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**Queers, Freaks, Hunchbacks, and Hermaphrodites:
Psychosocial and Sexual Behavior in the Novels of Carson McCullers**

**by
Judith Russell**

**Major Advisor:
Dr. Will Brantley**

This dissertation was submitted to Middle Tennessee State University Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Arts.

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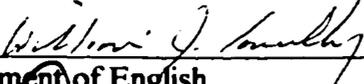
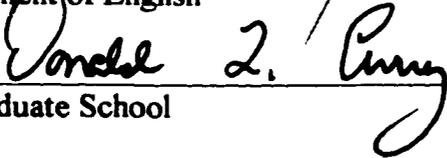
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**Queers, Freaks, Hunchbacks, and Hermaphrodites:
Psychosocial and Sexual Behavior in the Novels of Carson McCullers**

Judith Russell

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Abstract

Queers, Freaks, Hunchbacks, and Hermaphrodites: Psychosocial and Sexual Behavior in the Novels of Carson McCullers by Judith Russell

Focusing on her five novels, this study examines the ways in which Carson McCullers prefigures late twentieth-century queer theory analysis. McCullers' fiction incorporates the post-modern concept of a continuum of human sex and gender expression; a destabilizing examination of the interconnectedness of homophobia, misogyny, and male homosociability; a realistic representation of a hermaphroditic or third-sex category; a critique of compulsory heterosexuality; and an examination of changing cultural models in which conventional ideologies are de-naturalized and made problematic.

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter (1940) calls identity itself into question as its characters transgress relational sex and gender categories. *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941) critiques the institution of the United States military and its promotion of aggressive heterosexual masculinity. *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1943) presents a woman in overalls—or a man in a red dress—who is both masculine and feminine and who challenges binary schemes of sexual identification. *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) presents a young girl's refusal to become "woman" as she embraces her androgyny and accommodates her differences in a world that insists on heteronormativity. *Clock Without Hands* (1961) locates "queerness" in a repressive social order which becomes the focus of shame and prejudice it once projected onto its socially ostracized figures.

McCullers' life itself invites a queer reading of her fiction; her personal rejection of conventionality is supported by biographical data and is reflected in her humanistic portrayals of the marginalized characters who haunt her novels.

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Introduction

The personal pain in Carson McCullers' life (1917-1967) is reflected in her fiction. From her teens to her early death at age 50, McCullers was plagued by chronic illnesses, resulting from the long-term misdiagnosis and the subsequent incorrect treatment for rheumatic fever contracted while she was a senior in high school. The lack of adequate and timely medical intervention resulted in irreversible heart damage and caused her to suffer a number of strokes, the first in her early twenties and the fourth—a massive cerebral hemorrhage—which claimed her life. In addition to the physical and psychological pain caused by her health problems, McCullers often suffered great emotional distress in her complex romantic attachments to others. Her tumultuous relationship with Reeves McCullers, who she married twice, ended with his suicide. Because she lived with so much pain, McCullers was able to empathize with others who suffered from physical, emotional, or social limitations. In her fiction, McCullers gives voice, power, and dignity to those once silenced, marginalized, and shamed by conventional society. Because her work reflects the biographical essentials of her personal, cultural, social, and philosophical views and experiences, understanding Carson McCullers as a person is paramount to appreciating the humanistic portrayals of those unforgettable grotesques, freaks, queers, and other social outcasts who haunt her fiction.

Much as she did in her own life, the fictional characters in Carson McCullers' novels, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941), *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1943), *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), and *Clock Without Hands* (1961), challenge many of the stereotypes that form the basis of conventional sexual ideology, especially those stereotypes

relating to ideas of fixed sex and gender identities. Her characters blur, collapse, and defy conventional polarized classification as heterosexual or homosexual, masculine or feminine, male or female, and normal or abnormal. By exploring ideas of gender and sexual differences in her work, McCullers anticipates queer theory, and she distinguishes herself as a writer ahead of her time by at least three decades. Her resistance to utilize binary classification in the gender identity of her characters and her refusal to focus on any fixed notion of sexuality allow McCullers to show the strong connection between heterosexual and homosexual life, and to demonstrate that a variety of needs and desires overlap in both homosexuality and heterosexuality.

In her own life, McCullers rejected the conventional. Fascinated by the grotesque, she spent hours studying a friend's enormous photograph collection of freaks, and her knowledge and understanding of freaks find reflection in characters such as Miss Amelia, Cousin Lymon, Singer, and Antonapoulos. Additionally, McCullers developed numerous crushes on women she met. In adolescence, she developed an intense emotional attachment to her piano teacher Mary Tucker; her anxiety and her fear of abandonment as a result of her adolescent attachment to Tucker are reflected in Frankie's exclusion from the wedding in *The Member of the Wedding*, which is dedicated to Elizabeth Ames, the nurturing and supportive director of Yaddo during McCullers' fellowships. Perhaps the greatest love of McCullers' life was Annemarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach to whom she dedicated her second novel, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. Katherine Anne Porter rejected her overtures, but Elizabeth Bowen invited McCullers to her home in Ireland for repeated and extended visits. The circle of strong, intelligent, and supportive women in McCullers' life includes her physician, Mary Mercer, who is credited with keeping McCullers alive during

her last ten years and the person to whom she dedicated her last novel, *Clock Without Hands*.

In addition to her erotic interest in women, McCullers was drawn to triangular relationships with two males. The best known of these liaisons involved her husband, Reeves, and their friend David Diamond. The erotic and emotional entanglement of the triangular relationship is recounted in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* and *Reflection in a Golden Eye*. Also, McCullers was throughout her life friends with famous homosexual men, such as W. H. Auden and Tennessee Williams, and the insights she gained through those friendships are repeated in the dignified and humanistic manner in which she treats the subject of male homosexuality. McCullers' thematic approach to sexual politics, her probing of constructs of social empowerment, her rendering of characters with ambiguous qualities of identity, and her ability to conceptualize the origin of normalcy and deviancy as one and the same suggest a body of work that begs for queer theory analysis. The application of queer theory methodology to the novels of Carson McCullers facilitates a better understanding of the instability existing between natural human complexities and normal social demands.

As a critical approach, queer theory analyzes sexual discourse, examines ways in which sexual meaning is created and disseminated in society, and explores the foundation and function of social norms. Queer theory grew out of the 1990s development of the academic discipline of gay and lesbian studies. Incorporating and transforming the gay and lesbian challenge to the conventional idea of identity as a single and stable position, queer theory recognizes the multitude of sexual differences among those categorized under the monolithic label of homosexual, and in reaction to the need of a less specific way of discussing sexualities as exclusively homosexual or heterosexual, queer

theory appropriates and diffuses the power of terms used to marginalize and negate certain identities, such as its namesake "queer," which is not aligned with any specific identity; queer can be used to describe non-heterosexuals, or to describe all that is perverse about conventional heterosexual ideology.

In an attempt at mischief, Teresa de Lauretis coined the term "queer theory" as a 1990 conference title in order to "call attention to everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and sexual pleasure" (Halperin 2). More recently, Annamarie Jagose in the *Australian Humanities Review* explains that "queer is less an identity than a critique of identity . . . ceaselessly interrogating both the preconditions of identity and its effects" (3). For example, in a queer reading of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, John Clum incorporates the homosocial theory of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in his discussion of the potential for a subversive female bond and the ways in which the bond is subverted by marriage in the triangular relationship—involving—not male but—the female bonding of Blanche and Stella with Stanley at the apex. Clum sees Blanche's marriage to a homosexual and her campy behavior as suggesting the possibility of homosexuality in a heterosexual marriage, and he further asserts that it is Stella, not Stanley, who holds the power in the heterosexual unit, and that it is she who ensures that heterosexual marriage wins through her denial of Stanley's rape of Blanche. Clum's queer analysis, in sum, locates the characters outside the normative sex and gender categories (129).

As a relatively new academic field of inquiry, queer theory has attracted many advocates. Key queer exponents and seminal queer theory texts include Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Ed Cohen's *Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male*

Sexualities, Teresa de Lauretis' "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," Lisa Duggan's "Making It Perfectly Queer," Lee Edelman's *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*, David Halperin's *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, Donald Morton's "The Politics of Queer Theory in the (Post)-Modern Moment," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* and *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, and Michael Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*.

There is little consensus among queer theorists concerning the actual definition or the practical application of queer theory; some insist on queer literary methodology (descriptive/textual), while others believe in queer application to cultural studies (transformational/political). Additionally, some feminists and lesbians object to the lack of importance queer theory places on gender because it represents fixed and oppositional categories of identification, and some lesbians further object to the masculine bias in "queer" and fear that queer theory, which is prone not to address lesbian concerns, is just another way to privilege the love of the male in an already male dominated society. As a methodology for analyzing the novels of Carson McCullers, queer theory is a tool for both literary and cultural critique.

Queer theory is a new discourse based on the rethinking of sexuality. The focus on heteronormativity as a central concept allows queer theorists to separate the functions of cultural and political heterosexual norms from the sexual practice of heterosexuality and to critically scrutinize the manner in which heterosexual culture imposes and utilizes its normative standard. Queer theory's pan-sexual ideology radically challenges the oppressive power of conventional gender constructs. Drawing on psychoanalysis, post colonialism, feminism, and deconstruction, queer theory challenges the notion of

conventional heterosexuality as the fixed or stable category of normal sexuality and seeks to dismantle the assumption that a natural relationship exists between biological sex, gender identification, and erotic desire. Furthermore, queer theory attempts to destabilize heterosexuality as the standard by which all other sexualities are marginalized or rendered deviant.

Although queer theory is considered a recent methodology, many of its key concepts can be traced to previous attempts at reform. The ideologies and cultural changes associated with the homophile movement beginning in the late 1800s, gay liberation and lesbian feminism beginning in the late 1960s, and the emergence of the ethnic model of gay identity in the mid-1970s inform queer theory. Historically, McCullers' life and work (1917-1967) are located in the homophile movement period and in anticipation of the Stonewall era. However, reading McCullers' novels now through the lens of queer theory allows us to more thoroughly understand the complex messages encoded in her work. Contrasting the social criticism in McCullers' novels against the dominant conventional ideologies in place during that time provides evidence of her vision.

In Europe at the end of the nineteenth century (the period when homosexuality was reconceptualized as an identity category, not just a behavior), the early homophile movement organized, establishing educational programs and working to change legislation which criminalized homosexuality. Movement leaders argued that homosexuality was harmless and that laws against homosexuality resulted in the needless suffering of those charged. Members wanted political reform to increase tolerance and recognize homosexuality as a natural variation in sexuality. The basic opposition of the homophile movement to the idea that homosexuality is biologically determined

hurt the cause, in effect accommodating the notion that homosexuality results from mental abnormalities.

Later, in the United States, the Mattachine Society, which organized in 1951 in Los Angeles as a homophile organization, underwent a conservative swing in ideology. Employing Marxist analysis of class oppression of minorities, the Mattachine Society originally focused on organizing to fight oppression, while providing an environment where individuals were free to discuss homosexuality. As part of their educational programming, the Mattachine Society often hosted "experts" in the field of psychoanalysis as guest speakers on the subject of homosexuality; unfortunately, the majority of speakers affirmed the mental deficiencies of homosexuals, which caused some members to admit to mental problems and which shifted the movement away from fighting oppression to seeking treatment and a cure for homosexuality.

Additionally, dual membership by some in the Communist Party and the Mattachine Society caused conflict within the organization. The more conservative Mattachine members feared reprisals arising from witch hunts for communists in the McCarthy era, in addition to the prevalent intolerance of homosexuality that they already faced. This faction opted for a platform of accommodation to social norms, while the more liberal faction felt that defense of communist ideologies was the best route for an affirmation of a distinct gay identity. The conservative or assimilationist faction won, and although the attempt to present homosexuals as tax-paying, law-abiding citizens who shared many commonalities with the heterosexual world became the primary focus of the homophile movement, the dream of a distinct gay identity did not disappear.

Because gender was not an issue with the largely male membership of the Mattachine Society, lesbians, who saw gender as the basis of their own

oppression, felt that they were not adequately represented by the existing homophile movement, and, in 1955, established their own organization, Daughters of Bilitis, a political group whose focus was transforming the stereotype of the lesbian as a working-class woman involved in the subculture bar scene into one of middle-class respectability. Like the Matachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis were assimilationists, and, as such, both organizations excluded drag queens, transvestites, or anyone transgressing established gender boundaries. However, both organizations had some interest in establishing a distinct gay identity, and the concept of establishing identity became important to queer theory.

The Stonewall Rebellion on June 27, 1969, represents the symbolic ending of the homophile movement and the beginning of gay liberation. Determined to resist the oppressive measures of police officers who without justification frequently raided the Stonewall Inn in New York City, clients of the drag bar put up a fight that resulted in three days of riots. The Stonewall Rebellion is recognized as the watershed event that motivated homosexuals to stop trying to be acceptable to the mainstream and moved them into the culture of protest with an insistence on pride in a distinct gay identity. Borrowing the organizational structure model and ideologies from the New Left of the 1960s, gays and lesbians joined the counter culture movement and the sexual liberation movement in unified opposition to the dominant culture.

The switch from homophile persuasion to liberation militancy moved "gay" and "lesbian" from personal categories of identity to identities of political force. Homosexuals began to critique the values and structures of the dominant order, including social institutions which marginalized homosexuality as a crime or mental illness. Personal experience narratives which correctly named the

psychological stress of homosexuality as a result of living in a homophobic society replaced psychiatric expertise as the final word on homosexuality as a mental disease. "Coming out" and "consciousness raising" became catch words in gay liberation. Coming out declarations functioned as social transformations by moving homosexual identity from a private aspect of self to a public and political identity. The public declaration of homosexuality made it a legitimate and recognizable way of being in the world, instead of a shameful secret. In environments that were conducive to honest and informal discussions, homosexuals practiced consciousness raising as a source of personal and collective empowerment needed to live in a homophobic world where they were identified by sex roles instead of valued as individuals.

Additionally, feminism and the critique of gender in transforming social structures and values became important to gay men who felt they too were oppressed by the patriarchy, and although gay liberation made great advances in critiquing gender as the oppressive underpinning of heterosexual dominance, the sweeping social transformation wished for did not happen. Despite gay liberation's revolutionary and original claim to unify all oppressed people, gay liberation has been widely seen as a movement by white, educated, middle-class males. People of color, transvestites, transsexuals, hermaphrodites, and lesbians have not been well represented by gay liberation.

Lesbian feminism was the response to the disenfranchisement felt by lesbians to gay liberation. Lesbians rejected their identification as female versions of male homosexuals and proclaimed lesbianism as a profoundly female experience. Believing that their economic and cultural oppression differs from that of gay men, lesbians argue that lesbians who are not recognized as homosexuals are oppressed by homosexual men who enjoy the status and

power accorded to all males in a patriarchal culture. For lesbians, gender, not sexuality, is the primary identification category, and they see lesbianism as a political choice rather than a sexual identification. The belief in social transformation, the focus on denaturalizing gender, the analysis of power and repression, and the emphasis on changing categories of identification are important aspects of gay liberation and lesbian feminism to queer theory.

The change to the ethnic model of gay identification occurred in the mid 1970s with a conservative move in gay politics. Gay liberation emphasis shifted from radical transformation of society to that of securing equal rights. Reconciling their differences, gays and lesbians formed a solidarity in order to be recognized as a mainstream minority. The focus moved from the universal changing of a corrupt system to the specific changing of legislation to ensure gay rights. Yet as the ethnic model stabilized into a recognizable community, the processes and problems of marginalization and centralization returned. The ethnic model as a non-normative category of identification was critiqued, challenged, and destabilized by the disaffected. Black homosexuals who see a white majority at the center, bisexuals who question the hegemonic binarism of heterosexual and homosexual, lesbians who affirm patriarchal values through their involvement in role playing, and those who are interested in intergenerational sex question the ethnic model as a singular or unified gay identity. The inability of the ethnic model as a non-normative category to contain all non-normative identities is of interest to queer theory. The destabilizing of the ethnic model raised more questions than it answered.

By the mid 1980s, conceptualizing and theorizing identities of same-sex desire moved beyond public discourse and into academic circles as colleges and universities began to offer interdisciplinary Gay and Lesbian Studies. As an

established field of inquiry, Gay and Lesbian Studies concerns itself with the history of homosexuality and the emergence of homosexual identity. Focusing on how homosexuals view themselves and are viewed by others, Gay and Lesbian Studies examines the construction of homosexuality and heterosexuality, not as natural categories of identification, but as historical and cultural categories. Furthermore, in their critiques of existing binary categories of identification, gays and lesbians theorize that heterosexuality, like homosexuality, is equally determined by same-sex desire—without homosexuality as its opposite, there would be no heterosexuality. The resultant denaturalization of heterosexual and homosexual identities is an important concept of queer theory.

Utilizing the psychosocial theories of Louis Althusser, Sigmund Freud, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault in a post-structuralist context, gay and lesbian theory evolved or erupted into a queer examination of identity by the early 1990s. Althusser's assertion that an individual's identity and position are determined by pre-existing ideologies and Freud's theory of the unconscious challenge the notion of subjectivity, or self-determination, as stable and coherent. Additionally, Saussure's theory that the meaning of language is based on multiple differences, rather than singular similarities between concepts and words, and Lacan's assertion that subjectivity is something learned, rather than an inherent quality, suggest that identity is not some part of a divine or essential plan, but the effect of comparing and contrasting oneself with or against others. In post-structural theory, identity is not a fixed property, but an ongoing and always incomplete process.

Foucault takes the concept of identity one step further in his theories on the polyvalent capacity of discourse and the formation of sexuality as a cultural

category, rather than an essential personal attribute. Foucault believes that the power to oppress and resistance to oppression are not opposites, but simultaneous contemporaries of any system. He argues:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and 'psychic hermaphroditism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (101)

For Foucault, there is no difference between discussing and analyzing the unspeakable and simply speaking the unspeakable, and he believes that modern efforts to repress and control sexuality have, in effect, created a proliferation of sexual discourses and have publicly energized and eroticized the very concept or subject to be suppressed and silenced. Foucault's critique of identity politics and his radical reconceptualization of identity as a cultural myth rather than a provable fact are important to queer theory, which adapts Foucault's ideas of revisionist discourse to challenge the normative relations between sex, gender, and desire as the underpinning of heterosexuality and to call into question the idea of any identity as a fixed category.

More significantly, the cultural context of the AIDS crisis and the prevalent homophobic perception of AIDS as a gay disease brought new attention to the incoherencies and discontinuities of modern definitions of sexualities,

particularly in distinguishing sexual acts from sexual identities. The intellectual probing of the social norm in sexual identity resulted in gay, lesbian, and queer theorizing that sexual acts, such as oral and anal intercourse, between heterosexuals are frequently considered normative behaviors, yet those same behaviors by same-sex partners are deemed deviant.

A theoretical examination of sexual behaviors actually demonstrates that sexual acts do not constitute sexual identity; as a consequence, heterosexuality and homosexuality collapse as categories of normal and deviant identification and are replaced by the queer concept of differences within sexuality which are marked by overlapping fluidities and multiplicities that cannot be contained in any one single category of identification. Gay liberation which seeks minority recognition and status for homosexuality through its oppositional philosophy can be distinguished from the relational resistance of queer theory which refuses to recognize or privilege any category of sexual identity. While it does make room for homosexuality, queer theory is primarily concerned with resisting all regimes of the normal. Therefore, queer theory embraces bisexuals, drag queens, transvestites, and hermaphrodites—figures routinely excluded by categories of compulsory heterosexuality and assimilationist homosexuality. Beyond its power to denaturalize normative sex and gender categories, queer theory has the potential to disrupt all monolithic identities, including those based on class, race, and ethnicity.

Queer theory, which effectively questions the assumption that any identity is self-evident, facilitates a better understanding of the characters in McCullers' novels who have successfully resisted previous attempts of traditional classification. McCullers' characters consistently demonstrate all that is problematic with fixed categories of identity by revealing that such categories are

incapable of adequately encompassing all the inherent and fluid dimensions of human expression. Most importantly, McCullers' novels suggest some inclusive and relational alternatives to hierarchical categorization of individuals. Even if her characters are sometimes unable to move beyond ascribed identity-based classifications, they nonetheless symbolize the potential for living in a world where the human spirit is not crippled by mandatory conformity.

The scope and degree of McCullers' appeal are evidenced by the diverse range of her readers—from high school students to queer theorists—and the multiple and varied responses that result from such a wide reading base. The majority of reviews of her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), hailed Carson McCullers as the newly arrived literary genius. Critics regarded her as equal to Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Thomas Wolfe, Erskine Caldwell, and William Faulkner. Although producing such a compelling work as *Heart* was in itself quite a literary feat, McCullers secured her status as an outstanding artist when the reading public discovered that she was only 23 years old at the time she completed this novel.

Although McCullers' vision extends beyond the historical context in which she wrote, analysis of her novels has been limited to the dominant and successive paradigms of formalist, mythic, and feminist approaches to literary criticism. Critics have tended to employ approaches based on what has been available to them. For instance, formalism dominated literary criticism during the 1940s and 1950s, the period in which McCullers established her literary reputation. The formalist approach of this era resulted in a body of criticism that focuses on the unity, symbolism, structure, and the complex ironies of her first novels.

The orthodoxy of formalism and the importance it placed on a work's verbal structure was challenged in the 1960s with the emergence of myth criticism, which shifted the concerns of analysis to literary content and the question of the origin of meaning. Myth critics began to analyze McCullers' characters as archetypal fools, scapegoats, Amazons, and Christ figures. Additionally, the Jungian consideration of the androgyne, an important influence on myth criticism, opened the door for gender analysis as a method of critique. The implied psychosocial dimension associated with cultural memory or collective consciousness became more explicit in the 1970s when serious analytical discourse shifted to McCullers' social critique of racial and class prejudice.

In 1975 with the publication of Virginia Spencer Carr's biography of *The Lonely Hunter*, another shift in critical interest occurred which resulted in unwarranted criticism centered on McCullers' life. Carr's public and widespread revelation of McCullers' bisexuality and lesbianism and the details of her husband's suicide caused even veteran critics to envision McCullers as a monster. In the *Southern Review*, Dale Edmonds labeled McCullers as "one of the most selfish and destructive literary figures who ever lived" (443). Louis D. Rubin could only imagine "what she did to poor Reeves McCullers" (279). Unfortunately, such biased criticism resulted in the titillating identification of McCullers as a sexual predator and in the identification of her writing with themes of sexual abnormalcy, which, for a time, overshadowed the important messages of social criticism in her novels.

