

## I. INTRODUCTION

*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Southern American writer Carson McCullers, is a novel of different characters living in a small town in Georgia. It focuses on deaf-mute character John Singer and his relation with other four alienated characters. The four characters befriend John Singer considering him a kindred spirit and believe that only Singer can understand their plight.

Mick Kelly, an adolescent girl, who is forced by poverty and strict gender roles to give up her dream a career in music; a political radical, Jake Blount; Benedict Mady Copeland; a disillusioned African - American doctor and civil rights activists, and Biff Brannon, a lonely and sexually ambiguous restaurant owner, who has increasingly withdrawn from human contact since the death of his wife, each of these frustrated and isolated character is drawn to Singer. They all believe innocently that Singer cares about them and empathizes them. Hence, they personally make frequent visit to Singer's room and express their feeling, sentiment, plan and so on. Yet in reality, Singer listens to them only to be polite and is a bit confused by their attention and expectations. He is only concerned with his own mute friend Antonapoulos, an enigmatic man who has been placed in a mental institution. The simple-minded mute Antonapoulos is only confidante of Singer. This relation prevents him from establishing true friendship with other characters who confide their secrets. Finally Antonapoulos dies which leaves a bereaved Singer completely alone and commits suicide. Singer's mysterious cause of suicide leaves Kelly, Blount, Copeland and Brannon to make sense of his death and continue their frustrated search for love and acceptance.

In this way each of these characters is unable to communicate and connect with other in true sense. Emotional intimacy is often not reciprocated in novel and the

interpersonal communication is only futile. As a result every character suffers with a sense of spiritual isolation and loneliness. Therefore, in this research the researcher sees it as an existential problem and aims to prove that the failure of choice inflicts each character leading into spiritual isolation and loneliness. Mick Kelly dreams of becoming a music conductor or composer, but her poverty forces her to take a job at Woolworth's department store; Blount unsuccessfully attempts to organize workers at the local mill; and Copeland strives for racial equality and justice but is alienated from his people by his intellectualism and Marxism and moreover John Singer devotes himself to his partner but can't get same feeling of friendship in return. These characters are all victims of their own choice.

Furthermore, sense of alienation from others occurs because "even though we live among others, we do not have access to one another's inner thoughts and feelings. Our individual freedom also creates differences between what we and what other find meaningful in the world" (Patrick 50).

The existential theme in writings is common in the 1930s and 40s literature owing to two World Wars. The writers felt uncomfortable due to war and their own psychological problems became more important than political fears. America entered 'the age of anxiety' and existentialism became the dominant theme. Loneliness and search for the self became the major issues among Southern writers. Same also became the theme of Carson McCullers' writing, even though, the critics claim that she belongs to the Southern Gothic tradition. Most notably, her major works are written only after she left south. In her stories and novels, the characters bear unnaturalness, where their pain is confided within them like a secret. The horrors of life that she has 'described with careful coolness, and without emotion' (High 178). McCullers has examined the psychology of lonely, isolated people.

Carson McCullers born as Lula Carson Smith in Columbus, Georgia was daughter of a well-to-do watchmaker and jeweler of French Huguenot extraction. From the age of five she took piano lesson. Later on she studied creative writing at Columbus and New York universities and published in 1936 her first autobiographical piece, '*Wunderkind*', in *Story* magazine. It depicted a musical prodigy's failure and adolescent insecurity.

She married Reeves McCullers in 1937 and moved to North Carolina, where she lived for two years. During this time she wrote '*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*' a novel in the Southern Gothic tradition. She was only at twenty-three. It is the novel, which established McCullers as a promising writer. It was also filmed in 1968 and was interpreted as an anti-fascist book.

McCullers' marriage turned out to be unlucky because both of them had homosexual relationship and separated in 1940. Then she went to New York to live with George Davis, the editor of Harper's Bazaar. She also became member of the art commune February House in Brooklyn but mostly she lived in Paris after World War II. She remarried to Reeves but they could not continue healthy relation for she herself attempted to commit suicide under depression whereas Reeves killed himself in Paris hotel in 1963 by taking over dose of sleeping pills. *The Square Root of Wonderful* (1958) the bittersweet play of hers was an attempt to examine these traumatic experiences.

McCullers published only eight books. Among them *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) and *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1942) are her best and both filmed as well. Among her other works, *The Member of Wedding* (1946), a play staged in 1950 and won the New York Drama Critics Award and two Donaldson Awards. It was also filmed in 1952. *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1951) is a collection of her best stories.

This collection is also widely appreciated for its writing styles and theme. Her other work *Sweet as a Pickle, Clean as a Pig* (1964) was a collection of children's verse. Not so much as *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, but also her two more novels published after her death *The Mortgaged Heart* (1971) and *Clock Without Hands* (1961) are also popular and well read. *Clock Without Hands* remained her last work of her writing career.

McCullers suffered throughout her life from several illness. She had contracted rheumatics fever at the age of fifteen and a series of strokes left her a virtual invalid in her early 30s and died in New York on September 29.

*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is regarded as a notable first novel that established her literary reputation and viewed as one of her best known and most highly regarded works. Critics debate whether the novel should be read as a realist work or allegorical one. It is often discussed as a political parable of fascism. As Nancy B. Rich in her essay " *The 'Ironic Parable of Fascism' in The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* investigates the role of politics in the novel and perceives it as a political parable as she writes:

Although Carson McCullers referred to her novel, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, as "an ironic parable of fascisms", critics have not taken her statement seriously, either because it seems too general a reference to the social and economic conditions of the novel or because it appears too restrictive in terms of the theme of isolation.

Considerable evidence, however, suggests the probability that politics was a motivating factor in the genesis of the novel. (Rich 108)

Strong support and attempt to bring Marxism in practice by Jake Blount, a mill worker, by lecturing the relation between master and labour; Dr. Copeland to uplift

the standard and social status of the blacks and Mick Kelly's hatred to Fascism show McCullers' interest and her study of politics. Similarly, the religious imagery in the novel has also been a recurrent topic of critical interest, and several critics perceive the character of John Singer to be Christ like figure, as Jan Whitt puts:

'I've lost the presence of God!' Cried the author of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* late in her career. Remembered afterwards by the group of artists who had been with Carson McCullers at the Yaddo Artist Colony, the statement provides a tragic thesis for both McCullers' life and her work. Haunted by a Christ who remained entombed, a twenty-one-year old McCullers created an allegory in which numerous characters seek to work out their own salvation by relaying their individual fears to John Singer. Singer, a deaf mute, becomes a paralyzed Christ figure, so restricted by the expectations of others that he is fictionalized by them. (Whitt 27)

Here John Singer, a mute is presented as 'paralyzed Christ figure' for he became the god like personality, not in reality but in illusion, for other characters that they visit his room in the novel time and again to share their problems and thoughts. Singer, on the other hand, pretends he understands what other says. Not only in the case of Singer has been the religion a focus point but also throughout novel the conflict between religion and modern philosophy such as Marxism has been skillfully presented.

Furthermore, Mick Kelly, a 13-year-old girl occupies the equal space in the novel, which has made it easier for the commentators to provide feminist interpretation to the novel and investigated the autobiographical aspects of the story. In her essay Gayatri Spivak offers a feminist interpretation to the novel:

We are trouble in sex, race, and class. Any intellectual, any reader, any teacher must try to understand the world, even if she must remind herself constantly of the perils of taking understanding as a privilege or a goal. If she is a feminist, she must try to change the world, even if she is cautious enough at every step to reiterate at least two things: the sense of a "world" is the ever-shifting and many-planed converging point of interminable determinations and even a "change" conceived of as a restructuring . . . (Spivak 139)

Here, Spivak has pointed at the technique how McCullers' female character Kelly has been presented. Kelly's dream, her androgynous nature, her vision of the world and the reality she faced finally. Kelly behaves as male and she dreams of becoming a famous musician and singer like one she likes but her stereotyped society, her family background has restricted her within the role as female i.e. look after her brothers, help her father in his work and so on.

The critics also have focused their studies on the way how the mute as well as other characters communicate with mute, Singer. Frances Freeman Paden contends that by examining the autistic hand gestures of five main characters, "we will see how their hands reveal the alienation that they feel in their unsuccessful quests for love and acceptance" (Paden 456).

