Both in thematic conception and structural design, *Clock Without Hands* is a much more complex novel than all the earlier novels by McCullers. In the words of Richard M. Cook, "the comprehensive nature of its primary theme, the isolated self in time, permits her to incorporate into the novel matters that have concerned her throughout her career, matters such as the failure of love, the private, inward suffering of the grotesque or freak, the individual's helplessness in the face of racial and social injustices." Though McCullers focusses on the internal conflict of her characters in this novel, she attempts to give to the dramatization of this conflict the sociological base and a historical perspective. She explores such issues as racial antagonism, political controversy, class differences and the barriers between generations, thereby enlarging the ambit of her novelistic concern; but she deals with them primarily as realities which magnify loneliness, isolation and internal conflict. In projecting this micro-macrocosmic drama McCullers brings to bear upon the treatment, the technique of a political satire. As Margaret McDowell puts it, McCullers "gambled audaciously in her attempt to bring together, often with deliberately abrupt transitions, the realistic portrayal of
a historical political situation and symbolic fantasy; to bring together repeatedly a violent tragedy and a sequence of broadly satiric comedy; to bring together flat stereotypical figures like the Judge and a deeply understood character like J.T. Malone; and to pursue throughout an entire novel two sets of largely unrelated themes — those involving the individual's facing of death and those involving racial conflict and abuse of political and legal power. Though the book provoked many unsavory reviews from critics who thought that the plot in this novel was clumsily managed, the prose stylized and the symbolism ineffectively contrived, the fact remains that this is the only novel which McCullers tried deliberately to situate in history. It indicates her rise towards maturity; she made a serious attempt to envision man caught up in a particular historical situation in the United States. It is another matter though, that she falls short of achieving an integrated vision of life. It remains, in the telling words of Irving Howe, an unadorned and scrappy scenario for a not-yet-written novel. However, one has to admit that McCullers' underlying purpose is to share the sociological problem, "at the deepest possible level, as it penetrates the secret recesses of the human souls." It is definitely to the credit of the author that she subtly presents the moral issues and analyzes psychology of the distressing situation as it obtains in the South.
With her customary perception McCullers gives focus and meaning to personal lives and relationships and in them sees reflected the loneliness and the tragedy of man's existence. Viewed from a sociological perspective, the novel deals with the voice of conscience in the need for reaffirmation of faith in the dignity of man. As Joan Didion aptly remarks McCullers' early fiction presented "the chasm between some people and the circumstances of their lives... the condition in which some social cog is missing. In Clock Without Hands, however, she has tried to make believe that these Gothic characters of hers make up society itself, rather than exist outside of it." Sometimes they slide beyond believability, at times, seem stereotypes but they are there as they are for a purpose; they tell their story; they make their point. As a Newsweek commentator puts it, "the separate quests of these lonely hunter hearts do not blend very satisfactorily as a story, but the characters themselves are often piercingly real." With all its structural and stylistic flaws Clock Without Hands, in the words of Julian Mitchell, is "a meditation on life and death, and a long look into the eyes of the South." Admittedly, Clock Without Hands in its range of subject matter, and its treatment from the anecdotal to the tragic, is far above the general run of her novels. There is a serious attempt to convey her deeper intuitions about men, society and change, and if there is too much information, argument and social comment (much to the
chagrin of a few commentators), it is understandable.

As in her earlier novels, McCullers still handles man's aloneness in *Clock Without Hands* and here it is more sardonic. Her theme of loneliness takes on a darker aspect and a larger perspective. People in this novel are no existentialists, nor do they live in history, in time. Their life is a clock without hands. They are fixed in space, even death is a meaningless experience for them, as their life has been. They exist closer to a state of deadness than to a state in which they would be fully alive. Since they do not take up the challenge of time and the historical process of change they are only dead alive. They cannot strike any meaningful relationship with others. The result is a complete waste of human potential. The societal environment likewise proves a deadening influence. There is resistance to change, resulting in the perpetuation of social ills, inequality, injustice and the denial of human dignity. This takes on a poignantly aesthetic coloring, because those who suffer under the system do not understand or realize their identity; they do not make any existential choice or decision because they are not aware of their plight. Life and death do not have any significance; one is as meaningless as the other. McCullers thereby universalizes the fate of man who is born with a clock without hands, measuring out the time of his livingness.
Clock Without Hands deals primarily with loneliness that is a natural consequence for an individual who lacks rapport with self and is at the same time indifferent to the course of history and the passage of time. One of the major concerns of an individual in life is to realize one's identity, and, unless he is able to acquire it and relate to others, he must of necessity feel lonely and separate from others. Unable to find a satisfactory answer to questions regarding his own self, an individual becomes a victim of self-imposed fears and misgivings; more often than not, he tries to understand himself and the world around him in terms of what he is not. This results in a heightened sense of loneliness, and in this state of loneliness time seems to move with maddening slowness. Frankie Adams experiences this in The Member of the Wedding when she feels that "the world seemed to die each afternoon and nothing moved any longer." J.T. Malone in Clock Without Hands goes through the same experience while he awaits death.