During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, feminist analysis of sex and gender dominated criticism on McCullers' first four novels. In her 1980 feminist reading of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

broke with critics who throughout the previous decades had named Singer as the god-like protagonist onto whom the satellite characters project some power, wisdom, or spirituality as a means of making their own lives meaningful. With great insight, Spivak focuses on a key scene in the novel in which Antonapoulos holds a mysterious object above his head. In her discussion of that pivotal scene, Spivak identifies the object as "an undisclosed phallus . . . the mysterious unifier of the book's world" (19). Spivak associates Antonapoulos with some form of goddess worship, and she concludes that the image of Antonapoulos, "the male homosexual as the institutionalized insane," represents the heart of the novel (19-20). Spivak's analysis, more so than any previous criticism, connects the psychosocial and the sexual currents that permeate McCullers' fiction. Feminists (including Arleen Portada, Panthea Reid Broughton, Margaret Bolsterli, Mary Roberts, Barbara A. White, and Louise Westling) critiqued the military base setting of *Reflections in a Golden Eye* as a place where exaggerated gender roles are enforced; feminists analyzed Amelia's rejection of the female role in *The Ballad of the Sad Cage*, and they objected to decades of formalist and myth analysis which ironically employed masculine pronouns in reference to the life experiences of the central female character, Frankie Addams, in *The Member of the Wedding*.

McCullers spent almost seven years writing *The Member of the Wedding* which was published in 1946; fifteen years elapsed between the publication of *Member* and her final novel *Clock Without Hands* (1961), which took nearly twenty years to complete. McCullers struggled with *Clock* from its inception as "The Pestle" in 1941 until its completion at the end of 1960; during that time, she was working out her own ideas about gender and sexuality. As a result, *Clock* is the most radical of her novels. Although the initial reviews of McCullers' last

novel employ formalist analysis, the overt social criticism in *Clock* necessitates readings that move beyond analysis of structure and unity, and beyond identification of universal archetypes. Unfortunately, feminists have ignored the important issues of sex and gender in *Clock* because it focuses on male characters.

The body of existing criticism does not adequately address McCullers' fiction. Formalism ignores the content of McCullers' social criticism, and myth criticism tends to reduce her complex messages into codified forms of universal meaning. And although feminist analysts are concerned with social criticism, their focus on the resistance of McCullers' female characters to cultural expectations ignores the manner in which she also problematizes sex and gender classification through her male characters. As a more inclusive and comprehensive critique of sex and gender identity, queer theory currently represents the best lens for reading and analyzing McCullers' novels, but at this writing, only one significant study has appeared.

In "A Mixture of Delicious and Freak': The Queer Fiction of Carson McCullers," Rachel Adams discusses McCullers' use of "queer" as the symbol of deviant desire and "freak" as the visual embodiment of that deviant desire. Adams points out that "freak" calls normalcy into question because the freak's visual image reminds viewers of their own "uncomfortable experience of embodiment" (557). She further adds that "queer," unlike the same-sex desire labels of gay, lesbian, or homosexual, "counters a range of normalizing regimes and calls into question the knowledge/power system from which identity-based categories are derived" (556). Adams concludes that McCullers locates queerness in the repressive social order, not in the deviant desires or freakish

bodies of her characters. The following chapters of this study expand on Adams' ideas in a sustained queer theory analysis of McCullers' novels.

The novels of Carson McCullers are thematically linked in their challenge to and critique of conventionality. The encoded text of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* signifies that despite notions of fixed identities humans operate in a continuum of sex and gender categories. *Reflections in a Golden Eye* explores the ideologies and consequences associated with heterosexual expression and homosexual repression when hierarchical conceptualizations of sex and gender represent the social norm. *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* challenges conventional binary identification in sex categories of male or female by realistically depicting a third sex category. *The Member of the Wedding* explores the difficulty of maintaining an androgynous existence in a world of compulsory heterosexuality. *Clock Without Hands* examines changing cultural models to reveal conventionality as de-naturalized and problematic.

**Chapter 1: Transgendered Identity and Immaculate Conception
in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter***

Carson McCullers' novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), chronicles the complexities of life for individuals on the fringe of society in a small Southern milltown. Although McCullers utilizes some of the prevailing stereotypes of the 1940s in the presentation of her characters who push the envelope in terms of gender identity, her work is nonetheless a unique depiction of the sexual and social alienation of those who are unwilling or unable to subscribe to the rigid confines of conventionality. On the surface, McCullers presents a somewhat sentimental story of dysfunctionality, with some subtle undertones of gender confusion and homoeroticism; however, the underlying tension as seen in the individuals who transgress conventional boundaries of sex and gender in this fiction suggests the theme is emotional rather than sexual. At least four characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* transgress or defy conventional classifications of sex and gender in some fashion: the androgynous young female, Mick Kelly; the ambiguously engendered male bartender, Biff Brannon; and the homoerotic deaf mutes, John Singer and Spiros Antonopoulos.

McCullers presents Mick and Biff as characters who assume gender expressions that are conventionally considered inappropriate for their biological sex. As transgendered or transsexual individuals, Mick and Biff call attention to the limitations of heterosexual/homosexual and male/female identity politics. Although the words "transgender" and "transsexual" popularly evoke images of a cross-dresser or an individual whose sex has been surgically reassigned, the identity of those who blur gender and sex distinction cannot be so readily determined by such outward physical appearances or characteristics. Instead, the true identity of the transgendered or transsexual person has more to do with

the internal feelings or emotions of that individual. Transgendered or transsexual people do not deny the reality of their anatomic sex but feel their psychosexual identity differs from their anatomic gender through an unexplainable, unfortunate "trick of nature" (Wolf et al., 525). This psychosexual disparity is best exemplified in Geoff Brown's novel *I Want What I Want* by the character of Roy Clark, an individual who is institutionalized because he is transgendered; Roy insists, "It was ridiculous that I should have been sent to a mental hospital. It was perfectly sane for me to want to be a woman. It was my body that was wrong, not my mind" (51). Although the terms "transgender" and "transsexual" have historically been used by institutions, such as medicine and law, to label individuals on the basis of what they wear or to categorize them according to the type of surgical and/or hormonal procedures they have undergone, today "transgender" serves as an "umbrella term" which includes and unites the community of "transsexuals, transgenders, transvestites, transgenderists, bigenders, drag queens, drag kings, cross-dressers, masculine women, feminine men, intersexuals . . . androgynes, cross-genders, shape-shifters, passing women, passing men, gender-benders, gender-blenders, [and] bearded women" (Feinberg x). Leslie Feinberg, who had her biologically assigned female sex surgically reassigned as male, points out that "not all transsexuals choose surgery or hormones; some transgender[ed] people do" (x). Feinberg's insistence that gender identification precedes the need or desire for surgical intervention is well taken, and for the sake of simplicity, the term "transgendered" will be utilized in discussion of Mick and Biff from this point forward.

In her characterizations of Mick and Biff, McCullers incorporates many of the attributes that psychiatry assigns to transgendered individuals; in a majority

of instances, her intuitive identification of these attributions in her fictional characters precedes publication of similar clinical research results, and, in all cases, she casts these unique personal dimensions in a more humane light than that presented by theories of sterile medicine and science. The stereotypical signs of transgenderism in a female include a girl's openly stated wish to be a boy, her insistence on dressing in boy's clothes, her lack of interest in doll play, and her strong preference for male companionship (Green 504). When sister Etta criticizes "those silly boy's clothes" that Mick prefers to wear, Mick shouts at her, "Shut up . . . I don't want to be like . . . you and I don't want to look like . . . you. And I won't. . . . I'd rather be a boy any day, and I wish I could move in with [my brother] Bill" (35). In addition to her wish to be a boy, her desire to dress boyishly, and her need for male companionship, Mick spends time and energy trying to convert an old broken ukulele into a violin, and instead of playing with dolls she prefers "fishing in the woods, [going] to the clubhouses [Bill] built with other boys, [and playing] the slot machine in the back of Mr. Brannon's restaurant" (37-39). Mick's identity as a transgendered individual is further evidenced by her efforts in high school to avoid taking "a stenographic course like [her sisters] Hazel and Etta had done [when] she got special permission and took mechanical shop like a boy" instead (88).

Although the two are often mistaken as one and the same, according to psychoanalytical literature, there is a clear distinction between a transgendered individual and a homosexual individual. A transgendered person sees himself or herself as the opposite sex; a homosexual person does not deny his or her biological sex (Pauly 463). Generally speaking, transgendered people desire heterosexuals of the same sex as sexual partners, and because of their gender identification, they adamantly reject the idea that their sexual activity is

homosexual (Socarides 341-42). However, there is little difference in the struggles of transgendered or homosexual individuals against the rigid confines of conventional sex and gender identity politics.

Mick's desire to be male is expressed in her many escapes to her "inside room" (138) and in her fantasy to join the army and go to war where she "could dress up like a boy and nobody could ever tell. Cut [her] hair off and all" (209). Her recognition, early in life, that she must withdraw or go somewhere else in order to be herself is a strong statement about the isolation and rejection felt by those who do not fit in. Mick's gender identification as masculine is further evidenced in her sympathetic response to her neighbor Harry Minowitz as he indirectly confesses his feelings for another male: "She read between the words that he had a crush on Mister Blount and she knew how he felt" (211). Mick's rejection of heterosexuality begins with her first sexual encounter with Harry. During intercourse Mick felt "like her head was broke off from her body and thrown away" (235). Louise Westling believes that Mick does not like sex because it "destroys rational control and blots out the self" (344). Westling mistakes Mick's reaction as an aversion to all sexuality. Considering McCullers' frankness in discussing her own "hatred of sexual intercourse with men, including Reeves," Mick's reaction to Harry as a sexual partner should be read as a subtext code, which by no means suggests a rejection of sexuality, only an aversion to heterosexuality (Carr, *Lonely Hunter* 288). After her one-time sexual experience with Harry, Mick tells him, "I didn't like that. I never will marry with any boy" (235-36). She does not identify with the female sexual role, and therefore she rejects the male as a possible sexual partner in life. Her rejection of conventional heterosexuality is later echoed in Biff's awareness "when suddenly he lost it. When he could lie with a woman no longer" (210).

At the end of the novel, Mick makes some type of concession to her lot in life. In order to help the family through a dire financial situation, she dons female attire and accepts a job at a local department store where she is prized "[b]ecause she could stand longer on her feet and work harder before giving out than any other girl" (299). Ironically, Mick finds a place where her masculine strength is at last appreciated, but only as long as it appears within the socially acceptable identity of a strong working girl. Mick is finally "shut out from the inside room" where in her younger days she had once been able to realize herself as male (301). Now, like those transgendered individuals who feel they are victims of some unfortunate "trick of nature," she is left feeling "like she was cheated," and she is "mad all the time" (302). Mick's character at the end of the novel demonstrates the psychological damage resulting from the marginalization of those who struggle with originality and find that only conventional roles of gender identification are available to them. Once Mick fantasized about becoming a famous musician; in the end when she is forced to comply with social norms, Mick's fragmented masculine identity exists only in fantasies of violent fights with men whose noses she breaks (302). McCullers' statement that fixed and rigid rules of sex and gender identification have negative consequences for individuals and society as a whole is well taken; individuals suffer broken dreams, and society must deal with the broken individuals who are denied the right to establish their own identity.

Mick and Biff share some special attributes; both find the darkness of night preferable to the light of day, and both have given up their faith in God. Mick thinks that

nights were secret, and of the whole summer they were the most important. In the dark she walked by herself and it was like she

was the only person in town. . . . Some kids were afraid to walk through strange places in the dark, but she wasn't. Girls were scared a man would come out from somewhere and put his teapot in them like they was married. Most girls were nuts. If a person the size of Joe Louis or Mountain Man Dean would jump out at her and want to fight she would run. But if it was somebody within twenty pounds of her weight she would give him a good sock and go right on. (86)

Under the cover of darkness, Mick's unconventional gender difference is not so noticeable; the darkness affords her time to think her own thoughts without worrying about what others think of her. Her self-confidence of summer youth and nighttime is a stark contrast to her anger as she moves into adulthood and her day job and becomes governed by convention as the novel closes. Biff works nights to avoid intimacy with his wife who works days. Working nights in the bar also allows Biff to study human nature; he tells his wife, "You never watch and think and try to figure anything out you don't know what it is to store up a whole lot of details and then come upon something real" (12). In addition to his maturity, Biff's observations of human nature and his reflections on the complexities of human existence prevent him from struggling with his transgenderism to the extent that Mick struggles with her gender identity. Biff's summation that the apparently heterosexual Jake Blount's "difference was not in the body; it was probably in the mind" inverts and echoes the psychoanalytical theory of transgenderism (17). However, to an extent Biff does hide his transgenderism behind the facade of conventional heterosexual marriage for a time, while Mick refuses to do so. Both, as victims of an unexplainable, unfortunate "trick of nature," reject God and the conventional premise that He

created man and woman as heterosexuals to populate the earth. Mick says, "I don't believe in God any more than I do Santa Claus" (42), and Biff worries "how [his mother] would have felt about his giving up church and religion" (26).

Similar to her treatment of Mick, McCullers assigns Biff many of the attributes that psychiatrists of the sixties and early seventies identified as belonging to transgendered individuals. While the critical assumptions that were articulated thirty years ago still remain as the basic analytical framework for approaching transgendered identity, feminine psychoanalysis and queer theory are currently challenging the labels of perceived marginality which result from conventional analytical discourse, such as effeminate male and masculine female. McCullers' portrayal of the ambiguously engendered Biff as the symbol of wisdom and balance is consistent with the recent efforts of sex and gender theorists who call attention to all that is problematic with the actual or implied categorizing of individuals as normal or abnormal.

According to psychoanalytical research, the transgendered male perceives his mother as the ideal person, and the relationship of the mother and son is excessively close (Pauly 460-71). A study by Jan Walinder shows that transgender male children typically enjoy "behaving and playing like members of the opposite sex"; Walinder finds that in their formative years, transgendered males "played with dolls, . . . chose to be the mother when playing house, . . . sewed and embroidered, [and] helped their mother with the house-work" (39-40). Walinder's observation is relevant to Biff. In an effort to defend the transient and drunken Jake Blount who has run up a hefty tab at the bar, Biff tells his wife Alice, "I like freaks" (11). When his wife accuses him of being a freak himself, Biff regrets trying to talk to her because "[b]eing around [her] always made him different from his real self," and the argument left him feeling "tough and small

and common as she was" (11). Biff tells her, "The trouble with you is that you don't have any real kindness. Not but one woman I've ever known had this real kindness I'm talking about" (11). Of course Biff is recalling his mother, and he does so again as his wife reads Bible verses in preparation for teaching her Sunday school class. Struggling "to separate the actual words from the sound of Alice's voice as she spoke them, [h]e wanted to remember the passage as his mother used to read it when he was a boy. With nostalgia he glanced down at the wedding ring on his fifth finger that had once been hers" (26). After his wife's death, he clears out her things, and as he examines the contents of a box containing old souvenirs, pictures, and "a large bone hairpin that had belonged to his mother," he reflects:

As a little boy he had loved to watch her comb and knot her long black hair. He had thought that the hairpins were curved as they were to copy the shape of a lady and he would sometimes play with them like dolls. At that time he had a cigar box full of scraps. He loved the feel and colors of beautiful cloth and he would sit with his scraps for hours under the kitchen table. But when he was six his mother took the scraps away from him. She was a tall, strong woman with a sense of duty like a man. She loved him best. Even now he sometimes dreamed of her. And her worn gold wedding ring stayed on his finger always. (192)

In this passage McCullers reveals that Biff has a strong identification with the mother figure, and she shows that he prefers the conventionally prescribed feminine over the masculine.

More importantly, McCullers incorporates another psychoanalytical aspect of male transgendered personality, and she calls attention to the double

standard of gender roles. According to family research focusing on transgenderism, mothers of transgendered males demonstrate a boyish femininity—are tomboys until puberty—and never enthusiastically embrace the sexual role of female (Stoller 431-34). While Biff's phallic mother can operate inside the domestic sphere "with a sense of duty like a man," the male child is forced to give up his feminine ways in a ritualistic and brutal rite of passage into the public sphere of manhood. Despite the vast body of currently available information focusing on the damage resulting from conventionally enforced roles of gender and sex identification, the majority of little boys who are perceived as feminine are marginalized at a far more tender age than little girls who demonstrate masculine characteristics. Further, research shows, "The tomboy characteristics of the mothers of trans[gendered] children . . . are generally accepted by society, whereas few parents will recognize or boast of their son's 'sissy' traits" (Kiell 342). However, in the multitude of Freudian slanted psychoanalytical findings that seem to abhor the "queerness" of most mother/son relationships, there is the indirect suggestion that a genetic predisposition to refuse an assigned gender role might be at work since the gender identification problem occurs in consecutive generations of the family line. Transgenderism may very well have "powerful genetic or biological roots because the commitment to a change of sex is so strong and often has started so early in childhood that no psychodynamic generalizations explain the clinical picture satisfactorily" (Stoller 153). If this is the case, those who challenge conventional gender assignment are more normal and natural than those who prescribe and reinforce submissive feminine and dominant masculine role playing. The point that the strong female and weak male relationship is problematic cannot be overlooked; the real deviancy and perversion arises from

conventional society's fixation on sexual politics. Additionally, researchers who focus on the formation or creation of transgendered males have already rendered the females in compliance with social norms as mothers. Regardless of their desires to be masculine, their identification as mothers locate these females, first and foremost, in conventionally defined sex and gender roles; they have submitted to male sexual desire, and their bodies have produced offspring from that union. As sexual objects and mothers, these females are not problematic in conventional society.

McCullers suggests that females are allowed to retain their transgendered identity until puberty; Mick is not faced with pressures to conform until she is thirteen years old. Biff, however, must conform to social norms of masculinity at the age of six, or the average age that a child begins socialization in the educational institution—public school. At first, Mick's desire to be masculine eroticizes, reaffirms, and sustains masculinity as the standard. As a human body lacking a penis, her pseudo-masculinity is no threat to the established order; she cannot impregnate, and theoretically, she cannot force a male to sexually submit to her. However, the age of thirteen marks for Mick the onset of womanhood. Her developing breasts and the potential fertility of her womb mean that the time has arrived for her to eroticize, reaffirm, and sustain masculinity in a different way, not in mimicry, but as the opposition by which masculinity is defined.

In a discussion of the social institution of family relating to gender and inequality, Jean Baker Miller says that the attribution of gender difference means permanent inequality for females, especially when compared with the prototype of temporary inequality in the relationship of adult and child. While the child is supposed to grow into a parent, the wife will never grow up to become a

husband (4-6). While she is allowed more flexibility than Biff in gender identification in the beginning, the highest status available to Mick in conventional society is woman and/or wife. Her refusal to become wife and mother may threaten conventionality to an extent, but her existence as female still eroticizes the status of the male. Even if her compliance with social norms is forced or only a temporary concession, her choices are limited to unwilling submission or refusal. Because Mick is female, the power to dominate and insist is not available to her; such a power is elusive. For this reason, she does not pose a real threat to the power of the patriarchy. On the other hand, Biff's early identification with femininity is problematic; he threatens to undermine the masculine standard by privileging the feminine substandard, and since a male cannot eroticize another male—or the standard cannot eroticize the standard—in the conventional scheme of things, Biff must be forced into the masculine identified role. Ironically, Mick reaches her full growth potential and attempts to reject the submissive feminine role assigned to her; in contrast, Biff ultimately rejects the dominant masculine role assigned to him by strongly identifying with the mother and refusing to grow up.

Some feminist psychoanalysts see Biff's engendering as more normal and natural than that of conventionally socialized heterosexual males. In particular, feminist psychoanalysis tends to dismiss the concept of Oedipal resolution in the Freudian concept of male-child desire for the mother. Feminists theorize that both the female and male child traditionally identify with the mother as the role model in her role as primary care-giver; socialization as exclusively male does not occur for the male child until he enters the social world at school age some years later. If the male child identifies with the mother, his object of desire, like that of the mother, is the father. Conventional psychoanalysis fails to adequately

explain what happens to the male child's desire for the father; feminist psychoanalysis argues that desire for the father is repressed, but never replaced, in heterosexual socialization when the male child begins to identify with the masculine world of the father. This aspect of feminist analysis of desire supports queer theory's probing of homosociability and homosexuality and the role repression plays in the separation of the two forms of male bonding. Consequently, the female child who remains aligned with the mother does not experience the fragmentation required of heterosexual males, nor do homosexual males.

Although Mick and Biff, on the surface, seem to comply with conventional gender identity (symbolized by Mick's feminine dress and Biff's heterosexual marriage), they internalize some bizarre fragment of the identities they feel that they cannot outwardly exhibit. Mick fantasizes herself acting out stereotypical masculine violence, and Biff feels disgust for his body. In addition to the common characteristic of having "disgust with [their bodies], primarily [their] genitals," Norman Kiell reports that "Some [transgendered] men try to change their appearance by plucking their eyebrows, . . . removing facial hair, . . . shaving their arms and legs and trimming their pubic hair to make it look feminine" (346). McCullers hints that Biff is uncomfortable with his beard which is "black and heavy as though it had grown for three days" (11). And perhaps, in an effort either to hide his hairy arms from Mick or to hide his shaven arms from Jake Blount for the "several minutes" that the three of them stand together, Biff struggles with gender identity as symbolized by his continuous "fumbli[ng] with his shirt-sleeves"; he "unrolled his shirt-sleeves and then folded them up carefully again" (16). Additionally, McCullers shows that Biff basically ignores his genitals when bathing, except for the two times "during the season he got

into the bathtub and cleaned all of his parts" (26). Finally, Biff is reluctant to undress in front of his wife. McCullers shows that when he finished work and went upstairs to sleep, "he waited until Alice had left the room before he slipped off his trousers and crawled inside" the bed (26). Biff comes to realize that most people, even those who are identified with conventional heterosexuality, have some problems with body image perception; he understands that Blount covers his mouth because he is angry and embarrassed at crying in public. He notices that Singer, the deaf mute, guards his hands, and he observes that "Mick picked at the front of her blouse to keep the cloth from rubbing the new, tender nipples beginning to come out on her breast" (23-24). Of his reflective ability and his capacity to understand his own position in life, the narrator says, "Lingeringly Biff turned the ring on his little finger. Anyway he knew what it was not. Not. Any more. . . . His hand in his pocket moved nervously toward his genitals. [And Biff considers how it is] Funny to spot it in other people though" (24).