This novel is also viewed as the novel of people or different characters. The novel is set in Southern city of America, where both black and white people lived. Blacks were not well treated then but she has tried to show harmony between races. Not only she favors the harmony but also asserts very strongly the need of mutual cooperation. For that Richard Wright appreciating the novel writes:

The most impressive aspect of [her work] is the astonishing humanity that enables a white writer for the first time in Southern fiction, to handle Negro characters with as much ease and justice as those of her own race. This cannot be accounted for stylistically or politically; it seems to stem from an attitude toward life, which enables Miss McCullers to rise above the pressures of her environment and embrace in one sweep of apprehension and tenderness. (Quotata in the book *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*)

In fact, McCullers shows the brutality, injustice, exploitation as well as discrimination against blacks by whites in social affairs and solving the legal procedures. In the novel blacks are deprived from getting justice and acceptance from the society, hence, Dr. Copeland is fighting for the same and has to pass through fire and ice. But on the other hand she tries to show sympathy and cooperation between races. She stresses on the amity between black and white people.

By this way, this novel has been successful enough to address the various issues that are related to various aspects of lives. She has opened the passage for the critics to research almost from all aspects and has well received many critical reviews but none of the critics has provided with the existential overview. Hence, in this research the researcher is striving to give the existential analysis to the novel.

Three more chapters will follow this introductory chapter: they will be methodology, textual analysis and conclusion. Chapter II will deal the tool that the researcher will apply to analyze this novel. The chapter explains about existentialism, the brief history of existentialism as well as some influencing existentialist thinkers, who have provided their view, philosophy in the course of development of existentialism. Moreover, atheistic existentialist thinkers will be more focused to

enhance the theme of alienation as the hypothesis for the research has been the sense of isolation that the characters face during course of novel owing to their own failure of choice.

The third chapter will be textual analysis of the text, where the research will try to show the existential problem that each character in the novel faces. This textual analysis will be thoroughly based on the reading of text and the research will also base on other sources like library, Internet surfing. Finally, the final chapter will be conclusion. The researcher will summarize the hypothesis as well as the main issue of the research here in the chapter.



## II. EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism, a philosophical movement, came into existence as a reaction against more traditional philosophies, such as rationalism and empiricism, which sought to discover an ultimate order in metaphysical principles or in the structure of the observed world. Existentialism is a precise modern philosophy to assimilate the problematic modern condition after the two great World Wars in a true sense for it clearly raised the issues of absurdity and alienation in human life. Moreover, the World War II brought a radical change in the perspective to view the human being as the absolute value. The firm belief in wise and omnipotent God ruling history for the good of all seemed to have lost any defensible basis, such as unity, rationality, morality, value and even in Christianity. The then world was viewed from the perspectives of irrational, absurd, incoherent, disintegrated, chaotic, and meaninglessness not governed by the laws of providence but by pure chance and contingency. In such scenario, existentialism claimed that individual human beings are isolated existent thrown into an alien universe that possesses no inherent truth, value or meaning, however, have full responsibility for creating the meanings of their own lives. It means existence precedes the essence – a central proposition of existentialism; that is, that a human being's existence precedes and is more fundamental than any meaning, which may be ascribed to human life; humans define their own reality. One is not bound to the generalities and a priori definitions of what "being human" connotes. This is an inversion of a more traditional view, which was widely accepted from the ancient Greeks to Hegel, that the central project of philosophy was to answer the question "What is a human being?" (i.e., "What is the human essence") and to derive from that answer one's conclusions about how human beings should behave.

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In Repetition, Kierkegaard's literary character Young Man laments:

How did I get into the world? Why was I not asked about it, why was I not informed of the rules and regulations but just thrust into the ranks as if I had been bought by a peddling shanghaier of human beings?

How did I get involved in this big enterprise called actuality? Why should I be involved? Isn't it a matter of choice? And if I am compelled to be involved, where is the manager—I have something to say about this. Is there no manager? To whom shall I make my complaint? (254)

Heidegger coined the term "thrownness" to describe the idea that human beings are "thrown" into existence without having chosen it. Existentialists consider being thrown into existence as prior to, and the horizon or context of, any other thoughts or ideas that humans have or definitions of themselves that they create. Sartre, in "Essays in Existentialism", further highlights this consciousness of being thrown into existence in the following fashion. "If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be" (36).

Finding a way to counter this nothingness, by embracing existence, is the fundamental theme of existentialism, and the explanation for the philosophy's name. Emphasizing this action, freedom, and decision as fundamental, existentialists oppose themselves to rationalism and positivism. That is, they argue against definitions of human beings as primarily rational. Rather, existentialists look at where people find meaning. Existentialism asserts that people actually make decisions based on what has meaning to them rather than what is rational. The rejection of reason as the source of meaning is a common theme of existentialist thought, as is the focus on the feelings of anxiety and dread that we feel in the face of our own radical freedom and our

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awareness of death. It is a “very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood” (Ellman and Feidelson 803). In addition to that, existentialism advocates the modern culture reflecting a pervasive spiritual crisis as Richard Tarnas writes:

The anguish and alienation of twentieth-century life were brought to full articulation as the existentialist addressed the most fundamental, naked concerns of human existence- suffering and death, loneliness and dread, guilt, conflict, spiritual emptiness and ontological insecurity, the void of absolute values or universal contexts, the sense of cosmic absurdity, the frailty of human reason, the tragic impasse of the human condition. (389)

Therefore, existentialists focused on the aftermath problems of human beings brought forth by world wars. They popularized the themes of dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, and nothingness. They, not only, highlighted the individual freedom of choice but also the responsibility for the same.

### **Existentialism: A Historical Survey**

Existential philosophy flourished and invited the hot discussion on it in Western philosophy after the world wars. Jean Paul Sartre coined the term ‘existentialism’ ‘although the expression ‘existence philosophy’ had been used earlier by Karl Jaspers, who belonged to the same tradition’ (Mautner 141). The existentialist themes such as dread, boredom, alienation, absurd, freedom, commitment, nothingness, etc. got popularity through scholarly and fictional works, in the mid-20th century, in the works of the French writer-philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus, whose versions of it were set out in a popular form in Sartre's 1946 *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and

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Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*. However, this philosophical movement had its origin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thought of Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky and the German philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger, the existential themes have been hinted at throughout history. Examples include Socrates and his life, Gautama Buddha's teachings, the Bible in the *Book of Ecclesiastes* and *the Book of Job*, Saint Augustine in his *Confessions*, and Descartes' *Meditations*. Individualist politics, such as those advanced by John Locke, advocated individual autonomy and self-determination rather than the state ruling over the individual. This kind of political philosophy, although not existential in nature, provided a welcoming climate for existentialism.

In 1670, Blaise Pascal's unfinished notes were published under the title of *Pensées* (i.e., "Thoughts"). In the work, he described many fundamental themes of existentialism. Pascal argued that without a God, life would be meaningless and miserable. People would only be able to create obstacles and overcome them in an attempt to escape boredom. This was good enough reason not to choose to become an atheist, according to Pascal.

Gabriel Marcel pursued theological versions of existentialism, most notably Christian existentialism. Other theological existentialists include Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Miguel de Unamuno, Thomas Hora and Martin Buber. Moreover, one-time Marxist Nikolai Berdyaev developed a philosophy of Christian existentialism in his native Russia, and later in France, in the decades preceding World War II.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer are also important influences on the development of existentialism (although not precursors), because the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche were written in response or opposition to Hegel and Schopenhauer, respectively.

The first philosophers considered fundamental to the existentialist movement are Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, though neither used the term "existentialism". Like Pascal, they were interested in people's concealment of the meaninglessness of life and the use of diversion to escape from boredom. However, what Pascal did not write about was that people could create and change their fundamental values and beliefs. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche wrote that human nature and human identity vary depending on what values and beliefs humans hold. Objective truths (for example mathematical truths) are important, but detached or observational modes of thought can never truly comprehend human experience. Great individuals invent their own values and create the very terms under which they excel. Kierkegaard's *Knight of Faith* and Nietzsche's *Übermensch* are examples of those who define the nature of their own existence. In contrast, Pascal did not reason that human nature and identity are constituted by the free decisions and choices of people.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche's works were published too early to be considered a part of the 20th century existentialist movement. They were philosophers whose works and influences are not limited to existentialism. They have been appropriated and seen as precursors to many other intellectual movements, including postmodernism, nihilism, and various strands of psychology. Thus, it is unknown whether they would have supported the existentialism of the 20th century or accepted tenets of Jean-Paul Sartre's version of it. Nevertheless, their works are precursors to many later developments in existentialist thought.

One of the first German existentialists was Karl Jaspers. Jaspers recognized the importance of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and attempted to build an "Existenz" philosophy around the two. Heidegger, who was influenced by Jaspers and the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, wrote his most influential work *Being and Time*

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that postulates Dasein (pronounced dah-zIne), literally being there—a being that is constituted by its temporality, illuminates and interprets the meaning of being in time. Dasein is sometimes considered the human subject, but Heidegger denies the Cartesian dualism of subject-object/mind-body.

