

The Portrayal of the Hearing Impaired in Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

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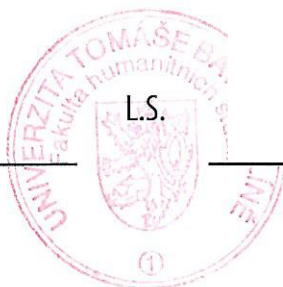
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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat znázornění sluchově postižených v literatuře a v díle Carson McCullersové *Srdce je osamělý lovec*. Teoretická část se zaměřuje na definici sluchového postižení, ohluchnutí, Americké znakové řeči a důležitých pojmů, které se váží ke komunitě neslyšících. Praktická část představí autorku románu a zkoumá zastoupení neslyšících v literatuře.

Klíčová slova: sluchové postižení, komunita neslyšících, hluchota, literatura o neslyšících, hluchoněmý, americká znaková řeč, Carson McCullers

ABSTRACT

The aim of this Bachelor's thesis is to analyse the deaf representation in literature and Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. The theoretical part focuses on the definition of hearing impairment, hearing loss, American sign language and vital terms connected to the Deaf community. The practical part introduces the author of the novel and examines deaf representation in literature.

Keywords: hearing impairment, deaf community, deafness, deaf literature, deaf-mute, American sign language, Carson McCullers

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“This moment will just be another story someday.”

Stephen Chbosky

I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor’s thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
INTRODUCTION	9
1 HEARING IMPAIRMENT.....	11
1.1 HEARING AIDS	12
1.2 TYPES OF HEARING LOSS	12
1.2.1 Sensorineural Hearing Loss	12
1.2.2 Congenital Hearing Loss.....	13
1.2.3 Conductive Hearing Loss.....	14
1.2.4 Mixed Hearing Loss.....	14
2 AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.....	16
2.1 D/DEAF.....	17
2.2 DEAF–MUTE	18
2.3 DEAF AND DUMB	19
2.4 WRITING A VISUAL LANGUAGE	20
2.4.1 American Sign Language Orthography	21
2.5 LIP READING	26
3 DEAFNESS IN LITERATURE	28
3.1 “DEAF” LITERATURE READ BY DEAF PEOPLE	31
4 CARSON MCCULLERS.....	34
5 DEAFNESS IN <i>THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER</i>.....	36
CONCLUSION	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	56
LIST OF FIGURES	57

INTRODUCTION

When hearing impairment is brought up it does not mean it is only about hard of hearing but also about deafness. People can either be born with hearing impairment or develop it during their life time. The level of hearing impairment varies depending on how much can the person actually hear. In mild to severe hard of hearing cases people typically use devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants to enhance their hearing. However, if a person is deaf it means they have little to no hearing and generally use sign language to communicate.

Mild hearing loss only has an affect on low sounds like whispers. People do not tend to mind and it does not affect their daily lives. They are able to communicate with people without any problem and if by any chance they do face problems they can use hearing aids to make the needed sounds amplified. Moderate hearing loss causes problems with hearing voices so there is a chance the person can have trouble with catching up in a conversation. Severe hearing loss does require hearing aids so a person could get through daily life. Finally, profound hearing loss only allows people to hear extremely loud noises and music. In this case a cochlear implant would be a suitable option. Hearing aids unfortunately can no longer improve person's hearing at this stage. It can only amplify sounds and noises and transfer those to the person's ear. However, if the person's hearing is one of the more severe cases, they probably cannot help them out.

American sign language, also known as ASL, is a language just like any other. It has got its own grammatical rules and syntax. It originated in 18th century from a combination of Old French Sign Language and what is now called Old American Sign Language. Although, a wide range of signs were acquired from other sign languages there are some uniquely American signs. Even though there are statistics of how many deaf people are in America, thanks to the health organizations, there is no exact number of how many people can and do use American Sign Language. Since there is no record kept for that there are only estimate numbers, more like guesses, which differ from each other quite a bit.

Deaf community, capital D, takes a great pride in being deaf and being a part of this group. Deaf people with capitalised D are the ones who consider themselves a part of the community and associate with their culture. On the other hand, deaf with lowercase d only refers to the medical condition of hearing loss. Being deaf does not mean a person has to be a part of the community. It is a personal choice and depends on each of them.

The term deaf-mute was plentifully used in the past referring to deaf people who are unable to speak with their voice. Only because they do not use their vocal cords to produce speech does not mean they do not talk at all. They use sign language to communicate on daily basis and that is a real way of communication just like vocally produced language is.

Calling someone deaf and dumb has always been an insult, degrading term. Deaf people are not silent they do talk via signs and they are surely not dumb. Back in the days it was believed that people who were not able to speak with their voice were automatically considered useless and that they could not contribute to the society in any way.

American language has been around for a relatively long time yet it still does not have an official written form. Many mistakenly refer to English as a written form of ASL, which could not be more far off. There are numerous writing styles each of them seemingly different and also for different uses: academic, public, written on paper, written on computer.

Being able to lip read involves a lot of hard work and knowledge of the English language. Even though, a person is extremely good at lip reading it still does not mean they understand every word the other person is saying. In fact, they only catch between 30 to 45 percent of English. When it comes to lip reading, hearing impaired people try to at least understand the context and from that try to deduct the parts of speech they missed.

Deaf characters in literature are frequently portrayed as the weak ones. They suffer from loneliness, depression, not fitting in they might be described negatively, that they are not good looking, are bitter, mean, outcasts. Mainly they do not do the Deaf community justice. The fact also is that not so many hearing impaired people actually find themselves reading books about deaf characters too often.

1 HEARING IMPAIRMENT

Hearing impairment is not only about hearing loss but also deafness. A person can be already born with hearing impairment (for reasons such as low birth weight, use of certain drugs during pregnancy) or develop the impairment during their life (infectious diseases, injury to the head or ear, old age).¹

People with mild to severe hard of hearing keep on using spoken language as a way of communication. To improve hearing difficulties assistive devices like hearing aids and cochlear implants are offered. If a person is diagnosed as being deaf it means they have “very little to no hearing.” Their way of communication is typically sign language.²

Hearing loss is in fact divided into four stages for practical reasons. Although, it is not a precise science it does provide the person with a basic information about the level of their hearing loss.³

1. To have mild hearing loss means having difficulties with hearing quieter sounds (25-45 dB), whispers, clocks tickling. Typically, there is no problem with daily conversations. However, if more people are talking at once or if there are some background noises it might be a struggle. In this case people use tiny in-the-ear or loose-fitting behind-the-ear models of hearing aids to enhance the mild hearing loss the person has.
2. Moderate hearing loss is connected to having problems with hearing sounds that are in between of 40-75 dB. This type does affect daily conversations. The person may catch some words or at least parts of them but it is significantly challenging.
3. Not being able to hear people’s conversations, sound coming out of the TV or a phone, and any other daily sounds is defined as severe hearing loss (75-90 dB). This level of hearing loss does require hearing aids if a person wants to understand everyday conversations. Yet again it might be a bit of a challenge communicating with a group of people in the streets but many individuals do just alright.⁴

¹ “Deafness and hearing loss,” World Health Organization, last modified March 1, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>.

² “What are the four levels of deafness?,” Steve Claridge, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.hearingaidknow.com/question/what-are-4-levels-of-deafness>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

4. The last one is profound hearing loss. In general, only profoundly loud noises and music is heard (the sounds have to be above 90 dB). At this level of hearing loss it is advised to get a cochlear implant, it is a better option since a hearing aid is not guaranteed to be fully working at this level of hearing loss. Even though a cochlear implant can help with hearing it is not a miracle device. It cannot “completely restore hearing to the implanted ear.” It makes it possible to hear a wider range of sounds and with a professional help might make an improvement in terms of speech patterns.⁵ It is crucial to be able to read lips and preferred to learn sign language to communicate.⁶

1.1 Hearing Aids

Hearing aid is a battery-powered gadget created to enhance hearing. It is designed to be worn in or behind an ear and it makes the surrounding noises louder. A part of a hearing aid is a microphone, which gathers the surrounding sounds, an amplifier, which magnifies the sound, and last but not least a receiver that transmits the amplified sound into the user’s ear. As glorious as hearing aids sound, they unfortunately cannot improve everybody’s hearing.⁷

1.2 Types of Hearing Loss

The hearing loss treatment is highly important and definitely should not go untreated since it can negatively impact one’s health. This chapter elaborates on different types of hearing loss and their causes.

1.2.1 Sensorineural Hearing Loss

Also known by its acronym SNHL. It can be present from birth or caused by any of the following factors such as aging, obesity, exposure to loud noises, diseases, smoking, infections, head trauma, tumours and medication. If a person is exposed to noises over 85 dB damage can be done to their stereocilia, auditory hair cells, located in the inner ear or to the auditory nerve, which carries signals from the inner ear to the brain.⁸ Despite that hearing

⁵ Matthew S. Moore and Linda Levitan, *For Hearing People Only* (Rochester: Deaf Life Press, 1993), 189-190.

⁶ “What are the four levels of deafness?,” Steve Claridge, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.hearingaidknow.com/question/what-are-4-levels-of-deafness>.

⁷ “Hearing Aid Basics,” WebMD Medical Reference, last modified June 13, 2019, <https://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/hearing-aids#1>.