When his wife dies, Biff recreates her in himself in a sense as he reclaims his own identity, and his sexuality takes on complex dimensions. In the process of grief, he considers that "the one who has gone is not really dead, but grows and is created for a second time in the soul of the living" (104). Biff discovers and uses perfume and hair rinse that belonged to his deceased wife, and he does some sewing to facilitate the new decor of their bedroom as he remodels the environment. Alone in the small apartment, "he often would uncork the bottle of Agua Florida and touch the stopper to the lobes of his ears or to his wrists," and he found that Alice's lemon hair rinse "made his dark, white-streaked hair seem fluffy and thick. He liked it" (192). During the remodeling of his living quarters, he adds "a thick red rug, . . . a beautiful cloth of Chinese blue to hang on the side of the wall," and "he had borrowed [his sister-in-law] Lucille's sewing

machine to make deep red curtains for the windows" (192). As Mick's artistic dreams diminish, Biff's artistic abilities come alive; he finds that he has "an eye for color and design" as he redecorates his living quarters and arranges displays for the window front of his business (196). And finally, to symbolize that his wife is no longer an immediate reminder of his need to assume the conventional role of heterosexual male, Biff "bundled up Alice's personal possessions to give to Lucille," and then "he sat in the tub and bathed himself all over" (105). Whereas Biff did not previously feel comfortable with his own body (as demonstrated in his reluctance to undress in the presence of his wife), in her absence and with the dissolution of their heterosexual marriage, he rediscovers and begins to appreciate the suppressed eroticism of his own being. According to psychoanalytical research, the transgendered male is "erotically responsive . . . to the image of himself as a female" (Money and Brennan 203-04). The narrator says that four months after Alice's death, Biff "stood shirtless before the mirror and dabbled some of [her] perfume on his dark, hairy ampits. The scent made him stiffen. He exchanged a deadly secret glance with himself in the mirror and stood motionless" (191). Biff's rejection of himself as a formerly perceived heterosexual male is expressed in his reflection on his married life with Alice as he projects that "now their life together was whole as only the past can be whole" (191). The death of the wife Alice also means the symbolic death of the husband Biff, and his new life allows great flexibility and complexity in his expression of his sex and gender identity.

McCullers once again demonstrates her ability to invert and expose the rigid rules of convention through the vehicle of the philosopher Biff as he assumes a stronger transgendered identity and calls attention to the sexual politics of power as he flirts with pedophilia. The decadence of Alice and Biff's

infertile heterosexual marriage is rendered in terms of her death following the delivery at the hands of surgeons of "a tumor almost the size of a newborn child" (103). Sitting with her corpse in the hospital room, Biff's "thoughts turned to a picture that had long been stored inside him" (103). He imagines, "The cold green ocean and a hot gold strip of sand. The little children playing on the edge of the silky line of foam. The sturdy brown girl, the thin little naked boys, the half-grown children running and calling out to each other with sweet, shrill voices" (103-04). Like Mick, Biff's identity is indeterminate. He is a heterosexual male who harbors secret pedophilic tendencies, and, at the same time, he is a female trapped inside a male's body who fantasizes about having children of his own.

At the home of his sister-in-law, Lucille, as they prepare to attend Alice's funeral, Biff discovers that "[w]hen he tried to remember her face there was a queer blankness in him" (110). His infertile marriage with Alice is set in direct contrast to the boiling pot of domestic violence in Lucille's former marriage. Just as Biff has denied his transgenderism to meet the expectations of convention, Lucille has whitewashed her position as a battered wife to prop up heterosexual marriage as the ideal. In response to her questioning, Biff describes an incident in his bar several years ago; he tells his sister-in-law that her husband Leroy

"came in that night and started drinking, and when he was drunk he shot off his mouth about you. He said he would come home about once a month and beat hell out of you and you would take it. But then afterward you would step outside in the hall and laugh aloud a few times so that the neighbors in the other rooms would think you both had just been playing around and it had all been a joke."
(109-10)

The relationship of Lucille and Biff represents a healthy coalition of female and male; she understands that Biff is "different." He can be honest with Lucille without having to assume the stance of a dominant heterosexual male. Lucille suggests the lack of sexual tension between them when she tells Biff, "You know how we always been—we nearly all the time understand each other pretty well without any kind of throbs either way" (110). The lack of importance of sexual activity in many transgendered lives is supported by the research of Norman Kiell, who finds, "Many trans[gendered individuals] have no overt sex life at all, with low libidinal energy" (337). Neither Mick nor Biff demonstrate an intense interest in sex, but both are capable of feeling intense emotions, and Lucille suggests that Biff is capable of dealing with those emotions in a logical way. She tells Biff, "We been knowing each other a pretty long time, and I understand now that you got a real reason for every single thing you ever do. Your mind runs by reasons instead of just wants" (109).

Part of the reason Biff rejects exclusive conventional heterosexuality lies in this reasoning ability referred to by Lucille, which allows him to see life from a different perspective. From a distance, Biff watches Mick and notes, "She was at the age when she looked as much like an overgrown boy as a girl" (112). As he wonders "on that subject [he questions] why was it that the smartest people mostly missed [the] point [that by] nature all people are of both sexes?" (112). He understands

marriage and the bed is not all by any means. The proof? Real youth and old age. Because often old men's voices grow high and reedy and they take on a mincing walk. And old women sometimes grow fat and their voices get rough and deep and they grow dark little mustaches. And he even proved it himself—the part of him

that sometimes almost wished he was a mother and that Mick and [his niece] Baby were his kids. (112-13)

His identification with motherhood continues to grow. In reaction to his soothing her child, Baby, Lucille tells Biff, "you'd make a mighty good mother"; he accepts her words as "a compliment" (196). And later he fantasizes that he will "adopt a couple of little children. A boy and a girl," and he imagines "the clothes he would make for [them]" (201). His questioning of whether "[t]he little girl [is] Mick (or Baby?)" suggests that Biff is capable of allowing Mick the masculine identity of boy she is denied by conventional society, since it would not be needed for Baby whose femininity is exaggerated throughout the novel (201).

However, the "something real" that Biff wants to give to Mick carries with it an allusion to some other dimension of his sexuality, since although "[h]e had done nothing wrong . . . he [still] felt a strange guilt" (199). Biff sees this emotion as "[t]he dark guilt in all men, unreckoned and without a name" (199). Here McCullers calls attention to the erotic power of the child, and she anticipates the newest arena of debate amongst queer theorists with her hint at Biff's potential pedophilic feelings. Certainly, conventional society maintains romantic notions of the innocent child and denies that children are sexual beings. Even among the most liberal theorists, the topics of children and sexuality remain taboo.

Annamarie Jagose reports that for queer theorists

the concept [of pedophilia] evokes a variety of positions in a debate structured overwhelmingly by such issues as consent, power and the legal definition of childhood. The association of paedophiles with gay men persists (in spite of evidence to the contrary) in homophobic culture, which is doubtless why the

mainstream gay movement would be reluctant to countenance any official discussion of this matter. (70)

In contrast to conventional ideology which simply denies sexuality in children, McCullers employs a historical stereotype of sexual exploitation of children. In a conversation with Jake Blount regarding the period of history when each would have best liked to have lived, "Ancient Greece was [the time of preference for Biff]. Walking in sandals on the edge of the blue Aegean. The loose robes girdled at the waist. Children. The marble baths and the contemplation in the temples" (194). Of course, the reference to "Children" is meant to evoke the pervasive homoerotic, pedophilic image of adult Greek males' attraction to boys. As Jean Baker Miller has already suggested, the little boys of Ancient Greece—like all males in conventional society—would eventually grow into men and potentially inherit the right of the patriarchy to dominate the next generation of little boys. However, McCullers does not readily focus on the physical dimensions of human sexuality; for her, simply raising issues of power and politics best serves her purpose, and her resolution of Biff and Mick's relationship shows that she always privileges the emotional over the physical.

After a brief episode of his "stalking" Mick or walking in areas where he thought he might get a glimpse of her, Biff realizes:

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 bracelet, and the new way she crossed her legs and pulled the hem of her skirt down past her knees. He watched her and felt a sort of gentleness. In him the old feeling was gone. For a year this love had blossomed strangely. He had questioned it a hundred

times and found no answer. And now, as a summer flower shatters in September, it was finished. (305)

In the end, Biff does not act on his impulses. Statistics show that adult males who are sexually attracted to children predominantly identify themselves as heterosexual; rarely is an adult male who is sexually attracted to children a member of the gay community (Sex Information 88). Since Biff is neither heterosexual nor homosexual, his existence blurs the boundaries for conventional labels of sex and gender identification and creates a situation where labels of deviancy collapse on themselves. His impulse to see Mick as an erotic being and his hesitancy to act on that impulse suggests that he confronts his sexuality in an open and honest manner; even after she is no longer erotically appealing to him, Biff still sees her as worthy of human dignity, and he maintains feelings "of gentleness" for her. His transgenderism perhaps represents his strange attraction to Mick, and their story raises the question of whether she would have been better off with him as someone "queer" like herself, than she is as a young girl forced to abandon her dreams in an effort to pull her family—the prime symbol of the conventional heterosexual institution—out of financial ruin through her drudge work. Due to the absence of any physical aspect of their relationship, Biff's attraction to Mick must be seen as a gender attraction grounded in the emotional—not a sexual attraction grounded in the physical.

Biff's character is in various ways closely related to that of Antonapoulos; both represent extreme complexity in their presentations of sexual and gender identities. While McCullers uses Biff to probe emotional and social issues relating to gender, she adds a complex sexual dimension to the novel with her characterization of Antonapoulos. McCullers' use of the silent males, Singer and

Antonapoulos, serves as her political statement on the positions of homosexuals, who were classified as either criminal or insane in the United States during the 1940s. Because homosexuals were censored from explaining or defending their situation, their silence became, in the words of Catharine R. Stimpson, "a shrewd refusal to provoke punitive powers" (366). Stimpson claims that the policies which caused marginalization of homosexuals in society and the resulting necessary survival tactic of silence on their part made literature by or about homosexuals basically impossible; writers who chose to present homosexual themes adapted an encrypted language which would satisfy the taste of conventional readers, but would also convey a shared and internalized meaning in the homosexual subculture (366). In the case of Singer and Antonapoulos, body language, especially the language of the eyes and hands, is used to express what their lips cannot utter. Their silence is both literal and figurative. McCullers says that the two men walk to work each morning, and before going their separate ways, Singer "nearly always put his hand on his friend's arm and looked for a second into his face" (1). Although McCullers does not include an explicit sexual dimension of their lives, Singer and Antonapoulos are, nonetheless, involved in a complicated relationship with sexual possibility.

Singer is usually cited as the protagonist in the novel; as a rigid, logical, and controlling character, he is more closely aligned with the conventional masculine perspective. While Singer is a tragic figure, he lacks the complexity of Antonapoulos, a female trapped in a male body—and therefore one who embodies more qualities of "the other." McCullers characterizes Antonapoulos as an earthy individual who privileges the physical over the intellectual. She says, "Except drinking and a certain solitary secret pleasure, Antonapoulos loved to eat more than anything else in the world" (2). By drinking,

Antonapoulos seeks to escape reality, and in masturbating and eating he seeks pleasure and comfort in a world where others try to control every aspect of his life. For instance, when Antonapoulos becomes ill and the doctor orders a strict diet that does not allow wine, Singer enforces the doctor's decision over the protests of Antonapoulos (4). But the cousin, Charles Parker, demonstrates the ultimate control over Antonapoulos when he arranges for Antonapoulos' admittance to the mental hospital because he is "afraid that some day he might be responsible for his cousin" (6-7). In their decision-making capacities, the doctor, Singer, and Parker respectively serve as the expert on life, the well-meaning spouse, and the surrogate parent to Antonapoulos, and they render him as powerless as the woman of the 1940s. In "Gothic Love," Stephen Adams characterizes the relationship of Singer and Antonapoulos as "a one-way direction of longing instead of an interplay of mutual response" (61). However, Antonapoulos demonstrates heroic qualities in his struggle for communication, recognition, and control in his life. Although Antonapoulos has little say in shaping his own identity, on occasion he manages physically and mentally to escape the control of others.

Before he is confined to the mental hospital, McCullers suggests that Antonapoulos experienced a "false pregnancy" in his efforts to bring about new meaning to his otherwise dull life. Furthermore, she characterizes Singer as a typical male who cannot comprehend the importance of this necessary fantasy and the resulting emotional loss in the life of Antonapoulos. As Antonapoulos becomes more obsessed with food, his weight gain mimics that of a pregnant female. McCullers' description of that event is similar to the physical and emotional details involved in giving birth. With the onset of labor pains, Antonapoulos "sat up in bed with his hands on his fat stomach and big, oily tears

rolled down his cheek" (4). Like the dutiful husband, Singer notifies family (Charles Parker), and he also "arrange[s] for leave from his own work" to stay with *the expectant mother*, the narrator says, "All day he sat by his friend's bed and did what he could to make the time pass quickly" (4). In the last stage of labor, the mother typically exhibits instinctual, animalistic behaviors which are usually expressed aggressively toward the father. From his hospital bed, Antonapoulos "looked at [Singer] angrily from the corners of his eyes and would not be amused" (4). Antonapoulos never recovers from his perceived loss, and he never forgives Singer for his lack of emotional support and understanding.

The narrator says:

After a week Antonapoulos was able to return to his work. But from that time on there was a difference in their way of life. Trouble came to the two friends. Antonapoulos was not ill any more, but a change had come in him. He was irritable and no longer content to spend the evenings quietly in their home. (5)

Although the idea of male pregnancy sounds absurd, there are myths and folk tales which contain accounts of males giving birth to children. Furthermore, in *Articulate Flesh*, Gregory Woods points out that incidents of false pregnancies in males have been recorded in physiological journals, such as James A. Knight's "False Pregnancy in a Male," and Gerald J. Aronson's "Delusion of Pregnancy in a Male Homosexual with Abdominal Cancer" (92-3). There are countless interpretations that can be made on the mental status of the male who claims to be pregnant, but culturally and spiritually, such a man positively affirms a traditional function of woman, and at the same time expresses an aspect of Christian belief in the possibility of a miraculous birth.

Denied his miraculous birth, Antonapoulos looks for other ways to add dimension to his life. For a time, Antonapoulos works at his cousin's fruit store where his duties include the traditional female chores of cleaning, cooking, and storing or displaying various food products. During the day Antonapoulos secretly hoards small tidbits of food in a bag he keeps under a shelf (2). In this work environment, Antonapoulos is required to touch the objects that he loves, yet he can never openly possess the food because it belongs to his cousin. In "The Beast in the Closet," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick analyzes food as a symbol used to "signify the bitterness of dependency or inequality" (310). By taking the food which belongs to the controlling cousin, Antonapoulos symbolically reclaims some power and independence. The act of taking food progresses into other areas of kleptomania which significantly impact Antonapoulos' life. Gregory Woods finds that "kleptomania is a compulsion not necessarily to possess . . . but to take possession" (173). At first, taking perishable food items satisfies Antonapoulos' need to take possession, but he later wants things that will not decay; his tastes turn to "pieces of silverware," "a floor lamp," and "an electric train he had seen in a showcase" (5). Woods says that the involvement of hands, the solitary nature of the act, and the guilt felt afterwards link kleptomania to masturbation (173). Yet this criterion is only partially applicable to Antonapoulos. Because he does not feel any remorse for his kleptomania, Antonapoulos is in fact rejecting the category projected for him by psychologists and sociologists.

Finally, Antonapoulos' behavior becomes more defiant and aggressive:

These habits of Antonapoulos grew worse. One day at noon he walked calmly out of the fruit store of his cousin and urinated in public against the wall of the First National Building across the

street. At times he would meet people on the sidewalk whose faces did not please him, and he would bump into these persons and push at them with his elbows and stomach. (5)

Antonopoulos tries to force the world to acknowledge him. In fact, his behavior can be considered as an attempt at "coming out." When he urinates on the bank wall, Antonopoulos attempts to make the private self public. He reveals a penis that biologically qualifies him as a male, but his unconventional behavior speaks to his rejection of the conventional male role. Additionally, this particular act of discharging urine shares a connection to the homoerotic symbolism of spilled liquid associated with the conventional view of the non-progenitive semen produced in male homosexual mating. By aggressively bumping into the people on the street, Antonopoulos establishes physical contact that forces them to acknowledge his presence, though they might wish him to remain silent and invisible.

In the end, Antonopoulos' insistence on being heard and seen causes severe consequences in his life. At first, Antonopoulos is treated as a criminal. He is arrested for "such charges as theft, committing public indecencies, and assault and battery" (5). Singer tries to keep Antonopoulos out of trouble and under control, but "on one occasion he was unable to pay bail for his friend and Antonopoulos spent the night in jail" (6). Ironically, in jail Antonopoulos finds the variety and pleasure for which he has longed, so much so that

When Singer came to get him out the next day he was sulky. He did not want to leave. He had enjoyed his dinner of sowbelly and cornbread with syrup poured over it. And the new sleeping arrangements and his cellmates pleased him. (6)

After Antonapoulos finds acceptance and perhaps even sexual gratification in the subculture of jail, he is unable to return to his former life with the boring and controlling Singer. On occasion, he "cooked the new dish he had eaten in jail" in order to evoke those memories (6). In *Embracing a Gay Identity*, Wilfrid R. Koponen discusses prison as a place where homosexuals may experience a rebirth or discover a sexual freedom, which is a reversal of the principles intended by conventional society (44).

Because the ever defiant Antonapoulos feels that jail is a pleasant experience rather than a punishment, he can no longer be treated as a criminal. Thus, the only other category applicable to the sexually deviant Antonapoulos is insanity. The social constructs of the 1940s force Antonapoulos into what John M. Clum describes as the "homeless place of homosexuality" (58).

Antonapoulos becomes a homeless non-citizen; he is involuntarily committed to a hospital for the mentally insane where he becomes a ward of the state. This fictional account is McCullers' biting critique of conventional society in which she finds that those who do not conform to mainstream culture will be punished or banished under the guise of rehabilitation and cure.

Ultimately, Antonapoulos' cure is death. After trying to externalize his feelings with aggressive behavior and public display, Antonapoulos internalizes the process, which is symbolized by his illness. When Singer visits Antonapoulos for the last time, he discovers that his friend has developed nephritis, a disease in which the kidneys lose the ability to rid the body of waste and toxins (187). Antonapoulos dies from the poison of his own body. The disease that destroys from within reflects mainstream ideology of the degenerative nature of homosexuality. Later, Singer becomes so distraught over the loss of his friend that he commits suicide by putting "a bullet in his

chest" (280). In contrast to Mick's concessions to conventionality and Biff's resistance to categorization in his ability to lead a double-life or exist "[b]etween the two worlds [in which] he was suspended" (306), Singer and Antonopoulos are given the same (and only) options of escape available to women who have not conformed to conventional roles in society—suicide or insanity.

McCullers clearly shows that those who cannot or will not conform and submit to the ideas of conventionality are punished and made outcast. Her novel serves as an important social critique of the practices and assumptions in place in the early 1940s. Her ability to probe social conventions, to reveal the inherent damage caused by such conventions, to penetrate the human soul, and to deliver all in such an artistic vision is evidenced by her skillful deprivileging of gender norms and her careful examination of sexual difference in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

**Chapter 2: Phallic Institutions and Sexual Repression
in *Reflections in a Golden Eye***

In *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941), Carson McCullers presents a scathing critique of military life. Set on a southern army base in the early 1940s, *Reflections* offers a hard-core perspective on militarized masculinity. The career officers, Major Morris Langdon and Captain Weldon Penderton, exemplify extremes in sexual expression. Langdon indulges in a sexual affair with Penderton's wife, Leonora, while Penderton struggles to repress and deny his homosexuality. Although Langdon and Penderton serve as interesting contrasts in a study of sexual politics, the relationship between Penderton and Private Ellgee Williams, an enlisted man, provides a more interesting probe of the concept of masculine identity in the military. McCullers describes the army base as a place where "all is designed according to a certain rigid pattern" (1). Conforming to the patterned, or regimented, lifestyle is a necessity for military personnel. Indoctrination, usually intense in the first weeks of training, strips away individuality and simultaneously mandates the goals of the institution.

The importance of McCullers' choice of a military base as her setting in *Reflections* cannot be overstated. No other institution in the United States of America is more associated with the formation of masculine identity than the military. Although women and gay men presently offer a challenge to the hierarchy, the military traditionally places great value on aggressive, heterosexual masculinity, and that tradition of masculinity is thematically significant to McCullers' novel. Military personnel who hold views outside those delineated by the institution must abandon or repress those ideas in some manner, "for once a man enters the army he is expected only to follow the heels ahead of him" (1). Since conformity and masculine identity are so

interdependent, private life and public life become difficult to separate.

Reflections demonstrates the power that tradition holds in the military, a place where stereotypical sex and gender roles are strongly ingrained. McCullers calls attention to the limitations and consequences of rigid, institutional roles of identification, and she points to the violent means by which patriarchy is affirmed in our society.

Until recently, women have been barred from all but ancillary functions in the armed forces, so the foundation and history of military service has basically been about men and an idealized masculine identity, an identity constructed on the heterosexual male body with all its needs and desires. Homosexual males, who naturally have no interest in sexually dominating a female, have traditionally been excluded from military service or not allowed to express themselves because they do not reflect the values of the heterosexual hierarchy. In effect, the military acts as police in dictating and enforcing work division along gender lines, with the hierarchy invested in the image of the dominant, phallic male as the symbol of masculinity. Because military and war are so strongly associated, it is a given that military training will involve lessons in aggression and violence; the ability to kill the enemy and the willingness to sacrifice oneself in battle are two objectives the army hopes to instill during physical training and indoctrination. The direct contradiction of pushing males to identify with dominant roles while also requiring them to surrender to institutional goals can only be accomplished in a system that values the physical at the expense of the intellectual and emotional.