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Although existentialists view Heidegger to be an important philosopher in the movement, he vehemently denied being an existentialist in the Sartrean sense, and responded to Sartre in *A Letter about Humanism*, denying his philosophy was existentialism.

Jean-Paul Sartre is perhaps the most well-known existentialist and is one of the few to have accepted being called an "existentialist". Sartre developed his version of existentialist philosophy under the influence of Husserl and Heidegger. *Being and Nothingness* is perhaps his most important work about existentialism. Sartre was also talented in his ability to espouse his ideas in different media, including philosophical essays, lectures, novels, plays, and the theater. *No Exit* and *Nausea* are two of his celebrated works. In the 1960s, he attempted to reconcile existentialism and Marxism in his work *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

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Albert Camus was a friend of Sartre, until their falling-out, and wrote several works with existential themes including *The Rebel*, *The Stranger*, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *Summer in Algiers*. He, like many others, rejected the existentialist label, and considered his works to be absurd. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth to demonstrate the futility of existence. In the myth, Sisyphus is condemned to roll a rock up a hill for eternity, but when he reaches the summit, the rock will roll back to the bottom again. Camus believes that this existence is pointless, but he feels Sisyphus ultimately finds meaning and purpose in his task,

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simply by continually applying himself to it, which he views as the noble quality of man.

Critic Martin Esslin in his book *Theatre of the Absurd* pointed out how many contemporary playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov wove the existential belief that man is an absurd creature lost in a universe empty of real meaning into their plays. Esslin noted that many of these playwrights demonstrated the philosophies better than Sartre and Camus did in their own plays. Though most of the playwrights subsequently labelled "Absurdist" (based on this book) denied affiliations with existentialism and were often staunchly anti-philosophical (for example Ionesco often claimed he identified more with Pataphysics or with Surrealism than with existentialism) the playwrights of the *Theatre of the Absurd* are often linked to existentialism based on Esslin's observation. Simone de Beauvoir, who was a longtime companion to Sartre, wrote about feminist and existential ethics in her works, including *The Second Sex* and *Ethics of Ambiguity*. Franz Fanon a French-born critic of colonialism has been considered an important existentialist.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, an often overlooked existentialist, was a companion of Sartre. His understanding of Husserl's phenomenology was far greater than that of his fellow existentialists. His work, *Humanism and Terror*, greatly influenced Sartre.

Michel Foucault would also be considered an existentialist through his use of history to reveal the constant alterations of created meaning, thus proving its failure to produce a cohesive form of reality.

Many writers who are not usually considered philosophers have also had a major influence on existentialism. Among them, Czech author Franz Kafka and Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky are most prominent. Franz Kafka created often

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surreal and alienated characters who struggle with hopelessness and absurdity, notably in his most famous novella, *The Metamorphosis*, or in his master novel, *The Trial*. The Russian Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* details the story of a man who is unable to fit into society and unhappy with the identities he creates for himself. Many of Dostoevsky's novels, such as *Crime and Punishment*, have covered issues pertinent to existential philosophy while simultaneously refuting the validity of the claims of existentialism (notably the "superman" theory advocated by Nietzsche.) Throughout *Crime and Punishment*, we see the protagonist, Raskolnikov, and his character develop away from existential ideas and beliefs in favor of more traditionally Christian ones, showing that Dostoevsky was still very much a Christian thinker.

In the 20th century, existentialism experienced resurgence in popular art forms. In fiction, Hermann Hesse's 1928 novel *Steppenwolf*, based on an idea in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (1843), sold well in the West. Jack Kerouac and the Beat poets adopted existentialist themes. In addition, "arthouse" films began quoting and alluding to existentialist thought and thinkers.

Existentialist novelists were generally seen as a mid-1950s phenomenon that continued until the mid- to late 1970s. Most of the major writers were either French or from French African colonies. Small circles of other Europeans were seen as literary existential precursors by the existentialists themselves; however, literary history increasingly has questioned the accuracy of this idealism for earlier models.

Although there are certain common tendencies amongst existentialist thinkers, there are major differences and disagreements among them, and not all of them even accept the validity of the term "existentialism." In German, the phrase Existenz philosophie (philosophy of existence) is also used.

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There is a split among existentialists between those who, like Kierkegaard, conceive the fundamental existentialist question as man's relationship to God; and those who accept Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God." Nonetheless, theological existentialism as advocated by philosophers and theologians like Paul Tillich, Gabriel Marcel, and Martin Buber shares many of the same tenets and themes that are central to atheistic existentialism. Belief in God is a personal choice made based on a passion, of faith, an observation, or experience. Just as atheistic existentialists can freely choose not to believe, theistic existentialists can freely choose to believe in God and could, despite one's doubt, have faith that God exists and that God is good.

As mentioned above, opinions of philosophers associated with existentialism vary, sometimes greatly, over what "existentialism" is, and even if there is such a thing as "existentialism" although no one could deny that existentialism 'represented a certain attitude particularly relevant to modern mass society. The existentialists have a share concern for the individual and for personal responsibility' (Mautner 141).

### **Theistic Existentialists**

By opposing the rationalist philosophies, especially, Hegelianism, Soren Kierkegaard (1813 -1855), a Danish philosopher, focused on the importance of passion, freedom of choice and self-definition. Soren Kierkegaard, concentrating his philosophy on the existence of human being as free individual, made a standpoint for himself as the precursor for the 20<sup>th</sup> century existential philosophical movement. He criticized the Romantics and Hegel's 'historicism' for obscuring 'the individual's responsibility for his own life' (377). Kierkegaard presented himself very aggressively against his society. Then the society was influenced by the rationalist thought and the Christian's doctrine. He perpetually forayed the society by his

expression, 'The whole of Europe is on the road to bankruptcy' (378). Although he was Christian having faith in it he attacked Danish Lutheran Church blaming its scarcity for passion and commitment. He opined regarding the Christianity that 'was both so overwhelming and so irrational that it had to be an either/or' (378). Therefore, existence does not simply mean being in the world and abiding with prescribed norms and values that is having faith over Christianity. It is not a being Christian in a true sense for him.

Kierkegaard was the student of theology but he could not alienate himself from philosophical queries. He called Socrates an existential thinker for 'eliciting the fundamental truths about life' (Gaarder 379) by the effective use of irony. Truth is subjective not objective to him. In this regard, he does not find any relevant reason for personal life. Truth is not the objective thing that can be found after searching. Jostein Gaarder writes in *Sophie's World* about Kierkegaard opinion on truth:

"According to Keirkegaard, rather than searching for the Truth with a capital T, it is more important to find the kind of truths that are meaningful to the individual's life. It is important to find 'the truth for me.' He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the 'system'. Kierkegaard thought Hegel had forgotten that he was a man [. . .]" (379)

Kierkegaard's main concern or focal point of study was man and his existence. Man must strive himself to attain the truth of life because he himself is responsible for what he does. One must give the meaning to his life in his own way by discovering the truth that is applicable in his circumstances. Here, Mautner further writes in his *A Dictionary of Philosophy*:

He gave a rather spectacular interpretation to the otherwise banal concept of 'existence' and insisted on the importance of passion, free choice and self-definition in opposition to the rationalist philosophies then popular in Copenhagen (where he live), in particular hegelianism. Existence, according to Kierkegaard, is not just 'being there' but living passionately, choosing one's own existence and committing oneself to a certain way of life. (224)

Kierkegaard followed the same philosophy in his practical life. He did not follow the Christianity blindly or not with any such reason which he could give. For truth is always subjective to him. Therefore, he believed that fundamental questions of God's existence or individual relationship these all can be approached only through faith. Gaarder quotes Kierkegaard in his novel:

If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith. (381)

It is not possible for us to give any certain reason whether there is God or not and similarly to lead the religious life so "to be or become a Christian, according to Kierkegaard, it is necessary to passionately commit oneself, to make a 'leap of faith' in the face of and 'objective uncertainty'" (Mautner 244).

One of the leading figures in the existential movement is Karl Jaspers, a German philosopher. Like Kierkegaard, he too thought that philosophy and science cannot provide any certainty. He saw the task of philosophy to consist not primarily in the discovery of theoretical truths, but in assisting the individual in the process of self-discovery and insight ("Mautner" 218). His primary concern is to be genuinely

oneself and making sense of one's life. For him, achieving something is making life meaningful by following an authentic way, which can be reached by one's own free decision. Nevertheless, one cannot negate the society or locality where he lives because communication between self-being with another self-being is equally essential as he declares in "*The Will to Communicate*":

The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into gloomy isolation-[sic] only in the community with others can I be revealed in the act of mutual discovery. My own freedom can only exist if the other is also free. Isolated or self-isolating being remains mere potentiality or disappears into nothingness. (867)

Jaspers talks about the only one world of the self that is visible so he does not agree that self exists as a transcendent reality different from the world of our experience, which constitutes a separate world. He tried to distance himself from the traditional theology; however, his outlook has many religious resonances.

