CHAPTER III
BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: ADOLESCENTS AND BLACKS AS SYMBOLS OF ISOLATION

The symbolic richness of the grotesque characters in McCullers' novels has already been dealt with in the second chapter. The present chapter, which is on the adolescent and black characters, aims at discussing the symbolic significance of these two sets of characters. In most of her works Carson McCullers makes use of the pre-teen figures as well as the blacks as living symbols of inner isolation. While the alienation the blacks feel is not unrelated to their black identity, it is their sexual and psychological ambivalence that insulates the adolescents, making them the victims of spiritual alienation. The blacks surrounded by the unsympathetic whites stand for everyman's existential estrangement in an alien universe. Sandwiched between childhood and adulthood the adolescents, too, strike us as symbols of spiritual isolation, for they are in a no man's land between two worlds--one already dead, the other no more palpable than a hazy outline. Both the adolescents and the blacks represent the universal phenomenon of spiritual isolation which is a recurrent motif in McCullers' works.
Her treatment of these characters is marked by humanity, sympathetic apprehension and tenderness.

Of the two sets of characters the adolescents may be discussed first. Like Elizabeth Bowen in *The Death of the Heart*, Emma Smith in *The Far Cry* and E. Arnot Robertson in *Ordinary Families*, McCullers, too, treats of the emotional perplexities of adolescence. The period of adolescence, with its blistering experience of growth, is an awkward and explosive phase of development and it always had a fascination for Carson McCullers. This theme is explored elaborately in many of her novels and short-stories. In tomboy heroines like Mick and Frankie, the novelist recreates her own troubled adolescence and the pangs of isolation she herself had experienced during her adolescence. She even excels J. D. Salinger or Flannery O'Connor in the brilliant portrayal of the working of the adolescent mind. She records the operations of the adolescent mind faithfully, not leaving out even the slightest psychic vibration.

Oliver Evans is of the view that the adolescents who do not belong anywhere serve as excellent symbols of spiritual isolation. At the age of adolescence, the sense of individual isolation is keener and sharper than at any other age. They view themselves as square pegs in round
holes and feel a terrible sense of bewilderment when it comes to integrating themselves with the society. According to Evans, "adolescence sets one apart just as effectively as does a physical or mental aberration: one is no longer a child, nor yet an adult. Even one's sexual identity is ambiguous." Revolting against their own femininity, McCullers' tomboy heroines bearing boys' names keep late hours and roam about the streets in male attire. As Ihab Hassan has said:

Adolescents and freaks are her rueful heroes because the first are as yet uninitiated and the latter are forever unacceptable; both do not belong, and in both physical incompleteness is the source of a qualitative, a spiritual difference. And lonely as her characters are, encased as they are in their teeming dreams, most private of human expressions, their actions usually serve only to intensify their solitude.

Frances in "Wunderkind" is the prototype of McCullers' exasperating and endearing adolescent characters, but her first fully developed adolescent heroine is Mick Kelly in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter. She is a pre-teen girl with "hoarse, boyish voice" wearing kakhi shorts and "swaggering like a cowboy in the picture show" (164). She wants masculine freedom and enjoys smoking cigarettes and visiting Biff Brannon's cafe.
Wherever she is, an army of kids is tacked on to her. These naughty kids who evoke in her the ambivalent attitudes of love and hate are the live reminders of a not so happy childhood, which has not yet left her completely.

Like Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding*, Mick is harrowed by an aching sense of alienation. She feels she would break into a hundred pieces: "The feeling was a whole lot worse than being hungry for any dinner, yet it was like that I want--I want--I want--was all that she could think about--but just what this real want was she did not know" (194). She wishes to flee to a hidden place where she may sing 'Motsart's' music. What she experiences in the boarding house is a populous solitude. She muses: "It was funny, too, how lonely a person could be in a crowded house" (195). Music swells in her heart, but "some kind of music was too private to sing in a house cram-full of people" (195). In the vocational also she feels terribly alone:

In the halls the people would walk up and down together and everybody seemed to belong to some special bunch. Within a week or two she knew people in the halls and in classes to speak to them--but that was all. She wasn't a member of any bunch. (246)
It is to beat down the engulfing sense of alienation and obtain peer group acceptance that she decides to conduct a prom party. She takes a long bath, which is supposed to wash away all the traces of childhood, and the excited girl makes elaborate preparations. She puts on adult female dress and feels much different from her old self. Contrary to her expectations, the party ends in a terrible mess. The kids from the neighbourhood intrude and spoil the party. With the coming of the kids, even the grown up girls forget themselves and revert to childhood. Mick is the wildest of all. In sheer excitement she jumps into a ditch. Her adult dress is torn and the rhinestone tiara is lost. Going back home she puts on her old shorts and shirt. The party, like Frankie's wedding, fails to impart the desired sense of belonging.

