



## Carson Mc Cullers' Fragmented Vision of Human Existence

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**ABSTRACT:** *In Carson Mc Cullers' ontological conception, there is a coherence of a type obtained in the grotesque form of juxtaposition between Agape and Eros. Mc Cullers' conceptualization of human being is analogous to the technique of "flickering" in which two alternative meanings exist and struggle in the same sphere, the same subject. Her characters suffer from social oppression and marginalization, and endure the punishment meted out to those who do not perform appropriately. A conceptualization that makes her works fascinating as her empathy with her isolated characters who cannot or will not express the yearnings boiling inside them and bound in the end to get what is coming to them like passions. Passions that overcome them and the results are embarrassment and further alienation.*

**Keywords:** *grotesque, Agape, Eros, marginalization, alienation*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the United States in recent years, a kind of Writing called "nature writing" or "landscape writing" has begun to receive attention, leading some to assure, that this is a relatively new kind of work. In fact, writing that takes into account the impact of history and place have on, culture, is one of the oldest, and perhaps most singular threads in America south literature. But before going a head in the analysis of south fiction, there is first of all the matter of a definition: is there a fiction that is southern? If there is a place that can be discussed and marked, it must also have a history so that both time and place may conceivable play a role in identifying the literature. A mere preoccupation with the past and with its relations to custom and human ceremony may well lead to rather empty life, and there is enough of this attitude in southern literature to suggest caution.

In numerous southern fictions history impact writing addresses the problem of psychological collapse in the south, and like post colonial literature, it is a search of a human identity that lies beyond writing. The sense of self awareness, what some writers called "the tragic feeling about the South," is the mark of distinctive difference. The Southern Writer lives with "the sense of the concrete", it means that the Southern writer lives with an acute sense of human limit and limitation and that he is aware of human condition as specific, explicit, bearing of the sinning and contrite personality. The truth is that the Southern attitude is compounded of a sense of guilt.

It is quite possible that the South has had the most interesting and the most valuable literary in recent times because its writers have had more to go on, or more to draw from. It suffered in the civil war and after. It is impossible to speak of the as place. Without discussing it as a region possessing a uniquely clear and responsible memory of its past. The psychological consequences of the Southern endurance in time have led to the use of the South as a pattern that has become a "Way of life". So that since the mid-1920's and it has more compelled attention to its virtues. As the years advance, the writers and historians become aware of variety and number of stars Carson Mc Cullers is part.

After setting out a few thoughts about the basis of the Southern literature, we would like to say something about Carson Mc Cullers herself, precisely about the way she depicts the bleak landscape of her consciousness and its impact on her existence.

#### I-The schism in man's mind

Born, on February 19, in 1917 in Columbus, Georgia, LULA Carson Mc Cullers has throughout her childhood and adolescent lived so intensively with her frustration and her inner exhaustion in her drive to achieve both technical mastery and sensitivity of interpretation.

Carson Mc Cullers left Columbus for New York when she was seventeen. Life there was for her a period of loneliness. Occasionally, she was forced to return to Columbus to convalesce from debilitating respiratory illness and undiagnosed heart disease.

She met Reeves Mc Cullers, an army Sergeant in Columbus in 1936. In September 1937, they married and four years later they divorced when she was twenty-four and newly famous. They remarried four years later in 1945. After another eight years, at the age of thirty-six, they divorced again. During that period she experienced a frustration in love for a woman, Annemarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach and for a man David Diamond.

Adolescent she contracted rheumatic fever and in her maturity she suffered three strokes that affected her eyesight, caused her loss of lateral vision in the right eye, a paralysis of her left side and a hemorrhage on the right side of her brain that permanently paralyze her. All the muscles of her arm atrophied. Carson Mc Cullers needed two operations to set a fractured hip; four heart operations to prevent further strokes and a mastectomy. She was hospitalized for pneumonia and on August 15, strokes followed by coma until death in September 29, 1967. She has been buried in Oak hill, Nyack.

Carson Mc Cullers' frequent illnesses and all familial frustrated love experience and her suffering did not completely impede her literary activity, on the contrary they became parts of her works and also they shine the origins of her confounding vision of life. One has the feeling that any string of typical events of her life would have served the author's purpose as well, for the value of her writing lies so much in what is said as in the angle of vision from which she sees life. It is not deliberately that she lingers over and accentuates the more obscure, oblique and elusive emotions of her characters who she succeed to chart their roiling interior lives. For the most part, the characters of Carson Mc Cullers remain two-dimensional presences; the poetry inside them is left unarticulated; the hearts of these lonely souls keep inflamed by angers, passions and pain and they remain unmoved observers of what comes to them as a fatality. Fatality that sadly with little of the furious feeling consumes them.

