



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

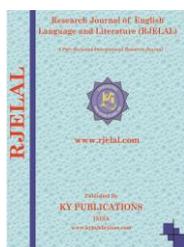
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

LONELINESS IN CARSON MCCULLER'S *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

R.PARTHIBAN¹, T.THIRUPPATHI²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, PRIST Deemed University, Vallam, Thanjavur

²Research Supervisor, Department of English, PRIST Deemed University, Vallam, Thanjavur



ABSTRACT

As the novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, it is a darker, more terrifying drama of loneliness and despair. The novel through its characterization of Mick and Portia, can be seen as a critique towards certain intersecting power structures of the 1930s South, and by that demonstrate the crucial need of inter sectionality theory when examining those power structures in the characterization of the two characters. With my account of previous research on both Carson McCullers' works in general, and her novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* more specifically, I have found that the novel has been read both as political and also as a text concerned with the social and political issues of its time. The major characters as well as the minor characters are greatly influenced by their past, their families, and people they met. Both primary socialization and secondary socialization spell out the future of their lives. Their loneliness, resentment, bitterness, rebelliousness or meekness are caused according to Durkheim by many factors such as the material and non material social facts such as society, environment, church, state, morality, collective collaborative conscience, collective live representation and social currents.

INTRODUCTION

McCullers gave the novel, the title *The Mute*. But the editor changed it to *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Its principal theme seems to be an individual's compulsion to revolt against enforced loneliness and the individual's urge to express the self at all cost. In other words, the theme is that sense of moral loneliness, expressed in terms of loneliness and longing, which is both the social evil of the modern world and the inescapable condition of man. McCullers is often described as Southern gothic and indicative of her southern roots. However, McCullers penned all of her work after leaving the south and eccentric characters as universal in scope.

LONELINESS IN CARSON MCCULLER'S *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

Each character in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* strives to break out of his or her isolated existence. The reasons for each character are isolated with very different: the deaf-mute John Singer cannot communicate with likely most of the world because he cannot speak; Mick Kelly could not communicate with anyone in her family because they do not spread her intelligence and ambition; Biff Brannon is left stand alone when his wife past away; Dr. Copeland is alienated from his ideal family and from other black people because of his education and viewpoints; Jake Blount is still alone of his radical social viewpoints and in the fact that he is a basically newcomer in town.

The loneliness from which each character suffers is a combination of personal and

environmental factors. All the characters feel profoundly alone in some sense and all of them desperately need to communicate their feelings with somebody who understands them. All of five, with that exception of Biff, confide in Singer the things that make them spiritually holiness lonesome. Though it is never made clear, the only reason Biff does not discuss of his personal conflicts with the Singer is most likely because Biff himself is unable to articulate these personal conflicts. Regardless, Biff still findings Singer's presence comforting. After of all talking to Singer, that the characters almost always feel soothed.

McCullers always uses the novel to explore that the idea of all people feel of a need to create some sort of guiding principle or god. However, whatever each person conceives of in this godlike role is merely his or her own fantasy; it has no basis in reality, just as those who believe in God have no proof that He actually exists. Singer becomes a pseudo-religious figure out for the main characters of the novel; they believe he has infinite and unending wisdom about lots of things, and they turn to him in times of trouble, constantly asking him to helping them achieves their goals and assuage their fears and doubts.

Each character creates a different god in Singer. After all of Mick, Singer is a man who feels as she does not about music and whom she can ask very personal questions - things she has never said to anyone before. For that human of Dr. Copeland, Singer is an the only enlightened white man he have been ever met, the only one who understands the Doctor's heat killing passion to achieve justice for black people in the world. For Blount, Singer is a man who shares his deep concern about the importance of socialist revolution and the eradication of capitalism. For Biff, Singer was, like Biff himself, a quiet and astute observer of the human condition who ponders many things have in great depth. The novel burst upon the literary scene amid reviewer's accolades that the young author was the most exciting new talent of the decade. That she could publish a best - selling novel at twentythree was feat enough, but to write with a knowledge and insight that so obviously

transcended her years and experience was just short of a miracle.

There are five major characters in the novel Mick Kelly, Biff Brannon, Jake Blount, Doctor Copeland, and John Singer. It is from the singular relation of the characters to one another that the novel takes its shape. According to Ihab H. Hassan, What makes the relations singular, literally, is that they are all centripetal, all the characters are singly drawn towards one man, the deaf-mute, Singer, who stands bewilderedly at the center. The novel's structure is broken up to convey the sense of mutual loneliness; each person remains in a padded cubicle, victimized by the very dreams which nourish his dignity. As the Author's outline of 'The Mute suggests', in reality however, Singer is *none* of these things; he is merely an ordinary, intelligent man who only wants to be with his friend Antonapoulos. Singer roughly cannot understand why all these other people put inside of him for advice on topics with which he has no expertise or even familiarity. It is ironic that Singer a liable character the others blindly make out to be a sort of god is just as prone to the same blind faith, which we see in his love for lovably Antonapoulos. Singer believes that the Antonapoulos was a wise, kindhearted person, and he worships his friend unremittingly. Meanwhile, it is clear to all of us that the evidence suggests Antonapoulos was actually coarse, selfish with laziness. In the end, we seen that all the major characters were deluding themselves by believing only what they wish about John Singer. Nonetheless, the very fact that they believe it gives them.

