FACTA UNIVERSITATIS
Series: **Linguistics and Literature** Vol. 23, Nº 1, 2025, pp. 27 - 42
https://doi.org/10.22190/FULL240825003S

Original Scientific Paper

UNCANNY POSTCARDS FROM THE AMERICAN SOUTH: THE GOTHIC AND THE GROTESQUE IN CARSON MCCULLERS'S *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

UDC 821.111(73).09-31 McCullers C.

Dušan Stamenković[1], Miloš Tasić[2]

[1]School of Culture and Education, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden
[2]Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Niš, Serbia

ORCID iDs: Dušan Stamenković https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0121-4591
Miloš Tasić https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4355-2326

Abstract. *This paper analyses the elements of the gothic and the grotesque in Carson McCullers's novel "The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter", within its distinct American South setting. By first describing the most prominent features of the South, on the one hand, and defining gothic fiction and the grotesque (both in their general and more specific senses), on the other, the authors examine numerous characteristics of the above concepts that permeate McCullers's novel. These include, among others, the gloomy weather and the grim and decrepit atmosphere of the mill town in which the story takes place. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the novel is brimful of isolated and lonely grotesque characters that indulge in dreams and nightmares, with sickness, particularly mental illness, and death looming large over everyone. The authors also observe how these characters often find themselves in grotesque situations that end almost exclusively in tragedy and despair. All of these findings situate the analyzed novel firmly within the American Southern Gothic literary tradition.*

Key words: *American South, Southern gothic, grotesque, Carson McCullers, The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

1. THE SOUTH

When we think of the American South, we often picture a warm, remote place, untouched by the chaos of modern life' – a place for reflection. One might imagine escaping the daily buzz by the Mississippi, daydreaming about steamboats. However, the reality is different. The South is more than a sunny postcard; it reveals a complex panorama to those who truly see it. To understand the South, we must view it clearly and remain open-minded, not settling for a superficial, idyllic image. The term "South" here refers to the region south of the Mason-Dixon

Submitted August 25, 2024; Accepted February 12, 2025
Corresponding author: Dušan Stamenković
Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden
E-mail: dusan.stamenkovic@sh.se

line, particularly the Deep South states: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This area has a distinct social and psychological atmosphere, historically marked by provincialism, economic hardship, and educational deficiencies due to its distance from cultural centers (see Mašović 2002, 299–320). Although these features are less pronounced today, they still shape the identity of the American South. This will provide the setting for our paper. Within it, we are going to explore the features of the gothic and the grotesque, frequently related to literature describing the South. In order to exemplify this, we will be focusing on Carson McCuller's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

2. GOTHIC FICTION

The term "Gothic" or "gothic" initially referred to the Goths or their language (Kaliff 2001). Today, it is commonly used in architecture, painting, music, and literature. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Gothic as a style characterized by a gloomy setting, grotesque, mysterious, or violent events, and an atmosphere of degeneration and decay. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes it as European Romantic, pseudo-medieval fiction with an atmosphere of mystery and terror, often set in castles or monasteries with dark passages, hidden panels, and trapdoors. Gothic fiction merges horror and romance, frequently seen as a lurid offshoot of realistic, morally respectable fiction (see Bacon 2018). It began with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and peaked with Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). However, Gothic elements can be traced back to earlier works such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–1748), Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), and even Shakespeare's plays and Jacobean tragedy. Prominent features of Gothic fiction include psychological and physical terror, mystery, the supernatural, haunted houses, Gothic architecture, darkness, decay, doubles, madness, secrets, and hereditary curses. Stock characters include tyrants, villains, maniacs, Byronic heroes, troubled maidens, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, femmes fatales, madmen, magicians, ghosts, skeletons, and the Devil himself or herself. Key themes involve anti-Catholicism, romanticizing the medieval past, melodrama, and parody (Sullivan 1986/1989). Critics have long noted the tension between the terms "Gothic" and "novel." Markman Ellis notes that while "Gothic" suggests historical inquiry, the "novel" implies a literary form, creating a paradoxical "Old New" genre. As Ian Watt jokes, "It is hardly too much to say that etymologically the term 'Gothic Novel' is an oxymoron for 'Old New'" (Ellis 2000, 17). This paradox allows the Gothic novel to encode debates about history. Botting (1995) notes that due to the diffusion of Gothic elements, Gothic should be viewed as a mode that goes beyond the notions of genre and categories.