The child in Mick surfaces at times and makes her do wild pranks as she does at the party. At the same time she evinces adult features too. She gropes towards adult understanding of her broken father. One night she gets a glimpse of his loneliness and isolation, and she patiently sits by him and lets him unburden his loaded heart. But she is unable to linger long in the realm of the adults and shuttles between the two worlds. Indefinable feelings make her tense and at times violent. She feels much
relieved on listening to the neighbour's radio. Once, when the radio is unexpectedly turned off, she starts hitting her thigh with her fists and scraping sharp rocks on her hand until it turns bloody. Her pent-up feelings seek expression through such masochistic acts.

Mick is defined by the acuteness of her isolation and the feverish intensity of her fantasy life. She indulges in fantasy as a sort of defence mechanism to shield herself from the drabness of her day-to-day life. Fantasy transports her with its viewless wings from her drab humdrum existence to an ambience of elevated feeling. 'The inside room' is the symbol of Mick's fantasy world. When the outer world becomes unbearable, she takes a flight to her inner room and withdraws into her own world: "The inside room was a very private place. She could be in the middle of a house full of people and still feel like she was locked up by herself" (304). Her 'inside room' is occupied by Singer and the sound of music. She fancies herself as an orphan living with Singer in a foreign land where it would snow in the winter. She imagines they are in a town in Switzerland with high glaciers and the Alpine ranges all around. The inner room, as well as the snow-capped fantasy world, is her means of escaping from the squalor and the sordidness of her monotonous existence. In fact the inner room represents "yet another retreat into a spiritual isolation
that can cripple as well as console." Mick's inner room is the haven of all her illusions and self-deception. The tension between the inner and the outer rooms adumbrates a very persistent concern of the novel--the ongoing conflict between illusion and reality.

Mick is not at ease either with the kids or with the adults. She badly misses someone who can understand her, someone who would lend a patient ear to her wild ravings and crazy notions. Though she is drawn by Singer's charisma, he does not often take note of her and the doors of his room are mostly closed. Thus she is incapable of entering the adult world. The sexual initiation, far from bringing her into the adult world, leaves her baffled. She wanders aimlessly as "no place was left but the street--and there the sun was too burning hot" (193). Her responses and reactions point to the pain of growing up. In Eisinger's opinion, "she is a typical adolescent struggling blindly toward maturity, unaware that the pain of alienation she now endures is the proper preparation for later life." 4

Having been compelled to shoulder life's responsibilities so early in life she misses the music of the inner room and her castle of dreams crumbles to pieces. Besides, Singer commits suicide and the idol of her sanctum sanctorum breaks into fragments. Thus the two...
occupants of her inner room bid farewell once and for all. Mick is forced to come to terms with life and she dons the garb of a conventional female. As Louis Westling has observed, "this conflict between serious ambition and the pressure of conventional feminity is exactly the problem that confronts Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams in Carson McCullers' fiction."  Mick expresses heroic fortitude in giving up her piano lessons and school in order to take up the job at the ten cent store. Like Silvia in Truman Capote's "Master Misery," she too sells all her dreams to Master Misery and is left with the feeling that she has been cheated.

Mick thus comes down from her ivory tower. Her wings clipped, she has no time to dream or to think of music. She feels thoroughly exhausted. At the store she is supposed to keep always a smiling face and once she is out of the store she has to frown for a long time to make up for the smile during the working hours. The green ear rings pinch her ears. The small of her back, her face and even her ear lobes get tired. She now resembles the sea gull in her picture captioned 'Sea Gull with Back Broken in Storm.' Constance Perry puts her plight in a nutshell:

In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* Mick first appears standing confidently on the roof of a house under construction. Yet by the story's
end, she no longer challenges the world from its rooftop. She is frustrated in her attempt to study art, disturbed by what she has learned of female sexuality, and haunted by nightmares in which houses collapse upon her.\(^6\)

Mick Kelly is not simply an adolescent. She is everyone fighting with their own fate and finally succumbing to the relentless force. The author sympathises with Mick in the outline of 'The Mute': "She is robbed of her freedom and energy by an unprincipled and wasteful society."\(^7\) Mick is the representative of women on any side of the globe, jettisoning their fond dreams in the attempt to come to terms with the choking realities of life. As Frederic I. Carpenter says, Mick's problems are "those of American society" rather than those of adolescence.\(^8\)