⁸ “Definition of auditory nerve,” Merriam-Webster, accessed April 11, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/auditory%20nerve>.

loss can go unnoticed till 30 to 50 percent of stereocilia is impaired. Just to demonstrate how easily anybody's hearing can be harmed, 85 dB is about the same decibel level as city traffic, road work, cello, clarinet, movie theatre, or even noisy restaurant.⁹ The human pain tolerance is set around 130 dB and being in the presence of louder sounds can be harmful as well as painful. For instance, one-time exposure to a sound like gunshots, decibel level ranges from 140 to 190 depending on a weapon, can permanently damage person's hearing. Nowadays kids and young adults are keen on listening to music with their headphones and might do not even realise they are putting themselves at risk as well. Listening to their favourite artist on a full volume, the extent of more than 100 dB, can cause harm after only 15 minutes per day.¹⁰ The damage can result in ringing in ears, inability to recognise voices, light-headedness. Statistics show that more than 90 percent of hearing loss in adults is caused by SNHL, making it the leading type of hearing loss.¹¹

1.2.2 Congenital Hearing Loss

As the name speaks for itself this type of hearing loss is congenital, already present at birth. It is one of the most frequent chronic conditions that affect children. It impacts approximately "1 to 3 babies per 1,000 births." Nowadays mostly all developed countries are in possession of hearing screening equipment, which can detect babies' condition early stage. It is recommended to be done withing the first 4 to 5 weeks but it is possible to be done till 3 months of age.¹² Babies whose condition is discovered early have "a better chance of developing language, speech, and communication skill."¹³ According to the statistics from 2014, 96.1 percent of babies in the United States had their hearing screening done by the age of 1 month.¹⁴ Another statistics from 2014 shows that out of nearly 4 million tested babies was 6.163 impacted with permanent hearing loss.¹⁵

⁹ "Understanding Decibel Charts," Miracle Ear, last modified April 25, 2018, <https://www.miracle-ear.com/blog-news/what-is-loud-decibel-chart>.

¹⁰ "Noise Induced Hearing Loss," Dangerous Decibels, accessed April 13, 2020, <http://dangerousdecibels.org/education/information-center/noise-induced-hearing-loss/>.

¹¹ "Types and causes of hearing loss," Starkey, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.starkey.com/hearing-loss/types-and-causes>.

¹² Korver, A., Smith, R., Van Camp, G. et al. "Congenital hearing loss," *Nature Reviews Disease Primers* 3, no. 16094 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrdp.2016.94>.

¹³ "Newborn hearing screening: programme overview," Public Health England, last modified November 2, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/newborn-hearing-screening-programme-overview>.

¹⁴ "2014 Summary of Infants Screened Before One Month of Age," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/ehdi-data2014.html>.

¹⁵ "2014 Summary of Early Intervention (EI) Among Infants Identified with Permanent Hearing Loss," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/ehdi-data2014.html>.

1.2.3 Conductive Hearing Loss

This is the less common type of hearing loss, which appears when there is an obstruction or harm done to the outer or the middle ear. Hence sound cannot be transmitted to the inner ear. Soft sounds might be barely heard and louder sounds might be faint. If it ends up being only temporary or permanent depends on the cause. Outer ear is typically affected by earwax build up, stuck foreign objects, inborn defect microtia (disturbs a proper formation of an external ear.¹⁶), swimmers' ear (bacteria found in water gets stuck in the ear canal¹⁷). For instance middle ear is affected by rupture in an ear drum (a result of trauma, ear infection, intense noise, sudden change in pressure), otosclerosis (atypical bone growth), or tympanosclerosis, which appears when a person's body does not create sufficient amount of calcium and their ear drum becomes thicker, tougher and registers a loss of its clarity and flexibility.¹⁸ Conductive hearing loss can sometimes be repaired by medication or medical procedure in minor cases such as removal of earwax build up. However, otosclerosis and other severe illnesses are more complex and uneasy to treat. There is a profound possibility they result into permanent hearing loss.¹⁹ In spite of that hearing aids and bone-anchored hearing aid can and often are used to enhance hearing.²⁰

1.2.4 Mixed Hearing Loss

Mixed hearing loss is a result of conductive damage as well as sensorineural. This means that the damage was done to the outer or the middle ear (conductive hearing loss) and the inner ear or auditory nerve (sensorineural hearing loss). This is called mixed hearing loss. Its causes are the same as for conductive or sensorineural hearing loss. A good example would be that somebody experiences hearing loss because they were exposed to excessively loud noises and at the same time they suffer from swimmer's ear. Either a permanent mixed hearing loss can occur – a long lasting conductive hearing loss mixed with aging. A temporary mixed hearing loss appears when age related hearing loss is combined with

¹⁶ "What are anotia and microtia?," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last updated December 5, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/anotia-microtia.html>.

¹⁷ "Swimmer's ear can lead to temporary hearing loss," Joy Victory, last modified May 8, 2019, <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52473-Swimmer-s-ear-can-lead-to-temporary-hearing-loss>.

¹⁸ "An Overview of Myringosclerosis and Tympanosclerosis," Krisin Hayes, last updated February 12, 2020, <https://www.verywellhealth.com/myringosclerosis-and-tympanosclerosis-1191943>.

¹⁹ "Conductive Hearing Loss," American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Conductive-Hearing-Loss/>.

²⁰ "Types of hearing loss," Mandy Mraz, last modified July 17, 2019, <https://www.healthyhearing.com/help/hearing-loss/types>.

earwax build up. When these two are combined they are most likely to worsen the hearing of an individual more than only one of them on its own would.²¹

²¹ “Mixed Hearing Loss,” American Speech Language Hearing Association, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Mixed-Hearing-Loss/>.

2 AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

The language, which is typically spoken among hearing impaired people in America is called American Sign Language, its abbreviation is ASL. As any other language ASL has also got its own, one of a kind, grammatical rules and syntax. The origin of the language begun in early 18th century²² when “Old French Sign Language and what’s now called “Old American Sign Language” were combined together. Therefore, ASL was formed by combining “FSL and an indigenous sign language.” Even though plenty of signs were acquired from FSL there have always remained a few original “American” signs. The language has evolved thoroughly freely of English. The way sentences are built and what words are used is not anyhow depended on English nor British Sign Language. Since ASL is a “living and ever-changing language” it keeps on developing. From a linguistic point of view signs are divided into two groups: iconic and arbitrary. If a sign is iconic it means the form of the interpreted symbol is closely associated with the meaning “(house, tree).” On the other hand, if the symbol and the meaning are not anyhow related, they are considered to be arbitrary signs “(easy, morning).”²³ As a sign language ASL does not involve auditory expressions but visual ones. It is built on facial expressions and body language.²⁴ As the time goes on iconic signs are progressively changing into more arbitrary, new signs are being invented, old signs either stop being used or are changed.²⁵

It is quite difficult to tell how many people use ASL considering each internet source has their own estimate number and they differentiate. However, most of the sources claim there is less than two million, and probably even less than half a million users. The other claim is that ASL is considered “the 3rd most used language in the United States.”²⁶

Although health department could provide the statistics “of born deaf or acquired deafness,” it is the hearing people using ASL who complicate the research. The statistics are usually made by multiplying the number of deaf ASL users by 4, which is an advised number of signing hearing people that each deaf person has around them (friends, family).

²² “History of American Sign Language,” DawnSignPress, last modified August 17, 2016, <https://www.dawnsign.com/news-detail/history-of-american-sign-language>.

²³ “Signs can be arbitrary or iconic,” Pompeu Fabra University, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/lsc/0/steps/13471>.

²⁴ “American Sign Language: Linguistics,” Erica Sandifer, last modified November 13, 2001, <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/linguistics.htm>.

²⁵ Matthew S. Moore and Linda Levitan, *For Hearing People Only* (Rochester: Deaf Life Press, 1993), 29-30.

²⁶ Wilcox Sherman, *Ten Lectures on Cognitive Linguistics and the Unification of Spoken and Signed Languages* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 219.

Unfortunately, not all the hearing people use ASL, which appears to be another obstacle for the research.²⁷

The person behind the establishment of the first American school for deaf-mutes was the Reverend Thomas H. Gallaudet. There was a deaf child in Hartford and Gallaudet was attempting to teach them. However, in 1815 Gallaudet ended up being sent overseas to acquire much needed skills to teach the deaf. While being in England he discovered that “the teaching of deaf mutes had for two generations been monopolized by one family,” they were one of a kind, which they took as an advantage and withhold their secrets on the teaching and obstructed the formation of an Irish school. Their vision was to expand to America and establish a monopoly there as well. Although, this did not stop Gallaudet as he went to France and made a significant accomplishment there.²⁸

2.1 D/deaf

Individuals who identify as culturally Deaf (uppercase D) tend to be active members of the Deaf community. They are mostly already born deaf and may have other deaf relatives. Nevertheless, plenty of people who were born to hearing parents or acquired hearing loss during their life can still be a part of the Deaf community. Generally, they rather use sign language to communicate and it might as well be their first language, English being their second, but not always. They might attend deaf schools or programs where they become deeply involved in Deaf culture.²⁹ Deaf people are proud of their identity and do not consider deafness as a disability but “as a ground-breaking cultural achievement that will go down in history.” Annually multiple events are held and culturally Deaf people attend them. They hold up signs, wear Deaf Pride merch and march for recognition.³⁰

On the contrary, the term deaf (lowercase d) only refers to the medical condition of hearing loss. People who identify as deaf ordinary do not have a solid connection to the Deaf community. It is not typical for them to use sign language and they rather have oral conversations. There are many reasons why people identify as deaf. It might be because they

²⁷ “What is the ranking of ASL (American Sign Language) as a “Spoken Language”?” SignGenius, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.signgenius.com/sign-language/ranking-of-asl-as-spoken-language.shtml>.

²⁸ Albert W. Atwood, “Gallaudet in Washington: The World’s Only College for the Deaf,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* no. 63/65, (1963/1965): 432-447.

²⁹ “The Difference Between d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing,” Gemma Matheson, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://blog.ai-media.tv/blog/the-difference-between-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing>.