In his introduction to *American Gothic Fiction* (2004), Alan Lloyd-Smith states that the hallmarks of the Gothic include pushing toward extremes and excess, implying an investigation of limits. By exploring extremes, whether of cruelty and fear or passion and sexual degradation, Gothic fiction tends to reinforce, if only in a novel's final pages, culturally prescribed doctrines of morality and decorum. The Gothic deals in misdemeanor and negativity, possibly reacting against the optimistic rationalism of its era, which allowed for a rethinking of prohibitions and sanctions previously seen as divinely ordained. Free-thinking characters in Gothic fiction often disbelieve in established social norms, proclaiming their own superiority and inherent freedom as rational beings, positioning themselves above conventions and

religious faith (Lloyd-Smith 2004). The Gothic explores taboos such as religious profanities, demonism, occultism, necromancy, and incest, reflecting the dark side of Enlightenment free-thinking or the persistence of an increasingly excluded occultist tradition in Western culture, insisting on the existence of magic, religious, and demonic forces within a secular society (Senior 1959). While much apparent supernaturalism in the Gothic is explained away, as in Radcliffe's romances, some remains unexplained. Gothic fiction's interest in extreme states and actions correlates with social anxieties and fears, including the suppression of past traumas and guilt, class and gender anxieties, fear of revolution, scientific developments, and the legacy of colonialism, involving fears of colonial otherness (see Hogle 2002). Gothic architectural settings often feature medievalist elements – ancient stone buildings with Gothic arches, passages, and crypts – creating a gloomy, oppressive atmosphere. These settings become metaphorical, allowing even simple houses or rooms to evoke a Gothic mood through darkness and emptiness (Lloyd-Smith 2004). Gothic is seen as a diffused or hybrid literary mode (Kocić Stanković and Mitić 2022, 19) and its elements spill over into other literary forms (see Hogle 2002).

2.1. American Gothic

American Gothic explores themes of trauma and guilt related to race, slavery, miscegenation, and fears of Native Americans and wilderness, along with anxieties about various immigrant groups and homosexuality (Lloyd-Smith 2004). David Punter suggests that the middle class displaces present social violence to the past, which then haunts them (Punter 1996, 28). American Gothic, despite being criticized as infantile and corrupting, gained popularity due to private circulating libraries, cheap printing, and a burgeoning magazine industry in the early 19th century (Ringe 1982, 14–16). It attracted a new, less sophisticated audience, while intriguing the educated with its exploration of societal taboos, aided by sensationalist crime reports in newspapers. Political fears about radical ideas and the stability of democracy also fueled this genre, while later interest in psychology and deviance added depth. American experiences such as religious fervor, frontier isolation, and violence, along with the shadows of slavery and racial attitudes, are inherently Gothic. Romanticism replaced the Scottish "Common Sense" philosophy by around 1830 and emphasized subjectivity, imagination, and the sublime, which aligned with Gothic themes. The genre's psychoanalytical potential metaphorically represents trauma and anxiety, giving voice to the culturally silenced and repressed historical events of the USA (Lloyd-Smith 2004). Leslie Fiedler, in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, describes American fiction as inherently Gothic – non-realistic, negative, sadistic, and melodramatic, embodying darkness and the grotesque in a seemingly optimistic land (Fiedler 1966, 29).

2.2. Southern Gothic

Within American Gothic we find the sub-genre of Southern Gothic, which is a macabre writing style native to the South of the USA. Since the mid-20th century, Southern writers have used Gothic conventions to interpret and illuminate the history and culture of the region. This sub-genre brings the atmosphere and sensibilities of the Gothic, which originated in late 18th-century England, to the Southern US states. Similar to its parent genre, Southern Gothic relies on supernatural, ironic, or unusual events to guide the plot. However, these elements are used not for suspense but to explore social issues and reveal the cultural character of the South. The genre often addresses the troubles of those

oppressed or marginalized by traditional Southern culture, such as African Americans, Native Americans, women, the LGBTQ+ population, and people with disabilities. Southern Gothic authors typically avoid perpetuating pre-war stereotypes like the contented slave or the chivalrous gentleman. Instead, they reinterpret classic Gothic archetypes – transforming, for example, the damsel in distress into a spiteful spinster or the heroic knight into a lawyer with concealed motives. Characters in Southern Gothic fiction often have "broken" bodies, minds, or souls, symbolizing societal problems and questionable moral patterns. The "innocent" character, who may be a redeemer, is common. Southern Gothic novels frequently feature characters set apart by disability or difference, who often become heroes by bringing new perspectives that help others emerge from the "dark". Many plots include incidents of characters being jailed or locked up, with underlying racial, social, and class tensions that usually turn violent.

