McCullers published her first novel, the International Unemployment Day campaign presented a scene of racial integration, in which Black and white unemployed people, for the first time in many American cities, marched side by side to revolt again for their equal rights (See Picture 3). [144] In the novel, McCullers also indicates the potential for unity between Dr Copeland and Jake at the end of their long conversation, by highlighting their agreement that '[t]he only solution is for the people to know' (260). Although they don't see eye



Picture 3: Groups of unemployed march in front of the White House in Washington on March 6, 1930.

[143] McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*', p. 173.
[144] People's World Archives, 'Background: The March 6, 1930' front page of the *Daily Worker*, [online] https://peoplesworld.org/article/international-unemployment-day-the-1930-revolt-against-capitalist-crisis/ [accessed 31 January, 2024].

to eye over how to spread the truth — Dr Copeland plans to lead a march to Washington in August that year, while Jake insists on writing 'chain letters' — they both understand the necessity of unity. Jake finds that 'on some points, they might be able to work together after all' (293). Dr Copeland also mentions that the hatred between Blacks and poor whites does no good on either side and claims that 'injustice of need must bring us all together and not separate us' (163). However, after their meeting, Jake and Dr Copeland have no further contact, and their plan to unite Black and white workers against injustices remains unrealized. Approaching the end of the book, McCullers narrates a brawl between white mill workers and African American boys at the Sunny Dixie show: 'The Negroes were fighting the white men and the white men were fighting the Negroes' (290). As McCullers explains in the outline of the novel, 'the fight seems to [Jake] to be a symbol of his own life'.[145] Jake, hired as a mechanic and keeper of the show, fails to stop the Black and white workers from fighting with each other, which, symbolically, hints at his failure in his life in organising the white and Black workers to fight together against capitalism. Through this example of the ongoing disunity between white and African American workers, McCullers implies one of the key problems with the labour movement. As she points out, 'Human beings are innately cooperative, but an unnatural social tradition makes them behave in ways that are not in accord with their deepest nature'.[146] The 'unnatural social tradition' that separates white and Black workers is a racial line and was at the root of the ongoing racial conflicts between whites and African Americans that hindered the progress of the labour movement in the 1930s.

With descriptions of both Copeland and Jake's regretful departure from the town, McCullers ends the novel without offering new, redemptive storylines to highlight the solidarity of African Americans, lower-class whites, and other vulnerable groups. Escaping or leaving, like keeping silent, however, is also a form of resistance. Using free indirect discourse, McCullers

[145] McCullers, 'Author's Outline of *The Mute*', p. 156.
[146] Ibid., p. 136.

describes Jake's reflection on his choice of leaving,

> But was this flight or was it onslaught? Anyway, he was going. All this to begin another time. The road ahead lay to the north and slightly to the west. But he would not go too far away. He would not leave the South. That was one clear thing. There was hope in him, and soon perhaps the outline of his journey would take form (300).

This narration not only indicates the challenges that he, as a grassroots agitator, has met in organising workers to fight for their rights, but also convey his positive determination to search for a more receptive environment to realise his political aspirations. In addition, in emphasizing that 'He would not leave the South', McCullers highlights Jake's commitment to equal rights for workers in the South. In this sense, Jake's departure, rather than being an escape, is a preparation for engaging in a new round of resistance. Different from Jake, who chooses to leave the town with 'hope in him', Dr Copeland, under the persuasion of Portia, agrees to leave the mill town for Grandpapa's farm, a place with symbolic meanings to the African American characters in the novel. In a talk with Mick, Portia describes the farm passionately: it is '[f]ifteen and a half acres' in size and is entirely owned by her uncles and Grandpapa' (41). On this farm, they grow cotton and peaches, keep 'a mule and a breed sow', have 'from twenty to twenty-five laying hens and fryers', and cultivate 'a vegetable patch, two pecan trees, and an abundance of figs, plums, and berries' (41). It is the place where Dr Copeland's wife, Daisy, returns to with her children after experiencing domestic abuse at the hands of her husband. As Portia tells Mick, it is a refuge: 'if me and Willie and Highboy gets in bad trouble us can always go back' (42). Therefore, the farm is a haven for the Copelands, where they can find a temporary escape from injustice and enjoy a self-sufficient life. In Chapter 1, Part Three, Dr Copeland, 'exhausted and sick in spirit,' agrees to leave the town, which marks a turning point in his lonely pursuit for ways to 'Better the Position of the Negro Race in Society'. Since his idea of elite education, as discussed elsewhere, is proven to be ineffective and only estranges him from the African American community, going back to Grandpapa's farm, a place associated with their roots and sense of belonging, as well as

with manual labour and self-sufficiency, is not only good for his physical recovery but a chance for him to get spiritually closer to his family and the African American community. As Jennifer Murray argues, '[i]n spite of his failing health and regular discouragement, Dr. Copeland has not lost the desire to fight for black equality'.[147] Similar to Jake's leaving for another town to continue his fight for workers' rights, Dr Copeland's retreat to Grandpapa's farm can be interpreted as a new journey of self-discovery and a re-exploration of African American roots and culture, which may help him prepare for future struggles for African Americans' civil rights. In a sense, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is both a novel of its time and a novel ahead of its time. Although Dr Copeland is unable to unite with white workers at the end of the novel, his plan to lead a march in the novel written in 1940 anticipates a nationwide united resistance — the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, on which Martin Luther King led approximately 190,000 African Americans and 60,000 whites in August 1963, calling for civil and economic rights and an end to racism in America. McCullers's depiction of Jake and Dr Copeland's individual fights against injustices and their unburied hope after failure not only reflects her awareness of the importance of solidarity and sensitivity to the overlap of racism and classism but also demonstrates her optimistic view of human potential for positive change and social progress.

Gender troubles for both women and men: 'By nature all people are of both sexes'[148]

As González Groba comments, in McCullers's fiction, 'she frequently deals with the twin original sins of the South: the subjection of blacks and the oppression of women'.[149] McCullers's sensitivity to overlapping power systems of oppression is presented not only in her exploration of race and class issues but also in her delineation of gender. During the Jim Crow era, both men

[147] Jennifer Murray, 'Approaching Community in Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*', *Southern Quarterly*, 42.4 (2004), 107-14 (p. 112).
[148] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* p. 37; p.113.
[149] González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and the Racial Problem', p. 65.

and women in America faced gender-related challenges, shaped by economic hardship, conventional gender norms, and societal expectations. As Butler argues, 'whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex'.[150] Distinguishing culturally constructed gender from biologically determined sex, she underscores the fluid and flexible features of gender. Culturally constructed gender norms contribute to imbalanced power dynamics between men and women, which shape a hierarchy of gender — a power structure, which, according to Simone de Beauvoir, defines men as 'the Subject' and 'the Absolute', but degrades and undermines women as 'the second sex' and 'the Other'. [151] As Kate Millett illuminates in *Sexual Politics*,

> As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design. The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from a fear of the "otherness" of woman. [152]

Millett's words suggest that the cultural and societal role of women has been predominantly constructed by men, and women's fear of being 'the Other' drives them to internalise men's dominance and to align with the expectations and desires of men. Based on existing studies on gender dynamics, this section explores gender-related challenges faced by McCullers's women characters.

None of McCullers's female characters are portrayed as political activists or race leaders. Instead, they represent American women in the Jim Crow South, who often occupied an inferior position in society. In her 1993 essay, 'Toward a New Vision: Race, Class and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection', Collins defines race, gender, and class as 'distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression' and establishes them as categories of analysis that 'are

[150] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 9.
[151] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), p. 6.
[152] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 62.

essential in helping us understand the structural bases of domination and subordination'.[153] According to this view, when examining gender issues, class and race factors should be considered in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of systemic oppression. American women were marginalised in the political movements against capitalist oppression and other social injustices during the mid-twentieth century. As Susan Ware states in *American Women's Suffrage*,

> Historians agree that there was no significant difference in the level or intensity of women's political engagement "across the great divide"— that is, before and after 1920. […] African American women, most of whom still lived in the South, found their right to vote restricted by Jim Crow legislation alongside black men. [154]

Accordingly, although white women won the right to vote in 1920, African American women still faced great barriers to full participation in political life during the 1930s. In addition, activist agitations for feminist issues like equal rights in the workplace and political equality had been deprioritised temporarily due to this period of economic turmoil. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* pays attention to multiple identities of women and their experiences of intersectional oppression through the portrayal of various female characters. This includes Mick Kelly, who, by the end of the novel, is compelled to set aside her musical aspirations and become a child labourer due to her family's financial crisis; Portia Copeland, who is content with her job as a domestic servant for a white family despite low payment; and Daisy Copeland, who experiences domestic abuse at the hands of her husband. The troubled experiences of these women typically reflect the gender-related challenges that American women had to confront during the Jim Crow era, such as culturally constructed gender stereotypes and pervasive sexual discrimination.

Based on their gender at birth, people's social gender performance is standardised by the traditional categorization of gender stereotypes. As will be discussed here and in later chapters,

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[153] Patricia Hill Collins, 'Toward a New Vision: Race, Class and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection', *Race, Sex &Class*, 1.1 (1993), 25-45 (p. 26).

[154] *American Women's Suffrage: Voice from the Long Struggle for the Vote 1776–1965*, ed. by Susan Ware (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 2020), p. 16.

McCullers creates, in her five novels, several female characters who represent the stereotypes of Southern lady or Southern belle, such as Baby Wilson in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Leonora Penderton in *Reflections in a Golden Eye,* and Miss Missy, Judge Clane's wife, in *Clock Without Hands.* McCullers also characterises several women as deviant from gender norms, like Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding,* and Miss Amelia Evans *in The Ballad of the Sad Café.* Baby Wilson, Biff's four-year-old niece, is the youngest female character in the novel. Her mother, Lucile Wilson, an unhappy divorced woman, attempts to mould Baby, even at her very young age, into a Southern belle according to her expectations. A 'southern belle', according to Carol S. Manning, is a would-be southern lady, 'the younger, unmarried, and hence incomplete version of the southern lady,' who appears 'beautiful or potentially beautiful, graceful, charming'.[155] Mrs Wilson dresses Baby in a mature, feminine manner, both in terms of hairstyle and clothing. She has 'been giving Baby finger waves down at the shop' and plans to 'take [Baby] up to Atlanta' to do her hair at 'the cosmetologist convention'(111). Under Mrs Wilson's guidance and influence, Baby always displays a submissive demeanour and behaves like an adult. For instance, she 'wait[s] patiently on the kitchen table with her hands folded in her lap' when her mother is fixing her hair, and 'always held her head when people looked at her' (111; 108). By contrast, Mick's boyish appearance and behaviour challenge the traditional Southern belle notion made according to the 'southern value', or the boundaries that women should not cross in the home and society.[156] Mick, who always wears 'khaki shorts, a blue shirt, and tennis shoes' and doesn't belong to any girl's group, dislikes the way her sisters dress, and says, 'I don't want to be like either of you and I don't want to look like either of you … I'd rather be a boy any day' (14; 36). Mick's remark shows her desire to

[155] Carol S. Manning, 'Belle' in *The Companion to Southern Literature: Themes, Genres, Places, People, Movements, and Motifs*, eds. by Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda H. MacKethan (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana University Press, 2002), p. 95.
[156] The image of the Southern belle developed in the South during the antebellum era. It was based on the young, unmarried woman in the plantation-owning upper class of Southern society.
See also Charles R. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 1527- 8.

reject her sisters' femininity. Mick frequently challenges gender norms and the limitations imposed on women by climbing up the roof of an empty new house in the neighbourhood, starting smoking at an early age, and taking 'mechanical shop like a boy', instead of taking 'a stenographic course' like her elder sisters have done (89). Ironically, Mrs Wilson considers four-year-old Baby's premature femininity, which deprives her of childhood innocence, as normal, while Mick's boyish attire and carefree behaviours, true to her nature, are criticised by her sisters as 'silly' (36). McCullers thus employs the experiences of young girls, who were constrained by societal expectations and gender roles, as symbols to represent the challenges faced by women in the Jim Crow South.

Sexual discrimination has long existed in unbalanced power relations between men and women, leading to gender-based systemic oppression and the marginalisation of women. In Chapter 3, Part One, Mick writes with chalk her initials — M. K. together with four names: 'MOTSART', a male composer, 'EDISON', a male scientist, 'DICK TRACY', a fictional male police detective, and 'MUSSOLINI', an Italian male politician, a fascist dictator, on the opposite wall, she writes 'a very bad word — PUSSY, and beneath that she put her initials, too' (32). The names and words that Mick writes on the walls carry symbolic meaning, indicating this young girl's perception of the male-dominant world that most influential and powerful persons in different fields are male, while females are simply seen as sex objects. The vulgar and taboo word 'PUSSY', according to Gleeson-White, makes 'a connection between the unclean female body and sexuality', which indicates that '[Mick] has internalized cultural perceptions which construct femaleness as obscene, as pornographic: sex is womanliness'.[157] This comment exposes how culturally constructed gender norms and social expectations shape the formation of gender stereotypes, which hinder women's chances to reach their full potential and limit the full

[157] Gleeson-White, p.114.

expression of female identity. In addition, Mick's act of writing her initials, 'M. K.' on both sides of the walls, suggests her confusion about her gender identity, a fluid state that hovers between femininity and masculinity, and her efforts to claim space and identity in both masculine and feminine realms.

Using the Kelly family's uneven room allocation as another example, McCullers demonstrates the pervasiveness of gender discrimination within a patriarchal society. Mick expresses her admiration for the privileges enjoyed by her elder brother Bill, reflecting, 'I wish I could move in with Bill, and I'd rather be a boy any day' (35). Mick knows that as a boy Bill is given priority over the other kids at home since he has 'the nicest room of anybody in the family', where he tacks his favourite photos on the walls and does many activities he enjoys (37). By contrast, Mick, who shares a room with Etta and Hazel, her two elder sisters, has to borrow a corner in Bill's room to keep her paintings and treasured items like strings and wood that she uses to try to make a violin. If Mick's clumsy hand-made violin symbolises her unfulfilled musical ambitions, her desire for a room of her own can be seen as her longing for independence and space to pursue her passions. In her 1929 essay 'A Room of One's Own', Virginia Woolf suggests to those talented women who aspired to be writers that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'.[158] According to this view, women will be able to develop their talents if they have their own space and are financially independent – Mick, of course, has neither private space nor financial independence. Further, McCullers, in Chapter 5, Part Two, discusses Mick's 'inside room' and 'outside room', both of which have symbolic significance for this young girl: 'School and the family and the things that happened every day were in the outside room. Mister Singer was in both rooms. Foreign countries and plans and music were in the inside room' (139). Mick stands between the 'inside room' and the 'outside

[158] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. by Anna Snaith (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), p. 3.

room', which brings about the conflict between Mick's inner aspirations and the outside obstacles, such as gender norms, economic hardships, and social expectations, which are intersected and prevent her from reaching her full potential.

In Mick, McCullers demonstrates the identity formation of a teenage girl in a combined social structure of patriarchy and capitalism. Economic hardship is one of the obstacles that Mick must face in pursuing her dreams in the 'outside room': her family could not afford a violin, a piano, or a radio; her father 'broke his hip' and his new watch-repairing business does not go well; the family finances are pushed from bad to worse after her younger brother Bubber shoots Baby by mistake; and, finally, she quits school and takes a full-time job in a ten-cent store to shoulder responsibility for the family as a teenager (40). In addition to economic hardship, Mick's gender confusion is a significant factor in the process of her identity development, even if it is addressed to a lesser extent than the character of Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding*. Gender identity, according to Butler, is 'a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo'.[159] She conveys the idea that gender is constructed through repeated performances of gender roles based on societal norms. Mick's boyish appearance is exposed to the judgement based on socially constructed gender stereotypes. In Part One, Mick's sister Etta Kelly criticises Mick's boyish appearance: '"It makes me sick to see you in those silly boy's clothes. Somebody ought to clamp down on you, Mick Kelly, and make you behave"'.[160] Etta's objection to Mick's boyishness mirrors the deep-rooted power of gender stereotypes in society. McCullers also presents Mick's efforts to fit into the grown-up world by transforming herself according to social norms. As Foucault states, '[t]he power of the Norm appears through the disciplines'.[161] Repressive power compels people to do what they don't want to do, while disciplinary power

[159] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* p. 520.
[160] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 35.
[161] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 184.

makes people want to do what they have to do. Mick takes gradual disciplinary actions to form a new identity comprised of elements that she used to dislike. The party that she holds at home symbolises the beginning of her conformity. Before the start of the party, she takes a long bath during which she 'scrubbed the rough parts of her heels and her knees and especially her elbows' and then dresses with 'silk teddies', 'silk stockings' and 'one of Etta's brassieres' before putting on 'an evening dress'.[162] When looking at herself in the mirror, '[s]he didn't feel like herself at all. She was somebody different from Mick Kelly entirely.'[163] Further, she manages to be a member of 'some special bunch' in vocational school to gain social acceptance (89). Later, Mick feels like a grown-up after losing her virginity to her childhood friend Harry, an act which symbolises the end of her childhood gender fluidity and the beginning of her conformity to heterosexual norms. Mick's changes in gender performance are observed through Biff's eyes:

> She had grown older. Her rough and childish ways were almost gone. And instead, there was something ladylike and delicate about her that was hard to point out. The earrings, the dangle of her bracelets, and the new way she crossed her legs and pulled the hem of her skirt down past her knees (306).

Depicting Mick's changes in appearance and behaviours under the scrutiny of a man, McCullers reveals how Mick becomes an object of male gaze. Her transformation from an innocent, boyish girl with artistic aspirations to be a ladylike teenage worker is shown to align with societal expectations and gender roles in a patriarchal Southern society.

Gender discrimination is inseparable from and intertwined with oppressive systems like classism and racism. McCullers, in addition to delving into white women's gender troubles, also highlights African American women's experiences of multiple discriminations in mid-twentieth-century South. In a white-dominated patriarchal capitalist society, African American women were always the underprivileged group disregarded by civil rights activists. Looking back to the

[162] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Heart,* p. 91.
[163] Ibid. p. 90.

history of the American women's suffrage movement, African American women, besides being treated as an inferior group on account of their race and gender, are also politically inferior as the last marginalised group to get the right to vote. African American men, though were authorised voting rights in 1870 (the 15th Amendment), were disenfranchised by various discriminatory practices (such as literacy tests, poll taxes, intimidation, and outright violence) during the Jim Crow era. About fifty years later, white women were granted the right to vote, on August 26, 1920 (the nineteenth Amendment). However, it was not until the Voting Rights Act was passed on August 6, 1965, that Black women were officially allowed to exercise their right to vote. In this context, McCullers's depiction of African American woman characters, as stressed in the introduction to this thesis, manifests her humanist concern with African American women, as well as her sensitivity to intersecting oppressive systems that shape their plight. According to Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality,

> Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. […] if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.[164]

Crenshaw's 'analogy to traffic in an intersection' is illustrated by McCullers's fictional African American women characters, who suffer from racial, class, and sexual discrimination simultaneously. As a result, they are most injured and vulnerable.

In McCullers's five novels, all African American woman characters are portrayed as domestic servants for white families, which offers an insight into racial relations and power dynamics in the Jim Crow South. Portia feels proud of working for a white family and tells Dr Copeland, 'the Kellys is really grand white peoples to work for. I really fond of them as I can be. Them three little children is just like some of my own kinfolks' (72). Despite being delayed and underpaid, Portia never argues with Mrs Kelly about her wages. This faithfulness towards a white

[164] Crenshaw, p. 152.

family is reflected in McCullers's other African American woman characters. As will be explored elsewhere, in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, Leonora Penderton's cook, Susie, works devotedly in the kitchen. In *The Member of the Wedding*, Berenice, the carer of Frankie and John Henry, is like a quasi-family member of the Addamses. All these African American woman characters can be associated with Ruth Mammy, Scarlett O'Hara's loyal and caring African American nanny in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936). It's important to note that Hattie McDaniel, for playing Ruth Mammy in the 1939 film of the same name, became the first African American to win an Oscar, which iterated the important role of African American domestic workers in the white homes and brought the Mammy stereotype into sharp focus. According to Grace Elizabeth Hale, an American historian and writer, 'images of integrated domesticity were central to this fiction of continuity as African American servants, symbolized and idealized most frequently as mammy, replaced slaves.'[165] Hale draws attention to racial relationships in *Gone with the Wind* and its romanticising and glorifying the Antebellum South and slavery. Due to her characters' shared identities with Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, McCullers may be criticised for stereotyping African American women. With this concern in mind, it is necessary to recount African American women's situation during the time McCullers's novels were written. According to W. Elliot Brownlee and Mary M. Brownlee,

> Until the 1940s, majority of women employed in service jobs were domestic servants. Among those domestics a disproportionate share were black women…. who simply continued to perform the kind of service they had given under slavery. These black women faced discrimination in their efforts to enter the ranks of the new service workers in offices and stores, but because they often had to support their families as the primary breadwinner, they took whatever work was available in the lowest status, lowest-paying service occupation.[166]

This statement reflects the historical setting of the characterization of McCullers's African

[165] Hale, p. 135.
[166] W. Elliot Brownlee and Mary M. Brownlee, *Women in the American Economy: A Documentary History, 1675 to 1929* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 243.

American women whose social status was the lowest and whose options for work were limited in the 'lowest-paying service occupation' during the Jim Crow era. Therefore, understanding McCullers's novel as the product of its time will better capture McCullers's intersectional insight into the plight of African American women.

In addition to exploring their inferior status, McCullers gives examples to show the gender-based violence that African American women experience both at home and at work. The portrayal of Daisy Copeland, a background character, demonstrates McCullers's concern with African American women's suffering from sexism, class stratification, and racial oppression. Dr Copeland and his wife Daisy form a traditional patriarchal family with the husband as the breadwinner and the decision-maker of the family. Daisy is always 'very quiet and gentle', working around the kitchen, 'silent and occupied' (69). Their main disputes lie in how to educate their children. As highlighted earlier, Dr Copeland displays his 'Negro ascetic' in insisting that 'everything in the house must be plain and dark and indicative of work and the real true purpose'(70). However, Daisy challenges her husband's authority and his 'Negro ascetics' with 'gentle stubbornness' (70). She encourages Portia to wear earrings and decorates the mantelpiece with a kewpie doll. When it comes to religious beliefs, Daisy takes the children to the Black church every Sunday and teaches them the 'cult of meekness' though Dr Copeland tells their children that there is no God. At one point, he strikes Daisy with the poker from the hearth driven by his drunkenness, taking it as an outlet for his despair over improving his people's situation. Daisy, like many other African American women with limited access to protection and support when suffering from domestic violence, chooses to leave her husband. In marital relationships, domestic violence is often a manifestation of power dynamics. Although Dr Copeland is characterised as a civil rights activist, he personally makes his wife a victim of sex discrimination. Similarly, in *The Member of the Wedding*, Berenice tells Frankie about her experience of domestic violence at the hands of her last husband: 'He gouged out Berenice's eye and stole her

furniture away from her. She had to call the Law on him' (24). Besides experiencing domestic violence, some African American women, McCullers suggests, also suffer from other forms of abuse. In a brief yet significant moment, McCullers mentions Davis's sister's experience of sexual assault: 'His older sister had gone out to work as a servant when she was eleven years old and she had been raped by her employer, a white man past middle age' (157). As Collins points out, '[Domestic] work was low paid and exposed Black girls and women to the constant threat of sexual harassment. […] The sexual harassment of African-American women by white men contributed to images of Black women as fair game for all men.'[167] McCullers does not offer further details of Davis's sister's assault. However, such a rape, involving a Black servant girl and a white male employer, a seemingly incidental detail in the tapestry of the Jim Crow South, draws attention to the plight of African American women. Although not being characterised as the main characters, McCullers's African American woman characters nonetheless play important roles in the revelation of the intersecting structures of oppression based on class, race, and gender during the Jim Crow era.

Examining gender norms and expectations for women alone is not enough to understand the interplay of gender dynamics: men's gender roles, expressions, and behaviours should also be examined. In the hierarchy of gender, men often occupy the position of 'the Subject', playing a dominant role in constructing social norms and shaping power dynamics. Dr Copeland and Biff in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, display different gender expressions. Dr Copeland shows the power of 'the Subject', whose masculinity is reflected in his leadership within the Black community, his courage to seek justice in the white-dominant courthouse, and his patriarchal authority over his family members. By contrast, Biff is portrayed as an androgynous character, who exhibits both masculinity and femininity in one body. In *Strange Bodies*, Gleeson-White

[167] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 54.

includes androgyny as a kind of grotesque identity, along with 'female adolescence, male homosexuality, cross-dressing'.[168] Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of the 'two bodies in one', Gleeson-White analyses Miss Amelia Evans as a female androgyne, and Biff as a male androgyne'.[169] She notes that Miss Amelia 'seems to be both man and woman. This is a perfect example of hybridity that defies the limits of the discretely gendered classical body to displace stable gender formation in terms of either/or'.[170] In addition to her discussion about Amelia's gender fluidity, Gleeson-White underlines Biff's state of standing 'between the male body and its feminization'.[171] This comparative study draws attention to both McCullers's and her critics' contradictory attitudes toward the gender expressions of both Amelia and Biff. For example, as González Groba underscores, 'Carson McCullers could not get free from the deeply rooted fear that the independent female who resists gender conventions is trespassing on forbidden territory and may even become a freak'.[172] According to the marginalised experiences of McCullers's boyish and manlike female 'freaks', such as Mick, Frankie, and Amelia, turning into a 'freak' is a fearful outcome for a female androgyne. Comparatively, McCullers's male androgynes receive more positive comments from critics, reflecting McCullers's tolerant perspective towards them. Patricia S. Box argues, '[t]he male androgyn[e], however, reverses the process: he moves from impotent manhood to an androgyn[e] full of hope'.[173] Biff in this novel, instead of being treated as a freak, is depicted as a thoughtful observer, who is also perceived as 'full of hope' by critics like Box. This can be understood as a poignant reflection of sexism suffered by non-normative women in McCullers's time.

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[168] Gleeson-White, p. 96.
[169] Ibid., p. 96
[170] Ibid., p. 96.
[171] Ibid., p. 96.
[172] González Groba, "The Intolerable Burden of Femininity in Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Ballad of the Sad Café*," *Atlantis*, 16(1994), 133-48 (p. 147).
[173] Patricia S. Box, 'Androgyny and the Musical Vision: A Study of Two Novels of Carson McCullers.' *Southern Quarterly* 17.1 (1978): 117–123 (p. 117).
Note: In Box's article, he uses the word 'androgyny' to refer to a person who embodies both masculine and feminine qualities, which is a misuse. I have used 'androgyne' to take place of it.

Biff's androgyny is reflected in the feminization of his male body — masculinity and femininity in one body. Physically, he appears to be masculine: 'His beard was black and heavy as though it had grown for three days' (12). Mentally, he is a rational person with the ability to observe and think. His 'stereotypically rational masculine mind', as noted by Gleeson-White, is reflected in his question about Singer's role as a 'home-made God' for the other main characters: 'Owing to the fact he was a mute they were able to give him all the qualities they wanted him to have. Yes. But how could such a strange thing come about? And why?' (199).[174] Furthermore, as the boss of the New York Café, he observes his customers from behind the counter. His observation not only, as he tells Alice, aims to 'store up a whole lot of details and then come upon something real' but also convey his power of authority and desire for dominance (13). He finds that 'in nearly every person there was some special physical part kept always guarded': Singer cares about his hands; Mick minds the change in her adolescent body; Alice cherishes her hair; he has concerns about his genitals (24). Based on these careful observations, he has a philosophical understanding of gender: 'By nature, all people are of both sexes' (113). This idea challenges the traditional binary understanding of sex and gender and reflects his insightful perception of the human body.

Subtly, McCullers shows the impact of Biff's androgyny on his interpersonal relationships with other characters in the novel. Biff is portrayed as a caring and empathetic person. For instance, he insists on allowing drunk Jake to stay overnight at his café and argues with Alice when she calls Jack a 'sponger' (11). Additionally, he has 'a special friendly feeling for sick people and cripples' and generously offers food and drinks to them' (19). The caring and empathetic nature exhibited by Biff are culturally associated with femininity. By depicting these feminine traits in a male character, McCullers challenges traditional gender norms and

[174] Gleeson-White, p. 98.

stereotypes. Biff's effeminacy is further exemplified by his fantasy about parenthood. McCullers describes Biff's fondness toward his niece, Baby, and strange feelings towards young Mick: 'sometimes almost wished he was a mother and that Mick and Baby were his kids' (119). Mrs Welson also praises Biff for taking good care of Baby and says, 'you'd make a mighty good mother' (197). Motherhood is an important embodiment of femininity. Biff's fantasy about mothering Baby and Mick, along with his caring and empathy, reflect his feminine traits. In the later part of the book, McCullers continues to show Biff's strong desire to father some children:

> To adopt a couple of little children. A boy and a girl. About three or four years old so they would always feel like he was their own father. […]. The little girl like Mick (or Baby?) at that age (202).

Biff's wishes to be both mother and father to some children challenge traditional gender roles in caregiving and nurturing. As Emily Miller Budick puts it, 'Biff dreams of nurturing, self-sacrificing, interactive responsibilities, not of fathering as opposed to mothering, but of parenting. Nor is parenting necessarily biological'.[175] In this sense, Biff's dreams for parenting children suggest that his androgynous gender expression is not limited to traditional gender roles.

If Biff is seen as a body signifying femininity in his masculine body, then his wife, Alice, displays masculinity in her feminine body, which illustrates that gender, as a social construct, is fluid. As Butler articulates,

> When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.[176]

Butler's statement suggests that the categories of 'man' and 'masculine' and 'woman' and 'feminine' can be applied to bodies of any sex. McCullers indicates Alice's feminine appearance by describing her as a 'good-looking plump wife' (51). However, in contrast to Biff's caring and

[175]Emily Miller Budick, "The Mother Tongue: Carson McCullers", in *Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition, 1850–1990* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 143–61.
[176] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* p. 10.

empathetic traits, she is described as a 'tough and small and common', without 'real kindness' or 'curiosity' and there is 'no distinctive point about her on which he could fasten his attention' (12;13). Similar to Marlon's wife, Martha, in *Clock Without Hands,* who runs her own cake business and possesses 'some Coca-Cola stock' during the Great Depression, Alice attains financial independence through partnership with her husband. In their Café, she decides the menu and the price for the dinners. At home, she expresses dominance over details such as their bedroom furnishing. She hangs 'stockings and pink rayon knickers with holes in them hung on a string across the room to dry' and keeps a 'flaked and rusty' iron bed 'decked with soiled lace boudoir pillows' (198). She refuses to sleep with Biff if he rubs oil on his scalp. She knows the secret of Biff's impotence and teases him verbally, while Biff usually keeps silent in front of Alice to avoid a quarrel. Living with Alice, Biff's sense of manhood is repressed. In contrast to Dr. Copeland and Daisy's patriarchal marriage, Alice seems to have greater control over Biff in their marital relationship. In Chapter 2 of the novel, McCullers describes Alice's sudden death: 'Within an hour they had taken Alice to the hospital and the doctor had removed from her a tumour almost the size of a newborn child. And then within another hour Alice was dead' (111). Metaphorically, the tumour with 'almost the size of a newborn child' that kills Alice can be interpreted as a symbol of the burden of her rejected gender role or the societal role that she has no access to. In another sense, Alice's death also frees Biff from his socially constructed gender role, which offers Biff space to perform femininity at home without feeling any pressure from others: 'Biff bent close over his sewing and meditated on many things' (105); he stood shirtless before the mirror and dabbled some of the perfume on his dark, hairy armpits (193). In Biff's acts, which expose his deeply repressed feminine traits, McCullers subtly hints at his defiance of gender roles and inner conflicts.

McCullers originally entitled this novel *The Mute* and then structured it with different chapters narrating from the point of view of different characters, indicating her purpose to give

voices to the rejected, the forgotten, the mistreated, and the oppressed. As Audre Lorde declares, 'There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.' [177] The five main characters in *Hunter* stand for five different groups of marginalised people in the Southern mill town during the Jim Crow era, who experience multiple forms of oppression based on their class, race, and gender. This chapter concludes that McCullers, through the portrayal of her main characters, demonstrates a leftist political stance and 'proto-intersectionality' in her sensitivity to the intersections of classism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

As mentioned earlier, the novel starts with Singer's quiet life with Antonapolos and then develops into parallelled tales, pivoting around Singer's interactions with other four main characters. However, Singer in this novel, as Lawrance Graver argues, is 'a product of mass wish-fulfillment'.[178] Due to his mutism, he does not function as a spokesman for McCullers. Instead, Biff, as Graver maintains, can be regarded as 'Mrs. McCullers' *raisonneur*, the one person to make objective sense of the action'.[179] McCullers ends the novel with a description of Biff's sudden moment of realisation:

> For in a swift radiance of illumination he saw a glimpse of human struggle and of valour. Of the endless fluid passage of humanity through endless time. And of those who labour and of those who — one word — love. His soul expanded' (312).

This fleeting epiphany reflects Biff's understanding of the complexities inherent in human existence and signifies his personal growth and enlightenment, particularly his insight into human struggles, love, and humanity. Through Biff's growth and enlightenment and his observation of other characters' experiences of failure, uncertainty, frustration, confusion, and fear, McCullers leaves readers a message of hope — 'he composed himself soberly to await the morning sun' (307). It's important that McCullers's five novels are set, as well as primarily written, between the 1930s and the 1950s, during which much progress was made in the struggle against oppression.

[177] Lorde, p. 138.
[178] Lawrence Graver, *Carson McCullers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 17.
[179] Ibid., p. 13.

As she does at the end of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, McCullers also leaves messages of hope in her other novels. Therefore, in the upcoming chapters, social and political changes related to the issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality will be further addressed through an intersectional lens, only with different focuses.

CHAPTER TWO

Seeing and Being Seen:
Power, Space, and Body in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*

'*Visibility is a trap*.'[1]

Unlike *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, which deals with same-sex relationships and gender issues implicitly, Carson McCullers's second book, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, describes, more openly and intently, both the suppressed homosexual interest and repressed heterosexual desires of different characters on an army post. This novel not only boldly challenges social norms in 'telling of the story of the transgression' and 'in the record of the transgressive' but marks McCullers's own fight against gender stereotypes and sexual boundaries.[2] The novel, published on Valentine's Day in 1941, is dedicated to McCullers's new love, Annemarie Schwarzenbach, a Swiss writer and journalist who attracted McCullers with her androgynous beauty, literary talent, and well-travelled experience. During the period of writing this novel, McCullers, like the sexually confused characters in the book, was troubled by her own sense of muddled sexuality and her family crisis caused by her obsession with Schwarzenbach. *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, as a concentrated reflection of McCullers's concern about gender and sexuality issues, is a key text for studying of how patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia, and sexism work together to constrain gender and sexuality and punish transgressions in mid-twentieth-century America.

McCullers drew inspiration for writing *Reflections in a Golden Eye* from 'a chance remark [her husband] Reeves made to her about a voyeur who had been arrested at Fort Bragg, a young soldier who had been caught peeping inside the married officers' quarters' and from D. H.

[1] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of a prison* (London: Penguin Books,1991), p. 200.
[2] McKinnie and Dews, p. 96.

Lawrence's 'The Prussian Officer' (1914), a short story about a domineering Captain who has a secret passion for his orderly and is ultimately killed by the latter in a desperate act of resistance against his brutal abuse.[3] Originally entitled *Army Post*, McCullers deftly combined and developed these two tales relating to sexual repressions in the army into a book about entangled relationships among 'two officers, a soldier, two women, a Filipino, and a horse'(5).[4] In the novel, McCullers portrays Captain Penderton, a married officer, who develops a same-sex passion for Private Williams after an encounter in the woods; Leonora, the Captain's wife, who has a love affair with a Major Langdon; and Alison, the Major's wife, who deals with the pain of losing her first child with self-mutilation and who ultimately dies in a sanatorium. As the novel develops, Anacleto, the Langdons' effeminate Filipino houseboy, leaves the army base after Alison's death; Private Williams becomes fascinated with Leonora after accidentally seeing her naked; and the Captain finally kills the Private after discovering the latter hiding in Leonora's bedroom. Almost all of these intense emotions and events occur within the limited confines of an army base in Georgia. As Foucault puts it, 'the military camp — the short-lived, artificial city, built and reshaped almost at will', is 'an almost ideal model' of observation and a presupposed mechanism that coerces 'the exercise of discipline'.[5] The fictional camp in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* displays the regimented nature of military camps and serves as a metaphorical space of a heteropatriarchal society, in which heterosexual men have authority over women and queer people.

This chapter adopts Collins's concept of the matrix of domination to analyze the gender confusion and sexual disorientation of the main characters in Reflections in a Golden Eye. It explores how 'interlocking systems of oppression', such as sexism, homophobia, and hegemonic

[3] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p. 89; p. 39.
[4] Carson McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (London: The Cresset Press, 1952). Further references to this novel in this chapter are given after quotations in the text.
[5] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 171.

masculinity, operate simultaneously across structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal domains of power in late 1930s and 1940s America.[6] Based on Collins's domains of power framework, the sections that follow investigate McCullers's presentation of the role of the structural domain of power in authorising or organising oppression against nonnormative people, the role of the disciplinary domain of power in regulating the oppressed people, the role of the cultural domain of power in justifying oppression, and the role of the interpersonal domain of power in influencing the relationship between individuals in everyday life.[7] Besides discussing how the above-mentioned four interrelated domains of power shape the experiences of queer bodies, this chapter also draws on Foucault's concept of power and space, as well as other related theories and ideas about power, space, and body, to examine the characters' interrelationships and hidden nonnormative sexual or gender identities under ubiquitous observations and rigorous discipline on the army post.

The 'network of gazes' on an army post

The brief epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, 'visibility is a trap,' highlights the central role of visibility in Foucault's understanding of power and control. On the one hand, Foucault states, 'In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them.' [8] On the other hand, as discussed in the first chapter, he stresses that under panoptic surveillance, the person who is seen cannot know when they are being watched. The fear of being punished or being seen to be doing something wrong forces oppressed groups to remain self-disciplined and normalised. Thus, the dominant groups exert control over others using the visibility trap, an efficient form of surveillance, instead of using violence. To some

[6] Collins, *On Intellectual Activism*, p. 72.
[7] Ibid., p.72.
[8] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 187.

extent, in *Reflections in a Golden Eye,* the description of the main characters' repressed desires under the ubiquitous surveillance in the barracks exemplifies how the economy of visibility transfers into the exercise of power. Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* a 'perfect camp' in which

> all power would be exercised solely through exact observation; each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power. The old, traditional square plan was considerably refined in innumerable new projects. The geometry of the paths, the number and distribution of the tents, the orientation of their entrances, the disposition of files and ranks were exactly defined; the network of gazes that supervised one another was laid down…[9]

Like Foucault's 'perfect camp', McCullers's army post also displays a 'network of gazes', consisting of military men's self-regulation and officers' strict supervision of soldiers. This serves the camp's ranking and rewarding policies and is enabled by its rigid and monotonous layout with 'the huge concrete barracks, and the neat rows of officers' homes built one precisely like the other' (5). The fictional heteropatriarchal military camp is depicted as a space foundationally shaped by self-observation, mutual observation, and disciplinary surveillance.