³⁰ “d or D? Who’s deaf and who’s Deaf,” Caroline O’Neill, last modified February 24, 2003, http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/opinion/d_or_d_whos_deaf_and_whos_deaf.shtml.

were born to a hearing family, grew up in the hearing world and were barely or not at all in contact with the Deaf community.³¹

That being said not every deaf person has to be a part of the community. People do not turn into members of the community out of feeling honoured to be deaf. Nevertheless, it is people whose perspective towards deafness is that it is an essential part of who they are, they mostly interact with other deaf people and are active members of Deaf culture. It is more common for the community members to attend “residential schools for deaf children,” and learn and use primary ASL to communicate over “speech and speechreading.” Although, is it not unusual that a deaf person associates themselves more with hearing society or that they are somewhere in the middle of “the deaf and hearing worlds.” What influences a deaf person to identify as a part of the community is mainly the age at which they lost their hearing. The older the people are the more unlikely it is for them to identify with the community. Typically, people who have not lost their hearing completely but only partially are less likely to associate with the community. In other societies it is common to pass cultural identity “from parent to child,” however, that does not happen in this society considering many deaf children have hearing parents who prior might as well have never come in contact with deaf people. Whether to be or not to be a part of the community is solely a personal decision every deaf person makes at some point of their life.³²

2.2 Deaf–Mute

A term originally invented in the 18th-19th century. Deaf meaning unable to hear and mute unable to speak, not having a voice. Although, this definition is theoretically incorrect taking into consideration that even hearing impaired people’s vocal chords are functional, at least in most cases. In spite of that they are frequently not able to produce a language orally, the reason being a person normally ought to hear their own voice in order to produce it. Nonetheless, this still does not make hearing impaired people mute. They do make use of different forms of communications apart from or to the extent of “using their voice, they are

³¹ “The Difference Between d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing,” Gemma Matheson, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://blog.ai-media.tv/blog/the-difference-between-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing>.

³² Jill Jepson, *No Walls of Stone: An Anthology of Literature by Deaf and Hard Hearing Writers*, Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 3.

not truly mute.” When one person shares an information with other human being and they do understand it and are able to reply to it, it is considered to be real communication.³³

2.3 Deaf and Dumb

The first recorded positive statement regarding deafness was made by Rudolf Agricola in *De Inventione Dialectica* in 1521, he declared that deaf people are capable of learning a language. Preceding this even there were frequently made negative comments on deafness such as Aristotle’s infamous line “Those who are born deaf all become senseless and incapable of reason.” He was convinced deaf people were affected and handicapped because they could not use their voice like hearing people could, therefore he thought they could not develop cognitive abilities.³⁴ The problem with deaf literature back then was that its writers were hearing and were not educated enough to capture deaf people’s real troubles and struggles in life nor succeeded at their portrayal. Roughly the last 100 years were the crucial ones for the community since that is when deaf people’s writing started being published in papers. Their writing was authentic, they were writing about their personal experiences and the way they perceived and regarded the world.³⁵

This ‘deaf and dumb’ label offends hearing impaired people. As already mentioned above, deaf people are not silent whatsoever.³⁶ They communicate with sign language, lip reading, vocal expressions, facial expression and more. Voice is not required to be used for communication. If it was then communicating with others would only be strictly hearing people’s right, but that is not the case. Deaf people are not stupid people, to which the ‘dumb’ refers to. Hearing impaired people constantly keep on proving that they “contribute to the society at large.”³⁷

³³ “Community and Culture – Frequently Asked Questions,” National Association of the Deaf, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Jack R. Gannon, *Deaf Heritage A Narrative History of Deaf America*. Silver Spring: National Association of the Deaf, 19.

³⁶ Carol Padden, and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 93.

³⁷ “Community and Culture – Frequently Asked Questions,” National Association of the Deaf, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>.

2.4 Writing a Visual Language

The first obstacle that comes with wanting to have a written version of ASL was how can a language expressed visually, 3D, be transformed into a written form. ASL is an astonishing language with an extensive vocabulary. The formation of signs and the way they are gestured is how emphasis is expressed in the language. Many writers struggle with how to point out that a certain part is in fact signed not spoken out loud. In a novel called *Sign of Attraction* is for example used so called classifier – a visual representation denoted from a sign used to construct scenes as demonstrated bellow.³⁸

1. She threw the ball far away.
2. She used her hands to portrait the ball, turns the direction it was thrown and imitates the process of the action using body language (stretching her body before the threw, the speed movement of the hand holding the ball when it was about to be thrown, facial expression signifying the intensity, legs indicating a strong posture, and finally throwing the ball, watching where it lands and the facial expression a relief)

It is up to every author to choose the way they want to express signing. Translating ASL word for word is not quite quintessential because it ends up sounding illiterate. For instance, in English everybody would be say “My newspaper arrived late.” however, if it is translated to ASL it changes into “Late arrive newspaper.” Considering the grammatical aspect of the sentence, it is a complex sentence, grammatically correct. So how is a visual language expressed in a written form and how can it be deducted that a character is using ASL? The following are the most common types of showing signed parts.³⁹

1. “*I went out with John,*” she signed.
2. *I went out with John,* she signed.
3. “I went out with John,” she signed.
4. **I went out with John,** she signed.
5. I WENT OUT WITH JOHN, she signed.

Overall, the Deaf Community seems to prefer examples 1 to 3. It is important to respectfully present ASL just like any other language. As for example 4 using bold the signed part is

³⁸ “ASL: Writing a Visual Language,” Laura Brown, last modified May 19, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/05/19/asl-writing-a-visual-language/>.

³⁹ Ibid.

visibly emphasised and differentiated from the rest. And in 5 it is emphasised as well by using capital letters, which is known to be used when somebody is yelling. The author of already mentioned novel *Sign of Attraction* prefers using quotation marks and italics (example 1) to distinguish ASL from English. Some might still disagree with the usage of quotation marks withing the community but what every member of the Deaf Community can agree on is that they wish ASL was respected the same way as any other spoken language.⁴⁰

Not all writing authors are a part of the Deaf Community and that is why their approach differs. Obviously, a hearing author who only writes about a hearing loss and their knowledge of the community is limited to what they have researched will most likely not have the same understanding as a writer who is a part of the Deaf Community. It is essential to take into consideration the deaf culture and obstacles they have to tackle on daily basis. For example, a hearing author Whitney Gardner does consider herself a part of the community. She was introduced to it at an early age when she started taking ASL lessons at high school. She even expressed an interest in becoming an interpreter one day and keeps ties to the community⁴¹. In her book called *You're Welcome, Universe* italics is not used and instead quotation marks are just as in any other language.⁴²

2.4.1 American Sign Language Orthography

Even though American Sign Language has been around for a couple of centuries it still remains without an official orthographic system. Although, there are multiple writing systems.

Stokoe Notation

This method of capturing visual speech was established by William Stokoe who was a professor at the Gallaudet University. In the past American Sign Language was generally considered to be some sort of a broken English. That was until Stokoe who was involved in helping others see that ASL “was (and is) a language on its own.”⁴³

⁴⁰ “ASL: Writing a Visual Language,” Laura Brown, last modified May 19, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/05/19/asl-writing-a-visual-language/>.

⁴¹ “Interview with Whitney Gardner about *You're Welcome, Universe*,” Andrea Shettle and Natasha Razi, last modified March 3, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/03/03/interview-with-whitney-gardner-about-youre-welcome-universe/>.

⁴² “ASL: Writing a Visual Language,” Laura Brown, last modified May 19, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/05/19/asl-writing-a-visual-language/>.

⁴³ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

He is an author of a book titled *A Dictionary of American Sign Language*, which was released in 1965. Its purpose was not to use it for writing complete sentences but “so signs could be looked up by location, handshape and movement.”⁴⁴

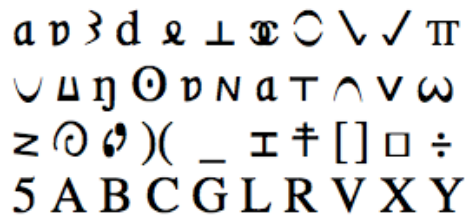


Figure 1 - Stokoe Notation

Source: *A Dictionary of American Sign Language*, 1965

The system is “written left to right, and uses subscripts, superscripts and diacritics. Each sign is written location first, handshape second, and movement third.” This method is frequently used by linguists and researchers.⁴⁵

SignWriting

In 1974 a dancer Valerie Sutton came up with a new system for writing not only ASL but signed languages overall. She was asked to do so by the University of Copenhagen after her previous success of developing a writing system for dance moves. It is purposely meant to be used for any signed language. It “uses many symbols, including symbols for writing non-manual features.”⁴⁶

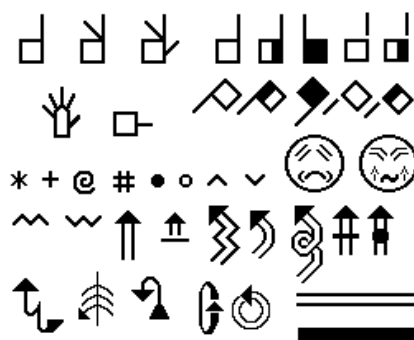


Figure 2 – SignWriting

Source: Sutton SignWriting Symbols, 1974

⁴⁴ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid.