Among religious existentialist thinkers, Jewish philosopher and religious thinker Martin Buber is also one. He strongly advocated for conciliation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine in his philosophy. According to Buber, the relation between self and other (I-Thou) is important but that should be concrete and immediate. He says this concrete reality has radical difference from the relation between self and object (I-It). He stresses that the person who keeps self-object kind of relations will lose authenticity, sense of community as well as human existence. He opines that much traditional, natural and revealed theology is committing mistake by conceiving the relation between self and God as "I-It" i.e. self and object, therefore,

we should address God as 'Thou' instead of 'It'. That is a genuine religion, which regards God as essentially a Thou.

Another religious existentialist philosopher who became influenced by Kierkegaard and Buber was a French philosopher and playwright Gabriel Marcel. He showed the importance of individual role in the society. The individual role should not be confined within the man himself but that must be inter- personal and of community. This inter relationship is only the means to understand the various modes of human experience. That's why his preference was not for 'I am' but 'we are'. Marcel has developed his religious thoughts in the influence of Bergson and other idealists. Similarly, his existential components are influenced by Kierkegaard and Buber. Hence, he opposed the empiricist and analytical approach in his philosophy.

Karl Barth, a Swiss protestant theologian, is one of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century. He is also well known as the founder of so-called dialectical theology. The protestant theology showed its liberal tendency by reconciling faith to human reason. Therefore, he opposed that liberal tendency in protestant theology. For the same reason he rejected and opposed the protestant theology and other, all forms of medieval or modern natural religion, and the attempts to strengthen theology by metaphysics. He thinks faith should not compromise with the world in cultural and political matters.

### **Atheistic Existentialists**

Atheistic existentialists followed the proclamation of Friedrich Nietzsche that God is dead. Nietzsche, the most influential German philosopher, is well known for his radical criticism on the Western tradition, with its beliefs in truth, morality and God. He disputed the existence of universal moral values, denounced the religious underpinnings of morality, and reflected on the widely varying views on morality held

in different cultures (Patrick 103). His doctrine of eternal recurrence defends positive attitudes to life against Christian worldview that is narrow to judge the life only on the basis of its end – either in heaven or in hell (Mautner 292). He prefers present to past because only in present one has many opportunities to make active choices that influence the character of the whole. For him the true pursuit for happiness comes from self-understanding, self-dominance, and self-control.

Attacking against Christian morality Nietzsche blames that Christianity corrodes the human beings virtues by emphasizing on humility, pity, and meekness. The Christianity is only the shelter for the weak and sick morality. Nietzsche clarifies it in his essay, “*The Death of God and Antichrist*”:

The Christian conception of God- God of the sick, God as a spider, God as a spirit- is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine as ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal yes! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature and against will to life! (912)

Denying the existence of god, Nietzsche gives the concept of the superman. The Superman is what we can become by overcoming ourselves, conquering the inner animal nature and compelling our most powerful drives to obey our own command. He clarifies that we can create the Superman within ourselves and assert our will to power. Christian morality is unhealthy slave morality. Slave morality, on the contrary, develops among those who are subjugated by the masters (Mautner 293). Hence, the slave only doubts his existence and perceives himself as an instrument – an object as Nietzsche writes in “*Subjective Wills and Objective Truths*”:

The objective man in an instrument, a precious, easily injured, easily clouded instrument for taking measurements. As a mirror he is a work of art, to be handed carefully and honored. But he is not an aim, not a way out nor a way up, not a complementary human being through whom the rest of existence is justified, not a conclusion. . . or content, a “self-less” man. (817)

In this way, human beings must strive to seek to enhance their power than to be the mere object on others as well as the religion. Nietzsche encourages the modern man to get rid of the slave morality to achieve the meaning of his own existence on by own effort. This helps to shape the doctrine of twentieth century existentialism.

Martin Heidegger is one of the most influencing existentialist thinkers who denied to be the existentialist. However, Sartre classified Heidegger as the atheistic existentialist in his essay *Existentialism and Human Emotion*. In this alien universe we, according to Heidegger, are responsible for our own choices that we create for our existence because there are many problems in the world for us to be faced.

Heidegger’s theory of “Dasein” is developed in a particular way different from other ordinary existence of things in the sense that they are determinate and they have their distinctive properties. As quotes in *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, Heidegger says showing difference between Dasein and other beings:

The sort of being that I manifest is not that of a thing with properties. It is a range of possible ways to be. I define the individual I become by projecting myself into these possibilities which I choose, or which I allow to be chosen for me. Who I become is a matter of how I act in the contexts in which I find myself. My existence is always an issue for me, and I determine by my actions what it will be. (183 -4)

In the world we belong to, we find ourselves 'thrown' in it, therefore, there is nothing. Hence, here Heidegger presents the existentialist view as he rejects any ideas that believe in any predetermining forces.

The sense of dread, of being 'thrown', of boredom, of guilt comes in the inner state of human being as he is thrown into being. It is obvious that he needs to face various problems. However, he must be aware of his mortality. If he becomes aware of his mortality, he will be able to live in a genuinely self-determining and self-revising. The redemption is possible only through freedom. *A Short History of Modern Philosophy* puts forward Heidegger's ideas in the following way:

The final assumption lies in that freedom, which time alone provides the freedom to make my life what I choose in to be and thereby to change from thrown-ness to resolution. In that change lies the realization, and acceptance of morality. (260)

Summing up his idea, one is bounded by the historic temporal context when he says he is extended in time. But as other existentialist he also talks about freedom and responsibility, individualism, choices and so on but he makes us aware that we should not let our lives be determined by the social convention and conformism. That existence is superficial and inauthentic.

The most prominent philosopher who introduced the term existentialism and its role is Jean-Paul-Sartre. He is a French philosopher, play-wright and social critic. He is a person to define the term existentialism as a doctrine, which makes human life possible, and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity (10). Not only he defined the existentialism but also divide existentialists as theist and atheist. He himself categorized himself as the



atheistic existentialist. For him man's existence is more precious than thinking of God's. He writes in his essay *Existentialism* that:

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, is more coherent. It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality. (15)

Sartre says from humanity itself existentialism starts. We can say that the focus point of existentialism is humanism. But existence alone does not mean only being alive because other creatures are also living. Here his priority goes to consciousness that separates human beings with other creatures. According to Sartre, man is only conscious of its own existence. Sartre emphasizes the consciousness of a man by referring humankind "for itself" and the material thing "in itself".

Existence precedes essence. According to Sartre, man must create himself because he does not consist any such innate 'nature' that defines him and that nature he creates is his essence. It is totally vain to search essence of life in outer world. However, man experiences angst when he comes to discover that there is no meaning of his life where he can cling. Man's feeling of alienation in the world creates a sense of despair, boredom, nausea, and absurdity (Gaarder 457). Man has not created himself so he is 'condemned to be free.' But this freedom does not mean that he can do whatever he wants. He must be responsible for everything he does. Which he makes clear in his existential play 'The Flies' when his character "Orestes" revolts against God, he says:

Foreign to myself – I know it. Outside nature, against nature, without excuse, beyond remedy, except what remedy I find within myself. But

I shall not return under your law; I am doomed to have no other law but mine. Nor shall I come back to nature, the nature, you found good; in it are a thousand beaten paths all leading to you – but I must blaze my trail. For I, Zeus, am a man, and every man must find out his own way. (Patrick 40)

In this way, Sartre confines man to be responsible for whatever he does. Man should create his own future and must be ready to find out the solution for his every action. As most of the existentialist, Sartre also stresses upon the subjectivity of the individual. If the consciousness of myself also embodies the consciousness of other being in front of me, than my existence is in the world of “inter-subjectivity.” Realizing the fact that there is not prior meaning of anything in the world, man must make his own universe with a meaning. This can be done only through commitment. One must choose and make a commitment of the talent and capabilities for a authentic living. Justifying this point, Sartre writes:

The existentialist says that the coward makes himself cowardly, the hero makes himself heroic. There’s always a possibility for the coward not to be cowardly any more and for the hero to stop being heroic. What counts is total involvement; some one particular action or set of circumstances is not total involvement. (35)

The individual consciousness is responsible for all the choices it makes, regardless of the consequences. Condemned to be free because man’s actions and choices are his and his alone, he is condemned to be responsible for his free choices. Sartre urges to get rid of bad faith. He believed that due to bad faith people lie to themselves and, underneath these lies, people negate their own being through patterns. Sartre believed that people who cannot embrace their freedom seek to be “looked at”, that is, to be

made an object of another's subjectivity. This creates a clash of freedoms between people.