It is this psychological rather than chronological measuring of time that McCullers deals with in the novel. J.T. Malone who dies fifteen months after he has learnt that he is suffering from leukemia has led an empty life and cannot ascertain the precise time of his death during the fifteen months of his illness, he has consequently lived a life according to a clock without hands. Judge Fox Clane, a racist
and a staunch believer in the supremacy of the white race also lives according to a clock without hands for he tries to ignore the passage of time and changes that are a part of the course of history; Jester Clane, who represents the hope of the South must also be measured by a 'clock without hands' for his ideologies are vague and sentimentalized and things are never really seen in their proper perspective by him.

The theme of identity has a close link with the desire to form an ideal love object which can enable the individual to relate to something bigger and larger than himself. Like Frankie Adams in *The Member of the Wedding* both Jester Clane and Sherman Pew seek ideal love objects in *Clock Without Hands* and long to identify themselves with something bigger and larger than themselves, in their case, the idea of social justice. The confused but progressive views of Jester, the mystery of his father's suicide, assume large proportions for Jester in his search for identity; Sherman Pew who dreams of overthrowing racial discrimination in a miserable attempt to establish his identity invents the fantasy that the famous singer Marian Anderson is his mother; J.T. Malone too seeks an ideal love relationship with his wife during his illness. The characters in *Clock Without Hands*, as in the other novels, are involved in a quest to attain meaning in their lives; they strive to attain selfhood by identifying themselves with something outside themselves,
and something that can enable them to relate to the world around.

Physical love leads but to disillusionment and does not provide any meaning to an individual's life. The incapacity of individuals to relate to one another at a physical level as seen in Reflections in a Golden Eye is evident in Clock Without Hands too; J.T. Malone is unable to forge a gratifying physical relation with his wife and has only experienced brief moments of physical passion in an affair carried on guiltily in his wife's absence many years ago; Johny Clane has nurtured passionate love for Sherman Pew's mother, who totally unaware of his emotions has a futile relationship with a black man, Sherman Jones; Jester Clane is loved by Malone's daughter Ellen but he is scarcely aware of her and he in return loves Sherman Pew who constantly ill treats him and has nothing but contempt for him; Sherman Pew, on the other hand, is attracted to a negro, Zippo, who does not return his advances of friendship.

This pattern of loneliness resulting from unreturned love is also present in The Ballad of the Sad Café where the beloved fears and hates the lover: the attempts of Jester Clane to kiss Sherman Pew are rebuffed with a blow as the advances of Marvin Macy to kiss Miss Amelia are; similarly Malone feels repelled and rushes from home as his wife makes sexual advances,
just as Miss Amelia rushes out of the bedroom when Marvin Macy makes advances to her. If physical love leads to disillusionment, then love that springs from a sense of pity also does not lead to a fructifying relationship. This mixture of love and pity leads to the futile relationship between Singer and Antonapoulos in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*; Miss Amelia and Cousin Lymon in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*; Mrs. Langdon and Anacleto in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*; and Martin and Emily Meadow in the short story, 'A Domestic Dilemma'. In *Clock Without Hands* too, Mrs. Martha Malone's advances towards her husband are bound to fail as they are motivated from a feeling of pity for the dying Malone and Jester Clane's desire of friendship with Sherman Pew proves futile because it springs from the unconscious feeling of pity for Pew because of his race.

Another subtle suggestion McCullers seems to be elaborating upon in *Clock Without Hands* is that even in the absence of love, illusions are necessary to enable man to face the crises of life and to endure the burden of existence. Like the dreams Frankie Adams has of traveling around the world; Mick Kelly has of joining all through her music as a concert pianist; Jester Clane, too, dreams of saving Sherman Pew from assault and Marilyn Monroe from an
avalanche. Sherman Pew also lives in a world of dreams where he becomes a glorified martyr, he deserts his white French fiancee and is openly acknowledged as her son by Marian Anderson. Old Judge Fox Clane too lives in a world of illusions where he hopes to preserve and maintain the traditions and heritage of the old South, to get the confederate currency restored by the federal government and to find true love that will relieve him of his loneliness as a widower.