This writing system is written “top to bottom in columns, and symbols can be rotated in 8 directions and placed anywhere in the writing area. Symbols indicating location, handshape, and movement are mixed together and arranged to create a picture of the sign.” This writing style remains to be used by a general ASL public till this day.⁴⁷

HamNoSys

Nowadays still popular writing system that has gone through four amendments and was developed in 1985 at the University of Hamburg and therefore is named Hamburg Notation System, or HamNoSys. Yet again this writing system was not designed for a particular sign language but can in fact be used to capture any sign language in the world. It partially offers “non-manual features” (facial expressions, body language). However, full sentences cannot be captured with HamNoSys.⁴⁸



Figure 3 - HamNoSys
Source: HamNoSys, 2004

The way HamNoSys works is that “it is written left to right, and uses subscripts, superscripts and diacritics.” The order the signs follow is “handshape, orientation, location, actions.” HamNoSys was intended to be used in an academic field.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

SignFont

A writing system SignFont was specifically designed for ASL at the Salk Institute in California in 1987. The author is a philologist Don Newkirk and the book was published under the title SignFont Handbook. This writing style was aimed to be used by academics.⁵⁰

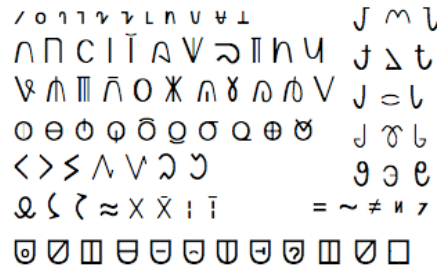


Figure 4 – SignFont

Source: SignFont Handbook, 1989

These symbols are written in a following order “handshape, contact region, non-dominant handshape, non-dominant contact region, location, non-dominant location, movements.”⁵¹

ASLphabet

In the year of 1990 Samuel Supalla began his research on a clarified writing method for ASL. The deaf philologist used SignFont as its base. With the cooperation of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf “a sign language dictionary for kids” was introduced. Supalla named this writing system ASL-phabet. It is intended to be used for children educational purposes. The relatively limited set of symbols was cautiously chosen and yet again this writing system was not meant for entire sentence formation.⁵²



Figure 5 – ASLphabet

Source: ASLphabet, 2001

⁵⁰ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

In the picture above can be seen the symbols of this writing system. It consists of “22 handshapes, 5 locations, and 5 movement types.” The sign order is “handshape, location, movement.” And as the previous ones, it is written from left to right as well. Although, the difference is that this style serves only as a dictionary.⁵³

si5s

Robert Arnold Augustus began working on si5s in 2003. At the time he was a student at the Gallaudet University and aimed to create a written system for ASL so he could write his Master’s thesis elaborating on this topic. His ASL writing system was first released “to the world at Deaf Expo in July 2010.”⁵⁴



Figure 6 - si5s

Source: si5s, 2010

This writing system is meant to be physically written on paper. The reason being “symbols can be rotated at any angle and placed anywhere in the writing space.” The way it works is that “[s]ymbols and lines are arranged to form a picture of each sign, and the signs are arranged from left to right.” Since 2012 students accepted to the Gallaudet University have been obligated to learn si5s, considering it was constructed for the public use.⁵⁵

⁵³ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Gloss

The meaning of glossing ASL is that a range of visual signs is transformed into a written form so they could be constructed in the sign language but also captured using English terms to symbolize every visual sign.⁵⁶

English:	<i>i believe that this is an open question .</i>
ASL Gloss:	<i>X-I BELIEVE THAT THIS BE DESC-OPEN QUESTION .</i>
Translation:	<i><s> x @-@ i believe that this be desc @-@ open question . </s></i>

Figure 7 – ASL Gloss

Source: English to ASL, Daniel Manzano, 2018

It has been years since glossing first started being used for teaching ASL as well as in numerous textbooks for ASL users. Although, it is usually not used in written conversation between two individuals on a regular basis but by academic staff.⁵⁷

2.5 Lip Reading

Truth to be told not all hearing impaired people can read lips. Some consider it as a set of skills that can be acquired meanwhile others see it as an art. Lip reading is in no way one hundred percent accurate due to certain sounds and words appearing a lot alike. It is all influenced by how well does the lipreader know the language and how precisely does the speaker produce their speech. In many cases being capable of reading lips can improve hearing impaired people's lives, it enables them to participate in conversations and overall socialize and get around easier and more often in the hearing world. Lip reading is for sure not easy to fully enhance and know-it-all it requires a lot of hard work, patience and persistence. Lip reading can make it harder on the deaf person if they are located in a big loud group of people. They can also be affected by the quality of lighting and a hearing person's knowledge of lip reading – slow down a bit, pronounce words properly, do not turn

⁵⁶ “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

around, no face covering, peaceful location, good lighting, rephrase and repeat, carry a pen and a piece of paper, look directly at the person who is lip reading.⁵⁸

According to a study only 30 to 45 percent of the English language is distinguishable during lip reading. Lip readers often have to rely on understanding the context and guessing what they could not catch.⁵⁹

A stereotype is that if a hearing impaired person is able to read lips it is the best way to communicate with them. This just shows the understanding and an attempt to help out, which hearing people oftentimes lack. Lip reading is tiring, exhausting and not half as efficient as an actual sign language. It is not uncommon for lip readers to get lost in the conversation, so just by doing a thing such as learning new language, sign language, it could ease someone else's life.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "What is lipreading?," Hearing Link, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.hearinglink.org/living/lipreading-communicating/what-is-lipreading/>.

⁵⁹ Christine Chong-hee Lieu, Georgia Robins Sadler, Judith T. Fullerton, and Paulette Deyo Stohlamann, "Communication Strategies For Nurses Interacting with Deaf Patients," *Clinical Practice* 16, no. 4 (August 2007), 239-244, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5936730_Communication_strategies_for_nurses_interacting_with_deaf_patients.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

3 DEAFNESS IN LITERATURE

Deaf characters in literature are often portrayed as unlikable and typically they do not leave a mark on readers. Frequently there is only some kind of a mention of them, their characters do not have time to evolve.⁶¹

In *The Canterbury Tales* can be found a woman character, The Wife of Bath, who is described as a gap-toothed deaf. There is a mention of her having five husbands and searching for the sixth one, she seems to enjoy being independent and in the centre of attention, she believes “she is God’s gift to men.”⁶² After a fight she and her husband have she turns somewhat deaf.⁶³

By God, he hit me on the ear, one day,
Because I tore out of his book a leaf,
So that from this my ear is grown quite deaf.
Stubborn I was as is a lioness,
And with my tongue a very jay, I guess,⁶⁴ (sic)

The book called *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* portrays a character as well, Quasimodo. A child left behind, later on adopted. His description is rather negative he is badly misshapen, has a hunchback, a protuberance sticking out of his torso and a mole so big it covered his eye. Apart from the harsh description he is a human being with the kindest heart, which is connected “to the cathedral itself.” The only way he communicates is through the alluring sound of the Notre Dame’s bells that he adores so much. Paradoxically, the entire city of Paris finds joy and pleasure in his bell ringing although, they constantly reject him and cannot stand the way he looks. Quasimodo actually translates to “half-made.”⁶⁵

“He shows himself; he’s a hunchback. He walks; he’s bandy-legged. He looks at you; he’s one-eyed. You speak to him; he’s deaf. And what does this Polyphemus do with his tongue?” “He speaks when he chooses,” said the old woman; “he became deaf through ringing the bells. He is not dumb.”⁶⁶ (sic)

⁶¹ Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

⁶² “The Canterbury Tales,” PACE University, accessed May 5, 2020, <http://csis.pace.edu/grendel/prjs3e/INDEX.html>.

⁶³ Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, (Clayton: Prestwick House, 2009), 1.

⁶⁵ “Hunchback of Notre Dame,” Lit2Go Ed., accessed August 6, 2020, <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/107/the-hunchback-of-notre-dame/1895/book-fourth-chapter-3/>.

⁶⁶ Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 92-93.

The daughter of Jim in the work of Mark Twain *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Jim is illustrated as a loving father yet he is not aware that his own daughter Elizabeth is deaf and mistreats her. Jim is a person of colour and a slave. Back in the days slave owners were abusing their slaves because they believed Negro “did not have the same feelings as white people” and used this to justify their actions.⁶⁷

Elizabeth, age four, went through a severe case of scarlet fever. One day when she seemed to be better and back to normal Jim asked her to shut the door but she kept on standing on the same spot with a smile at her face, which made Jim angry so he repeated the same sentence but louder, yet again no response from Elizabeth. He got furious, slapped her and left the room. Unfortunately, what Jim did not know was that Elizabeth had gone deaf as a result of the illness.⁶⁸

When I came back, the door was still open. The child standing in the doorway, looking down, crying, with tears running down her face. [...] “Oh, poor little thing! Let the Lord God Almighty forgive poor old Jim because he is never going to forgive himself as long as he lives! She was completely deaf, and she couldn’t speak either. And I’d been treating her so horribly!”⁶⁹

The same novel also includes another mention of deafness. Characters the King and the Duke pretend to be brothers and on a top of that the Duke pretends being deaf and they make up their own sign language to talk with one another.⁷⁰

[T]hey all come and shook hands with the king and thanked him and talked to him; and then they shook hands with the duke and didn’t say nothing, but just kept a-smiling and bobbing their heads like a passel of sapheads whilst he made all sorts of signs with his hands and said “Goo-goo—goo-goo-goo” all the time, like a baby that can’t talk.⁷¹ (sic)

Deaf characters are a part of Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well. Sarah and Frances better known as Misses Tutti and Frutti are both deaf. Miss Tutti does not want to accept that she is deaf and lives in silence on the other hand Miss Frutti made use of a huge ear trumpet in fear of missing out on something. On Halloween a group of children took an advantage of their deafness and sneaked into their home, stole all of their furniture from the living room and hit in their cellar.

⁶⁷ Erich R. Anderson, “A Window to Jim’s Humanity: The Dialectic Between Huck and Jim in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” (MA diss., Indiana University, 2008), 45, 55.

⁶⁸ “Finding Jim Behind the Mask,” Leslie Gregory, accessed August 5, 2020. <http://itech.fgcu.edu/&/issues/vol1/issue1/huckfinn.htm>.

⁶⁹ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (New York: William Collins, 2010), 159.

⁷⁰ Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

⁷¹ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (New York: William Collins, 2010), 168.

“I heard ‘em!” was the cry that awoke the Misses Barber’s neighbors at dawn next morning. “Heard ‘em drive a truck up to the door! Stomped around like horses. They’re in New Orleans by now!” Miss Tutti was sure those traveling fur sellers who came through town two days ago had purloined their furniture. “Da-rk they were,” she said. “Syrians.”⁷² (sic)

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place a short story written by Ernest Hemmingway portrayals an old deaf drunk who tends to stay up late at the café, drinking alcoholic beverages. There are two waiters at the café a young one, who rushes to get home and an old one who does not. The old one is understanding, wondering what could have led the old drunk to attempt suicide last week. He comes to a conclusion it must have been “nothing” meaning “life’s meaninglessness” according to the old waiter.⁷³

“Last week he tried to commit suicide,” one waiter said.

