McCullers, Carson (1917 - 1967)

US writer. Her remarkable debut novel, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), showed her to be a sensitive exponent of the 'southern gothic' style, epitomized by Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner. Other poetic stories include *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941) and *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1951).

Summary Article: McCullers, Carson
From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1917–67, American novelist, b. Columbus, Ga. as Lula Carson Smith, studied at Columbia. The central theme of her novels is the spiritual isolation that underlies the human condition. Her characters are usually outcasts and misfits whose longings for love are never fulfilled. In her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), a deaf-mute is the focus of a circle of sad and tormented people. *The Member of the Wedding* (1946; dramatization, 1950), her best-known work, is the tender story of a lonely adolescent girl. Her other works include the novels *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941) and *Clock without Hands* (1961); a volume of stories, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (1951; title story dramatized by Edward Albee in 1963); and a play, *The Square Root of Wonderful* (1958). As a result of misdiagnosed rheumatic fever in her adolescence, McCullers suffered a series of strokes during her twenties that left her partially paralyzed; during her last years she was confined to a wheelchair. A posthumous collection of her writings, *The Mortgaged Heart*, was published in 1972.

See her Complete Novels (2001);
biographies by O. W. Evans (1965), V. Spencer-Carr (1975), and J. Savigneau (2001);
study by M. McDowell (1980).

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