Closely related to the theme of identity in Clock Without Hands, is the dramatization of the theme of death by McCullers. She traces J.T.Malone's journey to death: J.T.Malone who represents everyman in the novel, is sentenced to die and lives according to a 'clock without hands' during the last fifteen months of his life. Though death is universal and inevitable, it nevertheless affects every individual differently and the process of dying thus becomes a uniquely personal experience. The process of dying can isolate individuals and make them feel estranged from the community of men because the others around them refuse to acknowledge the reality of death and the fact that they themselves will inevitably have to face death. The individual facing death thus starts regarding himself as separate and misfit in the community of men, which leads to a sense of isolation so predominant in the novels of McCullers. J.T.Malone is
"surrounded by a zone of loneliness" because those around him refuse to see in Malone the representation of the universal force of death to which ultimately they too will have to succumb. As a result, the dying individual becomes abnormal for them and is set apart because the condition of such an individual (in this case Malone) evokes hostility and a subconscious fear in their minds.

Death and the process of dying that can lead to isolation for an individual can also evoke attention and sympathy, if death is caused by unjust and oppressive violence. It is with a sense of subtle irony that McCullers creates a paradoxical situation in the novel where the beggar Grown Boy gains brief prominence because of the circumstances of his death (He is hit hard on the head by a policeman) and the social tensions arising out of his death make him a figure of significance for a short while, only to be soon forgotten by the people. Death, on the other hand, can also be a complete waste for those who lead a pointless life and have never been really alive. Certain characters in the novel die before they can discover and understand the meaning of their existence and find comfort in human relationships. The inconsequential life of these people; the barrenness and the limitations of their souls; the lack of any rich and deep emotional experience makes their dying as futile as their lives have been. Sammy Lank and
Sherman Pew are symbolic of this wasted human potential. Sammy Lank who has aspired to become a famous man by fathering quintuplets and is now burdened with fourteen children, can only claim attention because he agrees to throw a bomb at Sherman Pew's window. And Sherman Pew is blown to bits by a bomb in a racist plot against him before he can really understand the complexities of life and attain self-identity. The sudden violent death of Grown Boy, and the demeaning depressing life of Wagon constitute another symbol of wasted human potential.

The very fact that some of the characters die before they have really lived portrays the barren quality of the lives of these people who form so much a part of the community of men. As Margaret B. McDowell puts it:

In this novel, the tragedy of their deaths increases precisely because their lives have been so pointless. For them, the clock has never had hands, because their lives are too insignificant to be the subject of any sort of measurement. Each day for them is a repetition of every other day, full of hopelessly monotonous. The moment of their death will matter just a little, for the negative aspects of their lives comprise the real tragedy.

This precisely is the tragedy of Malone's life too, though to a much lesser extent. He has led an uneventful life, even when it is not as bleak as the lives of other characters.
like Sherman Pew, Sammy Lank, Wagon and Grown Boy. The knowledge of fast impending death evokes in Malone a feeling of having been wronged in life and he wonders, "how he could die since he had not yet lived."¹¹ It is with great artistic skill that McCullers heightens the sensibilities of this man who till then had been passive and content to live by conventions. In a moment of deep introspection, Malone wonders if his whole life has been a waste and whether he had done things in life without any reason or value:

Why had he done it so long? Like a plodding old mule going round and round a sorghum mill. And going home every night. And sleeping in bed with his wife whom he had long since ceased to love. Why? Because there was no fitting place to be except the pharmacy? Because there was no other fitting place to sleep except in bed beside his wife? Working at the pharmacy, sleeping with his wife, no more! His drab livingness spread out before him as he fingered the jewel-bright Tuinal.¹²

