Reflections in a Golden Eye came as a disappointment to many critics who felt that it did not satisfy the expectations aroused by her first novel The Heart is a Lonely Hunter; Rose Feld in New York Herald Tribune commented, "Reflections in a Golden Eye is a literary adventure into an emotional underworld and, as such, interesting but one still hopes that Carson McCullers will use her very real powers to write a book that does not depend completely upon the grotesque and abnormal for its effect." Obviously this novel, very different in temper and tone from The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, is primarily a study in the grotesque, which McCullers views as a deformity of love. However, the underlying frustration pattern is the same. The self-enclosed individuals situated on an army post fail to establish meaningful love relationship with each other. If the external atmosphere is constrictive, the inner life of these characters is no less warped and narrow. None of them is able to achieve a degree of self awareness which should enable them to recognize their own identity as also, to use the lawrentian expression, 'the otherness of the other'. All love relationship takes on the
aspect of the abnormal; that is why, Basil Davenport in the *Saturday Review of Literature* made a scathing criticism of the novel: "The story is a vipers-knot of neurasthenic relationships among characters whom the author seems hardly to comprehend, and of whose perversions she can create nothing." Similarly *Times Literary Supplement* in its review, underlined McCullers' excessive preoccupation with abnormality. The reviewer observed, "You are left at the end with the feeling that every body is frustrated in one way or another, but for the rest there seems insufficient point in this collection of arbitrary psychological violences." However, as Oliver Evans suggests, the adverse criticism came from those critics and reviewers who were "guilty of reading Mrs. McCullers on a merely realistic level." Evidently the bizarre situations and warped characters in this novel can scarcely be accepted as life-like in any except a symbolic sense. *Reflections in a Golden Eye* is to be treated more as an allegory than a realistic novel. Oliver Evans asserts that "although in form it is wholly unlike the first novel, the two have an identical theme: The spiritual isolation of the individual." Another Critic, John B. Vickery analyzed the novel in terms of the author's concept of love: "In Mrs. McCullers work," he says, "love is less a matter of sex than it is the measure of the heart's desire, the goal of man's quest and
the image of the world he lives in." McCullers in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* is primarily concerned with frustration and tragedy of love. The characters strive for release from their isolation by means of love which is not natural but perverse, aberrated or abnormal. Such love, she means to suggest, instead of becoming the agent of life-giving vitality becomes, on the contrary, the dark force of destruction and degeneration. Sex relationship when it does not lead to an increase in the individuals consciousness but remains a merely animal passion cannot but spell disaster. Meaningful relationship remains only a distant possibility. As Margaret B. McDowell remarks "As in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*; each man and woman in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* exists in a state of spiritual isolation, induced largely by his or her own fears and fantasies. The result of such insecurity and imaginative extravagance is inevitable destruction when the self-indulgence or self-hatred surpasses the capabilities of the individual to control it."

In *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* the characters are involved in the quest of love which they fail to achieve. In *Reflections in a Golden Eye* McCullers emphasizes the failure of normal love, resulting in the inner wasteland, to which each one of the characters is condemned. Love,
meaningful love, opens the door to self-knowledge and knowledge of the otherness of the other but in this novel the characters are incapable of entering into a natural and healthy sex relationship. They are too much involved in their perverse impossible fantasies. They are strange characters; as if stranded on an island, the Southern army base is hence the pattern of a closed society. In tune with the setting, the characters are significantly lacking in emotional and intellectual development. Cowardice, perversion, cruelty and self hatred that lie buried deep in the psyche of human beings are brought out in the open. They have no understanding of or communication with each other. The rigid discipline and the monotony of the military establishment and the egocentric bizarre behaviour of the people who live on the base are opposed to the natural universe. This oppositional relationship makes the novel proceed at two levels: the visual and the psychic. Artificially imposed orders and conventions do not count much in the comprehensive perspective of nature. Artificially imposed conventions are not sufficient to control the unconscious and egocentric individuals and ultimately result in underdeveloped truncated personality. According to Chester E. Bisinger, Mrs. McCullers's purpose in the novel is to show the incompleteness of human beings because of their incapacity for mutual love.
He makes an interesting comment regarding the polarization of the six characters in the novel:

They divide evenly into two groups. One is made up of Leonora Penderton, Major Morris Langdon and Ellgee Williams. These people live in nature, enjoying (in the literal sense) life at the creature level. They illustrate the principle of healthy animality. For the first two especially the appetitive life — food, drinks, sex, and sport, all of them equally attractive — is all-encompassing. They are incapable of asking any questions about life. The other group is made up of Captain Weldon Penderton, Alison Langdon, and Anacleto, a Filipino houseboy. These people are cut off entirely from the world of nature. They represent the sensitive feminine principle of culture, that is the cultivation of the mind and the arts. They are full of self-doubts and adept at self-torture. The two groups, even though they are moored to their separate spheres of being, destroy each other. No one succeeds in making himself whole, in borrowing from the other group what is lacking in his own personality.8

The title of the novel Reflections in a Golden Eye, is indicative of the ruthlessly detached reflection of the dark forces which pervert the human personality. The golden eye is to be associated with the mirror of art which is keenly observant and detached. The golden eye, as Hassan suggests, does not see; it merely reflects thereby symbolizing the objectivity with which McCullers wishes to render her effects. "To see would be to feel — and the hearts, as one reviewer commented, have been left out of this particular deck of cards."9 That is, McCullers' intention
in the novel is to depict love which is utterly lacking in emotional or moral involvement. Anacleto painting water colours at Alison's bedside suddenly has an inspiration for a picture: "A peacock of a sort of ghastly green. With one immense golden eye. And in it these reflections of something tiny and 'Grotesque', she finished for him. He nodded shortly 'Exactly'."

Evidently McCullers' principal theme in the novel is the grotesque in love. This kind of perverse love can never lead to self-fulfilment nor to any meaningful relationship. This kind of love, McCullers seems to be suggesting, leads but to frustration and degeneration of human beings. Captain Penderton is a homosexual and private Ellgee is but a simulation of Caliban, incapable of achieving sex consummation. The adulterous relationship between Leonora and Major Langdon is successful only in a physical sense, a mere mating of animals. At another level it is testimony to the farce of marriage. Alison's attachment to Anacleto is in direct ratio to her husband's indifference to her. She is more of a neurosthenic than a normal woman. The Filipino's devotion to Alison is highly romantic, verging almost on the grotesque. The captain has his love and hate relationship with the soldier and it is a subject for speculation whether his hatred is a mere device for masking
his unnatural love for the soldier. Even the filipino servant Anacleto's concern for Alison is rooted more in pity than in love. He imagines himself living with Alison in a hotel (his idea of earthly Paradise) or running a linen shop in Quebec, where he can enjoy the feel of fine fabrics and see all the snow he wishes to. Thus viewed, the alchemy of love is transformed into the viper's poison.

McCullers illustrates the effect of negative forces which lie very close to the human heart upon all characters and situations.

Perhaps in no other novel does McCullers portray so poignantly the quest of the people for love relationships and its total failure that is their fate because of their abnormal psyche over which they have no control. The characters find themselves helpless in the hands of the irrational. Outrageous behaviour, McCullers seems to suggest, in the peculiar situation in which they are placed may after all be common place and is presented with comic effect at times by introducing sudden startling details, by ironic contrast or by manipulating the deviant and whimsical tangential flight of fantasy or abnormal action. Dramatic fusion of the horrible with the ridiculous makes the presentation rather bizarre at places and the humorous effect is harsh rather than genial. Unlike in The Heart is a Lonely Hunter there is hardly a character or a situation or
scene in the novel *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, which provides relief from the exaggerated and the grotesque, nor even do they provide moral judgement on the mundane world of the army post where boredom, fantasies and the feeling of futility and the upsurge of violence afflicts all the characters, and where none seems capable of deep emotions, or grief or even despair. In other words, the characters do not enter the moral universe, nor do they qualify for a tragic end. They are incapable of arriving at the point of self awareness. As such, the question of fulfilment, salvation or tragic cognition is not for them. There is very little inner conflict or none at all in the characters as they move towards the climax. With the exception of Alison who rises above egocentricity for a moment, grieving for her dead child, all other characters seem mere puppets trapped in the mesh of their own abnormal psyche.

Though certain scenes are memorable, they remain unconnected with each other as if to imply the impossibility of intimate relationship among the characters in the absence of any rational pattern in the world around them. The impact of these scenes is not cumulative and any intensity that is to be found in the book exists in the individual scene, and the dramatic impact of it is registered in an oppressive atmosphere. The opening lines of the book themselves suggest the monotony
that characterizes both the life in a military compound, and the sensibility of its people which has been dead: "things happen, but they happen over and over again, the general plan of a fort in itself adds to the monotony — the huge concrete barracks, the neat rows of officers homes built one precisely like the other, the gym, the chapel, the golf course and the swimming pools — all is designed according to a certain rigid pattern," reflect clearly the insular life at a military base where every man is expected only to follow the heels ahead of him.