Frankie Addams is a more powerful and haunting symbol of isolation and of the desire to belong. She is presented as a "juvenile outsider alienated from her peers and her elders," who later becomes "the victim of a self-generated fantasy about belonging."\(^9\) As Eisinger points out, the story is about human beings' wish to ameliorate their loneliness by joining themselves, one to another, in meaningful relationship, and its inevitable failure.\(^10\)
Frankie is a freakishly tall girl of twelve, with very long legs and with hair cut like a boy's. A motherless child brought up by her busy father, she grows up with an acute sense of isolation. Her problems begin in the green and crazy summer when she is twelve years old: "This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world. Frankie had become an unjoined person who hung around in doorways, and she was afraid" (1). 'Hanging around' in the doorways refers to her uninitiated condition, which means she is always "on the threshold of things, but never, because of the isolation which is a product of the condition of adolescence, really inside them." 11

Frankie is sick of the ugly old kitchen within which she is enslaved. She feels her unquiet heart beating against the table edge. The "sad and ugly" kitchen is the symbol of the world itself in which the adolescent moves about with a stifling sense of confinement (4). In the kitchen world her companions consist of the little boy, John Henry West and the Negro cook, Berenice Sadie Brown. But their company does not relieve in any perceptible manner the isolation she feels, as they are removed from her not only in age, but in attitude as well. John Henry may be said to represent Frankie's innocence and childhood while Berenice stands for experience and adult wisdom,
towards which the girl is marching day by day. Frankie is sick of both the companions, yet she is unable to leave them. Obviously, her response to them is a mixture of affinity and antagonism.

Frankie feels an irresistible desire to identify herself with something outside herself—the same psychological urge as McCullers refers to in the following extract from one of her articles:

After the first establishment of identity there comes the imperative need to lose this new-found sense of separateness and to belong to something larger and more powerful than the weak, lonely self. The sense of moral isolation is intolerable to us. ¹²

While Mick hits upon the prom party as a means to become a member, Frankie decides to become a member of her brother's wedding. She falls in love with the very idea of wedding and accepts the bride and bridegroom as her 'we of me'. One finds a similar situation in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter where Antonapoulos is the 'we of me' for Singer, "the one to whom he told everything and the one human barrier against isolation."¹³ Frankie finds her existence meaningful only in connection with the bridal pair. She is sick and tired of being Frankie. Feeling an inexplicable sadness creeping into her troubled heart, she
yearns to leave the town, never to return. As a strategy to escape from her unconnected state she fabricates a fantasy world of ice and snow into which to retire and peoples it with dreams of great adventures. It is her essential loneliness that makes her wish for the impossible. She wants to be a boy so that she could go to the war as a marine. She reads the war news and thinks about the world and packs her suitcase to go away. But she is confused as to where she should go. Her sense of isolation is so intense that she decides to donate blood to the Red Cross, a quart every week, in the hope that her blood would be in the veins of the fighting soldiers all over the world.

One night, as Frankie and her father are about to go to bed, he looks at her and comments: "Who is this great big long-legged twelve year old blunderbuss who still wants to sleep with her old papa?" (21). The sudden revelation that her own growth stands between herself and her father and that she is too old to sleep with him causes greater alienation and she desperately wants to flee from home. Now she is five feet five and three quarter inches tall and she fears she would be over nine feet on the eighteenth birthday. It is difficult for her to accept the physical changes and growth poses many problems in front of her.
Frankie feels a certain tightness in her and goes about the town doing one thing or another—all wrong things. She even breaks the law and becomes a criminal. She has a protean temperament and is subject to sudden changes of moods. Her feeling of isolation expresses itself in acts of violence. She practises knife-throwing and at times turns dangerously violent. On one occasion she takes a sudden dislike for Berenice but a little later she buries her face in her lap and embraces her. Though they are close enough as friends, Frankie is always aware of their separate identities, of a certain distance between them which she would not have felt but for her loneliness. Frankie says to Berenice:

Doesn't it strike you as strange that I am I, and you are you? I am F. Jasmine Addams. And you are Berenice Sadie Brown. And we can look at each other, and touch each other, and stay together year in and year out in the same room. Yet always I am I, and you are you. And I can't ever be anything else but me, and you can't ever be anything else but you? (100)

To Frankie people look loose. She can't see what joins them up together. She feels so because there is no one with whom she can identify herself. The criminals in jail and the freaks at the Freak House seem to tell her 'we know you'.
By linking herself with Jarvis and Janice, Frankie suddenly feels connected to everyone. She tells everybody of her plan to go to Winter Hill and settle down there. She is so sure of it that when Berenice doubts its probability, she blurts out that in the event of failure she would shoot herself in the side of her head with Papa's pistol. She is completely taken up with this project and it preoccupies her day and night.