“Why?”

“He was in despair.”

“What about?”

“Nothing.”

“How do you know it was nothing?”

“He has plenty of money.”⁷⁴ (sic)

The old drunk is wealthy but money does not fix anything in his situation. At one point of his life he was married but does not have a wife anymore. He tried to kill himself and failed so the only way he can bear with his depression is by going to the café and sitting there for hours. Even though he is deaf he can sense the “quietness of the night time and the café,” he enjoys sitting in the café on his own because it does not make him feel so alone.⁷⁵

Jerome D. Salinger captured deafness in his book *The Catcher in the Rye* as something partially glorious. Holden, the protagonist and the narrator, romanticizes how improved and easier his life would be if he was deaf.⁷⁶

I’d pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes. That way I wouldn’t have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody. If anybody wanted to tell me something, they’d have to write it on a piece of paper and shove it over to me. They’d get bored as hell doing that after a while, and then

⁷² Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1988), 230.

⁷³ Gabriel, Joseph F, “The Logic of Confusion In: Hemingway’s “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”,” *College English* 22, no. 8. (1961): 542, accessed August 5, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/373494>.

⁷⁴ Ernest Hemingway, *A Clean Well-Lighted Place*, (Mankato: Creative Education, 1990), 1.

⁷⁵ Gabriel, Joseph F, “The Logic of Confusion In: Hemingway’s “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”,” *College English* 22, no. 8. (1961): 542, accessed August 5, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/373494>.

⁷⁶ Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

I'd be through with having conversations for the rest of my life. Everybody'd think I was just a poor deaf-mute bastard and they'd leave me alone.⁷⁷ (sic)

He debates how he would meet a pretty deaf-mute girl, they would get married, have children, purchase loads of books and “teach them how to read and write by ourselves.” He does not even consider a possibility of learning a sign language. He only dreams of distancing himself from the rest of the world and if they needed to tell him something they would “have to write it on a goddam piece of paper.”⁷⁸

3.1 “Deaf” Literature Read by Deaf People

Frequently deaf characters seem to possess qualities such as powerlessness and inadequacy. They tend to distance themselves and live in their own world. People around them typically feel sorry for them but sometimes they can also be unnecessarily mean to them. They have problems with fitting in and barely ever are able to communicate with other characters. They are often alone and lonely.⁷⁹

Students at the Learning Center for the Deaf do not seem to associate with the “negative portrayals of deafness.” The students are convinced deaf characters should be more genuine, reflect them, their ability to communicate, have friends and be smart. However, it is unusual for deaf literature characters to possess any of these features. These characters and their interpretation of deafness is actually so far off the reality that they appear to be negligible, their only purpose being literary text figures.⁸⁰

“I confess I have read very few texts with deaf characters, and I'm not sure I can think of one off the top of my head. [...] I wondered if I had ever read anything that had deaf characters in it. ... I felt no connection to them at all.”⁸¹ (sic)

As a former student of the educational facility said no deaf character has astonished him enough to remember. Overall, deaf literary characters are viewed as stupid, insane, angry, and odd as a result of their deafness. Meanwhile, this particular student was raised in a fluently speaking ASL household, went to “a school for the deaf,” and became an

⁷⁷ Jerome D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 107.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 95.

⁸¹ Ibid, 95.

enthusiastic member of the Deaf community. The student has never experienced being “treated as an abnormality or as a disability” for her deafness.⁸²

Two different students consider Quasimodo from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to be bogus and insulting. One of the students commented that Quasimodo’s deafness and disfiguration points out how “In the past, society viewed deafness on a par with mental retardation and other unwanted disabilities. People pitied them.... The old view is outdated and inaccurate.” The other student observed that Quasimodo does not fit in the community and is viewed as an inconvenience. Deaf people’s desire is not to be considered as an inconvenience but rather be somehow beneficent to the society. This for sure is not the memo they want hearing people to remember. Readers of the Deaf community feel distressed and let down by such an awful representation like Quasimodo. They are worried such phony characters could mislead the readers who do not know anything about the Deaf community and give them a false idea about it.⁸³

Another wrong impression could have been given by *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Particularly by Jim’s gloomy response when he finds out his daughter is deaf pointed out another student, this time sharing her parents’ thoughts. She confessed her parents mourned just like Jim did, however, learning how to communicate in a sign language made it easier for them to overcome the fact their daughter went deaf. Her parents realized “being deaf is not a bad thing” it gives people an opportunity to be a part of a community and their culture, which is a plus and definitely not a reason to feel sorry for somebody. The novel illustrates deafness as “nothing more than a tragedy.”⁸⁴

Another student continues on Twain’s other representation of deafness in the same novel and that would be the two characters the Duke and the King who not only faked being brothers but mainly the Duke pretended being deaf. Their made up sign language is not in any way like the real one. It demonstrates how back in the days ASL used to be disdained and recognized as “animal-like or low class.” Nonetheless, he is pleased with how the story line developed and considers Twain to be “ahead of his time.” He was able to capture the contrast between incomprehensible signs and a real sign language.⁸⁵

⁸² Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 95.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

“Twain was clearly against [a negative] perspective of deaf people.... I thought it was really cool and rare to see criticism of that kind of behavior against deaf people in that time.”⁸⁶ (sic)

This research was conducted among students and former students of the Learning Center for the Deaf in Framingham.⁸⁷

Even the experience of deafness has been likened to the materials from which walls are built: stone deaf; deaf as a post. [...] We have no choice now but to break down the barriers that separate us. At this time in history, we can no longer live with walls.⁸⁸ (sic)

Only because deaf characters are not portrait the way they should it does not mean the literary works have to be disregarded. Those works can still be read and enjoyed but the readers should analyse them and think about what they would change in order to address them more accordingly.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 95.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jill Jepson, *No Walls of Stone: An Anthology of Literature by Deaf and Hard Hearing Writers*, Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 3.

⁸⁹ Trent Batson, and Eugene Bergman, eds. *Angels and Outcasts: An Anthology of Deaf Characters in Literature*. (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1986).

4 CARSON MCCULLERS

Carson McCullers was born on February 19, 1917 in Columbus, Georgia originally named Lula Carson Smith. Her father owned a relatively prosperous jewellery shop in her hometown. At first, she pursued the idea of becoming a musician, which led to starting to take piano lessons when she was only 10 years old. As a child McCullers used to be constantly ill. Nonetheless, when she was diagnosed with rheumatic fever, she was forced to abandon music and that actually let her to begin writing. When she was about 17 years old she moved to New York where she attended the well known Juilliard School of Music.⁹⁰

As she moved to New York she completely dropped music and went after her new devotion – writing. Nobody knows whether McCullers truly wanted to attend Juilliard or if she planned moving to New York to become a writer all along. She signed up for “creative writing classes at Columbia University and New York University while working odd jobs.”⁹¹

At relatively young age McCullers already gained success for her first work *Wunderkind* printed in the December 1936 issue of *Story* magazine, she was only 19 at the time. The subsequent year she got married to James Reeves McCullers Jr., which later on turned out to be quite a rocky ride for them both. They were both jealous types, James McCullers was a writer as well and beside that they both had an alcohol problem.⁹²

McCullers first novel published in 1940 *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* obtained humongous “critical praise and commercial success.” At that time deafness was not quite understood nor accepted in the mainstream society. The reason behind the title remains a mystery since she never publicly spoke about it. However, it can be assumed that it refers to the fact that the majority of the characters suffer from loneliness and are desperate to pour their hearts out to somebody. In a sense, they are “hunters,” they are looking for someone or something.⁹³

The following year the couple got divorced and she also published her second novel *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. It was not as successful as the previous one, it got a lot of negative reviews, but still managed to have “some commercial success.” Yet again the novel elaborates on being lonely and isolated. Maybe the reason for many negative reviews this

⁹⁰ “Carson McCullers Biography,” Biography Editors, last modified April 12, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/writer/carson-mccullers>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

time around could be that it was more provocative, scandalous, than the first one. It talks about issues such as “impotency, bisexuality, infidelity, bestiality and murder,” which could have been partially influenced by her own personal life and marriage. She and her husband both identified as bisexual and had affairs behind each other’s back.⁹⁴

McCullers was struggling with illness and health problems nearly her entire life but the year of 1947 was one of the most devastating years of her life. She suffered from two strokes and they “left her paralyzed on one side.” That left not only physical but also mental mark on McCullers. She fell into depression and because of her unhealthy state she tried to commit suicide in 1948, at the age of 31. After her failed attempt she surrounded herself with close friends of hers and worked “on a stage adaptation of *The Member of the Wedding*.” The drama ended up being performed on Broadway in 1950, receiving emphatic reviews and winning the Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play the same year.⁹⁵

McCullers stayed in Europe for a quite some time in 1950 with her friends and her husband, Reeves McCullers, whom she remarried in 1945. Reeves McCullers’s depression was progressively getting worse and he desired the couple to end their lives together. This frightened McCullers so in fear of her own well being she went back to the United States in 1953. Meanwhile Reeves McCullers committed suicide in a Paris hotel room by overdosing on sleeping pills in November of the same year.⁹⁶

Another one of McCullers’s plays that opened on Broadway was *The Square Root of Wonderful*, which sadly was performed only 45 times. In 1961 she published her last novel called *Clock Without Hands*, which did not receive a lot of attention from critics nor commercial success. The next year McCullers went through a surgery to get her breast cancer removed as well as another one to fix her immobile left hand. In 1964 the adaptation of *The Ballad of the Sad Café* earned six Tony Award nominations but did not win one.⁹⁷

In 1967 McCullers had her final stroke and was left in a coma for over a month, which led to her death on September 29th. Over two hundred people went to her funeral to say their final goodbyes.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Carson McCullers Biography,” Biography Editors, last modified April 12, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/writer/carson-mccullers>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

5 DEAFNESS IN *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

The difference between the two deaf characters is clearly stated at the beginning. The way they are described and the way they behave throughout the book gives off an impression that even though “they were always together”⁹⁹ they are polar opposites. Spiros Antonapoulos, also referred to as ‘the Greek’, is obese, dreamy, his face is “round and oily, with half-closed eyelids and lips that curved in a gentle, stupid smile,”¹⁰⁰ he does not dress well “he could come out wearing a yellow or green polo shirt stuffed sloppily into his trousers in front and hanging loose behind,”¹⁰¹ and loves “to eat more than anything else in the world.”¹⁰² He is guarded and does not talk about his emotions or anything at all really, he barely signs. He is bitter, pessimistic and causes problems. To the contrary, John Singer is thin, tall, “immaculate and very soberly dressed,”¹⁰³ and his eyes are mixture of grey and green. He is warm hearted, understanding, hard working and a really good listener. Singer is in the centre of it all and by the end of the novel establishes a connection with nearly all residents of the town.