In addition to locating her characters in a panopticon-like military space, McCullers draws attention to self-observation or the internalisation of discipline and norms in the fort. British-Australian feminist scholar Sara Ahmed discusses the ambiguous relationship between 'following a line' and 'the emergence of lines' and suggests, 'Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created'.[10] That is to say, the repetition of norms and conventions creates lines, and meanwhile, the lines are followed through the repetition. The sentence in the opening paragraph of the book — 'Once a man enters the army, he is expected only to follow the heels ahead of him'— indicates that the army men in the novel are supposed to be docile bodies produced by a training machine, the army, and are forced to follow the lines

[9] Ibid., p. 171.
[10] Sara Ahmed, 'Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 12:4 (2006), 543-74 (p. 554).

of military norms and repeating the behaviors of senior soldiers within the military (5). Foucault asserts that in the eighteenth century, there was 'a military dream of society' in which individuals were not only trained like 'the meticulously subordinated cogs [of a machine]' but instilled with 'automatic docility' under 'permanent coercions' carried out as in the army.[11] The confined and disciplinary life on McCullers's army post hints obliquely at 'a military dream of society' in mid-twentieth-century America. In addition, McCullers applies various images throughout the novel, primarily 'reflections' and 'eyes', to reflect the power relations between her characters, and to suggest omnipresent mutual observation in the barracks. Pivoting around scenes of Leonora's being watched furtively by the Private, McCullers elaborates on her main characters' behaviours of seeing and experiences of being seen: the Private sees the naked body of Leonora by accident when working in the Pendertons' backyard; Alison catches sight of the Captain's act of stealing at a wedding dinner; the Captain encounters the naked Private Williams in the woods and then stalks him in the barracks; Alison unintendedly witnesses the Private creeping into the Captain's house; and, finally, the Captain captures the Private in Leonora's bedroom. These scenes, like links in a chain, not only constitute the main plotline but reflect the constant unknowing mutual observations (as in most cases, the characters do not know that they are observed) and unequal power dynamics among the characters.

Intertwined with personal and mutual observations, disciplinary surveillance play a vital role in the 'network of gazes' in the novel. McCullers demonstrates the hegemonic patriarchal heteronormativity of late 1930s American society by depicting a network of supervising, ranking, and rewarding in the barracks. She describes the spatial categorisation based on army ranks of soldiers and officers on the army post. High-ranking officers like Captain Penderton and Major Langdon live in two-storey houses with eight rooms on the outskirts of the fort. Lieutenant

[11] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 169.

Weincheck lives in a two-room apartment 'set aside for bachelor lieutenants' (47). Private Williams, a soldier of the lowest rank, shares a room with about three dozen soldiers in the barracks with 'neat cots placed in a row, the bare floors, and stark curtainless windows' (149). The 'curtainless windows' ensure visibility and make these soldiers objects of scrutiny. They, like prisoners in transparent cells in a Bentham panopticon, are exposed to supervisors' constant visual surveillance. Under this kind of ubiquitous hierarchical monitoring, 'the gaze is alert everywhere', and soldiers never know when they will be caught breaking the rules.[12] McCullers illustrates the aftermath of trespassing these hierarchical boundaries by narrating Private Williams's experiences. One and a half years before the period in which the novel takes place, the Private spilt coffee on the Captain's trousers by accident, while serving him. The Captain harbours resentment against the Private because of this accident, which he experienced as a bodily violation. Then, when clearing the woods in the Captain's backyard, the Private unconsciously irritates fastidious Captain Penderton by cutting off 'the down sweeping limbs' of an old oak that had functioned as a visual boundary (12). The Captain, as a result, seeks 'a fantastic situation' in which he might catch 'the soldier transgressing in some way' and have him 'court martialed' (15). On the same day, the Private catches sight of Leonora's naked body 'as she left the hearth and walked upstairs to her bath' (15). His first time seeing a naked woman engenders his desire to repeatedly sneak into Leonora's bedroom to view the sleeping lady. Power dynamics are immanent in these gazes. In this regard, the controllers exercise the power of disciplinary observation to keep 'the disciplined individual in his subjection'.[13] In the army, the Private, like other low-ranking soldiers, is allocated to a powerless, objective position of being seen or being supervised. Therefore, his frequent transgressive behaviours, especially his bold acts of intruding into the Captain's house and peeping at his wife, violate the latter's private boundaries and, most

[12] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195-96.
[13] Ibid., p. 187.

importantly, challenge the hierarchical power system in the army. To some extent, the Captain's shooting the Private to death can be seen as his punishment for breaking hierarchical boundaries.

In the army, the 'network of gazes' is built on the rank system, a major disciplinary tactic. McCullers delineates the power differentials among the main characters who are allocated to different military positions. Both the Private and the Captain believe that the officers and soldiers 'belong to the same biological genus' but are not in the same category (14). The Private accepts the Captain's superiority 'as fatalistically as though he [is] the weather or some natural phenomenon' (14). The Captain also finds that it 'is not easy on an army post for an officer to bring himself into personal contact with an enlisted man' (118). However, according to Foucault, rank 'individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations'.[14] The rank system not only defines the power relationships between soldiers and officers but also provides possibilities for rising through the ranks. Captain Penderton, for instance, has possessed an ambition to be Colonel Weldon Penderton since 'he was still a young West Pointer' and works very hard to achieve this dream (138). Rank progression impels soldiers and officers to regulate themselves as well as to conform to norms in the army. Major Langdon declares the importance of having 'a healthy body and patriotism' (148). On this peacetime army post, a miniature of late 1930s American society, a 'healthy body' can be interpreted as heterosexual orientation and militarised masculinity, while a patriot should be obedient to their superiors and protect and serve the interests of the country. McCullers's portraits of Major Langdon and Captain Penderton, however, offer a contrast between a 'healthy body' and a queer body.

Major Langdon, who is nicknamed 'The Buffalo', is portrayed as 'a fine horseman' with 'great heavy shoulders' (35). A 'fine horseman', controlling a large, strong animal with his body,

[14] Ibid., p. 146.

is a stereotypical representation of heterosexual, macho masculinity. Moreover, the Major's aphorisms — 'to be a good animal and to serve my country' — not only demonstrate his resolution to keep 'a healthy body' but convey two core values in the army: self-discipline and unthinking loyalty (75). Ahmed clarifies the relationship between queerness and social norms in a heterosexual culture:

> For a life to count as a good life, it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. Such points accumulate, creating the impression of a straight line. To follow such a line might be a way to become straight, by not deviating at any point. [15]

Ahmed describes a so-called 'good life' which follows 'a straight line' and underscores the power of heteronormativity in a gendered and sexualised society. Furthermore, as Foucault emphasises, '[t]he power of normalization imposes homogeneity', and meanwhile, makes it possible to measure differences between individuals.[16] In McCullers' novel, the Major is depicted as a symbol of masculinity and heterosexuality, embodying the 'straight line' and the authority of normalization, against whom other characters are measured and categorised.

As a counterpart to Major Langdon, Captain Penderton struggles hard to follow the 'straight line'. Unlike the 'fine horseman' Major Langdon, Captain Penderton is 'no rider at all' and in fact is nicknamed 'Captain Flap Fanny' by the soldiers (33). According to the 'straight line' and to gender stereotypes in the army, the Captain's lack of masculinity and ambiguous sexual orientation make him a misfit. McCullers describes his efforts to adapt himself to military life, such as working in his study from ten-thirty at night to two o'clock the next morning and attempting to prove his manhood by riding his wife's unwieldy horse, Firebird, in the woods. However, his fulfilments obtained through succumbing to normalcy do not bring him true

[15] Ahmed, 'Orientations', p. 554.
[16] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.184.

happiness. In her essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', Adrienne Rich introduces the idea of compulsory heterosexuality in a male-dominated society and brings to light the heterosexual cultural assumption that the only normal sexual relationship is between a man and a woman.[17] This is the Captain's plight. From describing the Captain's 'sad penchant for becoming enamoured of his wife's lovers' to his stalking the Private 'each afternoon before the quadrangle where Private Williams was quartered', then to his killing the Private in his wife's bedroom, McCullers exemplifies the existential anguish of queer people who struggle to hide their aberrant sexuality to avoid being excluded from homophobic society (15;71).

As discussed elsewhere, disciplinary power is a means to regulate individuals' lives. It is the structural domain of power (social institutions) that organises oppression against nonnormative bodies through laws and social customs. It is worth noting that in 1940, President Roosevelt and his Selective Service advisers were convinced by some psychiatrists, including Harry Stack Sullivan, the founder of the interpersonal theory of psychiatry, about the need to implement screening programmes to eliminate 'all who seemed mentally "unfit" before induction' into the army.[18] Besides categorizing rejectees with more specific diagnoses such as 'feeble-minded', 'Peeping Tom', and 'sexual psychopaths', these psychiatrists, in particular, considered homosexuality 'a form of mental illness', an unhealthy sexual orientation which would 'hurt the nation's interest'.[19] These governmental screening programmes set a line between being 'normal' and being 'deviant', aiming at excluding the so-called mentally sick, gay men in particular, from the army. Penderton and other nonnormative characters should be categorised as 'rejectees' and eliminated before induction, should their nonnormativity be recognized by Roosevelt's Selective

[17] Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 5.4 (1980), 631–60 (p. 111).
[18] Naoko Wake, 'The Military, Psychiatry, and 'Unfit' Soldiers, 1939–1942', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 4/62 (2007), 461–94 (p. 466).
[19] Wake, 461–94 (p. 465).
Also see Harry Stack Sullivan, 'A Seminar on Practical Psychiatric Diagnosis: Selective Service System,' *Psychiatry*, 4:2 (1941), 265-83 (p. 281).

Service programmes. In this context, the fear of being excluded from the army is a main source of McCullers's fictional characters' anxiety and anguish. To delve deeper into the interplay of power structures across various domains that shape individuals' experiences, the following section draws primarily on Foucault's concept of power and space. It analyzes bizarre behaviors of the main characters in the barracks and examines McCullers's portrayal of a hybrid space where the fictional military post intersects with heteropatriarchal American society.

The peacetime army post: A heterotopia of deviation

Reflections in a Golden Eye was written while Carson McCullers resided with her husband, Reeves McCullers, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, a city close to Fort Bragg. Although, as noted earlier, she was inspired to write this novel by a case of voyeurism that happened at Fort Bragg, McCullers acquired early knowledge about army bases through frequent visits during her teenage years to her piano teacher, Mary Tucker. Mary's husband, Lieutenant Colonel A. S. J. Tucker, was transferred to Fort Benning in Georgia in 1930. [20] In addition, Reeves, who was an enlisted soldier at Fort Benning from 1931 to 1936, also provided her information about the alien and disciplinary life in the barracks and enabled her to capture keenly the listless mood on an American military base in the late 1930s. In 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault describes spaces 'in which individuals whose behaviour are deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed' as heterotopias of deviation.[21] He offers several places as examples of heterotopias of deviation, including prisons, retirement homes, and psychiatric hospitals. McCullers's peacetime army post, with its military network of gazes, listless atmosphere, queer characters exhibiting bizarre behaviours, demonstrates main features attached to prisons, retirement homes and psychiatric hospitals, embodying a typical heterotopia of deviation.

[20] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, pp. 568-69.
[21] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 25.

In the opening lines of the novel, she introduces an unnamed army post, ten miles away from the nearest town, as 'a dull place' and emphasises that the 'dullness' is caused by 'a surfeit of leisure and safety' (5). This sense of dullness overran the whole country during the Great Depression. From the stress of high unemployment rate, to 'extravagant and useless' 'make-work' projects, initiated under the WPA (Works Progress Administration) initiative, to the state of feeling aloof, secure, and removed from the wars in Europe and Asia, the pervasive mood in America by 1940 was a combination of having nothing to do and doing nothing.[22] Both Fort Benning and Fort Bragg, the prototypes of the army post in the book, participated in an important 'make-work' programme — the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which recruited thousands of unemployed young men to a peacetime army to work on environmental conservation projects (mainly 'reforestation and other reclamation work').[23] In addition, although during this interwar period, the major task of the Regular Army was training and educating civilian components, 'the Great Depression had the immediate effect of cuts in appropriations and pay that further reduced the readiness of Army units for military service'.[24] This may explain why there is no intense training or any meaningful military missions mentioned throughout the book and why soldiers like Private Williams are depicted either doing a 'slack' job in the stable, waiting idly for the call for meals on the bench before the barracks every day, or riding a horse in the woods. Foucault points out in 'Of Other Spaces', the retirement home — a place for the non-productive— is a heterotopia of deviation because 'in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation'.[25] Leisure has connotations of spending free time constructively for social and health purposes, while idleness suggests purposeless relaxation. Although McCullers's secluded army post is a panoptic space framed by military discipline and a 'network of gazes', the aimless and

[22] *The Oxford Dictionary of American Political Slang*, ed. by Grant Barrett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 65.
[23] Richard W. Stewart, ed., *American Military History Volume II: In a Global Era, 1917-2003* (Washington, D.C.: Centre of Military History United States Army, 2005), p. 65.
[24] Ibid., p. 60.
[25] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 25.

relaxed state of the peacetime soldiers makes it more like a 'retirement home', thereby challenging traditional perceptions of a regular military base and creating a sense of deviation.

Geographically, McCullers's army post, with features like 'insularity', 'dullness', and 'monotony', is a space in which 'deviant' behaviours might occur (1). Foucault, in his *History of Madness*, describes 'ideal fortresses', 'entirely closed in on themselves', that are 'independent microcosms' or an 'inverted mirror of society where vice, constraint and punishment would take the place of virtue, liberty and the just rewards that made for the contentment of mankind'.[26] Foucault's 'ideal fortress' might be used to describe the army base in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, which is both a representation and a contestation of a real military fort. McCullers's bold creation of various bizarre behaviours of different characters — voyeurism, self-mutilation, kleptomania, adultery, animal abuse, and murder — caused 'some embarrassment in Columbus and at Fort Benning where people speculated about the source of her weird tale'.[27] Even General Marshall, a former Fort Benning commanding officer, had his doubt about the veracity of the military life described in the novel. He wrote to Mary Tucker: 'What is your private life in Fort Benning like really? Did the whole post go to pot when I left …?'[28] With all its contradictory elements — strict military norms versus various 'deviant' acts and rigid military homogeneity versus characters' multiple identities — McCullers's fictional fort mirrors vividly the existential plight of her queer characters.

Besides being portrayed as a misfit in the barracks, Captain Penderton is 'inclined to be a thief' and is 'continually resisting an urge to take things he saw in other people's houses' (63). McCullers skillfully interposes flashbacks into the regular third-person narration to recall Penderton's two secret acts of theft, which successfully bridges time and place in tracing his

[26] Michel Foucault and Jean Khalfa, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge 2006), p. 428.
[27] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter,* p. 91.
[28] Ibid., p. 84.

kleptomania back to his childhood and connecting this 'woeful shortcoming' with his sexual ambiguity in adulthood. Brought up by 'five old maid aunts' who teach him 'a history of barbarous splendour, ruined poverty, and family hauteur' and instil in him the idea of regaining family glory, Penderton is always haunted by the fear of loss and desire for possession (91). According to Jaques Lacan, desire is central to subjectivity and is 'a relation of being to lack'.[29] The strong feeling of lack in Penderton gives rise to his desire. His first theft happens at the age of seven when he becomes 'infatuated with' a 'schoolyard bully' and steals 'an old-fashioned hair-receiver as a love offering' (63). Here, the hair receiver stolen from his aunt's bedroom is a gendered object, not only a love token but a symbol of his effeminacy. Growing up in an all-female environment, masculinity is what young Penderton lacks and always craves. At this age, the 'manly' 'schoolyard bully' can be understood as Penderton's ideal model of masculinity, a vivid reflection of his own ideal image.[30]

As McCullers underlines in the early pages of the book, Penderton has 'a delicate balance between the male and female elements, with the susceptibilities of both the sexes and the active powers of neither' (15). If Penderton's first theft and infatuation with a boy reflect his gender-fluid identity as a child, then his second theft indicates his uncertain sexuality as an adult. At a dinner party on the post, Captain Penderton is seen stealing a beautiful dessert spoon by Major Langdon's wife, Alison. As Melissa Free suggests, 'Penderton's kleptomania involves not only theft but also object obsession and is associated metonymically with his sexual longings'.[31] McCullers subtly applies the spoon as a symbol of his 'sexual longings' here, though she does not define the Captain's sexuality directly throughout the book. The silver spoon, like the hair receiver,

[29]Jaques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jaques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis,1954-1955*, trans. by Sylvana Tomaselli, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: WW Norton:1991), p. 223.
[30] Jaques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 93-81 (p. 95).
[31] Melissa Free, 'Relegation and rebellion: The queer, the grotesque, and the silent in the fictions of Carson McCullers', *Studies in the Novel*, 40. 4 (2008), 426-446 (p. 434).

is another symbol of effeminacy. For example, Havelock Ellis in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* uses the term 'lying spoons' to describe 'Homosexual passion in women'.[32] Moreover, *Spoon Woman* (1927), a bronze sculpture created by Alberto Giacometti, a Swiss modernist artist, connects a spoon's shape to a woman's body to explore the metaphor of the ceremonial spoon.[33] However, instead of exposing his effeminacy as he had done at the age of seven by gifting the hair receiver to the boy he liked, the Captain hides his sexual orientation in the barracks as he locks the stolen spoon in a closet.

Captain Penderton's boyhood gender-fluid expression and his later sexual 'deviance' challenge traditional gender binary norms and compulsory heterosexuality, which arguably causes his anxiety and depression. McCullers indicates Penderton's attempt to conceal his sexual orientation in the details about the place where he hides the spoon — 'in his closet' — and the way he keeps it — 'wrapped carefully in a silk handkerchief and concealed in the box that his truss had come in' (34). As George Chauncey writes in *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940*, 'In the closet' is 'the spatial metaphor' people typically use to characterise 'isolated, invisible, and vulnerable' gay life before the advent of radical gay liberation (catalysed by the Stonewall Riots in 1969).[34] Regarding the origins of the gay use of the term 'closet', Chauncey argues that '[n]owhere does it appear before the 1960s in the records of the gay movement or in the novels, diaries, or letters of gay men and lesbians'.[35] It is worth noting, however, that in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, published in 1941, McCullers implicitly applies the metaphorical meaning of the 'closet' in describing Captain Penderton's queerness, which exhibit her awareness of queer themes and experiences well ahead of broader

[32] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume 2* (London: The University Press Ltd., 1900), p. 273.
[33] Alberto Giacometti, *Spoon Woman* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1927), p. 111.
[34] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books,1994), p. 6.
[35] Ibid., p. 6.

cultural acknowledgment and terminology adoption within the gay rights movement. Besides hiding the stolen spoon in the closet, the study where he is always alone is another closet-like domestic space of concealment. *Epistemology of the Closet* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explores how the homosexual/heterosexual binary is constructed to reinforce heterosexuality and marginalise homosexuality. In the first chapter of this book, Sedgwick recounts a legal case of Acanfora, a science teacher, who was fired from his job in Maryland because of his homosexuality. Later, he lost his appeal in court not because of his gay identity but for paradoxical reasons: First for choosing to make his homosexuality known to the public and then for failing to tell his school about his sexuality before being hired. From this case, Sedgwick reveals the idea of the closet based on the dualism of 'secrecy/disclosure and private/ public'.[36] She presents the dilemma of queer people — remaining in the closet but worrying about being found out anytime or coming out of the closet and risking exposure to oppression. In *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, McCullers, applying the 'closet' metaphor, describes the Captain's 'fretted' and 'restless' state of mind when alone in his study, from which she presents the Captain's struggle between secrecy and disclosure — maintaining the invisibility or increasing the visibility of his sexuality.

Given that in a heteronormative society in mid-twentieth-century America, McCullers could not name the hidden desires of her queer characters, she chooses to present the Captain's same-sex desire implicitly through his nuanced behaviours and psychological activities. First, Penderton's obsession with men, from Major Langdon to Private Williams, seemingly manifests the continuity of his admiration for a model of masculinity, but more evidently unveils his sexuality. Later, when Captain Penderton stalks Williams and pilfers a candy wrapper discarded by the latter, we see his tendency to attach his sexual desire to a fetish and his to-be-brought-out

[36] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp.69-70.

state — coming to 'recognize his sexual interest in other men'.[37] The Private is the character created to bring out Captain Penderton. From spilling coffee on Penderton's trousers, to trimming the old oak into an 'unusual shape' on Penderton's lawn, to being seen naked in the woods by Penderton, the Private gradually and unintentionally orients the Captain toward figuring out his sexuality. Near the end of the book, the Captain develops a strong passion for the Private — having 'an aching want for the contact between them of some sort', and an 'irresistible yearning to break down the barrier between them' (117;130). However, as Chauncey explains, between the 1930s and the 1940s,

> a new anxiety about homosexuals and hostility toward them began to develop […]. A host of laws and regulations were enacted or newly enforced that suppressed the largest of the drag balls, censored lesbian and gay images in plays and films, and prohibited restaurants, bars, and clubs from employing homosexuals or even serving them.[38]

In addition, the Office of the United States Army Surgeon General issued a circular in 1941 to exclude 'homosexual proclivities' from military service, installing implicitly heterosexuality as an ideal and homosexuality as undesirable.[39] Under such a homophobic social and cultural environment, exacerbated by the fact that he lives on an army base and is married, the Captain is forced to hide his queer desire and remain in the 'closet'.

McCullers's treatment of Penderton's sexual desire arguably manifests her own queer abjection. She describes Penderton's 'preoccupation with the soldier' as a 'disease' and compares his growing thoughts of the soldier as 'the insidious self-multiplication' of cells in cancer, which 'will ultimately destroy the [normal sphere of] the body' (138). As Sarah Beth Gilbert, an American scholar of gender and women studies, asserts, McCullers 'is able to project herself into her characters, but she still seems restricted in allowing them to come out or to

[37] Chauncey, p. 8.
[38] Ibid., p. 8.
[39] Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p. 12.

confront these desires and figure out what the desires mean in relation to their lives'.[40] In the last part of the novel, McCullers depicts Penderton's attempt to come out of his study. After seeing the Private sneaking into his house, the captain mistakes it as a secret visit to him and waits in his study anxiously, leaving the door 'ajar' (159). When he hears 'the cautious footsteps on the stairs', he 'comes out into the hall' (159). However, his coming out of the study ends in despair in the realisation that 'the one for whom he sought' enters his wife's room instead (145). Therefore, akin to the unreciprocated love experiences of McCullers's other queer characters, such as Jester Clane's obsession with Sherman Pew in *Clock without Hands,* John Singer's love for Antonapoulos in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* and Cousin Lymon's affection for Marvin Macy in *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, the Captain has to decide whether to hide or reveal his sexuality — whether to remain in the closet painfully or to come out and face the impossible love.

Along with highlighting Captain Penderton's queerness, McCullers also narrates in parallel Private Williams's bizarre behaviours related to his suppressed heterosexual desire, revealing power relationships among soldiers, officers, the army, the government, and American society. She relates the Private's voyeurism to two places — the farm where he grew up and the army post. As with the Captain, McCullers also traces his odd behaviours back to the biased education about the opposite sex that he received in his childhood. Unlike the Captain, who spent his childhood in an all-female environment, the Private grew up in 'a household exclusively male', a typical patriarchal background (20). He has had no contact with any woman since he was eight, and he was taught by his father that 'women carried in them a deadly and catching disease which

[40] Sarah Beth Gilbert, 'Veiling with Abjection: Carson McCullers' *Reflections in a Golden Eye*', *The Corinthian*, 3.17 (2016), 35-50 (p. 41).

made men blind, crippled, and doomed to hell'.[41]

Between the 1930s and the 1940s, state interventions became integrated into the everyday life of Americans in an unprecedented way, with posters about venereal disease displayed in public places, like libraries and on the subway (See Picture 3).[42] Most of the posters spread the idea that venereal disease was carried by women and inflicted upon men. In particular, due to the outbreaks of sexually transmitted diseases in military troops in the United States, the CTCA (Commission on Training Camp Activities) distributed a pamphlet — *Keeping Fit to Fight* — among soldiers and warned them: 'WOMEN WHO SOLICIT SOLDIERS FOR IMMORAL PURPOSES ARE USUALLY DISEASE SPREADERS AND FRIENDS OF THE ENEMY'.[43] In all likelihood, the 'deadly and catching disease' that Williams's father warned him about is venereal disease. His remark about women's bodies conveys misleading information to an eight-year-old boy about the opposite sex and causes his sustained fear of having any contact with women in his adult life. This is exemplified by his dramatic reaction to the nurses who come near him in the hospital after he gets ptomaine poisoning: '[t]he thought of the bad sickness in women had made him shudder beneath the cover' (10). McCullers also illustrates the strict surveillance of sexual behaviours on the army post by stressing that soldiers like the Private are 'examined once a month by the doctor to see if he had touched a woman' (10). These governmental, social, and military interventions, together with



Picture 4: *She May Look Clean — But* (1940)

[41] McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, p. 26.
[42] *She May Look Clean--But* 1940 (Bethesda, Maryland: U.S. National Library of Medicine/ Public Domain). < https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/101584655X24 > [accessed 31 May 2023].
[43] Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 67.

influences from his family, have hindered the natural development of Williams's sexuality.

In the novel, some seemingly unrelated perplexing behaviours exhibited by the Private are related to his inner conflict between his psychological resistance to women caused by the misleading education about women and his id-driven instinctual interest in the opposite sex. His sudden decision to join the army might be his choice to move from 'a household exclusively male' to another male-dominated place to avoid 'the bad sickness' in women. However, on the post, the Private cannot avoid contact with women — the nurses and army wives. As McCullers writes, 'Once having known this he could not let it go' (157). The Private's desire for the opposite sex awakens after glimpsing naked Leonora Penderton, and 'the memory of the Captain's wife had not left him' (157). He subsequently dares to sneak into Leonora's bedroom to touch 'the soft luxurious warmth of woman [Leonora's] flesh' and is no longer afraid of 'the bad sickness' that he was warned of by his father and the army (157). However, Private Williams's sexual awakening collides with the sexual repression ingrained in heteropatriarchal American society. Further, in delineating the Private's voyeurism, an inappropriate way to develop his sexuality, McCullers exemplifies the impact of biased sex education and governmental intervention on the sexual behaviour of heterosexual individuals.

Furthermore, the army post is also depicted as a psychiatric hospital. Besides describing the purposeless and relaxing state of soldiers in the army, McCullers also exposes the potential danger of 'a surfeit of leisure' on American people's mental health between the wars. Jay B. Nash, applying Freud's theories on repression and mental illness, pathologises the problem of leisure into an illness. As he states,

> without interesting things to do, without some drive that is so strong that it unifies the total body purpose, we literally go to pieces. Accompanying this absence of integration are worry, fear, hate, divided personality, which form the paved road to neural breakdown.[44]

[44] Jay Bryan Nash, *Spectatoritis* (New York: Holston House, Sears publishing company, inc., 1932), p. 271.

In addition to Captain Penderton's kleptomania and Private Williams's voyeurism, McCullers offers further cases of deviance on the army post. She provides three more examples to show readers that there is 'much behavior in the barracks far queerer than this': an old Corporal writes 'a letter every night to Shirley Temple,' with a delusion of being acquainted with this famous child star; another man, who has difficulty in managing his emotions, 'jumped out of a third-story window because a friend would not lend him fifty cents for beer'; a cook, with a somatic delusional disorder, is 'haunted by the fixed idea that he had cancer of the tongue' (155). These three cases of mental disorder, on the one hand illustrate the tremendous psychological impact on people who cannot fit in with life in the barracks, and on the other, satirize the ineffective screening system of the government which was supposed to single out and refuse to admit 'mentally unsuitable personnel' into the armed forces.[45] In addition, McCullers conveys profound reflection on the effect of governmental relief projects: some people might have found temporary comfort from the message of hope conveyed by the relief programmes, while many others were still so demoralised that they either went insane or lost their will to survive. A heterotopic site, as sketched by Foucault, is 'embedded in aspects and stages of our lives and which somehow mirror and at the same time distort, unsettle or invert other spaces'.[46] In a sense, the barracks in McCullers's book, with their combined features of a prison, a retirement house, and a psychiatric hospital, is an unreal fictive place. Nonetheless, it reflects, in a dramatic touch, social reality in the American South in the late 1930s through its hierarchical observations, unequal power dynamics, and characters' struggle for control over their own bodies.

[45] Wake, p. 469.
[46] Peter Johnson, 'The geographies of heterotopia', *Geography Compass* 11.7 (2013), 790–803 (p. 790).

The reservation: 'Nature is not abnormal, only lifelessness is abnormal'[47]

In 'The Flowering Dream: Notes on Writing' (1959), McCullers responds to 'accusations of morbidity' about *Reflections in a Golden Eye* by saying, 'Nature is not abnormal, only lifelessness is abnormal'. Here, she questions conventional ideas of normality and underscores the danger of bonding people to socially and culturally constructed norms. By depicting the rigid, monotonous, and lifeless existence within the enclosed army post, she indicates that the boredom, anxiety, and spiritual alienation of her characters stem from normative ideologies imposed upon them concerning gender, sexual orientation, and social roles. To further clarify her perception, McCullers creates a natural world as a metaphorical site to embody a space where human bodies are free from the influence of social norms. The reservation surrounding the army post, with 'fifteen miles square wild unspoiled country,' is pictured as a colourful and lively space: 'Here were to be found giant virgin pines, many varieties of flowers, and even such shy animals as deer, wild pig, and foxes' (7). By contrasting the painful performance of 'the normal' by both the Captain and the Private in the barracks with their more natural self-expressions in the reservation, McCullers illustrates her argument that conforming to social norms, at the price of repressing natural desires, is the source of abnormality and unhappiness.

Private Williams is portrayed as a 'Gauguin primitive', an uncultured and blissfully innocent figure, who is always painted against a colourful tropical background (32). In stark contrast to his lifeless demeanour in the grey-coloured barracks — described as 'a bit heavy and awkward in his bearing' — the Private 'canter[s] about in the sunlight' amidst the woods of the reservation, adorned with 'blackish green … giant virgin pines' and flowers of 'crimson and yellow' colour (7). In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed argues that being oriented 'makes some bodies feel in place, or at home, and not others'.[48] The possibility of bodies finding a home in

[47] McCullers, 'The Flowering Dream', p. 277.
[48] Ahmed, 'Orientations', p. 563.

the world that is around them is crucial to the shaping of those bodies and that of the world as well. As McCullers describes, there is 'a sensual, savage smile on his lips' when riding a horse there, which contrasts with his unemotional bearing on the military barracks where he is not 'known to laugh, to become angry, or to suffer in any way' (7). This description demonstrates that Williams appears to be more oriented and 'at home' when in the woods. Further, the harmonious relationship between the Private and his horse in the woods embodies his freed instinctive desire: 'In this lonely place, the soldier always unsaddled his horse and let him go free. Then he took off his clothes and lay down on a large flat rock in the middle of the field' (7). As Margret B. McDowell, a biographer of McCullers, argues, McCullers uses 'natural landscape and animals as symbols of the uninhibited, unconscious elements in the psyche'.[49] Williams's instinctive personality suggests his pleasure-seeking nature. He seems to care more about his instinct needs and impulses of his body than the world around him. Resting in the forest, Williams is no longer a disciplined and obedient soldier but a freed wild creature: 'Sometimes, still naked, he stood on the rock and slipped upon the horse's bareback' (7). However, returning to the army post, a hierarchical panoptic place, the Private develops a deviant way to satisfy his desire — becoming a voyeur. According to Ahmed, 'The starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the 'here' of the body and the 'where' of its dwelling'.[50] This argument suggests that our understanding of the world begins with our bodily presence ('here') and the specific location ('where') in which we find ourselves. The free state of the Private in the woods shows that he has found 'the "here" of the body' (his sexual consciousness), while back at the army base, he is lost in locating 'the "where" of its dwelling' (his sexual disorientation). Sexuality, like gender, is socially constructed, and 'is affected and shaped by its surroundings'.[51]

[49] Margaret B. McDowell, *Carson McCullers* (New York: Twayne Publisher,1980), p. 51.
[50] Sara Ahmed, *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 8.
[51] Ibid., p. 8.

Accordingly, the starting point for his sexual development is misled by biased early sex education from his father and later restrictions on sexual freedom in the army barracks.

The question of 'orientation' is thus not solely a spatial question. Ahmed calls for a rethinking of 'the spatiality of sexual orientation' and insists that 'with sexual orientation, direction "follows" the line of desire, like the direction of arrows toward the loved object'.[52] In the novel, McCullers provides many clues to indicate Private Williams's disorientation in finding his 'loved object': having no contact with any women in his adolescence, the Private satisfies his curiosity about the opposite sex through the purchase of a cow; in the barracks, he cannot help peeping at Leonora out of his repressed and gradually awakened sexual instinct. Finally, out of his desire to get close to Leonora, the Private repeatedly sneaks into her bedroom, where he finds 'the "where" of its dwelling'.[53] It seems that he has established an intimacy with this room and knows 'what to do and which way to turn'.[54] Even in the darkness, he can navigate his way and 'tiptoe[…] to the side of the bed' of the Captain's wife (36). However, McCullers indicates the peril of the Private's frequent intrusion into others' space. She describes his fearless voyeurism: 'In these reconnoitrings, and during the dark vigils in The Lady's room, the soldier had no fear. He felt, but did not think; he experienced without making any mental résumé of his present or past actions' (116). His eccentric behaviours remind the readers of his other aggressive and risky deeds, such as stabbing 'a negro' to death '[i]n an argument over a wheelbarrow of manure' five years before his enlistment (59) and picking a fight with another soldier in the barracks. These 'activities that jeopardize the safety of others', according to Graham-Bertolini, stem from Williams's 'deficit of moral sense'.[55] Williams's violent

[52] Ibid., p. 70.
[53] Ibid., p. 8.
[54] Ibid., p. 7.
[55] Alison Graham-Bertolini, '"Nature is Not Abnormal; Only Lifelessness is Abnormal": Paradigms of the Invalid in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*' in *Carson McCullers in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Alison Graham-Bertolini and Casey Kayser 1st eds. (*London:* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.175-88.

behaviours can be interpreted as a demonstration of his 'animalistic, chaotic impulses which demand gratification'.[56] The Private stands for those who are altered by the world but affect the world around them at the same time. When the private's life instinct — the desire to survive, reproduce, and satisfy — cannot be fulfilled or is threatened, he resorts to aggressive and self-destructive behaviours out of his death drive — what Freud calls 'an *instinct of destruction* directed against the external world and other living organisms'.[57] His deviance stems from the conflict between his pleasure-seeking nature and the socially and culturally constructed rank, gender, and sexual boundaries.

Unlike the Private, who always follows his sexual instinct, the Captain struggles hard to hide and repress his same-sex desire. Similar to Biff Brannon in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, who believes that '[b]y nature all people are of both sexes', the Captain sees in himself 'a delicate balance between the male and female elements' (15). Although McCullers portrays both Biff and the Captain as queer characters trapped in ambiguous gender identities, she provides more clues to indicate the Captain's same-sex interest, such as gifting the schoolyard bully the hair receiver and having 'a sad penchant for becoming enamoured of his wife's lovers' (31). Additionally, she hints at the Captain's impotence by claiming that he has 'the susceptibilities of both the sexes and the active powers of neither' (15). In the opening part of the novel, when Leonora performs a shag dance (a popular dance in the 1930s) in bare feet in the kitchen, the Captain is irritated and calls her a 'slattern' (19). Then to mock him for being prudish, Leonora strips and stands naked in front of the hearth with the front door open, which makes the Captain 'sicken strangely' (13). Leonora's naked body awakens Williams's heterosexual desire but does not arouse the Captain's interest in the same way. Although, as discussed earlier, the Captain makes efforts to fit into heteronormative society, Leonora's mockery of his impotence

[56] J. P. Chaplin, *Dictionary of Psychology* (New York: Dell Publ. Co., Inc., 1968), p. 228.
[57] Sigmond Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. by Joan Riviere (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), p. 381.

exemplifies interpersonal discrimination against the Captain and other queer people.

Chapter Three brings a climax to the novel by depicting how the Captain is led to explore his sexual orientation through a horse-riding experience in the woods. Freud compares the relation between the ego to the id as 'a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse'.[58] As a writer who was 'steeped to' Freud's works, McCullers borrowed Freud's metaphors of horse-riding to present the Captain's attempt to direct the forces of his id (instinctual desire), from getting the horse under control initially, to losing the control over the horse and giving it free rein, to getting lost in the reservation.[59] The Captain starts his riding smoothly by controlling his wife's free-spirited horse, Firebird, successfully with his tactics. He first lets Firebird run freely 'long enough for the joy of freedom to be aroused' and then tightens the reins suddenly and jerks the horse up short while the horse gallops (85). After repeating this twice, he is 'exceedingly satisfied' to see that the horse '[stands] quite still, surprised but tractable'.[60] As Graham-Bertolini observes, the tactic of '[c]hecking the horse's freedom replicates what he is doing to himself. He controls his sexual urges, denying himself the freedom to be who he is'.[61] In other words, the Captain keeps his place in the barracks at the price of repressing his nonnormative desire and submission to gender and sexual norms, whilst allowing himself small moments of freedom, exemplified by his theft of the spoon. As Ihab H. Hassan also maintains, 'the horse may stand as an embodiment of instincts and the military camp as an image of social regimentation. Between these two, men must somehow mediate'.[62] As a result of a mediation between his instincts and the repressive 'social regimentation', the Captain chooses to give up 'the freedom to be who he is'.[63] In the early pages of the book, McCullers

[58] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 15.
[59] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p. 39.
[60] McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, p. 85.
[61] Graham-Bertolini, p. 9.
[62] Ihab H. Hassan, *Racial Innocence: The Contemporary American Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961), p. 217.
[63] Graham-Bertolini, p. 9.

elaborates on the Captain's efforts in controlling his instinctual desire — making 'many strange and secret little penances on himself which he would have found difficult to explain to others' (44). In a sense, the Captain's early success in controlling the horse is based on his painful struggles in hiding his sexual orientation on the heteropatriarchal military base on which he lives.

McCullers delineates a turning point in the Captain's horse-riding outing after he has pulled the horse to a sudden stop for the third time: 'At this point, without warning and with the speed of a demon, the horse swerved to the left and plunged down the side of the embankment. The Captain was so stunned that he lost his seat' (31). Here, turning to 'the left' and running down 'the embankment' have profound implications. If 'the embankment' here symbolises 'the straight line' and the horse represents his 'sexual urges', then 'the left' can be interpreted as his deviant orientation. Ahmed examines the traditional connotations of 'the right' and 'the left' and observes that the right is 'associated with truth, reason, normality and with getting "straight to the point" while the left, according to the etymology of the word, means 'weak and worthless'. She concludes, 'This lack of neutrality is what grounds the distinction between right and left: the right becomes the straight line, and the left becomes the origin of deviation'.[64] In *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, it is not a coincidence that turning left is used to refer to Captain Penderton's deviance. According to McCullers's descriptions elsewhere, he is spatially posited as a 'deviant' in the book. For example, his house is located to the left of Major Morris Langdon (a symbol of heterosexuality and masculinity). In addition, he is found living alone in one of the 'two bedrooms of medium size' on the left rather than sharing with his wife 'the double bedroom' on the right, a symbol of traditional heterosexual marriage (35). In addition to the above-mentioned implications about the Captain's deviation in the heterosexual world, the Captain's 'preoccupation with the soldier' is described as a 'deep secret longing' that 'grew in him like a disease' (138). As noted

[64] Ahmed, p. 14.

earlier, in the late 1930s, American psychiatrists generally considered homosexuality 'a form of mental illness'.[65] Comparing the Captain's same-sex interest to disease as well as using 'left' to symbolise his sexual abnormality, McCullers's language subtly illustrates discrimination against people with nonnormative sexualities in her time.