The day that is supposed to actualize her golden dreams arrives at last. Dressed beautifully like a bride Frankie reaches Winter Hill, but the scene enacted there stupefies the girl. After the wedding, she takes her suitcase and confidently gets into the car to accompany the bride and the bridegroom. She clings to the steering wheel, crying "take me! Take me!" Then somebody drags her from the car and the couple drives away to celebrate their honeymoon.

Frankie has had enough of this world, and is now distraught with disillusionment. She can't stand the kind tone in Berenice's words of consolation. Like a defeated soldier who is not prepared to admit failure, she mutters: "I never meant to go with them" (129). In her view, the wedding is all wrong. Now what she wishes most is for no human being ever to speak to her so long as she lives.
As John Henry puts it, "the show is over and the monkey is dead" (126).

But Frankie is not ready to swerve from her plan of leaving the town. Having written a letter addressed to her father she walks out into the dark street. In the lonesome street she feels abandoned and even points the pistol at the side of her head. Scared in the dark alley, she wishes if only there were someone with her. In fact her solitary walk along the dark alley is symbolic of her lone journey through adolescence. "She must find somebody, and anybody, that she could join with to go away" (136). Later, as she is caught by the Law, Frankie is sorry that she is not sent to jail:

In a way she was sorry. It was better to be in a jail where you could bang the walls than in a jail you could not see. The world was too far away, and there was no way anymore that she could be included. She was back to the fear of the summer time, the old feelings that the world was separate from herself--and the failed wedding had quickened the fear to terror. (138)

After reaching home, Frankie does not mention anything about the wedding. She appears apparently unshaken even by John Henry's death or Portia's quitting the service.
With John Henry the child in her also dies and she turns over a new leaf. Now she is no more the old Frankie or F. Jasmine, but Frances, who is wild about Tennyson and Michael Angelo. She is crazy about her new friend, Mary Littlejohn and plans to travel around the world with her. But this plan also sounds as impossible and unpractical as the first one.

Like Holden Caulfield in Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, Mick and Frankie express "something of the moral condition of the adolescent today."¹⁴ In their rootless and floating state, wandering without any sense of belonging, they represent modern man's existential anguish and search for identity. As Delma Presley observes, Mick and Frankie are Mrs. McCullers' "metaphors for the human condition."¹⁵ Both of them feel unconnected, bored, cheated and isolated, and wish to flee from life to the lands of snow. Their palpable loneliness is a universal human condition. Every man, in his lonely pilgrimage of life, desperately tries to belong to something or someone but his attempt ultimately leads to disillusionment and abject frustration. The majority of men find themselves in Frankie's predicament at some time or other in their life, and they appear doomed to inevitable loneliness, a condition to which their unwise choice of companions contributes in no small measure.
As Oliver Evans has said, Frankie is "a peculiarly eloquent symbol of human loneliness."  

The portrayal of Mick and Frankie has an additional significance as being based on the author's own personal experience. McCullers herself was a tomboy in her teens, and she, too, had found it difficult to cope with the traditional feminine role. While Eudora Welty revels in celebrating femininity, McCullers and her contemporary Flannery O'Connor seldom glorify womanhood. The very fact that McCullers' female adolescents are incapable of accepting their femininity intensifies their loneliness to a great extent. Their revolt against society's fiat to play the conventional role and remain subdued avails them nothing. Their dreams and hopes are thrown to the winds and they are cowed by the pressures of life. Like Jean Stafford's _Boston Adventure_ or Herling's _All Fall Down_, the stories of Mick and Frankie emphasise "the loss, the pain and bitterness of growth."  

Jester Clane in _Clock Without Hands_ is another example of the alienated adolescent. He is the grandson of the senile Judge Fox Clane. His father commits suicide before the son is born and his mother dies in childbirth. Thus Jester grows up alone under the overprotective wings of the old Judge to whom he feels no particular regard.
Jester feels estranged as he learns more about his grandpa's fanatic and narrow-minded views. Though he feels terribly alone, Jester does not feel like sharing his feelings with the Judge. "This summer I've been very lonely"--Jester was going to say I've been very lonely but he could not bring himself to admit this truth aloud. The relationship between the Judge and his grandson, with the unbridgeable generation gap between the two, calls to mind Frankie's companionship with the elderly Negro cook.