David H. J. Morgan attributes cult-like qualities to the military in his discussion of the most readily recognized symbol of soldiering—"the uniform [which] absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless masculinity while

also connoting a control of emotion and a subordination to a larger rationality" (166). The focus on and glorification of the phallic male body becomes inseparable from the social process of indoctrination. Successful indoctrination of a male means complete separation from the feminine, and such an indoctrination carries with it a socialization of homophobia, a socialization based on the traditional perception that the effeminate male is a pathologicalized entity. The American Psychiatric Association's declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder weakens the military's stand of prohibiting or censoring gays in the service; however, the present "don't ask; don't tell" policy makes it clear that the military is still in the business of protecting and promoting an idealized heterosexual, masculine identity.

Because sex and gender are so defining for the military, the idea of women and gay men serving as equals to heterosexual males is problematic, since both represent what the heterosexual male is not. In such a homosocially engendered and homophobic charged environment, bizarre expressions of masculine sexuality are bound to occur. This is the case with McCullers' characters, Major Morris Langdon, Captain Weldon Penderton, and Private Ellgee Williams, who become entangled in complex relationships where labels of normalcy and deviancy are called into question. Although *Reflections* takes place in a time of peace, Langdon, Penderton, and Williams are nonetheless thoroughly located in a culture of dominance and violence. The cost of so blindly supporting such a hegemonic patriarchy is evident at the conclusion of the novel.

Langdon represents the ideal militarized masculinity and maintains his identity with displays of physical prowess as in his horse riding capabilities and his sexual conquest of Penderton's physically attractive wife, Lenora. Because

he operates as the normative symbol, Langdon has no need to reflect on his status, a status of power and prestige. His socialization of self-involvement allows him to ignore problems or project them onto others. He enjoys a simple life of physical pleasures because he refuses to become involved in any in-depth issues, even those concerning his own personal affairs. Langdon sees his wife Alison's emotional and physical distress "as something morbid and female, altogether outside his control" (46). Since he represents the norm in military life, his behavior is unquestionable. Langdon embraces the philosophy that the military has "made a man of him" (162). He has been successfully socialized to see the heterosexual masculine as the standard and all "others" as objects.

The hierarchy of sexual politics is also represented through Langdon; he, in effect, exercises control of others' sexualities through his symbolic power to create the marginalized identities of others. Such labels of marginality or deviancy prop up his image as the norm. The other characters derive their sexual identities through him; Alison becomes the frigid wife, Lenora the adulterous wife, Penderton the repressed homosexual, and Williams the voyeur. Their "otherness" arises from their differentiation to and distance from the standard of the heterosexual male. Langdon's position of power has no rationale other than dominance, violence, and aggression. Don Conway-Long theorizes, "Male dominance is real, with very real effect, yet it is built on insecurity and fear of loss of masculinity through the (subversive) action of women or other men" (74). Langdon's belief in the rigid division of sex and gender roles is evidenced by his homophobic attack on Anacleto, the effeminate male Filipino housekeeper, who Langdon thinks would have benefited from military service because it "[w]ould have knocked all the nonsense [or gay sensibility] out of him" (162). Although Anacleto is male, he affirms the female

with his inclination to express himself by "dancing around to music and messing with water-colors" (163). Langdon wishes to use physical aggression and violence to force Anacleto, and others like him, to conform to militaristic views of sexual and gender identity. However, Anacleto blurs the distinction of sex and gender roles so important to military hierarchy, and he undermines heterosexual masculinity in his relationship with Landon's wife Alison, a female he loves and one he does not sexually desire or need to sexually dominate. Langdon's homophobic reaction is grounded in his identification with the institutional concept of masculinity, which ensures he will devalue the feminine. He understands that the army "would have run [Anacleto] ragged and he would have been miserable, but even that seems to [Langdon] better than the other" (163). Here, Langdon literally names that which is not heterosexually masculine as "the other," and he asserts that those identified with heterosexual masculinity have the right to control the gender expression and sexuality of others; heterosexual masculine identity depends on such dominancy. Just as he feels entitled to force Anacleto to become masculine, he feels entitled to use females as objects for his own satisfaction and as a means of establishing and maintaining his own masculinity. Militarized masculinity requires that men act as the aggressors and women function as the subordinates. When men like Anacleto refuse to act and women like Alison refuse to function, masculine identity is threatened.

The frailty of such a masculine identity becomes obvious when the female refuses to become the feminine object against which the masculine subject is defined. The source of Langdon's identity, or position, in the institution of the family, as he is defined in opposition to his wife, arises from the presence of her femininity or the absence of it. Langdon's wife Alison sexually or physically

withdraws from him because he is unable to understand her emotional and intellectual needs. Because his identity depends on the physical domination of the female, he must have a subordinate female in order to maintain his masculine status. Langdon finds fulfillment in a relationship with Penderton's wife Lenora, who also exists only in the physical; she is "feeble-minded," and Langdon "love[s] her for it all the more" (22). That his sexual identity grows from his military masculinity is evident in his morning-after reflections on his first sexual encounter with Lenora, which he imagines was "like being out on maneuvers, shivering all through a cold rainy night in a tent that leaked. And then to get up at dawn and see that the rain was over and the sun was out again. And to watch the fine-looking soldiers making coffee over campfires" (67). For Langdon, sex with a woman is a military experience that allows him to feel close to other men; the female body is an object that allows him to homosocially express his heterosexuality.

As Alison pulls away from Langdon, he turns to Lenora to sexually reassert his masculinity. The need to act out this type of defining ritual suggests that heterosexual masculine identity is the most unstable of all identities. Unlike "the other"—homosexual males—who feel no need to prove their homosexuality, the heterosexual male must continually prove his masculinity in the face of all threats and challenges. Dependent on male control, physical violence, and sexual dominance, heterosexual masculine identity is not conferred on males by females through oppositional definition; instead, such an identity is possible only through the recognition of certain characteristics valued by other heterosexual males. Although the female is instrumental in defining the male, her value is as the object by which a heterosexual male displays for—and seeks the approval of—other heterosexual men. Langdon's homosocial nature is revealed in his

reactions to important domestic events which shed light on the deterioration of his marriage. His sexual union with his wife produces a physically frail and handicapped offspring. He emotionally abandons his wife during this crucial period, and rejects their child in fear "that if he had to touch that baby he would shudder all over" (52). The presence of the doctors and nurses in his home during the infant's extended illness diminishes his physical importance, and he resents not having a warm meal at the end of the day. Because he identifies so strongly with the physical, he cannot accept a child who is less than physically perfect. When the baby (whose "index and third fingers were grown together") dies in the first year of life, Langdon "could feel nothing except relief" (52). In failing health, depressed by the death of her child, and finally no longer able to cope with her husband's unfaithfulness, Alison commits an act of desperation; she leaves the Penderton home where she and her husband are visiting, runs home, tragically turns on herself, and "cut[s] off the tender nipples of her breasts with the garden shears" (40). In violent protest of her status as female object, Alison makes sure her breasts will no longer be perceived as symbolic of female sexual attractiveness, since she knows in her heart that the natural function of female breasts is breast feeding infants, and her infant is dead. Alison attempts to recreate herself as a woman-identified female by mutilating her breasts in reaction to and in opposition of the identity assigned to her in a male dominated environment.

Although she achieves her goal of withdrawing or removing herself from the category of male-defined female sexual object, she, like Antonapoulos, is nonetheless rendered the masculine-created identity of "insane." Until recently, the field of psychoanalysis, like the institution of the military, has been male dominated in foundation and practice. In this case, diagnosis or identification of

a mentally normal or mentally abnormal female would depend on a male perspective. The same may be said for the field of medicine. And of course, since the beginning of Freudian influence, the social and scientific context of "normal" has been constructed on white, middle-class, heterosexual male thought processes.

Feminist psychoanalytical research suggests that the male objectification of the female body is grounded in fetishism which grows out of a need to fragment or dissect female identity in order to mentally control and physically dominate (Daly 235). The power of the patriarchy is not an inherent power of maleness, but a power that is usurped by the assault on the female body and mind. After Alison refuses the physical role of female, she is deemed mentally defective and sent away to an institution. Physically disfigured in appearance as a sexual object and mentally defective in rejection of the wife's role, her body and her mind, each "degraded in its fall" (like the bird killed by Langdon), no longer benefit the patriarchy (47). The direct violence fantasized by Langdon to socially control Anacleto pales in comparison to the indirect violence done to Alison in the institution of marriage. The narrator says, "[T]he diseases that attack the body and the brain simultaneously are of a special kind" (153). Put another way, the simultaneous attack on the female body and the female mind is a disease in which the patriarchy specializes. Women who thwart or threaten the established hierarchy must be redefined or reconstructed; women who cannot be redeemed must be destroyed. The redefinition and reconstruction of Alison is attempted by military men (her husband along with his Colonel friend and associate) who attempt to put her body and mind back together in order to reestablish their ideal version of female. The necessity of that which is female and feminine as the object for the definition of male and masculine is echoed in

Langdon's questioning of his own identity and his perception that Alison's mental state is "a reflection on his own respectability" (151). He cares little for her pain and suffering, but he is concerned about how the domestic crisis will affect his image in the eyes of other men. After Alison's death, Langdon goes through the motions of grief, but his main concern is with image. His goals are to maintain his "healthy body" and to exemplify "patriotism" (168). The tragic death of his wife leaves him unaltered; he remains the phallic male who finds his identity in military ideology.

Although Langdon is thoroughly identified with "normal" military masculinity, this is not the case with Penderton and Williams, two "deviants" who fall short of the ideal of the sexually dominant heterosexual male. As Penderton struggles to deny and repress his sexual identity, Williams' sexual identity begins to take shape. Williams is characterized as devoid of human emotion; he has "neither an enemy nor a friend," and "he move[s] about with the silence and agility of a wild creature or a thief" (2-3). Although he lacks emotion, he is not without passion. Williams loves the horses at the stable, regularly carrying sugar treats to them. A special bond between the loner and a pregnant "little mare" exists; as her due date drew near, Williams "stroked her swollen belly and stood for a time with his arms around her" (28). Isolated, withdrawn, or marginalized from the brotherhood of military men, Williams spends most of his free time horseback riding and exploring the forested area on the outskirts of the fort where he often enjoys sunbathing and riding horseback naked. Such experiences put "a sensual, savage smile on his lips that would have surprised his barrack mates" (77). Because Williams does "not smoke, drink, fornicate, or gamble," his lifestyle is not compatible with the majority of enlisted men who participate in these heterosexually masculine-identified, off-duty activities

commonly associated with military living (3). Furthermore, Williams has the power to unnerve the other enlisted men: "Often soldiers who had thought themselves alone were startled to see him appear as from nowhere by their sides" (3). Williams requires only the basics in life: three meals a day, an army cot, and simple work assignments. Although he does an adequate job of caring for the horses as his work detail at the stable, he lacks the capacity to follow anything close to complicated instructions, as when he botches the assignment of clearing around the big oak tree behind Penderton's house.

Penderton is similarly isolated from those around him. However, unlike Williams who refuses to identify with the other men, Penderton is isolated because of homophobia. Like misogyny, homophobia arises from heterosexual masculine insecurities. Children and women are supposed to "just say no" to drugs and unwanted sexual advances, but heterosexual males commonly respond to masculine homosexuality as if the concept or idea itself is a source of contamination. Penderton's gay sensibility directly contrasts to the heterosexual masculine philosophy which requires that a heterosexual male be socialized to both love and hate the object of his sexual desires. The homosocial environment and required heteronormativity become unbearably repressive for Penderton who must express his homosexuality according to heterosexual guidelines. Penderton struggles with both desire and hate:

There are times when a man's greatest need is to have someone to love, some focal point for his diffused emotions. Also there are times when the irritations, disappointments, and fears of life, restless as spermatozoids, must be released in hate. The unhappy Captain had no one to hate. (67-68)

However, as Penderton attempts to locate himself in the heterosexual ideology of dominant/submissive role playing, he learns to hate the thing he loves, and in the end, the object of his desire is "the young soldier whose face the Captain hated" (102). In his earlier years with the military, "his fellow officers tended to avoid his room in the bachelors' quarters or else to visit him in pairs or groups" (14). And unlike Williams who is capable of only elementary thinking, Penderton is complex; he is well read, he knows about astronomy, he speaks and writes three foreign languages, and his "head [is] filled with statistics and information of scholarly exactitude" (14). Yet despite his intellect, Penderton cannot openly accept his homosexuality, for "the formation of an idea involves the fusion of two or more known facts. And this the Captain had not the courage to do" (14). Unable to make his private self public, Penderton denies, suppresses, and represses his sexuality.

Like Langdon, Penderton and Williams negotiate their sexual identities through Lenora as a female object; however, the needs and desires of Penderton and Williams do not conform to the ideal of heterosexual masculinity. Penderton has "a sad penchant for becoming enamored of his wife's lovers" (13). Unlike the heterosexual husband who feels a threat to his masculinity in the face of his wife's adultery, Penderton worries that if his wife's affair ends he will lose the opportunity to spend time with Langdon. Williams eventually replaces Langdon as Penderton's love interest, about the same time that Williams becomes obsessed with Lenora. With no past sexual experience, Williams is functionally asexual, until he becomes fixated on Lenora's body. David H. J. Morgan says the military is a place "where young men [come] to terms with or to an understanding of their own sexuality away from home and in the company of other men" (167). Unfortunately, this means that men like

Penderton and Williams must understand the concepts of normal and deviant sexuality, and they understand that deviancy from the normal must remain a secret "in the company of other men." Located in a rigid, heterosexual environment, Penderton and Williams attempt to comply with the rules of "normalcy," but their socialization is only partially successful. Their attempts at heterosexual expression of needs and desires are in fact bizarre, but their problems associated with dominance, violence, and the objectification of the female body originate in heterosexual socialization.

Both men successfully separate from the feminine, but neither feels the urge to sexually dominate a female. Penderton's separation from the feminine is symbolized by his impulsive, brutal treatment of the tiny kitten he places inside a mailbox on a freezing night, but before doing so, Penderton "looked into the soft, gentle little face and stroked the warm fur" (15). In sacrificing the kitten, Penderton separates from the feminine and symbolically displays the aggressive characteristics associated with the dominant heterosexual role, but the desire for a female sex partner does not follow. Williams' separation from the feminine happens early in his life. From his father, a preacher at a Holiness church, Williams "had learned that women carried in them a deadly disease which made men blind, crippled, and doomed to hell" (25). The military further socializes Williams to fear the female body; "[i]n the army he also heard much talk of this bad sickness" (25). Thus, Williams' need to remain clean or uncontaminated initially overpowers his sexual desire for the female body. After he accidentally sees the nude Lenora through the Pendertons' open front door, Williams experiences a sexual awakening in which he desires the female object. To accommodate both his needs and desires, Williams' sexual expression becomes that of a voyeur, as he secretly watches Lenora in order to experience sexual

pleasure with her without risk of contamination by merger with the female body. Penderton and Williams struggle to balance their sexual needs and desires. Penderton fantasizes about dominating Williams, and Williams sneaks into Leonora's bedroom at night to look at her while she sleeps.

One of Penderton's earliest recollections of Williams involves an accident in which Williams, who was assigned to serve refreshments to Penderton and another officer, "spilled a cup of coffee on [Penderton's] trousers" (5). The memories of Williams's accidental injury to him are compounded by "an unpleasant association" Penderton holds of Williams to his wife's horse, Firebird (12). Just as the horse functions as a phallic symbol in the novel, the spilling of the hot liquid in Penderton's lap is also erotically symbolic and highly significant to the sexual tension that results between Penderton and Williams. In heterosexual copulation resulting in orgasm, the male typically spills or ejaculates warm fluid into or onto the female, but the female does not spill seed onto or into the male. In homosexual acts, there is the possibility of an exchange of fluid. Thus, Williams inadvertently denies Penderton the opportunity to possess or dominate as he forces Penderton into the submissive or feminine role as the coffee spills into his lap. Since Penderton needs to function in the dominant role, the accident sets off a chain of fantasies in which Penderton obsessively imagines scenarios in which he takes possession or reclaims the dominant position. At first, Penderton "imagined a fantastic situation in which he caught the soldier transgressing in some way and was instrumental in having him court-martialed" (12).

When the fantasies do not relieve Penderton's unresolved issues of need and desire, he starts to act upon impulse. In spite of his fear of horses, he orders Firebird saddled for a lone outing. On the trail, he attempts to establish

dominancy as he torments the horse by allowing it to run freely and then abruptly pulling back on the reins. By the third round of this brutal treatment, the horse rebels and runs wildly out of control, and the terrorized Captain is barely able to whisper, "I am lost" (98). However, he manages to hold on during the wild ride, and his surrender to impulse becomes an important moment in his life. The narrator reports that in "having given up life, the Captain suddenly began to live" (98). Realizing he finally has control of the animal, he runs the horse until it can go no further. Although his assumed mastery over Firebird takes care of his need to dominate, his desires are left unfulfilled, and, in frustration and rage, Penderton "broke off a long switch [from a tree], and with the last of his spent strength he began to beat the [tied] horse savagely" (100). As a reminder of his unfulfilled desire, Williams, who has been sunbathing in the nude, appears in the forest, and, without acknowledging Penderton, takes the beaten and broken horse back to the fort. Penderton is left feeling "a rush of hatred for the soldier that [is] as exorbitant as the joy he had experienced on runaway Firebird" (104). By acknowledging his hatred of the thing he desires, Penderton moves closer to the philosophy of masculine heterosexuality.

As Penderton struggles with needs and desires which result in acted out impulses, Private Williams compulsively returns to Leonora's bedroom at night to look upon her as she sleeps as a method of dealing with his own needs and desires. The sexual tension between Penderton and Williams is resolved in Leonora's bedroom, but she is not a participant in the resolution, only the indirect object over which the tension culminates and explodes. As the novel concludes, Penderton discovers Williams in his wife's bedroom, and fatally shoots him.

Williams' death at the hands of Penderton is symbolic at different levels. Penderton finally achieves that much needed status of dominancy, and the act of taking Williams' life is symbolic of the extreme in taking sexual possession of that which is desired—it represents the ultimate consummation of their relationship. Penderton's homosexual identity and heterosexual performance blur the distinction between deviant and normal sexuality. It is ironic that although the sexual tension arises from Penderton's homosexual feelings, it is heterosexuality that is affirmed in the final act. Penderton acts as the vehicle by which the patriarchy is restored. On the surface, he is a man who physically protects his wife and home from a *perverted intruder*, and as a consequence, Penderton finally achieves recognition as a real military man. At the beginning of the novel, McCullers labels Penderton's action "a murder" (1). His punishment for that murder is to live a life of repression in which "any fulfillment obtained at the expense of normalcy is wrong . . . because it is morally honorable, for the square peg to keep scraping about the round hole rather than to discover and use the unorthodox square that would fit it" (163). But McCullers calls attention to the bigger picture with her uneasy conclusion to *Reflections*. If Penderton must live a lie, it is no worse a lie than those created by repressive institutions that produce murderers like him, institutions that rely on traditional and romantic notions of heterosexual masculinity, a masculinity that depends on violence as the core of its identity.

**Chapter 3: Hermaphroditism and the Natural Abnormal
in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe***

Carson McCullers moves beyond the complexities found in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *Reflections in a Golden Eye* with the rendering of the ambiguous sexual identity of Miss Amelia Evans in what Louise Westling calls "the dangerous psychological territory of *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*" (*Sacred Groves* 119). The novella (1943) begins in a setting of spatial detachment and physical isolation in "a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world" (3). In the center of town is Miss Amelia, a dispossessed recluse, who resides in the building that once housed the town's first cafe, but that now looks as if it will "collapse at any minute" (3). The narrator reconstructs the events that lead to the tragedy in Miss Amelia's life: her brief marriage to Marvin Macy, her subsequent rejection of him, and her relationship some years later with the dwarf, Cousin Lymon. In presentation of the complex Miss Amelia and her relationships with other characters in the novella, McCullers undercuts the conventional ideology of sex and gender as fixed categories of human identity.

Marvin Macy is the epitome of masculinity, "the handsomest man in [the] region—being six feet one inch tall, hard-muscled, and with slow gray eyes and curly hair" (27). In contrast to Macy, Cousin Lymon, besides his diminished size and deformed body, has a face that is "both soft and sassy"; the locals associate him with Morris Finestein, a "prissy" man who was known to weep in public (7, 9). Thus, Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon respectively represent the stereotypical concepts of the masculine male and the feminine male, but Miss Amelia resists conventional classification. The narrator says that Miss Amelia, "a dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man . . . cared nothing for the love of men" (4). In addition to producing the finest whiskey in the area, the

Amazonian Miss Amelia, a shrewd business person, farms the multiple tracts of land she owns throughout the county, butchers and processes her own meat, constructs outbuildings to improve her property, and operates the only store in town, which eventually becomes a cafe. In this capacity, Miss Amelia's physical presence and her social prominence distinguish her as a masculine entity; however, McCullers suggests that Miss Amelia, a trusted healer who "charge[s] no fees whatsoever" for her services, has a feminine side also (17).

Throughout the novella, Miss Amelia symbolizes confusion in sex and gender roles as either a woman in overalls or a man in a red dress. After finishing her evening meals, Miss Amelia customarily "tilted back her chair, tightened her fist, and felt the hard, supple muscles of her right arm beneath the clean, blue cloth of her shirtsleeves—an unconscious habit with her" (12). Indeed, Miss Amelia is not acutely aware of her "otherness." McCullers locates much of this uniqueness in Amelia's subconscious, which, after her dispossession, markedly surfaces in the image of "a face like the terrible faces known in dreams—sexless and white, with two gray crossed eyes which are turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief" (3-4). In "On Eye-Symbolism," Psychoanalyst Szabolcs Ferenczi (a contemporary of McCullers) discusses the eye as symbolic of genital organs. According to Ferenczi:

The symbolic equating of genital organs with [the eyes] is secondarily made to serve repression, which seeks to weaken one member of the equation, while it symbolically over-emphasizes the other, more harmless one by the amount of repressed affect. In this way, the upper half of the body, as the more harmless one, attains its sexual-symbolic significance [referred to by Freud as

displacement from below upwards]. In this work of repression the eyes have proved to be specially adapted to receive the affects displaced from the genital region, on account of their shape and changeable size, their movability, their high value, and their sensitiveness. It is to be supposed, however, that this displacement would not have succeeded so well, had not the eye already had from the beginning that significant libidinous value . . . as a special component of the sexual instinct (the impulse of visual curiosity). (275-76)

For Amelia, the sharp crossing of her eyes represents the female form that is not completely woman and the masculine orientation that is not totally man, a condition that warrants a "long and secret gaze of grief." In effect, her human condition has a double-mirror function. First, Amelia is a reminder that binary classifications of biological sex do not adequately contain her identity; conventionality says that she cannot exist. Secondly, she destabilizes normative gender classification as one who symbolizes the potential of functioning as either male or female and the potential of giving sexual pleasure to both male and female.