The dehumanized military post suggests the utter futility and aimlessness of life in general, for people who have lost touch with values of any kind. The characters in this military base appear maladjusted, decadent and complacent, and their actions have no apparent relationship to human affairs of consequence, which, if they exist, lie beyond the limits of the army base. The very chaotic nature of the book suggests the possibility of no fixed norms and values in the universe to bind the people together. McCullers seems more interested in baring the inconsistencies in the interaction of her characters, rather than in exploring the psychic origin of their abnormal behaviour. McCullers seems to be expressing distrust of intelligence as an exclusive means of interpreting human experience, and also expressing her distrust of realism as a literary mode which
has to rely on rationally stated motivations for its characters. Probably McCullers was interested in experimenting with the gothic mode.

The characters in this novel behave erratically and reflect incomplete, distorted, inconsistent attitude towards life. Their incongruities and abrasions characterize their actions but they are never explicated fully. The movement, often occurring through metaphor, remains difficult to comprehend and the images suggest disoriented vision in which the book originates. The changing patterns of shadow, clouds and stars, the blur of rapidly moving objects and fast changing landscape, comparison with broken mutilated images; the images of fierce and many-faceted eyes, the distorting mirrors and the strangely-coloured sunlight, all reflect an incomplete and distorted vision. Reality as seen by the characters in the novel is fragmented, blurred and out of proportion like a grotesque reflection to be found in the golden eyes of a bejewelled peacock.

Though McCullers projects a sense of horror and ugliness yet there is also, at times, a sense of serenity and beauty. For example, the sensory perception and loss of perspective of Penderton is more dramatically effective than his beating of Firebird in a futile yet symbolic gesture. Though a bullying officer, Penderton finds himself powerless
and at the mercy of the horse as it carries him "flying over the wide open space" and yet he suddenly becomes exultant as death seems near. With remarkable control of imagery based on smell, sound, tactile sensations, warmth and cold, McCullers explores the simultaneously existing emotions of terror and exhilaration in Penderton: "As the horse races through the trees, Penderton is aware of his skin being torn by the pine cones and at a stage he loses his sense of proportion and perspective. Forced to cling sideways to the horse he watches the world sweep past without being able to perceive objects separately. Despite this blurring of his sight he responds more sensually and sensitively to nature than he had ever done before. He is aware of the bitter sweet odour of pines and rotting leaves filling the air with an intensity he has never felt before. The world becomes kaleidoscopic for him and he comprehends it as a mystic would do. This disturbance of Captain Penderton's senses recurs late in the novel when he is about to shoot Williams. The awareness of the weather experienced simultaneously by Penderton and Williams determines the psychological condition of both the characters. Like an animal sensing danger, Williams seeks shelter from rain when he feels a storm breaking, while Penderton paralyzed by frustration and indecision is drenched bitterly in the cold November night. That night Williams is shot dead by Penderton while he is squatting in Leonora's bedroom watching her sleep."
Carefully documenting the regimented aspects of military life McCullers creates a universe without fundamental order and direction and the values reflected in the book are more relative than representative. She reports carefully the details of obsessive behaviour and of confused perception but does not enter the minds of the compulsive individuals, exploring only the superficial realms of psyche. She avoids the use of supernatural but creates a distorted, macabre world as a result of which the ordinary and the natural is often misinterpreted by the characters. Ellgee Williams, for example, feels time standing motionless as he sits from midnight to dawn, by the side of Leonora's bed. In another example, things assume abnormal shapes for Anacleto, Alison and Penderton, whenever they are under stress. If the military regime, the cocktail party schedules and the rows of barracks never change then even this monotony breeds its own revulsion, where the characters would like to but cannot escape from the world of suffocation in which they are imprisoned. Penderton, Alison and Anacleto some times show greater awareness of intellectual and emotional interaction and perceive the military base as a hell where one's vision can be fragmented and distorted, because all live from moment to moment as this nightmare world dictates. Moral directions and rational response seems impossible or irrelevant while unreason and instincts dominate.
In Reflections in a Golden Eye each individual character is situated in a state of spiritual isolation, where the possibility of communication is shut out. The loneliness of the characters is induced largely by his or her own fantasies, and the end result of such imaginative extravagance is inevitable destruction for those who practice self-indulgence or self-hatred, with little capacity or ability to control it. The characters are seen struggling at places to establish some contact or relation with those around them to provide relief to their quest for harmonious balance but in vain, as they cannot interact with one another. Penderton is engaged in a strange inexplicable love/hate relationship with Williams. No closeness exists in the two marriages; Alison, unable to communicate her anguish to Langdon over the death of her child, seeks solace in the unnatural company of the eunuch Anacleto; Penderton impelled by unnatural desire keeps on following Williams at a distance or, tries to gain a glimpse of him through barrack windows. Williams and Leonora occupy the same room and yet Leonora is totally estrange from him as she is from the feelings and thoughts of those around her. Though the characters are confined to one tiny stage, the actions of the characters are disjointed and exist in separate patterns and hardly ever intersect. If the world of the army post is narrow, its people live in still narrower world, each to himself.
Love, with power to nurture or to destroy solitary people it touches, does not touch people in the novel and they are involved in a mad game in which they not only destroy themselves but the others too. Frustration, the result of a total lack of love, is in plenty in the novel and the characters find themselves groping in the dark; the achievement of self-identity through love eludes them. As McCullers sees it, the characters are incapable of love because they remain meshed up in the cocoon of their egocentric self and never for a moment realize that they are themselves responsible for their lack of communication. The critics who dismissed this book as bizarre did not realize that McCullers seems to be expressing distrust of intelligence as a means for interpreting human action; she seems to be suggesting that the absence of love, very often if not always, causes destruction of the self and those around. Love in this book does not exist except in terms of self-gratification in which all characters, with the exception of Alison and Anacleto, to some extent indulge.