The loneliness that the other four major characters — Mick Kelly, Biff Brannon, Jake Blount, and Doctor Copeland — face makes them see in Singer a certain mystic superiority and consider him their ideal. They seem to find in him all the qualities they wish for him to have. His silence is compelling which makes them consider Singer the repository for the most personal feelings and ideals. McCullers did not, as many reviewers thought, make Singer a deaf-mute because she had a fondness for the unusual as such but because of his symbolic value. His Greek friend Antonapoulos' defect, which is mental as well as physical, is likewise essential to the moral of the story.

The fact that Singer's four friends do not see him as he really is but as they imagine him, and that Singer does not see Antonapoulos as he really is but as he (Singer) imagines him, suggests that what men see in other men whom they admire or love is not what is really there but what they wish to find. McCullers seems to suggest through this novel that the more grotesque and repulsive a character is who is yet capable of inspiring love in another, the more forcefully does he illustrate this thesis. His attentive silence and thoughtful eyes draw the four people close to him: Mick Kelly, a girl burdened by the care of two younger children, by poverty, and by frustration of her ambition to become a musician; Biff Brannon, who operates an all-night cafe; Jake Blount, an itinerant Marxist, who presently works for a carnival; and Doctor Benedict Mady Copeland, a proud and bitter black physician whose intense commitment to Marxism as the only means of raising the status of blacks has alienated him from most of his friends and relatives.

There are two mutes in the novel, one a very fat Greek Antonapoulos, the other, Singer, very tall and immaculate. They have no friends and have lived together for ten years. For Singer, "Nothing seemed real except the ten years with Antonapoulos. Mick Kelly is another important character in the novel. She is the daughter of the owner of the boarding house where Singer has a room. She has just entered her teens and is always dressed in shorts, a shirt and tennis shoes. She loves music and is prepared to go anywhere to hear it. To her music is the symbol of beauty and freedom. She has no musical background and has little chance of educating herself. There is no radio in her house. In the summer she walks on the streets of the town listening to any music she can hear from other people's houses. She starts reading at the public library and learns from books some of the things she needs to know. In the fall she enters the Vocational High School. She arranges to have primary lessons on the piano with a classmate of hers.

At home no one realizes what she wants. It is Singer who lets her talk to him when she feels lonely. She begins to centre her undirected love on Singer because he fulfils her desire to always have a

person to love and admire. It has been pointed out by some critics that Singer resembles Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* of Dostoevsky. There is an aura of holiness about the characters which is associated with their simplicity. Both the characters inspire confidences in the most unlikely persons. When we read that Singer has in his face "something gentle and Jewish, the knowledge of one who belongs to a race that is oppressed" HLH (114), "a brooding peace that is seen most of all often in the faces of the very sorrowful or the every very wise" HLH (9), we are reminded of the Dostoevsky doctrine that was suffering which ennobles and redeems mankind.

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter is neither religious nor political also been as but concerns the struggle of individuals to live free themselves from the cells of their beings. Hungry for human sympathy, each of the four characters confides in Singer just as Singer has confided in Antonapoulos. However, each fails to understand that the deaf-mute, although he reads lips, understands little of what he is told. Longing for sympathetic ear, the four characters, like their deaf-mute idol, create in their own image what one of them calls "a sort of home-made god". From Singer's side, he considers Mick pitiful, Jack crazy, Doctor Copeland hopeful, and Biff thoughtful, but he always welcomes them when they come to meet him. It can be said that the four characters seek Singer's company chiefly because of what they think he has to offer them, not because they wish to offer him anything their own. This point has been elaborated by Horace Taylor. He points out that the selfishness of each character is demonstrated in the scene when all of them meet by chance in Singer's room. It is an awkward occasion.

Conclusion

The aim of this essay was to examine how *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, through its characterization of Mick and Portia, can be seen as a critique towards certain intersecting power structures of the 1930s South, and by that demonstrate the crucial need of inter sectionality theory when examining those power structures in the characterization of the two characters. With my account of previous research on both Carson

McCullers' works in general, and her novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* more specifically, I have found that the novel has been read both as political and also as a text concerned with the social and political issues of its time.

In the first part of the analysis I have focused on Mick: what intersecting power structures she is either restrained or privileged by, how those structures shape her experiences, and how she resists or accepts them. I have found that Mick is restrained by notions of femininity based on racial, classist, and sexist notions, and that her characterization challenges them through her "inappropriate" modes of behavior. She is also restrained to fulfill her artistic aspirations due to her unprivileged position in the intersection of class and gender. Ultimately, Mick is defeated by the intersecting power structures of race, class, and gender, and not solely because she is a woman or because she is economically disadvantaged, but because of her position as an economically disadvantaged woman.

In the second part of the analysis I have focused on Portia, a character who hardly any critics have even mentioned. I have examined what intersecting power structures she is either restrained or privileged by, how those structures shape her experiences, and how she resists or accepts them. By examining Portia's characterization through an intersectional framework, it has been possible to see how race, class, and gender intersect and thus create notions which she either challenges or internalizes.

WORKCITED

1. Andersen, Margaret L., and Patricia Hill Collins, comps. *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*. ed. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2010. Print.
2. Champion, Laurie. "Black and White Christs in Carson McCullers's 'The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter'" *Southern Literary Journal* 24.1 (1991): 47-52. JSTOR. Web. 28 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078029>>.
3. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination

Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." Ed. D. Kelly.

6. Weisberg. *Feminist Legal Theory: Foundations*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993. Print.
7. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991): 1241-299. JSTOR. Web. 22 Oct. 2011. <<http://jstor.org/stable/1229039>>.