Jester Clane and his father on the one hand and the old Judge on the other seem pitted against each other in a symbolic equation, in which the former stand for reason and justice and the latter represents bigotry and injustice. As Margaret McDowell says, he contrasts with his grandfather in age and in his liberal views on racial integration and politics. According to her, Jester, the liberal white youth epitomizes "the hope of the South." He has inherited his father's liberal views and he boldly questions the justice of white supremacy.

Jester, with his affinity with the blue-eyed Negro youth, represents those liberal minded white men who are lenient and sympathetic to the blacks. His passion for Sherman symbolises his desire to establish racial harmony and unity in the South. But, however sympathetic the whites may be, the blacks keep aloof and are prejudiced.
and suspicious as when Jester kisses Sherman and the latter slaps Jester on both his cheeks. He ridicules Jester and hurts his feelings quite deliberately. The harsh treatment by his only friend deepens Jester's isolation.

Jester being an orphan, his isolation is more piercing than that of Mick or Frankie. While the female adolescent protagonists are provided with mother-surrogates like Portia and Berenice, Jester is left absolutely succourless. Like a typical adolescent, he is in search of an identity and gets absorbed in wild dreams like rescuing Sherman from a lynching and saving Marilyn Monroe from an avalanche. But he fails to play the role of Sherman's saviour as the boy leaps into his doom. Jester winds up his search for identity as he comes to know more about his father and the cause for which he stood. He decides to become a lawyer and follows in the footsteps of his father.

With this newly found identity, Jester makes the right choice in the end. Though he is burning with indignation and wants to punish Sherman's murderer, his heart melts on hearing the grotesque story of his family 'blessed with' fourteen children and allows him to escape. But he is far too weak and ineffectual a character to play the role of the redeemer that he assigns to himself, and
is able to save neither Grown Boy nor Sherman from the doom that overtakes them in the end.

Half a dozen of McCullers' short-stories also focus on the working of the adolescent mind. "Wunderkind," written at the age of fifteen, marks her debut into the dizzy and turbulent world of the adolescents. It is about Frances, the fifteen year old piano student who is on the horns of a dilemma. When she sits down to play in front of her teacher Bilderbach, she fails to rise up to his expectation. She feels incapable of actualizing the music that she hears in her mind. She struggles again and again but fails miserably. "'I can't,' she whispered. 'I don't know why, but I just can't--can't anymore'." She is overcome by a gnawing sense of defeat, and with the sad realization of her own limitations, she grows into adult wisdom. Frances' repeated but abortive attempts to prove her proficiency are not without symbolic significance. She is the representative of the frustrated human beings who struggle and ultimately get defeated.

The alienation of Henrietta, another adolescent girl in "Correspondence" is reflected in a series of unanswered letters she sends to her South American pen-pal, Manoel Garcia. In the first two enthusiastic letters she addresses him 'dear Manoel' and signs her name 'Henky Evans,' as her near and dear ones call her. Two months
later she attempts a third letter addressing him 'dear Manoel Garcia' and putting her name as 'Henrietta Evans.' The waning hope is mirrored in the form as well as the content of the letter. In the fourth and final letter she bluntly says she cannot waste anymore of her valuable time writing to him. The estrangement is completed and the thread of the one-sided relationship is severed. Quite formally she addresses the boy 'dear Mr. Garcia' and signs her name as 'Miss Henrietta Hill Evans'. The changes in the style of address and subscription subtly bring out the cooling off of a once warm relationship and Henrietta's slipping back into hard-shelled isolation.

"Breath from the Sky" presents a situation somewhat similar to that in Clock Without Hands. Constance, the adolescent girl who is dying of tuberculosis, feels she is abandoned by everyone at home. She feels utterly isolated as there is nobody to sympathise with her. She envies the nurse who is in the pink of health. Fettered by her own invalidism, she can only heave a sigh when the family gets ready for swimming. Like Malone, she is cut off from other people and confined within the yellow walls of the sick room. Constance, isolated among the adults and the kids of the house, is a typical adolescent victim of alienation.
The foregoing analysis of pre-teen characters in McCullers' novels demonstrates that an adolescent in her novels, whether male or female, is not so much an individual as a symbol of isolation and searing spiritual anguish. The alienation he feels, passing as it is, has been brought on by his 'no man's land' feeling and is a pre-condition for his passage into adulthood. The blacks too serve as symbols of spiritual isolation and unlike the freak or pubescent characters, they seem to represent only a social or historical problem, but the question they present is the same—that of identity. The blacks find themselves aliens in their own land, their racial and other differences from the white majority excluding them from cultural integration.