The tension between sex and gender is further dramatized in the relationship between Amelia and Cousin Lymon. Although conventional gender norms insist on fixed opposition between male/masculine and female/feminine, McCullers offers a scenario in which the absurdity of such a binary classification is revealed. The townspeople who perceive Amelia and Cousin Lymon as a heterosexual couple think that "these two [are] living in sin" because they may be related and because they are not married (25). However, given Amelia's masculine gender and Cousin Lymon's sexual attraction to men, the couple must

also be considered homosocial. Amelia's significance evades critics who attempt to analyze her according to traditional sex or gender identities; her crossed eyes in the upper half of her body suggest a cross in the lower half of her body, a condition that resists classification as strictly male or female and allows her limitless fluidity in sexual performance. In "Prenumbral Insistence: McCuller's Early Novels," Lawrence Graver describes *Ballad* as "an elegy for Amelia Evans [which] has all the brooding eloquence to stand as a fitting tribute to that very peculiar lady" (67). Her peculiarity is identified by Mary Roberts in "Imperfect Androgyny and Imperfect Love in the Works of Carson McCullers' Fiction" and Claire Kahane in "The Gothic Mirror" as hermaphroditism. However, Roberts addresses Amelia's hermaphroditism mainly as psychological and suggests that her marriage fails because her masculine psyche is threatened by the virile Marvin Macy (94-95). Kahane sees Amelia's hermaphroditism in literary terms and labels her as "Gothic" and "grotesque" (347). The existing criticism fails to address Amelia, a hermaphrodite, as a possible representation of real human existence; instead, her status as an intersexed individual is dismissed by critics with pretty much the same distancing she receives from the good townspeople who view her with "a mixture of exasperation, a ridiculous little inside tickle, and a deep, unnamable sadness" (15). In this case, the injustice and tyranny she displays, such as exacting payment or repossessing merchandise, is proportional to what Amelia endures in humiliation and isolation as the grotesque. As far as her neighbors are concerned, Amelia needs to become "a calculable woman," one who is the feminine and female bride of the male and masculine Marvin Macy—or one who fits neatly into their conventional schema of sex and gender identity. While she, with all her knowledge of herbs and natural medicine, represents the potential

for healing, the townspeople recognize her only as the grotesque, one whose "habits of life were too peculiar ever to reason about" (14). Because conventional society cannot understand her complexities, she is negatively labeled, marginalized, and isolated.

In *The Lonely Hunter: A Biography of Carson McCullers*, Virginia Spencer Carr discusses McCullers' lifelong fascination with the grotesque and her study of George Davis's "enormous photograph collection of freaks" during their residency as members of the celebrity group at 7 Middagh in Brooklyn (126-27). The details which McCullers uses to characterize Amelia suggest that the central figure in *Ballad* does transcend the hermaphroditic qualities attributed to her by Roberts and Kahane. Roberts describes Amelia as "Amazonian" and "desexualized" (94). Kahane more specifically points out that McCullers presents the visual image of Amelia as hermaphrodite. By clothing Amelia in a red dress and exposing "her strong, hairy thigh" to the rest of the world, McCullers forces attention on the ambiguity embodied in her main character (60). Amelia simultaneously represents the ability to dominate and the possibility of being dominated; she cannot be strictly identified with one because she is always both. Kahane notes, "The grotesque disjunction between the strong hairy thigh that signifies male power and the red dress that signifies her femaleness within the context of her increasing loss of power both dramatizes her intermediate location and foreshadows the conclusion"—her dispossession (348). Although critics only see Amelia's intersex as symbolic, McCullers' non-judgmental treatment of Amelia as an individual who possesses both negative and positive attributes shows that McCullers intended a humanistic portrayal of Amelia.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest that Miss Amelia "refuses to acknowledge the biological law that governs her own body" (106). However, Gilbert and Gubar operate under the assumption that all humans are clearly either male or female, and their ideology leaves little room for consideration or recognition of those who blur distinctions of biological sexual identity. There is evidence to suggest that McCullers is describing Amelia as an individual with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS)—a human being whose sex organs develop ambiguously in utero. Although Amelia is perceived as an adult female, McCullers shows that she has no knowledge of the female reproductive system. The *Ballad's* narrator notes:

If a female patient came with a female complaint [Miss Amelia] could do nothing. Indeed at the mere mention of the words her face would slowly darken with shame, and she would stand there craning her neck against her collar, or rubbing her swamp boots together, for all the world like a great, shamed, dumb-tongued child. (17)

According to the Intersex Society of North America, the androgen-insensitive individual represents one of the "various intersex conditions" in which an infant may be born without a uterus, fallopian tubes, cervix, plus the upper part of the vagina, although the "genitals differentiate in the female, rather than the male pattern" (*ISNA* 1). Such an individual would not have a menstrual cycle and when confronted with the situations briefly mentioned in *Ballad* would probably react in the "shamed" fashion McCullers attributes to Amelia, especially in the 1940s when anything outside the binary classification of gender and sex was subject to rejection and ridicule. The ambiguous presentation of the genitalia of

an intersexed individual may be related to the "grotesque affair" of Amelia and Marvin Macy's unconsummated marriage (34).

Nowhere is McCullers' humanistic vision more apparent than in her treatment of Amelia as "the other." McCullers was intensely interested in "freaks." She once insisted to a close friend that although she had a female body, "[she] was born a man" (qtd. in Westling 119). McCullers was also aware of the existence of intersexed individuals and the precarious position they face in conventional society. Virginia Spencer Carr includes in her biography an account of the 1963 meeting between Gordon Langley Hall, a female who was wrongly assigned the sex of male at birth, and McCullers, who astutely recognized Hall as female and eventually urged him to have surgical reassignment as a female; later, Hall married a man and bore a child (519-20). McCullers' characterization of Amelia suggests that she empathized with those who could not or would not change to fit in. Contrary to Gilbert and Gubar's charge that she denies her biological status, Amelia actually "acknowledges the biological law that governs her own body" and reacts in a very logical manner.

Morgan Holmes, author of "Re-membering a Queer Body" and an AIS individual who underwent *corrective surgery* as an infant, criticizes the tunnel vision of the medical community in surgically altering the genitals of infants born with ambiguous sex organs. Her outrage at the medical treatment of those with AIS eclipses McCullers' revelation of Miss Amelia's brutal treatment by the purveyors of the patriarchy. As Holmes points out:

The medical definition of what female bodies do not have [is] a penis. Any body which does possess a penis must either be designated "male" or surgically altered In the minds of doctors, bodies are for procreation and heterosexual penetrative

sex I would have liked to have grown up in the body I was born with, to perhaps run rampant with a little physical gender terrorism instead of being restricted to this realm of paper and theory. Someone else made the decision of what and who I would always be before I even knew who and what I was. (11-13)

McCullers shows that the idea of "physical gender terrorism" is not tolerated; in fact, Amelia is violently punished because she does not "possess a penis," even though she identifies with masculinity. During her fight with Marvin Macy, Amelia proves superior in physical ability, since it requires both Cousin Lymon and Macy to defeat her. However, she is left "sprawled on the floor, her arms flung outward and motionless" while the dominant male, Marvin Macy, stands over her in what can only be considered a rape scene in which the patriarchy and all patriarchal values are restored (68). In the end, Amelia is "surgically" removed from society and denied her prominent and masculine status because she lacks a penis.

Leslie Fiedler says that "no category of Freaks . . . is regarded with such ferocious ambivalence as the hermaphrodites, for none creates in us a greater tension between physical repulsion and spiritual attraction" (179). In order to resolve the tension between the physicality and spirituality, Fiedler urges readers to recognize "that there are not two physiological sexes but . . . a continuum" involving as high as four percent of the population (190-92). Although Fiedler's estimate of the frequency of intersexed births is difficult to substantiate, the medical profession suggests that such births are natural occurrences (Gaither). Still, the condition of being intersexed is treated as a form of pathology by those in the field of medicine. Furthermore, the enduring quality of hermaphroditic mythologies throughout the ages suggests that such

occurrences are not new in the realm of human history, yet the existence of intersexed individuals has been socially and systematically designated unnatural and consequently labeled abnormal by a *civilized* world that insists on conformity or marginality. The pathology associated with hermaphroditism is solely located in the narrow views of conventionality. Acceptance as recommended by Fielder would eliminate the derogatory use of terms such as "hermaphrodite" and "freak," which force individuals into the margins of society; in a more accepting world, these words would be replaced by references such as "normal variant" or "intersexed individual" to describe the physiological sex of a human being with no implication regarding the character of that person.

In addition to gay and lesbian issues, queer theory focuses on subjects such as "crossdressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery"; queer theory "locates and exploits the incoherencies in [labels of deviancy or abnormality] which stabilise heterosexuality" (Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* 3). Kahane locates the concept of "freakishness" in the ideology of conventional gender norms; she argues, "In a time when the traditional boundaries of sexual identity are in flux, the hermaphrodite, challenging those boundaries by its existence, mirrors both the infantile wish to destroy distinction and limitation and be both sexes—a power originally attributed to the primal mother—and fear of that wish when it is physiologically realized as freakishness" (347). Rightfully, McCullers attempts to show that Amelia, a strong, talented, driving force in the community, is a healthy—though realistically and necessarily unsuccessful—alternative or challenge to the paralyzing and narrow dimensions of sex and gender classification in conventional society.

Despite critics' insistence that Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon do not have a meaningful and fulfilling sexual relationship, McCullers suggests

otherwise. Joseph Millichap says that Cousin Lymon "is a man loved without sex, a child acquired without pain, and a companion which [Amelia's] limited personality finds more acceptable than a husband or child" (335). In "Carson McCullers's Amazon Nightmare," Westling surmises that "no union of male and female, however reluctant, occurs in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*" (112).

However, these attitudes reflect the ideology that limits concepts of sexuality to the procreative and heterosexual penetrative sex criticized by Holmes. The narrator says that Miss Amelia has "the look of a lonesome lover" and an "undertone of love" in her voice (23, 45). Additionally, McCullers goes to great length to suggest images of eroticism by giving evidence of physical contact between Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon with her descriptions of her carrying him on her back and rubbing his body regularly with pot liquor (24-25). While most critics work within the confines of conventional thinking to deny and exclude the potential sexuality of those designated as "the other," McCullers allows the possibility of a sexual dimension to Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon's relationship. Furthermore, McCullers' narrator co-opts conventional morality in the admonishment, "who but God can be the final judge of this or any other love?" (34).

McCullers clearly demonstrates that conventional ideology with its focus on containment and conformity destroys much that is unique to the human experience. *Ballad of the Sad Cafe* drives home the message that the beautiful and the grotesque are equal dimensions of vision, and the failure to embrace the grotesque will result in the inability to recognize the beautiful.

Chapter 4: Androgyny and Accommodation of Compulsory Heterosexuality
in *The Member of the Wedding*

Carson McCullers' novel *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) covers the brief but turbulent summer in which the motherless, twelve-year old Frankie Addams struggles with an identity crisis and the process of "coming out" as a lesbian in the 1940s. While Frankie never actually appropriates the term lesbian as a label of self-identification, she does undergo an empowering transformation, and she experiences personal liberation as the result of embracing a new identity. Frankie's "coming out" process involves a series of hard-fought attempts to defy conventionality and voice her lesbian identity, despite the repressive measures of those around her to deny and silence her voice. Through her oppositional "acting out," Frankie questions and challenges heteronormative ideology, and she continues to discover and assert her identity difference until she finds a place where her voice is not excluded. Frankie's ability to creatively accommodate compulsory heterosexuality does not necessarily indicate her surrender to and compliance with the conventional female role as many feminists argue. Instead, as McCullers demonstrates, the "coming out" process involves the ability to hear differences as well as the ability to speak of them.

While the characters associated with conventionality remain static in their inability to hear Frankie speak of her differences, her voice grows more forceful as the novel progresses. In the end, she has the last word, and her voice is undeniably the voice of gay pride. A lesbian-focused reading of *The Member of the Wedding*, however, is not intended to reduce the complexities of McCullers' novel to the binary opposition of homosexual versus heterosexual realities. Queer theorist Rachel Adams points out that Frankie and many of the characters

in McCullers' fiction defy "attempts to link the unpredictable flows of human desire to the type of categorical definitions suggested by homo- or heterosexuality" (555). Indeed, McCullers' focus extends beyond aspects of sex and gender identity; in *The Member of the Wedding*, the issues of power and oppression associated with race and class are equally explored. Even Frankie's age, which denies her social and political power, becomes an oppressive category of identification. Although coming to terms with the changes and demands of adolescence is within itself an ordeal for Frankie as she attempts to give up the ways of childhood and move more toward adulthood, this period of adolescence for her is made more painful and confusing because her gender and sexual identity fall outside the expected conventional norm. *The Member of the Wedding* is a powerful story of a young girl's refusal to become *woman* and a statement of the creative manner in which Frankie Addams discovers, embraces, and accommodates her differences in a world that insists on conformity.

Set in a small southern town during World War II, *The Member of the Wedding* chronicles the emotional and psychological trauma Frankie endures in both the domestic and public arenas of life as she searches for a definition of self and a place to belong. At home where she spends her days with Berenice, the black housekeeper, and John Henry, her five-year-old cousin, Frankie resists Berenice's efforts to socialize her as a passive heterosexual female, and she rejects the housekeeper's advice to find "a nice little white beau your own age" (78). In the public sphere, a small town where military men on leave represent emerging wartime social and sexual trends, Frankie seeks the status of "power [and] entitlement" (50), but when a drunken soldier brutally reminds her of the compulsory role of female as sexual object, she becomes "paralyzed by horror" (130) at the idea of the dominant male and the passive female in

heterosexual intercourse. Unable or unwilling to submit, Frankie violently resists rape and successfully denies female heterosexual indoctrination. Throughout the novel, Frankie exists in dual roles as victim and victor; she is a victim of conventional society's demands, and she is victorious in insisting on her individuality and its qualities which exceed the limits of convention. The imagery of the attempted rape scene is an important thematic reversal for the intended victim and her would-be victimizer; in Amazonian style, Frankie leaves her male attacker subdued and on the floor in a passive position with "a froth of blood . . . on his mouth" (130). His bloody body opening is a symbolic reversal of the bloody vagina that would have resulted from the rape of young Frankie.

Frankie's dualities of oppositions uniquely function as qualities which cancel out each other, leaving her at times an indeterminate entity. Terry Castle suggests that the lesbian character in western literature and popular culture is denied, disembodied, and "vaporized by the forces of heterosexual propriety" (7). Routinely defined as a phantasm, ghost, or apparition in order to "better drain her of any sensual or moral authority," Castle says that the lesbian subject is made to "disappear altogether" (6). For any female, identity is constructed as either in compliance with or in opposition to heteronormativity as a naturalized product of patriarchy, but always the definition of female grows out of male ideology; the concept of conventional social identity is not female or feminine in origin. Therefore, the female who operates in opposition to patriarchal values has no identity, at least no ideological identity. While such a system of identification does to an extent disempower a nonconformist by denying her existence, it also creates a culture in which her containment and control cannot be guaranteed, and that lack of containment and inability to be controlled compensates as a form of power. Castle further points out, "The literary history

of lesbianism . . . is first of all a history of derealization . . . : in nearly all the art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lesbianism, or its possibility, can only be represented to the degree that it is simultaneously 'derealized,' through a blanching authorial infusion of spectral metaphors" (34).

To a degree, *Member* is infused with "spectral metaphors" in the characterization of Frankie Addams, such as "the ghost of the old Frankie" (56, 58), but McCullers uses the ghosting technique to represent her break with literary tradition in dealing with issues of sex and gender. Frankie is not erased or made invisible by the ghosting; instead, she survives, evolves, and grows, having the last word and the greatest hope of personal happiness of all the other characters in the novel. The unforgettable and undeniable power of Frankie's character arises from McCullers' skillful rendering of the adolescent's "acting out" as Frankie unknowingly demonstrates who she really is by railing against what she knows she is not. Further, McCullers clearly depicts Frankie's dilemma as a human problem, not merely a homosexual problem. The struggles within Frankie as an individual who cannot or will not adjust to the conventional role society has established for her simultaneously and symbolically parallel the greater world war going on at that time.

The androgynous quality of her given name "Frankie" and the suggestive universal, or Biblical, appeal of her surname "Addams" qualifies this narrative as a case study exemplifying the various phases of isolation, confusion, actualization, and accommodation for Frankie and those like her who routinely find no positive reflection of self in conventional society. Unlike gay males of the 1940s whose existence was at least acknowledged (though rarely accepted outside the gay community), lesbians were basically ignored and denied even a prejudicial acknowledgment of existence. Frankie, a frightened and "an unjoined

person who hung around in doorways," can only operate in a liminal space or on a threshold, existing without identity (1). The narrator says, "For a long time [Frankie] had not been a member" of any group in the world (4), and overcome with feelings of confusion and alienation, Frankie confesses, "I wish I was somebody else except me" (6). In "The Formation of Homosexual Identities," Richard R. Troiden describes this phase as "Sensitization, [a period] characterized by generalized feelings of marginality, and perceptions of being different from same-sex peers" (50). Frankie's coming of age occurs in a particularly bleak period for homosexuals. However, regardless of the prevalent homophobic ideologies concerning gay males, there was at least a conceptualization of love between males, and a limited space for coexistence as long as the patriarchy remained privileged. The refusal even to envision love between females is a statement of the hegemonic power and the influence of the patriarchy in American society. With penetrative heterosexual intercourse as the standard in sexual performance, the idea of love of the male body becomes naturalized to a degree and allows for the concept of inversion of one male's love for another male, but the patriarchy could not conceive of female desire for a female body. And while Berenice admits that she has known "boys to take it into their heads to fall in love with other boys," (76) she remains ignorant or silent about the possibility of female for female love, accusing Frankie of "falling in love with some unheard-of thing" (102). Whether in the domestic setting or the public sphere, the importance of Frankie's socialization process cannot be underestimated, and while McCullers demonstrates the painful consequences of Frankie's social isolation, her text also critiques the rigid and narrow views of conventional society which impose her isolation.

Frankie's relationship with her father, who conveys the social codes and

familial constraints associated with patriarchy and conventionality, provides some insight into the manner in which dominant masculine ideology is culturally transmitted. Until April of Frankie's twelfth year, she has routinely slept with her father, but Mr. Addams, without preparation or explanation, dismisses Frankie with, "Who is this great big long-legged twelve-year-old blunderbuss who still wants to sleep with her old Papa," and he sends her to another room to sleep alone (22). Although his remark might be intended as a lighthearted ploy to ease Frankie into a more mature or socially acceptable sleeping arrangement, it nonetheless involves name calling and suggests that her growth, already a source of anxiety for her, is partially the reason. Furthermore, her father's remark implies that some desire on Frankie's part is not natural because she "still wants to sleep" with him. For Frankie, whose mother died in childbirth, the routine sleeping arrangement allows some intimate contact with her only available parent. It is her father who has "unnatural" feelings about the arrangement, yet he is unable to acknowledge or explain his feelings, preferring instead to project his "unnaturalness" onto his young daughter. In this situation, Frankie must understandably remain silent, without protest, and comply with her father's dictate. To speak out against her father and his social order carries with it the risk of appearing to own the "unnatural" feelings already attributed to her, especially since Frankie already feels "the world [is] somehow separate from herself" (21). In effect, her father perpetuates the idea that the female naturally desires the male body as a love object, excluding himself as a bed partner solely on the socially constructed or cultural taboos of age and familial relationship. Moreover, the unchecked authority of his decision represents the inherent, authoritative status of patriarchy and its ability to control and limit the sexuality of those who are subordinate to men. Most importantly, the father remains

oblivious to the fact that Frankie identifies with him, instead of in opposition to him, and his emotional distance adds to her identity confusion. The event has a tremendous negative effect on Frankie, and for a long time she feels "whatever she did was always wrong" (23). As a result of their refusal to speak of or acknowledge Frankie's emerging orientation, the two most vital adults in her life, Mr. Addams as well as Berenice, negate her identity by superimposing their views of heteronormativity as the only acceptable course in life.

Shortly after the novel begins, Frankie learns that her brother Jarvis, a member of the Armed Services, will soon marry his fiancée Janice. The forthcoming wedding, a social tradition and ritual of heterosexual bonding that publicly signifies personal desires, stirs Frankie's budding sexuality, but it also creates a critical state of confusion "or a feeling she could not name" (2). Thus, her ambiguous sexual identity is constructed in relation to that social norm, and her marginalization is so painful that at times "[s]he hated herself" (20). Frankie's identity confusion is marked by her adamant rejection of heterosexuality in combination with her ignorance of any alternative sexuality and her inability to name lesbianism as a replacement for conventional romantic attachment in "the summer of fear" (16). She dismisses the concept of heterosexuality as "nasty lies about married people" with the disdain expected of children who confront the idea of emerging adult sexuality for the first time (11); however, Frankie is not totally inexperienced in matters of heterosexuality. That her rejection of heterosexuality goes beyond the socialization of childhood innocence and results from her individual or personal orientation is evident in her reflections on her "queer sin," or her sexual experimentation on a Saturday afternoon in the MacKean's garage with Barney, a boy from her neighborhood (23). The experience leaves Frankie feeling as if she has committed a crime, "a

secret and unknown sin," and the memory of that heterosexual encounter is so distasteful and disturbing that each time Frankie recalled the event "[s]he hated Barney and wanted to kill him. Sometimes alone in the bed at night she planned to shoot him with the pistol or throw a knife between his eyes" (23).

With the drunken soldier and the adolescent male from her neighborhood, Frankie psychologically and physically reacts to heterosexuality with violent imagination and outbursts. And the more she feels pushed toward compulsory heterosexuality the more she "acts out." The wedding announcement is the pivotal event that forces Frankie to confront her differences and attempt to locate herself somehow and somewhere in the world. In the end, Frankie, like most homosexuals, sees the civil wedding service as an exclusive symbol of heterosexuality, "a dream outside her own power, or a show unmanaged by her in which she was supposed to have no part" (138). Prior to the wedding announcement, Frankie is bombarded by messages and indicators of social normativity and marginality which cause her extreme psychological distress. In the conventional scheme, her excessive growth over the summer symbolizes that she will be betrayed by her own body, though the betrayal comes from internal feelings rather than external development. Frankie calculates that she will reach a height of nine feet and become a freak if her growth continues at its present pace (17). Terry Castle says the use of the slang word "freak" has been used as a negative label for lesbian since the eighteenth century (242). In addition to McCullers' frequent use of "freak," the word "queer" appears in some form at least twenty times in her novel. The importance and frequency of the deployment of the words "freak" and "queer" to the subject matter and theme of *Member* deserves mention.