Albert Camus one of the most effective existentialists, was a journalist, novelist, and philosopher. His major concept of existentialism is absurdity of life. In this whole universe, the human being is alone for him and this concentration on the alienation is his central theme. He, like Sartre, believes that this universe does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning, hence, in this vacuum universe human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. It is absurd to seek meaning into this universe. Summarizing the existential view of Camus, in his *Glossary of English Literature*, M. H. Abrams writes:

[. . .] to view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning, and to represent human life, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the nothingness where it must end, as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (1)

We, human beings, are strangers who are out of place and alienated. Camus following the concept of nothingness from Heidegger believes that it is useless if we try to find the meaning of our being. Therefore, he states in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, that a universe is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile [. . .]. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity (68).

For Camus, we are not at home in the universe but are extraneous to it (Patrick 42). Following the existential philosophy of Sartre, Camus believes that man is free to make his choices and from those choice he creates himself. And this choice is the reason to make him feel a sense of absurdity as repetition comes by the choices.

However, there exists man then. Sisyphus is given the choices. He does not surrender to God and makes a choice, though he chooses the tough work, yet he exists through this choice, faces punishment than to surrender before God. According to Camus, suicide is not the ultimate solution of life. He believes that the absurd man naturally fills up with anxiety and hopelessness when he comes to encounter with the futility of living although he does not commit suicide. He believes that one has to take the challenge, but not commit suicide. Camus believes that choice leads us to absurdity but joy comes out of that absurdity:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain; one always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. The universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night – filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a master's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

To sum up, Camus views us as strangers in the alien universe where, for us, death is inevitable. Death always comes and takes us much too soon, making all of us “transients” on the move through an all –too-temporary life (Patrick 43) even though he does not support suicide as the mode of existence because it is a cowardly act. We, like Sisyphus, should become bold, face the challenge and assert existence like Sisyphus. Camus never believes in surrender. Sisyphus does not surrender. He undergoes a challenging task and upholds heroism. Finally, Camus advocates freedom, individuality, choices and consequently the human existence.

### **Freedom of Choice and Individual's Role**

Existence involves freedom of thought and action. It means our ability to be self-conscious and our ability to launch ourselves into action. This is the special feature of existentialism - that distinguishes it from other philosophies. It views the human being as an entirely decisive power who deserves freedom to interpret himself and his actions. Our freedom of action is the ability to choose an action and to act on our choice. We are the director rather than the puppet of the action we perform. Existentialists do not believe in the casual determinism of human actions. Sartre's character Orestes in his *The Flies* says:

I shall bear it on my shoulders as a carrier as a ferry carries the traveler to the farther bank. And when I have brought it to the farther bank I shall take stock of it. The heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be; for that burden is my freedom. . . . (Patrick 37)

In this way, Sartre gives freedom of choice to each individual for his action but he never excludes him from taking responsibility of what he does. We are also responsible for who we actually become because we are free and create our own individual essence through our actions. In existential philosophy, freedom and responsibility have symbiotic relationship. Being free means no other cause determines our action. Unless we freely choose to allow other, no one can step in and take control of our conscious action. We have authorship of own actions. Our actions create our essence or individual character. Our habits, talents, character flaws, along with our emotions, attitudes, desires, and value judgments are shaped by our actions. Hence, we are each responsible for who are as individuals.

Every individual must be true to oneself as a free individual. It is known as authenticity. It acknowledges one's own freedom and decisiveness in undertaking the

particular action that go into the creation of one's own essence. However, the evidence of freedom arises from the self-understanding that accompanies a certain mood – anxiety – into which an individual falls. Like other moods, anxiety has no intentional object where there is fear of something. As Heidegger puts, it as the state of mind that arises when contemplating “sheer nothingness”, when the standard way of looking at the world loses its obviousness. It is the sense of responsibility that comes in man for the actions he has committed. Every individual is free to choose his own fate and he makes his own decision at that point he makes various choices. If he becomes failure in his choices, then he suffers from the sense of alienation. However, he himself is responsible for the outcome of the choice that he makes for himself.

### **Existential Alienation**

Alienation, according to Oxford Dictionary, is a situation when one becomes alienated from somebody or something. The concept of this term is inherited by existentialist from the nineteenth century philosophers Hegel and Marx. They used it as personal sense of feeling alien and lonely. Existentialism always focuses on individual freedom and responsibility for himself and others. It means man makes his choice for future freely. Even though, it is not certain that every time the choice man makes come to be correct one. He makes choice for himself but that choice may fail owing to various factors that bring the alienation. The alienation is felt from nature, from others and from the continuation of life. Even after surpassing through the alienation one is again responsible for the action he does. When a man fails to understand the world in which he is thrown. He does not have control over irrational, invasive and irresistible forces of nature and moves through unexpected happenings therefore he feels alienated from the nature.

At a mean time, even though we live with other people we feel one alienated from the others. It is because we do not have access to one another's inner thoughts and feelings. Each individual freedom also makes a difference. It is not necessary that one must find the world same as another does. The world may be meaningful to one whereas meaningless to the other. This difference invites misunderstanding, conflict and finally alienation to the person. Plus, alienation occurs from continuing one's life. Everyone in this world is stranger and shaped by death and the world is indifferent to what we do. Whether we born or we die it has nothing to do. When one comes to realize this and find everything around him absurd, meaningless and useless, he surpasses through this absurdity and feels frustration. The frustration leads him to alienation from the self. This alienation may result the individual sufferings even it may lead one to the disastrous consequences too.

In Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, the characters are chosen from the various walks of lives and they make choices for their existence. They dream of their future and career. Some of them think for the society but they are not successful in their choices for their future; hence, they suffer from the sense of alienation. The major character John Singer, a mute, who thoroughly depends on his another mute friend Antonapoulos; establishing him a source of his living, but after discovering his death he commits suicide. This is also his individual choice which he makes independently. Similarly, other characters Jake Blount, Biff Brannon, Mick Kelly, and Dr. Copeland are also frustrated after being failure in their choices for their lives.

### III. SENSE OF ALIENATION IN *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

#### Major Characters and their Relation

Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), was published during the World War II, and the period of economic crisis. It is the novel of different people and contemporary situation of their lives in Southern part of America. The characters come to know each other and unknowingly become familiar with each other. All the characters of the novel are different from each other in their way of living.

John Singer, a mute, is the major character of the novel who works as a silverware engraver at a jewelry store in the city and lives in a rented house. Before shifting to this apartment of Kellys', he had lived in another part of the city with friend, Antonapoulos who too was mute as he is. He lived with him for ten years since he had come to the city. Singer took care of his friend and wished to keep him happy every time. They both were only people in the whole city with whom they could share their experiences, feeling and be happy with. As a matter of fact Antonapoulos was changed due to mental problem he developed after being sick for a week and started reacting very badly even at public places. The situation got worse so his cousin whom Antonapoulos worked for decided to send him for treatment in next city. Singer did not like this although he couldn't help it.

Since, Antonapoulos left he was totally alone in the city, especially the room where he lived with him so he shifted the room. He regularly visits at Biff Brannon's New York Café. This is the place where he introduces and befriends forlorn characters café owner and Jake Blount. Brannon likes mute's modesty, whereas, Blount also finds Singer a suitable person who can understand him. Blount seems highly impressed by Singer's personality as he says Brannon, 'It's funny, but I been



seeing that fellow in my sleep for the past three or four nights. He won't leave alone. If you ever noticed, he never seems to say anything' (19). Singer takes Jake to his room when he was discovered all injured and bleeding since then Jake becomes regular visitor at Singer's room. Beside Jake, Mick Kelly, Biff Brannon and Dr. Mady Copeland too become the visitors there at Singer. Dr. Copeland, a black physician, is highly impressed by Singer's habit because "the white man (Singer) had lighted his cigarette and smiled and seemed to want to be with him. Since then he had thought this over many times" (85). He is not insolent as other whites in the city. Dr. Copeland wishes to get help from Singer to find out proper place for his deaf and mute young patient. For that Portia, Copeland's daughter who works at Kellys' arranged the meeting. Since then they become friends.