Yet another important thematic concern of McCullers in Clock Without Hands, is her concern with the racial problem. This theme, prominent in The Heart is a Lonely Hunter — where wage slavery is attacked by McCullers, and is only dealt with at a social level in The Member of the Wedding, becomes definite and stands closely related to the central theme of the search for identity in Clock Without Hands. The quest for identity which each of the main
characters is involved in, is closely related in terms of the relationship between the blacks and whites in the South. It is only in Clock Without Hands that McCullers calls for specific reforms and suggests the way out for the moral salvation of the South, through the younger generation which Jester Clane symbolizes. The mill workers and the negroes in The Heart is a Lonely Hunter for whom Jake Blount and Dr. Benedict Copeland are willing respectively, to sacrifice so much, do not evoke our sympathy much because they are themselves in a way responsible for their condition, being content with what they are and for maintaining status quo in the novel. But in Clock Without Hands McCullers strikes a positive note for she emphasizes the role young, educated and just youth like Jester Clane can play in undoing the wrongs for which men like the Judge are to be blamed. Jester and to some extent his father Johny Clane, represent the forces of reason and justice that will ultimately win and overcome the biased and opportunistic forces backed by the Judge and all those who regularly assemble in Malone's pharmacy. Though Judge Fox Clane wins one battle against his lawyer son Johny Clane (he convicts Johny Clane's black client Sherman Jones for the murder of a white man. Ossie Little, with whose wife he had an affair), he does not win the battle in which Jester and Malone, sick and weak as he is, emerge victors. The complete breakdown of the Judge, when he hears the Supreme Court decision of School desegregation towards the end of the
novel, symbolizes the impending collapse of the old order in the South; his helplessness and inability to deliver a reactionary speech over the radio signifies the helplessness and the ultimate failure of all those who belong to the Judge's class and his delivery of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address instead of the planned reactionary speech, signalizes the acceptance of Lincoln's message by the South and the victory of his (Judge Clane's) conscience over self-interest. In a reply to a question from his wife about what the Judge really meant by delivering Lincoln's speech, instead of the reactionary speech as planned by him, Malone replies: "I don't know what he was talking about", (Martha said) 'What happened?' 'Nothing, darling' Malone said. 'Nothing that was not a long time in the making.'

Clock Without Hands becomes an important book for it is here that McCullers attempts to set her ambitions high and explore various themes that she had only occasionally touched in her earlier works. Though it is difficult to achieve fully what McCullers aspired for in Clock Without Hands, it is nevertheless creditable that she attempted so much; and that she was largely successful in her attempt. Viewed from another angle Clock Without Hands is a study of a series of portraits...
held together by a common theme. Each of her characters faces loneliness at various stages of gaining maturity and become symbols for the themes that she wishes to elaborate.

The most significant character who provides structural design and aesthetic effect to the novel is J.T. Malone. The forty-one year old pharmacist Malone learns in the beginning of the book that he is suffering from leukemia and has only a short while to live. A passive man, Malone has let life slip by till then and the news of his impending death awakens in him the sudden self-realization that he has never really lived. Determined to acquire meaning and a sense of identity in the remaining months of his life, Malone starts seeing life in a new perspective and acquires new psychological and philosophical reactions to life that has condemned him to die soon. Choked with terror at the suddenness of death and the uncomprehendible mysterious drama surrounding it, Malone seeks comfort in the company of the old Judge Fox Clane and discusses his disease with the Judge who refuses to believe the doctors since he himself has never heard of leucocytes.

Confused by the unpredictable grief and fear that the news of his sickness brings to him, Malone reacts initially in an embarrassed way. He resents the nervousness of the physician while breaking the news to him, and sees in
it a reflection of his own nervousness. He feels apologetic for the spurt of tears that come to his eyes; is ashamed of his thin body during the medical check up; and lying on the examination table he hastily covers up his knobby feet with his stockings as if ashamed and nervous of their ugliness. But the initial anger and sorrow soon give way to some perspective on his situation, and Malone embarks on the quest for meaning in life and some philosophical significance in his fast approaching death. He is fascinated by the miracle, (as he sees it) that his vegetable garden, "sown so carelessly and forgotten in that long season of fear, had grown up."\textsuperscript{14} The flourishing of the plants that had never been tended to make Malone realize the continuity of life, in spite of all its intricacies and complexities.

Malone tries to find out whether any close relationship exists between living a decent life on earth and getting a reward in heaven; whether immortality can be confirmed; and is led to the conclusion that a reasoned view on these questions cannot be attained. The refusal of the Judge to believe the prognosis of the doctor and the calm acceptance of his disease by his wife Martha leave Malone discouraged and baffled. He refuses to be comforted by his wife and rushes out of the room when she tries to re-establish physical intimacy between them. He reminisces about his past and thinks of the physician he might have become, had he not failed in his exams; he thinks of the holidays he could have enjoyed
and women he could have loved had he not accepted life so meekly. He contemplates seriously about the waste of his life; the blankness and the insensitivity of his spirit and finds himself unable to remember really when had he lost the zeal for life and become content to go along the tide.