As seen, the Captain loses control of the horse and is taken suddenly to the left to cross the embankment. Temporarily freed from disciplinary observations and the influence of social and cultural norms in the barracks, he is given the opportunity to gain the freedom to be himself. McCullers highlights that no matter how hard the Captain tries to 'hold on' by '[c]linging desperately to the mane, the reins, and the saddlebow, he eventually fails and utters: "I am lost"'(46). As Ahmed suggests, 'changing directions' always risks 'departure from the straight and narrow, makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer'.[66] The Captain comes to an open space where the natural world engenders changes in his mind and body and the risk of 'becoming queer'. The open space in the reservation is compared to a kaleidoscope, where the Captain sees 'multiple visions' of nature and feels the connection between his body and nature: 'He was conscious of the pure keen air and he felt the marvel of his own tense body, his labouring heart, and the miracle of blood, muscle, nerves, and bone' (46). As Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann note, 'The place in which I find myself, my actual "here," is the starting point for my orientation in space'.[67] At this moment in the woods, the Captain discovers the 'here' of his body, which directs him to reach 'that rare level of consciousness where the mystic feels that the earth is he and that he is the earth' (88). These words about the Captain's first-ever feeling of being integrated with the earth suggest the awakening of his body consciousness. McCullers proceeds to describe the unexpected pleasure

[65] Wake, p. 465.
[66] Ahmed, p. 7.
[67] Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structure of the Life world*, trans. by Richard M. Zaner and H. Tristram Engelhardt (London: Heinemann Educational Books,1974), p. 36.

that the Captain experiences on the back of Firebird after facing the threat of death: 'A great mad joy surged through him. This emotion, coming as unexpectedly as the plunge of the horse when he had broken away, was one that the Captain had never experienced' (87). The Captain's 'great mad joy' echoes the 'sensual, savage smile' on Williams's lips when riding in the woods and embodies similar satisfaction derived from the awakening of their bodily consciousness.

The Captain is then pulled back to reality by his ego when he discovers that Firebird is about to 'give out' following a 'mad ride' coming out of the woods and he realises: 'When this ends, all will be over for me' (46). What makes him anxious is that the pleasure of finding freedom in the forest will not last long, knowing that it will be replaced by rigid constraints when he returns to the heteronormative post. As Freud specifies, 'the ego has the task of bringing the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality-principle for the pleasure principle which reigns supreme in the id'.[68] The uncertainty about the future — specifically, the potential impact on his career and family if his 'deviant' sexuality is exposed — combined with the harsh reality of the homophobic culture in the army, compels the Captain to suppress his desires, prioritizing his ego over his pleasure-seeking impulses. Graham-Bertolini points out that the Captain 'is so regulated by ideological systems that he is unable to be true to his own nature'.[69] Further, as McCullers asserts, 'In his balance between the two great instincts, toward life and death, the scale was heavily weighted to one side to death. Because of this, the Captain was a coward' (16). The Captain's cowardice is reflected in his fear of being punished or expelled from the army, which is conveyed by his act of beating the horse savagely in this episode. As discussed in Chapter One, panoptic surveillance weakens the power of resistance and makes external coercion unnecessary.[70] Since the Captain has internalised the

[68] Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 19.
[69] Graham-Bertolini, p. 185.
[70] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 201.

hierarchical observation and heteronormative culture of the army, the satisfaction from indulging his desires does not persuade him to risk deviating from these norms at the cost of his rank, reputation, and family.

Being lost in the reservation leads the Captain to an unexpected encounter, creating a queer moment. While lying exhausted on the ground after beating the horse, the Captain discovers the Private, who is 'leaning against an oak tree … completely naked' (92). Ahmed interprets a queer moment as the time 'when the world no longer seems the right way up. Things appear on a slant. They fall obliquely'.[71] Taking a 'slant' orientation represents the Captain's deviation from 'the straight line' and affirms his queer identity. At the moment he catches sight of the Private, whose 'slim body glistened in the late sun', he is 'too paralyzed by surprise to move' (92). For the Captain, 'things come out of line' temporarily because both the line of ranking and the straight line of sexuality seem to 'fall obliquely'.[72] Symbolically, McCullers uses the position of the two to show their current power dynamics. Looking downward, the Private no longer respects the Captain as a high-ranking supervisor, but rather sees him as a weak person who is laying 'on the ground like a broken doll, sobbing aloud' (93). The Captain, at this moment, gets rid of his performative sexual role and exhibits his passion for the Private. With admiring eyes, he watches 'the young soldier's bare foot' which is 'slim and delicately built, with a high instep marked by blue veins'; he dwells on 'the pure cut lines of the young man's body' even after the private has left (93). The Captain's reaction to Williams's bare body contrasts sharply with his prior attitude to his wife's nakedness. When Leonora, after a quarrel with the Captain, stands naked with the front door open, he looks at her with 'stunned indignation' and says in a strangled voice, 'I will kill you!' (12). On the one hand, the Captain's different reactions to the bodies of Leonora and the Private disclose his sexual orientation; on the other, they mirror heterosexual norms in

[71] Ahmed, p. 561.
[72] Ahmed, p. 562.

American society. Leonora's openly exposed body in the Captain's 'brightly lighted' house in the barracks symbolises socially accepted straight marriage — the visibility of heterosexuality, while Williams's naked body, in a concealed natural space outside the barracks, embodies the Captain's closeted nonheterosexuality — the invisibility or marginalisation of homosexuality.

In 'The Flowering Dream', McCullers defines the Captain as a 'homosexual, … also a symbol, of handicap and impotence'.[73] It is important to note that in McCullers's time, 'homosexual' was commonly labelled as physical disability. McCullers, obviously, was not immune to the impact of this stigma and prejudice. Her limitations in unjustly defining Penderton's sexuality should be attributed to the prevailing historical and cultural context of widespread homophobia. Therefore, the claim of McCullers's 'astonishing humanity' by both Wright and my thesis is not undermined. Instead, her brave portrayal of Captain Penderton's same-sex passion offers truthful reflection of the marginalised condition of queer individuals and sheds light on the complexities of human existence. In *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, the Captain, being teased by Leonora for his impotence, is also treated by the Private with disrespect and coldness for his queer affection. The Private, who always salutes the Captain at the sight of him on the post, overlooks the Captain's admiration, glancing at the Captain from above 'with vague, impersonal eyes as though looking at some insect he had never seen before' (92). In essence, the attitudes of Leonora and the Private towards the Captain reflect his existential plight — being impotent in a heterosexual marriage and not receiving reciprocal love when following his instinctual same-sex desire.

The portrayal of both the Captain and the Private reflects McCullers's own repressed sexual desire and her painful denied passion, especially her unrequited romantic obsession with Annemarie Schwarzenbach during the time she was trying to publish *Reflections in a Golden Eye*.

[73] McCullers, 'The Flowering Dream', p. 277.

Graham-Bertolini interprets the portrayal of the Captain and the Private as 'almost two versions of the same man'.[74] This 'same man' can also refer to Carson McCullers, the writer. Although in this novel, published in 1941, she didn't know how to define or dared not name the sexuality of her queer characters, in 'The Flowering Dream', written in 1959, she claims that when 'I write about the Captain, I become a homosexual man'.[75] In 1958, the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark decision for LGBT rights (*One*, Inc. v. Olesen, 355 U.S. 371), which overturned the Ninth Circuit Court's ruling that the gay magazine *ONE* violated obscenity laws and was thus not constitutionally protected under the First Amendment rights of free speech and press.[76] This context may be used to explain why in 'The Flowering Dream' McCullers could openly use the term 'homosexual' to define the sexual identity of her characters. The portrayal of the Private, in a sense, expresses her interest in women. Gilbert examines the characterization of Private Williams and reads him as 'a projection of McCullers and her own desires (for women)'.[77] Carr also mentioned that McCullers was 'completely open to her friends about her tremendous enjoyment in being physically close to attractive women'; however, she never wrote about same-sex love between women in her books.[78] Instead, she implicitly expresses her interest in women, for example showing her desire for women under the cover of her depiction of Private Williams's obsession with Leonora. In *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, both Penderton and Williams experience temporary happiness by freeing their sexual instincts in the reservation, a lively natural space outside the lifeless army post. McCullers's vivid depiction of two sites in the novel offers a metaphorical ground to criticise arbitrary interference and the deprivation of sexual liberty in American society in the late 1930s and the early 1940s and implies that being queer is not abnormal; rather, a lifeless body under the control of heteropatriarchal norms is abnormal.

[74] Graham-Bertolini, p. 176.
[75] McCullers, 'The Flowering Dream', p. 277.
[76] *One*, Inc. v. Olesen, 355 U.S. 371 (1958).
[77] Sarah Beth Gilbert, 'Veiling with Abjection', p. 35.
[78] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p. 295.

Women as objects of the male gaze

In addition to depicting army men with bizarre behaviours in the heteropatriarchal barracks, McCullers creates two army wives, Leonora Penderton and Alison Langdon, whose bodies are constructed as objects of the masculine gaze. Foucault, as discussed in Chapter One, explains the disciplinary power derived from the panoptic gaze in several spaces, such as barracks, schools, and hospitals, and highlights the power of the gaze:

> Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorisation to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercizing this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be minimal cost.[79]

The above quotation reiterates the invisible power of discipline, which leads to an internalisation of the 'inspecting gaze' and self-discipline. As Anna Kérchy puts it, the masculine gaze is a 'normativizing gaze' based on a heteropatriarchal system, which 'hierarchically orders the active masculine spectator above the passive, eroticized, feminized object to be looked at'. [80] Accordingly, the oppressive and invasive male gaze enforces gender norms without using violence. In the barracks created by McCullers, two army wives are under a constant masculine gaze and internalise gender norms.

In the novel, neither Leonora — who, despite her physical strength, is portrayed as 'feebleminded' — nor Alison — who, though physically weak, is depicted as clearheaded — conforms to traditional gender stereotypes. Traditionally, men are seen as strong, capable, and intelligent, while women are often depicted as weak and naive. In *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger examines gender relations from a Marxist-feminist perspective. His arguments provide insight into women's position in gendered patriarchal American society, especially his concept

[79] Michel Foucault, 'The eye of power' in *Power/Knowledge*. ed. by C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books,1977), p. 152.
[80] Anna Kérchy, 'Queering the gaze in the museal space: Orshi Drozdik's feminist (post) concept art Space' in Ágnes Zsófia Kovács and László B Sári, eds., *Gender, and the Gaze in Literature and Art* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2017), pp. 63-86.

of the male gaze and women's identity as both the surveyor and the surveyed. As Berger elaborates:

> To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space.[81]

Both Leonora and Alison, like caged birds, are confined in houses on the post allocated to their husbands. According to gendered Southern culture, Leonora is 'a good hostess', who always works actively in the kitchen with Susie, her African American servant (23). By contrast, Alison is described as an eccentric wife, who indulges in her grief over the death of her only baby and plans to leave her husband and make a living by herself. People embody and are embodied by place. Analysing respectively (in this and the next sections) the places where the two female protagonists reside provides a way to understand how interpersonal domains of power work in their relationships with other characters and their social presences in the patriarchal barracks.

The spatial layout of the Pendertons' house displays gender segregation and traditional heterosexual culture. The Pendertons live in a two-storey house with eight rooms in the married quarter of the barracks. In the social area downstairs, there is 'a large sitting room', 'the servant's room' on one side of the stairs, 'the dining room' on the other, 'the kitchen' and 'a sun porch' which has been converted into a study by the Captain (41). The sitting room, a place for family gatherings and social activities, plays the role of keeping the couple socially connected and accepted. Sometimes after dinner the Pendertons and the Langdons go into the sitting room 'to finish out the evening with cards and conversation' (45). Like those soldiers and officers who are spatially separated according to their rank, the Captain and his wife occupy different home spaces under their socially constructed gender roles. The Captain always works alone in the study, a gendered place recently dubbed a 'man cave', where, as Belanger notes, 'male family

[81] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books,1972), p. 46.

members … are supposed to be able to do as they please', whereas Leonora always helps their maid, Susie, work in the kitchen, playing the traditional role of taking care of the family.[82] In the eyes of soldiers and officers on the post, Leonora is a perfect army wife: 'a good hostess, an excellent sportswoman, and even as a great lady' (23). Leonora holds a dinner party twice a year in the dining room. Ahmed, using Husserl's metaphor of the table, demonstrates how bodies are turned toward the objects around them and argues, 'a dining table, a table around which a 'we' gather. […] In gathering we may be required to follow specific lines'.[83] The 'dining table' here can be interpreted as a community or a society, where people gain a sense of belonging by following specific rules or social norms. McCullers exemplifies Leonora's 'old Southern notions' through, for example, her belief that 'pastry or bread is not fit to eat unless it is rolled on a marble-topped table' (11). Gathering around the Captain's dining table, members follow Southern traditions and heterosexual culture. Moreover, the dinner party held by 'a good hostess' is a way to exhibit a happy heterosexual marriage to the public — 'the desire to support straight lines and the forms they elevate into moral and social ideals'.[84] In this sense, the Captain's absence from the dinner party after his encounter with Williams in the woods is thus an implication of his failure to follow the straight line and potentially a misfit in a heteropatriarchal society.

Furthermore, the lifeless state of the private area upstairs discloses the Pendertons' unhappy marital relationship. The original arrangement of the rooms ('[u]pstairs to the right there was a double bedroom and a small cubicle' and '[to] the left were two bedrooms of medium size'), sustains the ideal of the nuclear heterosexual family (41). The double bedroom is designed for the married couple and two other bedrooms for their future children. However, McCullers writes, 'The Captain used the large room and his wife slept across the hall from him' (41). Sharing a bed

[82] Leigh Belanger, 'Man Land: More Homes Have a Room Just for Him, and You'll Know It When You See It.' *The Boston Globe*, 3 February 2005, p. 17.
[83] Ahmed, 'Orientations', p. 555.
[84] Ibid., p. 568.

is a typical example of how the deepening of spousal ties affects relationships in daily life. The details about the Captain's separated bedrooms with his wife and his habit of staying in his study till well after midnight, not only discloses their sexless marital relationship but provokes broader thinking about their body–place interactions. McCullers also links the interior spaces of the bedroom with the exterior spaces and creates an aperture of transgression by describing the open door of 'The Lady's room', together with the couple's separated bedrooms, the Captain's habit of staying up late in the study with its always-closed door, and other details, such as the carpeted (sound-proof) stairs. These elements collectively create the opportunity for the Private to repeatedly slip into Leonora's bedroom without being noticed (41). Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher, suggests the metaphorical meaning of the door: 'In fact, the very origin of a daydream that accumulates desires and temptations: the temptation to open up the ultimate depths of being, and the desire to conquer all reticent beings'.[85] Compared with the closed door of the Captain's study, the open door of Leonora's bedroom not only gives the Captain opportunity to conform to heterosexuality but also offers a possibility for the Private to sneak in and satisfy his unlocked and accumulated heterosexual desire — the desire of the male gaze. Consequently, Leonora, the target of Private Williams's voyeurism, is, consciously or unconsciously, placed in the position of being looked at without her knowledge.

Leonora represents women in late 1930 and early 1940s American society whose bodies are culturally and spatially invaded. In 1975, Laura Mulvey, a British feminist film theorist and filmmaker, developed Berger's idea of the male gaze in light of psychoanalytic theory. She argues in her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' and suggests that the male gaze is derived from that of 'scopophilia'— 'the pleasure in looking'.[86] She points out that

[85] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* Trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 222.
[86] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16. 3 (1975), 6-18 (p. 11).

'women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness'.[87] In this way, Mulvey emphasises women's roles as exhibitionists in their relationship with men. McCullers conveys a similar idea in depicting her female characters. Taking Leonora's undressing near the open door for example, McCullers refers to Leonora's 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.[88] In addition, Leonora's daily activity of taming her horse, Firebird, is described like an erotic performance, during which she 'laughed aloud and spoke to Firebird in a voice that was vibrant with passion and excitement: "You sweet old bastard, you!"' McCullers emphasises that this exhibition, with its 'theatrical, affected air' is not only for 'their own amusement' but also 'for the benefit of spectators' (71). The above instances suggest that it is Leonora's 'to-be-looked-at-ness' or specific forms of visibility that ignite Private Williams's desire to look.

From depicting what Williams sees and how he acts when stealing into 'The Lady's room' at night, McCullers presents his intrusion into Leonora's personal space:

> Green shadowy moonlight filled the room. The Captain's wife slept as her husband had left her. Her soft hair lay loosened upon the pillow and her gently breathing chest was half uncovered. A yellow silk spread was on the bed and an open flask of perfume sweetened the air with a drowsy scent (71).

The Private, in this circumstance, is an obsessive observer, who enjoys the pleasure of looking and takes Leonora as an object of his gaze. Her room, where his desire for women is awakened, offers him a sensual banquet with 'the thick rug beneath his feet', the touch of 'the silk spread', 'the faint scent of perfume' and 'the soft luxurious warmth of woman flesh' (157). In such moments, an 'alien sweetness' grows in his heart and a 'tense power' fills his body (157). As Rosalind Coward claims, "men can and do stare at women; men assess, judge and make advances on the basis of these visual impressions. The ability to scrutinize is premised on power. Indeed

[87] Mulvey, p. 11.
[88] Ibid., p. 11.

the look confers power"[89] Invading into Leonora's bedroom, Williams not only looks but feels and smells, who enjoys the sensual pleasure brought by the power of gaze. Leonora's being constantly peeped at by Williams clearly implies unequal power dynamics between men and women, both within the barracks and in a broader context of a patriarchal society.

The delineation of Leonora's gender expression on the army post, a typical masculine space, draws attention to the power of the gendered gaze. As Berger emphasises, '[t]he surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object — and most particularly an object of vision: a sight'.[90] Under male observation, a woman, especially her body, becomes an object. This visibility, according to social norms and expectations, results in women's passive role in the gaze of an active, observing male perspective. In the opening pages of the novel, Leonora attempts to subvert this power dynamic by deliberately undressing in front of her husband, thus asserting control over her own body:

> She pulled off her jersey, crushed it into a ball, and threw it into the corner of the room. Then deliberately she unbuttoned her breeches and stepped out of them. In a moment she was standing naked by the hearth (12).

This scene demonstrates a power struggle between the Captain and Leonora, focusing on control over her body. Leonora's act of undressing represents a declaration of ownership over her own body, challenging and undermining her possessive husband's authority within the household. Therefore, when the Captain urges Leonora, who is performing a barefoot sexual dance in the kitchen, to 'go up and put on some shoes' and warns her that 'The Langdons are coming any minute now', Leonora defiantly strips in the living room to resist her husband's command (19). Moreover, McCullers portrays Leonora's pleasure-seeking lifestyle as a direct challenge to her husband's dominance. She has affairs with different officers in different periods, which can be

[89] Rosalind Coward, *Female desires: How they are sought, bought and packaged* (London: Granada Publishing, 1984), p. 75.
[90] Berger, p. 47.

interpreted as her acts of gaining and maintaining control over her own body. However, as Berger argues, 'To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself'.[91] Leonora does not notice that when she is exposing her body to be herself, she is, at the same time, seen by another man (the Private) from the outside. Thus, willingly, and unwillingly, she does not escape from turning her body into a 'sight'. Seen by Williams as an object of desire, Leonora is nothing more than a nude body.

Female gaze — A subversion of the male gaze

Like Leonora, Alison is socially and spatially situated in the position of the surveyed in the fictional barracks and is judged by the male gaze within the context of gendered society. As Mulvey elucidates, '[t]he determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure… with [her] appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact'.[92] His statement highlights that the male gaze often emphasises aspects of women's appearance that serve to enhance visual and erotic appeal. From the perspective of a male gaze, Alison's appearance does not meet the feminine beauty ideal when compared with Leonora's luscious flesh that transfixes the Private. In the Captain's eyes, Alison, a 'small, dark, fragile' woman, is a 'big nosed female Job' (22). He even feels 'a quiver of nausea' at the sight of her hands which are 'slender to the point of emaciation, with long fragile fingers and delicate branchings of greenish veins from the knuckles to the wrist' (22). Major Langdon also dislikes Alison's 'female' and 'morbid' features and takes her illness as 'a hypochondriacal fake' to avoid the duties of an army wife — 'the routine of sports and parties' — and to go 'outside his control' (24; 53). Besides being a grotesque and hyper-feminine woman in the eyes of Major Langdon, Alison is also treated by Leonora as 'an abject idiot' (44). Leonora always speaks to Alison in a 'careful and reasonable voice', which

[91] Ibid., pp.53-4.
[92] Mulvey, p. 19.

seems to be a reflection of Leonora's own internalised male gaze (44). The male gaze objectifies Alison's body and excludes her from the mainstream circle in the army community. McCullers, again, applies the metaphor of the dining table to present Alison's state of being an 'abject' outsider. When she, together with her husband, sits at the Pendertons' dining table, Alison feels out of place and 'hardly touch[es] her dinner', while her husband behaves as a 'great eater', sitting 'with one elbow on the table and [being] altogether very much at home' (14). The Pendertons' dining table, as discussed above, is a symbol of heteropatriarchal Southern culture. Being incompatible with other members around the table, Alison appears to be a misfit. However, in a different respect, it also reflects her refusal to keep in line with others and follow social norms.

Alison is also portrayed as a surveyor, who is bestowed with an observing eye by McCullers to review the gothic distortion of life on this regimented military base. In this sense, she embodies a female gaze — a subversion of 'the determining male gaze'. Most of the time when sitting together with other three main characters, Alison observes them with her 'dark and shrewd' eyes and feels ashamed to be one of them. Major Langdon, a model of a heterosexual army man, in Alison's eyes is as 'stupid and heartless as a man could be'; Leonora is seen by Alison as 'being nothing but an animal'; she even condemns Captain Penderton as 'thieving' and 'at bottom hopelessly corrupt' (101). Additionally, she catches the bizarre behaviours of other characters with her keen eyes, including the love affair between her husband and Leonora, and Captain Penderton's petty theft. She comments satirically on people around her: 'What a gang!' (52) Through Alison's female gaze, McCullers challenges traditional male perspectives by portraying women as subjects rather than objects. Furthermore, Alison's self-mutilation — after losing her baby and discovering her husband's betrayal, she 'cut off the tender nipples of her breasts with the garden shears'— from the perspective of the male gaze is eccentric and hysterical behaviour (14). However, as Free maintains, it also symbolises a 'gender defiance', another way to

challenge male supremacy.[93] Just as Leonora's exhibition of her naked body challenges her husband's dominance, Alison's self-mutilation is another form of gaining body autonomy. Notably, McCullers also depicts a grotesque act of self-harm in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* — African American teenager Lancy Davis's attempt at 'self-emasculation', which can be interpreted as an extreme form of resistance against racism (163). Similarly, Alison's act of self-harm is also a desperate way of showing her grief over her incapacity to nurture a child, as well as her determination to reject the role of being a sexual object.

All forms of surveillance are related to power dynamics, specifically, who sees and who is seen. When Alison looks out of her bedroom window, she takes the position of a supervisor with an all-seeing vision. McCullers also imbues Alison's bedroom window with rich symbolic connotations, similar to her treatment of the doors in Leonora's bedroom and Captain Penderton's study. Windows, like doors, are apertures in the house constructed to connect the outside world with inside beings. At her bedroom window, Alison contemplates and observes people around her: 'Everyone she had known in the past five years was somehow wrong, that is, everyone except Weincheck and of course Anacleto and little Catherine' and '[i]f it were not for sordid procrastination and if she had a rag of pride, she and Anacleto would not be in this house tonight' (52). Unlike other three characters who, to a large extent, try hard to maintain the status quo, Alison is the only character who plans to escape. She has contemplated her life after divorcing her husband: 'tutoring Latin in some college town, shrimp fishing, hiring Anacleto out to drudge while she sat in a boarding house and took in sewing' (82). According to Collins, 'the interpersonal domain stresses the everyday, resistance strategies within this domain can take as many forms as there are individuals'.[94] Of course, being as fragile as a 'hothouse rose', her physical illness prevents her from taking any of the jobs she has thought of (136). Nonetheless,

[93] Free, p. 435.
[94] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* p. 287.

Alison's plan for escaping from the hegemony of patriarchal control, just like her self-mutilation, embodies her acts of 'everyday resistance'.

McCullers, who was also in poor health during the writing and publication of this book, bestows Alison, a vulnerable woman, 'a golden eye' to reflect truthfully on the morbid world on this army post. Kent Bloomer and Charles Moore compare 'an inhabited room' to 'an organic part of a house that is itself experienced as a megabody' with 'windows for eyes and a front door for mouth'.[95] From the windows in her bedroom, Alison observes what happens outside. For example, she catches sight of a 'shadow of a man on the Pendertons' back lawn' and mistakes him for her husband (129). Williams's voyeurism is a sort of surveillance, and so is Alison's gaze at the window. However, Alison's female gaze, subverting the male gaze, potentially changes traditional power dynamics in the gendered acts of looking. In this shift between the object and subject of looking, men become the objects of observation while women assume the role of the observer, which reveals the hidden power of surveillance, challenges the male gaze, and puts herself in danger. Her intention to reveal the adultery between her husband and Leonora frightens both the Captain and the Major, who want to cover up the scandal for their own benefits. The Captain chooses to overlook Alison's report that someone is in his wife's bedroom, while Major Langdon, using the excuse that Alison's mental state is 'on the verge of actual lunacy', sends Alison to a sanatorium. Finally, Alison, unable to escape the cage-like confines of Langdon's house on the barracks, ultimately finds herself confined to a sanatorium, another prison-like place. McCullers's decision to silence Alison in this way at the end of the novel presents an unequal power balance between the female gaze and the male gaze — but also indicates the obstacles in women's resistance against deep-rooted sexism and patriarchy between 1930s and 1940s America.

[95] Kent Bloomer and Charles Moore, *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 47.

The queer gaze of 'one immense golden eye'[96]

In *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, McCullers uses imaginary eyes to reflect inner thoughts of queer characters. For example, in 'the horse's round, purple eyes', Captain Penderton sees the reflection of 'a liquid image of his own frightened face' when he tries to appear calm before mounting Firebird (84). In addition, eyes reflect Penderton's growing passion for Williams. McCullers compares his 'glassy blue' eyes to 'blue burning flames' when he 'follow[s] and [stands] watching' Williams at the stable after their encounter in the forest (50). Furthermore, the Captain experiences a 'unique and voluptuous sensation' through taking an overdose of a drug: 'it was as though a great dark bird alighted on his chest, looked at him once with fierce, golden eyes, and stealthily enfolded him in his dark wings' (35). In another scene, Anacleto sees from a vision of the embers a reflection of a 'tiny' and 'grotesque' world in 'one immense golden eye' of a 'peacock of a sort of ghastly green' (57). These two queer characters have different visions of a similar 'queer' bird. Penderton conjures an illusion of being 'stealthily enfolded' by the 'dark bird', which symbolises his thirst for love (35). However, seeing an imaginary 'rare bird', Anacleto contemplates his marginalised status in this 'tiny' and 'grotesque' world and considers 'running away from home and opening a linen shop in Quebec' (56). As Lillian Faderman notes, the term 'queer bird …in the 1930s… referred to female homosexuals'.[97] McCullers, as a bisexual writer, portrays the Captain and Anacleto as 'queer birds' to express her own understanding of gender and sexual variance. As noted earlier, Alison's female gaze subverts women's position as the object for the male gaze, while the Captain and Anacleto's queer gaze challenges the traditional gender binary and reflects the uncertainty of sexuality. In a way, McCullers, while writing her novel from the perspective of the queer gaze, is like a 'queer bird'

[96] McCullers, *Reflections in a Golde Eye*, p. 57.
[97] Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 106.

with ‘one immense golden eye’, observing and reflecting the vulnerable status of the outsiders in a heteronormative Southern society in the mid-twentieth century when people had little knowledge about fluid gender and sexuality.

McCullers portrays in her novels a group of queer characters who are bounded by socially constructed gender stereotypes and feel uncertain and confused about their sexual identities. as discussed, her first defined queer character, Lily Mae Jenkins, appears in the outline of *The Mute*, a draft of her first novel eventually published as *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* in 1940, in which he is proposed to be a minor character:

> an abandoned, waifish Negro homosexual who haunts the Sunny Dixie show where Jake [Blount] works. He is always dancing. His mind and feelings are childish, and he is totally unfit to earn his living. Because of his skill in music and dancing, he is a friend of Willie’s. […] Lily Mae is right pitiful now. […] he cares for men instead of girls.

Although this character who stands for gender and sexual transgressions was removed from the final text of the published novel, McCullers did not give up writing about the intersection between gender and sexuality. Besides Anacleto and Captain Penderton in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, queer figures like Lily Mae exist in all of McCullers’ novels, as I’ve already outlined, from Biff Brannon, the crossdressing café owner, to John Singer, who has an attachment to his friend Antonopulous, from Cousin Lymon, an emotional child-like hunchbacked man fascinated by Marvin Macy’s brute masculinity in *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, to Jester Clane’s interracial affection for Sherman Pew, a young African American man, in *Clock without Hands*. McCullers demonstrates an intersectional perspective in creating her queer characters. By depicting Lily Mae as a dancing and childish racial stereotype, Singer as a Jewish disabled man, and Anacleto as an Asian servant, she illustrates the diverse identities of her queer characters, who are often more vulnerable to intersectional oppression than other characters.

Anacleto is not viewed as a man from either the female or the male gaze. McCullers describes Alison’s first impression of Anacleto at seventeen: ‘What a sad, strange little creature

he had been! He was so tormented by the other houseboys that he dogged her footsteps all day long. If anyone so much as looked at him he would burst into tears and wring his hands' (74). Alison's pitying gaze reveals Anacleto's intersecting vulnerabilities within the context of the heteropatriarchal culture of 1930s and 1940s America: as a non-white servant, physically weak individual who is always bullied. Like Lily Mae, who 'is always dancing' and is musically skilled, Anacleto, 'a grown man twenty-three years old', is fond of 'dancing around to music and messing with water colours' (111). According to Chauncey, in a homophobic backdrop, 'describing someone as "artistic" could be a coded way of calling him homosexual'.[98] In a similar vein, Chiara Bassetti observes that 'artistic inclinations were regarded as a homosexual trait' at the beginning of the twentieth century. She further stresses that 'an interest in dance might be read as a sign of deviation from mainstream masculinity'.[99] This explains why Major Langdon calls Anacleto 'idiot' and 'rare bird' and threatens, 'What I wouldn't do if I could get you in my battalion!' (27) In the barracks where the Major, an ideal figure of masculine prowess, represents mainstream masculinity, Anacleto's effeminacy and interest in music and art make him 'deviant' and thus a threat to the heteronormative masculinity of the barracks and of Langdon's home. Anacleto's effeminate gender expression strays from the expected straight line of gender, so Major Langdon proposes to send him to K. P. (Kitchen Patrol) to increase his masculinity: 'Anacleto wouldn't have been happy in the army, no, but it might have made a man of him' (72-3). Anacleto's ambiguous gender identity deconstructs gender binary power structures. In addition, his escape from the army post is a refusal to conform to social norms, which further creates space for diverse expressions of gender identity.

[98] Chauncey, p. 53-4.

[99] Chiara Bassetti, 'Male Dancing Body, Stigma and Normalising Processes. Playing with (Bodily) Signifieds/ers of Masculinity', *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, 44.2 (2013), 67-90 (p. 72).

In addition to depicting the above-mentioned male queer characters, McCullers subtly implies Leonora's bisexuality. As mentioned elsewhere, 'queer bird' is associated with female homosexuals.[100] Naming Leonora's horse 'Firebird', McCullers hints at her queerness. In addition, the Captain's queer gaze captures traces of Leonora's possible same-sex interest. As Bachelard puts it, a house or a room can be used as 'a tool for analysis of the human soul'.[101] Leonora's bedroom is a place reflecting her internal world. A 'photograph of a girl of about seventeen' on the wall of Leonora's bedroom arouses Penderton's curiosity. From its intimate inscription — 'To Leonora with Oodles of Love from Bootsie' — and Leonora's way of treasuring it: hanging up there 'for more than a decade' and carrying it 'halfway around the globe', it can be inferred that there used to be a deep affection between two girls (66). Further, when Penderton asks about the identity of the girl, she excuses herself for forgetting 'this Bootsie's lawful name'. Finally, by connecting fragmented information like 'the boarding school', and the fact that 'Bootsie had drowned some years ago' to the worry of 'her old father, the General, about if she can be 'safely married' (14), readers can make a bold guess that there might be a same-sex love story behind this photo. The equivocated response that Penderton gets from Leonora regarding the girl in the photo is similar to the evasive answer Reeves McCullers got from Carson about her sexual orientation at nineteen. Jenn Shapland starts her book, *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, by discussing 'Carson's status as maybe-lesbian' and recalling the scene when 'Reeves asked Carson if she was a lesbian on the front porch of Carson's house on Stark Avenue'.[102] Carson McCullers responded to this question 'with a swift denial, wished aloud that she wasn't one, then expressed plain uncertainty'.[103] As Shapland clarifies,

> It is by no means easy to track or trace relationships between women, past or present. Women's relationships with other women are often disguised: by well-documented marriages to men, by a cultural refusal to see what is in full view or even to believe such

[100] Faderman, p. 106.
[101] Bachelard, p. 47.
[102] Jenn Shapland, *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers* (Portland: Tin House Books, 2019), p. 9.
[103] Ibid., p. 9.

> relationships exist. In a world built by and for men and their pursuits, a woman who loves women does not register — and is not registered, i.e., written down.[104]

McCullers offers little information for us to track the relationship between Leonora and the girl in the photo, but some further traces may be found in the Pendertons' marital relationship. If Penderton takes his marriage as a disguise to cover his 'deviant' sexuality, a 'well-documented' marriage to a man might also be a disguise for Leonora. Considering the aforementioned reasons for McCullers's ambivalence in depicting Penderton's sexuality, it is more or less easy to understand her indirectness and reticence here about the maybe-bisexual identity of Leonora. Ultimately, Leonora remains sitting around her 'marble topped [dining] table', playing the role of a Southern lady and following the straight line. Her efforts to hide the identity of the girl in the photo and conform to heterosexual norms and gender stereotypes, to some extent, reflect McCullers's insight into the plight of the queers in a heteronormative society.

McCullers reflects on her own multiple identities in the characters she has created: Captain Penderton's closeted same-sex desire, Private Williams's repressed interest in women, the untold 'maybe-lesbian' identity of the girl in the photo cherished by Leonora, Anacleto's effeminate nature, and Alison's painful struggle for independence as a woman. As Chauncey points out, 'the state built a closet in the 1930s and forced gay people to hide in it'.[105] Among all the queer characters in the enclosed barracks in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, we see an intertextual echo and reversal of a queer stereotype — Lily Mae Jenkins, who hides in all Carson McCullers books. Highlighting the effeminacy of her queers, McCullers's Lily Mae-like characters embody 'fairies' in the first half of the twentieth century, whose queerness, as observed by Chauncey, is mainly about gender rather than sexuality, which illustrates the limitations of McCullers's understanding of gender and sexuality.[106] During their second meeting in a bar,

[104] Ibid., p. 20.
[105] Chauncey, p. 9.
[106] Ibid., p. 4.

McCullers expressed her sympathy for vulnerable people to Annemarie Schwarzenbach and said, '[a]ll my life I've been oppressed, I've had to fight all my life for every lyrical note in my writing, […]and I've always lived among outsiders, the tormented, the rootless'.[107] Captain Penderton, Anacleto, and other Lily Mae-like characters penned by McCullers embody those marginalised queers who suffered from intersected discrimination in the first half of the twentieth century. Audre Lorde, a 'black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet', and pioneer of intersectional thinking, drew a lesson from her own experience of confronting racism, sexism, classism, capitalism, heterosexism, and homophobia, and told us: 'My silences had not protected me. Your silences will not protect you'.[108] Like Lorde, McCullers, wrote bravely about gender and sexual injustices. Despite not explicitly defining queer bodies in her works, due to inadequate language to describe gender and sexual minorities and the pressure to avoid surveillance of the social and cultural life of her time, she nonetheless challenged with words the heteropatriarchal American society between the 1930s and the 1940s.

[107] Annemarie Schwarzenbach, 'Carson McCullers in 1940', *Agni, trans by* Padraig Rooney, 84 (2016), 69-74 (70).
[108]Lorde, p. 41.

CHAPTER THREE

Loneliness and Belonging: Adolescence and Society in *The Member of the Wedding*

'You are the we of me, her heart was saying, but she could only say aloud: "Take me!"' [1]

The previous two chapters have discussed how the intersections of classism, racism, and sexism shape and define the lives of marginalised individuals based on Carson McCullers's first two novels. Building upon this ground, this chapter shifts its concentrate to McCullers's portrayal of adolescent characters, particularly Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding*, whose identity formation is set within the cultural, historical, and social background of mid-twentieth-century America. In her 1949 essay, 'Loneliness ... An American Malady', McCullers writes,

> Consciousness of self is the first abstract problem that the human being solves. […] This primitive grasp of identity develops with constantly shifting emphasis through all our years. Perhaps maturity is simply the history of those mutations that reveal to the individual the relation between himself and the world in which he finds himself.[2]

One's maturity, a conscious and ongoing process, evolves mostly through self-recognition and interactions with society. McCullers's vivid depiction of her young protagonists draws attention to the enduring influence of societal norms and expectations on individuals' growth and self-discovery. In her novels, McCullers creates various teenage characters, who stand in a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, going through many sudden and rapid physical and psychological changes. Carson and Reeves McCullers lived in Charlotte, North Carolina

[1] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p.119. Further references to this novel in this chapter are given after quotations in the text.

[2] Carson McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady', in *The Mortgaged Heart*, ed. by Margarita G. Smith. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971), 293-96 (p. 293).
First published in *This Week* (New York: Herald Tribune, 1949), 18-9 (p. 19).
Also quoted and discussed in the book chapter:
Kathleen Riley, 'Carson McCullers's "Look Homeward, Americans" (1940)', in *Imagining Ithaca: Nostos and Nostalgia Since the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 145-54.

between 1937 and 1938. *The Charlotte Observer*, one of the leading local newspapers, highly valued McCullers's 'superb understanding of the bewilderments of adolescents' and noted, '[McCullers] knows better than almost any author how to catch the dream-like quality that is at the root of most people's private existence.'[3] McCullers probes into the inner world of her young characters and their interactions with the outside world, portraying their lingering anxiety, confusion, and loneliness, as well as highlighting their efforts to fit in society to gain a sense of belonging.