At the county fair, Frankie's fears are intensified when she visits the Freak

House where "it seemed to her that [the Freaks] had looked at her in a secret way and tried to connect their eyes with hers, as though to say: we know you" (18). Frankie's discomfort with self, as she reflects on the Freaks, is so intense that she asks Berenice, "Do I give you the creeps?" (18). And while Berenice, usually deemed a decent surrogate mother by critics, does have genuine affection for Frankie, her answer to Frankie's question for validation, in essence, carries a label of degeneracy as she tells Frankie to "file down them horns a inch or two" (19). Berenice is also defined by the dominant order due to her race, but because Berenice is marginalized by the color of her skin, her identity is never in question. Her heterosexual identity is evidenced numerous times throughout the novel as she recounts her experiences of marriage to four different men. And while she can understand the concept of social and racial injustice, Berenice disagrees with Frankie's world vision in which "people could instantly change back and forth from boys to girls, which ever way they felt like and wanted. . . . Berenice would argue with her about this, insisting that the law of human sex was exactly right just as it was and could in no way be improved" (92).

For all of Frankie's efforts to seek answers to her questions of identity and gain information about her place in society, she receives only platitudes based on the heterosexual world view—conventional answers and information that do not fit her emerging identity and role. Later in the novel, she tries again to press the issue of longing and belonging with Berenice, but Frankie "could not speak the unknown words" (111). In "the conclusion of that last queer conversation," Berenice confesses an awareness that "all human beings is caught. . . born this way or that way and we don't know why," but she keeps the focus on the social issue of race, ignoring the confines of conventional gender and sex roles that

shape Frankie's development (114). For Berenice, being "caught" as a human being means the individual is trapped in an unchangeable role created by society. In direct reversal or inversion of such conventional ideology, Frankie, who has no acceptable role that she can determine, finds no "reason and connection" in the social order, and, unable to "see what joins them up together," she believes people are "loose" (114). In their opposing world views, Frankie and Berenice become the agents of truth in the novel, and it is important to note that while Frankie has less life experience, she nonetheless has the capacity to embrace Berenice's truths while asserting her own, an inclusive capacity lacking on Berenice's part. Near the end of the novel, Frankie addresses Berenice's shortcoming and accuses, "You could not possibly ever understand. . . . It's just not in you" (151).

Although Frankie is at first unable to adequately label her orientation as homosexual, when she can no longer sublimate her thoughts and feelings, she does go to great lengths to reveal and describe herself to the world as different. In that spring and summer before the wedding announcement, Frankie temporarily finds release and fulfillment in the backyard arbor where she writes plays, acts out parts, and designs costumes for the different characters she creates. The arbor—a place that is strange and theatrical, yet natural and familiar—serves as a safe womb, or a place where Frankie's identity is boundless, yet safely contained. According to Gabriele Griffin, lesbian fiction often incorporates an interior and discrete space, such as Frankie's arbor, where "the creative self can substitute for the sexual self" and engage in sublimatory, artistic activities such as writing, acting, and designing (37). The arbor affords great fluidity for the creative self, allowing Frankie to assume a multitude of personalities to which she alone assigns value; the social self or the sexual self,

in contrast, faces compulsory heterosexuality or its opposite, marginality. By late August, Frankie outgrows the costumes, and she becomes too big to fit beneath the arbor. The loss of the arbor as a personal place for creative expression means Frankie can no longer postpone her sexual expression, and when the wedding, to be held at Winter Hill, is announced, it becomes the heterosexual event against which her identity assumption is revealed.

While Frankie does not articulate the term "lesbian," she utilizes a self-definition of homosexual as she compares and contrasts herself to Jarvis and Janice when she suddenly realizes, "*They are the we of me*" (39). *They*, the male and female of heterosexual attraction, is the opposite of Frankie's *me*, a term demonstrating desire inversion in which the sexual attraction is for one's same sex. Most critics overlook or ignore Frankie's personal statement of inversion and analyze her confusion as arising from the roller coaster emotions of adolescence. Such analysis adapts the heterosexual world view as represented by Berenice, who in the novel argues, "Frankie got a crush! / On the *Wedd-ing!*" (32). Even McCullers' biographer, Virginia Spencer Carr in discussing the process of plot development and the actual writing of *The Member of the Wedding*, supports Berenice's idea and reports that McCullers told an acquaintance, "Frankie is in love with her brother and the bride, and wants to become a member of the wedding!" (121). However, in her recently published autobiography, *Illumination and Night Glare*, McCullers frankly asserts, "Frankie is in love with the bride of her brother and wants to join the wedding" (32). McCullers, the creator of Frankie Addams, designates her character as "an I person" (*Member* 39), and McCullers characterizes Frankie as the literal and symbolic inversion of conventionality.

Not only does Frankie outwardly refuse the subordinate female role in a

socially sanctioned heterosexual relationship, she represents a threat to the patriarchy in her potential to undermine the social order of convention. Gayle Rubin, in her groundbreaking essay, "The Traffic in Woman: Notes Toward an Anthropology of Sex," differentiates the biological sexes (male/female) from gender categories (masculine/feminine), and argues that while biological sex is a natural assignment, gender is the result of socially constructed categories in which women's subordinate roles are determined by the negotiations of the privileged sex, heterosexual men. The patriarchy depends on the marriage of females to males to form familial, tribal, and national alliances, and in the patriarchal system the female becomes the commodity through which men conduct masculine transactions (157-210). Building on Rubin's work, Eve Sedgwick, in her discussion of "male homosociality" and the "erotic triangle" of male homosocial desire, theorizes in *Between Men* that heterosexual male bonding is mediated "between" two men—over, around, and through the body and soul of a woman. The "normative man" uses a woman "as a 'conduit of a relationship' in which the true *partner* is a man" (26). To insure that the relationship does not evolve from social to sexual, the female object is necessary to diffuse any overt and erotic male-male attachment that might threaten heterosexual male bonding and the very foundation of conventional ideology. In the male-female-male erotic triangle, the very concept of patriarchy depends on the female. In its inversion, the female-male-female erotic triangle, a threat to patriarchal ideology of crippling magnitude exists when female bonding suppresses or denies male bonding of any type. Thus, Frankie's decision to become a third member of the wedding and her efforts to attach herself to the couple symbolize an assault on the patriarchy, and her degradation as she is pulled from the couple's car and left crying on the ground

is a statement of the brutal measures that conventional ideologues use to repress and marginalize those who threaten social norms. Despite her disruptive and threatening behaviors, Frankie's motivation comes from the personal desire to survive in a world where she feels "left out of everything" (21).

The wedding not only forces Frankie to acknowledge her sexual orientation and the life of marginality that she will face, it also helps her to formulate a plan of accommodation. In coming to terms with the concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality, Frankie "knew who she was and how she was going into the world" (42), and her initial strategy of accommodation is an attempt at a weird *marriage de convenience*, an arrangement that she hopes will allow her to avoid social compliance with heterosexuality and also social marginalization in homosexuality. While her reaction to and rejection of heterosexuality does at times receive focus, as in her interactions with the drunken soldier and the young Barney MacKean, Frankie's homosexuality is textually marginalized to better emphasize her state of mind.

Frankie's intellectual ability to overlay and blend aspects of homosexuality with heterosexuality as a method of assuming identity and accommodating the conventional world is effectively dramatized by McCullers with descriptions of Frankie's mental images and her reflective thought processes throughout the novel. For example, on her way home from buying a dress to wear to the wedding, Frankie catches a half-glimpse of something in the alley, "a dark double shape . . . and because of this half-seen object, there had sprung up in her the sudden picture of her brother and the bride." Although she knows they are miles away in Winter Hill, "she [sees] the two of them as they had been when, for a moment, they stood together before the living-room mantelpiece, his arm around her shoulders" (69-70). Fearing to look further into

the alley, "[h]er eyes stole slowly down the brick wall and she glimpsed again the dark double shapes . . . only two colored boys, one taller than the other and with his arm resting on the shorter boy's shoulder . . . but something about the angle or the way they stood, or the pose of their shapes, had reflected the sudden picture of her brother and the bride" (70). In this instance, Frankie simultaneously holds homoerotic and heteroerotic images in her mind, and the distance between the two sexualities does not seem all that significant in human terms, but her reflections indicate a dawning awareness that the homoerotic images are relegated to the alley, while the heteroerotic images can be displayed publicly, before the mantelpiece. Decades later, Ann Bannon, in her novel, *Beebo Brinker*, echoes Frankie's growing awareness of the social intolerance of nonconventional sexuality in the 1940s. Bannon presents a female-male-female erotic triangle involving Beebo, Venus, and her husband Leo Bogardus, who tells Beebo, "'The world was made for normal people. . . . The abnormal in this world have a tough go. If they keep their abnormality secret, they're damnably lonely. If they broadcast it, they're damnably hurt. You were born with that and you'll have to live with it'" (167).

As Frankie comes to terms with her limited space in a homophobic world, she plays with the ideas of creating identity confusion, changing one's identity, and blurring identity distinction. Her cat, Charles, which responds to no moral code, has the alternate identity of Charlina (29). Frankie changes her name to Miss F. Jasmine Addams (29), but she later blurs the gender distinction of her new identity by appending the male suffix *Esq.* to her new title (46). And, finally, the idea of situational passing and stigma management is put into words as Frankie tells Berenice's troubled brother Honey, "I think you ought to go to Cuba. You are so light-skinned and you even have a kind of Cuban expression.

You could go there and change into a Cuban. You could learn to speak the foreign language and none of those Cubans would ever know you are a colored boy" (125). Frankie's advice to Honey indicates that she understands that changing identity or passing as someone other than the self is, at times, a route of survival because it is a way of enhancing personal safety and achieving some social acceptance. Additionally, the need "to pass" is a strong indictment of the conventional thinkers who simultaneously give lip service to the value of honesty, but marginalize those who cannot or will not pass. In the end, Frankie understands the code of double standards, and she believes that it is "better to be in a jail where you could bang the walls than in a jail you could not see" (148).

During the course of the novel, Frankie undergoes many changes in identity. Before the wedding announcement, Frankie is the confused and isolated adolescent who "wanted to be a boy and go to the war as a Marine" (21). After the wedding announcement, she temporarily becomes F. Jasmine, who tries to bond with the wedding in order to avoid compulsory heterosexuality or marginalized homosexuality, and although her "need to be recognized for her true self was for the time being satisfied," (59) as this phase of her life closes she begins the process of understanding and assuming a homosexual identity (59). After her rejection by the wedding couple, she becomes Frances, a self-defined homosexual who feels that the object of her desire, Mary Littlejohn, adds to her life "a final touch of strangeness, silent terror, that completed the wonder of her love" (151). The significance of the name Littlejohn suggests the symbolic diminishing of importance of the big phallus of conventionality and its inversion and appropriation by those in the lesbian subculture.

The destruction of the old Frankie and F. Jasmine and the consequential identity formation of Frances occur during the crisis resolution of the events following her rejection from the wedding, and the transition in Frankie becomes the actualization of her previous oath, "After the wedding I'm not coming back" (34). The change is symbolized by the running away and the contemplated—and weakly attempted—suicide with the father's gun, a function of her rebirth as Frances who can publicly assimilate the social demands of heteronormativity. However, Frances' romantic attachment to Mary Littlejohn indicates a complete homosexual identity assumption and the discovery of a community to which she can belong. The situation is an interesting reversal or inversion of the old Frankie's creative and sexual identities; now, the creative self publicly accommodates the social norm, and the sexual self is the private, personal expression of self. Frances is no longer bound by a "guilt which she had lost the power to understand" (147); instead, she has pride in her identity, citing her interest in Michelangelo and Tennyson as suggestive of her knowledge, acceptance, and inclusion in the homosexual subculture. Although Frances does reconcile herself in some fashion to the demands of the erotic and social world of men, her accommodation does not result in the forfeiture of her dreams. McCullers denies Frances the traditional exits for fictional female characters: marriage, death, or madness. Frances' insistence that she and Mary Littlejohn will in a few years "travel around the world together" suggests that her life is just beginning, and, as the novel concludes, the humanism represented by her dreams far exceeds that suggested by the normative behaviors of Berenice, who quits her job and decides "she might as well marry" a man she does not love, and Mr. Addams who simply moves to "a house out in the new suburb of town" (149).

**Chapter 5: Substandard Inversion and Conventional Perversion
in *Clock Without Hands***

Carson McCullers' last novel, *Clock Without Hands* (1961), is her most overtly critical statement on conventional society. Set in the Deep South of Milan, Georgia, *Clock* begins in the early spring of 1953 and ends on May 17, 1954, as the Supreme Court orders public school integration. The four main characters are J. T. Malone, a local pharmacist; Judge Fox Clane, a former Congressman; Jester Clane, the Judge's grandson; and Sherman Pew, the blue-eyed black youth. On the surface, *Clock* is a story about the relationships between these four males, but, on a deeper level, McCullers presents a biting critique of Southern ideologies of gender, class, and race as she explores concepts of desire and need. The novel opens with Malone's recent onset of leukemia and the subsequent revelation that he has less than a year to live. Malone's disease and resulting death sentence foreshadow the political decline of conventional ideologies represented by the elderly Judge Clane, a white Supremacist, who is raising his orphaned grandson, Jester. In contrast to the conservative Judge, Jester is a Southern liberal, who forms a relationship of some romantic attachment with another orphan, the young black Sherman Pew, who temporarily finds employment as the Judge's amanuensis. Through their private, interpersonal, and social negotiations, these four principals represent the changing cultural models of the South.

Clock Without Hands differs from McCullers' previous novels. In *Clock* McCullers plainly says what she could only show in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, and *The Member of the Wedding*. In a sense, McCullers' first four novels deal with the effects of being made to feel socially insignificant, but *Clock* critiques the causes

of social marginalization. Although aspects of sexuality are important to a queer analysis of McCullers' last book, *Clock* requires a queer reading that moves beyond the examination of sex and gender identification. McCullers' thematic treatment of shame and prejudice demonstrates how conventional ideologies prop up social and political systems of inequality.

McCullers' thematic approach to death in *Clock* relates to social constructs of shame and prejudice. Malone, in a personal review of his life as he confronts physical death, is associated with shame, and Judge Clane, the pillar of the community in his public life and a hypocrite in his private life, is associated with prejudice. Their actions and reactions directly parallel concepts of inversion and perversion as exemplified by the new ideologies of the younger generation of Jester and Sherman.

Malone, a representative of the white, middle-class, professional male, initially identifies with the traditional ideologies represented by Judge Clane; on occasion, he has been a guest at the Clane home, and he has participated in the traditional Southern ritual of masculinity—bird hunting with the menfolk. A respectable family man by all outward signs, Malone lives in a comfortable house on a nice street in a good section of town. In material or worldly terms, Malone is well-off, and superficially he is a symbol of the standard, but the cost to his emotional well being for that material life nullifies his very existence. Although words like "respectable," "comfortable," "nice" and "good" describe Malone's relationship to family and community, he merely reflects the institutional hierarchy of politics and ideologies. He is powerless to create a political movement or formulate an ideology as long as he is shadowed by the presence of those like Judge Clane. In essence, Malone is an unidentified or "unnamed other," and his "unnamed otherness" is the source of his shame—his

emotional pain. In order to heal his emotional pain, Malone must de-privilege the standard—the Great Body of Knowledge represented by his physician and the Great Body of Tradition represented by Judge Clane; in doing so, he claims a dignity in dying, and he reclaims a dignity in life.

McCullers first identifies Malone with the concept of shame at the time he receives the *official* diagnosis of leukemia in the doctor's office where he is literally and figuratively stripped bare. In the first phase, Malone feels distanced from the standard of white maleness when he cannot understand his own lab results, even though he was "once a med student" (3). His "otherness" is evident in his lack of understanding and participation in the symbolic Great Body of Knowledge, facts of scientific laws and fixed rules of life that are traditionally created and defended by white protestant heterosexual males. As he looks across the desk at Dr. Hayden, Malone notices the symbols of masculinity—facts and phallus—that are absent or suppressed in himself. The knowledgeable man of science has "white and hairy" hands with "stubby, scrubbed fingers," and "Malone could not bear to watch them fooling with the [paper] knife" (3). In the second phase, when he is instructed to "take off [his] clothes and lie down a moment on the treatment table," Malone complies and feels "gaunt and pallid in his nakedness and ashamed" (4). Already marginalized by the stereotypical feminine qualities of submission and obedience, Malone is "repulsed by his own weakness and distress" as he takes on "the meek and neuter look of an incurable" (5). As the doctor presents scientific facts about the inversion in the pharmacist's body—the red cells are abnormally suppressed and the white cells are abnormally elevated—"a long dormant memory stirred so that [Malone] was aware of something shameful that had been forgotten, although the memory itself was still unclear" (3). Finally, after the disease is, in effect, *spoken into*

existence by someone with the authority to speak such things into existence, Malone asks the doctor, "how long do you give me?" (5) The position of power and authority is clearly established in the nature of Malone's humble request for the facts and statistics, which, in effect, seal his identity as a dying man; the doctor assigns the pharmacist's lifespan from that point forward as an existence of "a year or fifteen months" (5). In direct contrast to the controlled speech and sterile, scrubbed hands of the physician, Malone "covered his face with his broad acid-stained hands and fought to control his sobbing breath" (6). Dr. Hayden as a Godlike expert in dealing out data is clearly established with the Great Body of Knowledge since he apparently knows more about Malone than Malone knows about himself. Malone as the substandard is defined by the standard, and that is the source of his shame. –

McCullers' recognition of the impact of the powerful emotion of shame on the psychological health of an individual and her empathetic understanding of the force of shame in social roles are indicators of her genius. Her probing of the concept of shame in Malone's character anticipates a study conducted by sociologists in 1973, a dozen years after McCullers' novel came out. In *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb found that at the early age of ten or eleven, school boys understand the painful system of socialization in which "the split between the many and the few who are expected 'to make something of themselves is out in the open . . . [The mass] of boys in class act as though they were serving time, as though schoolwork and classes had become something to wait out, a blank space in their lives they hope to survive" (82-83). These boys also become "unnamed others" because they will not move to a position of power or ever belong to the Great Body of Knowledge.

While feminist criticism focuses on the damage done to adolescent females in competitive classrooms dominated by aggressive males, it is of absolute importance to call attention to how conventions of hierarchical society also cause grave harm to the majority of males in such a setting. Such situations are doubly shameful for males since by custom they support the traditions which alienate them. A deconstruction of hierarchical ideology then shows both an inversion and perversion as the basis of conventional society. The masses of men, in order to maintain their masculine identity, must support a power system to which they will never belong, and, in doing so, they cause damage to themselves.

Although he is much older than the boys in Sennett and Cobb's study, Malone recounts a similar school experience. After he is admitted to the hospital, Malone has a dream in which he remembers his hidden source of shame: "The memory concerned the time he had failed in medical school his second year" (7). Recalling his earlier reaction to Dr. Hayden's twitching right eye and handling of the knife (3), Malone reflects on the time "Jew grinds had crowded [him] out of medical school and ruined his career as a doctor—so that he had to shift to pharmacy" (7). He recalls that "they ran up the grade average so that an ordinary, average student had no fair chance," and he specifically associates Dr. Hayden with "a Jew called Levy who fiddled with a fine-blade knife and distracted him from getting the good of the class lectures. [He was a] Jew grind who made A-plus and studied in the library every night until closing time" (7). And part of Malone's unsettling memory is that, similar to Dr. Hayden, Levy's "eyelid twitched" also (7). Although he resents Jews who attempt to deny their ethnicity by assuming "good old Anglo-Saxon, southern names" (7), Malone processes through his anti-Semitic feelings and comes to understand that he

doesn't hate Dr. Hayden because he is a Jew, but because the doctor "was living and would live on—he and his like—while J. T. Malone had an incurable disease and would die in a year or fifteen months" (8). The phrase "he and his like" refers to the standard to which Malone will never belong because he and all the other substandards of the world "wait out a blank space in their lives" and then just die without ever leaving a mark. It is even more painful to Malone since an impostor, a Jew like Dr. Hayden, manages to claim a place in the Southern hierarchy when the pharmacist, a native of the South, is not able to do so. In the traditional scheme of things, this is a source of great shame.

Only recently have researchers begun to study the effects of the "master emotion," shame. Masked by the attention given to guilt and sometimes even mistakenly identified as guilt, shame has been virtually overlooked by sociologists and psychologists, yet shame has more power in defining an individual self within society than any other emotion. Helen M. Lynd provides psychological insight into the most central emotion of human experience as she distinguishes guilt from shame. Lynd finds that guilt assumes some intactness of ego—an individual is powerful enough to inflict injury on another and powerful enough to atone for the injury. With guilt there is a way of making things right, of correcting the wrong. With shame there is no way to make amends or correct the wrong, as the wrong is you. Guilt, an individualistic emotion, is then associated with an action. Shame, on the other hand, is all about the self, an experience of being defective to the very core of one's being. Guilt is often felt for making a mistake; shame is the experience of feeling that you as a person are a mistake (22-24). In addition, Thomas J. Scheff offers a sociological definition of shame as a reaction to a (real or perceived) rejection by society, a threat to the social bond, and he asserts that shame is the "most social of basic

emotions" and "pervasive in virtually all social interactions" (2).

Malone manifests both the psychological and sociological aspects of shame. His leukemia, a disease of the bone marrow, is symbolic of his being defective to the very core, and his fear of "[telling] his wife about his [illness] because of the intimacy that tragedy might have restored" is evidence of his inability to maintain a social bond in the most basic of social institutions—the family (8). In relationship to his wife's social role as "a contributor to the family finances . . . with a [cake and sandwich delivery] business of her own and even some Coca-Cola stock," Malone fears "it would be said that he was not a good provider" (8-9). In addition to being psychologically empty at the center, Malone socially exists "in a curious vacuum" in a world where "the daily activities swirled around him as dead leaves ring the center of a whirlpool, leaving him curiously untouched" (9). "Surrounded by a zone of loneliness" because of his shame, Malone cannot touch and is untouchable. McCullers leaves no doubt that Malone is to be associated with the concept of shame; she consistently and simultaneously associates Malone with shame in the first pages of her writing. Malone is "shameful," and he feels "shame" (3). He is "ashamed" and "loathsome to him[self]"; he is plagued by a "half-remembered shame," or a "dormant shame" (4-5, 7).