Mick Kelly, a young girl of twelve, notices Singer very often and keeps on watching him coming and going to work. She thinks he can understand music better than any other person. She, too, visits Singer's room and tells him her dreams, likes and dislikes and thinks he can better understand her. She unconsciously loves him. As McCullers writes, "She said his name over and over. She loved him better than anyone in the family, better even than George or her Dad. It was a different love. It was not like anything she had ever felt in her life before" (313). Singer also likes Mick coming to his room. He buys radio even if he is deaf. It is because Mick likes to listen to music programs and most of the time music becomes her subject to talk to him.

Despite the fact that Singer has been regarded as the trustworthy, caring and understanding friend for them, he feels alone and pines for his friend Antonapoulos. He often sends him gifts and letters even though he never gets any reply. He also makes frequent visits to Antonapoulos without giving any hint about it to his new

friends. Throughout the novel the character of Singer remains mysterious. His origin, religion, politics no one can come to know only they keep on speculating about it.

Biff Brannon is cool and kind person. He has the hobby of reading daily newspaper standing behind the register counter of his café and collect them. He runs the café with his wife. He does not have warm relation with his wife even they stay together and run the same business. Clarifying their relation McCullers writes, “ For the fifteen years of their married life they had called each other just plain Biff and Alice. Then in one of their quarrels they had begun calling each other Mister and Misses, and since then they had never made it up enough to change it” (14). They are quite different. Biff likes “freaks” which is the thing Alice didn’t like about him. Further talking about this nature of Biff, McCullers describes:

He had a special feeling for sick people and cripples. Whenever somebody with a harelip or T.B. came into the place he would set him up to beer. Or if the customer were a hunchback or a bad cripple, then it would be whiskey on the house. There was one fellow who had his peter and his left leg blown off in a boiler explosion, and whenever he came to town there was a free pint waiting for him. (22)

Biff is childless and he dreams of having children like Mick Kelly and her brother. He likes Mick to come to her café to buy chocolate and whenever she come he observes her very keenly standing behind his register counter. He provides Jake Blount credit despite his wife prevents. He also becomes close to Singer who comes every night for his meals and he too visits in his room. Alice dies after the operation of tumor in the hospital and he becomes alone. He continues to run the café.

Dr. Mady Copeland is a black physician serving the blacks in the city for the very long time. His mother had been born a slave and father was a preacher. They had

taught him with great difficulty. He went to North hiding eighty dollars in his shoe. There he worked at different places and completed his study. After that he returned back with true purpose in South being a doctor. He is very studious person and has read widely many books by famous writer and has been highly influenced by them. Hence, beside his profession he takes upon a job himself to teach his people and making them aware about the prejudice done against them by whites. He lives alone in the house as his wife left him along with four children. He did not like Daisy, his wife, to take the children to the church but she never stopped. When his sons Hamilton, Karl Marx, William and daughter Portia were “a little older he would impress upon them that there was no God, but that their lives were holy and for each one of them there was this real true purpose” (80). He had “terrible Negro feeling” and wished his children not to be like other Negroes. But his real true purpose was never understood as a result he is doomed to live isolated life.

Jake Blount came to the town from Carolina. He is short, with heavy shoulders like beams and had a small ragged mustache. His hands were huge, stained and calloused. He drinks very heavily and talks continuously. He takes on a job at a Sunny Dixie Show as a mechanic. He sounds to be highly educated. Like Dr. Copeland, Blount is also Marxist and tries to define the relation between the boss and the workers. But the problem is there that no one is ready to understand him which makes him more violent hence finds Singer the only man to understand him, when he says singer:

‘You see, it’s like I’m two people. One of me is an educated man. I been in some of the biggest libraries in the country. I read. I read all the time. I read the books that tell the pure honest truth. Over there in my suitcase I have books by Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen and such

writers as them. I read them over and over, and the more I study the madder I get. I know every word printed on every page. To begin with I like words. Dialectic materialism – Jesuitical prevarication’ . . . – ‘teleological propensity’. (68)

For him also in the city Singer becomes the great support and he keeps on visiting his room and drinks beer heavily there. As Dr. Copeland he does not believe in God and claims that he got “the Gospel” (64) in him. Through Singer he also comes to know about Copeland and the problems faced by him. Blount has also won the confidence of Biff as he regularly visits there to drink.

Mick Kelly, a twelve- year- old girl, is androgynous. She is a school girl quite different from the girls of her age. She is dreamy, bold, strict and clever too. She is one of the members of Kellys’ family where Singer boards. She goes to Biff’s café to buy chocolate and cigarette for herself and wish to stay longer there in pretext of listening to music. She likes music very much. She listens to Mrs. Brown’s radio sitting on the steps every Sunday. She dreams of her initials printed every where. As McCullers writes about her dream:

M.K. – That was what she would have written on everything when she was seventeen years old and very famous. She would ride back home in a red –and –white Packard automobile with her initials on the doors. She would have M.K. written in red on her handkerchiefs and underclothes. Maybe she would be a great inventor. She would invent little tiny radios the size of green pea that people could carry around and stick in their ears. Also flying machines. . . . . a large tunnel through world to China . . . (35)

Music is always there in her mind beside that she thinks of John Singer every time. “Except for her Dad, Mister Singer was the nicest man she knew” (91), even though she does not know anything in detail about him. She likes to follow him after her school and she seems to be thinking every time about him. She likes to talk to Portia, their helper, and amuses when she hears that her father is Doctor and has a house in the same city. As she enters Singer’s room to talk to him, she is acquainted to Jake Blount too.

Each of the characters in the novel is very much optimistic in their faith on another person as the true friend, their dreams of being savior for the whole race or class, their high ambition to be the popular person. They seem total content on what they have chosen for them. All of them move towards fulfilling their choice. They truly devote and faithfully present themselves in their purpose. As a rule, the world is changeable and it is full of irrational, invasive and irresistible forces on which no one can get control. Every individual has got his own freedom of choice and the different perception to view the world. Not only that but the sources or means to fulfill the wishes are also limited. And moreover, the time and situation is always not favorable for all. The success of dreams, choices may undoubtedly provide the extreme joy and pleasure to people but what if it is shattered. Can it not lead one to the deep distress? Are all people are equally enable to bear such pain when their dreams remain unfulfilled? Here, in this novel, none of characters seem to be aware of the change that will come with the course of time. They seem unconscious of future while making a plan for the future. The short-sighted dreams, choices of the characters are capricious to the limitations of the world. The characters choices may fail and due to that failure they may feel the sense of alienation. Can the characters, then, stand with their choice? Will they be able to assimilate the result of their choices?

In this way McCullers' characters are totally from different fields and are different in their nature even though they come to be associated with each other somehow. Even though they are different with each other, they have their individual mission, dreams, feelings and choice they try to understand each other. Moreover, they remain in illusion that they understand each other.

### **Choices of the Characters and Their Failures**

Every one is free to choose their future as a man makes himself what he wants to be. He/ she is free to select the friend, the way to live his/ her life but one must be responsible for the outcome of his choice. The choice might be wrong or right but also every one has got the choice for their life. As in this novel, all the characters have got their own choice even their choices fail. John Singer, a mute, has only one choice in his life. He loves his mute friend Antonapoulos very much and is truly devoted to him. Might be Antonapoulos being mute as Singer himself is the reason why he cares him so much. Unfortunately, Antonapoulos was to be taken to the state insane asylum two hundred miles away from the city owing to his mental problem. But Singer wishes to live together with him. It does not matter to him how much trouble he has to take for sake of his friend. Here, he is ready to take any responsibility that comes forth due to Antonapoulos. Singer had fulfilled the responsibility before when his friend became ill. He takes leave from his work and looks him day and night. As McCullers writes:

. . . Singer rigidly enforced the doctor's orders. All day he sat by his friend's bed and did what he could to make the time pass quickly, but Antonapoulos looked at him angrily from the corners of his eyes and would not be amused. . . . Singer was patient and did all that he could.

He drew little pictures, and once he made a sketch of his friend to amuse him. . . . (6-7)

But Singer does not stop to send gifts and passes his time thinking about Antonopoulos. He gets company of Copeland, Blount, Biff and Mick although Antonopoulos remains the only true friend to him. He likes these other people coming to his room but he, too, expresses his loneliness when he writes a letter to Antonopoulos, "The way I need you is a loneliness I cannot bear (217). It shows that Singer finds him lonely even at the presence of other characters and despite the fact that Antonopoulos is never responding him in the way he does.

Singer visits twice the state asylum to meet his friend but he never tells about it to his new friends. In his visit, he talks too much about of his new friends and many other things but Antonopoulos seems indifferent. In his third visits he discovers that Antonopoulos is died and he returns back very frustrated and with heavy heart of loneliness. His only meaning to live his life for his friends is ended.