Williams, though close to nature, is not idolized because he, too, lacks the capacity to attain self-knowledge through love. He is more brute than human being, and is excessively embryonic to be capable of an emotional response. He is sensate — that is all. So completely void of emotions, he is never seen smiling, suffering or getting angry throughout
the book. Though capable of murder — having murdered a man once, Williams belies such capacity for violence through his passive disposition. A lover of open and of sun and nature Williams is not truly an open or out-going individual and at times is almost furtive and covert in his behaviour as Penderton is. Towards the end of the book, he is seen lurking in the darkness rather than enjoying the sun. He seems more capable of loving the animals than the people around him and acknowledges Penderton's attention as passively as he would acknowledge the landscape, and Penderton rouses in him emotions and questions not "any more than he would question a thunder-storm or the fading of a flower." His total lack of association with people makes Ellgee Williams completely forget about the negro he has killed five years ago but the physical sensations are remembered by him, the smell of dust as he dragged the body, the heat of the July afternoon and the colour of his blood. Being totally unaware of the human situation, he does never identify himself as the killer of another fellow human being. His mind though "imbued with various colors of strange tones without delineation, void of form." In short, he never has, nor can ever, hope to become a truly developed human being capable of relating to other human beings or capable of getting into any association or relation with them.
Like Ellgee Williams, Leonora too, is inhibited and lives for the satisfaction of physical appetite and remains a primitive throughout the novel. Though outwardly more vocal and communicative, Leonora is incapable of sustained thought and the warmth which leads to deep relationships between people. Living at a pure sensual level — she loves to be outdoors riding or exercising, she sleeps naked, is fond of drinking, entertaining and being witty with gusto, getting herself entangled into vigorous sexual relationships with whom so ever she desires, Leonora is totally insensitive to the world of emotions, rational thought and is spiritually dead. She loves moving about barefooted in the kitchen to seek comfort from the floor beneath and is foolish to the extent of being feebleminded. Writing a letter — a simple thank you note — is a "weighty enterprise" for her and the simple mathematical additions, a difficult task to perform.

Captain Penderton though something of a scholar, with his head full of statistics and information of scholarly exactitude, lives for the expression of his sadistic and masochistic impulses, and has lurid visions to give expression to his impulses strongly. Addicted to taking sleeping drug seconal, Penderton loves to have dreams of 'truth' which he finds mirrored in the eye of a terrifying bird, which enfolds him in its huge black wings. Due to his
military background, Penderton is a follower of discipline and organization and seeks to control the living things in his immediate world by self-assertion. He quarrels with his wife and threatens to kill her if she does not obey him; he trims trees and shrubs that grow too freely; he beats Firebird in an abortive attempt to subjugate him. It is unfortunate for Penderton that these attempts to control others lead to frustration and violence, this violence in turn induces greater frustration and eventually leads to despair and exhaustion. Penderton's assertion of power, in fact, helps to reveal his negative aspects — his impotence, his cowardice and his inhumanity. Penderton often acts involuntarily, and the fixations of his mind make him engage in acts of stealing (he steals small antique silver dessert spoon during a party given by a young bride at the military post), beating or killing. Towards the end we know that the five spinster aunts who had a dominating role in his upbringing are responsible to some extent in shaping this enigmatic, desperate, loveless and, to some extent, emotionless man.