On the reverse or inverse side of shame is another basic social emotion which Charles H. Cooley identifies as pride, a quality in Judge Clane that McCullers explores in its extreme as prejudice. In Cooley's concept of "the looking glass self," he sees the individual's social nature as directly and exclusively corresponding to the emotional levels of pride and shame. Just as exaggerated shame can lead to feelings of inadequacy, an exaggerated sense of pride will manifest itself in the dogma of prejudice. Cooley assigns three

steps to the formation of the mirror images of shame and prejudice: "the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification," which is a variant of shame (184). This scheme suggests that the psychological and social status of all individuals is a predictable result arrived at by using a prescribed formula that is applicable to each social situation. Cooley further elaborates:

The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggests the second element, the imagined judgment, which is quite essential. The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind. This is evident from the fact that the character and weight of that other, in whose mind we see ourselves, makes all the difference with our feeling.
(184-85)

Cooley's idea of "the character and weight of that other" is more aligned with the concept of straight forward projection than mirror reflection. More to the point, "the character and weight of that other" assumes the psychosocial power to create roles, identities, or labels for individuals at the bottom of the social rungs by the those at the top. The emergence of shame in young children who are socialized primarily by parents is a prime example of creating identities and social roles for the powerless, the children, by those in power, the adults. In essence, shame functions as a social control. In practice, it has historically appeared as a social norm—a method of self-monitoring, though the ideology has benefited only those in power or at the top—because shameful individuals do not feel normal, socially or psychologically. In addition, the standard does not have

to monitor itself since it embodies the rules of good behavior and merely functions to create shame in the substandard. Most importantly, this means that the individuals associated with shame must at least have the ability to grasp a perception created by another, and, by inverse, the ability to perceive oneself beyond the concept of self is absent or suppressed in an excessively proud or prejudiced person. In terms of need and desire, the standard needs the substandard to sustain and eroticize the existence of the standard.

However, in terms of numbers alone, the idea of the standard becomes problematic since, ideally, there can be only one standard with many substandards. In postmodern thought, the "super-self-consciousness" that shame creates in individuals eventually allows them to embrace their shame as a shared social experience, which becomes a social norm; this process creates the circumstances and environment for substandards to reject shame as a social control. A good example of the substandard's ability to claim power for itself can be seen in the appropriation (or inversion) of language which was originally used as a threat and control. The highly charged racial label of "nigger" used by whites is rendered powerless when appropriated by the black culture. When one African American calls another African American "nigger," it represents a shared cultural experience or common bond. The same is true with the word "bitch" which has been used to label females who were thought to exhibit socially unacceptable behavior. A female who asserts "I can be a bitch if pushed too far" is usurping power from those who would attempt to control her. Thus, shame becomes normal in its tolerance of self and others, so to speak, and the pride and prejudice of those who defend conventionality as the standard become perverse and abnormal in their intolerance. This is the case with Judge Clane who in different ways uses Malone, Sherman, and Jester to sustain and

eroticize his own existence as "not only the leading citizen in Milan but the most responsible one" (94). Judge Clane alternates in his methodology of putting Malone in his place and claiming him as an equal, which keeps Malone "near the center of power," but not quite a part of it. After Malone's leukemia is diagnosed, he turns to the Judge for support and understanding. The Judge's reaction in countering Malone's story with his own account of a previous health problem suggests that Malone can overcome his disease if he can discover the qualities and strengths of the Judge in himself. Malone's disclosure that he has "a blood disease" is met with the Judge's rebuff: "A *blood* disease! What, that's ridiculous—you have some of the best blood in this state" (15). Dominating the conversation, the Judge tells Malone:

"Oh, doctors—with all due respect to the medical profession, I seldom believe a word they say. Never let them intimidate you. Some years ago when I had that little seizure, my doctor—Doc Tatum at Flowering Branch—began this alarmist talk. No liquor or cigars or even cigarettes But I spoke up to Doc and followed my own instincts. Instincts, that's the only thing a man can follow. And here I am as hale and hearty as a man my age could wish to be. And poor Doc, the irony—I was a pallbearer at his funeral." (15)

When Malone tries to explain that his "blood count showed a terrible increase in leukocytes," the Judge refuses to understand and dismisses Malone's leukemia as "an insignificant disorder" that can be remedied by eating "fried calf liver and beef liver," and he concludes that Malone's condition is the result of being "just tense and intimidated" (16). In effect, Judge Clane attempts to *speak out of existence* the very same disease that Dr. Hayden has earlier *spoken into existence*. While Dr. Hayden uses science to identify Malone as a man with a

diseased body, Judge Clane uses tradition to label him as a man with a weak will.

At a later meeting, Malone is exposed to more of the Judge's "fantastic reasoning" about his leukemia. Laying the groundwork to suggest Dr. Hayden's motivation in diagnosing Malone's illness, the Judge asks him, "J. T., have you ever noticed that when someone has a failing that fault is the first and foremost thing he attributes to another?" (48). The Judge continues to explain, "The doctor didn't tell you [about the leukemia] out of meanness or spite . . . It's just the logical, human way of contagating bad things away from yourself" (49). Although the Judge's hypocrisy is cloaked in his own statement, he goes even further in attempting to appropriate the power of the medical profession based on his recent observations of Dr. Hayden and the experiences of his three month-stay "at Johns Hopkins where [he] was a perfectly well, ambulatory patient who knew every soul at that hospital" (49). The Judge relates his epiphany to Malone: "The minute I saw [Dr. Hayden], I knew what had happened. I knew that look of a mortally sick man . . . looking sideways, his eyes averted as though ashamed" (49). Of course, the Judge's projections recall Malone's very own shame in the doctor's office when his diagnosis of leukemia was made. Basing his medical opinion on the idea that Malone's "eyes are straight as a die," the Judge assures Malone that all he needs is to "eat liver" or take "liver shots" (49).

In contrast to Malone's "insignificant disorder," the Judge, who "was one of those persons who felt that anything he owned was greatly superior to the possessions of others . . . even if they were identical," sees his own condition of high blood pressure and obesity with resulting diabetes as one of the "rare, uncommon diseases" worthy of the attention of the specialists at Johns Hopkins,

although his condition is actually quite common for his age group (60). The Judge's self-centeredness is further evident in his inability to understand and accept that his wife's breast cancer is terminal and in his failure to acknowledge his insensitivity to and neglect of his now deceased daughter-in-law. Between his bragging that he took his grandson out of school to accompany him to Johns Hopkins because "a seven-year-old boy is just right to go to the nearest liquor store and get a bottle for his sick grandfather," his efforts to keep his condition of being a diabetic from the general public, and his mincing of words in an attempt to convert his obesity and stroke into the more esteemed conditions of "corpulence [and] that little seizure," Malone "strangely lost faith in the old Judge" (63-4). Although the Judge has already dismissed Malone's condition as "insignificant," in addition to his suggestion that Dr. Hayden's diagnosis is less than accurate, he nonetheless concludes his conversation with Malone by telling him, "tomorrow we'll talk more about Johns Hopkins because, seriously, I think you ought to go there" (65). Thus, the Judge begins by putting Malone in his place by identifying him as "insignificant," but he concludes by offering Malone a place "near the center of power" with a suggestion that he, like the Judge, is worthy of being at Johns Hopkins. The insignificance of Malone bolsters the standard position of the Judge, and Malone's inability to overcome his blood disorder symbolizes his weakness in contrast with the Judge's dogmatic refusal to be associated with disease.

For a while, Malone fluctuates between his real role of substandard and his desire to be the standard. Like Jester's pink mules (30) and Sherman's existence as a mulatto (a namesake of a mule), Malone, in his crossed identity, is "like a plodding old mule going round and round a sorghum mill" (115). Although his "lack of interest in sex had often made him feel gross, indelicate,

almost uncouth," he still fills the patriarchy's role of handling "forbidden matches and fires," or controlling the sexuality of others (120). This is evident in his offering his daughter Ellen ice cream in an effort to cool her attraction for Jester (132) on the same evening he recalls a pleasant memory of an adulterous affair or "the guilt of freedom" in imagery of "the polar enchantment of snow" (130). Malone's pleasurable remembrance of his own sexual experience in the face of denying his daughter's sexuality is not unlike the Judge's "salacious pleasure" in reading—behind the dust cover of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*—the *Kinsey Report* which he banned in the public library (92).

Although Malone temporarily identifies with the ideologies of Southern convention, he begins a transformation when his leukemia is no longer in remission. During his second stay in the hospital, Malone picks up a copy of *Sickness unto Death* in which he reads:

The greatest danger, that of losing one's own self, may pass off quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, that of an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc., is sure to be noticed. (147)

The passage causes the dying man to reflect on his own life in relationship to the social institutions and traditions of his world. Malone realizes that his failure in medical school was a "humiliation that made him fumble in the beginning of life," and the early failure set a pattern in which "little by little he had lost his own self" (148-49). Too proud to stay in his hometown of Macon after flunking out of medical school, Malone took a job in a Milan drugstore where he dated his boss's daughter. When the boss died, Malone took out a mortgage on the business, and, living up to the family's assumption that he would marry the daughter because he "would have felt an irresponsible man if he had not spoken," Malone asked the boss's daughter to be his wife (148-49). Realizing

that he had lost himself by living up to cultural expectations of honor, work, and family, Malone begins to "[wonder] how he could die since he had not yet lived" (150). In addition to his horror in recognizing the confines of the institution of marriage, Malone is forced to accept the inability of the First Baptist Church to function in anything beyond a mere social role in his life; after an unsuccessful effort to find the "spiritual solace" needed by a dying man, Malone leaves his pastor's house "in a daze of weariness and vacuity," and from that point forward "he felt strangely apart from [the holy men]" of the community (154-55).

During the second remission of his leukemia and after changing local doctors numerous times, Malone secretly goes to Johns Hopkins in hopes of hearing some good news about his health, but "the too-familiar verdict" of leukemia is confirmed once and for all, and "in his limbo of waiting for death, Malone [becomes] obsessed with time" (209). Already estranged from family, community, and religion, Malone struggles "with the feeling that something awful and incomprehensible [is] going to happen that he [is] powerless to prevent" (210). However, the further marginalized he becomes from the core of tradition, the closer he moves toward reclaiming his power as a member of humanity. This progression becomes evident when he alone lifts his voice in opposition to the group of white racists led by Judge Clane as they plan to murder Sherman Pew, a black man who has moved into a white neighborhood.

Just as the Judge had used Malone in the past to eroticize his own diseased condition, he now finds that he needs him to sustain his position as the standard. Before the men gather at the drugstore, "the Judge began to work on Malone. 'I don't hold with violence any more than you do, J. T., but when a thing like this comes up I feel it is my duty to act'" (219). Mousing the traditional political ideology of white supremacy, duty to race, and recalling the "secret and

invisible power" he once experienced as a member of the Ku Klux Klan, the Judge asserts that as the "chief citizen of [the] town" he is "speaking for the poor, for the unprofited" (219). In an appeal to Malone's diminished pride, the Judge tells him:

"You and I as foremost citizens of Milan . . . have our property and our positions and our self-respect. . . . [The] poor whites . . . have nothing but the color of their skin. Having no property, no means, nobody to look down on—that is the clue to the whole thing. It is a sad commentary on human nature but every man has to have somebody to look down on." (219-20).

This is the ideology of hierarchy in a nutshell; the Judge reserves the right to look down on everyone, and he intends to protect the system that allows him the privilege to do so. Although he will lift Malone up when it suits his own needs, the Judge as the "chief citizen of [the] town" always claims the highest position for himself.

But, when the men finally congregate, Malone notices "there were no leading citizens" in the group, and he "[recalls] something unpleasant about each of the men he met that night . . . the sheriff [who had] beat a Negro girl with his billy stick . . . Sport Lewis . . . divorced by his wife for extreme mental cruelty," Bennie Weems, a "deadbeat" dad who does not take care of his sick child, and Max Gerhardt, the diabolical German who is intelligent enough to later build the bombs used for murdering Sherman, but not smart enough to realize that he, like the other "white trash" present that night, is being used by Judge Clane, who is "willing to go around the law if the cause is just and if the situation threatens the standards of our community" (221-222, 224). As he had treated Malone earlier, the Judge wants to convince these men that they are part of the

standard, but he merely uses them as substandards to shore up his own position as the standard. Malone alone resists the "fraternity of hate [that] made them all act together" (223). When he draws the piece of paper with the X which designates him as the assassin, Malone refuses to kill because he is "too near death to sin, to murder," and because he does not want to endanger his "immortal soul" (224-25).

Although Malone does not actively intervene on behalf of Sherman Pew, he nonetheless voices his opposition to the ritualistic violence of white supremacy, and that represents a first step in the changing cultural models of the South. Regarding the relationship between Judge Clane and Malone, McCullers, near the end of her novel, writes, "Their roles were now reversed," and, as a result, it is the Judge who pays homage to Malone with gifts of vegetables and fruit (237). Finally able to overcome his shame of not being a member of the facts, phallus, and traditions standard, the bedridden Malone with "limp genitals" doesn't need to control time because he has risen to a new level of power by making individual rather than conventional choices (237). He understands that the clock without hands encompasses both death in life and life in death for all humanity. For Malone, time becomes circular, not linear. In his human condition, he becomes a standard in rejecting the standard.

Malone's hesitant voice of opposition lays the groundwork for another symbol of the changing cultural models of the South: Sherman Pew with his intermittent defiance of oppressive racism. Like Malone's, Pew's relationship with Judge Clane is based on need and desire where his function is to eroticize and sustain the Judge as a standard. The relationship of Sherman Pew to Judge Clane is a multifaceted symbol of race relations in the Old South. Like Malone, Pew does not belong to the realm of the factual, phallic, or traditional;

this is evident in his effort to impress Jester with his somewhat faulty vocabulary, his femininity, and his blackness. Early in the novel as he begins the journey of the last phase in life's experiences, which finally enables him to accept and embrace his own substandardness, Malone has an unsettling encounter with Pew that leaves him feeling as though "something momentous and terrible had been accomplished" (12). During a brief and unexpected meeting in an alley, Malone is startled to catch his own reflection in Pew's eyes, which are "the same gray-blue" as his own, and "it seemed to Malone that the blaze [in Pew's eyes] flickered and steadied to a look of eerie understanding" (12). Because he is biracial, Pew sees from the perspective of black or white, and his "look of eerie understanding" implies that he recognizes Malone's substandardness. Their second meeting also conjures up memories of Malone's shame when he mistakes "a bunch of keys on a silver ring" which are found by Pew as "the paper knife of Dr. Hayden" (25). The meeting leaves Malone filled with "alien emotions" that are "split between love and hatred" (25). Malone's feelings echo the Old Southern adage often offered as a token explanation for race relations in which "the South loved Negroes as a people, but hated them as a race." Of course, Judge Clane demonstrates the true meaning behind the adage which really means that the South loved Negroes as people owned by white Southerners, but hated them as a race freed from bondage. The Judge tells Malone:

"the South is in the vortex of a revolution almost as disastrous as the War Between the States The wind of revolution is rising to destroy the very foundations on which the South was built. The poll tax will soon be abolished and every *ignorant* Nigra can vote. Equal rights in education will be the next thing. Imagine a future

where delicate little white girls must share their desks with *coal-black niggers* in order to learn to read and write. A minimum-wage law so outrageously high that it will be the death knell of the rural South may be forced on us. Imagine paying a passel of *worthless* field hands by the hour. The Federal Housing Projects are already the *ruination* of the real estate investors. They call it slum clearance—but [t]he people who live in slums make the slums themselves by their own *improvidence*." (13-14 italics added)

Not only are the Southern blacks attributed the negative qualities that inform the ideology of white supremacy, the Judge personally, though perhaps unconsciously, uses Pew to eroticize his own existence. Historically, black men have been denied "manhood"—which means a chance to claim a place in the hierarchy based on social, financial, and political empowerment. The castration of black lynching victims throughout the history of the racist South is a literal and symbolic statement about the taking of a black's manhood by white supremacists. The intention is to inflict the ultimate humiliation on the victim by reducing him to the status of woman, since one could easily conclude that the absence of the testes means that one is female. Although Pew is not literally castrated, he does lack masculine identity. Pew has no social, financial or political power; he lives in an apartment which belongs to his foster brother (71), he briefly holds "a fine, dainty job as an amanuensis"—or the under-paid personal servant/nurse to the Judge (171), and in the absence of any real political power, he can only mouth ideas he has heard about the efforts of other blacks to gain the right to vote (69-70). The Judge says that Pew "Writes my letters with the calligraphy of an angel, gives me my injections and makes me

toe the line on the diet. Reads to me in the afternoon" (127). Additionally, McCullers attributes many exaggerated feminine qualities to Pew; he is associated with femininity in his conceited concern for his physical appearance, his over-emphasis on material comforts and expensive food and drink as he shows Jester the furnishings of his abode, and his uncanny reliance on story-telling, chatter, and guileful banter as a means of entertaining Jester as a guest. Even within the black community, Pew, who was "sexually assaulted" at the age of eleven by an adult male (78), is not embraced as a masculine person. Pew's "otherness," resulting from his femininity, is exemplified when the Judge's black cook Verily refers to him as "The Queen of Sheba" (165). In essence, Pew embodies all the qualities that are conventionally attributed to the Southern Belle—the ideal of Southern White Womanhood—and Pew's femininity as a black male eroticizes the Judge's existence by fulfilling both his repressed desires and his need to dominate. The Judge's behavior is yet another aspect of the "love/hate" relationship of white for black. For example, when the Judge enjoys his afternoon toddy with Pew, he is in the desire mode—his desire for companionship is met—but when Pew is "sent to the kitchen [or library] to have dinner with the cook," the Judge is in the dominant mode—he reasserts that he is the standard (110).

In this perverse manner, the Judge dominates and enjoys that which is black male and white feminine without risk of physical/sexual contamination or public disclosure, although he adamantly insists, "'White is white and black is black—and never the two shall meet if I can prevent it'" (40). Of course, the Judge is referring to interracial sexual relationships of heterosexual nature, and he does so even as Pew, an interracial person, is in his employment. Although the Judge identifies himself as a "Southerner who defends his womankind

against the black and alien invader" (184), his views on Southern womanhood arise out of a dark space that exists somewhere between fixation on female breasts and a romantic attachment to female singers of choir hymns. His perversion lies not in his sexual desires, but in his hypocrisy in failing to honestly own those desires and in his efforts to force his views on others. The necessity for the Judge's objectifying "the other" or "the substandard" in his life, especially the female/feminine as object, arises from conventionality.

Feminist psychoanalytical theory addresses the male fear of merger with the female body, which has some implications in the Judge's sexuality. Western cultural attitudes toward biological functions of conception and childbirth in which the father contributes the spirit and the mother contributes the matter are grounded in Aristotle and *Genesis*. Ian Maclean historically traces the enduring influence of this concept and locates the idea of the female ovum contributing the matter as a commonly held belief of the medical profession in the sixteenth century (36-37). Modern scientific studies in the field of embryology have done little to dispel the dualism that greatly informs popular ideas of sex and gender roles, which are culturally ingrained as intellectual and religious ideologies. Because the male can never truly identify with the physical aspect of birth as does the female, he is distantly removed from the birth process. He can never know with absolute certainty that the child produced is his; he must believe that he is the father. Thus, the male's position as parent becomes the spiritual father. While the male becomes more closely aligned with God, the female is linked with Eve in the Garden of Eden as a source of contamination identified with the original sin. In her role as the giver of physical life, the female also becomes responsible for assigning mortality to her offspring. Because little boys recognize the power of the female body to "make or unmake life," the male child

feels both desire and fear of the female. Janet Adelman says that the female body "invokes a primitive and infantile terror derivative from the period when the mother . . . was not seen as a whole and separate, when she—or the body-parts through which she was imagined—had the power to make or unmake the world and the self for her child"; Adelman further asserts that although a woman is relatively powerless, the symbolic womb "is not embodied in any individual woman in whom it might be contained or controlled" (4). A pregnancy resulting in birth represents the making of life, and the breasts which produce milk become the means by which that life is sustained. A womb that rejects a fetus is the unmaking of life, and breasts that deny nourishment—for whatever reason—refuse to sustain life. Symbolically, the female body has the power of life and death for that male child. McCullers suggests that in the South, even the symbolic power of the female is usurped by patriarchal conventions. In *Clock*, the females die because of their wombs or breasts. Miss Missy, the Judge's wife, dies of breast cancer. Mirabelle, his daughter-in law and the mother of Jester, dies in childbirth, and Ossie Little, Sherman Pew's mother, dies from complications of childbirth. Thus, the females in the Judge's world are reduced to objects as breeders and feeders of males, and relegated to death.

Additionally, in a conventional society, after a prolonged dependency on the female body for the period of time required to move from infancy to childhood, little boys must undergo a traumatic ritual of separation from the female (mother) in order to establish a masculine identity. In other words, the little boy must reject all that is female in order to become fully male. Conventional society requires that little boys define themselves in complete opposition to the female (or mother) in order to become a masculine male, which means the male child must see the mother as substandard in order for him to

become the standard. When the male reaches a state of sexual maturity that is identified as heterosexual, the experience of returning to the womb, as symbolized by sexual intercourse, is a time of great desire and fear on the part of that male. The experience of becoming too closely identified with the female body which has the potential to make or unmake his life—this time his masculine identity—is a time of great anxiety for the male. In order to protect his masculine, heterosexual identity, the male must dominate the female without allowing too much intimate identity with her. This is also a love/hate relationship in some respects. Because a phallic, heterosexual male despises being identified as feminine in any aspect, there is a big conflict in the ideology of heterosexual love which requires that a man must love the thing he despises. The motherless males, Jester and Sherman, represent a threat to conventional heterosexuality because they do not define themselves in opposition to the female.