Now that he is faced with the terror of death, a sentence from Soren Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death*, takes possession of him and produces a strange but impactful effect on his psyche. "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." This sentence brings Malone face to face with himself and leads him to attempt a painful examination of his life. In an awful and incomprehensible way he begins to experience the dawn of awareness. This betokens the beginning of his concern with saving his soul to the exclusion of everything else.

In the last few months before his death, he undergoes meaningful changes in his inner life and very soon they are translated into visible public acts. This for him, is the climatic moment to change. He will no longer act like a conventional automaton; he will assert himself and be himself. In the terminology of the existentialists he is involved in the process of becoming — becoming his independent unique self. Out of his dead past
will emerge a new man with a distinct identity, no longer member of the herd. Very soon he reaches the point of cognition. It is this awareness that brings about a vertical change in his personality. As a result, he takes days off from his work, loiters around in the garden, even says a few intimate things to his wife. He is now capable of the most astonishing action in refusing to bomb a negro (Sherman Pew) at the instance of his friend Judge Clane and his accomplices. He is no longer the same cowardly ordinary man; he has now acquired the courage of his awareness. Having nothing to lose but his soul he says what he could never have said as a healthy man: "Gentlemen, I am too near death to sin, to murder... I don't want to endanger my soul." This is an act of redemption and indicates that Malone has resurrected his dead self, he asserts his humanity and thereby proves that he is no longer content to lead the meaningless life of a conventional automaton. Although everybody else looks at him as though he were stark raving mad, Malone has survived the greatest danger "that of losing one's own self."  

It is towards the end of the novel that Malone, mellowed and at peace within himself, is not tortured by the idea that his body will be a corpse a moment after his death; no longer is he anxious to unravel the mystery of heaven and hell and his relationship to these concepts; his only concern
is his immediate comfort, about the desired warmth of the hot water bottle, and whether or not he wants ice in his drink. J.T. Malone's experience of death forms the somber background against which the novel's other characters are seen grappling with a changing world, specifically the changing South of the early 1950's.

Though J.T. Malone provides structural unity and presents the author's point of view, his character is nevertheless counter-balanced by the old Judge Fox Glane who is directly or indirectly responsible for most of the action of the novel. An elderly politician, Judge Glane at the age of eighty five, is a strong racist and a lover of the old South. A man of dishonest habits, he never pays his state income tax, he reads Kinsey Report hidden under the cover of Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, in spite of the fact that he himself was instrumental in getting it banned from the public library. Judge Glane is a master at self-deception, believing only in what he wants to believe. He sticks to his misconceived ideas and views long after they have ceased to be of any importance, and does not accept change even when it is imminent and inevitable. He tries to monopolize his eighteen-year old orphan grandson Jester Clane, refusing to listen to his point of view, and is totally unconcerned about the emotional needs of the boy and the difficulties he has to face. Pompous and self-centred, the Judge is completely unaffected by the problems of those around
him or working for him. The violent death of his son, whom he mourns deeply, has not affected his ill-conceived ideologies. Johnny Clane, his lawyer son had committed suicide on Christmas, after his failure to get acquitted his negro client Sherman Jones charged with the murder of a white man, Ossie Little. Judge Clane who headed the jury still blames his son for defending a black man who, in his opinion, never did deserve any defense. Eighteen years after he has pronounced the judgement, sentencing Sherman Jones to death, the judge still vehemently defends his judgement and tells Jester that when deciding such cases he did not depend so much on evidence as on the wilful desire that he must preserve the heritage of the old South from being ruined by the blacks. The judge holds firmly to the dogma that pride in one's race is more important than rationality or legality and one must do everything to maintain this racial pride.

The fact that Sherman Pew is the son of Sherman Jones and Mrs. Ossie Little is concealed by the Judge and he has no thought of how the truth of his parenthood would inflame and hurt the otherwise passive but arrogant boy. The real facts are discovered by Pew, as he looks at the papers in the Judge's office, making him extremely bitter towards the Judge for his and his son's involvement in the case. Sherman Pew then tries to murder the Judge by substituting water instead of insulin
in the injections for three days. On the fourth day, he
gives up his attempt because the Judge does not show any
signs of being affected. It is here that the Judge becomes
an emblem of McCullers' satire. The subtle suggestion is that
Sherman Pew must give up his attempt to kill the Judge, for
what he symbolizes is the law of the land. The Judge of
necessity, must remain burlesque, for even in her sympathetic
viewing of the Judge as an old man left behind by the changing
time McCullers does not allow his chivalry and nostalgia for
old order to excuse his inhumanity and naivety.