Carson McCullers possesses, according to Richard Wright, the astonishing humanity that enables a white writer, for the first time in Southern fiction, to handle Negro characters with as much ease and justice as those of her own race. She delves deep into their isolated lives and tenderly touches those lonely hearts. In many of her works McCullers fictionalizes the black psyche and represents the Negroes as symbols of black loneliness. Just like the grotesque and adolescent characters, Negroes also serve as metaphors of isolation.
The major black characters appearing in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* are Doctor Copeland, his daughter Portia and Willie, his son. Of the three, the most poignant symbol of isolation is Doctor Copeland. He is a frustrated Negro crusader alienated from both his own family and the black community. More than being a black, he is an isolated man cut off from the mainstream of life.

Copeland was a successful doctor, leading a peaceful life with his wife and children. But the hopeless suffering of his people almost deranged him. Maddened by a savage mood of violence, at times he drank heavily and beat his head against the floor. Once he grasped the poker from the hearth and struck down his wife. Taking her children, she went to her father's house and never returned. Thus started the solitary and self-imposed confinement of this Negro idealist.

Copeland is introduced as sitting alone in his dark kitchen, in one of the Negro sections of the town. The piercing solitude of this old Negro leader is in fact unbearable:

And after the solitary hours spent sitting in the dark kitchen it happened that he began swaying slowly from side to side and from his throat there came a sound like a kind of singing moan. (212)
As Portia, her husband and William visit Copeland, he is sitting alone in the unlit room, drenched in darkness. When Portia asks him why he has not switched on the bulb, he replies: "The dark suits me" (213). This enveloping darkness, by all means, is emblematic of the general darkness and gloom surrounding the lives of the blacks.

Life has always been a mission for Copeland, an opportunity to try and uplift the Negro race. He tries to drive home into his children "the real true purpose" of their life (222). But he is quite disillusioned. "He would talk and talk, but none of them wanted to understand. The feeling that would come on him was a black, terrible Negro feeling" (222-23).

Copeland's mind is a heap of shattered hopes. He had colourful dreams concerning his kids. He wanted them to attain their goals and soar up like black birds. He expected William to become a lawyer fighting against injustice, and Portia a doctor for women and children. Quite paradoxically, William gets imprisoned and justice is denied to him. He becomes permanently crippled as a result of the fiendish cruelty of the white prison-guards. And Portia, the supposed gynaecologist and paediatrician, is enslaved in the Kellys' kitchen as their cook and baby-sitter.
Copeland, the estranged father, does not know how to talk to his children. "Sometimes he thought that he had talked so much in the years before to his children and they had understood so little that now there was nothing at all to say" (224). All his words fall on deaf ears. For them it is nothing short of a rigmarole. On seeing Willie, Copeland feels his pulse hammering at his wrists and temples. He wants to speak to his son, but his mind is blank. At last the frustrated paternal heart spills out:

I mean that to you and Hamilton and Karl Marx I gave all that was in me. And I put all of my trust and hope in you. And all I get is blank misunderstanding and idleness and indifference. Of all I have put in nothing has remained. All has been taken away from me. (230)

The face of a black man with agony writ large in his eyes is the saddest of all pictures because it is the emblem of alienation and the very picture of suffering mankind. The isolation Copeland experiences in his private and public life is as sharp as a double-edged sword. He is obviously a typical existential hero caught in an inimical ambience.

Physically also he is quite exhausted. He is tubercular, measuring his temperature four times a day and having himself X-rayed once a month. He often spits blood
on his handkerchief. The ironical situation of the doctor himself being the victim of an incurable disease points to the hopeless plight of the Negro race.

This militant fanatic has little faith in the miraculous power of religion, which, according to Grandpa, will transform their blackness and make them white as cotton. Hearing Grandpa's comment, "his pulse beat too fast and his throat was tight. Sitting in the corner of the room he felt isolated and angry and alone" (287). As Portia is reading the Bible aloud, Copeland cracks the joints of his fingers. Karl Marx lies sprawled upon the floor. Hamilton and Highboy simply doze. All this coalesces into a picture of a God-forsaking and God-forsaken community staggering under the burden of life.