The behavior of all Carson Mc Cullers' characters is erratic and reflects their incomplete, distorted and inconsistent attitude toward life. This image inconsecutive and suggest the disoriented vision from which her books originate. Horror and ugliness result from Carson Mc Cullers' vision in her books. Reality, as perceived by the characters in her books, is fragmented, blurred, and out of proportion. Carson Mc Cullers creates a universe without fundamental order or direction in her novels. She reports carefully the details obsessive behaviour and of confused perception. Carson Mc Cullers creates a distorted, macabre world as a result of the way in which her characters fearfully misinterpret the life.

Carson Mc Cullers claimed that in her novels she tried to illustrate the superiority of Agape (communal affection) over Eros (passionate love). Actually, her novels demonstrate the destructive nature of Eros in the life of the characters. Carson Mc Cullers suggested that Agape is at best minimal. The fickle Eros is destructive and dramatized in Carson Mc Cullers' books (Spencer Carr, 1941, 98).

In her novels, Carson Mc Cullers localized the action by limiting it to a milieu in order to suggest the presence of a closed society. The characters are further enclosed by their lack of emotional that distorts their Agape. They are limited by their intense obsessions or "simple-mindedness" or in their Eros. Their personal limitations and their narrow environment predispose them to irrational fear and behavior when they are under pressure. Thus, even in writing *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, Carson Mc Cullers created a psychic stress in her characters that will distort their perception and also will, in turn, communicate intimation of a psychic realm that transcends the ordinary. By the time she produced *The Ballad of The Sad Café*, she understood that irrational impulses of all sorts distort an individual's perception of reality. The result is that in extreme circumstance the character will find a trivial or harmless phenomenon overpowering. In her novels, Carson Mc Culler renders states inner turmoil in term of outward stress or in term of terrifying, the macabre, or the bizarre. Carson Mc Cullers' characters dramatize the forces of evil at large in the universe, beyond their control and understanding. Evil in Carson Mc Cullers' novels appears as an unmotivated, irrational, or inexplicable phenomenon. She appreciated, furthermore, the power of such forces and probed their psychological effects on the individual. Carson Mc Cullers' characters react irrationally in their frustration or their anxiety and seem as fascinated by evil as repelled by it. She assumes that a close relationship exists between evil and Eros and human solitude (Mc Dowell, 1980, 152).

Miss Amelia, in *The Ballad of The Sad Café*, is a sorceress of reputation and she is supposed to heal the diseases. Leonora, in *Reflection in a Golden Eye*, also uninhibited and living for satisfaction of physical appetite, remains as primitive in her behavior as Allegee William. The later, himself is closed to nature, he remains more brut than human. He is more often lurking in darkness. He finds rapport with animals and remotes from people.

## II- Fear of independence

Carson Mc Cullers dramatizes the theme of death in her novels: though death is inevitable and universal, the process of dying is uniquely individual experience. Like most of the isolate people in Carson Mc Cullers' novels, J.T Malone, The hero of *Clock Without Hands*, regards himself as a misfit who is slowly dying of leukaemia.

Carson Mc Cullers reveals throughout the example of J.T Malone as conscious of the fundamental limitation of human nature itself. Since men and women tend by nature to be evasive whenever a strong positive emotional reaction is demanded of them, they often regard a dying individual as abnormal. J.T Malone lives surrounded by a "zone of loneliness", because he is at present so much more vulnerable to death. Regarding the example of J.T Malone, an ironic paradox inheres in the situation that death for some people, in direct contrast to this later's own, provides the only source of possible attention that they ever receive from the community.

A further irony subsists in Mc Cullers' view that tragedy must fully inheres in the limited and deprived as said of a person's ordinary existence rather than in his death. Not only she introduces this theme when the decent, yet undistinguished, Malone hears that he is soon to die, but Mc Cullers also reiterates it, often by implication, in the fates of several of the characters. In her books a number of individuals die before they can discover meaning in their lives and solace in human relationships. The dullness, bareness and limitation of their daily experience make living for such people inconsequential and their dying is equally pointless. When John Singer the deaf mute's friend, Antonopoulos, dies in an insane asylum, he commits suicide, an act which deprives the confessional of its priest. At the boarding house where he lives, Singer, himself, is an object of fascination for Mick Kelly, the dreamy tomboy whose soul feasts on the beauty of the classical music she hears on the radio when she wanders into the better parts of town; for Dr. Copeland, whom he meets after offering him a light in the street one night. The doctor's righteous belief in the dignity of his race is continually being disappointed, and his anger at social oppression eats away at him as disease plagues his lungs; for Jake, a deeply alienated socialist who tamps down his rage at the meekness of his fellow men in the face of economic injustice by drinking himself into oblivion. In desperation, each turns to John Singer, a gentle-eyed mute, taking his passive friendliness for profound understanding. For each he is the sympathetic companion without whom life would be too cruel to bear while he, in turn, lives only for the friend whose company he loses, leaving Singer adrift and bereft.