Adolescent characters such as Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding* and Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, had an important place in American literature between the 1940s and the 1960s. In his 1967 book, *The Novel Now*, British novelist Anthony Burgess argues that, in mid-twentieth-century American literature, 'the typical hero is a child or adolescent, bearing a half-realized innocence through the dirty world.'[4] He regards Holden Caulfield, the teenage character in J. D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in The Rye* (1951), as a misfit adolescent who demonstrates 'at least the symptom of a need, after a ghastly war and during a ghastly peace, for the young to raise a voice of protest against what the adult world was doing, or failing to do.'[5] Holden challenges himself to be a protector of innocence and struggles to stay innocent in the phony and corrupt adult world. Significantly, a great number of Holden-like coming-of-age characters were created between the 1940s and the 1960s, and among them, female misfits penned by female authors face similar challenges to those of McCullers's female adolescents as I will discuss here. For example, Betty Smith's novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1943), explores themes of coming-of-age and identity through the depiction of Francie's experiences with family misfortunes and social injustices during the early twentieth century; 'Annie Allen' (1949), a

[3] Harriet Doar, ''Love ... Is at the Heart' — Battling Ill Health, Carson McCullers Writes On', *Charlotte Observer* (N.C.), 5 May 1963, p. 10 c.
[4] Anthony Burgess, *The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), p. 199.
[5] Burgess, *The Novel Now*, p. 152.

collection of poems by Gwendolyn Brooks, focuses on the themes of race, gender, and societal issues through the experience of Annie Allen, an African American girl, during her transition from childhood to adulthood; Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar* (1963) by Sylvia Plath is portrayed as a talented young woman, who struggles with mental illness, identity formation, and societal expectations in 1950s America.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers describes the coming-of-age story of Frankie, a confused twelve-year-old boyish adolescent, who is experiencing a painful transformation from childhood to adulthood in an American Southern small town during WWII. Frankie's existence is defined by her position as part (or not) of a set of trios — she and her parents, she and Berenice and John Henry, she and her brother and his bride. From psychosocial and existential perspectives, this chapter analyses the identity formation of Frankie by exploring her lingering loneliness, painful separateness, and strong desire for belonging, alongside her struggle to shed childhood innocence and gain self-awareness as she approaches adulthood. Pivoting around the analysis of Frankie's existential crisis on her journey of identity development, this chapter delves into McCullers's depiction of other marginalised characters through the lens of queer intersectionality, providing insight into her sensitivity to the complex intersections of adolescent identity development, gender fluidity, sexual ambiguity, and racial dynamics in a transitioning American society at the end of World War II.

The existential aspects of adolescent identity development

In an interview with Harvey Breit, a reporter from the *New York Times*, about her play *The Member of the Wedding*, the stage version of her same-name novel, McCullers claimed,

> I do think the idea of wanting to belong haunts every child. And not only children. I think it is the primary question: 'Who am I? What am I? Or, where do I belong? And where can I belong?' But childhood or adolescence is a time of crisis, and such questions are more

haunting, more immediate, then.[6]

Here McCullers draws attention to existential questions when discussing the undefined state of adolescence at a transitional stage of identity development. American psychologist G. Stanley Hall in *Adolescence* (1904) proposed the notion of adolescence 'as a unique period in individual development, laying the groundwork for the now familiar association of youth with a universal developmental trajectory leading to autonomy and individuality.'[7] Interpreted in an existential perspective, adolescence is an undefined present, an existence determined by the way one looks back to the past and looks ahead into the future. In terms of the study of adolescent identity development in the mid-twentieth-century, Erik H. Erikson, a prominent twentieth-century Danish-German American psychologist, is famous for developing the psychosocial development theory that relates the issue of adolescence to both social and psychological concerns. In *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968), Erikson, observing the existential aspects of ego-identity of adolescents, coined the concept of identity crises to refer to an existential crisis in adolescence, which is defined as 'a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and historical context of the identity formation of individual identity.' [8] In a similar vein, McCullers, also emphasised that 'adolescence is a time of crisis' in the aforementioned interview in 1950. As a time of tension and transition, the mid-twentieth century saw the rise of feminism, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the aftermath of the Great Depression, and pervasive sense of fear and uncertainty during and after World War II. In this context, McCullers's adolescents, standing at

[6] Harvey Breit, 'Behind the Wedding: Carson McCullers Discusses the Novel She Converted into a Stage Play', *New York Times*, 1 January 1950, Section Drama-Music, Fashion-Screen, p. 49.
[7] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1904), p. 111.
[8] Erik Homburger Erikson, *Identity: youth and crisi*s (New York: Norton & Co.,1968), p. 16.

'a necessary turning point' and 'a crucial moment' in their lives, are in a process of defining, finding and realising themselves.

Between the 1940s to the 1960s, existentialist thought gained prominence within the field of psychology in the United States. French existentialists published many notable works in the 1940s and 1950s, such as *Being and Nothingness (L'Être et le néant*, 1943) and *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (*L'existentialisme est un humanism*, 1946) by Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Second Sex* (*Le Deuxième Sexe*, 1949) by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Structure of Behavior* (*La Structure du comportement*,1942) and *Phenomenology of Perception* (*Phénoménologie de la perception*, 1945) by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and *The Stranger* (*L'Étranger*, 1942) by Albert Camus. These works examine various existential themes, such as dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, and nothingness. George Cotkin, an American historian, notes in his book *Existential America* (2003) that 'the conversation of existentialism reached a fevered peak with the post-Second World War arrival of Sartre and French existentialism.'[9] Further, he points out that 'New York intellectuals, no less than the popular press, played a significant role in making the ideas of French existentialism part of the intellectual coin of the realm in the postwar years.'[10] Exploring the meaning of life, love, and death and having developed themes of loneliness and alienation in her works, McCullers was among the intellectuals in New York who were influenced by French existentialism in the mid-twentieth century. In late 1946, McCullers had face-to-face contact with French existentialists when she and her husband, Reeves, visited Paris, where she met '[a] host of French authors and playwrights, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus.'[11] According to Virginia Spencer Carr, McCullers, when she lived in February House, a well-known colony of artists in Brooklyn, was urged by her friend, the poet W. H.

[9] George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 359.
[10] Ibid., p. 7.
[11] Ibid., p. 283.

Auden, 'to read and embrace the teachings of Kierkegaard.'[12] Accordingly, Freud, Kierkegaard, and French existentialism informed McCullers's thinking as she explored both the identity confusion and the existential plight of American individuals between and after two world wars.

Many critics and scholars attribute the loneliness and marginalisation experienced by McCullers's characters to the existential agony inherent in being human. For example, Claire Lenviel, reading *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* through Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of the look, maintains that the novel 'represents a process of resistance to our tragic human existential dilemma, in which the characters challenge the look by attempting, and failing, to determine their own visible identity in the world.'[13] Lenviel's perspective is similar to mine in Chapter Two, where I analyze Leonora's act of stripping off her clothes to challenge her husband's dominating gaze and assert her own visibility. Another scholar, González Groba, analyses McCullers's *Clock without Hands* and argues that '[McCullers] brings existentialist influences to bear on the attitudes of her white characters with respect to relations to the violent racial relations at the outset of the Civil Rights Movement….'[14] McCullers, like Camus in *The Stranger*, stresses the significance of adolescence as a time of transition and existential awakening in her novels. Her adolescent characters often struggle with questions of identity, meaning, and the absurdity of life. McCullers shows their responding to social changes and their personal need to belong through unconventional behaviours that challenge the cultural norms of their parents' generation and are often perceived by wider society as deviant and delinquent. As Margaret Johnson stresses, 'when considering the Modernist theme of searching for an authentic identity and purpose, Frankie

[12] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p.109.
Note: Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, is commonly recognised as the father of existentialism.
Note: Carson McCullers lived in February House from 1940 to 1941. This communal living arrangement in Brooklyn, New York, brought together several notable literary figures of the time, including McCullers, W.H. Auden, Benjamin Britten, and Gypsy Rose Lee, among others.
[13] Claire Lenviel, 'Hopeless Resyistance: The Self-Look in McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter', ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 26:2(2013),115-20 (p.115).
[14] González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and the racial problem', p. 63.

presents herself as a mosaic of selves, beginning as Frankie, metamorphosing into F. Jasmine, and finally settling on the identity of Frances.'[15] Frankie's mosaic of selves is also manifested in McCullers's uses the four seasons as symbols representing Frankie's different phases of identity development: In 'scared spring', old Frankie worries about her fast growth and longs for a change; in 'crazy summer', F. Jasmine falls in love with her brother's wedding; in 'gray and gold' Autumn, F. Jasmine learns to confront reality and grows self-awareness; in 'plain gray winter', Frances finds her '*we of me*' and is expecting a trip together with her new friend (38; 83; 19). In the upcoming sections, I will delve into McCullers's insightful portrayal of Frankie's identity transformation. From analysing her sense of exclusion due to rapid physical growth, to examining her disillusionment from the failure of her quest for belonging, then to highlighting her powerlessness after learning about societal norms and injustices in society, and finally to her sense of hope derived from her self-recognition and potential social acceptance, this chapter seeks to disclose the intricate interplay of biological, psychological, cultural, and social factors in identity development during the mid-twentieth century.

The 'scared spring': Old Frankie is 'a member of nothing in the world'[16]

McCullers's early interest in adolescent identity formation is manifested in her creation of thirteen-year-old Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. However, the main themes of this novel are the issues of racism and injustice as articulated by Dr Copeland and Jake Blunt, rather than centering on Mick's teenage loneliness and identity crisis. In *The Member of the Wedding,* McCullers portrays Frankie as the central protagonist and provides enough space to demonstrate the relations between adolescence and society. Frankie is created as a confused twelve-year-old

[15] Margaret Johnson, 'Identity and the Female Body: Carson McCullers's Frankie Addams's', *Body Studies*, 1.2 (2019): 9-25 (p. 10).
[16] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding,* p. 38.

adolescent, who is experiencing a painful coming-of-age transition. From a third-person limited point of view, McCullers displays the connection between adolescents and society through the narration of Frankie's experience and inner thoughts. The tale is divided into three parts, covering three days during the summer of 1944 from the evening of the last Friday in August to the following Sunday night. McCullers narrates Frankie's desire for belonging, her expectations of starting a new life with her brother and his bride, her disappointment when her plan to leave with the couple fails, and her subsequent changes after the wedding. In another sense, the three days can also symbolise Frankie's past, present, and future. On the one hand, being motherless and ignored by her busy working father, Frankie depends on Berenice Sadie Brown, the middle-aged African American domestic servant, to learn about norms in the adult world and the lines that divide different groups from each other. On the other hand, the company of John Henry West, Frankie's six-year-old cousin, symbolises her close ties with her childhood fantasies and naivety. Besides spending time with Berenice and John in the kitchen, Frankie also explores the adult world through her experiences and adventures in the town, from which she learns about sex, sexuality, race, death, and, most importantly, love. After the wedding, Frankie runs away from home and is eventually brought home by the police. The tale ends with the death of John Henry, the departure of Berenice, and Frankie's looking forward to travelling around the world with her new friend, Mary Littlejohn.

The social context, especially the wartime setting, shapes adolescents' experiences, relationships, behaviours, and identity development. Different from Mick Kelly's experience set at the end of August 1939, several days before the start of WWII, Frankie's coming-of-age story begins on the day when the Allies liberate Paris from Nazi control in World War II, a historical turning point of the war in Europe. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, the talk between Mick and Harry, Mick's Jewish neighbour, highlights people's anxiety about the threat of Nazism and Fascism before the second world war. To a certain degree, Mick demonstrates her naivety about

the war in her claims: 'I'd like to fight the Fascists. I could dress up like a boy and nobody could ever tell. Cut my hair off and all' (210). In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie experiences a greater impact from the war than Mick does, despite sharing a similar desire to be a guy and to join the war. During that summer, Frankie plays cards with Cousin John and Berenice in the afternoons in the kitchen with walls covered with John's 'queer drawings of Christmas trees, airplanes, freak soldiers, flowers' (10). 'Airplanes' and 'freak soldiers' in child drawings by John reflect the impact of war on children and their simple understandings of the war. As McDowell argues, 'The three […] wait but do not know for what they wait. […] Their anxious waiting mirrors the nation's anxieties during that summer as it waits for the shift in the balance of power in the war.'[17] She highlights the connection between individual experiences and the collective mood of the nation, emphasizing how personal narratives can reflect larger societal issues. McCullers later specifies the historical setting through the war news that Frankie hears on the radio in the kitchen — 'It was the summer when Patton was chasing the Germans across France. And they were fighting, too, in Russia and Saipan' (24). Although in this novel McCullers only talks about the topic of war peripherally, as in her other books, she constructs the U.S. home front background by establishing a connection between Frankie and the war through her brother, Jarvis Addams, a corporal in the American army stationed in Alaska. As McCullers writes, 'Frankie had not seen her brother for a long, long time, and his face had become masked and changing, like a face seen under water' (6). Although being far away from the battlefields, the Addamses, like many other American families, are affected by the war. In particular, Frankie's loneliness, confusion, and longing for connection are intensified by her brother's enlistment and the wartime uncertainty.

Frankie's connections with the war serves as a lens, through which McCullers reflects the

[17] McDowell, p. 83.

impact of wars on both American individuals and society. Frankie's direct participation in supporting the army is described in her acts, such as 'mail[ing][her enlisted brother] candy almost every week, sometimes divinity instead of fudge' (9). What Frankie does is very common for most home front families, which, according to American historian Larry Aasen, had supported the frontline during WWII in many ways, including 'providing the soldiers with candy, cookies, and other welcome items.' [18] Moreover, Frankie, who is obsessed with imagining what's happening outside the enclosed space of her family kitchen, keeps picturing in her mind soldiers on world battlefields:

> She saw one Russian soldier, dark and frozen with a frozen gun, in Russian snow. The single Jap with slanted eyes on a jungle island gliding among green vines. Europe and the people hung in trees and the battleships on the blue oceans. Four-motor planes and burning cities and a soldier in a steel war helmet, laughing. (19)

These vivid pictures of soldiers from different countries on the war front display Frankie's childish and vague understanding of the war. In Part Two, McCullers mentions Frankie's visit to the Palace, a movie theatre in her town, where she watches 'crook shows, war shows, or cowboy shows' (82). It is reasonable to surmise that Frankie gets obscure impressions about war after watching the war shows. Additionally, the scenes in her mind may respectively indicate three decisive battles in the Second World War: Russian soldiers fought against the Germans in the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942, Japanese soldiers counterattacked the Americans in the Battle of Midway in 1942 and the Allied operation attacked German forces on the coast of Normandy, France, in the Battle of Normandy in 1944. In addition, Frankie's use of a racial slur — 'Jap' — and the derogatory Asian stereotype of 'slanted eyes' to address and describe a Japanese soldier also underscores the profound impact of war on everyday life. The Americans' fervent anti-Fascist perspective during World War II inadvertently cultivated an environment conducive to

[18] Larry Aasen, Foreword for *America's home front heroes: an oral history of World War II,* ed. by Stacy Enyeart, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), xi.

anti-Asian racist discourse. In another aspect, having a brother in the army may be the main reason for Frankie to be concerned about the state of individual soldiers — soldiers who may also be a brother, a son, or a father from a family somewhere else in the world. Even if McCullers does not make direct comments on Frankie's mental pictures, her description of Frankie's imagination conveys her humanist concern with the existential plight of isolated individuals during the war years.

In the first lines of the novel McCullers brings out the theme of adolescent loneliness and marginality by stressing that Frankie 'belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world' (3). McCullers presents Frankie's intention to be a member of the army to serve the nation at war: she 'want[s] to be a boy and go to the war as a Marine,' or '[to fly] aeroplanes and [to win] gold medals for bravery' and to 'donate blood to the Red Cross'(19-20). According to American historian Steven Mintz,

> Wartime children considered themselves valuable contributors to the nation's defense. They collected scrap metal, rubber, tin cans, and bundles of old newspapers. They sold War Bonds and Victory Stamps and distributed government pamphlets about civil defense, price controls, and rationing. Girls knitted socks, mittens, scarves, and sweaters.[19]

Compared with the above-mentioned contributions made within children's capabilities, Frankie's plans are impractical and even impossible. She could not be a boy, and even if she could, she would not be old enough to fly a plane or donate blood to the Red Cross. Apart from describing Frankie's disappointment that 'in the war, they would not include her', McCullers stresses Frankie's 'restless and blue' feeling by noting that 'the world seemed somehow separate from herself' (19). No longer belonging to the world of young children (the age group of her six-year-old cousin John Henry), Frankie is not a member of the neighbourhood club comprised of 'girls who were thirteen and fourteen and even fifteen years old,' either (13). As Frankie claims, 'The

[19] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A history of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 273.

trouble with me is that for a long time I have just been an *I* person. All people belong to a *we* except me. Not to belong to a *we* makes you too lonesome.' [20] Portraying Frankie as a girl with a wish to be included both in the war and the girls' club, McCullers indicates the conflict between her growing knowledge about the world and her physical and psychological immaturity at the early stage of her adolescent identity formation.

Not belonging to any group makes Frankie feel lonely, but the fear of being labelled as one of the 'Freaks' is even worse for this young girl than loneliness itself (102). In the first part of the novel, McCullers describes what Frankie sees during a visit to the 'House of the Freaks' in the Chattahoochee Exposition last October:

> The Giant
> The Fat-Lady
> The Midget
> The Wild Nigger
> The Pin Head
> The Alligator Boy
> The Half-Man Half-Woman (16)

The description of deviant bodies as exhibits in the freak show reflects societal attitudes and prejudices towards individuals who deviate from physical norms. In 'A Mixture of Delicious and Freak', Rachel Adams, focusing on *The Member of the Wedding* and *Clock without Hands*, explores McCullers's interpretation of two overlapping concepts — the freak and the queer. Adams traces the freak show to 'the sideshow, where, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women, people of color, and those with developmental and physical disabilities were exhibited as 'human curiosities' for entertainment and profit'.[21] In other words, the sideshow represents the prevailing standards and expectations regarding physical appearance, behavior, and identity within a society, from which people with special body sizes, shapes, skin

[20] McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady', p. 260.
[21] Adams, p. 556.

colours, or androgynous features are labelled as 'freaks' and become targets of discrimination and exploitation. However, Frankie does not enjoy 'the comfortable anonymity of her position as a member of the audience,' thinking that her unusual growth speed might trap her as a member of 'the Freaks.' [22] She feels afraid when 'they had look at her in a secret way and tried to connect their eyes with hers, as though to say: we know you' (17). Sperling explains Frankie's fear as a rejection of the 'identification with the freaks,' highlighting that '[to] be known by the freaks is to belong among them.' [23] Further, she argues that the uncontrollable growth of the adolescent body may lead to being diverted from 'the normative futures of womanhood', which is also a possibility of being seen as a 'freak.'[24] In another sense, Frankie's fear of becoming one of 'the Freaks' is attributed to her internalised gender norms. Although she is questing for a sense of belonging throughout the novel, becoming a member of 'freaks' is not what she desires. As Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* learns about the norms of womanhood from the expectations of her sisters, Portia, and others, Frankie acquires similar perceptions from the freakshow and people around her.

If the 'Freak House' is a symbol of societal marginalisation and the confinement of those who are defined as deviant bodies by mainstream society, then the mirror in the Kellys' kitchen is specifically a symbol of self-reflection, through which Frankie observes the difference between her boyishness and the Southern Lady stereotype. Examining Frankie's self-development from a sociological perspective, her acts of self-observation illustrate her internalisation of social norms — Gaining her sense of self or belonging based on the perceptions of others' judgements. In the opening scene of the novel, Berenice tells Frankie to look at herself in the mirror after noticing her 'jealous' emotion at the news of her brother's upcoming wedding. For the first time,

[22] Ibid., p. 556.
[23] Sperling, p. 94.
[24] Ibid., p. 1; 94.

McCullers describes Frankie's image in the mirror:

> There was a watery kitchen mirror hanging above the sink. […] This summer she was grown so tall that she was almost a big freak, and her shoulders were narrow, her legs too long. She wore a pair of blue black shorts, a B.V.D. undervest, and she was barefooted. Her hair had been cut like a boy's, but it had not been cut for a long time and was now not even parted.(7)

This description reflects Frankie's perception of herself. Self-deprecating that 'she was almost a big freak' because of her rapid growth, Frankie consciously judges herself according to the height stereotype of women which suggests that a woman should not be taller than a man. American social scientist Charles Cooley's 'looking-glass self' concept can be applied to explain the symbolic meaning of Frankie's mirror reflection. Cooley put forward this concept in his 1902 book, *Human Nature and the Social Order,* in which he states: 'As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, […] in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it.'[25] The term 'looking-glass self' is an analogy to looking at oneself in a mirror, suggesting that people develop their self-awareness through reflections and responses in social interactions, specifically through how others perceive and assess them. In the mirror, Frankie sees her boyish appearance, which presents a sharp contrast with those neighbourhood girls in 'the club' who have 'golden' skin and are 'dressed in clean, fresh dresses' (78). In this sense, Frankie's 'looking-glass self' embodies her self-awareness of her difference from the Southern Lady stereotype.

Further, McCullers uses another example of Frankie's mirror reflection to show the changes in her gender identity awareness from being 'almost a big freak' to 'would be a Freak' (7;16). She highlights Frankie's fear when looking at herself in the mirror on Saturday, the day before the wedding: 'according to mathematics and unless she could somehow stop herself, she would grow to be over nine feet tall. And what would be a lady who is over nine feet high? She would be a Freak' (16). This description demonstrates the gap between Frankie's uncontrollable

[25] Charles Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner, 1922), p. 96.

growing body and the societal expectations of ideal women, which strengthens her worry about becoming a 'freak' in the future. Frankie's worry at this stage, according to Sperling, is 'the ultimate fear of never achieving so-called normal adulthood, and, instead, becoming a freak.'[26] Significantly, to achieve 'so-called normal adulthood' or to become a Southern Lady in the future, Frankie should learn to be a Southern Belle first. A Southern Belle is defined by Carol S. Manning as a would-be Southern Lady, 'the younger, unmarried, and hence incomplete version of the southern lady,' who appears 'beautiful or potentially beautiful, graceful, charming.' [27] As discussed previously, Frankie is aware of the gap between her appearance and that of the Southern Belle, not only through her reflection in the mirror but through the judgements passed by her peers and adults in the town. Besides the teasing from other children (who 'hollered to her: 'Is it cold up there?'), 'the comments of grown people make Frankie shrivel on her heels' (20). According to Cooley's concept of the 'looking-glass self', people around Frankie are like mirrors through which Frankie finds how others judge her. In this light, Frankie's fear comes from her own rejection of her boyish appearance and others' negative judgements of her appearance based on the archetype of a Southern Belle and Southern Lady.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie's experiences testify to the impact of societal expectations and judgements on the formation of adolescents' identities. As aforementioned, not only Berenice but also Frankie's family members and other people around her, intentionally or unintentionally, instil in her the idea that becoming a Southern Belle is the socially accepted gender role for her. In the novel, the doll that her brother, Jarvis, gifts Frankie can be interpreted as a symbol of Southern Belle, which indicates his expectation on Frankie's gender role — to be an adorable 'little girl' forever (16). Additionally, McCuller's description of John Henry's fondness for the doll and his announcement — 'I will name her Belle,' echoes the symbolic

[26] Sperling, p. 90.
[27] Manning, p. 95.

meaning of the doll and illustrates the impact of gender norms on children (16). As Louise Westling argues, 'In McCullers' case, we find again and again the tomboy heroine suddenly confronted by society's demands that she subdues her behaviour, accept the facts of adult sexuality that she has tried to deny, and start acting ladylike.' [28] Westling effectively elucidates how McCullers portrays her 'tomboy' heroines' grapple with societal pressures and fit into the adult world by making self-transformation and conforming to social norms. As noted in Chapter One, near the end of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Biff observes Mick's change from a boyish girl to a 'ladylike and delicate' figure working for a ten-cent store.[29] Notably, Mick's premature transition from childhood to adulthood is related to the Great Depression background as well as society's demands for Southern ladies. Although in *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers doesn't end the novel with Frankie's transformation into a socially accepted Southern Belle, she exhibits multiple factors, such as race, gender, and sexuality, that work together in her struggle to shape her identities within a heteropatriarchal society.

Frankie is portrayed as a tall, boyish adolescent girl whose physical traits challenge traditional gender norms and expectations, a trope also evident in McCullers's other works, such as Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Miss Amelia in *The Ballad of the Sad Café.* Mick, who is taller than every kid at her prom party ('five feet six inches tall at thirteen'), has a similar worry with Frankie about her rapidly growing body.[30] McCullers portrays Frankie and Mick as would-be freaks, while Amelia in *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* portrayed as a tall woman with masculine traits, is considered as a 'freak' by her townspeople. As Sperling argues, in *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, 'McCullers again explicitly connects freakishness to growth and to womanhood, linking the girls' fears of growing into freaks with Miss Amelia's full realization of this fear.'[31]

[28] Westling, p.5. Also see quoted by Gleeson-White, p. 35.
[29] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, P. 306.
[30] Ibid., p. 94.
[31] Sperling, p. 98.

Analysing Miss Amelia's experience of being treated as a 'freak' *in The Ballad of the Sad Café* will help understand Mick and Frankie's internalised fear of being would-be 'freaks'. McCullers underscores that in the memories of people in the town, Amelia has 'grown to be six feet two inches tall' 'early in youth, which, according to their judgement, 'is not natural for a woman.'[32] Compared with her 'unnatural' height gain 'early in youth', adult Amelia appears more incompatible with gender stereotypes. Her masculinity is depicted at the beginning of the novel: 'She was a dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man. Her hair was cut short and brushed back from the forehead, and there was about her sunburned face a tense, haggard quality.'[33] These masculine features of Amelia make her appear odd to others and thus a target for discrimination. In the novella, Cousin Lymon mocks her for her manliness to please Marvin Macy, a representative of the traditional masculine men: 'in order to imitate her awkward long-legged walk; he crossed his eyes and aped her gestures in a way that made her appear to be a freak'.[34] In this way, Amelia becomes an object for men to evaluate and judge. Freakishness in McCullers's work, according to Carr, 'is a symbol of a character's sense of alienation, of his being trapped within a single identity without the possibility of a meaningful connection with anyone else.'[35] That is to say, individuals with unconventional traits are usually marginalised by society and confined to a stereotypical identity, which makes it difficult for them to show other aspects of themselves and form relationships with others based on understanding and acceptance. In Amelia's case, she tries to fit into the world by building connections with her townspeople through Cousin Lymon. However, being categorised as a 'freak' by people around her, including her beloved Cousin Lymon, she is doomed to be isolated. Significantly, adolescence is a period in which social norms are imposed. From depicting young Mick's and Frankie's fear of becoming

[32] McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, p. 6.
[33] Ibid., p. 2.
[34] Ibid., p. 57.
[35] Carr, *Understanding Carson McCullers* p. 91.

a ‘freak’ to narrating the plight of adult Amelia’s being regarded as a ‘freak’, McCullers makes a well-rounded exploration of the impact of gender norms on young girls’ identity development.

To some extent, both Frankie and Mick are autobiographical images of adolescent McCullers, each experiencing the trauma of being misfits among their peers. As Josyane Savigneau writes in *Carson McCullers: A Life*, in her high school classmates’ eyes, young McCullers was ‘eccentric’ and ‘bizarre’; she was ‘a long-limbed, gangly teenager who wasted no time reaching, prematurely, her full adult height of five feet nine inches’.[36] This widespread phenomenon of peer rejection among adolescents is also discussed by Erikson in his *Childhood and Society:*

> Young people can also be remarkably clannish, and cruel in their exclusion of all those who are ‘different’, in skin colour or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in such petty aspects of dress and gesture as have been temporarily selected as the signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper.[37]

Notably, different from the perspectives of sociologists, such as Charles Cooley, who concentrate on the role of society in shaping behaviour and attribute these acts of inclusion or exclusion to the impact of social norms, Erikson pays attention to both the mental development of individuals and social factors and gives a psychosocial understanding of the ‘in-grouper or out-grouper’ categorisation among adolescents and considers this as ‘a defense against a sense of identity confusion.’[38] He explains this ‘clannish, and cruel’ exclusion among adolescents as a way not only to ‘help one another temporarily through much discomfort by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies’ but to ‘test each other’s capacity to pledge fidelity.’ [39] In his view, to fit into society, adolescents need to establish their sense of self and find a direction in life through their interactions with their peers and the adult world. In her

[36] Savigneau, p. 27.
[37] Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 236.
[38] Ibid., p. 236.
[39] Ibid., p. 236.

portrayal of Frankie, McCullers presents the influence of both social and psychological factors on the development of self, which arguably fits Erikson's psychosocial concept of identity development.

Based on her own childhood experience of trying to avoid becoming a 'freak' in others' eyes, McCullers narrates her adolescent characters' efforts to change their physical appearance to respond to their internalised gender stereotypes. According to Carr, young McCullers, who feared that 'she might never stop growing after viewing the freaks at the Chattahoochee Valley Fair', started smoking at fourteen 'in an effort to stunt her growth.'[40] Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* also thinks that 'maybe cigarettes would help stunt the rest of her growth.'[41] Frankie doesn't smoke, but wonders if 'marrying really stop[s] … growth' after learning that Berenice stopped growth after getting married at thirteen years old (22). Later, her assumption that married people cease to grow evolves into an eagerness to join her brother and his bride and form a trio of 'we.' According to Erikson,

> identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them.[42]

Erikson's argument highlights the view that people make frequent observations of what's going on around them and reflect on the results to judge themselves according to the way they believe others judge them. However, trying to stop growth by smoking or getting married are examples of these young girls' immature cognitions of their biological changes and distorted reflections of gender norms, which may result in their further role confusion and identity crisis. At the end of Part One, McCullers describes Frankie's existential anxiety triggered by the changes in her body

[40] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p. 30.
[41] McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 94.
[42] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p. 22,

during her adolescence:

> She was afraid of these things that made her suddenly wonder who she was, and what she was going to be in the world, and why she was standing at that minute, seeing a light, or listening, or staring up into the sky: alone. She was afraid, and there was a queer tightness in her chest. (21)

Frankie's psychological growth does not keep pace with her biological changes in the body, which leaves her questioning and engenders her existential dread. As quoted earlier, McCullers stresses that 'adolescence is a time of crisis.' To delve into Frankie's existential crisis in this novel, McCullers examines not only the intersection of biological and psychological factors but also emphasises the social and cultural forces that shape Frankie's identity.

The 'crazy summer': F. Jasmine is seeking 'the *we of me*'[43]

To answer the often-asked question — 'Who Am I?' — is to find one's identity. As an important part of one's identity, one's name always indicates subtle personal, cultural, or historical connections. Erikson states his understanding of the relationship between identity and naming in *The Life Cycle Completed*:

> Identity marks, acclaims, and distinguishes each infant at birth and is immediately confirmed by naming. A boy gets a boy's name, and likewise, a girl's name pronounces her to be female. […] The greatest problem we encounter is who we think we are vs. who others may think we are or are trying to be. Who does he or she think I am? is a troublesome question to ask oneself, and it is difficult to find the appropriate answer.[44]

Changing one's name helps affect identity changes and, to some extent, helps individuals find their place in the world ('who we think we are') and gain recognition from others ('who others may think we are or are trying to be'). It is worth noting that McCullers attaches symbolic implications to the change of her name and that of her adolescent character.

[43] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p. 35.
[44] Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, p. 110.

Born Lula Carson Smith, McCullers was named after her maternal grandmother, Lula Carson Waters. Giving children double names is a southern tradition and naming them after a beloved family member is also popular in the south. As Carr notes, in the summer of 1930, McCullers decided to drop 'the embarrassing tag of Lula and a double name, part of her southern heritage, after a visit to her uncle, Elam Waters, in Cincinnati,' 'where the Waters children and their northern friends had teased her about her double name.'[45] According to Samantha Schreiner, 'To name something is to declare authority and take ownership over it.' [46] McCullers, at thirteen, had consciously seized the power of naming herself by keeping a gender-neutral name Carson, which primarily is an English origin name meaning Son Of Carr.[47] She also interweaves the connection between the name change and identity transformation in the characterization of some of her young characters. At 16, McCullers wrote her first short story, 'Sucker', which depicts the power relationship between two adolescents, a 16-year-old narrator (Pete) and his 12-year-old cousin, 'Sucker' (Richard). In the story, McCullers demonstrated her maturity in penetrating the young protagonist's feeling of being (by 'Sucker') while adoring someone (Maybelle) who disregards him. McCullers then signals an ironic shift in power dynamics between 'Sucker' and Pete by having him change back to his real name, Richard. In a way, the change of name for Richard marks the end of his old identity of being a 'Sucker' and an enthusiastic and blind admirer of Pete. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Bubber Kelly, Mick's six-year-old brother, undergoes a drastic change in personality from a pleasant and carefree child to a self-isolated boy. After he accidentally shoots Baby Wilson, his three-year-old neighbour, with a BB gun, Bubber keeps 'his mouth shut' and doesn't 'fool around with anybody'.[48] The name Bubber, a version of the name

[45] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p. 1.
[46] Samantha Schreiner, 'Naming, Identity and Intersectionality in Toni Morrison's Sula, Beloved and A Mercy', *English Academy Review*, 36:2(2019), 38-48 (p. 39).
[47] Ibid., p. 493.
[48] McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 156.

‘Bubba,’ is an affectionate term used to address a brother in the American south. As McCullers states, ‘After that night nobody called him Bubber anymore. The big kids in the neighborhood started calling him Baby-Killer Kelly. […] The family called him by his real name — George’.[49] The shift of names that people apply marks who others think he is and indicates a transformation of the social and psychological identity of this young character.

Frankie also expects a new identity by changing her name. At the beginning of the novel, Frankie is ‘sick and tired of being Frankie’ (24). McCullers then marks Frankie’s different stages of identity quest in the changes of her protagonist’s first name in each of the three parts of the novel, from ‘Frankie’ to ‘F. Jasmine’ and then to ‘Frances.’ As Gleeson-White argues, Frankie’s name changes from ‘the tomboy Frankie becomes the feminine ‘F. Jasmine’’ to ‘the sensible Frances’ best exemplifies ‘the tomboys’ shift in gender identification.’ [50] The gender-neutral nickname ‘Frankie’ represents the childlike part of her personality: naïve, careless, and fanciful. Then, by changing her name to F. Jasmine, Frankie naively expects that if she uses a name that starts with J A, she can join her brother, Jarvis, and his bride, Janice, as a J A trio, ‘the three of us.’ Meanwhile, ‘the tomboy Frankie’ becomes ‘the feminine ‘F. Jasmine’’ by putting on ‘the pink organdie, and put on lipstick and Sweet Serenade’ the day before the wedding (42). However, after failing to be included by the newlywed couple, Frankie resumes her legal name ‘Frances,’ the feminine form of Francis, which symbolises her construction of an identity as a socially accepted woman. In another sense, with the same pronunciation as Francis, the name ‘Frances’ conveys an implication of Frankie’s androgynous identity.

Being no longer a young child but not yet an adult, adolescent Frankie is depicted as ‘an unjoined person who [hangs] around in doorways’ (24). As González Groba maintains, Frankie is ‘in the doorway, on the threshold separating her from the freedom of childhood, represented

[49] Ibid., p. 154.
[50] Gleeson-White, p. 26.

by her … cousin John Henry, and the clearly defined sexual world of adults that she is reluctantly being forced to enter.' [51] Physically, Frankie's height makes her appear like an adult, but, psychologically, she is not ready to enter 'the sexual world of adults.' When Frankie's father reminds her that she is 'too big to sleep with her father any more,' she grows 'a grudge against her father' and does not 'like to stay at home' (21). According to Erikson, young people, reaching the end of childhood, are at 'a developmental stage,' which is 'characterized by a diversity of changes in physical growth, genital maturation, and social awareness.'[52] Frankie's feeling of being 'an unjoined person' in the world is intensified when her father suddenly estranges her because of her physical growth. Frankie's resentful response to her father not only exposes her bewilderment at this sudden change in the father-daughter relationship but reveals her deferred awareness of a new identity. On the one hand, Frankie, being bored of being stuck in the claustrophobic family kitchen in summer afternoons in the company of a six-year-old child, John Henry, and an African American caretaker, Berenice, has claimed to be ready 'to leave this town so long' (9). On the other hand, the sense of alienation and the fear of facing uncertainty in the outside world alone as an adolescent haunts Frankie in the first part of the novel.

Frankie's physical growth is accompanied by some psychological changes. If in the first part of the novel 'old Frankie' is wondering and confused, then in the second part, 'F. Jasmine' is expecting a new identity. Rolf Eduard Helmut Muuss, a German-American psychologist, valued Erikson's theory of psychosocial development as 'the base of contemporary identity research' and from it developed his own c of adolescent psychology and development. In his renowned work *Theories of Adolescence*, Muuss clarifies, 'Identity is not given to the individual by society, […] it must be acquired through sustained individual efforts.'[53] McCullers depicts

[51] González Groba, 'The Intolerable Burden of Femininity in Carson McCullers', p. 137
[52] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* p. 87.
[53] Rolf Eduard Helmut Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 58; 63.

Frankie's continuous efforts in her search for identity and reflects the conflict between her immature self-cognition and the social norms in the adult world. Besides the attempts to join the war and donate blood to the Red Cross as a young girl, Frankie performs a series of aberrant acts during her transition into young adulthood:

> She took the pistol from her father's bureau drawer and carried it all over town and shot up the cartridges in a vacant lot. She […] stole a three-way knife from the Sears and Roebuck store. One Saturday afternoon she committed a secret and unknown sin. In the MacKeans' garage, with Barney MacKean, they committed a queer sin, and how bad it was she did not know. (26)

Here, McCullers delineates Frankie's engagement in some risky and potentially harmful behaviours, including theft, weapon misuse (children under fourteen must be supervised when handling a firearm), and a queer sin (probably having sex with Barney). In the 'Womanhood and the Inner Space' chapter of *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* Erikson defines the adolescent stage in a woman's life as 'a psychosocial moratorium, a sanctioned period of delay of adult functioning.' He argues, 'The maturing girl and the young woman […] may venture into 'outer space' with a bearing and a curiosity which often appears hermaphroditic if not outright "masculine."'[54] 'Outer space,' according to Erikson, is a space dominated by men and is the opposite concept of 'inner space' which refers to women's internal reproductive organs and 'a biological, psychological and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy.'[55] Like hermaphroditic adolescent girls observed by Erikson, Frankie temporarily freed from 'the tyranny of the inner space,' challenges the traditional gender role of a woman not only by behaving like those adventurous and mischievous boys but by breaking the 'special rules of virginal restraint' by having sex with Barney.[56] In brief, Frankie's aberrant acts demonstrate her rebellion, curiosity, and moral ambiguity, and most importantly, her challenge against socially constructed gender role for

[54] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* p. 282.
[55] Ibid., p. 283.
[56] Ibid., p. 273.

young girls.