There are, however, flashes of shrewdness and wisdom
shown by the Judge. For instance, while discussing legal
work with Johnny Clane, the Judge tells his son to always talk
to the jurists at their level and never to try to talk to them
in terms of something beyond their comprehension. "Talk on their
own level and for God's sake don't try to lift them above it,"18
but Johnny Clane does not pay any heed to his worldly-wise
father, and argues Sherman Jones' case before the jury in a
manner as if he were talking to the educated enlightened
jurists of the Supreme Court, the result of which is, that he
loses his case and is unable to secure justice for his client.
In another instance, while talking to Malone, Judge Clane
tells Malone that every individual in order to maintain his
ego and identity has to have somebody to look down to, and
Sherman Pew who has nobody to look down to, proves the Judge right
by killing Jester's pet dog after he has learnt the truth of
his birth.
McCullers presents the Judge as a conscious and deliberate reactionary who not only resists change but denies the reality of the present. In the words of Richard M. Cook:

McCullers undoubtedly intended her portrait of Judge Clane as a caricature of certain Southern traits at their worst and most ridiculous. The Judge's self-centered provincialism as well as his monumental failure to come to grips with the changing world around him may be seen as half-serious, half-burlesqued vision of the South's know-nothing conservatism and its ineffectual resistance to inevitable change.19

Evidently McCullers saw the 1950's as a critical period of South's struggle for maturity, and her portrait of Judge Clane suggests how hard the struggle will be to bring about a new social order based on racial equality and justice.

It is Jester Clane who is treated as a symbol of the hope of the South by McCullers, but he too is shown groping in the dark searching for an ideal love object and his self-identity. He comes in sharp contrast to the other characters in the novel, and offers parallel views on political and racial integration to his grandfather Judge Fox Clane. In the words of Richard M. Cook, "Jester Clane, figures importantly in the novel by rounding out its thematic treatment of the self in time. Jester is the only character in the novel to find a place in the changing times of the South."20
a solo flight in his plane, Jester is drawn to the cause of racial justice primarily due to a feeling of guilt of having been born a white. Dependant on the Judge for financial support, Jester nevertheless rejects the political views of the Judge, and is eager to forge intimate relationship with Sherman Pew, "Yet this is not passion but a kind of love, a deep, instinctual sympathy [He feels for Sherman Pew]. He even wonders at times whether they may not be brothers." When Sherman Pew moves into an all white neighborhood and plans are afoot to bomb his house, Jester Clane tries to warn Pew of the danger to his life. Pew ignores him, and is killed by Sammy Lank, while he sits playing the piano. Jester out of his love for Pew plans revenge. He takes Sammy Lank on a ride in his plane, planning to shoot him when they are above the clouds. It is during his conversation with Sammy Lank that the realization comes to him that they (he, Sammy Lank and Sherman Pew) are all victims of circumstances beyond their control; that his vengeful passion is rooted in the same bitterness that had motivated the people to bomb Sherman Pew's house; that had motivated Judge Clane in his tirade against the blacks. On hearing Sammy's sole desire of claiming fame by fathering quintuplets, and laughing at the absurdity of the story, Jester finds his anger spent, and he returns to earth without killing the naive man.

Though liberal in his views, Jester is portrayed as
an awkward youth who depends more on impulse than rationality. In his search for better human relationships, Jester makes attempts to identify himself with Sherman Pew, in whom he sees the makings of a hero, but all his efforts to forge a deep emotional relationship based on love are thwarted by Pew. The struggles of Jester Glane to adjust to the enlarging perspective of life as he grows up; to explore and understand the intricacies of human relationship and to relate himself to others; to recognize his ambitions as well as constrictions; make him a fully developed character capable of forging human relationships. He comes next to Malone in his search for identity, in the novel. But Jester never does become a fully realistic adolescent, as he himself is baffled by the conflicts and motivations of his mind as much as the reader is, and the questions that present themselves before Jester are never fully resolved.