Singer and Antonapoulos always walk silently to work together. Although once they reach the main street of the town they stop. That is where Singer typically puts his hand on Antonapoulos’s arm, looks at him for a moment and then leaves. This is the way they say goodbye to each other. Antonapoulos works at a fruit store, owned by his cousin. His duty is to “make candies and sweets, uncrate the fruits, and to keep the place clean.”¹⁰⁴ John Singer works as a silverware engraver. After work Singer goes to the fruit store and waits for his friend. It was a habit of Antonapoulos to sneakily take some of the dainty on the display before leaving. Occasionally the store owner notices and gives Antonapoulos a warning look. Whenever that happens Singer looks away because he does not want “to watch this little scene between two Greeks.”¹⁰⁵

After they arrive home Singer is always the one talking. He is excited to tell Antonapoulos “all that had happened during the day.”¹⁰⁶ However, Antonapoulos barely gives Singer any response. He mostly fumblingly moves his hands to sign whether he wants “to eat or to sleep

⁹⁹ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, 2.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

or to drink.”¹⁰⁷ The only three words he actually knows how to properly sign are “Holy Jesus, or God, or Darling Mary,”¹⁰⁸ which he uses when he is not too drunk to pray at night. Even though Singer talks to Antonapoulos on daily basis he does not know how much he actually understands, but that does not matter to him.

They both live together in the same room, different beds. Since Antonapoulos loves food, he is the one who cooks and Singer is the one who washes the dishes afterwards. Singer even tries teaching Antonapoulos chess but as long as “a bottle of something good”¹⁰⁹ is not kept under the table he is not interested. Singer loves his friend and sometimes purposely “attacks on his own men so that in the end the black king was killed,”¹¹⁰ because that always makes Antonapoulos “very proud and pleased.”¹¹¹

Singer and Antonapoulos have no other friends, it is just them two mutes against the world. Their lives are stereotypical because of how lonely they are. Them both being deaf-mute makes them feel even lonelier and bitter about it. Barely ever anything disturbs them. Their routine is to visit library once a week where Singer withdraws a random book, on Fridays they go to see a movie, on paydays they go to the “ten-cent photograph shop,”¹¹² where Antonapoulos has his picture taken and that is all places they ever go to. The town they live in is fairly large and there are many places they have never even explored.

They are doing alright till Singer celebrates his thirty-second birthday, which marks ten years of living in the town with Antonapoulos. Soon after that Antonapoulos gets ill. Singer informs the fruit store owner about the situation and also asks his employer to take some time off in order to take care of his ill friend. The doctor makes out a diet for Antonapoulos, which he has trouble following since he cannot drink any more wine. Singer takes care of his friend all day long and makes sure he follows the doctor’s orders, which Antonapoulos is not happy about. He does not enjoy Singers presence, he does not like the food Singer prepares for him, and often makes Singer to help him get down on his knees so he could pray. Singer tries his best and is patient with his ill friend. He even draws a picture of Antonapoulos, which “hurt the big Greek’s feelings, and he refused to be reconciled until

¹⁰⁷ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

Singer had made his face very young and handsome and coloured his hair bright yellow and his eyes china blue.”¹¹³

All because of Singers great care a week later is Antonapoulos ready to go back to work. However, nothing stays the same after that. Antonapoulos changes. He is “irritable and no longer content to spend the evenings quietly in their home.”¹¹⁴ Whenever he decides he wants to go out Singer closely follows him. When they are sitting at a restaurant Antonapoulos “slyly put lumps of sugar, or a pepper-shaker, or pieces of silverware in his pocket.”¹¹⁵ To avoid any disturbance Singer always pays for whatever his friend steals. At home Singer gives Antonapoulos a lecture about his behaviour but he does not seem to care and only blandly smiles. Unfortunately, his behaviour is progressively getting worse. He urinates in public, purposely bumps into people on the streets, once even “hailed out a floor lamp without paying for it.”¹¹⁶

All that is making Singer’s life uneasy. He is spending his lunch hours at the courthouse and wasting his saved money on bail and fines. He does everything in his power to keep his friend out of jail. Singer is worrying about his friend but no matter what happens Antonapoulos keeps a flaccid smile on his face. Singer runs out of money and is forced to borrow some from his own employer. Although once he is not able to collect enough money for the bail and his friend has to spent the night in jail. The next day Singer comes to pick him up but he refuses to leave. Antonapoulos seems to like it there.

Singer feels lost without Antonapoulos “they had lived so much alone”¹¹⁷ and he has no one to open up about his distress. Antonapoulos “let nothing disturb him or cure him of his habits.”¹¹⁸ The final trouble for Singer is when he finds out Antonapoulos’s cousin made a decision to have the Greek taken to the state insane asylum two hundred miles away. Antonapoulos’s mental health has been getting worse and providing him with a special care seemed to be appropriate solution. For the next week Singer barely ever stops moving his hands as he wants to tell Antonapoulos as much as humanly possible in the little time they have left.

¹¹³ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 5..

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 7.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

When Antonapoulos leaves for the state insane asylum Singer is left alone. He struggles to remember what his life was like before he met Antonapoulos. Singer was born deaf and “left an orphan very young and placed in an institution for the deaf,”¹¹⁹ therefore he was not always a real mute. He learned how to sign, read lips and lastly how to speak. At school he was smart but speaking did not feel natural to him. He felt insecure about the way he sounded judging from other people’s reactions to his voice. He thought he sounded like some animal. Producing spoken language caused him great pain but “his hands were always ready to shape the words he wished to say.”¹²⁰ At the age of twenty-two Singer met Antonapoulos and since then never used his mouth to speak again because there was no need for it.

Months pass by and Singer tries contacting Antonapoulos but never receives any reply. Singer is achingly lonely and has trouble falling asleep. He cannot handle spending any more time at the place his friend had lived so he rents a new place for himself. When Singer goes to a restaurant nearby his new place for the first time, he reads the menu and writes a note that he hands over to the owner. The note states:

Each morning for breakfast I want an egg, toast, and coffee - \$0.15

For lunch I want soup (any kind), a meat sandwich, and milk - \$0.25

Please bring me at dinner three vegetables (any kind but cabbage), fish or meat, and a glass of beer - \$0.35

Thank you.¹²¹ (sic)

Without his only friend Singer is lonelier than ever before. He is going through a rough time, not having anyone by his side. He does not know how to cope without Antonapoulos, how to live on his own. He does not try to talk to anyone nor to make any new acquaintance. He just aimlessly walks around the town by himself.

In his face there came to be brooding peace that is seen most often in the faces of the very sorrowful or the very wise. But still he wandered through the streets of the town, always silent and alone.¹²² (sic)

Singer spends a good amount of time at the restaurant. Even at night he just sits there enjoying his coffee or a glass of beer not paying attention to people around. But people around him actually do notice him. A drunken guy Jake Blount occasionally glazes over him and admits to Biff, the employee, “It’s funny, but I been seeing that fellow in my sleep for

¹¹⁹ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 8.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 9.

¹²¹ Ibid, 10.

¹²² Ibid, 11.

the past three or four nights. He won't leave me alone. If you ever noticed, he never seems to say anything."¹²³ Biff agrees saying "No, he don't."¹²⁴ That is when another customer, a girl named Mick, contributes to the conversation by saying "It's not funny if you know anything about him."¹²⁵ It turns out Mick's family is the owner of the house where Singer rented a room three months ago.

One afternoon Jake Blount and Singer lock eyes. Blount walks over to him and says "You're the only one in this town who catches what I mean, for two days now I been talking to you in my mind because I know you understand the things I want to mean."¹²⁶ People who heard that laughed not knowing the full story, for them it seemed like "the drunk had picked out a deaf-mute to try to talk with."¹²⁷ Blount sits at Singer's table pouring his heart out:

There are those who know and those who don't know. And for every ten thousand who don't know there's only one who knows. That's the miracle of all time – the fact that these millions know so much but don't know this. It's like in the fifteenth century when everybody believed the world was flat and only Columbus and a few other fellows knew the truth. But it's different in that it took talent to figure that the earth is round. While this truth is so obvious it's a miracle of all history that people don't know. You savvy.¹²⁸ (sic)

The customers keep on laughing while Biff is genuinely curious whether Singer seriously understands what he is told. Singer "never smiled until several seconds after the funny remark had been made,"¹²⁹ and he kept on smiling for a moment.

People felt themselves watching him even before they knew that there was anything different about him. His eyes made a person think that he heard things nobody else had ever heard, that he knew things no one had ever guessed before. He did not seem quite human.¹³⁰ (sic)

At the first glance nobody can tell Singers condition. He is well-dressed, quiet and never seen with any company. But there is something about him that attracts people. They do not hold anything back. They trust him with their secrets. Some view him as a superior.