Changing her name is another effort that Frankie takes to establish her identity in the adult world. The news about the upcoming wedding of her brother ignites Frankie's new hope to find her sense of belonging. McDowell interprets Frankie's name-changing fantasy as an impact of the Western tradition that 'women who are part of a wedding change their names as they enter a 'joined' life'.[57] This explains Frankie why adopts a new name, 'F. Jasmine' at the beginning of Part Two. In doing so, Frankie appears to assume that getting married is a way to join with others. Saying aloud in her mind that '*They are the we of me*,' Frankie wants to say goodbye to 'old Frankie,' 'an *I* person who had to walk around and do things by herself,' and fancies a physical and emotional connection with her brother and sister-in-law (34). McCullers then describes F. Jasmine's feeling of hope on Saturday, the day preceding the wedding: '[S]he belonged. Because of the wedding, […] the world seemed no longer separate from herself and when all at once she felt included' (48). In her essay 'Loneliness … An American Malady,' McCullers would suggest that 'After the first establishment of identity, there comes the imperative need to lose this newfound sense of separateness and to belong to something larger and more powerful than the weak, lonely self.' [58] In this light, individuals, after gaining a primitive sense of self-awareness, are eager to develop a sense of *we-ness* out of the *I* sense. As McDowell argues, 'the wedding will publicly acknowledge her (Frankie's) new identity, exactly as a christening publicly acknowledges the naming of a newly born personality.[59] This explains Frankie's eagerness to publicise her role in the wedding to satisfy her strong 'need to be recognized for her true self' by touring the town and talking to 'many people, some known to her by sight and name, some strangers' of her plans to run away with the newly-weds after the wedding (24). A similar scene

[57] McDowell, p. 83.
[58] McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady',p. 261.
[59] McDowell, p. 84.

is depicted in *The Catcher in the Rye*, in which young Holden roams around New York City for two days after being expelled from school, talking to anyone he can find, including his friends, his former teachers, a prostitute, a nun, and cab drivers, about his adolescent bewilderment. Unlike Holden, who admits his immaturity by claiming, 'I act quite young for my age sometimes. I was sixteen then, and I'm seventeen now, and some times I act like I'm about thirteen,' Frankie hates to be treated as a child and purposely acts like an adult on many occasions, such as trying to react in a mature manner upon the death of Uncle Charles and accepting a date invitation proposed by the red-haired soldier in the Blue Moon café.[60] Although Frankie and Holden hold slightly different attitudes toward childhood — Frankie attempts to shed her childhood persona to publicise her maturity, while Holden wishes to remain in childhood a little longer and be a protector of childhood innocence — they both are seeking recognition from others to know their place in the adult world.

McCullers emphasises Frankie's clumsy attempts to reject her boyishness to meet the societal expectations of Southern Belles by making herself 'look good' for the wedding (66). As discussed earlier, before the wedding, when Frankie gazes at her reflection in the mirror, she notices the contrast between herself and the Southern Belles. Therefore, after expressing her regrets about having a 'close crew-cut' instead of 'long bright yellow hair,' she decides to improve her appearance before the wedding by swearing to 'take two baths' on the previous night and 'scrape this brown crust off [her] elbows' (20; 81). Later, when Frankie tries on her newly bought dress, an 'orange satin evening dress,' Berenice describes her as a 'human Christmas trees in August' and criticises that she 'looks peculiar' by having 'a silver ribbon' tied around her head with her hair 'shaved off like a convict' and the 'brown crust' on her elbows doesn't match with the 'grown woman's evening dress' (64). As discussed in Chapter One, in *The Heart Is a Lonely*

[60]Jerome David Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), p.13.

Hunter, McCullers narrates Mick's similar ritual of bathing to welcome a new self. Both Mick and Frankie appear 'peculiar' as they dress themselves to resemble Southern Belles, unaware that they have more to do to meet the requirements of being a member of this 'club'. As Manning puts it, 'If trained right, the belle had, by her early teen years, already acquired most of the makings of the southern lady.'[61] Besides emphasizing the 'beautiful or potentially beautiful, graceful, charming' physical appearance, she lists other virtues that a Southern Belle should have, such as being 'virtuous, loyal to family, submissive to father, in need of men's protection, yet resourceful and brave when unusual circumstances called on her to be.'[62] Frankie, as well as Mick, fails to meet the Southern Belle criteria outlined by Manning and may not be recognised by others as a would-be southern lady.

'F. Jasmine' fails to draw attention from both her family and the townspeople when she publicises her plan of leaving the town after the wedding: her father does not listen to her when she mentions, 'I'm not coming back here after the wedding' (40); the Portuguese owner of the Blue Moon café does not respond after hearing her words; the lady, who is ' sweeping her front porch,' does not 'say anything'; and the tractor-man's only response is to 'laugh and yell back to her something she could not quite catch' (44-6). Frankie's father and the townspeople give no response to F. Jasmine's new identity declaration, which can be regarded as a silent denial of Frankie's childish fancy of a 'J A' group. Erikson indicates the importance of 'the community's response' to the young individual's need for recognition and maintains,

> [I]t is of great relevance to the young individual's identity formation that he be responded to and be given function and status as a person whose gradual growth and transformation make sense to those who begin to make sense to him. [63]

Recognition from peers or the community, according to Erikson, provides psychological support

[61] Manning, 'Belle', p. 95.
[62] Ibid., p. 95.
[63] Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p. 156.

to the identity development of adolescents. Accordingly, one's identity that is not recognised by others may lead to identity loss, confusion, or transformation. Frankie's fanciful plan for being a part of her brother's marriage does not meet 'society's demands' and fails to get recognition from her family and community, which foreshadows her identity loss and confusion on the day proceeding the wedding and identity transformation after the wedding.

The 'gray and gold' Autumn: F. Jasmine learns life lessons before coming of age[64]

As discussed in the previous section, McCullers's tall boyish girls, Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, young Amelia in *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* and Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding,* experience similar gender identity confusions during adolescence. Adolescents usually imitate the behaviours of others during their identity formation. Except for the physical and psychological factors highlighted earlier, the lack of a gender-matched role model is another factor to consider when examining these girls' identity crises. McCullers uses many details to present her adolescent girls' relationships with their opposite-sex role models within their respective families. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Mick, who, according to Biff's observation, 'had always tagged behind her older brother,' doesn't choose a gender-matched role model.[65] McCullers highlights Mick's strong admiration for Bill, her eldest brother, who has priority over other children in the Kelly family. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis and the previous section, young Mick's boyish appearance and aberrant behaviours challenge the Southern Belle stereotype and the patriarchy as well, which makes it difficult for her to get societal recognition. Similarly, in *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* Miss Amelia chooses her father, her only family member, as a gender role model. McCullers weaves some flashbacks to recall the relationship between motherless Miss Amelia and her late father, from stressing the pet names applied to them to call

[64] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p. 83.
[65] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* p. 1.

each other — 'Big Papa' and 'Little', to noting that her late father is 'an interminable subject which was dear to her', then to describing her resemblance to her father in many aspects, such as her masculine appearance, solitary personality, and business head.[66] Taking her father, her only family member, as a role model, young Amelia's gender role confusion develops into an identity crisis in her marriage and her relationship with others. McCullers vividly describes Miss Amelia's 'unholy' behaviours on her wedding night.[67] Refusing to go to bed with Marvin Macy, her newlywed husband, Miss Amelia goes downstairs on the wedding night, 'in breeches and a khaki jacket,' where she 'slammed the kitchen door and gave it an ugly kick' and then 'read the Farmer's Almanac, drank coffee and had a smoke with her father's pipe'.[68] Miss Amelia rejects the socially constructed gender role in her marriage and refuses to convert into 'a calculable woman'.[69] In this sense, Miss Amelia imitates her role model in life and develops into a female version of her late father.

Like Mick and Amelia, Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding*, a motherless girl with a busy and neglectful father, apparently builds her self-image based on her male family models, especially her brother, Jarvis. All fantasies and dreams of Frankie are pivoted around Jarvis and his upcoming wedding. Generally, individuals copy the appearance and behaviours of their role models. Frankie's 'peculiar' appearance, wearing 'blue black shorts, a B.V.D. undervest' and a 'close crew-cut', makes her look like a boy or, to some extent, resembles her brother in his teenage years.[70] Additionally, her fantasies about becoming a soldier to 'go to the war,' and joining her brother and his bride in and after the wedding can be interpreted as Frankie's attempts to follow the life path of her brother. Frankie is seemingly more attracted to someone who bears a resemblance to her brother. For example, she agrees to a date with a 'red-headed soldier' partly

[66] McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, p. 16.
[67] Ibid., p. 29.
[68] Ibid., p. 29.
[69] Ibid., p. 13.
[70] B.V. D. started as a men's underwear brand but diversified later.

because he is, like Frankie's brother, 'a Member of the Armed Forces' and will possibly be sent 'to Alaska like they sent [her] brother' (51). However, in the early pages of the novel, McCullers notes that Frankie's brother 'had spent almost two years in Alaska' to indicate that adolescent Frankie is not under the direct influence of her brother when she needs guidance and direction in her identity transition (8). As will be analysed later, throughout the novel, Frankie is exposed to the values, attitudes and thoughts of Berenice, the family cook and caregiver of Frankie. During the summer when Frankie confronts role confusion in her identity transition, Berenice teaches her about gender norms and social expectations of young girls. It is unlikely that Frankie chooses Berenice, an African American cook, as her ideal role model to admire due to Berenice's class and racial identity. According to British developmental psychologist Leo B. Hendry, 'a mentor describes an adult who plays a significant functional role in the adolescent's development by offering support at critical moments, by acting as a teacher or guide, and by offering at least some characteristics of a role model.'[71] In this sense, Berenice plays the role of a mentor for adolescent Frankie. For Frankie, Berenice, as McDowell argues, is 'at different times the affectionate or stern mother, the primitive seer, and the black queen.'[72] McDowell captures Berenice's multiple roles within the Kelly family, from being a surrogate mother giving warmth and care to motherless Frankie and John, to acting like an enigmatic oracle possessing prophetic insight, and then finally to playing the role of an authoritative mentor teaching the Kelly children about social realities. Berenice's talks about her four marriages and social injustices, including racial inequality, sexual discrimination, and homophobia help Frankie identify her psychosocial identity in society.

Berenice's role as a mentor is best illustrated by her casual talks about gender roles, race,

[71] Leo B. Hendry, Wilma Roberts, Anthony Glendinning, & John C. Coleman, 'Adolescents' perceptions of significant individuals in their lives,' *Journal of Adolescence*,16 (1992), 255-70 (p. 267).
[72] McDowell, p. 81.

love, and sexual orientation during the dinner in Section Two of Part Two. McCullers artfully uses these talks as responses to the confusion in Frankie's mind after her first outing with a new identity, 'F. Jasmine,' during which she publicises her leaving the town with her brother and the bride after the wedding, accepts the date appointment with 'red-headed soldier', and catches sight of 'a dark double shape' of 'two colored boys' 'in a narrow alley' (53). In their argument about the wedding, Berenice believes that Frankie falls in love with her brother's wedding and warns her,

> You think you going to march down the center of the aisle right in between your brother and the bride. […] If you start out falling in love with some unheard-of thing like that, what is going to happen to you? […] Will you be trying to break into weddings the rest of your days? And what kind of life would that be? (75)

Besides criticizing Frankie's wedding complex as a 'mania' and 'pure foolishness,' Berenice quotes an old saying — 'Two is company and three is a crowd' and 'He admitted them creatures two by two' from the story of Noah's ark to teach Frankie the normality that marriage is a bond between two persons, not three (55). Arguably, McCullers makes clear that Frankie is attracted to the wedding because of its function as a ritual of identity transformation. Frankie's wedding complex seems like a childish attempt to find her 'we of me', yet it also exhibits her tentative steps toward prematurely transition from a young girl to a woman, uncertain of where it might lead her. Berenice's comments on Jarvis and Janice — 'they looked natural. Your brother is a good-looking blond white boy. And the girl is kind of brunette and small and pretty. They make a nice white couple' — contain an implication that the marriage between a man and woman of the same race is welcomed and celebrated by the community (24). Further, Berenice tries to convince Frankie 'to fix yourself up nice in your dresses,' 'speak sweetly and act sly' and to fall in love with — 'a nice little white boy beau' (59). Having a heterosexual African American adult (Berenice) suggest a white girl (Frankie) dating a 'whiteboy beau,' McCullers indicates the

pervasive impact of gender norms, sexual stereotypes, and cultural taboos against interracial dating and marriages in the Jim Crow South.

Berenice's recounting of her four marriages shatters Frankie's romantic imagination of love and marriage derived from observing the coupling of Jarvis and Janice and reinforces her reluctance to conform to traditional gender and sexual identities. As Jewett points out, Frankie is 'afraid of inhabiting a heterosexual self, because her black surrogate mother models it as painful.'[73] In this novel, McCullers provides ample space for Berenice to reminisce about her cherished happy time with her first husband and recount her painful experiences with her other three ex-husbands, a 'sorry old liquor-drinker', a crazy dreamer who 'had eating dreams in the night', and a domestic abuser, who 'gouged out Berenice's eye and stole her furniture away from her' (23). Berenice's blue glass artificial left eye is evidence of her suffering from domestic violence in her fourth marriage, which also conveys a wish to survive the sexism as well as racism of the Jim Crow South. McDowell observes Berenice's multiple intersected identities: 'the grieving widow, the insulted divorcee, the battered and disfigured wife, the woman fearful of aging, the exploited black servant, the woman who greatly enjoys sex, and the perennially hopeful bride.' [74] However, McDowell's interpretation of Berenice's vulnerable identities in her marriages is a sharp contrast with his exploration of Berenice's comparatively powerful role in the Kellys' kitchen ('stern mother, the primitive seer, and the black queen'). Implicitly, this embodies the contrast between the harsh realities of adulthood and Frankie's idealised adolescent imaginations. Berenice's unhappy marriages serve as cautionary lessons, highlighting the challenges and realities that Frankie must face as she transitions from adolescence to adulthood. McCullers emphasizes Berenice's obsession with finding a dream lover — someone who resembles her first husband, Ludie Freeman — when describing her reasons for marrying her

[73] Jewett, 'Somehow caught', p. 96.
[74] McDowell, p. 81.

most recent three husbands. She is drawn to Jamie Beale because his right thumb resembles Ludie's, falls in love with Henry Johnson due to his similar build in a comparable coat, and marries Willis Rhodes, the man who is said to be as 'wild cruel' as fascist Germans and Japanese, on account of a reason that she now refuses to mention (68). Berenice uses these lessons to persuade Frankie to give up her passion for being a member of her brother's wedding. She concludes the lesson that she learned from her four marriages:

> I loved Ludie and he was the first man I loved. Therefore, I had to go and copy myself forever afterward. What I did was to marry off little pieces of Ludie whenever I come across them. It was just my misfortune they all turned out to be the wrong pieces. My intention was to repeat me and Ludie (74).

Berenice's cautionary love tales convey her warnings to Frankie that holding on to an attachment to her brother's wedding may bring her misfortune. As a result of these talks, Frankie expresses her uncomfortable impressions of Berenice's dreadful marriages by saying 'I feel sadder about Ludie than I do about Uncle Charles,' (72). As I will discuss elsewhere, this impression might give rise to her desire to postpone her transition into seemingly painful southern womanhood.

McCullers attaches profound meaning to the title of the book. Elizabeth Freeman, an American literary critic, studies the wedding complex in *The Member of the Wedding* and interprets the original title of this novel, *The Bride,* as a 'foreground' for 'Frankie's future sister-in-law Janice as the figure with whom the protagonist identifies, and whom she will eventually replicate as bride and then wife.'[75] She then notes that three years later 'McCullers re-titled her novel-in-progress *The Bride and Her Brother*' to 'figure affiliation without defaulting to heterosexual couplehood as its emblem.' [76] However, as Freeman argues, the new title 'foregrounds nonmarital social ties as well as autonomous identity — and its pronominal

[75] Elizabeth Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 46.
[76]Ibid., p. 46.

ambiguity suggests that Frankie might want to pair incestuously with her sibling groom.'[77] However, as discussed previously, Frankie denies her wish to marry her brother and claims what she wants is a '*we of me*'— a sense of belonging. Additionally, Berenice's bride complex exists simultaneously with Frankie's wedding complex, though Berenice is longing for love, while Frankie is experiencing an identity transformation. Therefore, the final adopted title, *The Member of the Wedding*, is more inclusive and reflective, encapsulating diverse identities of brides-to-be in the novel, including Janice (a southern white lady), Berenice (an African American woman), and Frankie (a boyish white adolescent girl).

As noted in the Introduction part, McCullers's non-normative characters generally fall into two types: freaks and queers. Frankie represents those 'freakish' adolescents with 'abnormally' developed bodies according to societal standards (in a pejorative sense). Besides depicting Frankie's transition from 'old Frankie' to 'F. Jasmine' to avoid becoming a member of 'the Freaks', McCullers also brings in some queer characters whose bodies deviate from gender or sexual norms. During a 'talk of love' activity after dinner, Berenice mentions 'a queer thing' about some boys who 'fall in love with other boys' and then introduces the 'queer' love of 'Lily Mae Jenkins,' who 'fell in love with a man name Juney Jones' (57). According to Adams, the term 'queer' is in 'a veiled deployment' in McCullers's works and is 'defined in opposition to normative categories of identification and desire.'[78] Defining Lily Mae's same-sex interest as a 'queer thing' or sexual deviance, Berenice attempts to instil in Frankie the heterosexual norm and guides her to develop into a socially accepted Southern Lady. Adams also notes, McCullers's use of 'queer' has 'vague but suggestive' implications, according to the context — 'a historical moment when it regularly functioned as a shaming mechanism to legitimate discrimination and

[77] Ibid., p.47.
[78] Adams, p. 554.

physical violence against homosexuals.'[79] In her talk, Berenice not only asserts that Lilly Mae's same-sex love is a change of 'his nature,' but reminds Frankie that 'you don't need to know Lily Mae Jenkins. You can live without knowing him' (58). Taking Lily Mae as an example of gender and sexual transgression, Berenice highlights the marginalised status of Lily Mae. She tries to teach Frankie about what kind of people should be included as her '*we of me*.'

In addition to the conversation about Lily Mae in the kitchen, Frankie's witness of 'a dark double shape' of 'two colored boys' in the 'narrow alley', further illustrates the marginalised status of queer people. In a vague but suggestive way, the 'dark double shape' is described as a 'half-seen object' for Frankie, which triggers an instinctive association with a picture of her brother and the bride standing 'before the living-room mantelpiece, his arm around her shoulders'(53). As Jewett argues, 'It is another formation defined by its otherness — forced into an alley, unacceptable to society's eyes.'[80] He draws attention to the symbolic meaning of 'alley' here. If the alley, in this context, symbolises darkness and social marginalisation, then a living room with a mantelpiece leaves an impression of brightness, acceptance and happiness. The romanticised embrace of a heterosexual couple (her brother and his bride) 'before the living-room mantelpiece' presents a sharp contrast with the secret hug of two same-sex lovers ('two colored boys') in a dark 'narrow alley.' Notably, the scene in the alley verifies the vague visibility of Lily Mae-like people in Frankie's world.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, the dark 'narrow alley' symbolises the marginalised existence of queers with same-sex desires. As Chauncey clarifies, 'We lost sight of [the gay world] in part because it was forced into hiding in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s.'[81] Specifically, he highlights the 1930s, a period in which, '[a] new anxiety about homosexuals and hostility toward them began to develop, which soon became part of the more general reaction to the cultural

[79] Ibid., p. 554.
[80] Jewett, 'Somehow Caught', p. 98.
[81]Chauncey, p. 8.

experimentation of the Prohibition era that developed in the anxious early years of the Depression.'[82] However, he also notes that '[t]he effort was unsuccessful in many respects, for the gay world continued to thrive and became even more extensive in the 1940s and 1950s than it had been before the war.'[83] This historical and cultural context explains Lily Mae's resurrection in Berenice's casual talk in *The Member of the Wedding*, together with the 'half-seen' 'dark doubled shape' in the alley, indicates the increased visibility of homosexuals during the 1940s and McCullers's consistency in making same-sex love visible in her works. In *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America*, Roger Austen, a literary historian, surveys approximately two hundred gay fictions written by gay writers in American history before the watershed movement of the Stonewall Uprising. According to Austen, 'World War II helped to liberate gay novelists in their personal lives and to nudge Americans to question — if only halfheartedly and briefly — some of their cherished opinions about absolute right and wrong.' [84] In Austen's book, McCullers is included as an 'almost gay novelist' during the war years. Although the term 'almost gay novelist' is outdated according to contemporary discourse of gender and sexuality, it, to some extent, reflects McCullers's ambiguous identity and her implicit depiction of queer characters.

As mentioned elsewhere, McCullers, as a bisexual writer, shows her readers the complexity of sexual orientation and gender fluidity, which contributes to the presentation of queer intersectionality in her works. She explores multiple forms of repression and oppression experienced by characters with androgynous features, such as Mick, Biff, Anacleto, Frankie, Lily Mae, and Honey Camden Brown, as well as characters with same-sex passions, like John Singer, Captain Penderton, Cousin Lymon, and Jester Clane. The diverse identities of McCullers's queer characters exemplify that their marginalised experiences extend beyond homophobia; instead,

[82] Ibid., p. 9.
[83] Ibid., p. 9.
[84] Roger Austen, *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1977), p. 93.

they are shaped by intersecting factors such as class, race, gender, and sexuality. Although Lily Mae reappears in *The Member of the Wedding* only in a conversation between Berenice and Frankie, McCullers creates in this novel a Lily Mae-like queer character, Honey Camden Brown, an effeminate, light-skinned, biracial African American man. Using some 'vague but suggestive' words and expressions in the descriptions of Honey, such as 'a limber body,' 'a sick-loose person,' 'standing in the doorway' and 'as though he came from some foreign country,' McCullers indicates his effeminacy and his marginalised situation in the heteronormative American South (32). Describing Honey as 'almost lavender in color,' McCullers makes use of the coded meaning of the word 'lavender' to imply his queerness. The word 'lavender,' according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, contains the figurative meaning of effeminacy, homosexuality, or homosexual tendencies.[85] This word is also used in McCullers's other novels as a symbol of the queerness of some characters. For example, in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, when effeminate Anacleto exhibits his artistic talent in painting, as McCullers writes, he 'dipped his brush into the glass and a lavender cloud showed in the water'.[86] Similarly, after narrating Captain Penderton's obsession of stalking Private Williams each afternoon, McCullers observes that 'For a brief period after sunset there was in the atmosphere a misty lavender glow.'[87] At the end of Part One, McCullers uses 'lavender' again to symbolise Frankie's unconventional love for her brother's wedding: looking into the beautiful 'lavender sky' at night, Frankie decides to adopt a new identity, F. Jasmine Addams, to join her brother's marriage (37). Further, McCullers explicitly notes the consequence of Honey's effeminacy — 'The army would not include him'— echoing the experiences of both Anacleto and Captain Penderton as misfits in the army in *Reflections of a Golden Eye*. This reveals that his queerness diverges from the mainstream masculinity defined

[85] 'Lavender', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* Additions Series, ed. by John A. Simpson and Michael Proffitt, Vol.3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1997), p. 179.
[86] McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, p. 109.
[87] Ibid., p. 40.

by the army and society.

Frankie undergoes a profound transformation in her understanding of gender and sexuality on the eve of her brother's wedding. This shift is sparked by several pivotal moments: witnessing two African American boys embrace in a dimly lit alley, Berenice's conversation about Lily Mae, and, most significantly, her realization of Honey's queerness and the marginalisation she faces. Big Mama's comments on the indefinable identity of Honey — 'he was a boy God had not finished' — reminds Frankie of 'a peculiar half-boy — one arm, one leg, half a face — a half-person hopping in the gloomy summer sun around the corners of the town' (88). This 'half-boy' image in Frankie's mind can be traced to the 'Half-Man Half-Woman, a morphidite (hermaphrodite)', that Frankie sees in the 'Freak House':

> This Freak was divided completely in half — the left side was a man and the right side a woman. The costume on the left was a leopard skin and on the right side a brassiere and a spangled skirt. Half the face was dark bearded and the other half bright glazed with paint (18).

The above 'Half-Man Half-Woman' character embodies gender ambiguity with the masculine features of a man and feminine traits of a woman combined in one body. In a social system defending the gender binary, exhibiting the 'Half-Man Half-Woman' in the 'Freak House' is discrimination against the gender non-normative individuals. Instead of using the pronouns, like his or her or they, McCullers employs 'the' in two sentences, 'The costume on the left was a leopard skin' and 'Half the face was dark bearded', to refer to the displayed human body, which reveals the objectified state of the gender ambiguous persons in the sideshow. Additionally, Berenice's remark also exposes Honey's intersected vulnerable identities as an African American and a queer: 'And we caught as colored people also. […] Sometimes a boy like Honey feel like he just can't breathe no more' (83). Metaphorically, Berenice's remarks underline Honey's plight under the oppression of both racism and homophobia and reflect the existential crisis of queer people like Honey and Lily Mae. McCullers conveys similar metaphorical implications through

another detail about Honey, who walks into and disappears in the alley after talking to Frankie. The alley in this novel may symbolise hope or fear, an exit or a dead end. Honey's queer body challenges the traditional sex-role structure, which forces him to confine in a dark 'narrow alley.' Like Lily Mae, Honey is marginalised both in the novel and in the daily life of the South.

Like the dark alley, a symbol of Honey's marginalised and confined queer identity, the kitchen in this novel can be seen as a 'queer' space, where individuals challenge traditional roles and expectations related to gender, sexuality, and domesticity. Traditionally, a kitchen is an arena where women are confined as domestic workers or housewives. However, the Addamses' kitchen, apart from being a gendered and marginalised corner, is also a place of collective resistance, where the queer kitchen trio (Berenice, John Henry, and Frankie) challenge racial and gender norms in this Jim Crow southern community. The kitchen is a space of autonomy for Berenice, where she resembles a 'colored queen' and acts like a surrogate mother of two white children (84). For John Henry, the kitchen is a place for playing, where he can paint 'queer drawings' on the walls 'whenever he wish[es]', play cards with Frankie and Berenice without obeying the rules, and enjoy his sex role-exchanging games by freely trying on woman clothes and high-heel shoes (10). However, Frankie regards the kitchen as 'a sad and ugly room' where she eagerly wants to escape. During their last dinner before the wedding day, the kitchen trio talk about 'the work of God' in the kitchen and express their views on gender and sex: John Henry dreams of a world with 'a mixture of delicious and freak,' thinking that 'people ought to be half boy and half girl'; Frankie hopes that 'people could instantly change back and forth from boys to girls, which ever way they felt like and wanted'; Berenice insists that 'the law of human sex was exactly right just as it was and could in no way be improved' (68; 84). Frankie's wish of 'instantly chang[ing] back and forth from boys to girls' presents a notion of gender fluidity. However, as González Groba argues, in the terms of McCullers's novel, 'gender is only reversible in the realm of fantasy or of

children's play, as in the socially tolerated cross-dressing of John Henry.'[88] In the novel, John's gender fluidity is tolerated by people around him because of his age. Even Frankie's boyishness is acceptable during childhood; according to her memory 'until this summer she had been like a younger member of their crowd (the big girls' group)' (12). However, when entering in her adolescence, Berenice keeps warning her to reject her boyishness and to behave like a 'lady', though she does not warn John Henry to behave like a boy when seeing him playing with Frankie's doll and dressing up in the kitchen like 'a little old woman dwarf' by 'wearing the pink hat with the plume, and the high-heel shoes' (85). Different from John Henry, who seems to have more freedom in keeping his ageless, sexless, and gender-fluid identity as a six-year-old child, adolescent Frankie's transgression of the gender boundaries may make her a 'freak' in others' eyes. Meanwhile, when John suggests a 'half boy and half girl' androgynous alternative, Frankie threatens to 'take him to the Fair and sell him to the Freak Pavilion' (69). As noted previously, 'The Half-Man Half-Woman' exhibited in the Freak House is the kind of person that Frankie fears to grow to be. Although holding a fantasy of gender fluidity, Frankie gives a negative response to John Henry's notion of androgynous body and insists that a person cannot be both male and female. Further, McCullers has Berenice join the debate and highlights, through her conviction of 'the law of human sex,' the socially constructed binary gender norm, which denies both John Henry's idea of being an androgyne and Frankie's gender fluidity fantasy.

Jarvis and Janice's wedding, a ritual of celebrating heterosexual love and marriage, serves as an example for Frankie to follow when she comes of age. McCullers depicts Frankie's 'queer' feeling at the first sight of Jarvis and Janice during their short visit before the wedding:

> She stood in the doorway, coming from the hall, and the first sight of her brother and the bride had shocked her heart. Together they made in her this feeling that she could not name. But it was like the feelings of the spring, only more sudden and more sharp. There was the same tightness and in the same queer way she was afraid (22).

[88] González Groba, 'The Intolerable Burden of Femininity', p. 141.

Arguably, Frankie's 'feelings of the spring' at this moment, partly come from the excitement of meeting her beloved brother, Jarvis, again after two years' departure, and are partly evoked by the surprise of seeing Janice, a Southern Belle, appear with her brother as a *we* group. This couple, different from those 'freaks' in the 'Freak Pavilion,' is regarded as natural and welcomed by society. The feeling of 'tightness' and queerness in Frankie at this moment may be interpreted as her reflection on her sameness with 'the Freaks' and her otherness as a boyish adolescent with undefined gender and sexuality. McCullers, as discussed elsewhere, introduces Frankie as 'an unjoined person who hung around in doorways' in the first lines of the novel (3). She applies the metaphorical meaning of the doorway again here to emphasise Frankie's adolescent stage of life — facing the unavoidable transition from her childhood to the adulthood.

McCullers implicitly presents Frankie's wishes to leave the town with the newly-weds to defer the inevitable transition from childhood to adulthood, imagining that the 'three of them would go into the world and they would always be together' (37). At the end of Part Two, McCullers then crafts a plot where Frankie visits Big Mama, an African American fortune teller, indicating Frankie's life path as controlled and monitored by societal expectations and norms. Big Mama seems to be able to foresee many changes in Frankie's life:

> There going to be a change in your life. […] I see here where you going to marry a boy with blue eyes and light hair. […] And I see a wedding. […] And I foresee a trip ahead. […] I see a going and a coming back (90).

Big Mama, who lives with Honey and Berenice, is likely prompted to give this answer by Berenice, who knows that Frankie is intending to visit her. Therefore, Big Mama's predictions about what will happen to Frankie are mainly made based on Berenice's understanding of Frankie, specifically, her fears for a change and her desire to be a member of her brother's marriage. In this sense, Big Mama's predictions answer Frankie's questions about her identity transformation according to Berenice's expectations or, in a broader sense, societal expectations. Further, Big Mama successfully foresees Frankie's escape from home and an eventual return, as if it is an

inevitable part of a life journey. Prior to Frankie's visit to Big Mama's place, Berenice has already taught her certain life lessons: 'We all of us somehow caught. […] I born Berenice. You born Frankie. John Henry born John Henry. […] We each one of us somehow caught all by ourself'(98). Berenice's words underline that people's identities are defined by their birth. No matter what they do, they remain confined. In her article, 'Somehow Caught', Jewett states that 'Frankie's fear of a permanent defining gender is likely intensified through Berenice's racial definition of gender.[89] Arguably, due to Berenice's realistic talk of race, gender, and sexuality throughout the novel, Frankie connects her gender choice with racism and homophobia in the South and grows a strong desire to escape from the town and reality to defer a choice. From the beginning of the novel, McCullers exposes Frankie to a gender choice — changing from being a boyish girl to a masculine woman, then to a 'Half-Man Half-Woman' or transforming to a Southern Belle before becoming a socially accepted Southern Lady. Connecting Big Mama's successful prediction of Frankie's departure and return with Berenice's talk about defined identities, McCullers shows that Frankie's future, like her gender role and sex, seems to be predicted and defined according to social norms, no matter how unready and unwilling she is.

The 'plain gray winter': Frances's departure and return[90]

Physically, adolescent Frankie, teetering on the brink of sexual maturity, is exposed to gender expectations and the norms of sexuality. However, psychologically, she feels unready for the transition from a child to an adult and strongly desires for a deferral or an escape. At the very beginning of the novel, she expresses her wish to leave the town, saying 'I've been ready to leave this town so long' (9). According to Erikson, 'Identity problems sharpen with that turn in puberty

[89] Jewett, 'Somehow caught', p. 99.
[90] McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p. 19.

when images of future roles become inescapable.'[91] Adolescent Frankie's identity problem sharpens due to her immaturity, undefined identity, and the unknown future — the question on where 'she ought to go, or how she would get there by herself' (21). In Part Three, Frankie, in her letter to her father, pronounces her reasons for escaping from home: 'I told you I was going to leave town because it is inevitable. I cannot stand this existence any longer because my life has become a burden' (99). Frankie's present 'burden' in life is primarily around her identity as an adolescent girl, metaphorically 'hanging around in doorways,' a position which is inescapable or inevitable for Frankie as she navigates gender choices and establishes her future roles in the world. As Jewett observes,

> As Frankie enters puberty, she is perpetually on the cusp of two worlds that alienate her: the childhood world of John Henry, on the one hand, in which the gender playfulness that Frankie found comfortable was acceptable, and the adult world of Berenice, on the other, with all of its gendered and sexual responsibilities. Frankie is both unready and unwilling to explore either world.[92]

Although Frankie rejects both the childhood world and the adult world, she has to make a choice between the two. The talks about gender and sex among the kitchen trio, as analyzed previously, have taught Frankie that both her fantasy of gender fluidity and John's dream of androgyny are not acceptable in the adult world. In this sense, it is inescapable for Frankie to face the 'gendered and sexual responsibilities' when she comes of age.

Besides participating in the open discussion about gender and sex with Berenice and John, Frankie, according to some details elsewhere in the novel, has developed her sexual awareness from what she sees, experiences, and learns. In a flashback, McCullers describes how Frankie, at nine years old, naively understands the sexual behaviour of Mr and Mrs Marlowe, two former boarders of her family, as 'having a fit' (33). Then, at twelve, Frankie has 'committed a queer

[91] Erikson, 'Autobiographic Notes on the Identity Crisis,' p. 743.
[92] Jewett, 'Somehow Caught', p. 98.

sin' with Barney MacKean, a 'nice little white boy beau' whom Berenice suggests Frankie should start to fall in love with (59). McCullers, not specifying this 'sin' as kissing or having sex, narrates Frankie's first sexual experience in vague language. Described as 'a queer sin', Frankie's initial heterosexual encounter is both transgressive and immoral in her mind. Similar to Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, who loses her virginity to her childhood friend Harry Minowitz and 'felt very old, and … something was heavy inside her,' Frankie regards her experience as a 'secret and unknown sin' and 'hate[s] Barney and want[s] to kill him' (21). Despite her physical and psychological aversion to her first heterosexual experience, Frankie possesses primary knowledge and experience about heterosexuality during adolescence, which may help her get prepared to play the given gender role.

Frankie's attempts to reconcile with the heterosexual world before the wedding lies in her date with an adult man, a 'red-headed soldier,' whom she encounters in the Blue Moon — 'a place for holiday soldiers and the grown and free' and where a child has 'no valid right to enter'(43). For 12-year-old Frankie, entering an adult-only place, as well as dating a soldier, is a transgression. However, this transgression does not indicate her sexual maturity but demonstrates her failed quest for a sense of belonging. As discussed earlier, Frankie's queer desire for joining Jarvis and Janice is a wish to be a member of a *we* group and to leave the town with them, instead of having an intimate sexual bond with them. In a way, Frankie is fascinated with the possibility of meeting new people and joining them as a *we* group. But as Anna Young in her article, 'North to the Future: Captivity and Escape in *The Member of the Wedding*,' observes, 'Frankie is not in love with the couple but rather with what they represent: possibility and mobility.'[93] In particular, she admires the mobility of those who can go around the world together, to honeymoon and then have a new home elsewhere. Likewise, the red-headed soldier arouses attention from Frankie

[93] Anna Young, 'North to the Future: Captivity and Escape in *The Member of the Wedding*', p. 87.

because of his 'possibility and mobility', being one of the soldiers on the Front Avenue of the town, who 'came from all over the whole country and were soon going all over the world' (43). In her interaction with the soldier, Frankie also holds a naïve expectation of finding a '*we* of me', hoping that the soldier can join with her 'like a traveler who meets another traveler in a tourist town' (49). However, the soldier, as Young argues, 'does not view her as an equal, a fellow traveler, but rather as a sexually available young woman.'[94] From the very beginning, the soldier has treated Frankie as a sexual object. When Frankie is talking about the wedding and the travel after it, the soldier is 'not really listening' but looking at 'the pink organdie dress' of Frankie. When Frankie, curious about his liability 'to be sent to any foreign country in the world,' raises the question, 'Do you have any idea where you will be going?', the soldier mistakes it as a sexual cue and takes her to the hotel where he is temporarily staying (50). Staying with the soldier in his 'hard and very ugly' hotel room, a confined space, Frankie is disenchanted with the soldier. In her eyes, the soldier now is neither 'a member of the loud free gangs' nor a fellow traveller, who seems to her 'unjoined and ugly' (93). She even sees no possibility for his mobility — 'she could not see him any more in Burma, Africa, or Iceland, or even for that matter in Arkansas' (93). McCullers then uses some hints to underline Frankie's awareness of the soldier's sexual desire for her, from 'a mysterious uneasiness' in the silent hotel room to her recalling of the 'queer sin' that she committed with Barney in the MacKeans' garage, then to the soldier's 'strange eyes' on her (93). This episode (Frankie's date with the soldier) ends with her hitting the soldier in the head when he wants to kiss her. Notably, Frankie's adventurous dating with the soldier reflects her ambivalent attitude toward sex and offers one more reason for her future escape.

Part Three begins with Frankie's leaving for Winter Hill to attend the wedding with her family. Sunday in the novel is a special occasion for Frankie. She transforms into a new identity

[94] Ibid., p. 91.

by resuming her legal name, 'Frances,' and speaking out her long-awaited words to her small-southern-town home: 'Farewell, old ugly house' (95). Psychologically, Frankie is expecting a permanent departure, being tired of the repetitive life in the small southern town. However, with Berenice and John Henry also being invited to the wedding, Frankie's plan for saying goodbye to the kitchen trio — 'the last *we* in the world she wanted' — and leaving together with the 'J A three of them' is foreshadowed to fall through (34). As a member of the kitchen trio, John Henry is a symbol of the lingering childhood of Frankie and a character with indeterminate or fluid sexual/gender characteristics. According to Jewett, the 'effeminate play of John Henry … brings about an unwelcome reminder of the freedom she no longer has as well as the southern femininity she (Frankie) must embrace.[95] This argument highlights that John Henry, who is suffering from gender role confusion, seems to have more freedom in enjoying his ageless and sexless identity. Frankie holds conflicting attitudes towards John — on the one hand, she wants to stay away from John to separate herself from members of children, but on the other hand, she feels comfortable to have John as a companion in that her childlike personality gets more recognition from John than from the club of 'big girls.' The inextricable tie between Frankie and John at this stage indicates that Frankie is not ready for a transition from childhood to adulthood on her first departure.

The failure of her plan to leave with Jarvis and Janice after the wedding on Sunday is a turning point for adolescent Frankie's identity development and the reason for her second departure. The wedding, which starts at ten o'clock in the morning and ends at four o'clock in the afternoon, is briefly mentioned in several sentences, covering Frankie's 'unmanaged' nightmare-like experience — being treated as a child by 'the grown people', getting no chance to speak to Jarvis and Janice about her plan, and, finally, watching the newly-wed 'driving away

[95] Jewett, 'Somehow Caught', p. 101.

from her' (96). Frankie's feeling of being abandoned on the wedding day is manifested in her desperate cry, 'Take! Take me!', which turns out to be a sharp contrast to F. Jasmine's sense of being connected and included on Saturday, imagining that she will join her 'we of me' in the upcoming wedding (75). However, after losing the opportunity to join the J A group and to gain her sense of belonging, Frankie grows a stronger desire to escape the unchanging life confined with two other kitchen occupants.