In a scene of symbolic significance, Jester looks down from his plane and sees the chaotic earth assuming order. The whole area appears to be governed by laws more just and fair, and the whole earth appears to him as one round finite:

The surrounding terrain seems designed by a law more just and mathematical than the laws of property and bigotry: a dark parallelogram of pine woods, square fields, rectangles of sward. On this cloudless day the sky on all sides and
above the plane is a blind monotone of blue, impenetrable to the eye and the imagination. But down below the earth is round. The earth is finite. From this height you do not see man and the details of his humiliation. The earth from a great distance is perfect and whole. 22

The implication here is that, inorder to understand problems that are inherent in human situation, one must renounce theories, vague distractions and prejudices and try to see and understand the people for what they are, rather than view them from physical or even psychic distance. This harmonious design that presents itself to the viewer who is physically miles above, represents the view that the people placed securely high up in the hierarchy of the South have, of the community around them. But inorder to see reality one must circle down and look into the dark corners of the backyards, into the inner recesses of human hearts because, "From the air men are shrunken and they have an automatic look, like wound-up dolls. They seem to move mechanically among haphazard miseries. You do not see their eyes. And finally this is intolerable. The whole earth from a distance means less than one long look into a pair of human eyes. Even the eyes of the enemy." 23

Jester's decision to become a lawyer like his father, signifies his desire to replace passion with justice in the South. He will carry on where his father left off. In time
he will be able to right wrongs rather than avenge them. Unlike Judge Clane, or even J.T. Malone, Jester achieves, "what nobody else in the novel achieves, an identity in time." Other characters in the novel like the solitary grotesques in McCullers' earlier novels, are hopelessly shut off from time and society. Jester is the only character whose search for self ends in integration, not alienation. His love is no longer a personal passion, it becomes detached. He gives himself over to a cause — the establishment of social justice in the South. Thus he is the only character whose love expands so as to include the whole cultural community consisting of the whites and the blacks in the South.

But if the white South was going through a cultural crisis in the 1950's, so was the black. The Judge's domestic servant Sherman Pew, finds it extremely difficult to adjust himself to the historical change, indicating that adaption to a historical change could be as difficult for the oppressed as the oppressor. Passion beclouds judgement and shuts out any possibility of seizing up the situation in perspective; when passion rises high, reason goes under. In such a situation there is no love lost between the whites and the blacks. Sherman Pew "finds it as difficult in his way as the Judge Clane does in his to synchronize feelings with history." Sherman as an adolescent, has nourished a deeply felt resentment against the wrongs done to negroes, the knowledge that his father also
was a negro who was executed as a result of the machinations of the Judge, makes him furiously militant. Like Dr. Copeland in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, Sherman suffers moments of uncontrollable rage against the wrongs suffered by the negroes in the South. As he once tells Jester Clane, "I vibrate with every injustice that is done to my race. Vibrate... Vibrate... Vibrate, See?" This reality about the cultural situation in the South, compounds Sherman Pew's sense of personal injury and injustice. He becomes a member of various secret militant organizations always imagining himself in the role of a Messiah for his race who must reek vengeance on the whites. With this frame of mind, he finds it impossible to respond to the very serious and sincere gestures of love made to him by Jester Clane. For instance, when Jester, out of deep pity for Sherman, suddenly kisses him on the cheek — a symbolic gesture of brotherly concern — "[Sherman] slapped Jester, using his whole arm." This mule-headed rejection of a friendly gesture, suggests that Sherman will not be able to achieve a balanced view of himself and the world around him. Consequently one who shuts out love must remain a wretched lonely hunter.

But though Sherman has always wanted to redress the wrongs done to negroes, he never dared act out his resolves and because of his inaction he carries his hell about him. There are only two options open to an individual intent upon revenge, either he should act out his anger and hate against the oppressor or he must try to conquer his spirit of revenge
through understanding and love. Sherman is capable of neither one nor the other. Another trait of his character which makes his escape from this psychic torment impossible, is the tendency to ape the habits of the middle class whites. He likes to think of himself as 'The Man of Distinction’, an image he fosters by serving only Lord Calvert whiskey and wearing Hathaway shirts. He also enjoys impressing his acquaintances by singing German Lieder, and finally and fatally, he makes down payment and moves into a house in the white district of Milan. With in a week he is dead — the victim of a bomb thrown into his house by a lynch-mob organized by his former employer, the Judge: "He dies setting the clock ahead in a society determined to set it back."28

May be this is McCullers' way of saying how injustice corrodes the human heart, and replaces love by blind prejudice and hatred. Sherman's death proves the futility of a negative approach to life's problems, for ruthless violence of feelings or action leads but to the perpetuation of wretchedness and misery.