Blount has been sharing his thoughts with Singer for nearly an hour and Singer being a patient man he has been listening to him. Although, Singer keeps on checking the clock, which Blount does not seem to notice till he "nodded his head in the direction of the clock,

¹²³ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 18.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 22.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

smiled in that hidden way of his, and got up from the table.”¹³¹ Blount is so intoxicated he is no able to comprehend what had just gone down. He did not even notice Singer never gave him any response. Not long after he leaves there is a fight in the ally behind the restaurant in which Blount is involved and ends up getting hurt and Singer witnesses it all. When Willie, a guy who works in the kitchen, tells all this to Biff along the fact that police came up and was told Blount has been staying at the restaurant Biff panics. However, Singer being a good caring person he offers to cover up for him writing on a piece of paper “If you cannot think of any place for him to go he can go home with me.”¹³² In the middle of the night Singer carries Blunt’s suitcase in one hand and the other one uses to support Blunt himself.

Mick, who lives in the same house as Singer, occasionally wonders “what kind of music he heard in his mind that his ears couldn’t hear. Nobody knew. And what kind of things he would say if he could talk. Nobody knew that either.”¹³³ In fact Mick profoundly enjoys spending time with Singer. He reminds her of Mozart’s music.

She wished there was some place where she could go to hum it out loud. Some kind of music was too private to sing in a house cram full of people. It was funny, too, how lonesome a person could be in a crowded house..¹³⁴ (sic)

When Blunt wakes up at Singer’s place he is confused and does not remember much from the last night so Singer hands him his card, which reads:

I am deaf-mute, but I read lip and understand what is said to me. Please do not shout..¹³⁵ (sic)

This is his typical way of communication. Nobody around speaks his language so the easiest way for him is to write everything down and pass that to the person he is talking to. Blunt shows an interest in Singer and proceeds to asking him whether there are any deaf-mute people, if he has friends and lastly whether he finds it lonesome. To which Singer shakes his head in an unclear way, could have meant yes, could have meant no, nobody knows. He continues by thanking Singer, this time he makes sure he speaks slowly so the mute can easily read his lips and understand what he is saying. Blunt is prepared to leave when Singer offers him to stay yet again writing on a piece of paper:

¹³¹ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 24.

¹³² Ibid, 27.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 52.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 54.

I can put a mattress on the floor and you can stay here until you find a place. I am out most of the day.
I will not be any trouble..¹³⁶ (sic)

Blunt is overwhelmed with Singer's act of kindness but he cannot accept it. Claiming he does have a place to stay he stands up and leaves the room. Blunt walks back to the restaurant and after finding out how much he owes and what is the current job situation like in the town Biff asks him what was his impression of Singer. He takes a moment and thinks how he can see Singer's face "in his mind very clearly. It was like the face of a friend he had known for a long time. He had been thinking of the man ever since he had left his room."¹³⁷ Later on Blunt wishes he could "return to the mute's quiet room and tell him of the thoughts that were in his mind. It was a queer thing to want to talk with a deaf-mute. But he was lonesome."¹³⁸ Even after such a short period of time Singer leaves an imprint on Blunt. He has an urge to talk to the mute again.

Apart from being kind Singer also always pays his rent on time. "Ain't but one person in the house who pay a decent amount for his room and pay it on the dot without fail. He one of these here deaf-and-dumb folks. He the first one of them I ever seen close up – but he mighty fine white man."¹³⁹ Portia, a servant in the Kelly household, makes this remark and even though she considers him a fine man she still refers to him as deaf-and-dumb. Degrading him as if he was less of a person because of his inability to hear.

Doctor Copeland describes Singer as "Tall, thin, with grey and green eyes? And always polite to everyone and very well dressed? Not like someone from this town."¹⁴⁰ In his eyes Singer is kind and offers a shoulder to cry on to everyone. The doctor is interested in getting to know Singer once he finds out he is deaf, in sake of his own deaf-mute patient. It is a little boy, only five years old, and Copeland blames himself for his handicap.

"I delivered him, and after two post-delivery visits of course I forgot about him. He developed ear trouble, but the mother paid no attention to the discharges from his ear and did not bring him to me. When it was finally brought to my attention it was too late. Of course he hears nothing and of course he therefore cannot speak. But I have watched him carefully, and it seems to me that if he were normal he would be a very intelligent child."¹⁴¹ (sic)

¹³⁶ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 55.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 60.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 63.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 83.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 85.

Being deaf is not considered to be normal. It is a handicap and everyone affected by it is shown pity, people around feel sorry for them. They seem to be convinced that a life of a deaf person must be awful – lonely, living in silence and cut off from the rest of society.

Things have changed for Singer by midsummer – he starts having “visitors more other than any other person in the house. [...] And always he met his guests at the door with a welcome smile.”¹⁴²

Mick loved to go up to Mister Singer’s room. Even if he was a deaf-and-dumb mute he understood every word she said to him. Talking with him was like a game. Only there was a whole lot more to it than any game. It was like finding out new things about music. She would tell him some of her plans that would not tell anybody else. He let her meddle with his cute little chess men. Once when she was excited and caught her shirt-tail in the electric fan he acted in such a kindly way that she was not embarrassed at all. Except for her Dad, Mister Singer was the nicest man she knew.¹⁴³ (sic)

Jake Blount came every week. When he walked up to Singer’s room the whole stairway shook. Usually he carried a paper sack of beers. Often his voice would come out loud and angry from the room. But before he left his voice gradually quieted. When he descended the stairs he did not carry the sack of beers any longer, and he walked away thoughtfully without seeming to notice where he was going.¹⁴⁴ (sic)

Even Biff Brannon came to the mute’s room one night. But as he could never stay away from the restaurant for long, he left in a half-hour.¹⁴⁵ (sic)

Mick Kelly and Jake Blount and Doctor Copeland would come and talk in the silent room – for they felt that the mute would always understand whatever they wanted to say to him. And maybe even more than that.¹⁴⁶ (sic)

They all appreciate Singer. The sessions are always the same, they come in, share their feeling and thoughts while Singer sits by the window, nodding or smiling as a sign that he understands. They believe his quietness and a constant smile on his face hide behind a tremendous compassion. He is polite and empathic. He always leaves without saying anything, which implies it is expected from him, to disappear without leaving a trace so “the mystery of Singer” stays unanswered. Singer is carrying the embodiment of loneliness on his shoulders throughout the novel. Although, he himself is profoundly lonely he is the one who is capable of taking away other people’s loneliness.

¹⁴² Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 90.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 91.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 94.

Out of the blue Singer packs all his belongings and leaves the house as well as leaving everyone wonder where he could have gone. He decides to spend his summer holiday, two weeks off, with his dearest friend Antonapoulos. When Singer walks in Antonapoulos's room in the asylum he notices the packages he had sent him were all over the floor. Antonapoulos does not value Singer's gifts he would open them all but once he "saw that nothing good to eat had been concealed there, he dumped the gifts disdainfully on his bed and did not bother with them any more."¹⁴⁷ Antonapoulos is obsessed with food and while he is staying in the asylum he progressively keeps on gaining more and more weight.

Singer has so much to say to his friend. He is sloppily signing all his thoughts yet Antonapoulos does not move at all. Singer tells him about the visitors and that he likes when they come over. In total Singer gets to visit Antonapoulos three times. However, it is mainly him talking and Antonapoulos staring and not moving at all. He does not show any interest nor involvement in the conversation. Thus, their communication completely fails. Antonapoulos is always grumpy, sick or both whenever Singer visits him. He does not seem to appreciate that his friend had to spend twelve hours on the train just to see him. Singer tries his best to have a physical and emotional connection with him, to be someone he could relate to, but Antonapoulos never contributes to that. Singer wishes his friend would express the same fondness to him as the residents of the town do. When Singer returns back to the town people are curious where he had been but he avoids answering that question and rather pretends as if "he did not understand their questions."¹⁴⁸

Mick compares Singer to God reason being "God was silent maybe that was why she was reminded."¹⁴⁹ Maybe that is why she sees him as a superior, she sees him as God, no wonder as the time goes by she becomes more dependent on him and craves his presence.

From the impressions Doctor Copeland gathered he thinks highly of Singer. "He was a truly good man. He was a white man of intellect and true knowledge. In him there was none of the mean insolence."¹⁵⁰

When Singer is back at the restaurant and Mick comes over, it stirs up the pot. Blount and Mick are both carefully watching him from the distance.

¹⁴⁷ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 92.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 94.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 117-118.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 193.

Nobody but a freak like a deaf-mute, cut off from other people, would ask a right young girl to sit down to the table where he was drinking with another man. Blount and Mick both kept their eyes on Singer. They talked, and the mute's expression changed as he watched them. It was a funny thing. The reason – was it in them or in him? He sat very still with his hands in his pockets, and because he did not speak it made him seem superior.¹⁵¹ (sic)

Singer being around a minor suddenly changes their perspective on him. For a moment they do not trust him and make sure they watch his every move.

One day “A change came over Singer.”¹⁵² He yet again starts wandering the streets of the town as he did for months when his only friend was taken away from him. He spends so much time walking around that soon there is no place of the town he would not know about. Every time a stranger approaches him he hands them his card “so that his silence would be understood. He came to be known through all the town. [...] He was always glad to stop with anyone who wished his company.”¹⁵³ He likes keeping people company and comforting them. But he does not only do it for the people but also for his own sake. Their company makes him feel less lonely and maybe for a moment he forgets about how much he misses the Greek. Singer is a dedicated friend and even though they no longer lived together, the Greek is constantly on his mind and wishes for a reunion “In his dreams they were always together.”¹⁵⁴

When Singer and Antonapoulos still lived together they were viewed as lonely people who went everywhere together. Back then they did not really catch anyone's attention and if they did it was usually Antonapoulos whom people were curious about, never Singer. “The Singer of those years was forgotten.”¹⁵⁵ There were many rumours that circulated around the town about them.