Singer knows well that other four people believe him truly and regard him an understanding and caring friend but for him they are just the talking people who do not have rest in their mind. This can be more clarified when McCullers describes Singer's dream as follows:

Out of the blackness of sleep a dream formed. There were dull yellow lanterns lighting up a dark flight of stone steps. Antonopoulos kneeled at the top of these steps. He was naked and he fumbled with something that he held above his head and gazed at it as though in prayer. He himself knelt halfway down the steps. He was naked and cold and he could not take his eyes from Antonopoulos and the thing he held above him. Behind him on the ground he felt the one with the mustache and

the girl and the black man and the last one. They knelt naked and he felt their eyes on him. (217)

In this way others are after him to share their feelings, plans, experience as well as to be his true friend but he can not forget the person who no more cares him. He confines himself in loneliness in the memories of Antonapoulos every time ignoring the present.

Similarly, McCullers presents her next character Biff Brannon as a very thoughtful person and focuses mainly his thoughts rather than his action. Biff becomes lonely because whoever he thinks very close and his own, he finds either parting or impossible to keep relation to. He married Alice but their time passed on only in discord. They were childless. It's why Biff always thinks of having children. Whenever he sits his thoughts turned to a picture that had long been stored inside him. The thoughts of:

The cold green ocean and a hot gold strip of sand. The little children playing on the edge of the silky foam. The sturdy brown baby girl, the thin little naked boys, the half-grown children running and calling out to each other with sweet, shrill voices. Children were here whom he knew, Mick and his niece, Baby, and there were also strange young faces no one had ever seen before. (122)

In this with the thoughts of children he always remains tense and somehow finds himself inclined to Mick. He likes her coming in her store, and observes her top to bottom. Even he takes a walk in the evening with a wish to see Mick sitting on the steps of her home. But the fact is Mick does not like Biff but she does not know the reason for her dislike.



McCullers presents her idea of nothingness. People might have many ideas, knowledge and could be able to think deeply but it is vain because everything is meaningless. Every time we are trying to find meaning of living but it is only a riddle for there is never an answer for our existence. Because nothing is pre-determined. She shows the same when she talks about the isolation of her character Biff in the following:

At last he put away his mandolin and rocked slowly in the darkness.  
 Death. Sometimes he could almost feel it in the room with him. He  
 rocked to and fro in the chair. What did he understand? Nothing.  
 Where was he headed? Nowhere. What did he want? To know. What?  
 A meaning. Why? A riddle. (237)

Here, Biff has been hollering in his thoughts in which he is making his choices but their too he does not find any relevance. Biff feels distant from nature, because he fails to understand the world into which he is thrown. He is alienated from nature because it contains absurd, insidious, and irresistible forces over which he has no control.

Another character Jake Blount is very aggressive. He is not satisfied with the system of the nation where there is no freedom and equality in a true sense. He wants to teach the people and wants to make them aware of the politics, equality, and freedom. Wherever he goes, he finds the people corrupted, killing and lying each other for own personal happiness. For him a man claims he does *know* but Blount refers such people don't know. He thinks it his responsibility to aware people about the facts but every time and every where he fails. He says to Singer, 'I been all over this place. I walk around. I talk. I try to explain to them. But what good does it do? Lord God!' (152) this makes him change job and place time and again. He does not find rational so he

started the organization selecting 'twenty lintheads' and with the motto, "Action", signified the razing of capitalism. Later on they swapped their motto from "Action" to "Freedom". He failed in here when his co-workers or friends "had stolen the fifty-seven dollars and thirty cents from the treasury to buy uniform caps and free Saturday suppers" (156). He takes job at Sunny Dixie as the mechanic and there, too, he tries his best to convince the workers about his ideology, but no one pays attention. Instead they back bite him and dislike him.

In the city Jake has only one satisfaction to stay that is the company of Singer. He finds Singer very considerate and understanding. He likes talking to Singer and tells him his ideology. McCullers writes, "Although he knew many people in the town by name or face, the mute was his only friend" (155). But the mysterious suicide of his idol person keeps him in great dilemma.

Alienation comes in Blount from others, because even though he lives among others, he does not have access to one another's inner thoughts and feelings. Blount is always misunderstood by others, despite his success at his job and his involvement in friendships.

Dr. Benedict Mady Copeland wants to uplift the standard of the blacks in the south. Outside or inside, his mission becomes to teach his people. His wife never listened to him. Later on he thought of four children and decided to make their life meaningful. He wanted them to fulfill his true purpose hence he had dreams for them. As McCullers writes:

And this feeling of real purpose for them was so strong that he knew exactly how each thing should be with them. Hamilton would be a great scientist and Karl Marx teacher of the Negro race and William a

lawyer to fight against injustice and Portia a doctor for women and children. (80)

Instead of following the true purpose of their father the children got scared of his difficult philosophical teachings and tried to avoid him. They did not like to go in front of him. They rather showed their interest in following their mother and her tradition. They believed in Christ and visited church with their mother. Finally, they, along with their mother, left Copeland alone and went to live with their maternal grandfather. That is why in one visit he says Willie (William) his son:

‘I mean that to you and Hamilton and Karl Marx I gave all that was in me. And I put all of my trust and hope in you. And all I get is blank misunderstanding and idleness and indifference. Of all I have put in nothing has remained. All has been taken away from me. All that I have tried to do-’ (89)

Not only the physical alienation he suffers when his dreams shatter but also mental alienation he surpasses through. Even after this great stroke in his mind, the strong true purpose remains always in him. He endlessly serves his people day and night. He goes from one house to another holding the unending work. He speaks the mission and the truth. But “the hopeless suffering of his people made in him a madness, a wild and evil feeling of destruction” (143). He has a plan in his mind to march up to Washington with thousand of his men as the movement for the rights of his people seized by the whites. But this civil right activist himself becomes the victim of the cruelty of whites. His son Willie losses his both legs when he was captive. In this case, Copeland visits the judge to talk about this brutality but himself gets fists and bad behaves from the guards there. Even he is jailed for that.

Finally, Mick Kelly, a young girl develops a deep interest in music. Every time music is there in her mind she can't even imagine herself from separating from music. She says to herself aloud, 'Next to a real piano I sure would rather have some place to myself than anything I know' (51). All the time no matter what she is doing there is music. Either she hums herself as she walks or she listens quietly to the songs inside her. She overcomes every kind of fear to listen music. At midnight she walks along the city to the place where she could sit and listen to the music played inside the house. She likes Mozart a lot. She takes piano lesson at school and also saves up fifty cents a week she gets for lunch to give her lessons and remains whole day hungry.

Besides singing and listening to music she composes herself music at night keeps them in her *private box*. She composes very wonderful piece called 'This Things I Want, I Know Not What' (240) and she dreams of her future as a successful singer, musician and composer. McCullers writes about her thoughts as follows:

Later on – when she was twenty – she would be a great world-famous composer. She would have a whole symphony orchestra and conduct all of her music herself. She would stand up on the platform in front of the big crowds of people. To conduct the orchestra she would wear either a real man's evening suit or else a red dress spangled with rhinestones. The curtains of the stage would be red velvet and M.K. would be printed on them in gold. . . . (240-241)

But her dreams remain the dream only because the depleting economic condition forces her to give up her music class. It not only deprives her from taking music class but also compels to take on the job at ten cent store. Even though she is not forced by the family members to do so, she feels the responsibility towards her family in such the time of crisis. Obviously, what each of us does depend on our own choice. Mick

does the same by giving up her first choice to be singer. But she hopes to save enough money to buy piano.

Along with music, John Singer is always in her mind. She herself is confused why she is following her everywhere. But she likes to be with John Singer and follow him from his jewelry store to room. She believes that Singer loves music and knows about music. Even he can't reply her every question she thinks he can better understand everything that she says to him. John Singer can't hear although he buys a radio in installment. It means a lot for her and develops even more love and affection for him because she is free to go and listen to the program she likes any time even in the absence of Singer. At night, Mick thinks over and over about Singer. She realizes that what she is doing is wrong even she can't help it. The disturbed mind of Mick regarding her affection towards Singer is well mentioned by McCullers as follows:

She thought of how she would begin to tell him. Mister Singer – I know this girl not any older than I am – Mister Singer, I don't know whether you understand a thing like this or not – Mister Singer. Mister Singer. She said his name over and over. She loved him better than anyone in the family, better even than George or her Dad. It was not like anything she had ever felt in her life before. (313)

But her unexpressed love is also broken when Singer committed suicide without any apparent reason known for them. Like other characters she also remains in unsolved mystery of Singer's death. In this way her choices fail one after another and she feels alienated.