III

It is true that in Clock Without Hands, McCullers' themes have multiplied and widened but her vision of life remains profoundly pessimistic. The author refuses at every
point, in her presentation of the social and political
South, to countenance any easy hope for better conditions
in the future. As Margaret B. McDowell puts it, "no appro­
priate human horror or grief is evident after the bombing of
Sherman Pew's house." McCullers makes a significant
ironic comment on the incident having larger ramifications,
"Mr. Peek who owned the grocery store adjoining the house had
a very good business that night." That so great a tragedy
can be regarded with total indifference indicates how the
whole community is dehumanized, shutting out any hope for
a bright future. Another evocative symbolic presentation of
the same idea is manipulated as Jester returns to earth in
his plane, indicating the loss of hope for any radical change
in the human situation, "the gray-green of cotton, the dense
and spidery tobacco land, the burning green of corn. As you
circle inward, the town itself becomes crazy and complex...
Gray fences, factories, the flat main street." If ever hope
is to come to the South, McCullers seems to suggest, it will
come not through the orderly design, foreign to the heart that
one sees from a place from the north or from the world of
political theorists. It must come from those who have the
courage to achieve the wisdom of the heart, from those who must
dare step out of their individual and racial grooves to forge
fraternal friendly links with fellow human beings, irrespective
of their colour, class or creed.
However, as Richard M. Cook comments, it is her failure, "to point through her characters to deeper, psychological causes of the South's problems that keeps Clock Without Hands from succeeding in the manner of The Heart is a Lonely Hunter. Serious analysis is sacrificed too soon to the easy laugh with the result that the South instead of being better understood remains hidden behind caricature." In other words, the greatest flaw in Clock Without Hands is that of form or the medium through which McCullers chooses to communicate her meaning. It suffers from a division of narrative purpose; its themes do not coalesce as smoothly as they should. This may be because of the complex situation which McCullers wanted to explore in this novel — presenting the moral issues and analyzing the psychology of the distressing situation. In The Ballad of the Sad Café, where the medium is uniformly abstract, the result is a satisfying artistic work of art, likewise in The Member of the Wedding, the medium is a perfect adjustment between the abstract and the concrete, the symbolic and the realistic, which resulted in the artistic manipulation of the novel evoking favourable reviews from knowledgeable critics. In Clock Without Hands however, the medium is uncertain, realism and allegory do not quite blend and the concrete and the abstract do not harmonize, and the book is uneven stylistically.
As in the other novels, McCullers is concerned with the vital problem of search for love and understanding in *Clock Without Hands*, and involves public issues of social and racial injustice. Writing in 1940's on the trend towards ideological abstraction in *Current American Fiction*, Lionel Trilling warns that "We have lost something of our power to love, for our novels can never create characters who truly exist." McCullers in her novels deals again and again with the desperate need human beings have for mutual understanding and love, and their inability to satisfy this need -- "In *Clock Without Hands* love is shown again to fail in time and finally in death, leaving man forever in a 'zone of loneliness'." Only in this novel McCullers' treatment of love is more complex and comprehensive, because she takes into view both the personal and the public aspects of love -- The Eros and the Agape. It is a tribute to McCullers' artistic imagination and empathy that she possesses a double vision (which most of her characters tragically lack) that enables her to see the inside and the outside of her characters. Because of her liberal imagination and empathy, she could penetrate through such anonymous labels as the militant black, the radical, to the unique individual beneath. When Richard Wright observed that McCullers was able to handle negro characters with as much ease and, justice as those of her own
race, he was praising her for revealing beneath the stereotypes valuable complex human beings—people interesting in the variousness of their contradictions as well as in their suffering. In the words of Richard M. Cook, "When her Mrs. McCullers vision was still radiant with 'the language and voices and foliage' of the South, she did create the kind of characters Trilling feared lost to our fiction, people in whom love's failure could only be apprehended through the author's love."35
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Margaret B. McDowell, *Carson McCullers*, p. 98.


8 Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*, p. 1.


10 Margaret B. McDowell, op. cit., p. 107.

11 Carson McCullers, *Clock Without Hands*, p. 150.

12 Ibid., p. 115.
13 Ibid., p. 241.

14 Ibid., p. 117.

15 Ibid., p. 147.

16 Ibid., pp. 224-225.

17 Ibid., p. 117.

18 Ibid., p. 190.


20 Ibid., p. 114.

21 Ibid., p. 115.

22 Carson McCullers, Clock Without Hands, p. 233.

23 Ibid., p. 234.


25 Ibid., p. 112.

26 Carson McCullers, Clock Without Hands, p. 83.
27 Ibid., p.144.


29 Margaret B. McDowell, op.cit., p.114.

30 Carson McCullers, Clock Without Hands, p.230.

31 Ibid., p.234.

32 Richard M. Cook, op.cit., p.119.


34 Richard M. Cook, op.cit., p.129.

35 Ibid.