The mute were rich and varied. [...] It was whispered in one browbeaten textile union that the mute was an organizer for the C.I.O. [...] A lonely Turk claimed passionately the mute was Turkish. He said that when he spoke his language the mute understood.¹⁵⁶ (sic)

Singer and Antonapoulos had no other friends, they were both lonely together but dependent on one another. However, throughout the ten years of living together they became friends with three other mutes. Although only one of them Singer recalls. It was the last one, his

¹⁵¹ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 132.

¹⁵² Ibid, 195.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 197.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 198.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 197.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 197-198.

name was Carl. When Antonapoulos meets him, he looks at him “with expressions of offence and great disgust.” Singer makes an attempt to keep the conversation going, which Antonapoulos does not appreciate and instead starts making “all the gestures of obscenity which he knew.”¹⁵⁷ With that he scares Carl away and they never see him again.

It has been over a year since Singer and Antonapoulos were separated. He remembers how his friend made him promise to give up smoking, beer and meat for a whole month. He compares the struggle of suddenly having to live without these goods to him losing his friend. At the beginning he is showing signs of a struggle but ends up adjusting to it and finding a new way to cope.

The want for Antonapoulos was always with him – just as it had been the first months after his friend had gone – and it was better to be with any person than to be too long alone. It was like the time years ago when he had made a pledge to Antonapoulos [...] that he would give up cigarettes, beer, and meat for a month. The first days had been very bad. [...] In those days being near any stranger was better than thinking alone about the cigarettes and beer and meat that he wanted..¹⁵⁸ (sic)

When people first start seeking Singer’s presence it confuses him. They know nothing about each other yet they show signs of trust and share so much with Singer as if they have been friends for ages. Might the fact that he is deaf and cannot reveal their thoughts to anyone makes them feel like their secrets are safe with him.

At first he had not understood the four people at all. They talked and they talked – and as the months went on they talked more and more. He became so used to their lips that he understood each word they said. And then after a while he knew what each one of the would say before he began, because the meaning was always the same..¹⁵⁹ (sic)

Undeniably Singer’s heart is aching from not being around Antonapoulos but it brings great pain to his hands as well. Singer was used to signing restlessly and enjoyed taking good care of his hands “he used oil to prevent chapping, and he kept the cuticles pushed down and his nails always filed to the shape of his finger-tips. [...] But now he only scrubbed them roughly with a brush two times a day and stuffed them back into his pockets.”¹⁶⁰ He misses signing and at times finds himself unconsciously shaping the words. “Then when he realized he was

¹⁵⁷ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 200.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 202-203.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 203.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

like a man caught talking aloud to himself. It was almost as though he had done some moral wrong. The shame and the sorrow mixed together.”¹⁶¹

Antonapoulos cannot read, which does not stop Singer from expressing his emotions and putting them on paper. He is well aware about Antonapoulos’s inability to read yet continues on writing him letters that he never actually ends up sending. It is therapeutic for him to get it all off his chest and later on destroy the letters.

As the time passes by rumours about Singer grow to even greater extent. When people approach him, it is mainly them talking and Singer listening. Therefore, they do not get to hear Singer’s thoughts, emotions, interests, hobbies, they do not really know much about him. They only see him the way they want to.

The rich thought that he was rich and the poor considered him a poor man like themselves. And as there was no way to disprove these rumours they grew marvellous and very real. Each man described the mute as he wished him to be.¹⁶² (sic)

Biff reminisces what Singer was like when he still had his friend around. He would see him passing by on the streets, Singer always walking behind Antonapoulos. Apart from that, he did not know anything more about the old Singer since he never came to the restaurant. What Singer was like in the past did not matter to him but what did “was the way Blount and Mick made of him a sort of home-made God. Owing to the fact he was a mute they were able to give in all the qualities they wanted him to have.”¹⁶³

Kelly has a great connection with Singer she feels like they have some sort of a secret “like they wanted to tell each other things that had never been said before. [...] She talked to him more than she had ever talked to a person before.”¹⁶⁴ Singer is viewed as a great teacher for her. The feelings were not only from Kelly’s side but also from Singer’s he “would admire her and count her as his very best friend.”¹⁶⁵ Kelly likes finding out new things about him and considers them to be valuable. At times she seems to be a bit obsessed with Singer.

When she was with him the main thought in her mind was to store up everything so that later she could live it over and remember.¹⁶⁶ (sic)

¹⁶¹ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 203.

¹⁶² Ibid, 221.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 229.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 239-240.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 238.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 241.

She wanted to follow him everywhere.¹⁶⁷ (sic)

She loved him better than anyone in the family [...] It was a different love. It was not like anything she had ever felt before.¹⁶⁸ (sic)

“Of all the places he had been this was the loneliest town of all. Or it would be without Singer.”¹⁶⁹ Blount states. Singer is in fact the only reason why Blount is still in the town, if it was not for him, he would have been long gone. They spend Sundays together and it is the only day of the week when Blount feels at peace. They go for a walk, play chess but mostly just occupy Singer’s room. “It seemed to him that only Singer could help him now.”¹⁷⁰

On yet another weekend Singer decides to visit his friend again. When he arrives to the asylum he first tries to look for Antonapoulos himself, but does not succeed. He prepares his note and hands it to the person behind the desk. The young boy working there takes a piece of paper and writes a sentence that completely shatters Singer’s world. Antonapoulos is dead. He died from nephritis, all alone in the asylum. Singer ends up wandering the streets alone when he suddenly notices three mutes using their hands to communicate. He walks up to them and introduces himself but he is in such a distress from the earlier event that he just stands there, not saying anything. The group of mutes finds him odd and leaves him standing there. Singer cannot believe his friend is dead now. He does not understand how it happened or what Antonapoulos’s last moments on the earth were like. When Singer returns home his eyes are swollen from crying and he has a headache. He is overwhelmed with grief, depressed and crushed by Antonapoulos’s death.

After resting he drank a glass of iced coffee and smoked a cigarette. Then when he had washed the ash tray and the glass he brought out a pistol from his pocket and put a bullet in his chest.¹⁷¹ (sic)

Singer’s suicide is hard on everyone. It is a mystery to them. They do not know why he did it and it keeps them restless. Needless to mention people who used to open up to Singer start to miss him terribly, he became such a significant part of all of their lives.

[T]he way he had felt when he first heard that he had killed himself was not sad – it was angry. He was before a wall. He remembered all the innermost thoughts he had told to Singer, and with his death it seemed to him that they were lost. And why had Singer wanted to end his life? Maybe he had gone insane. But anyway he was dead, dead, dead. He could not be seen or touched or spoken to, and the

¹⁶⁷ Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 305.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 312.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 283.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 285.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 326.

room where they had spent so many hours had been rented to a girl who worked as a typist. He could go there no longer. He was alone.¹⁷² – Jake Blount (sic)

There were these two things she could never believe. That Mister Singer had killed himself and was dead. And that she was grown and had to work at Woolworth's.¹⁷³ – Mick Kelly (sic)

And the riddle was still in him, so that he could not be tranquil. There was something not natural about it all – something like an ugly joke. When he thought of it he felt uneasy and in some unknown way afraid.¹⁷⁴ – Biff Brannon (sic)

I certainly hope that when I dead and gone as many people grieves for me as grieves for Mr Singer.
.¹⁷⁵ – Portia (sic)

And there were strangers nobody had ever seen or heard of before. God knows where they came from or why they were there. The silence in the room was deep as the night itself.¹⁷⁶ (sic)

¹⁷² Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 337.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 349.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 356.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 330.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 356.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed deaf representation in Carson McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. John Singer the main character of the novel who is always in the centre of all happenings is a kind, understanding, well tended and hardworking man. He always listens to other people's problems and troubles they might come across in life. Singer is everybody's favourite in the town. People enjoy talking to him, sharing with him their secrets and even ask for advice. They trust him because he is deaf-mute, their secrets are safe with him. He wishes if only his friend Antonapoulos, another deaf-mute, showed him the same fondness and compassion, that would make Singer significantly happy. Unfortunately, Antonapoulos does not seem to care about Singer's feelings whatsoever. He rarely makes an effort to keep the conversation going. Antonapoulos is a plus size Greek, he is reserved, does not share his emotions, does not seem too keen on having conversations with Singer. For his ongoing bad behaviour and mental state, he ends up in a mental institution. Singer spends twelve hours travelling by train just to pay him a visit but Antonapoulos does not appreciate his efforts. He is typically grumpy, feeling ill or both when Singer visits him. He does not physically nor emotionally connect with Singer even though he is one of the people he could have a genuine connection and be able to relate to him. Antonapoulos is mad, pessimistic, gets himself in trouble and dies from an illness, alone in the asylum. When Singer receives the unbelievably sad news he falls into a state of depression and hurt and makes a decision to take his own life. After his death everyone who knew him misses him terribly and they grieve together.

Antonapoulos is the embodiment of what deaf characters are often portrayed like in literature – lonely, depressed, not fitting in, grumpy, not good looking, mean, outcast. Meanwhile Singer is partially a confident character. The fact that he is deaf even contributes to his popularity. He is not weak although he is profoundly lonely and at the end depressed enough to end it all.

Even though McCullers was not hearing impaired herself and did not seem to have any connections to the Deaf community she was able to greatly capture these two deaf-mute characters. The way she approached their illustration and their story is not seen so often. She did not make them weak, nor outcasts. Everybody loves the character of Singer. The representation of sadness and depression could come from her own experience as well as the suicide part, which she attempted when she was in her 30s.

The first publication of the novel was in 1940 thus it has been 80 years since that moment and it still remains current and relatable and without any doubt worth reading.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASL	American Sign Language
dB	Decibel
SNHL	Sensorineural Hearing Loss

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Stokoe Notation.....	22
Figure 2 – SignWriting	22
Figure 3 - HamNoSys	23
Figure 4 – SignFont	24
Figure 5 – ASLphabet.....	24
Figure 6 - si5s	25
Figure 7 – ASL Gloss	26