Frankie's second departure, which, as Big Mama foresees, is 'a short trip' — 'A departure and a return' (88). After narrating details of how Frankie escapes from home, McCullers reveals the first problem that Frankie faces in this departure is that 'she did not know where she should go' (101). Further, she stresses that as a twelve-year-old girl who has never taken a trip by herself, Frankie 'admitted she was too scared to go into the world alone' (102). Young compares Frankie's dilemma to a Catch-22 situation and notes that the 'need to belong drives her urge to run away, but at the same time, it renders escape impossible as she does not dare to leave until she has found a group or club that will accompany her.'[96] Again, McCullers uses the alley to symbolise Frankie's present complicated emotions: fear is accompanied by hope. Frankie is posited in a dark alley now, where, according to her memory, 'Lon Baker (a coloured boy) had been killed,' where she encounters the 'half-seen' 'dark doubled shape' of two African American boys, and where she sees marginalised Honey walks into and disappears. Meanwhile, Frankie is full of wishes for having companions: 'If only there was someone with her! If only she could hunt down Honey Brown and they could go away together! […] Or if she could find the monkey and the monkey-man and join with them to run away!' (101) Then, McCullers presents Frankie's attempt to reconcile to heterosexuality to get a companion by returning to the Blue Moon to find the soldier. Assuming that she may 'ask the soldier to marry with her, and then the two of them

[96] Young, p. 92.

could go away,' Frankie tries to find an exit in her gender choice to become a member of 'the grown and free' during adolescence (69;102). However, Frankie fails to find the soldier in the Blue Moon and is caught by the police and sent back home.

McCullers describes Frankie's hopeless feelings when she returns to the original confined place where she is stuck in a repetitive life: 'It was better to be in a jail where you could bang the walls than in a jail you could not see' (103). This sentence has been selected as the epigraph for Chapter One of this thesis because of its profound meaning regarding enclosed spaces, visible prisoners, invisible surveillance, which align with the themes of identity and power dynamics. In a physical jail, the walls are visible, allowing inmates to actively express their emotion or frustration. However, in a space with no tangible boundaries but exposure to panoptic surveillance, individuals struggle to find directions or targets for their emotional outlets. In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie's aimless escape and hopeless return demonstrate her existential crisis during adolescence. In the final pages of the novel, McCullers narrates the dissolution of the kitchen trio, which metaphorically foreshadows Frankie's transformation from childhood to adulthood: the death of John Henry symbolises the death of Frankie's inner child; Berenice's quitting from her domestic work, in a certain degree, marks the end of her mission as a mentor for young Frankie; Frankie and her father's plan for moving to a house 'out in the new suburb of town' can be a chance for Frankie to say goodbye forever to the 'sad and ugly' old kitchen and start a new life. It is noteworthy that the presence of Mary brings Frankie the possibility of joining a *we* group to confront the perplexity of adolescence. Before meeting Mary, Frankie has become more mature and stops talking about 'the fear of the summertime' and 'the failed wedding' (103). Further, she demonstrates her increasing maturity in taking Mary as her new '*we* of me' based on Mary's 'possibility and mobility', in contrast to her previous imagining of Jarvis and Janice as her '*we* of me' out of a childish fantasy. Mary not only shares a common interest in art and poetry with Frankie but has the possibility of becoming her companion in slightly more feasible travel

plans: ‘When Frances was sixteen and Mary eighteen, they were going around the world together’ (104). Regarding the relationship between Frankie and Mary, critics put forward different arguments. Gleeson-White, for instance, maintains that ‘Frankie’s new friendship is the mark of her ultimate acceptance of womanhood’.[97] Young expresses her disagreement with the argument that ‘Frankie is … trapped as a helpless victim of conformity’ at the end of the novel, but underlines that at this stage ‘she is already relatively free.’ [98] In Young’s opinion, Frankie is luckier than other queer characters around her, for example, Berenice, Honey, and John, who are ‘caught by race, class, age, poverty, gender, or their own eccentricities.’ [99] Comparatively, Frankie has more choices in her quest for belonging during adolescence, from changing her name freely to indicate her identity development, to shaking off her boyishness to convert to a Southern Belle, then to her possibility of making gender choices and the mobility for travelling around the world in the future.

Regarding Frances, Frankie’s final identification at the end of the book, critics and scholars have offered a variety of interpretations. According to Lawrence Graver, ‘Frances is a good deal more reasonable than F. Jasmine.’ [100] He argues that ‘having parted with her fantasies, she begins to compromise like most other thirteen-year-old girls’.[101] Louise Westling, also notes that at the close of the book, Frances avoids ‘the Freak Pavilion which had so fascinated her and John Henry the year before’ when she visits the sideshow with Mary Littlejohn, no longer feeling ‘any association with the freaks, for she is secure in her new feminine identity.’ [102] Through analysing these details, Westling highlights that ‘McCullers has rather ruthlessly removed the “deviants” from Frances’s life so that safe conformity can triumph.’ [103] From a different angle, Nicole

[97] Gleeson-white, p. 34.
[98] Young, p.96.
[99] Ibid., p. 96.
[100] Graver, p. 41.
[101] Ibid., p. 41.
[102] Westling, p. 131.
[103] Ibid. p. 131.

Seymour discusses the 'queer ending of *Wedding'* and argues, '[c]lassical narrative standards would have the Frances Addams of *The Member of the Wedding*'s last section be "complete," or at least closer to the "ideal end" of white, heteronormative adulthood. But this is not the case.' She asserts that Frankie's 'new obsession is a young girl named Mary Littlejohn, arguably, an even more inappropriate object of affection for a maturing girl than the heterosexual wedding.'[104] Arguably, when writing about Frankie's gender and sexuality choice approaching the end of the novel, McCullers uses 'vague but suggestive' language, as she does elsewhere, to indicate Frankie's possibility of developing same-sex passion towards Mary. At the end of the novel, McCullers writes about two girls' interests in common and notes that Mary is 'mad about Michelangelo' and Frankie is going to be 'a great poet' like Tennyson (130). As Gleeson-White states, Frankie's 'attempt to conform to an acceptably heterosexual female' is undermined in her reference to Michelangelo and Tennyson, one is speculated to be a gay artist and the other a gay poet.[105] Again, these 'vague but suggestive' words attract commentators like Melissa Free to assert, 'We can — and I think should — employ the word 'lesbian' to describe Frankie' and 'we can — and I think should — read *The Member of the Wedding* as a "lesbian coming of age" novel.'[106] Examining the description of Frankie's happiness with Mary's visit, the unfinished sentence 'I am simply mad about —' can be interpreted as Frankie's implicit way to show her passion for Mary Littlejohn (140). Accordingly, McCullers's creation of Mary Littlejohn not only provides the young protagonist with a 'fellow traveler' but a chance to explore diversity of gender and sexuality.

McCullers's contribution to the coming-of-age literature is widely recognised and acknowledged by scholars and researchers. For example, together with Mick Kelly in *The Heart*

[104] Nicole Seymour, 'Somatic Syntax: Replotting the Development Narrative in Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding'*, *Studies in the Novel*, 41.3 (2009), 293-313 (309).
[105] Gleeson-White, p. 90.
[106] Free, p. 437.

Is a Lonely Hunter, Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* is included as a representative figure to start a study on coming-of-age girls by female writers in *Girls in Bloom: Coming of Age in Mid-20th Century Women's Fiction* by Francis Booth, an English writer and translator. McCullers's insightful exploration of adolescents' identity development in *The Member of the Wedding*, as well as in her other novels, provides a prism to examine societal norms and social issues. Metaphorically, the personal experiences of her adolescent characters as they navigate their own transitions in life mirror significant societal shifts in mid-twentieth-century America. This chapter has examined complex interactions between adolescents and society in the American South during the 1940s by analysing McCullers's depictions of Frankie's identity transformation from childhood to adulthood. It discusses how gender roles and societal norms generate Frankie's identity confusion and loneliness, as well as her yearning for belonging and connection. Pivoting Frankie's struggles to fit into the heteropatriarchal society, this chapter also expands the analysis to include McCullers's broader humanist concern with social issues related to class, race, and sexuality, which are evident in Frankie's interaction with other marginalised characters, such as Berenice, John, and Honey. As noted elsewhere, in addition to the portrayal of Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding*, McCullers also depicts several teenage characters in her other novels, who also undergo existential crises during their identity formation, such as Mick in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Sherman Pew and Jester Clane in *Clock Without Hands*. In her short stories, McCullers also creates several adolescents who can be seen as prototypes for characters and eventually appear in her later novels. For instance, 15-year-old Frances in 'Wunderkind' (1936) not only shares the same name as Frankie's real name in *The Member of the Wedding* but also experiences a similar sense of alienation and desire for belonging. In 'Sucker' (1963), as Robert Phillips suggests, 'Sucker desperately wants to be loved, to become a member of the family. In this respect, he is a young Frankie Addams, who wanted so very much

a "we of me."'[107] In *Clock Without Hands,* both Sherman and Jester raise their existential questions, 'those questions, the ghosts that haunt the adolescent heart' — 'Who am I? What am I? Where am I going?' [108] In a broader context, the identity crises experienced by Sherman and Jester, and McCullers's other young characters vividly demonstrate how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersected in shaping adolescents' identities between the 1930s and the 1950s.

[107] Robert Phillips, 'Freaking Out: The Short Stories of Carson McCullers', *Southwest Review*, 63.1(1978), 65-73 (66).
[108] McCullers, *Clock Without Hands,* p. 223.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Question of Our Identity: National Identity and Biopolitics in *Clock Without Hands*

'*…we Americans are always seeking. We wander, question. But the answer waits in each separate heart — the answer of our own identity and the way by which we can master loneliness and feel that at last we belong.*'[1]

Carson McCullers noted in her 1949 essay, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady,' that 'loneliness is the great American malady' and 'the nature of this loneliness…would seem essentially to be a quest for identity.'[2] In addition to depicting the loneliness of her adolescent characters as they pursue a sense of belonging during their transitional identity development, McCullers delineates the lonely 'quest for identity' experienced by many other marginalised characters. These individuals find themselves caught by a conflict between conforming to societal norms and keeping authority over their own bodies. In her final novel, *Clock Without Hands*, McCullers's revelation of the identity quest of people from different groups can be seen in the 'the age-old haunting questions' raised by one of her characters, Jester Clane: 'Who am I?' 'What am I?' 'Where am I going?'[3] However, an individual's identity quest is arguably not only about seeking the answer to the question 'Who am I?' but about responding to the query about 'What are we?' in a very precise moment in history. Answering the question of 'What are we?', as Michel Foucault claims, is 'an analysis of both us and our present'.[4] This can be understood as exploring the connections between individuals' identities and national identities formed in the historical and political context.

[1] McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady',p. 261.
[2] Ibid., p. 259.
[3] McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady', p. 260.
See also in McCullers, *Clock Without Hands* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 158.
Further references to this novel in this chapter are given after quotations in the text.
[4] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1982), 777-95 (pp. 785; 781).

Different from the focus on individual identity crisis experienced by Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding,* where she articulates that 'Not to belong to a *We* makes you too lonesome', *Clock Without Hands* centres around the existential problems of a collective *us* during the 1950s — addressing questions like, *Who are we?* and *What are we?* To answer these questions, it is important to analyse how socially, culturally, and politically constructed lines — such as those of color, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality — separated and categorised American people. To investigate American national identity in the 1950s, this chapter examines the intersection of human biology and politics (biopolitics) in *Clock Without Hands*, focusing on McCullers's portrayal of life-and-death issues and social and political power that shapes the lives and identities of the main characters. The central argument of this Chapter is that biopower works together with sovereign power and disciplinary power in controlling and governing human lives. In the Jim Crow South, an individual's lonely 'quest for identity' reflects not only the identity formation of a specific group but also the broader tensions within the national identity. McCullers elucidates the role of the government and political organisations in shaping the national identity of the time through sponsoring institutional racism, sexism, and homophobia.

National identity and biopolitics: *Who are we?* and *What are we?*

In *Clock Without Hands,* McCullers demonstrates her understanding of the intersections of bodies and politics by delineating the formation of American national identity and the existential crises faced by marginalised groups in 1950s America. The novel starts with a description of the predicament of J. T. Malone, a middle-aged white pharmacist, who is diagnosed with leukemia and only has 'a year or fifteen months' to live (5). Malone is a follower of Judge Fox Clane, a former congressman and a white racist, who desires to restore his wealth by proposing a bill to the government to redeem old Confederate currency. Meanwhile, John Jester Clane, the grandson of Judge Clane, searches for his identity in the process of discovering the truth behind his father's

suicide and navigating his relationship with Sherman Pew, a rebellious mixed-race houseboy hired by the Judge. As another adolescent protagonist, Sherman, in searching for his racial identity, engages in acts of 'everyday resistance' and 'discursive forms of challenges' against white supremacy. Eventually, he moves into a white section, which upsets his white neighbours.[5] Tragically, Sherman is bombed and killed by his next-door neighbour, Sammy Lank, one of a group of hateful white supremacists in town led by Judge Clane. Malone, though reluctant, unwittingly enables this murder.

McCullers, who started working on the first part of *Clock Without Hands*, titled 'The Pestle', in 1951, took about ten years to complete this novel. By the time the novel was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1961, her readers had witnessed not only the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement sparked by the injustices experienced by Rosa Parks in 1955 but the rising of the second wave of feminism and the gay rights movement in the United States under the influence and inspiration of the civil rights struggles. Therefore, this novel, set in Milan, an American southern town in Georgia between 1953 and 1954, to a certain degree, provides a literary text to look back and reflect on various social and political issues over the period immediately preceding the accepted beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Through her vivid depiction of institutional segregation, the Southern nostalgia for Confederate traditions, women's subordinate status, and interracial homosexuality in this novel, McCullers her awareness of civil rights and insight into intersections among race, gender, and American national identity.

McCullers's pre-Civil Rights narrative in this book, with a literary use of history, reveals the dominance of traditional Anglo-Protestant culture and the segregation culture in America. As Erikson observes, traditionally, America 'attempts to make a super-identity out of all the identities imported by its constituent immigrants,' which recognised WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon

[5] Mona Lilja & Stellan Vinthagen, 'Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance?', *Journal of Political Power*, 7 (2014), 107-26 (p. 114).

Protestants) as 'we' (true Americans) while American non-white citizens as 'they' (outsiders).[6] Crossing lines between who are 'we' and who are 'they' has always been regarded as a challenge to American national identity by conservatives. Samuel Huntington, a contemporary conservative political scientist, brings up questions such as, 'Are we a 'we,' one people or several? If we are a 'we,' what distinguishes us from the 'thems' who are not us? Race, religion, ethnicity, values, culture, wealth, politics, or what?'[7] These questions about American national identity, instead of being newly raised, were also prevalent among white racists in U. S. history. Defining 'who are not us' shapes traditional divisive views and rhetoric of white nationalists, which lays the ground for institutional racism. These practices of inclusion and exclusion of outsiders are applications of biopower, viewing from the theoretical lens of Foucault's biopolitics. As stated by Foucault, disciplinary power ('an anatomo-politics of the human body'), influences deviant individuals, while biopower ('a biopolitics of the population') exercises regulatory controls over the lives of species. In *Clock Without Hands,* matters of life and death are both personal and political issues. McCullers's portrayal of the gendered, racialised, and queer bodies in the novel exemplifies the intense and pervasive biopolitical technologies of managing, disciplining and supervising human bodies.

The making of American national identity is based on traditional Anglo-Protestant culture, as Huntington explains, represented by 'English language, Protestant values, individualism, religious commitment, and respect for law'.'[8] In the early twentieth century, the southern racists in their search for 'a new racial order', as Grace Elizabeth Hale identifies, constructed a 'culture of segregation', which excluded African Americans from getting civil rights enjoyed by those white American citizens.[9] During this period, the second Ku Klux Klan started and flourished

[6] Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 256.
[7] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are We: The challenges to American National identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), p. 9.
[8] Ibid., p. xvi.
[9] Hale, p. 427.

in Georgia, taking acts of violence 'against other racial and religious minorities, as well as against the Negro', which manifested a strong appeal of racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholicism and 'attained a larger following outside the South than within'.[10] After reaching its peak years between 1890 and 1920, the lynching culture in America persisted into the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the Southern states. The local governments expanded Jim Crow laws to enforce racial segregation and uphold white superiority, citing scientific racism, a pseudoscientific belief in the inferiority of non-whites, particularly African Americans, purportedly based on Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory. American race policies, such as the Jim Crow laws (1876-1965), the American immigration and citizenship laws (for example, the Chinese Exclusion Act) and anti-miscegenation law (1691-1967), as James Whitman argues, became models for anti-Jewish legislation of the Nazi regime represented by Nuremberg Laws, principally, the Citizenship Law (which made Jews second-class citizens) and the Blood Law (criminalising marriage and sexual relations between Jews and 'Aryans'). After World War II, a war against Nazi Germany and totalitarianism, America, according to James Q. Whitman, fell into a choice between letting systemic racism plague America and protecting the country's image of being 'the home of liberty and democracy — as a country that puts all of its might into the battle against fascism and Nazism that was finally won in 1945.'[11]

McCullers, as González Groba asserts, 'was one of the first white writers in the late 1930s and early 1940s to relate the South's racial practices and politics to European fascism.'[12] Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish economist and sociologist, also raised a question — 'Is the South Fascist?' — in his 1944 book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), and argues, '[t]he South has not yet reached the objectivity and legality of the mature democracy.

[10] Comer Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1974), p.115.
[11] James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 2.
[12] González Groba, 'Carson McCullers and the racial problem', p. 67.

But still less does it resemble the tight, totalitarian regimentation of the fascist state.' [13] However, it is this dilemma between democracy and racism that might have caused liberals like McCullers to worry about America's potential to evolve into a fascist state. Through individual characters' critical comments on both local and state politics, McCullers, as Kaiser insists, establishes emotional links between their 'intense personal experiences' and 'the question of fascism.'[14] In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Harry Minowitz, a Jewish teenager, explains to his childhood friend, Mick, on one afternoon about the Fascists and describes 'how the Nazis made little Jew children get down on their hands and knees and eat grass from the ground'[15]. Though Harry's tale of Nazis and understanding of Fascism in 1939 is only based on his ethnic identity and experience of being discriminated at school, he exhibits his historical perspective: 'there's just two things ahead nowadays […] Militant Democracy or Fascism.'[16] In addition, McCullers presents different interpretations of fascism by Jake Blount and Dr Copeland in their first face to face conversation. Kaiser points out that 'these two (Jake and Copeland) tragically unfulfilled characters express the widely divergent personal experiences through which fascism was interpreted in everyday America'.[17] Jake criticises the oppression of capitalism by saying, '[t]he whole system of capitalistic democracy is — rotten and corrupt. There remain only two roads ahead. One: Fascism. Two: reform of the most revolutionary and permanent kind.'[18] However, Dr Copeland blames the oppression against African Americans: 'so far as I and my people are concerned the South is Fascist now and always has been, in that southern blacks, like the Jews in Germany, are deprived of their legal, economic, and cultural life.' [19] Therefore, with the penetration of fascism into everyday lives of Americans in the 1930s, marginalised 'they' groups,

[13] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers,1944), p. 459.
[14] Ibid., p. 295.
[15] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 210.
[16] Ibid., p. 210.
[17] Kaiser, p. 294.
[18] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 262.
[19] Ibid., p. 256.

such as the poor whites, African Americans and Jews, share similar suffering. McCullers, connecting these individuals' search for the 'We' with the Jim Crow system and Nazi Germany regime, exposes a main political and social issue in America in the mid-twentieth century — a dilemma between fascism and democracy.

Although issues of race, gender and sexuality that had been addressed in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* in 1940 still existed twenty years later in 1961 when her final book was published, McCullers frames her pre-Civil Rights narratives in *Clock Without Hands* by depicting implicit changes in state policies, power relations between the oppressors and the oppressed, various forms of resistance, and growing political consciousness of the marginalised people. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Dr Copeland fails to meet a judge to appeal for justice for his son, Willie, and his experience of being maltreated by Mister Wilson, a racist sheriff, in the courthouse. In contrast, McCullers illustrates in *Clock Without Hands* the changes in the court by depicting Jonny Clane, a white lawyer with liberal conscience, who defends Jones Sherman, an African American sharecropper in his case of killing a white sharecropper, Ossie Little, for self-defense. What is more, McCullers reveals in her first book the expansion of the Jim Crow laws in the 1930s, such as housing segregation and racial discrimination in the judicial system, while in her final novel, she reports dramatically the Supreme Court decision in 1954 — Brown v. Board of Education — which forbade segregation in public schools. In Volume I of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault points out that 'biopower', a power for governing life, works 'to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow and ordering them rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit or destroying them.'[20] Through highlighting the progressive Brown v. Board of Education decision — the milestone in the Civil Rights Movement in American history —

[20] Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume I*, p. 179.

McCullers reveals the decline of institutional racism and the removal of some segregation laws and regulations within society, which also illustrates the biopower of the government in improving welfare and civil rights of the marginalised population in the 1950s.

Racism and biopower: 'You have the best blood in this state in your veins'[21]

National identity, as discussed above, is a mighty force in people's lives, which plays an important role in determining how different groups are viewed and treated. According to Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, an American political scientist, in American history, the privileged group with Anglo-protestant origin held the power to define who can be counted as 'a true American.'[22] She makes a 'social group' interpretation of American national identity in her book, *Who Counts as an American? The Boundaries of National Identity* and summarises traditional identifiers of 'a true American' based on Anglo-protestant culture as those 'native born, having U.S. citizenship, … living in the United States most of their lives, … speak[ing] English, … mostly likely [being] Christian and … white.'[23] Under this identity line, those who do not have these 'prototypical characteristics' are 'marginalised, pushed to the periphery of the group' and not counted as 'prototypical Americans.'[24]

McCullers created diverse white American characters who are counted as 'prototypical Americans' but hold different views on race. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Mister Wilson, a deputy sheriff, who beats Dr Copeland in the courthouse and throws him into prison for no legal reason, is depicted as a guard of white supremacy. Jake Blount, a radical skilled white mechanic and an itinerant agitator, shows sympathy for the sufferings of African Americans but finally fails to unite African Americans with the oppressed white workers to fight for equal rights together.

[21] McCullers, *Clock Without Hands*, p. 16.
[22] Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Who Counts as an American? The Boundaries of National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 86.
[23] Ibid., P. 87.
[24] Ibid., p. 182.

Then about two decades later, in her last book — *Clock Without Hands*, McCullers portrays primarily white characters from three generations of a family to represent different racial views that existed among American whites in the 1950s: eighty-five-year-old Fox Clane is a representative of white supremacists; thirty-nine-year old Malone is influenced by deep-rooted white supremacist ideology but does not agree with violent attacks against African Americans；eighteen-year-old Jester Clane demonstrates white liberal conscience and warns Sherman of the danger of being attacked by the white racists. McCullers's characterisation of young Jester indicates the weakness of the progressive power of white liberals in the 1950's. Meanwhile, McCuller reveals the race issue from the perspective of a biracial character, Sherman, who articulates that 'all white men were crazy, and the more prominent their positions the more lunatic were their words and behavior' (178). He also stresses that '[t]he politicians, from governors to congressmen, down to sheriffs and wardens, were alike in their bigotry and violence' (178). McCullers then depicts some poor white characters, for example, Sammy Lank, who eventually killed Sherman as a form of revenge for this African American boy's intrusion into the white district. Sammy's violent attack, supported by Judge Clane and other racists in town, illustrates white racists' collaboration in upholding white supremacy in the 1950s. The following paragraphs of this section will explore the link between individual racial prejudices and institutionalized racism by examining racist policies and practices within the state alongside the racist rhetoric and behaviors of white characters.

In *Clock Without Hands*, McCullers connects J. T. Malone's personal racism with traditional prejudice and societal stigma towards Jewish people and African Americans. As she highlights in 'Loneliness ... an American Malady,'

> fear is a primary source of evil. And when the question 'Who am I?' recurs and is unanswered, then fear and frustration project a negative attitude. The bewildered soul can answer only: 'Since I do not understand 'Who I am,' I only know what I am not.' The

corollary of this emotional incertitude is snobbism, intolerance and racial hate. [25]

The above statement shows how McCullers moves from general existential questions to class and race politics. The emotions of 'snobbism, intolerance and racial hate' stressed here owe their existence to the sense of fear caused by individual's failure in the 'quest for identity,' echoing the pervasive anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racism deep-rooted in American national culture during the first half of the twentieth century. In the novel, Malone, in the process of discovering his identity ('Who am I?'), exhibits his subconscious racism based on racial biases against those who are not 'prototypical Americans.'

As a white pharmacist in the town, Malone's anxiety and sense of threat are first caused by the Jewish people around him. Antisemitism, hostility to, prejudice or discrimination against Jewish individuals, exists throughout American Jewish history and has permeated American culture and national identity. Unconsciously influenced by this deep-rooted Christian anti-Semitism, Malone exhibits name bias against his Jewish doctor, Kenneth Hale Hayden. As observed by Maass, 'for a long time immigration to the United States has been accompanied by a tendency to change the immigrants' names' with the main purpose for integration and avoiding discrimination.[26] In the novel, Dr Hayden's assimilated name makes Malone feel 'somehow wrong' for the middle name 'Hale' is one of the 'good old Anglo-Saxon, Southern names' (8). Moreover, McCullers pictures Malone's envy and hate towards Dr Hayden and other Jews, as he baselessly blames the 'Jewish grinds' for having 'crowded [him] out of medical school and ruined his career as a doctor' (7). McCullers's uses the symbol of a paper knife to subtly connect the diagnosis of Malone's terminal illness with the myth of Jewish deicide. According to Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, 'In the gospels' rendition and as interpreted for centuries, the

[25] McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady',p. 261.

[26] Ernest Maass, 'Integration and Name Changing among Jewish Refugees', *Names*, 1.3(1958),129-71 (p. 139).

Jews are perceived as 'the Christ-killers,' a people condemned forever to suffer exile and degradation.'[27] This centuries-old myth has been the original anti-Semitic false accusation and persecution against Jewish people. Picturing the scene that Dr Hayden unintentionally plays with the paper knife in front of Malone when giving the prognosis that he has a year to live, McCullers subtly associates Malone's fear of death with his unconscious anti-Semitism. She implies that Malone's 'dormant shame' and 'obscure distress' comes from the fact that he, a white Christian, is dying but Jews, like Dr Hayden, '[are] living and [will] live on' (8). Therefore, the 'paper-knife' symbol reveals a collective racial bias among white Christians against Jews and explains Malone's feeling of the threat of death or the fear of being replaced.

J. T. Malone's interactions with Sherman Pew illustrate the tense racial relationship between the whites and African Americans. McCullers describes an encounter between the two in the middle part of Chapter One:

> When Malone turned and they collided, the nigger steadied himself but did not budge, and it was Malone who stepped back a pace. They stood in the narrow alley and stared at each other. The eyes of both were of the same gray-blue and at first it seemed a contest to outstare each other. (12)

This seemingly ordinary meeting 'in the narrow alley' 'upsets him (Malone) strangely mainly due to the 'unnatural appearance' of Sherman (12). The 'gray-blue' eyes, 'set in the dark face' of Sherman, is a mark of mixed-race identity, symbolically challenge Judge Clane's claim of 'best blood', the white race purity. So for Malone, the eyes have 'a bleak, violent look' (12). In his lecture, 'Society Must Be Defended,' Foucault quotes a racist argument: 'We have to defend society against all the biological threats posed by the other race, the subrace, the counter-race that we are, despite ourselves, bringing into existence.'[28] According to this stance, the 'biological

[27] Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.18.

[28] Foucault, p. 61-2.

threat' brings about the concern about the biopolitical purity of the white population and explains Malone's deep-rooted fear of and hatred against blacks. Later, McCullers uses the symbol of the knife again to show Malone's sense of threat caused by Sherman. At his door, seeing a 'blue-eyed nigger … holding in his hand something that glinted in the sun,' Malone is so 'unnerved that he dropped the pestle' in that he mistakes 'a bunch of keys on a silver ring' in Sherman's hand as 'the paper-knife of Dr Hayden' (27). Through these details, McCullers vividly presents Malone's subconscious racial prejudice which leads to his groundless fear and hate of Sherman and Dr Hayden.

Apart from his sense of fear and threat in his contact with nonwhite characters, Malone's racial prejudice is also embodied by his racist language. With a masterful use of free indirect speech, McCullers moves in and out of her characters' consciousness and present readers their internal thoughts and feelings. In characterising Malone, McCullers draws attention to his habitual use of the term 'nigger' in both his thought and speech, revealing his entrenched racism. When meeting the African American boy Sherman, Malone's mind 'automatically used the harsh term bad nigger' (12). Moreover, genetics ('good blood') and intelligence has long been a hallmark of white supremacists and the main ground of scientific racism. This may explain why Malone does not believe that Sherman can be 'a too intelligent colored boy' and associates his 'cold, blazing eyes with the pestle, rats and death' (71). Malone's subconscious use of 'bad nigger', a term historically used by former slave owners, along with his instinctive association of African Americans with 'rats and death,' reflects the racist culture that has indoctrinated him into white supremacy under racialised state apparatuses and is ingrained in his everyday life. In this way, McCullers exhibits racial differences in these white characters' language, and meanwhile, presents the racialised rhetoric produced by the construction of race.

Compared with Malone's implicit biases against racial minorities, Fox Clane's overt racist rhetoric and active role in hate activities make him a downright racist in this novel. Being

portrayed as a 'prototypical' American, the Judge justifies white supremacy and racial segregation with arguments of scientific racism (biological racism). 'Under scientific racism', as Collins asserts, 'blacks have been construed as inferior, and their inferiority has been attributed either to biological causes or cultural differences.'[29] In this novel, these notions about the biological inferiority of black people are illustrated by Judge Clane's inflammatory racist rhetoric about blood through which he incites white character's sense of superiority in this novel. At the beginning of Chapter One, when the Judge knows that Malone has 'a blood disease (leukemia)', he expresses his doubts about the doctor's diagnosis. Then he comforts Malone by affirming his Anglo-protestant origin and says, 'that's ridiculous — you have some of the best blood in this state' (16). Clane is not talking about blood disease from a medical point of view but stressing Malone's racial purity and superiority from a white racist's perspective. Later, he highlights the supremacy of 'Anglo-Saxon' blood again in front of Malone by saying, 'You and I have our pride, the pride of our blood, the pride in our descendants' (239). Considering the Judge's identity as a former congressman, his white supremacy rhetoric not only manifests his ideology of scientific racism but to a certain degree affect the white population around him. Clane's racist rhetoric, connecting the possibility of getting a blood disease with racial superiority, seems ignorant and absurd, but ironically, as McCullers describes, makes Malone feel 'a little chill of pleasure and pride' (16). At this moment, Malone, though as a pharmacist himself, begins to question the judgement made by the Jewish doctor after hearing Clane's pseudoscientific arguments on race. In Chapter two, McCullers describes the Judge's efforts in trying to teach his grandson, Jester, to have a 'passion' for 'the heritage of their blood' (45). By stressing that 'the South was, after all, the same flesh and blood and should have been treated as brothers' and expressing his outrage at the sight of 'a Nigra man sitting at a table with a white girl' in New York, Clane tries to instill

[29] Collins, *Black feminist thought*, p. 77.

the young generation the culture of including WASPs and excluding non-whites (45). In essence, these pseudoscientific arguments for white supremacy offer grounds for racist hate crimes and activities.

Judge Clane is also characterised as a nationalist politician, who involves and instigates terrorist activities to promote white supremacy. McCullers first gives the old Judge a surname 'Clane' (a word that visually echoes 'Clan' and 'Klan') and then confirms this identity, stating 'In the old days the Judge had been a Ku Kluxer' (238). In the novel, 'the old days' when the Judge could 'go to those white-sheeted meetings at Pine Mountain and fill himself with a secret and invisible power' refers to the second Klan which started in Georgia and flourished in the early and mid-1920s (238). The second Klan, as historian Craig Fox argues, wove itself quickly and thoroughly into '[m]any aspects of everyday life — entertainment, leisure, commercial life, church life, politics, even birth, marriage, and death' and could 'be conducted, quite legally and acceptably … in the white Protestant communities.'[30] Nonetheless, *Clock Without Hands*, set between March 1953 and May 1954, demonstrates the influence of the third Klan that surged after 1950 and was concentrated in the Deep South.[31] The Klans in this era carried out violent attacks against African American Civil Rights activists and their white supporters, aiming at preserving racial segregation in the South and maintaining the economic and social supremacy of white Americans. Judge Clane, who advocates 'the restoration of the South' and pursues legislation to redeem Confederate money, shares the same motivations with the new Klans. Moreover, McCullers also implies that though Clane's overt racist rhetoric and former Ku Kluxer identity demonstrate his individual racism, the powerful and deep-rooted institutional racism behind it, which shaped the national culture and identity of mid-twentieth-century America,

[30] Craig Fox. *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2011), p. 196.
[31] Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), was a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the Court ruled that U.S. state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools are unconstitutional.

cannot be overlooked.

Besides delineating individual racist rhetoric and acts in the novel, McCullers exposes the permeability of institutional racism in the Jim Crow South. As civil rights activists and political scientists Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton state, institutional racism that originates in 'the operation of established and respected forces in the society' is 'less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is no less destructive of human life.' [32] Their statement underscores how institutional racism operates through established societal structures and norms, often in subtle ways that make it harder to identify and address. However, its impact on individuals is just as harmful as more overt forms of racism. In the novel, individual racism represented by both Malone's subconscious racial bias and Judge Clane's overt racist rhetoric is far less harmful than institutional racism based on policies, practices, regulations, and laws. This argument is iterated by Thomas Lemek, a German sociologist and social theorist, who maintains that racism 'is not defined by individual action. Rather, it structures social fields of action, guides political practices, and is realized through state apparatuses.'[33] Individual acts of racial discrimination may exclude nonwhite individuals from being considered part of the 'We' group, but the American government's racist ideology of separation and exclusivity constructs the inferior racial identity of ethnic minority groups by relegating them to being seen as 'They'. Modern southern states, as Foucault asserts, make 'the distinction among races' and 'the hierarchy of races', dividing the population into biological groups with labels of 'good' or 'bad', 'superior' or 'inferior' races, which are techniques of biopolitics that 'the population can be brought under State control.'[34] In the first half of the twentieth century, state-sponsored segregation and exclusion intensified racial inequality in

[32] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 4.

[33] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, trans. by Eric Frederick Trump (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 43. (Originally published as Biopolitik zur Einfüfrung in 2007).

[34] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 255.

America. For example, the Poll Tax (that limited the chance to vote for poor citizens, especially, African Americans in many southern states since the late nineteenth century), the Immigration Control Act of 1924 (that limited the number of immigrants to entry into America through a national origins quota), and the National Housing Act of 1934 (that excluded African Americans from New Deal urban housing projects which provided aid to white families only during the Great Depression), to name only a few, illustrate institutional discrimination against African Americans, Jewish people and other non-white immigrants, which gives rise to a social environment for violence and hate crimes against minority groups.

In *Clock Without Hands,* Sherman's political awareness is evidenced by his recognition of the hypocrisy in American democracy concerning racial equality. In Chapter Nine, Sherman complains that though 'The Fifteenth Amendment of the American Constitution had guaranteed the right to vote to the Negro race,' there is 'no Negro [he] had known or heard tell of had ever voted' (56). Then, in a conversation with Jester, Sherman recalls his people's preparation for voting led by Golden Nigeria, a 'protest club protesting against racial discrimination':

> First we registered for the vote in a body…. Each member got a little cardboard coffin with his name in it and a printed sign, 'A voting reminder.' [...] under the circumstances, with cardboard coffins slipped under doors — we continued our voting studies, learned the names and dates of all the Presidents, memorized the Constitution and so forth, but we had been aiming to vote, not aiming to be no Joan of Arc, so under the circumstances — (76).

This quote describes Sherman and his people's earnest preparation (probably for the literacy test) to vote. Having Sherman repeat 'under the circumstances' twice, McCullers draws attention to the racist political environment and voter suppression tactics that obstruct people of color from fully participating in the political process, particularly in voting. In third-person point of view, McCullers illustrates some obstacles that prevent African Americans from exercising their legal right to vote: 'He did not tell Jester of the charges and countercharges exchanged as voting day neared, nor did he tell him that he was a minor and could not have voted anyhow' (76-77). Given

Sherman's assertion in the aforementioned speech that his people seek participation in voting and civic duties rather than to engage in conflict with the government, it is conceivable that African American voters could become entangled in disputes and controversies concerning their voting rights. Moreover, Sherman's belief that he 'was a minor and could not have voted anyhow' vividly reflects the confusion and frustration experienced by African Americans when they are unable to exercise their constitutional right to vote. The right to vote is a basic right for a US citizen. During the pre-Civil Rights era, denying African Americans the right to register to vote was just one of the political tactics of disenfranchisement, which served as biopolitical techniques of institutional racism. These tactics not only hindered political equality but also undermined the foundations of American democracy.

As an experienced politician, the old Judge foresees the coming social and political changes, observing that 'The wind of revolution is rising to destroy the very foundations on which the South was built' (14). McCullers underscores the Judge's reluctance to see any progress in civil rights for people of colour:

> The poll tax will soon be abolished and every ignorant Nigra can vote. Equal rights in education will be the next thing. […] A minimum-wage law so outrageously high that it will be the death knell of the rural South may be forced on us. […] The Federal Housing Projects are already the ruination of the real estate investors. (15)

The Poll Tax, unfair wage and housing segregation are all existing primary racist policies in the South before the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. McCullers, again through the mouth of her characters, demonstrates her political sensitivity in mirroring the changes in government policies in her book set between 1953 and 1954. In 1961, the federal minimum wage law was extended based on previous minimum wage laws in 1933 and 1938. The U. S. government ratified the 24th Amendment in 1964, abolishing the use of the poll tax as a prerequisite for voting in federal elections. In 1968, the Fair Housing Act was passed, which forbade overt refusal to sell properties to African Americans. In addition, school segregation, an important form of exclusion

enforced by the racist state to keep African Americans in an inferior position, also underwent challenges in the 1950s. Judge Clane expresses his worry about integration in schools in the future and asks Jester, 'The time may come in your generation … when the educational system itself is mixed — with no color line. [...] How would you like to see a hulking Nigra boy sharing a desk with a delicate little white girl?' (31) On one hand, the Judge's rhetorical question reflects his deep-seated racial prejudice and strong desire to preserve white supremacy. On the other hand, his fear of integration indicates the rising power of desegregation. Through weaving the impact of political policies into the daily lives of different groups, McCullers tactically pictures the conflict between the power of abolishing injustice racial policies and the power of defending segregation and white supremacy.