Although the Judge espouses conventional heterosexual ideology, his sexual history is quite unusual. After his wife dies, he goes through a period in which he experiences sexual "fascination for choir ladies" (56). In order for him to become sexually interested in a female, he must first convince himself that she is "a pure woman," and because of this self-imposed limitation, "only choir singers attracted him" (53). To pursue his interest in choir singers, the Judge attended all the churches in town where "he loved to watch the throats and bosoms of women when they sang," and to explain his various "changes of churches . . . he would declare in a loud voice, 'I like to be informed about what goes on in various religions and creeds. My wife and I have always been very broad-minded'" (52-53). He tries to pass off his sexual interests as liberal philosophical endeavors. His unusual behavior is partly the result of his wife's struggle with breast cancer, the removal of her breast, and ultimately her death.

However, when his fascination with the "singing throat and breasts" (52) is considered in connection with his obsession with food—"he would love to eat forty baked alaskas every day" (170)—it suggests that his conception of need and desire for the female body is located somewhere back in infancy—a time of lullabies for a suckling baby, and also a time in which the infant, due to its natural self-centeredness, sees the mother's body as an object for fulfilling its own needs. This preconscious need further explains why the Judge's object of affection must be "a pure woman"—the good mother. Perhaps some trauma associated with his weaning from the breast caused the Judge to suffer arrested development; his relationships with others clearly indicate that he did not advance beyond the self-centered stage of infancy.

As a sexual being, the Judge is mainly defined by his fixation for a time on the female body parts of breasts and womb. Except for his fathering a son in his early adult life, there is no evidence that he merges with the female body in conventional sexual practices. But there is evidence that he is curious about the power of the female body to make or unmake life; the Judge loves reading "serious articles about pregnancy and childbirth" (90). The Judge's "queerness" is located in the manner in which he uses Pew. While Pew does not have a womb or breasts, he is associated with the Judge's nourishment and life. Not only is he responsible for feedings in his monitoring of the Judge's meals, Pew is associated with a symbolic rebirth for the Judge, who tells Malone, "He was the colored caddy who saved my life when I fell into that pond" while suffering a light stroke (64). In this sense, Pew, who says, "I put myself in other people's places" (105), is the giver of life as symbolized in the watery rebirth of the Judge, and he is the maintainer of that life as the individual who has control of the Judge's nourishment. In his feminine role "as a body servant" (61), Pew

eroticizes the Judge's life as he fulfills the role of "the strange, the alien, the perverse and dangerous" (200) for "an impotent, dirty old man" (92); these are needs and attributes which the Judge respectively projects onto his son and the author of the *Kinsey Report*. Despite his needs and desires, the Judge struggles to maintain his identity with conventional ideology.

Earlier in the novel, in a conversation with his grandson, the Judge recalls:

"Once when I was in New York, I saw a Nigra man sitting at a table with a white girl and something in my bloodstream sickened. My outrage had nothing particularly to do with justice—but when I saw those two laughing together and eating at the same table, my bloodstream—I left New York that same day and never went back to that Babel, nor will to my dying day." (41)

What the Judge really objects to is the "queerness" of the relationship of two substandards; black men and white women are the primary sources for eroticizing and sustaining the assumed standard position of the white male in Southern culture, and when the two substandards eroticize and sustain each other, the hierarchy is threatened by a feared lack of support. The conventions of the white male are powerless to direct or control such a relationship, and since it represents transgressions of race and gender boundaries, such a relationship becomes "queer" by default. With Pew, the Judge experiences the "queer" while maintaining his connection with convention because Pew as a transgendered interracial person represents the absence of boundaries, and, at the same time, he simultaneously allows the Judge to feel some control over boundaries. As a sexually identified black male who is engendered white female, Pew is the object by which the Judge precariously transgresses the

boundaries of race and gender, and as a paid servant who is of black father and white mother lineage, Pew is the object which allows the Judge to assume that he has some mastery over the boundaries of race and sex. And because control and pleasure overlap for the standard, by inverse, the Judge has control over the black male and the white feminine, and he derives pleasure in his relationship with an individual who symbolizes the absence of sexual boundaries for whites and blacks. The Judge's method of obtaining pleasure through control, domination, and ultimate consummation is not all that different from the relationship between Penderton and Williams in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. Of course, the relationship between the Judge and Pew is not homosexual, but it is homoerotic to some degree. As further evidence of his role in eroticizing and sustaining the Judge's role as standard, even in Pew's temporary absence from his job, a "sadness and tedium returned to the Judge" (138).

Although Pew enjoys his position in the Judge's service for a time, he becomes outraged when he is sent on an errand to Clane's law office and discovers legal papers which reveal that his father was sentenced to death by the Judge for supposedly raping a white woman—his mother (211). After having fantasized all his life that his mother was a black woman and his father a white rapist, Pew becomes acutely aware of the disparity in his sense of black identity and the opposing identity created for him in the white man's legal documents. And the discovery made Pew feel "tricked . . . cheated. He wanted to die like the Negro man had died" (212). No longer able to operate in the gray area of fluid boundaries, he is limited in his choices of accepting the white man's definition of black male or creating his own identity. When he returns to the Judge's house and the Judge brings up his fantastic political plan to ask the federal government for revaluation of Confederate money and reparation for slaves, Pew refuses to

write letters concerning the matter and gives the Judge his "quit notice" (179). Resolved to "*do something*" defiant, Pew elects "to rent a house in Milan in the white man's section" (215, 227). The Judge, feeling that his "house was lonelier than ever and the emptiness . . . blanker, more dismal . . . blamed Sherman for leaving him" (218).

Fearing that his position as standard is slipping away, the Judge tells Malone, "He left me high and dry. I am too furious to fool with him any longer" (219). And out of a perceived necessity to destroy that which will not remain within the boundaries of the substandard, the Judge incites a group of white men to destroy Pew. Warned by Jester of the whites' plan for bombing his home, Pew avows, "I have made my decision. So I am going to stay right here. Right Here. Bombing or No" (229). Just as Malone delivered the first blow to white supremacy in his voiced opposition to violence and in his refusal to identify with conventional society, Pew delivers the second strike with his defiant move to cross racial lines and integrate a white neighborhood, and with his refusal to accept an identity created for him by conventional white society.

Without the sustaining and eroticizing support of those like Malone and Pew, the already weakened standard suffers a third strike as Jester, a Southern-born aristocrat, is unwilling or unable to embrace or accept the Southern conventionality of his grandfather as his birthright or his way of life. Jester is a pivotal and important individual. A source of "comfort–anxiety" to the Judge, Jester symbolizes the future or the decline of the Old Order, and the Judge acknowledges his hopes and fears concerning tradition when he says of Jester, "he is all that is left" (19). Unlike Malone and Pew, who merely represent a threat from the outside, Jester is an insider, and his inside location

suggests that he will redefine the standard as cultural models of the South change.

In a sense, Judge Clane's grandson Jester is forced to reject conventionality because he is unable to locate himself within its confines. McCullers introduces Jester as the embodiment of inversion and reversal. He has "different feelings [and] different thoughts," and his need to "question the justice of white supremacy" causes the Judge to label him "abnormal" (30-31). Regarding their conflicting views over segregation, the Judge asks Jester, "How would you like to see a hulking Nigra boy sharing a desk with a delicate little white girl?"; Jester both inverts and reverses the question and asks, "How about a hulking white girl sharing a desk with a delicate little Negro boy?" (28). When Jester tries to reason with his grandfather that he is entitled to "a few opinions of [his] own," the Judge tells him that he is "far sharper than a serpent's tooth . . . a thankless child" (32). Although the Judge tries to use convention to render Jester dependent and substandard, Jester understands the system well and tells his grandfather that "quoting the Bible . . . isn't fair because it automatically puts a person in the wrong" (32). Finally, the Judge, exploiting the belief that "[Jester] doesn't even go with girls," asks him, "Would you marry a Nigra? Be truthful" (40). Jester cannot honestly give the correct and standard answer (the white, protestant, heterosexual answer) that is necessary for him to win the political debate.

McCullers does not focus on Jester as a practicing homosexual; instead, she concentrates on his "homosexual sensibility," a psychological and philosophical outlook outside that of conventional society which forms an identity based on extremes of emotional pain and personal enlightenment. When his grandfather tries to force him to identify with Southern tradition by accusing him

of lacking passion, Jester feels ashamed, and he fears that the Judge knows he is still a virgin. Moreover, Jester suffers "a shame [in] his secret defeat" at not being sexually aroused by the local prostitutes; he realizes, "Other boys he knew boasted of love affairs . . . [after visiting] a house run by a woman called Reba" (42). His gay sensibility is further suggested by his realization that "sentimentality disgusted him" (42). Jester understands that sentimentality is grounded in convention, and he is not. When Jester recalls the attraction he once felt for a fellow male student, he is filled with "a cringing shame" (43). Later, when he meets Sherman Pew, Jester experiences "sudden shame" conflicted with feelings of "love" and "passion" (44). The emotional impact of this "love at first sight" was so strong that "Jester felt that if he touched Sherman it would lead to a mortal sin" (82). In an effort at temporary concession to conventional behavior, Jester visits a prostitute, and as "he lay in bed with a woman with orange hair and gold in her teeth, [h]e closed his eyes, and having in mind [Sherman's] dark face and flickering eyes, he was able to become a man" (84). Feeling no real sexual attraction for females, Jester "was afraid, so terribly afraid, that he was not normal"; further, "[i]f it turned out he was homosexual like men in the *Kinsey Report*, Jester avowed that he would kill himself" (93-94). Although he has read Kinsey's scientific evidence that he is a normal variant of the human population, Jester's acculturation makes him "afraid, so terribly, afraid, that he [is] not normal and the fear corkscrew[s] within him" (93). Like Malone, Jester must reject conventional ideology in order to overcome his shame.

McCullers calls attention to fundamental issues of gender and sex equality with her demonstration of the manner in which homophobic discourse is used by different characters as an attempt to control or coerce the behaviors of

others. The Judge refers to the statesmen who he fears will not support his efforts "to restore the South" (35) as "weak sisters" (162). When Malone refuses to participate in the violent attack on Pew, the men in the drugstore refer to him as "Chicken" and look "at him as though he had gone stark raving crazy" (225). Amid his leveling of insults such as "tenderhearted, chicken sissy" toward Jester (83), Pew asserts that the object of his great sexual conquest during military service was a "beautiful, lily-white French virgin" (140). Jester worries that his failure to grow a beard will cause people to think that he is "[ab]normal or queer" (94, 98). In a fit of rage, Pew accuses Jester of being like the man who sexually assaulted him as a child (145). In all instances, the reaction of homophobia is not based on a disgust for the love of man for man, but in hatred of that which is perceived to threaten the brotherhood of conventionality—a man who acts like a woman or a man who does not dominate a woman. Homophobia is about power, inequality, and control; thus homophobia is linked to misogyny and racism. Sociologist Donald F. Sabo writes:

homophobia is not inborn but learned. As a boy grows up, homophobic sentiments and attitudes become grafted to his developing personality and gender identity. A boy's inner sense of manliness develops in juxtaposition to his sense of what it means to be gay or feminine. And yet, there is more to homophobia than sexual preference or conformity to gender stereotypes. Like other forms of prejudice, homophobia gets acted out and perpetuated in our relationships with other people. Homophobia derives from and reinforces a wide range of power relations among individuals and

groups. These relations, in turn, are tied to systems of inequality.
(155)

Sabo describes the very basis of the system of conventionality which the Judge sees as "passionate prejudice" (162), a system based on "a state of happy peonage" (163) with all "others" beneath the white, heterosexual male as the standard. In a discussion with Jester about socialism, the Judge objects to the absence of a clearly established hierarchy; he is "revolted" by the socialist system in which he sees that "one after another [are] identical" or equal (189). The Judge realizes that socialism theoretically dismantles power, inequality, and control associated with race, sex, and gender in conventional society.

Critic Dale Edmonds' 1969 response to *Clock* demonstrates the degree to which the prejudices described by Sabo permeated the intellectual and philosophical attitudes of some working in the liberal arts of modern society; Edmonds sees Jester's attraction to Sherman as "a ludicrous homosexual passion" and his attempt to confirm his manhood by visiting a prostitute as "an unintentionally laughable sexual encounter" (30). Of course, Edmonds is speaking from the context of prevailing attitudes at the beginning of the Stonewall era, and from the platform of conventionality where white protestant heterosexuality is the norm or the standard. If Jester filled the role of *emotional whipping boy* for Pew, at least "he was learning to defend himself" and gaining "an awareness that he was the chosen one; that he was the one that Sherman used to lash out against when he wanted to lash out against the world" (136). The personal conflicts in Jester and Pew's homoerotic relationship are not so different from those found in the Malone's heterosexual relationship, which are exemplified by Malone's fierce retort of "Why is it your God-damn business?" to Mrs. Malone's concern for his health and her suggestion that he put on a hat to

protect himself from the "broiling sun" (122). Of course, theirs is a dominant white male and subordinate female relationship, and it represents the Judge's rationale for banning the *Kinsey Report* because "as a responsible man [he was] determined that things in [the] town and state [were] going to be in order" (97). The *Kinsey Report* would naturally be suppressed as "out of order" since it was one of the first studies of sexuality to suggest that young boys normally have their first sexual experience with others of their own age and sex group. McCullers' inclusion of multiple references to the *Kinsey Report* adds an extra meaning to Malone's "boys will be boys" suggestion, which on the surface is intended to counter the Judge's concern about Jester's staying out late (57). In the end, the damage done to humanity by the harmless sexual experimentation of young men with their peers pales in comparison to the damage perpetuated by a society that teaches its young men to see females as only objects used to establish their manhood, as in Jester's meaningless visit to the prostitute. The conventional system of establishing both a public and private identity of manhood means that a male must be willing to subordinate another, or the male must become willing to become marginalized as a subordinate.

The resolution of the tension between the public self as defined by the Judge and his reliance on conventions of Southern society and the private self as revealed through Jester and his rejection of that conventionality is McCullers' concluding concept in *Clock*. Pew (who has always fantasized that his black mother was raped by a white man) fails to accept a part of himself upon discovering the identity of his white mother, but Jester manages to embrace his "otherness" through the legacy of his father's break with convention. The young men almost simultaneously discover that their pasts are linked. Sherman Jones, the father of Pew and a black man accused of killing a white man, was

earnestly—though unsuccessfully—defended by Jester's father, and Pew's white mother, Mrs. Little, later became the unreciprocating love interest who rejected Jester's father because of his failure to prevent her lover from receiving the death sentence as delivered by the presiding Judge Fox Clane. The fracture in the public and the private ideology of conventionality is exemplified in the Judge's retelling of this event to Jester in an effort to explain why Johnny Clane, his son and Jester's father, chose to commit suicide when conventionality prevailed over Constitutional justice. The Judge alternates in voicing his abhorrence at his son's love for a white woman who is pregnant by a black man and his insistence that he and his son were "two peas in a pod . . . blood twin brothers" (199, 201). Of course, in some ways the Judge and his son are alike in their desires; however, the Judge denies and represses his desire for the exotic other, while his son is driven by a desire that grows out of his perceived duty to that exotic other. Split between duty and desire, the Judge chooses to operate in the realm of conventional duty and his son moves into the realm of unconventional desire—and his grandson even further.

At first, the Judge attempts to render any unconventional relationship an impossibility; he says of Pew's mother, "That woman couldn't possibly have loved Sherman Jones. He is black and she is white" (200). Unable to speak unconventional behavior out of existence, the Judge attempts to define it in relationship to the standard and thereby diffuse its potential power. Calling his son's attraction to Pew's mother as "[e]ither lust or lunacy," the Judge appropriates and applies the labels used in the early fifties for marginalizing perceived sexual deviants as either criminal or insane (201). Although the Judge cannot bring himself to admit it, the most troubling aspect of the case involves a woman's sexuality that is so out of control that it threatens the very

foundation of conventional society. Not only does Mrs. Little belong to the class designated as "white trash," she begins to accumulate sexual experience as the "twelve-year-old child-bride" of Ossie Little who "was twenty years older than his wife" (181). She is further sexually empowered as a white married woman who transgresses the boundaries of the institution of marriage, as well as race, in her adulterous relationship with a black man that results in a pregnancy. And finally, she is a married white woman who has sexually transgressed racial boundaries, and who threatens to transgress social boundaries as the Judge's son finds her sexually appealing. Mrs. Little's rejection of the white, aristocrat Johnny Clane in favor of the accused black rapist, Sherman Jones, who she identifies as "the cleanest, most decent man she had ever known," flies in the face of all that is conventional in the South; her preference for a black man over any white man, let alone the Judge's son, is intolerable. And her sexual excess, whether real or imagined, combined with her efforts to control her own sexuality, severely invert and reverse the power structure of southern society. In a racial inversion, her white husband is killed by a black man as the two struggle to see who will sexually own her. To add yet another queer dimension to her powers of sexuality, the prominent Judge's son defends her adulterous black lover and ends by falling in love with her himself. To re-establish the order of conventionality, the husband is rendered an abusive, old fool and is killed; the black lover is rendered a rapist and is executed; and the infatuated son of the Judge is rendered insane and takes his own life. The great lengths to which conventional thinkers will go to deny the power of the female voice and the power of female choice in sexual matters is obvious in the efforts of the juror-citizens of Milan as they elect to believe that Mrs. Little is a powerless rape victim and her sexual favors were taken by force by the black male, though as

the only eyewitness to the shooting, she swears "that he had always treated her like a lady" and that he is innocent (195).

Before the trial, the Judge warns his son "that when one is too much involved with the underdog, one is apt to go under oneself" (185-86). The Judge's preoccupation with protecting "the standards of [his] community" (224) and ensuring his own position of "almost unlimited power" (180) calls attention to his fear of going under. Since the underdog is necessary to sustain the Judge's status as standard, his lack of involvement with the underdog and his unwillingness to compromise when faced with eroding support as evidenced by Malone's withdrawal, Pew's defiance, and Jester's rejection make his warning prophetic.

In a last act of desperation on the eve of the Supreme Court order of desegregation, the Judge attempts to incite the community with a radio broadcast that he plans to fill with racial hate speech; however, at the appointed time, he draws a mental blank, and in an act of what can only be described as senility, he lurches into the Gettysburg Address. The shouts of the radio station programmers to "cut it" as the Judge utters "all men are created equal" blends with "the memory of the sound of his own gavel rapping in his courtroom" as he denied his son the right to speak these same words about equality in defense of a man's life (240-241). In the end, the Judge is not defeated by the feared revolution he mentioned earlier to Malone, but by his own rhetoric—the stock of his political trade. The emasculated Malone, the effeminate Pew, and the homo-sensible Jester, as representatives of inclusive humanity, become the new standards.

Although Judge Clane's legacy still attempts to find voice at times in horrendous hate crimes (which was evident in the 1998 murders of James Byrd

Jr. and Matthew Shepard for instance), the old historic, natural, and intolerant standard is now the de-naturalized and problematic standard which faces the shame and prejudice it once projected onto the substandard. Jester understands the "lag between the words and the idea and justice" (197), and he declines the opportunity to kill Sammy Lank, the man who threw the fire bomb into Pew's home. His refusal to avenge Pew's death is based on a recognition of the "grotesque pity" he feels for Lank (233), a poor mill hand, who supports the very system of peonage that keeps him down by affording him the illusion that his pitiful existence is better than that of some poor black soul he thinks beneath him simply because of the color of his skin.

In 1961 reviewer Granville Hicks suggested that in *Clock*, "Mrs. McCullers is not trying to underline the obvious fact that there is a problem, nor has she a solution she wants to thrust upon us; her purpose is to show the problem at the deepest level, as it penetrates the secret recesses of human souls" (15). This is not completely true. At the end of her novel, McCullers calls special attention to "the laws of property and bigotry," and she emphasizes the newly acquired tolerance of Jester (233-34). She is calling attention to the problem and showing it at its deepest level, and she is suggesting a solution—a change in the secret recesses of the conventional, white, protestant, heterosexual man's soul!

Conclusion

The last forty-to-fifty years have yielded a great deal of information on the sexual and the psychosocial aspects of identity. Challenges by blacks, women, gays and lesbians to culturally ingrained categories of race, gender, and sexual identification have effectively destabilized conventional notions of fixed identity. Building on the social activism of the extended civil rights movement, queer theory seeks to expose the ideological inconsistencies of the social norm and dismantle the system of knowledge/power at the core of oppressive conventionality which uses sexuality as a key determinant in labeling the psychosocial status of individuals as normal or deviant.

McCullers' understanding that sexual and psychosocial behavior are not naturally relational is evidenced by her suggesting—but deprivileging of—sexual differences in her characters, and by her strong focus on their psychosocial status in contrast to a backdrop of dysfunctional heterosexuality. Although her characters represent a potential departure from conventional social norms in their sexual needs and desires, McCullers ensures a queer reading of all sexualities by intentionally omitting references to the sexual activities of her freaks. Instead, she forces her readers to assign their own ideas of sexual performance to her characters, and thereby establishes indeterminacy in the multitude of resulting sexual interpretations. The queer strategy in McCullers' fiction is the manner in which she locates the origin of queerness and deviancy in the minds of her readers, not in the souls of her characters. Because her fiction focuses on psychosocial identity and details the painful isolation of freaks, queers, hermaphrodites, and grotesques, the recent development of queer theory provides an ideal approach to reading and analyzing of Carson

McCullers' novels; "queering" is the long awaited methodology needed to see and understand McCullers' important messages of social criticism.

Only now, after forty years, are people beginning to understand the complexities of McCullers' fiction. Queer theory finally makes available the approach and the vocabulary necessary for a more thorough understanding of the encoding component in McCullers' novels. Queer theory analysis of McCullers' fiction promises to reverse the tradition of reading her texts as accommodating and complying with conventional taste, while hiding, suppressing, and encrypting the queer message of those marginalized and isolated by the dominant order. Today, McCullers' fiction must be read as the social critique which gives dignity and validation to those who could not or would not conform to conventionality, and, equally important, McCullers' queer fiction rightfully locates that which is unnatural and problematic as originating at the very core of a prejudiced and intolerant conventional society. McCullers' messages of truth regarding human needs versus cultural expectations become more accessible through the critical approach of queer theory.

McCullers' resistance to binary classification and her deprivileging of sex and gender as the basis of identity are evidence of her anticipation of queer theory. Not only did she possess an acute understanding of how marginalized individuals suffer in an oppressive society that demands conformity, she understood the faulty bases of power and knowledge used to marginalize those outside the established order. Her novels embody the queer knowledge that psychosocial identity should not be determined solely by sexuality. She shows us that, queerly, sexuality is a normal and variable human experience, while psychosocial identity is a construct which reflects conventional society's power to reward or punish individuals for their particular kinds of existence.

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