Yet, if Singer fails to communicate any of its emotional substance, as he is mute, the aflame men and women desperate for communion with a need for understanding, who pay him a visit every night grants us to the feelings simmering under the awkward surfaces of these characters, it is hard to work up any great sympathy for them.

If the repulsion-attraction relationship among Carson Mc Cullers' characters provides one major strand in her novels, a second thematic concern resides in the characters' longing to become, like Frankie Addams "joined"-to be a member of a group, to have a close friend, to donate her blood so that their lives will flow in the veins of people live all over the world. Even more than their desire for independence they want ultimately to lose individual identity through being assimilated in a group. All the characters understood what it is to attain "the we of me". The characters perceive a solitary person to be one who has stepped, unprotected, into a universe which is different and hostile to human pretensions. Being incontrovertibly joined with another person protects one, they think, provide them with direction, and allow them to move safety into the new and the unknown.

Carson Mc Cullers recognized that those who know they are about to die move through roughly recognizable stages of awareness, rebellion and finally acceptance. She realized that also that dying differs for each person and that successive phases need not be clearly defined.

Nor do the dying traverse these plateaus of philosophical understanding and psychological and physical adjustment in any predictable order or in any predictable period of time. The process of dying is a turbulent one, and the victories of courage or faith achieved by any individual on any day may yield to fear or petulance the next day or even the next minute. A change in the weather, an overheard comment, a touch, or an odour can cause the dying person to react excessively or can produce no effect on him at all. For the moment, he loves life intensively, hates it beyond reason or feels apathy concerning it. If the dying individual disturbs those around him, who expect him to be more rational than he can be in this "zone of loneliness" he is himself confused by his unpredictable anger, fear, and grief.

In her books and precisely in *Clock Without Hands and The Heart is a lonely Hunter*, Carson Mc Cullers develops constantly the concept that life and death are not polarities but the extremes on a continuum, where most people exist closer to a state of deadness than to a state in which they would be fully alive. In tracing the philosophical and psychological changes in J.T Malone or John Singer, Carson Mc Cullers skillfully suggests the intensity, the dullness, or the absence of sensory perception as she portrays the relative presence or absence of human vitality. J.T Malone, himself, is frightened whenever he tries to imagine a state of non-existence, and he finds the thought hypnotic or paralyzing in its effect. (Mc Dowell, 1980, 97)

Carson Mc Cullers refused to be sentimental in depiction of the dying characters. Suffering does not made them virtuous, kindly, gentle, or patient. They grow irritable, petty, jealous, of anyone who is good heart, and particularly resentful of their lives. Morbidly they seek out the details of every death they hear about, whether or not they even knew the person who has died. Only the fact of their dying, not the consequences of their living, makes these people important to them. J. T. Malone goes to his younger brother's funeral, the rouge or the cheeks of the corps preoccupy him more than does the grief for his brother.

## II. CONCLUSION

Carson 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. Her quality of despair is unique and individual; and it seems more natural and authentic than that of Faulkner. Her groping characters live in a world more completely lost than any Sherwood Anderson ever dreamed of. And she recounts incidents of death and attitudes of stoicism in sentences whose neutrality makes Hemingway's terse prose seem warm and partisan by comparison.

The reading of Carson Mc Cullers' work provides the reader with a dynamic intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic experience. Her gifts are manifold, intense, and varied. For one thing, she is a masterful portrayer of character as she gives simultaneously the essence of each individual is his idiosyncratic particularities. Her range as portrayer of character is wide. Her adolescent figures remain memorable as she treats them with sympathetic understanding of in their awkwardness, frustration, bitterness, confusion, and feelings of isolation. If her ordinary characters are memorable, the oddities of some of others arrest, amuse, or shock. Such personages function symbolically or metaphorically, as well as realistic.

Besides Carson Mc Cullers characterization, her artistry lay, to a considerable degree, in the remarkable virtuosity of her blending of the formal with the colloquial, of the mystical and metaphorical perspective with the details of life in an ordinary small Southern town or sleepy place.

Carson Mc Cullers' ongoing sense of the Evil to be found in human nature found expression in fiction which has symbolic and allegoric implications as she analyses the elemental realities confronting her characters. Her portrayer of the South is therefore, never sentimentalised; it is land where "a man's life may be worth no more than a load of hay."

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