Morris Langdon is also committed to a military career like Penderton but is more of a hedonist than a masochist. Like Ellgee Williams and Leonora, langdon too, is generally relaxed, tolerant, uncomplicated, unintellectual
and apparently healthy and sensible. Unlike Penderton, he does not need visions to confirm his psychic tendencies. In fact, he completely lacks insight and deals with people at a superficial level. Though McCullers does not seem interested in the detailed analysis of the psychic life of her characters yet at times this lack of probing throws light on the contradictions of her characters' behaviour, for example, Langdon's lack of sensitivity in contrast with his engaging simplicity in social situations. Langdon has achieved his ambition of "a healthy body and patriotism."¹⁶ The suggestion implied by McCullers could perhaps be, that a man of simplicity may lack imagination and sympathy. The apparent simplicity and geniality may hide a total lack of concern for the others and a total concentration of the individual on his self.

Langdon, for example, listens to his wife screaming in childbirth but refuses to touch the frail daughter who has two fingers joined together. Like Leonora, Williams and Penderton, he is incapable of associating himself with others and cannot communicate with them let alone form an emotionally-fulfilling relationship with them.

Anacleto, the ageless eunuch, who is an outsider in this tightly-closed social group, acts as a catalyst by making other characters stand in a clearer light as they react to him. He prefigures Lymon of The Ballad of the Sad Café and is ineffectual as a romantic or sexual partner for
Alison. Having attached himself to Alison, Anacleto remains on the scene only till Alison is there and disappears soon after her death. Desperate to please and comfort Alison, Anacleto fusses over her, but does not gain any emotional serenity from a relationship as unnatural and futile as this is.

Alison is the only character who seems clear sighted and yet is a victim of limitations. Ignored by Langdon, treated contemptuously by Leonora and hated by Penderton, Alison refuses to be angry even when she has the justification; she lacks self-respect which leads to her ultimate doom. Learning of her husband's infidelity Alison knits a suit for his mistress in a desperate attempt to identify herself with the woman who shares the attention of her unworthy husband; consumed by her constant hatred for herself and hampered by lack of perspective, Alison dreams of a seemingly impossible life with Anacleto or grieves for her dead child losing sight of past, present or future. Dreaming foolishly of a romantically imaginative life with Anacleto, Alison shows courage and clear sightedness at times. Looking into the golden, jewelled eye of the bird which Anacleto paints, she sees the primitive and over sophisticated work of Anacleto as "Grotesque" and is aware of the unwholesome "ghastly green" of the bird. Alison is the only one to recognize Eligee Williams face as primitive.
Though Alison is more sensitive and responsive than the other characters, she lacks the strength to free herself from them, because she is incapable of giving expression to her own strength of character. Her anguish, at the denial of motherhood, is reflected in the symbolic gesture of her cutting of her nipples with the garden shears. It results in nothing but embarrassment for her, this gesture of self-abasement. This act evokes no sympathy or understanding from the others. Alison becomes strong and vital only near the end, that too when she is faced with the premonition of her death. She faces death bravely, at first remembering the few independent years of meaningful life and then recalling in clear details her life as a school teacher in Vermont, where she had lived happily with her dogs and cats and served herself tea, hot chili and zwieback and where she had chopped her own wood. Waking up at two in the morning with the sudden clarity of death looming near, Alison begins to knit and suddenly hears the loud, monotonous unbearable thuds of her heart, and drops her knitting only to realize moments later that Anacleto is sitting beside her holding her hand. His presence does not allay Alison's fears and she sees the "sickly grimace" on Anacleto's face as a reflection of her own expression. Alison's inability to cry out in anguish, seeking help, is more poignant and powerful than the many exaggerated, melodramatic and violent incidents of the book and for a moment the reader finds himself
able to relate and sympathize with Alison. Alison cannot bear the impersonal, mundane routine of the military base and its monotony is beyond her endurance but she cannot reject its rituals and realities either and she remains till the end a lonely figure seeking acceptance, association and comfort but not getting it, to die alone in a mental hospital. Alison is at the mercy of adversity, because she too, lacks the clarity of vision and the strength of will to alter the stultifying society of which she is a part.