#### **Alienation Resulting from Failure of Choice**

Alienation is personal sense of feeling separated and alone. One may suffer from the sense of alienation because of the nature he belongs to or this sense may also

come from others or from own life after living it continuously. Because of the feeling of alienation one feels anxiety. As he sense that nothing other than his own will makes his choose how to act. Hence, there is no any pre determined form that one follows when he is in existential anguish. One may react or take the decision for own life in his own way which he finds better. In this novel, McCullers characters are inflicted by the sense of alienation resulting from their failure of choice.

John Singer returns back to broken heart full of memories of his dead friend Antonapoulos who had been the only purpose for him to live his life. Geographically, they were living in separated places but also writing letters, sending gifts and visiting his occasionally have been his regular routine and the way to live the life on. But all hope and the desire to life has gone from Singer ended his life by putting a bullet in his chest. This is also the freely chosen action of John Singer as he freely chose to be together with his friend since they had met. Brannon, Copeland, Jake and Kelly are left to make sense of his death and continue their frustrated search for love and acceptance.

On the other hand, Dr. Copeland in the effort to grant his Negro people their rights, freedom, equality and justice contribute his life but by the end of the novel seems hurt, alone and broken. McCullers leaves Dr. Copeland with full of rage and hatred for his past and physically meek. McCullers writes:

During the past month the black, terrible feelings had arisen again to wrestle with his spirit. There was the hatred that for the days had truly let him down into the regions of death. [ . . . ] And the different anger that came in him when he looked on the stumps of Willie's legs. The warring love and hatred – love for his people and hatred for the

oppressors of his people – that left him exhausted and sick in spirit.

(333)

McCullers has presented the most convincing and richest of all her character but with Dr. Copeland there is a kind and palpable and inescapable social integrity. He becomes alienated from his people by his intellectualism and Marxism. The pain and loneliness of characters are personal, subjective but with him, there is added a specific and very formidable social deprivation. He is forced to leave the house where alone he spent so many years because of illness and infirmity. He pines for John Singer, the only white who understood him and baffles why he committed suicide.

Jake Blount remains disturbed by the death of John Singer. Singer had been the only reason for him in city. At Sunny Dixie he involves in quarrel in which two people are killed in fight. He runs from there unconsciously to his friend's room and he sobs aloud when he remembers his friend's death. He wishes to meet Dr. Copeland with him quarrel before. He recalls black man saying him 'Do not attempt to stand alone' (342) and goes to meet him but finds no one there. Finally, he decides to leave the city for ever leaving back all his efforts and dreams on which he worked listlessly. He dreams sitting in Biff's café before leaving the city.

He had been walking among the great crowd of people – like at the snow. But there was also something Eastern about the people around him. There was a terrible bright sun and the people were half-naked. They were silent and slow and their faces had a look in them of starvation. There was no sound, only the sun, and the silent crowd of people. He walked among them and he carried a huge covered basket. He was taking the basket somewhere but he could not find the place to leave it. . . . (348)

His dreams justify his incomplete mission and frustrated ambition which brought spiritual alienation in him; that comes in him from others. Metaphorically, the basket is his mission and he visited to leave the basket many places but couldn't find the suitable one. Now, he sets out for the journey that has no destination.

Mick can't believe two things: that Singer had killed himself and was dead and that she was grown and had to work at Woolworth's. She has been changed she is no more boyish now in her appearance. She visits Biff's café where she takes "a chocolate sundae and a nickel glass of draw beer" (351). Now music remains no more in her life as her dream. Frustration and alienation has brought the change in her thought. McCullers examines the changes in her attitudes towards music as follows:

But now no music was in her mind. That was a funny thing. It was like she was shut out from the inside room. Sometimes a quick little tune would come and go – but she never went into the inside room with music like she used to do. It was like she was too tensed. (353)

Mick seems like the mad all the time but there is nothing to be mad at because nothing has cheated her but the feeling of being cheated comes in her. McCullers shows here Mick alienated from her own life for she confines her freedom to play, sing by taking a job herself.

Lastly, Biff Brannon counts his past sitting alone in his café. He concludes that his life has been loveless. Alice left him first after that Singer and now Blount. He ponders on love. He thinks of the person whom he can love now but finds no one. His loves were over 'leaving him either better or worse' (357). But Mick lived strangely there in his heart. But she no more remained the child he imagined of. She has grown older. Like other characters McCullers has left Biff also in the state of confusion and



tension in his thoughts. His mind and soul are not in rest. His tension is shown in the novel by McCullers in the following ways:

For in him he felt a warning, a shaft of terror. Between the two worlds he was suspended. He saw that he was looking at his own face in the counter glass before him. Sweat glistened on his temples and his face was contorted. One eye was opened wider than the other. The left eye delved narrowly into the past while the right gazed wide and affrighted into a future of blackness, error, and ruin. And he was suspended between radiance and darkness. Between bitter irony and faith. (359)

In this way, the spiritual isolation and loneliness come in his life and he is doomed to live the forlorn life full of terror and pain.

#### ***The Heart is a Lonely Hunter as a Depiction of Alienation***

*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers in a representation of alienation. The novel ends with the depiction of alienation that the characters face as the result of their own free decision they made. Existential alienation occurs in the characters owing to the nature they belong to, the environment they are thrown into and the life they are leading themselves too. Here, the characters are not alienated and suffering from only one kind of reason but the various. Political view, social norms and values, individual choice, social and individual deprivation are the caustic for the alienation of the characters. In this way, the novel has lots of characteristics of existential world where the characters are suffering from anxiety and isolation, morally troubled experience, individuality, industrial and capitalistic form of society.

Carson McCullers' characters choice shatter when they can not cope with what they dream, they plan and what they think for their life. Each of the character's choice can not be fulfilled as the things won't go in the way they think to be. The

political doctrine or system, the social norms and values, the faith upon others, the path chosen for oneself by the characters' could not bring success to them.

There is humanistic strain in her writing besides the anxiety, pain, suffering, victimization and alienation. She focuses on freedom and love and always keeps humanism in her mind. In the decade of 40s also she has managed to judge the people from the eye of humanity, when there is extreme exploitation and discrimination against the blacks. She has depicted the vivid picture of discrimination, inhumane activities, injustice and cruelty of whites in America. However, the alienation has been her focal point. Alienation occurs in the characters because their choices fail. Alienation is there in the novel both in the context as well as in the manner of presentation.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers emphasizes individual freedom and choices in life. It depicts the sense of alienation in each character that is due to failure of choice, which inflicts them leading to spiritual isolation and loneliness. All the characters delve in their choice for their future. They dream of making their life meaningful, praiseworthy and some of them even work very hard to obtain their ambition fulfilled but find everything vain. Each of them comes to realize the meaninglessness of the world where they are thrown into. The lack of their understanding of others, others inability to understand their purpose, and ironically the economic crisis are the caustic to bring alienation among the characters.

McCullers characters know happiness, but never for very long. The solitude is inevitable in such a situation, and it is always painful. Thus life is a matter of living in pain. John Singer is the lover and Antonapoulos the beloved. Antonapoulos accepts Singer because it is convenient and comfortable for him to do so, but then he loses his intelligence and his need for what Singer can provide. Singer is left, bereft, and loveless. Antonapoulos' very inchoateness and the lack of awareness were an advantage, since Singer believes his love understood and returned. Singer's self-deception in turn makes possible the self-deception of all the others – Biff, Mick, Dr. Copeland, Jake. So long Singer will sit and listen to them speak their troubles, they can for a time at least function. Singer understands them only imperfectly as he depends upon lip-reading. The fact that he cannot speak, cannot carry on a dialogue makes him satisfactory, for in that way the others are enabled to believe that he understands, sympathizes and accepts all that they say and feel. Therefore, the mysterious suicide of Singer then leaves them all in quite dilemma and isolation. This incident also leads them towards frustration of their own choice.

In this way, Carson McCullers capacity for recognizing and portraying and sympathetically identifying with pain and loneliness, arise out of a social situation in which the patterns and forms and expectations of conduct and attitude are very firmly presented. Hence, the inability or failure to function within those patterns seems crucial. If everything is permitted and expected, then there is no need to feel pain or frustration because one's own behavior and inclinations are different from those of other. But if there is a strong set of expectations and one is unable to fulfill them and yet be oneself, then one search out for kindred sufferers in order to feel less lonely through assurance of their pain. That is the way the world goes, and no genuine human sharing is possible.

McCullers has demonstrated that despite varied surfaces and individually realized characterizations, they are all alike, and what lay at the core of each was suffering and pain deriving from loneliness which they feel after the failure of their choice.

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