During the postwar period, aiming to oppose the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation, white racists conducted terrorist activities across the South, including bombing, attacking, and murdering African Americans and white activists who were seeking to enfranchise the African American population. As Foucault suggests, when the state becomes 'the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race,' it usually promotes hate and violence and issues xenophobic policies as valid political tools. [35] *Clock Without Hands* builds to a climax in which Judge Clane, Malone, and a small group of poor white Milan residents meet at Malone's pharmacy to discuss an attack against Sherman. Targeting Sherman, who crosses the red line of segregation, this gang of white racists practice individual racism. However, as Terry Jones, author of 'Institutional racism in the United States,' argues, 'the individual racist must have an institutional framework for his behavior.' [36] Federal, state, and local governments were responsible for generating residential segregation in the South by issuing segregated housing projects and unconstitutional and racial zoning ordinances, which justifiably promoted white

[35] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended,* p. 81.
[36] Terry Jones, 'Institutional racism in the United States', *Social Work,* 19 (1974), 218-25 (p. 219).

individuals' prejudice against people of colour in their neighbourhood. In her essay, '"The Astonishing Humanity": Domestic Discourses in the Friendship and Fiction of Richard Wright and Carson McCullers', Julieann Veronica Ulin explores the impact of Richard Wright's experience of housing segregation on McCullers's writing of her last novel:

> Wright composed "I Choose Exile" around the time when McCullers begins her decade-long work on *Clock without Hands*. This, her last novel, appears the year after Wright's death, and is fully indebted to his experience of "choosing exile" as a result of U.S. housing discrimination. [37]

Evidently, McCullers's relationship with Wright provided her firsthand sources for the writing of *Clock Without Hands*, which testifies the expansion of McCullers's interest from individuals' loneliness to deep-rooted racism in Jim Crow America. In the novel, after Sherman moves into his newly rented house in the white section, '[t]he news spread like wildfire through the town. Sammy Lank went to Malone to complain and Malone went to the Judge' (238). As a white nationalist and an influential politician in the 1950s, the old Judge, as well as other whites in this group sees defending white supremacy as a patriotic duty.

Judge Clane, a representative of the power of traditional racial nationalists, tries all means to keep nonwhites as second-class citizens. Earlier in the novel, in a talk with his grandson, Jester, the Judge openly declares to be a 'duty-bound' 'Southern patriot' who 'reacts when the age-long standards of the South are threatened' (30-31). In his 1954 speech, subsequently circulated as a pamphlet, 'Black Monday,' future Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Tom P. Brady declared that every 'patriotic American' has a duty to resist racial integration, which echoes Judge Clane's response to Sammy Lank's appeal to punish Sherman for moving into the white district in the novel.[38] American historian Gary Gerstle also highlights that before and during the Civil Rights

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[37] Julieann Veronica Ulin, '"The Astonishing Humanity": Domestic Discourses in the Friendship and Fiction of Richard Wright and Carson McCullers', in *Richard Wright: New Readings in the 21st Century,* eds. by Alice Mikal Craven and William E. Dow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.193-210 (p. 196)

[38] Tom P. Brady, 'Black Monday: Segregation or Amalgamation … America Has Its Choice,' in Clayborne Carson, and others, eds., *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom*

era,

> White southerners had done everything in their power to resist the dismantling of Jim Crow and the repudiation of white supremacy. They formed organizations throughout the South to resist integration, declaring that this policy rested on federal laws and judicial decisions that illegally infringed on states' rights. They reinvigorated the tradition of racial nationalism, arguing that blacks would never achieve the worth of whites and thus did not deserve first-class citizenship.[39]

Gerstle's historical definition of white Southerner can be used to explain McCullers's characterisation of the Judge. The Judge gives his reason for organising a violent attack on Sherman : 'I am speaking as a chief citizen of this town. I am speaking for the poor, for the unprofited. We leading citizens have to be the spokesmen for the downtrodden. […] How would you like to be living next door to a Nigra?' (239). This former congressman's racist rhetoric, linking housing segregation with the responsibility to defend the white population, in a certain sense, is aligned with the propaganda of the racist government and serves to trigger hatred towards blacks among other whites. Then, with powerful rhetorical questions, the Judge delivers an inflammatory speech to warn the crowd of the threats of African Americans, mirroring the injustice (and language) of state-sanctioned racial segregation: '[A]re there no zoning laws in this town? Do you want coal-black niggers moving in right next door to your house? Do you want your children crowded in the back of the bus while coal-black niggers sit in the front?' (242). Clane's repetition of the term 'coal-black niggers' echoes Malone's use of 'bad nigger,' which assigns African Americans an inferior status and separates them spatially and culturally from 'true Americans'.

As discussed earlier, who counts for 'true Americans' is a question of national identity which manifests as a 'race struggle'. As Foucault puts it, a 'race struggle' is,

a battle that has to be waged not between races, but by a race that is portrayed as the one true

Struggle (New York, 1991), p. 89.

[39] Gary Gerstle, *American crucible: race and nation in the twentieth century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 111.

> race, the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage.[40]

In this sense, when white Americans hold power to set the norm and nonwhites are portrayed as deviants and a biological threat, racial identity is constructed. Through his last calling for action among 'true Americans'— 'This is the hour of decision. Who is running this town, us or the niggers?'— the Judge intends to justify his order to kill. Foucault identifies the essence of state racism in the belief that, 'The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I — as species rather than individual — can live….'[41] Biopower works to defend the state against the threat of deviant populations. As aforementioned, 'a threat to the biological heritage' has been a pseudoscientific excuse used by racists to justify racial and cultural exclusion and segregation and, ultimately, to control the bodies of the minority population. Sherman in the novel is eventually killed by his white neighbour, Sammy Lank, for deviating from 'the norm', a man-made colour line, more specifically, housing segregation rules.

Nevertheless, Sherman is not only a victim of individual racism but also of the institutional structure. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant claim, 'Discrimination, far from manifesting itself only (or even principally) through individual actions or conscious policies, was a structural feature of U.S. society, the product of centuries of systemic exclusion, exploitation, and disregard of racially defined minorities.'[42] Taking the life of Sherman by violence, in the context of the Jim Crow regime, is a biopolitical technique 'for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations.'[43] According to Foucault, sovereign power is the 'power of life and death' and is

[40] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended,* p. 61.
[41] Ibid., p. 81.
[42] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 196os to the 1990s*, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 69.
[43] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, p. 140.

'in reality the right to take life or let live', whereas biopower is the power to 'make live.'[44] Judge Clane, Sammy Lank and their like exercise old sovereign power ('murderous power') to take Sherman's life, from which McCullers hints at the danger of America's turning into a Nazi state, where everyone 'had the power of life and death over his or her neighbours.'[45] In another sense, setting the death of Sherman just before the outbreak of the Civil Rights Movement, depicting the awakening of Malone's moral conscience and the growth of Jester's liberal political thoughts, McCullers again shows her awareness of emerging forces that would change the old order of the South. The following section will examine the network of power relations in the context of the American South in the 1950s, considering intertwined and competing forces, such as discriminations from white supremacists, the complicity of the government in racism, progressive efforts of white southern activists, and the resistance by nonwhite groups.

Identity, resistance, and biopower: '… slowly he started to go out of line'[46]

McCullers's sense of humanity and political consciousness drove her to seek the profound meanings of life and death, identity and power relations, loneliness and livingness. She investigated the race issue in America between the 1930s and 1950s, through an examination of the unequal power dynamics between her white and nonwhite characters in the context of social changes from the Great Depression and World War II to the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. According to Foucault, the study of power relations can start with an investigation of 'the forms of resistance.' He compares the 'resistance against different forms of power' to 'a chemical catalyst' which is used to 'bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used.'[47] In other words, power relations shape the

[44] Ibid., p. 136 Also see: Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 241.
[45] Ibid., p. 260.
[46] McCullers, *Clock Without Hands*, p. 233.
[47] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1982), 777-95 (p. 780).

forms of resistance and, meanwhile, resistance reacts to power and reflects power relations. As mentioned in the Introduction, McCullers creates a group of non-white characters in her novels, who are marginalised in the system of racial hierarchy and respond differently to white supremacy and systemic racism. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Portia tolerates unfair wages paid by the white family she works for (the Kellys), while Dr Copeland plans to organise a non-violent protest march on Washington. Berenice Sadie Brown in *The Member of the Wedding* tries to integrate into the world of the whites through having one artificial blue eye and imagines living in a 'round and just and reasonable' world 'with No colored people, but all human men and ladies and children as one loving family on the earth'.[48] In *Clock Without Hands*, McCullers also presents various forms of resistance by African American characters. Unlike obedient and submissive domestic servant figures like Portia and Berenice, Verily chooses to leave her white employer, the Judge, after he rejects her request for reasonable payment and welfare. Sherman initially engages in some hidden and discursive acts of resistance before escalating to overt actions in his fight against white supremacy.

Similar to Joe Christmas, a mixed-race character in William Faulkner's 1932 novel *Light in August*, who is abandoned as an infant on the steps of an orphanage on Christmas Day by his biological grandfather, Uncle Doc Hines, Sherman Pew is depicted as a mixed-race adolescent with dark skin and blue eyes, who is left 'on a pew of the Holy Ascension Church in Milan' after his birth (219). Moreover, as Joe Christmas's name carries significant symbolic meanings related to themes of identity, race, and isolation, Sherman Pew's name is also attached with profound symbolic meanings. Just like Sethe's dog in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* being called 'Here Boy' in a perfunctory manner, a way slave owners used to summon male slaves during the slavery era and a symbol of the dehumanised and objectified African American men, Sherman is given a

[48] Ibid., p. 79.

random surname, 'Pew', based on the place where he is abandoned. Being left on the bench 'at one of the colored churches' implies that the 'dark-skinned' baby Sherman is rejected by the white community and socially classified as an African American (138). To echo the symbolic implication of the surname 'Pew', later in the novel McCullers describes young Sherman's experience of being 'directed… to a colored church' by an usher when he intentionally sits 'on a back pew at the Baptist Church', a white church (233). Sherman is treated as an intruder into the whites-only church, as well as 'a threat to the biological heritage (white racial purity)'.[49] In this way, McCullers illuminates Sherman's complex identities as a misfit in both white and black communities. In addition, Sherman Pew's first name 'Sherman' can be associated with William Tecumseh Sherman, a Union general, who played a crucial role in the victory over the Confederate States in the Civil War. Like General Sherman, who 'burnt the cotton' and fought against the Southern Confederacy during the Civil War, Sherman Pew in the novel is also rebellious. He opposes Judge Clane's advocacy of 'the restoration of the South' and tries to challenge racial segregation (176). Comparatively, Sherman's rebellion is only individual everyday resistance, which reflects the growing small-scale resistance against racial discrimination and segregation before the formal start of the Civil Rights Movement. In *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments,* Saidiya Hartman uncovers forms of 'open rebellion' in the everyday practices of young African American women at the turn of the twentieth century and raises the question, 'How could they not rebel against circumstances that made it impossible to live?' [50] Sherman, resembling those African American adolescent girls who experience identity crises in a racist circumstance, finds no place to live in a white-dominated society and eventually chooses to resist. As Erikson states in his book, *Youth: Identity and Crisis*, 'the crisis of youth is also the crisis of a generation and the ideological soundness of its society: there is also a

[49] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended,* p. 61.
[50] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), p. 102.

complementarity of identity and ideology.'[51] His statement suggests that the challenges faced by youth are closely connected to the broader societal context. In *Clock Without Hands*, Sherman's quest for justice reflects the broader collective struggles for equality for marginalised groups. Analogically, America in the mid-1950s, much like Sherman in his transition from adolescent to adult, stood at a turning point in the history of race relations. During this period, African American activists, alongside white liberals, embarked on a painstaking fight to abolish racial segregation laws. Their efforts won a monumental victory in the case of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, which marked the beginning of a larger scale fight for civil rights. This follow parts of this section will delve into how McCullers's portrayal of Sherman Pew and those around him exemplifies the complexities of identity, race, and power relations within the deeply divided society of the Jim Crow South.

The Clanes' home provides a space to observe race relations and racial identities. Hale underlines the role of white homes in the culture of segregation during the Jim Crow era: 'The white home served as a major site in the production of racial identity precisely because there this racial interdependence was both visible and denied.'[52] White families employed non-white people and relied on the labor of non-white servants to maintain their sense of racial superiority. However, white racist employers persistently denied or avoided mentioning their dependence on non-white servants. Judge Clane hires Verily as a cook and Sherman as a 'general amanuensis' (107). Verily's inferior position is indicated through Clane's 'customary Sunday remark' 'during the soup course': 'Verily, Verily, I say unto you: you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. […] If you cook this well' (30). The Judge, viewing himself as a godlike saviour to his African American servants, fantasises about maintaining an old Southern racial relationship within his household permanently. Although both are employed by Judge Clane, Sherman holds a different

[51] Erikson, *Youth: Identity and crisis*, p. 309.
[52] Hale, p. 135.

position from that of Verily in the Clane's household. As the Judge's new 'general amanuensis', Sherman is regarded as 'a veritable treasure, a jewel' in that he can write letters, read poems for the Judge, assist him with his diet control, and give him insulin injections (138). Therefore, when Verily suggests having Sherman cook for the Clanes after she quits the job, the judge clarifies Sherman's role in this white home: 'Sherman is no servant. […] No trained servant' (225). Likewise, Sherman does not identify himself as a lower-class domestic servant, either. Portia in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is proud of having 'a good deal of white folks' blood' and calls those people with pure African blood 'bad blood … nigger[s].'[53] Similarly, biracial Sherman applies racist rhetoric to discriminate against Verily for her darker skin colour, and claims, '[a]nyway I'm not pure nigger like you are' (180). Verily observes Sherman's intention to draw a boundary between them and comments, 'It's because he's too uppity to eat with me in the kitchen as he belongs' (147). Arguably, Sherman's sense of superiority over Verily displays his internalised biases and prejudiced attitudes towards other African American people. As discussed elsewhere, most of McCullers's African American characters internalise white supremacy by admitting whiteness as superior and Blackness as inferior. For instance, Grandpapa in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* prays to 'be white as cotton' and Berenice in *The Member of the Wedding* has one artificial eye and choses blue glass for this. Just like Pecola Breedlove, an African American girl in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, who prays for a pair of blue eyes, Berenice and Grandpapa internalise blue eyes and white skin as symbols of whiteness, believing that changing the colour of their skin and eyes will bring them social acceptance and happy lives. However, like Morrison who conveys through Pecola's madness at the end of the novel that internalised whiteness deforms the lives of African American people, McCullers also illustrates through Sherman's experience that having blue eyes does not guarantee African Americans equal treatment in a

[53] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, pp. 72;123.

white-dominant society.

To some extent, Sherman's sense of superiority over Verily is related to his relationship with Judge Clane, which is described as full of 'joy and lucidity' at the beginning (173). Judge Clane's 'suspicious … kindness,' including offering Sherman a 'soft, clean, bossy job' as a houseboy, giving him liberties in 'reading the magazine, drinking the gin and tonic' and even eating in the library instead of dining in the kitchen with Verily, strengthens Sherman's unrealistic assumptions about his racial and social status (148; 141). Accordingly, the portrayal of a seemingly harmonious racial relationship between Sherman and Judge Clane in the early pages serves a dual purpose: it prepares the ground for a further narration of Sherman's transgressions both within and outside the white home, and it also foreshadows a drastic shift in Judge Clane's roles from a 'servant-spoiler' (80) to an organiser of the bombing attack against Sherman at the end of the book. Being openly referred as 'a veritable treasure, a jewel' by a white employer, Sherman is confused with his relationship with Judge Clane and even assumes that he shares the same privileges as the whites by his half-white blood and blue eyes. As Dick Gregory, an African American comedian and civil rights activist, points out, 'Down South, white folks don't care how close I get as long as I don't get too big. Up North, white folks don't care how big I get as long as I don't get too close.'[54] This statement interprets the difference between race relations in the North and the South during the Jim Crow era. Culturally, white northerners did not act against African Americans' demand for civil rights but expected them to keep a certain distance or avoid challenging the social and cultural boundaries that separated them from white society. However, southern whites were comfortable with African Americans' physical proximity to them or integrating into certain aspects of society (such as labour or domestic roles) as long as white supremacy was not violated. McCullers delineates the process of Sherman's getting 'too big',

[54] Dick Gregory, *From the Back of the Bus* (New York: Avon Books, 1962), p. 64.

from his 'deliberately rude' behaviours and language in the presence of white characters to his 'separate acts of going out of line' (74; 234). As will be discussed below, Sherman's transgressions, especially his move into the white district in the later part of the novel, threaten white supremacy and resultantly lead to his murder by the white racists in the fictional Southern town, led by the old Judge.

In the eyes of white racist characters in the American South, Sherman gets 'too big' and challenges their sense of superiority. Malone speaks out about his negative impression of Sherman: 'I never liked him, […]. Just a biggity, disrespectful, and a thoroughly bad Nigra' (243). Historian Ronald L. F. Davis illuminates Jim Crow racial etiquette in America:

> Most southern white Americans who grew up prior to 1954 expected black Americans to conduct themselves according to well-understood rituals of behaviour. This racial etiquette governed the actions, manners, attitudes, and words of all black people when in the presence of whites.[55]

Accordingly, white racists, by regulating African Americans' behaviour around how to act, speak and behave in the presence of white people, aim to maintain white superiority. The initial meeting in a narrow alley, when Sherman 'did not budge' and 'it was Malone who stepped back a pace' (12), suggests what Malone and others perceive as 'biggity' in Sherman. As Davis notes, '[u]sually it was expected that blacks would step off the sidewalk when meeting whites or else walk on the outer street side of the walk thereby "giving whites the wall."'[56] Sherman's refusal to 'step back,' along with his 'contest to outstare' Malone, violates the 'rules of racial etiquette' and creates 'an air of equality with whites.'[57] Notably, Sherman's refusal to submit to these rules governing conduct can be interpreted as an everyday form of resistance to the socially constructed inferior racial position imposed on him. As discussed in Chapter One, Scott proposes a

[55] Ronald L. F. Davis, 'Racial Etiquette: The Racial Customs and Rules of Racial Behavior in Jim Crow America' (2006) https://files.nc.gov › dncr-moh › jim crow etiquette, downloaded August 5, 2021.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

perspective to view the dispersed and disguised resisting acts of the oppressed people by introducing the notion of 'everyday forms of resistance', which is claimed to be 'a vast realm of political action … that is almost habitually overlooked.'[58] He defines everyday resistance as 'ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups' and lists some typical acts of hidden confrontation: 'foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth'.[59] Sherman's hidden rebellious acts in the early chapters of the novel illustrate Scott's 'everyday forms of resistance'. As noted elsewhere, Sherman's silent confrontation with white supremacy is first described in the early part of the novel when he encounters Malone 'in the narrow alley' (12). Then in the middle part, McCullers also depicts Sherman's hidden acts of resistance. When Malone visits Judge Clane, Sherman is reading poems to the Judge. The Judge orders Sherman to bring drinks to Malone 'in a bossy voice', specifying 'plenty of ice' (137). Sherman is 'fit to be tied' for being interrupted and treated as a servant and makes the drinks 'with very little ice' as a resistance (137). According to Scott, 'discursive forms of challenges' can be seen as 'the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups' to destabilise institutional control over personal behaviors. [60] In this sense, Sherman's acts of silent confrontation, hidden resistance, and disobedience are instances of marginalised individuals' engagement in racial infrapolitics as means of challenging oppressive structures.

While working for the Judge, Sherman never stops seeking his identity — the answer to 'Who am I? What am I?' (231). Depicted as a person who thinks highly of himself, Sherman entertains fantasies about his parents, from regarding Marian Anderson, a famous African American singer, as his possible mother, thinking that she 'might have fallen in love …with [a] white prince,' to assuming that his 'unknown white father had raped his (African American)

[58] James C. Scott, 'Everyday Forms of Resistance,' *Copenhagen Papers*, 4 (1989), 33-62 (p. 33).
[59]Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, p. 134.
[60]Ibid., p. 32.

mother' (65; 130). Sherman's idea about having a white father and an African American mother aligns with other characters' assumptions about his birth. Verily assumes that he has 'a white pappy', while Malone first speculates that Judge Clane is his father and then tries to think of the Judge's son, Johnny Clane, 'having a sexual relation with a colored girl,' prompted by the Judge's mysterious claim that Sherman has affected 'Not only my very life but my life's blood my own' (99). Nikki Khanna applies a social psychological approach to study the making and shaping of multidimensional racial identities in America, and underlines people's attitudes towards interracial sex in the Jim Crow era,

> The history of frequent rape of black women by their white masters under the repressiveness of southern slavery was often overlooked and ignored by white southerners, yet interracial transgressions during the Jim Crow era became increasingly taboo because of the perceived 'stain' on white racial purity. [61]

In this context, compared with those white men who raped Black women but received no punishment, white women who had children by African American men were regarded as disgraces to the white race. McCullers does not depict Sherman's birth as a consequence of the 'rape of black women by their white masters' but as the child of an African American man and a white woman — a symbol of a more unacceptable 'stain' on white racial purity. Racial taboo concerning interracial relationships between white women and African American men, even if it was out of true love, as in the case of Sherman's parents, engenders hate crimes in the Jim Crow South. As Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson, and Ronald E. Hall note, African American men 'were murdered for defiling "the sanctity of white womanhood," and even "risked a spontaneous lynching" for looking at a White female.[62] In *Clock Without Hands*, Sherman Pew's father Sherman Jones is sentenced to death when wrongly accused of raping Mrs. Little and

[61] Nikki Khanna, Biracial in America: Forming and Performing Racial Identity (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 35.
[62] Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson, and Ronald E. Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color among African Americans* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,1992), p. 23.

intentionally killing Mr. Little. Linking the secret of Sherman's parentage with the taboo against interracial love, McCullers reveals how characters' experiences are shaped by societal and cultural norms.

The trope of mysterious parentage surrounding mixed-race children often serves as a narrative device to examine themes of identity, belonging, and interracial relations. Pivoting around Sherman's search for the truth of his birth, McCullers draws attention to biracial individuals' identity as misfits and outcasts within both white and black communities. Sherman is sent by Judge Clane to fetch the judge's 'clippings from the newspapers' from the latter's office in the courthouse, where he discovers the truth of his parentage (230). In 'the folder which held the papers from Johnny's brief', Sherman reads about his parents, Sherman Jones, who was accused of killing Mr Little and sentenced to death by the Judge, and Mrs Little, a white married woman, who is 'accused of fucking the Negro' (231). In *To Kill a Mockingbird,* a book published one year earlier than McCullers's *Clock Without Hands,* Harper Lee also shows her concern with the plight of biracial individuals in the South. Jem Finch explains to his brother, Scout, about the social rejection of Mr Dolphus Raymond's mixed-race children: 'They don't belong anywhere. Colored folks won't have 'em because they're half white; white folks won't have 'em 'cause they're colored, so they're just in between, don't belong anywhere.'[63] The marginalised state of the mixed-race children described in Lee's novel is also reflected in Sherman's identity confusion in *Clock Without Hands*. Sherman is proud of his white blood and blue eyes and tries to separate himself from Verily and others leading her to accuse him of acting 'so high and mighty' and tell him, 'You just had a white pappy who passed on them blue eyes to you, and that's nothin to put on airs about. You nigger like the rest of us.' (180). According to the racist logic of the Jim Crow South, as set out in the 1911 General Assembly passage of Act 320, known as the one drop rule,

[63] Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1960), p.177.

'one drop of black blood made a person black.'[64] This rule drew a colour line and defined the racial identity of mixed-race people. Reinforcing the one drop rule, as well as insisting on Sherman's place within the African American community, Verily's remarks and the revelation of his parentage lead to a psychological shift. Sherman moves from rejecting his connection with the black community to gradually realising that he does not belong to the world of whites.

Furthermore, the racial relationship between Sherman and the Judge also reveals Sherman's racial identity. Through Judge Clane's remarks, McCullers indicates that Sherman is important to Judge Clane not because he is included as a member in the white community but because the Judge needs an assistant or a potential ally in his plan for 'the restoration of the South' (126). Responding to Malone's puzzle about his favouritism toward Sherman, the Judge answers, '[a]lthough he's an adolescent like my grandson, we have a quite different relationship' (101). In terms of the necessity of building this 'different relationship', Clane quotes a line from Shakespeare: 'out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.'[65] In *Henry IV,* Hotspur, after reading Worcester's letter about the danger of a hasty attack against the King, argues that if they take the risk, they might win and be safe. In *Clock Without Hands,* realising that '[t]he wind of revolution is rising to destroy the very foundations on which the South was built', the Judge, like Hotspur, plans to 'pluck [the] flower'— to take a risk to restore the old South system. Arguably, the Judge, who 'feel[s] alone' due to the death of his wife, the suicide of his son, and the lack of support from his grandson, puts his hope in developing Sherman into his ally. According to Russell, Wilson, and Hall, 'Southern whites often perceived them (mixed-race people) as constituting a "buffer class" between whites and blacks, which created a three-tiered system of race in some parts of the South'.[66] In this light, Judge Clane's 'kindness' can be

[64] Scott L. Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* (New York, 2000), p. 356.
[65] *The Oxford Shakespeare: Henry IV*, Part 1, ed. by David M. Bevington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), I. 2. 3. p.172.
[66] Russell, Wilson, and Hall, p.29.

associated with his intention to develop Sherman into a member of the 'buffer class' or a potential ally of racists (192). Moreover, in describing Sherman's hesitancy towards Judge Clane's request to write letters to some congressmen and senators about 'the Confederate money and the general retribution of the South,' McCullers displays his dilemma between becoming the Judge's ally and taking the side of the Blacks (187). Even if the old Judge has repeated several times: 'I have treated you as a son,' Sherman is 'suspicious of [the Judge's] kindness' and is confused about his connection with the white community; about his own blue eyes and 'the blue-eyed South' (192). Sherman is 'in a quandary,' struggling between the benefit of his 'soft, clean, bossy job' offered by Judge Clane and the harm of the latter's racist ideology to the African American race (187). When the Judge justifies and romanticises slavery by saying, 'of course I believe in slavery. Civilization is founded on slavery. […] If not actual slavery at least a state of happy peonage,' Sherman sees through Clane's racist nature and explicitly chooses his side by claiming that he 'won't be a party to turning the clock back almost a century' (188). Sherman's refusal to assist Judge Clane in his plan for 'the restoration of the South' manifests his decision to take the side of African American people. This also foreshadows his resistance against racism in the latter part of the novel.

Sherman's internal identification as an African American is evidenced by his conversation with the Judge's grandson, Jester, in which he discusses keeping a 'black book' to 'register every single vibration that happens to those of [his] race' (91). McCullers employs the vibrations of piano keys to symbolise emotional resonance and the ongoing impact of racist oppression as evidenced when Sherman states, "I vibrate with every injustice that is done to my race' (91). Later in the novel McCullers states that 'Sherman knew of every lynching, every violence that had happened in his time and before his time, and he felt every abuse in his own body and therefore lived in his stasis of tension and fear' (92; 179). This quote underlines Sherman's historical consciousness and awareness of the racial discrimination that existed during and before

his lifetime. Further, McCullers shows how Sherman 'envelop[s] all disasters' by assuming that 'any evil he read or heard about could just as well have happened to himself' (179). Sherman imagines himself as one of a group of African Americans reported in the newspaper who were caught by cops for tearing off the Aunt Jemima sign and 'all four of the gang was sent to jail, sentenced to two years on the road for destroying public property' (64). Aunt Jemima, as Kimberly Wallace-Sanders clarifies, is not only a successful trademark but an embodiment for 'a post-Reconstruction fantasy of idealised domesticity, inspired by "happy slave" hospitality, and revealed a deep need to redeem the antebellum South.' [67] Culturally, tearing down the Aunt Jemima sign can be seen as an everyday act of protest against racial stereotypes and a push for racial equality and justice.

Examining the awakening of historical and cultural consciousness reflected in various practices of resistance helps to reveal the complexities of racial identity and various ways in navigating and resisting systemic oppression. In *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1996), Robin D. G. Kelley, a prestigious American historian, applies Scott's idea and explores 'the political significance of everyday forms of resistance at work and in public space, the pleasures and politics of culture, and community institutions that are usually not defined as "working-class" organizations'. [68] Kelley's groundbreaking analysis of various forms of hidden resistance during the pre-Civil Rights era demonstrates his understanding of the intersections of race, class, and gender, which is highly relevant to the discussion of African Americans' quest for racial identity and fight for civil rights in this thesis. By depicting Sherman's imagined participation in African Americans' acts of sabotage, McCullers points out the prevalence of everyday resistance in the Jim Crow South and indicates the awakening of race

[67] Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press,1962), p. 61.
[68] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race rebels: culture, politics, and the Black working class* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 4.

consciousness among African Americans. However, according to Scott, everyday resistance 'by not openly contesting the dominant norms of law, custom, politeness, deference, loyalty and so on leaves the dominant in command of the public stage.' [69] In other words, people may oppose in their daily lives, but this resistance doesn't always threaten the power structure of the dominant group or have an impact on the larger social order. Therefore, emphasizing severe and unjust punishment experienced by the aforementioned 'four of the gang', McCullers further demonstrates white racists' repressive power against various forms of anti-racist practices.

With the development of his racial and historical consciousness, Sherman's form of rebellion changes from everyday resistance to defiant acts of challenging segregation laws. Sherman expresses his strong desire to act by repeating 'do something, do something, do something' after discovering the truth about his parents, and again after reading the news about the bomb attack by white racists against their African American neighbours (166-67). McCullers describes Sherman's 'separate acts' to transgress the colour line:

> First he drank water at the white fountain in the courthouse square. No one seemed to notice. He went to the white men's room at the bus station. But he went so hurriedly and furtively that again no one noticed. He sat on a back pew at the Baptist Church. Again, no one noticed except at the end of the service, and an usher directed him to a coloured church. He sat down in Whelan's drugstore (166-68).

Sherman's open acts against segregation rules in public demonstrate his growing consciousness of racial equality, which is closer to tactics that organised civil rights activism would undertake collectively. In the 1950s, popular collective strategies against racism were boycotts, freedom rides, voter registration drives, sit-ins, and marches, based on principles of nonviolence and passive resistance. However, in *Clock Without Hands*, instead of writing about Sherman's open participation in organised actions against white supremacy and Jim Crow laws, McCullers mainly depicts Sherman's hidden resistance. As Scott puts it, activities of everyday resistance 'require

[69]James C. Scott, 'Everyday Forms of Resistance', p. 57.

little or no coordination or planning' and 'typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority.'[70] In this way, the oppressed people can 'both survive and undermine repressive domination; especially in contexts where rebellion is too risky.'[71] Before moving into the white district, Sherman's transgressive acts are politically invisible and do not attract attention from the white racists. To be or not to be noticed is key to Sherman's ultimate act of transgression. McCullers delineates Sherman's inner conflict between '[w]anting to go out of line and afraid, wanting to be noticed and afraid to be noticed' (167). When taking acts of transgression alone, he is terrified with 'his hands … sweaty, his heart lurching,' and is '[h]arassed and suffering' since '[n]o one seem[s] to notice' his defiant acts, which drives him to do something more 'to be noticed' (167). Nevertheless, further actions taken by Sherman to attract attention, such as deliberately hanging and killing Jester Clane's dog with 'a clothesline' and 'substituting water instead of insulin' when giving the Judge his injection, are 'strange and zany' but dangerous (167). As Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson claim, 'everyday resistance … is done routinely, but … is not politically articulated or formally organised (yet or in that situation). It is a form of activity that often avoids being detected as resistance'. [72] Sherman's open transgressive behaviours in the later part of the book are still dispersed individual resistance, which also lacks organisation and is too weak and invisible to counter the deep-rooted and organised institutional racism. Therefore, depicting Sherman's evolving forms of defiance against oppression, McCullers responds to the emergent Civil Rights movement.

[70]Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, XVI.
[71]Ibid., XVI.
[72] Vinthagen and Johansson, p.10.

White liberals and racism: 'I question the justice of white supremacy'[73]

Not long after the publication of her first novel, McCullers highlighted the conscience of the South in a long talk with Ralph McGill, an anti-segregationist editor of *The Atlanta Constitution*. In this talk, besides elucidating what she saw as 'the sense of loneliness and solitude' in Americans in their quest for identities, McCullers noted that 'the search of us Southerners is more anguished. There is a special guilt in us, a seeking for something had — and lost. It is a consciousness of guilt not fully knowable, or communicable'.[74] In American history, the South was the only region that had written racial discrimination into state laws and constitutions, particularly through Jim Crow laws. Therefore, McCullers attributed Southerners' spiritual isolation to the injustices in the political and social system, stressing that 'Southerners are the more lonely and spiritually estranged, … because we have lived so long in an artificial social system that we insisted was natural and right and just — when all along we knew it wasn't'.[75] As noted elsewhere, Wright, in his review of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, praised McCullers her 'astonishing humanity' for being able to 'rise above the pressures of her environment and embrace white and Black humanity in one sweep of apprehension and tenderness.'[76] It was McCullers's sense of humanity and her 'consciousness of guilt' as a Southerner that drove her to speak for vulnerable nonwhite people, to write about race relations, and to reveal government-sponsored racial discrimination and segregation in the South. In early 1948, she wrote a letter to the *Columbus Ledger*, a local newspaper in her hometown Columbus, Georgia, declaring her position against segregation in Columbus's new public library, which had written to ask for a donation of her manuscripts to the library:

> Always it has been an intolerable shame to me to know that Negroes are not accorded the same intellectual privileges as white citizens. … I would like to go on record and like to say

[73] McCullers, *Clock Without Hands*, p.34.
[74] Ralph McGill, *The South and the Southerner* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1992), p.271.
First publication: Ralph McGill, *The South and the Southerner* (Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown and Company, 1963).
[75] Ibid., p.271.
[76] Wright, 'p. 195.

> that we owe to these (the molders of the conscience of our civilization) the freedom of all citizens regardless of race, to benefit by their wisdom, which is our greatest inheritance. [77]

Moreover, in October of the same year, McCullers, along with Sinclair Lewis and other twenty-five leading American writers, signed a declaration to support Harry S. Truman in the presidential election, in which they declared, 'Harry Truman's stand in favor of civil rights, his constant advocacy of aid to Europe, his effective resistance to totalitarianism abroad and at home…. There are service to democracy that entitle him to the support of every liberal.'[78] The abovementioned examples demonstrate McCullers's active participation in the social and political fight for civil rights. However, her significant contribution to confronting race issues in the South went beyond her explicit political and racial views. She resonated with marginalised nonwhites by depicting their struggles during the Jim Crow era in her novels.

Literary historian Thomas F. Haddox, in his 2004 essay 'Elizabeth Spencer, the White Civil Rights Novel, and the Postsouthern', included McCullers's *Clock Without Hands* in his list of 'white civil rights novels,' together with Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit* (1944), William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), Elizabeth Spencer's *Voice at the Back Door* (1956), Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and Jesse Hill Ford's *Liberation of Lord Byron Jones* (1965). According to Haddox, these novels

> all are set in small southern towns and their environs, all foreground the mores and politics of race relations, and all present these relations not as a metaphysical given (as earlier southern novels often did) but as a problem that requires attention.[79]

Haddox's comment underscores that unlike earlier Southern novels that might have taken racial relations as given and unchangeable, these civil rights novels by white authors treat race issues

[77] Carson McCullers, 'The People's Voice', *Columbus Ledger*, March 8, 1948, page not found.
[78] The Democratic National Committee, '27 Leading Writers Are out for Truman' *New York Times,* October 27, 1948, p.20.
[79] Thomas F. Haddox, 'Elizabeth Spencer, the White Civil Rights Novel, and the Postsouthern', *Modern Language Quarterly* 65 (2004), 561-81(561).

as important problems that need to be actively addressed. His argument best reflects McCullers's purpose of writing *The Clock Without Hands* — Not only to draw attention to the deep-rooted institutional racism and complex racial dynamics but to recount how different groups tackle with race problem within the Jim Crow South. In addition to depicting tense race relations between the white racists and the oppressed nonwhites, 'white civil rights novels' highlight the conflicting power between white supremacists and white liberals, especially how white liberals navigate their roles and responsibilities in a society experiencing a significant transition. For instance, in Jesse Hill Ford's *Liberation of Lord Byron Jones*, a white male city attorney, Oman Hedgepath, uses his legal skills to help a white police officer, Willie Joe Worth, cover up his crime of murdering L. B. Jones, a wealthy African American funeral director. In contrast, many other white lawyer characters in civil rights novels seek justice for African American characters who are falsely accused of a crime. Gavin Stevens, an eminent local lawyer in *Intruder in the Dust*, defends and seeks justice for Lucas Beauchamp, a black farmer, accused of murdering Vinson Gowrie, a white man. Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* represents Tom Robinson, a black field worker, in his trial for the alleged rape of Mayella Ewell, a white woman. Likewise, Johnny Clane, son of Judge Clane, in *Clock Without Hands* is also depicted as a lawyer of conscience, who tries to defend Sherman Jones, a black sharecropper, accused of killing a white man, Ossie Little, in self-defense. In novels addressing the race issue during the Jim Crow era, including the above-mentioned ones, most white lawyer figures embody the liberal power to uphold justice and confront institutionalised discrimination. They are always depicted as ideals of justice and defenders of equal rights of underprivileged people. In another aspect, these fictional white lawyers also present their complex moral and ethical dilemmas in challenging their own race and white supremacy. McCullers, as one of the white liberal writers in the mid-twentieth century, displays her white conscience or 'consciousness of guilt' as a Southerner. The following paragraphs will analyse her portrayal of Johnny Clane, a representative of young southern liberal

lawyers, and his successor, Jester Clane, a conscientious white teenager, to explore her understanding of 'politics of race relations' and her stance on supporting civil rights.

Johnny, as a background character, exists in the Judge's memories and conversations with Malone and Jester. McCullers elucidates the social and political background for the formation of Johnny's liberal ideology through Judge Clane's speeches:

> Johnny's adolescence was passed when communism was blaring wide and handsome in the grandstand. High muckety-mucks squatting in the very White House itself; the time of TVA, FHA, and FDR, all those muckety-muck letters. And one thing leading to anoter, a Negress singing at the Lincoln Memorial …! (150)

The Judge's words first clarify the widespread presence of CPUSA in the early 1930s. Then he uses 'High muckety-mucks' to refer to a group of highly educated advisers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, his Brain Trust, who helped Roosevelt shape the policies of the First and Second New Deal. The Judge ridicules them as impractical idealists and is ideologically opposed to their modernising, interventionist politics, as well as their gestures toward racial justice. As John American historian Milton Cooper explains, Roosevelt drew from the 'radical rethinking of liberalism' of his cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, who 'in 1918, a year before he died, … outlined a program of public works, hydroelectric power development, agricultural aid, pensions, and social insurance.'[80] The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA, 1933) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA, 1934) mentioned by the Judge are two examples of Roosevelt's New Deal programme during the Great Depression, which embody 'New Deal liberalism' and the role of the federal government in regulating American economic and political life. In addition, African Americans were also significantly impacted by the New Deal programmes. Economically, they received a certain aid from the federal help that came with Roosevelt's Relief, Reform, and Recovery programmes, though they were not treated equally with the whites in the New Deal programmes.

[80] John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1983), p. 259.