III

Reflections in a Golden Eye is thus another variation on McCullers' patent theme that intimate and enduring love relationship is beyond the reach of men and women especially those who lead a fragmented and isolated existence or those who are given to self-indulgence, to image-building or to perverse sexual excitement. McCullers in this novel depicts a world which in the words of Oliver Evans "is lacking in moral dimension but which is strange to the point of freakishness." In such a world, meaningful relationships and love are hard to come by. It will be naive on our part to suggest that McCullers wishes to imply that the cosmos is
fundamentally awry or hostile to the heartfelt aspirations of the individuals. On the contrary, as the title suggests, the author means to focus on the limitations of human beings, their abnormal eccentricities and their half-hearted attempts, indicating lack of intensity and passional involvement that give rise to a society, utterly lacking in stability and meaning. The eye of the peacock does not see: It merely reflects thereby symbolizing the plague-spots of the characters who are responsible for their frustrated devitalized existence. At the same time, it helps McCullers achieve objectivity in the presentation of these characters who are incapable of forging meaningful relationships with others.

None the same, it will be true to say that the novel depends, by and large, upon the grotesque and the abnormal for its effect. It is a literary adventure into an emotional underworld. "The novel's inversions and mutilations and nastiness stick in one's mind like burrs."21 Fantasies and illusions, which the characters often indulge in, seem necessary for them to endure the hideous reality of life. The bizarre situations and warped characters are deliberately manipulated, with psychological vividness of course, to symbolically image forth the type of frustrated life to which all incomplete human beings are of necessity subjects. However, a few critics like Lawrence Graver aver that Reflections in a Golden Eye, "is a muddled pretentious book that promises to
illuminate shadowy places of the human psyche, but manages only to exploit them. These critics take exception to the author's morbid obsession with abnormal aberrations of her characters: perversion, voyeurism, mutilation and murder. But this criticism is grounded in their wrongly imagining the mode of this novel to be realistic. In fact, McCullers is allegorically treating the very important subject of the ravages caused by dammed-up sexual energies which the characters cannot properly channelize. The novelist is endeavoring to explore in this grotesque drama, a monumental conflict of will against instinct, the artificial against the natural, and death against life, though it is true to say that McCullers fails to impart to the novel, the elemental force of myth which only a Faulkner or Dostoevsky could give.

Though lacking the maturity of her later novels, Reflections in a Golden Eye reveals a technical virtuosity which in some respects surpasses that found in her first novel. The narration is distinguished by emotional detachment, formality, precision and ironic humor indicating the author's awareness of the absurdities of the characters and situations in the novel. The pattern thus achieved, though simpler, is admirably sharp and clear. McCullers sustains a tone of mockery by a stylistic terseness which reveals in a sentence or two, the ridiculous, odd or petty nature of the individual involved.
McCullers sometimes uses landscape to suggest the passage of time or to intensify a mood or a situation. The brilliant sunny days of early autumn when Ellgee has not yet entered Leonora's room contrasts with the later oppressive atmosphere when the action takes place at night, as cold, rain and wind increase. McCullers sometimes uses the impersonal phenomenon of nature to contrast with the personal situations of her characters, and to set them in a total perspective. At the time of Ellgee's murder the blackness of the night is made more intense by the brightness of the single flicker of light, which also alerts his murderer to his presence.

In short, Reflections in a Golden Eye represents a break with the realism informing The Heart is a Lonely Hunter and "adumbrates the imaginative fantasy and the psychological exploration of complex patterns of attraction and repulsion among human beings by means of stylized two-dimensional characters."23 The narration points to the Gothic mode.

However, when all is said and done, the fact remains that the narration seldom coalesces into larger patterns of action or meaning: the melodramatic episodes shock but do not illuminate. The story does present a complicated situation but does not propose any clear cut or illuminating way out of the labyrinth. The tone is, no doubt, evocative enough and we experience rootless terror and dark unspeakable
desires; but we look in vain for any in-depth psychological exploration which is revelatory of the dark primeval forces inherent in man.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


5. Ibid., p.76.


11. Ibid., p.1.

12. Ibid., p.48.
13 Ibid., p.33.
14 Ibid., p.52.
15 Ibid., p.12.
16 Ibid., p.79.
17 Ibid., p.59.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p.57.
20 Oliver Evans, Carson McCullers: Her Life and Works, p.71.
22 Lawrence Graver, Carson McCullers, p.21.
23 Margaret B. McDowell, Carson McCullers, p.64.