As Portia describes how the whites mutilated Willie, Doctor Copeland sits dazed, as in a stupor:

He waited for the black, terrible anger as for some beast out of the night. But it did not come to him. His bowels seemed weighted with lead, and he walked slowly and lingered against fences and the cold, wet walls of buildings by the way. Descent into the depths until at last there was no further chasm below. He touched the solid bottom of despair and there took case. (395)
Poor William lying in the prison cell with his back on the ice-cold floor and feet in the air is a distressing and haunting picture of persecution by the soulless whites. Later both his feet are sawed off. Now he symbolises the helpless Negro community permanently crippled by the whites. William, feeling the stumps of his legs with his dark hands and asking "'I just wish I knewed where my f-f-feets are'" is the most heart-rending scene in the novel (431). His "lonesome Negro music" now turns all the more melancholic (172).

Copeland who approaches the Judge to get justice for his son is ridiculed and struck by the deputy sheriff and imprisoned in a dirty, foul-smelling cubicle. He huddles on the edge of a bunk and groans. Copeland never again regains his health after his release from the prison. Now he hates all those callous whites except the kind-hearted deaf-mute. Singer's unexpected suicide presents one more dark sorrow to his already overladen heart.

In the end we find Copeland unwillingly accompanying his children to lead a retired life in their farm. He departs like a wounded warrior. The black prophet of freedom, the herald of the brave, new world is led by the nose to preach his sermon to the chickens and sows in the farm.
As one of the most articulate characters in the novel, Copeland also stands for the failure of dialogue. He talks and talks but reaches nowhere. The more he talks, the more he is estranged from his people. Unlike Singer who is the personification of unadulterated love, Doctor Copeland is full of ideological fervour. That is exactly what repels his own children. Copeland is yet another prophet banished from his native land. Like Blount, he too fails to redeem the Southern wasteland. Both are failed Messiahs. Blount and Copeland may not be Christ figures, as they lack Christ's all-encompassing and unconditional love, but given the messianic nature of their lives, they are not unlike Christ though they fail in their mission.

Berenice Sadie Brown, the coloured cook in *The Member of the Wedding*, is another symbol of isolation. She is a widow and a divorcee. She has suffered much in her life and she perpetually chews the cud of the past. Now she is sustained by the memory of her beloved first husband, Ludie Freeman:

'Sometimes I almost wish I had never knew Ludie at all' said Berenice. 'It spoils you too much. It leaves you too lonesome afterward. When you walk home in the evening on the way from work, it
makes a little lonesome quinch in you. And you take up with too many sorry men to try to get over the feeling.' (81)

Berenice has lost one eye in the attack of one of her husbands and the left eye is blue glass. The right eye is always dark and sad. Her right eye seems to reflect the dark and isolated existence of the coloured woman whereas the left eye suggests her desire to belong to the white community. In Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eyes, Pecola Breedlove exhibits a similar yearning for blue eyes and she even gulps candies wrapped with the pictures of blue-eyed girls.

Berenice's feeling of isolation is very intense and it is mirrored in her concept of the ideal world:

First, there would be no separate colored people in the world, but all human beings would be light brown color with blue eyes and black hair. There would be no colored people and no white people to make the colored people feel cheap and sorry all through their lives. No colored people, but all human men and ladies and children as one loving family on the earth. (84)
Her black identity makes Berenice feel caught. To Frankie she says:

'Because I am black', said Berenice: 'Because I am colored. Everybody is caught one way or another. But they done drawn completely extra bounds around all colored people. They done squeezed us off in one corner by ourself. So we caught that first way I was telling you, as all human beings are caught. And we caught as colored people also. Sometimes a boy like Honey feel like he just can't breathe no more. He break himself. Sometimes it just about more than we can stand.' (105)

Honey, her half-brother, who is not a finished product of creation, is also utterly isolated. His dark eyes look sad and his long face is still as stone. He goes around doing one thing and then another, and he is left eternally unsatisfied. Eventually he turns a drug-addict, breaks into a drug-store and gets imprisoned. Meanwhile Berenice is forced to sell all her dreams and marries T. T.

Sherman Pew in *Clock Without Hands* is a mulatto boy with a pair of blue eyes on his dark face. He views his "blue and alien eyes" as "the evidence of bastardy" (167). His surname is 'Pew' since as a child he was found abandoned on a pew of the Holy Ascension church in Milan.
He grows up as an alienated orphan, absolutely unaware of his parentage. The blue eyes make him think of his father as a ruthless white rapist who might have violated a helpless Negro woman. This engenders a black fury in him which is given vent in harassing the whites.