Politically, the Roosevelt government, as Du Bois observes, 'gave the American Negro a kind of recognition in political life which the Negro had never before received.'[81] For example, the 'Negress singing at the Lincoln Memorial' mentioned by Judge Clane refers to Marian Anderson, an imaginary mother for Sherman in the novel and also an eminent African American singer in American history. On April 9, 1939, Marian Anderson, with the help of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, held an open-air concert on the Lincoln Memorial steps in the capital, which made a marginalised voice heard at the shrine of America's Great Emancipator and became an important prelude to the Civil Rights Movement. Though Johnny does not physically appear in the novel and has no direct interactions with the main characters, his association with broad political reforms in the Judge's recollections arouses attention to the ideas and actions of white liberal lawyers in the Jim Crow South.

As discussed earlier, Johnny is depicted as a character in the background, while the Judge is a protagonist with a dominant voice in the novel. Applying the technique of free indirect speech, McCullers grants access to the Judge's innermost views on Johnny's lack of tactics in taking cases:

> To what avail had Johnny graduated magna cum laude at the University if he did not have a grain of common sense? To what avail had been Johnny's legal knowledge and education when he stepped on the bunions, corns, and calluses of every one of that jury of twelve good men and true? (208)

Given his status as a 'seasoned lawyer and former congressman', the Judge's critique of Johnny's decision to represent Sherman Jones reflects the pervasive racial inequalities within mid-twentieth-century U.S. criminal justice system. First, according to the Judge's legal principles, Johnny should not have represented Sherman Jones because it is against 'common sense' or unwise for a new lawyer to 'eschew court charity cases' (142). Then, the Judge emphasises that

[81] William E. Leuchtenburg, *The White House Looks South: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), p. 62.

the case of Sherman Jones, in which an African American kills a white man, is doomed to be 'a lost cause from the beginning' despite Johnny's rich legal knowledge (142). In a sense, Johnny's experience, mainly narrated by the Judge from the Judge's point of view, can be seen as an analogy of the unbalanced power between anti-racists and racists in the 1930s. Moreover, Johnny Clane's suicide may embody his despair with the racist legal system and the weak liberal power during the 1930s, but it, much like Singer's suicide, can be interpreted as a silent resistance.

Both beginning their careers as lawyers, the Judge and Johnny present distinct professional ethics and political ideologies: Judge Clane prioritises self-interest and political interest, whereas Johnny Clane is guided by moral conscience and legal justice. Taking '[f]inancial returns or political prestige' as the prime consideration and avoiding court charity cases, the Judge is self-centred and lacks conscience from the day he becomes a lawyer (145). When the Judge teaches Johnny not to take 'a crooked case' or 'unsavory cases,' suggesting taking 'lucrative cases combine with a just cause,' like defending the Milan Power Company against TVA, he not only aims at gaining money but demonstrates his political stance of advocating states' rights over federal intervention. Compared with Judge Clane's overt harangue about his lawyering tactics, Johnny shows his different position by declaring, 'I'm not that kind of lawyer' (146). McCullers notes that during his time as a student at the University of Georgia, Johnny exhibited 'admiration of Bolshevism, Samuel Liebowitz, and radicalism in general' (144). Samuel Liebowitz was best known as a Defense Attorney of the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s. These details suggest Johnny's appreciation for revolutionary socialist ideology (Bolshevism), the progressive legal advocacy of Liebowitz, and the belief in challenging societal norms and reforming injustice systems (radicalism). In particular, Johnny's respect for Samuel Liebowitz, a representative of liberal lawyers, serves to underscore the contrasting perspectives on professional responsibility between Johnny and the Judge.

Judge Clane's conduct and remarks indicate his inconsistency and hypocrisy regarding

professional ethics. Johnny questions the Judge's responsibility as a 'mature lawyer and ex-congressman' by saying, 'Often this past year I have wondered how responsible you are' (204). Responding to Johnny's comments, the Judge claims violently, 'I am the most responsible citizen in Milan, in Georgia, in all the South' (204). In the early part of the novel, the Judge also claims his role as a leading citizen and his identity as a 'duty-bound' 'Southern patriot' (31). His so-called responsibility is to redeem Confederacy currency and defend white supremacy, which, in essence, is a pursuit of the interest of himself and that of the white race. In the opening part of Chapter Ten, the Judge exhibits a pang of conscience caused by his deep regret over a mistake: He once 'sentenced a twenty-year- old Nigra to death for rape,' only to later discover the young man's innocence (197). However, his transient sense of guilt is soon replaced by the trick of passing the responsibility to the jury. Knowing that 'as a judge, he had almost unlimited power ... even the power of life and death,' the Judge, at this moment, makes a canny excuse to avoid professional responsibility when claiming 'he, himself, was only an instrument of the law' and 'his decision just followed the law and the customs of the state' (197). After describing the above case, in which Judge evades the responsibility for his wrong decision in the court, McCullers introduces the case of Sherman Jones. In this instance, the Judge, once again succumbing to racist customs and cultural norms, sentences Jones to death based on the all-white jury's guilty verdict decision. Just as the Judge asserts earlier, '[s]elf-defense or no, the Nigra [who had murdered a white man] was doomed to die' (142). Through this former Congressman overt declaration of the double standards of American justice, McCullers highlights the systemic racism that undermine fairness in the American legal system.

The deaths of Sherman Jones and another innocent twenty-year-old African American caused by the Judge's unfair trial in *Clock Without Hands* raise questions about people's right to life and the abuse of power by a racist court. In Chapter Nine of *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, Atticus Finch, a conscientious white lawyer, advises his children, 'remember it's a sin to kill a

mockingbird.' The innocent mockingbird symbol brings out the theme of denouncing racial discrimination and persecution against African Americans in the mid-twentieth century. However, Miss Maudie, a respectable citizen in Maycomb with a passion for justice, explains further to the children, 'Mockingbirds … don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it is a sin to kill a mockingbird.'[82] Miss Maudie's words reveals the paternalistic attitude which conveys a logic that if African American defendants have to be wholly innocent or model citizens in order to receive legal support or sympathy. In other words, if African American defendants don't serve the white wholeheartedly ('sing their hearts out for us') or go out of line ('eat up people's gardens or nest in corncribs'), they should be punished. If viewed from Miss Maudie's perspective, both Sherman Jones, who killed Mr Little by mistake, and Sherman Pew, who moves to the white district, are not wholly innocent for going out of line defined by white racists. This also explains why for Judge Clane, a defender of white supremacy, does not view depriving them of their right to life as a 'sin'.

Notably, in sharp contrast to unethical judges like Fox Clane, in American history between the 1930s and the 1950s, there appeared a handful of ethical judges, who, with a passion for justice, courageously used their judicial power to defend the civil rights of African Americans. For instance, Julius Waties Waring, District Judge for the Eastern District of South Carolina between 1942 and 1952, first declared that 'Segregation is per se inequality' in a school segregation case — Briggs v. Elliott, one of five cases combined into the landmark public school desegregation case, Brown v. Board of Education (1954).[83] McCullers does not create any Waring-like conscientious judges in her book, but she announces, in the early pages of *Clock Without Hands,* through the mouth of the Judge, 'the South is in the vortex of a revolution' (13). To echo the depiction of the Judge's sensitivity to the power of anti-racists, McCullers ends the

[82] Lee, p. 94.
[83] Briggs v. Elliott, [1952] 342 U.S. 350

book with the Judge's desperate reaction to the news of the legal victory of Brown v. Board of Education. Delivering a chaotic address in the room of a radio station by reciting Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address instead of a 'historic speech' on anti-integration, the Judge's voice is eventually cut off, which symbolises the weakened power of the racists.

Sherman Jones's case illustrates the racism embedded in the American jury system. As Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of America, maintained, 'I consider trial by jury as the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution.'[84] In this sense, the jury system is an important part of American democracy. However, during the Jim Crow era, the systemic racial discrimination in the jury selection system not only violated the principles of the American Constitution but undermined the integrity of legal justice. As the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit law organisation in Alabama, reports: 'The 1875 Civil Rights Act outlawed race-based discrimination in jury service, but 135 years later [in 2010] illegal exclusion of racial minorities persists'.[85] This report also exposes the harm of racist juries to the legal justice: 'The underrepresentation and exclusion of people of color from juries has seriously undermined the credibility and reliability of the criminal justice system …'[86] During the Great Depression, African Americans were excluded from the pool of potential jurors in Southern jurisdictions including Peach County, Georgia, where only white individuals were permitted to participate in the jury selection process. In the novel, Johnny questions the racism evident in the jury selection in Jones's case by arguing, 'the population of Peach County was almost equally balanced between the Nigra and white races,' however, 'there was no Nigra represented on the jury' (215). Johnny's words underscore African American people's marginalised status within the legal system in the Jim Crow South.

[84] *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 15*, ed. by Julian P. Boyd, 27 November 1789, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1958, pp. 266–70, p. 269.
[85] Equal Justice Initiative, 'Illegal Racial Discrimination in Jury Selection: A Continuing Legacy' (Montgomery, Alabama: Equal Justice Initiative, 2010), p. 4.
[86] Ibid., p. 4.

Johnny's effort to defend Jones and his frustration at failing to persuade the white-only jury to deliver justice reflect the moral conscience of white liberals and the formidable challenges they faced in combating racism in 1950s America. Notably, the white-only jury in Jim Crow South were mainly composed of poor whites who were selected by racist judges as jurors to stand on the front lines to defend white supremacy. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee highlights the low educational and economic level of the jurors: 'The jury sat to the left, under long windows. Sunburned, lanky, they seemed to be all farmers, but this was natural: townfolk rarely sat on juries, they were either struck or excused.'[87] Similarly, in *Clock Without Hands*, the Judge warns Johnny about the educational level of the jurors, who are mainly 'Georgia crackers, millhands, and tenant farmers,' '[i]lliterate, one and all' (207; 212). In the court, the white-only jury unjustly declares Jones's guilty, despite Johnny's masterful defense, which includes compelling gestures like 'requesting the jurors to rise and pledge allegiance to the American flag' and 'lift[ing] a sordid, cut-and-dried murder case to the level of constitutional law' and despite Johnny's eloquence in quoting 'the preamble and the amendments freeing the slaves and giving them citizenship and equal rights' (211). The description of this ironic and paradoxical courtroom scene, exhibiting the result of Johnny's idealistic thoughts and actions, symbolises the obstacles experienced by white liberals during their fight for African American civil rights.

In the novel, Johnny denounces the double standards of American democracy by uttering the fact that 'the case involves a white man and a Negro man and the inequality that lies between the handling of such a situation' (214). In 1965, James Baldwin, an African American author and civil rights activist, participated in a Cambridge Union debate with William F. Buckley, an American conservative author. Baldwin articulates that 'It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, 6 or 7 to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody

[87] Lee, p. 289.

else, has not pledged allegiance to you.'[88] Baldwin described a feeling of betrayal among African Americans, who, as legal American citizens, had declared loyalty to the country but found themselves excluded from constitutional equality. According to the Judge's recollection, after 'pledg[ing] allegiance to the American flag', the jury makes unjust decision based on a rape rumour spread by Rice Little and suspicion on Mrs Little's testimony — 'Mrs. Little was so quick to speak up for her husband's killer, it just looked downright strange' (154). Historically, white racists used rape as a tool to defend race purity, as exemplified by the case of Nine Scottsboro Boys mentioned elsewhere. Being accused of killing a white man and suspected of raping a white woman, Sherman Jones is not likely to gain trust or sympathy from the white jurors. Through this case, McCullers conveys her understanding of the double-standard American democracy, highlighting that the educational and economic background of the jurors does not solely cause the guilty verdict against innocent Jones. Instead, the existence of the racist jury system significantly results in the unfair decision in his case.

Besides describing Johnny's white liberal conscience, McCullers also presents his ambiguous lawyerly virtue in his purpose of taking Jones's case. Just as there is debate over whether Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* should be viewed as an ethical model for lawyers, so too does the question of whether Johnny Clane serves as a moral compass for Jester Clane, who dreams of becoming a lawyer, draw critical attention. Monroe Freedman, an American legal scholar, questions the notion that Atticus Finch is a model for lawyers. As he argues,

> I would have more respect for Atticus Finch if he had never been compelled by the court to represent Robinson, but if, instead, he had undertaken voluntarily to establish the right of the black citizens of Macomb [sic] to sit freely in their county courthouse [and not segregated in the balcony]. That Atticus Finch would, indeed, have been a model for young lawyers to emulate.[89]

[88] Rima, Transcript: James Baldwin Debates William F. Buckley(1965)[online blog] <https://www.rimaregas.com/2015/06/07/transcript-james-baldwin-debates-william-f-buckley-1965-blog42/ >

[89] Monroe Freedman, 'Atticus Finch, Esq., RIP', *Legal Times*, Feb. 24, 1992, p.21, cited in Christopher Metress, 'The Rise and Fall of Atticus Finch' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), p. 143.

Freedman's commentary illuminates that Atticus Finch, as a member of state legislators, can actively do more to change racist laws and improve the civil rights of African Americans, instead of passively taking an allocated charity case. Freedman views Atticus as a complicit of racism or a lawyer with an ambiguous view of race. Likewise, in *Clock Without Hands*, Johnny is not portrayed as a prominent civil rights legal icon. Except for making a recall of Johnny's involvement in the case of Jones, McCullers provides no information about Johnny's other acts of fighting against racism, such as introducing a bill to stop segregation in public places or taking actions to reduce racial discrimination in jury selection. As historian Melissa Milewski states in her article, 'white lawyers might still take on black clients because of personal connections with the black client, out of a sense of paternalism, out of a feeling of professionalism, or, in a few cases, because of their political preferences'.[90] Personal connections with African American clients frequently fueled white liberal lawyers' passion and commitment to fight for civil rights. McCullers does not clarify Johnny's purpose in taking the case of Jones in the novel but brings in a subplot about Johnny's passion for Mrs Little, which creates an impression that he represents Jones in the court for Mrs Little's sake. This plot reflects McCullers's intention to show how interracial connections foster understanding between racial groups and the potentiality for white liberals and marginalised African Americans to ally to combat racism.

Depicted as a successor of Johnny Clane, Jester Clane represents the new generation of white liberals. Jester's growing racial consciousness and liberal conscience are vividly demonstrated in his interactions with African American characters in the novel. Jester is indirectly involved in the death of Grown Boy, Verily's nephew, who is mistaken as a robber and is killed by the police by accident. He exhibits a sense of guilt over the death of Grown Boy by saying, 'It was all my fault. If I hadn't been chasing him and those people piling in on top of us' (115). At the same time, he

[90] Melissa Milewski, 'Rethinking the Role of the Courts in the Lives of Black Southerners', *14* (2017), *The American Historian,* 28-36 (32).

blames the cop's violent treatment to Grown Boy by questioning, 'why did you hit him so hard?'(115). Jester's guilt and confusion demonstrate his conscience and attitude toward life, reflecting his compassion and profound concern for human life. As noted in the first section of this chapter, matters of life and death are both personal and political issues. In Grown Boy's case, the life of African Americans is small and powerless when faced with the disciplinary power of the white police. Moreover, Jester learns about injustices upon African Americans in his conversations with Sherman, who, as discussed earlier, keeps a 'black book', registering lynching, violence, racial stereotypes, disenfranchisement, and segregation in housing and education. Jester, like his father, is 'the son of a rich man, fortune's darling, blessed in all ways' (19). However, from the beginning of the novel, McCullers implies that Jester is a potential rebel against white racists. In Malone's eyes,

> It was Jester who was a 'stranger' — he had never been like a Milan boy. He was arrogant and at the same time overpolite. There was something hidden about the boy and his softness, his brightness seemed somehow dangerous — it was as though he resembled a silk-sheathed knife (25).

The 'silk' is a symbol representing the softness and politeness of Jester, while the 'knife' symbolises danger or threat. McCullers uses a simile, comparing Jester to a knife wrapped in silk, to convey how Jester's 'brightness' — his potential to oppose the racists — evokes a feeling of threat to Malone. Throughout the novel, Malone associates three characters with a knife, regarding it as a symbol of death threat: Dr Hayden plays with a 'paper-knife' in the face of Malone; Sherman holds 'a bunch of keys on a silver ring' that resembles 'the paper-knife of Dr. Hayden'; Jester is compared to 'a silk-sheathed knife'. Jester in this book is not only depicted as a rebellious adolescent but as part of a young white elite who question the legitimation of white supremacy. In this sense, Malone's fear of Jester manifests white supremacists' fear of the rising power of white liberals.

The depiction of the conflicts between Jester and Judge Clane symbolise the rising influence

of white liberals and the diminishing power of white racists. The first conflict between Jester and the Judge is described in Chapter Two when the Judge expresses his gladness in being referred to as 'a reactionary' by *The Atlanta Constitution*. At Jester's question about what 'noble standards' 'a reactionary' is defending, the Judge answers that protecting '[t]he noble standards of our way of life, the traditional institutions of the South' is a duty of 'the Southern patriot' (31). He stresses further that 'the whole balance of Southern civilization' is based on segregation (31). In response to the Judge's harangue about the threat of integration, Jester reacts directly and bravely by stating, 'I can't see why colored people and white people shouldn't mix as citizens' (32). Compared with Johnny who responds to the Judge's racist rhetoric with an ironical smile, Jester argues with his grandfather more bluntly and more violently. McCullers applies the word 'fearful' twice in describing the Judge's shock at Jester's overt support for racial integration: 'it is fearful to acknowledge the approach of madness in a beloved. It is so fearful that the old Judge preferred to distrust his own hearing' (32). The Judge's fear of Jester's 'madness' echoes with Malone's sense of threat and both conservative figures in the novel exhibit the fear and paranoia of their era. According to Manfred Berg, a historian, 'the anticommunist hysteria of the early Cold War […] infested all corners of public life in America. Southern racists were among the most ardent anticommunists and tried their best to discredit the civil rights struggle as a Communist conspiracy'.[91] This may explain some nuances in the Judge's attitude towards his son and grandson's liberal ideologies: in the 1930s, the Judge did not 'associate Johnny with danger' for his 'admiration of Bolshevism,' while, about seventeen years later — under a historical context of the Postwar Red Scare, he feels fearful at Jester's 'communist idea' and the notion of racial integration (203; 32). Throughout the novel, McCullers does not state any specific impact of the communist ideal on Jester. Instead, having the Judge attributes 'the approach of madness in a

[91] Manfred Berg, 'Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War,' *The Journal of American History*, 94.1(2007), 75-96 (p. 75).

beloved (Jester)' to the impact of 'unthinkable' and 'preposterous' 'communist ideas', McCullers illustrates the Southern racists' tricks to 'discredit the civil rights struggle as a Communist conspiracy' and mirrors anti-communism tendency in the 1950s (32). In the Preface of his 1950 edited book, *The Liberal Imagination*, Lionel Trilling elucidates,

> In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. […] But the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse do not, with some isolated and some ecclesiastical exceptions, express themselves in ideas but only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas.[92]

Trilling's argument exposes that from New Deal liberalism to Cold War liberalism, modern liberalism pitted against conservatism and reactionism, remained the dominant paradigm in American politics. The Judge tries to warn Jester of the threat of integration and indoctrinates him into white supremacy (31). However, to the old Judge's surprise, Jester replies, 'How about a hulking white girl sharing a desk with a delicate little Negro boy? [...] I can't see why colored people and white people shouldn't mix as citizens. […] For one thing, I question the justice of white supremacy' (34). Jester's response challenges the legitimacy of racial segregation and exhibits his liberal belief in the equality of all citizens, regardless of race.

In addition to depicting Jester's open defiance against the old Judge regarding racial segregation, McCullers further illustrates the differences in their views on the old South racial relations through a discussion about 'a picture over the mantelpiece' in the Clanes' house — 'a Southern scene of a peach orchard and a Negro shack and a cloudy sky' (25). As the main images depicted in this decorative picture in a Southern household, the orchard symbolises the Southern economy based on agriculture, the shack evokes an association with the historical legacy of slavery, and that cloudy sky suggests the racist culture of the old South. The picture can be interpreted as a poignant reflection of the deep-rooted social and economic inequalities prevalent

[92] *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society,* 1st edn, ed. by Lionel Trilling (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), p. xi..

in early twentieth-century America by indicating the social and economic disparities between affluent landowners and African American labourers. Milan, the fictional Southern small town in this novel, is located in Peach County, Georgia, named for the most famous regional crop when it was created in 1924. In *The Georgia Peach*, a book written by historian William Thomas Okie, the fruit is not only stressed as a cultural icon, representing 'southern beauty, hospitality, sweetness, and agrarian roots,' but a slave-tended crop linked to the culture of white supremacy, such as cotton, corn, and tobacco.[93] As Okie argues,

> although those who planted and promoted peaches made constant appeals to the beauty of the fruit and the orchard landscape, and often praised the peach as a thing apart, unbleared with greed, unstained with oppression, the fruit could not really be disentangled from the wretchedness and shame of the southern story'.[94]

The words "greed" and "oppression" best expose systemic inequalities and the exploitative nature of plantation system labor practices and in the old South agricultural industry. The beauty of the peach cannot cover the wretchedness and shame of the southern story. The picture in the Clanes' house can be interpreted as a reflection of the deep-rooted social and economic inequalities prevalent in early twentieth-century America by indicating the social and economic disparities between affluent landowners and African American labourers.

McCullers alludes to the unequal racial relationship between greedy white landowners and the oppressed African American farmers by presenting different views of the Judge and Jester on the pastoral painting scene painted by Jester's great-aunt Sara. For the Judge, the picture reminds him that 'I lost a small fortune with those pretty peach trees' (25). However, Jester imagines a cloud 'between the shack and the trees' in the painting as 'a pink mule' and even asks the Judge to see a 'whole sky of pink mules' (26). According to Christopher E. Koy, mule

[93] William Thomas Okie, *The Georgia Peach: Culture, Agriculture, and Environment in the American South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 227.
[94] Ibid, p. 7.

'was seized as the metaphor for the black man' because 'this beast of burden [was] exploited, laughed at, slighted as "stupid" and "lazy" and "stubborn," etc., and because of the hybrid breeding which brought greater opportunities for profit.'[95] Based on Koy's interpretation of mule images and references in other American literary works, the 'pink mules' imagined by Jester can be associated with African Americans working amongst peach trees with pink flowers. Craig Slaven also discovers McCullers's implication of old South racial relationships in this picture and articulates, 'Like the childhood activity of discerning shapes in amorphous clouds, Jester makes out a mule, and this racially charged image returns the conversation to the topic that the Judge was so relieved to have left behind.'[96] Unlike his grandfather who is nostalgic for his lost fortune and Southern glory at the sight of the picture, Jester sees behind the cloud (a symbol of the racist southern environment) 'a sky of pink mules', which symbolise hard-working African American farmers. Declaring that 'All my life I had seen the picture like Aunt Sara had intended it. And now this summer I can't see what I'm supposed to see in it,' Jester clarifies his growth in independent thinking: 'I used to have ideas exactly like everybody else. And now I have my own ideas' (26). Jester's declaration hints at his awareness of the connection between the old South's glory and the oppression of African Americans, which again manifests his liberal thoughts in contrast to the old Judge's racist ideology.

Jester's recognition of Judge Clane's racial bias in the courtroom unveils the double standards of justice within the Jim Crow courts: 'I still think that as a judge you judge one crime in two different ways — according to whether it is done by a Negro or a white man' (44). In his 1893 speech, 'Convict Lease System', Frederick Douglass, a leader in the abolitionist movement, revealed racial prejudices in courts,

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[95] Christopher E. Koy, 'The Mule as Metaphor in the Fiction of Charles Waddell Chesnutt', *Theory and Practice in English Studies*, 4 (2005) 93-100 (p. 95).

[96] Craig Slaven, 'Jester's Mercurial Nature and the Hermeneutics of Time in McCullers' *Clock Without Hands*,' in *Carson McCullers in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Alison Graham-Bertolini and Casey Kayser 1st edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 251-67.

> To have Negro blood in the veins makes one unworthy of consideration, a social outcast, a leper, even in the church. The second reason our race furnishes so large a share of the convicts is that the judges, juries and other officials of the courts are white men who share these prejudices. They also make the laws. It is wholly in their power to extend clemency to white criminals and mete severe punishment to black criminals for the same or lesser crimes.[97]

The racial injustices noted above by Douglass existed in the late nineteenth century but persisted into subsequent eras. In the statement above, Douglass highlights the dehumanised exclusion and persecution of African Americans and systemic racism supported by racist judges, juries, and other officials. In *Clock Without Hands*, McCullers displays the old Judge's racist rhetoric on justice in his response to Jester's comments on his double standards of judgement in court: 'I realized that justice itself is a chimera, a delusion. Justice is not a flat yardstick, applied in equal measure to an equal situation' (44). Interpreting justice as 'a chimera, a delusion … not a flat yardstick,' the Judge makes excuses for holding a biased standard of justice. He then complains about young whites' lack of 'passion': 'Young people of your generation have no passion. They have cut themselves off from the ideals of their ancestors and are denying the heritage of their blood' (45). The 'passion', according to the Judge, is 'the passion of the posse, the passion of the Southerner who defends his womankind against the black and alien invader'— the enthusiasm to defend racial purity and white supremacy (201). Emphasising that 'Passion is more important than justice,' the Judge overtly declares his racist ideology, which places white supremacy above legal justice. In his eyes, Jester has no passion for passing down the old Southern tradition and does not mind if he sees 'two (a Nigra man and a white girl) laughing together and eating at the same table' (45). Jester, questioning the fairness of the school segregation law and criticising the old Judge's double standards of judgement in courts, displays his stance as a white liberal and an advocator for equality and justice.

Jester and Johnny represent white liberals of different generations who share similarities

97 Library of Congress, 'Convict Lease System' (1893) in *Frederick Douglass Papers, Manscript/Mixed Material.* < https://www.loc.gov/item/mfd.01008/> [accessed 12 November 2021]

in humanitarian concerns and different responses to racism. According to McDowell, 'Jester parallels his father as the pride of the Judge's life and as the source of his greatest anger and disappointment.'[98] Both growing up in a white elite family, Jester and Johnny challenge the white supremacy and actively reach out to help African Americans with whom they have direct or indirect personal connections. In Chapter Ten, the old Judge's recollection of Johnny's speech in the court draws young Jester's interest. Johnny, at the beginning of his defence for Jones, also states the fact of racial prejudice in the court: 'The fact is that the case involves a white man and a Negro man and the inequality that lies between the handling of such a situation' (214). Different from Jester, who is not equipped with knowledge of the law and articulates his understandings based on moral intuition, Johnny, as a professional and conscientious lawyer, points out a key problem with legal justice: 'in cases like this, the Constitution itself is on trial' (214). Johnny's speech not only articulates his personal questions about American democracy but conveys broader societal concerns regarding the equality rights of every American granted by the Constitution. McCullers, besides depicting Johnny's idealistic way of persuading the jury by quoting 'the preamble and the amendments freeing the slaves' and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, emphasises Jester's deep resonance with Johnny's remark (214). As Slaven notes, in his adolescence, '[Jester's] sense of self — his convictions, aspirations, desires — are ambiguous and unformed, always in process.'[99] McCullers depicts Jester's concentration on listening to his grandfather's recitation of the Gettysburg Address: 'Jester listened with tears of glory in his eyes, his foot drawn up and his mouth open' (152). This vivid portrayal of Jester's reaction to learning about the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address, and a speech advocating civil rights resembles an enlightening educational experience on civil rights.

Being exposed to both his father's progressive ideals and his grandfather's racist biases,

[98] McDowell, p. 111.
[99] Slaven, p. 255.

adolescent Jester experiences inner turmoil. As Slaven argues, 'Jester's inner conflicts, more than those of his antecedents, allegorize the historical moment in which his story takes place, when the South, like Jester, was in an adolescent stage of change and confusion'.[100] That is to say, the inner struggles that Jester experiences are not just personal, but also a symbol of the larger historical and societal transformations happening around him, especially in the Jim Crow South. Jester is confused about Johnny's suicide and questions, 'Some people think it's the act of a weakling ... to commit suicide ... and other people think it takes a lot of guts to do it. I still wonder why my father did it' (108). Jester's confusion stems from a contradictory fact that Johnny dares to fight for the civil rights of an African American in a turbulent setting but cannot face the failure of the case. McCullers provides some hints to respond to this puzzle through the Judge's words and psychological activities. On the one hand, the Judge, in words of consolation, attributes Johnny's suicide to 'a fleeting depression' and attributes it to his hopeless affection for Mrs Little (109). On the other hand, he holds resentment against Johnny: 'It was as though his son had cheated him by depriving him of his beloved presence, the sweet and treacherous thief had plundered his heart. […] But suicide seemed a deliberate act of spite which the Judge resented' (202). If Singer's silent suicide demonstrates his spiritual loneliness as an outsider, Johnny's suicide is a way to express his despair in the racist social system and a resistance against social injustice. In front of Jester, the Judge avoids telling the truth that Johnny's 'upset' and 'shock' before killing himself stem from his failure to prevent the execution of Sherman Jones, or as McCullers comments, his failing to 'cope with injustice concerning the deplorable injustice to blacks.'[101] Like Johnny who is unable to save Sherman Jones from being executed in the 1930s, Jester, as McDowell argues, 'facilitates, unwittingly, the death of Grown Boy and fails also to

[100] Ibid., p. 255.
[101] Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, p.493.

prevent the killing of Sherman Pew, although he knows of the plot against him'.[102] Through depicting the failure of both Johnny and Jester in helping innocent African Americans in the novel, McCullers presents the role of white liberals in advocating equal rights and their confusion about the double standards of American democracy before the outbreak of the Civil Rights Movement.

As McCullers notes in 'The Flowering Dream',

> For many years I have been working on a novel called *Clock Without Hands*… […] This novel is in process day by day of being focused. […] In the process of hard work, there must come an illumination, a divine spark that puts the work into focus and balance. [103]

According to the analysis of McCullers's final novel in this chapter, her concept of 'illumination' can be understood as an insight into the interplay between individuals' search for identity and American national identity within the context of the Jim Crow era. Moreover, this illumination also echoes 'the answer' in the epigraph of this chapter, quoted from McCullers's 'Loneliness ... an American Malady'— 'the answer of our own identity and the way by which we can master loneliness and feel that at last we belong.' [104] Meanwhile, the 'divine spark' represents a revelation of the ongoing struggle for equality and equal rights amidst intersecting systems of oppression. This chapter, based on important historical facts and events related to racism in the Jim Crow era, delves into McCullers's exploration of American government's role in separating and categorising American people and her presentation of the changes in American national identity in the 1950s from the prevailing individualism to a wider acceptance of government intervention in regulating human lives illustrates the 'positive influence on life' of the biopower in the unstoppable tide of progress towards integration and equality.

[102] McDowell, p.111-12.
[103] McCullers, 'The Flowering Dream', p. 318.
[104] McCullers, 'Loneliness ... an American Malady',p. 295.

CONCLUSION

Carson McCullers's 'astonishing humanity' and proto-intersectionality, reflected in her work, establish her as a pioneering voice for marginalised groups in American literature. American literature scholar Lisa Logan maintains that while most critics agree that 'Carson McCullers was concerned with human isolation and loneliness, and with the inability to mediate this condition through love', far less agreement exists regarding her intentions 'when she addressed androgyny, homosexuality, sexual awakenings, racial and class oppression, and the complexities of the sociopolitical context in which she wrote.'[1] To explore McCullers's uniqueness in addressing issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality, this thesis, drawing on the theory of intersectionality, provides a comprehensive study of her insight into multiple forms of oppression and marginalisation within the intricate tapestry of American Southern society during the Jim Crow era. In addition to exploring McCullers's proto-intersectionality through an intersectional lens, this study reveals her profound historical, political, gender, and racial consciousness, which further enriches the understanding of the humanitarian themes in her literary oeuvre.

Four chapters of this thesis, focusing on McCullers's four novels in chronological order, reflect different aspects of intersectional identities and power dynamics within complex historical context between the 1930s and the 1950s. Examining characters' connection to both the past and the present is essential for understanding McCullers's historical consciousness. According to Richard Wright, 'Miss McCullers' picture of loneliness, death, accident, insanity, fear, mob violence and terror is perhaps the most desolate that has so far come from the South.'[2] As discussed in my Introduction, McCullers's unbreakable ties with the South inspired her writings, stemming from her keen observations of the lives of people from various sociopolitical

[1] Lisa Logan, 'Introduction', in *Critical essays on Carson McCullers*, ed. by Beverly Lyon Clark and Melvin J. Friedman (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996), p. 2.
[2] Wright, p. 195.

backgrounds. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, McCullers masterfully narrates the experiences of Dr. Copeland and his family, delving into the history of American racism and its enduring impact on African Americans in the 1930s. *The Member of the Wedding* does not directly touch on the race problem but articulates through the mouth of Berenice the wish for racial integration in the pre-Civil Rights era. In her last novel, *Clock Without Hands*, McCullers turns her attention to the race issues again by depicting tense racial relations and mob violence against African Americans in the early 1950s. The exploration of McCullers's direct and indirect treatment of race issues in her novels reveals her historical consciousness — her insight into the persistent systemic racism, as well as the ongoing progress made by the marginalised groups through their resistance against discrimination.

My thesis not only traces the historical contexts of injustices during the Jim Crow era but also probes into the political environment of McCuller's time. Historical facts provide the framework and foundation for understanding political events, while political events often shape and redefine historical narratives. In Chapter Four, I noted that the Great Depression led to significant political reform policies like Roosevelt's New Deal and other social welfare programmes designed to mitigate economic distress and foster social stability. Private Williams in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* is an example of thousands of unemployed young men recruited to participate in 'make-work' programmes in the army. Moreover, the historical fact of deep-rooted racial discrimination in America kindles marginalised people's fight for civil rights. Through describing the characters' different responses to the Brown v. Board of Education case, McCullers interweaves the fiction with a real-life event to revisit this pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement. Apart from highlighting African American characters' experiences of racism, McCullers also draws attention to subtle forms of racism against other nonwhite groups, such as Anacleto, the Langdon family's Filipino houseboy in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and

Dr Hayden, a Jewish doctor in *Clock Without Hands*. These nuanced examinations of racial dynamics in McCullers's novels, intertwined with my analysis of issues of class, gender, and sexuality in four chapters, not only reveal McCullers's attentiveness to historical realities but demonstrate her political commitment to exposing and challenging the social injustices.

The examination of McCullers's portrayal of diverse, disadvantaged, and non-normative characters enhances the understanding of her sensitivity to the complexities of identity, particularly her awareness of gender fluidity and sexual diversity. Compared with her overt exhibition of left-wing views on class and race in her first book, McCullers, as noted in the second chapter, addresses gender and sexuality with a more implicit touch in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, reflecting complex historical, political, and cultural contexts. I interpret John Singer as a representative of voiceless marginalised people in the 1930s. However, as elucidated in Chapter Two, McCullers's explicit portrayal of queer individuals first occurs in the depiction of Captain Penderton's same-sex passion in her second novel. I attribute the Captain's grappling with inner desires to the confines of societal norms and expectations. In the next chapter, my investigation of Lily Mae's resurrection, linking McCullers's depiction of other Lily Mae-like queer characters across her four novels, from Singer, Biff, and Captain Penderton to Anacleto, Honey Brown, Cousin Lymon, and Jester, further illuminates her awareness of the intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality. This thorough examination of McCullers's queer characters with multiple identities in this thesis contributes to the understanding of McCullers's intersectional perspective and her profound empathy and emotional resonance with her characters.

The inferior status of marginalised people defines the privileges of advantaged groups. This thesis examines the roles of McCullers's privileged characters within oppressive power structures through the lens of Patricia Hill Collins's four domains of power. In the structural

domain, Judge Clane in *Clock Without Hands* exemplifies the power of institutional racism, while in the disciplinary domain, Sheriff Wilson in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* stands for the regulating power that defends white supremacy. In the cultural domain, Malone in *Clock Without Hands* exhibits deep-rooted racist ideology as a white Southerner. Similarly, Jarvis Addams and his bride, Janice, in *The Member of the Wedding*, is a symbol of a heterosexual couple, that is culturally accepted and welcomed by society. In the interpersonal domain, racist Lanky harbours hostility against his new African American neighbour, Sherman Pew, and eventually kills the latter. Notably, these four domains of power are always interrelated. For example, Major Langdon in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* represents the power of heteropatriarchy and is structurally privileged and endowed with supervision power. Meanwhile, culturally, he manifests norms of heterosexual masculinity, who enjoys superiority over people of other genders and sexual orientations. Therefore, by delving into McCullers's description of the privileged power of the oppressors, this study discloses how the politically, socially, and culturally constructed systems of oppression shape the miserable experiences of misfits, outcasts, and queer individuals within mid-twentieth-century American society.

The obsevation of the political, social, and cultural privileges enjoyed by oppressors also prompts an exploration of diverse forms of resistance against oppression. This thesis has explored McCullers's depiction of passive resistance and 'everyday forms of resistance', along with some irrational, grotesque, and bizarre acts of defiance. Singer in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* commits suicide as an act of silent resistance; Private Williams's voyeurism in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* is one of the bizarre behaviours caused by the repression of desires in the barracks; Alison's self-mutilation can be interpreted as an extreme rejection of the gender role and norms imposed on her; Sherman in *Clock Without Hands*, deliberately kills the Judge's dog by hanging it 'on an elm branch', thereby openly challenging white supremacists. As I have

covered in my chapters, these grotesque and bizarre acts embody various reactions to structural and institutional oppression as well as identity marginalisation.

My study also calls for attention to imaginative forms of individual resistance in McCullers's work, which involve no specific actions but mostly manifest as imaginations, fantasies, stories, or plans for changing personal life or remaking the world. Rebecca Solnit claims in *Hope in the Dark,* 'hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists.'[3] Analysing the imaginative forms of resistance offers new lens to discover how marginalised and vulnerable people endeavour to empower themselves and always habour hope in their fight against oppression. Sarah Schulman praises McCullers for her capacity to 'imagine and create consciousness that was not her own'.[4] McCullers's empathy for individuals with disadvantaged identities is evident in the depiction of these characters' imaginative resistance. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* Dr. Copeland articulates his programme for 'A march to Washington', advocating that 'All of us together in one solid body.'[5] Jake proposes to spread the truth about William's case through 'chain letters'.[6] Harry tells Mick about 'how he planned to assassinate Hitler'.[7] Biff dreams for adopting and parenting 'a couple of little children'. [8] In *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, Alison is also 'trying to make plans' for her future life with Anacleto, after divorcing her husband.[9] In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie's gender fluidity fantasy, John Henry's idea of androgyny, and Berenice's dream of racial equality are all idealistic wishes and signs of hope in the dark. Finally, in *Clock Without Hands,* McCullers further illustrates the way imagination can work as a form of

[3] Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), p. 55.
[4] Sarah Schulman, 'White Writer', *The New Yorker*, 21 October 2016.
< https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/white-writer> [accessed 11 November 2022]
[5] McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, p. 266.
[6] Ibid., p. 264.
[7] Ibid., p. 215.
[8] Ibid., p. 202.
[9] McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, p. 58.

resistance. Sherman's 'phantasy' of voting and then being lynched for the act embodies his awakening racial consciousness, which foreshadows his later hidden and then overt acts of resistance.[10] Analysing the above-mentioned examples of imaginative defiance, along with other forms of resistance, will enrich the research on the awakened political, racial, and cultural consciousness among oppressed groups and their accumulating power against injustices. In addition, they also tribute to the conversation about McCullers's awareness of the progress achieved in the labour movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the feminist movement, and the gay rights movement in the United States between the 1930s and the 1950s.

[10] McCullers, *Clock Without Hands*, p. 77.

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