As a mulatto, Sherman is caught between the whites and the blacks, but he fits neither community. His black colour sets him apart from the whites whereas the blue eyes single him out as the odd man out among the blacks. According to Margaret McDowell, the fact that Sherman is a blue-eyed mulatto may be a symbolic indication of his "confusion in his search for racial and personal identity. This mixture of physical characteristics does not symbolically join the races, as Berenice's glass blue eye seems to in _The Member of the Wedding._"22

Sherman's isolation is more penetrating than that of Jester, Mick or Frankie, as his condition is worse than theirs. In addition to being an adolescent, he is a mulatto and an orphan who is sailing his boat alone. In his search for the roots, he dreams of the Negro Singer Marian Anderson as his long-lost mother and writes unanswered letters to her. He rapturously envisages the day when she will acknowledge him openly as her son. On realising that she is not his mother, he desperately stomps on all her records, shatters them and wails aloud.
It may be his basic insecurity and confusion regarding his personal and racial identity that makes Sherman "one of the world's worst liars" (76). He appears to be a compulsive pathological liar like Madame Zilensky. The story of jilting the lily-white French girl whom he has impregnated is only one of those nasty lies. As he says, "a lot of my life I've had to make up stories because the real, actual was either too dull or too hard to take" (141). It is these illusions that make life livable to him.

Never does Sherman respond to the sympathetic love of the liberal white youth, Jester. Jester's love is rewarded with taunting remarks and teasing. In fact Sherman is isolated further by his contempt and hatred for all men. He deliberately wants to appear as a cynical misanthrope, as insensitive and unresponsive as Antonapoulos in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. Jester, like Singer, tries in vain to redeem him.

Unlike Jester, Sherman grows more and more restless and sick as the mystery of his birth is unravelled. That his mother is a white adulteress causes him unbearable shame. He feels cheated and wants to die. Now he hates the whites more than ever and this blazing resentment is symbolically expressed on many occasions. He is fed up with his anonymous, unconnected and unjoined condition and desperately wants to be noticed by going out of line.
The craziest thing is done in the end; he rents a house in Milan, in the white man's section, an act that is suicidal for a Negro. Jester's warnings fall on deaf ears and Sherman's house is bombed by the fanatic whites. Thus, at last, he achieves his identity by courting martyrdom. For the whites, Sherman's death is only the passing away of a 'mean nigger' and none but Jester muses upon the pity and cruelty of the deed.

There is a Faulknerian touch in the characterization of Sherman Pew. He calls to mind Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August*, who also is lost between two races. Like Sherman, he rejects all overtures of kindness and at the height of rebellion curses God in a Negro church and works his own doom.

Such alienated Negroes appear in McCullers' shorter fiction as well. In "The Aliens" McCullers presents a Negro woman as a "derelict of humanity." She gets into the bus in which a Jew is travelling and the latter is left thoroughly disturbed at the sight of the miserable creature:

The Negro was of indeterminate age and, had she not been clothed in a filthy garment that served as a dress, even her sex would have been difficult at first glance to define. She was deformed—although not in any one specific limb;
the body as a whole was stunted, warped and undeveloped. She wore a dilapidated felt hat, a torn black skirt and a blouse that had been roughly fashioned from a meal sack. At one corner of her mouth there was an ugly open sore and beneath her lowerlip she carried a wad of snuff. The whites of her eyes were not white at all, but of a muddy yellow color veined with red. Her face as a whole had a roving, hungry, vacant look.24

She is deliberately left without a name, as a typical representative of the oppressed race.

McCullers is at her best in the portrayal of adolescent and Negro characters. Berenice is a character far stronger than Faulkners' Dilsey. The spiritual isolation encircling the lives of the adolescents and the Negroes makes them fitting symbols of the universal phenomenon of isolation. The pre-teens caught in the no man's land between childhood and adolescence resemble the Negroes in their lack of the sense of belonging. Both grope in a twilight region and struggle towards deliverance. McCullers portrays these characters with deep sympathy and concern. As Richard Wright observes, she can "embrace white and black humanity in one sweep of apprehension and tenderness."25
Notes

1 Evans, Modern Southern Literature 338.
7 The Mortgaged Heart 128.
9 Eisinger, Fiction 255.
10 Eisinger 255.
11 Evans, Modern Southern Literature 338.
16 Evans, Introd. The Member of the Wedding by Carson McCullers.
17 Recent American Fiction 31.
18 Carson McCullers, Clock Without Hands (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961) 31. All subsequent references to Clock Without Hands are to this edition.
19 McDowell 111.
20 Carson McCullers, "Wunderkind," The Ballad of the Sad Cafe and Other Stories 82.
22 McDowell 103.
23 "The Aliens," The Mortgaged Heart 95.
24 The Mortgaged Heart 95.