Southern Gothic literature builds on the Gothic tradition, typically including supernatural elements and themes of mental and physical illness. One notable feature is "the grotesque", which includes situations, places, or characters with cringe-inducing qualities, often reflecting racial prejudice and self-righteousness but also possessing enough good traits to engage readers. While disturbing, grotesque characters offer a greater narrative range and highlight unpleasant aspects of Southern culture without being too literal or excessively moralistic. The grotesque, a key element of Southern Gothic, will be discussed separately as one of the disambiguated terms. Famous Southern Gothic writers include William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Harry Crews, Lee Smith, John Kennedy Toole, Cormac McCarthy, Katherine Ann Porter, Lewis Nordan, and William Gay. These authors have significantly contributed to the genre, using its unique blend of macabre and social critique to explore the complexities of Southern life and culture.

3. GROTESQUE

The term "Grotesque" primarily refers to a style of decorative painting or sculpture that combines human and animal forms with foliage and flowers, creating fantastical and interwoven designs. It is frequently used in architecture and decorative art, stemming from the Italian "grotteschi", found in Roman houses like Nero's Golden House around 1500 (grotesque. Def.1a.1b. *Oxford English Dictionary*). In literature, the grotesque is a powerful aesthetic category involving the disruption and distortion of hierarchical or canonical assumptions. It combines ugliness and ornament, the bizarre and the ridiculous, the excessive and the unreal. During the Romantic era, the grotesque became an essential component, reflecting interest in the dispossessed and the invisible of pre-Revolutionary society. Victor Hugo considered the grotesque the richest source nature could offer art, while Bakhtin placed it at the heart of the carnival spirit, emphasizing ironic reversals and the motif of The World Upside-Down, where hierarchies are disrupted, and order is overturned (Bakhtin 1968). The grotesque and The World Upside-Down reveal the constructed nature of rationality, showing that the surface relationships governing daily life are sustained illusions (Leopoldseder 1973; Tristan 1980; Cornell University 2000/2012).

Characters are considered grotesque if they evoke both empathy and disgust, such as the physically deformed or the mentally deficient, as well as those with socially cringe-worthy traits. Readers are intrigued by the grotesque's positive aspects and continue

reading to see if the character can overcome their darker side. Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Shakespeare's Caliban from *The Tempest*, Dr Frankenstein's monster, Stoker's Dracula, the Phantom of the Opera, and the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast* are notable literary grotesques. Additional examples include works by Edgar Allan Poe, Raymond Kennedy, Robertson Davies, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Sturm und Drang literature, and Sterne's Tristram Shandy. The Romantic grotesque is more terrifying than the medieval grotesque, which celebrated laughter and fertility. Gothic is frequently associated with grotesques, and Southern Gothic particularly excels in their depiction. Flannery O'Connor, in her essay "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," stated, "Whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one. To recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man, and in the South, the general conception of man is still, in the main, theological. That is a large statement, and it is dangerous to make it, for almost anything you say about Southern belief can be denied in the next breath with equal propriety" (O'Connor 1960). This introduction to Gothic fiction and its sub-genres – American Gothic and Southern Gothic, as well as to the term grotesque – sets the stage for analyzing these elements in Carson McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

4. Carson McCullers and *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*

Carson McCullers was born in 1917 in Columbus, Georgia, a place that provided much of the material for her literary career (Bryant Jr. 1997, 137). She studied creative writing at Columbia and New York Universities. In 1936, she published "Wunderkind," an autobiographical piece about a musical prodigy's failure. McCullers joined the art commune February House, with friends like W.H. Auden, Paul and Jane Bowles, and Gypsy Rose Lee. Post-World War II, she lived mostly in Paris, maintaining close friendships with Truman Capote and Tennessee Williams. Williams encouraged her to adapt her novel *The Member of the Wedding* into a play, which became highly successful on Broadway and was adapted into a movie in 1952. McCullers suffered from illnesses throughout her life, including rheumatic fever at fifteen, and a series of strokes that left her virtually a disabled person by her early 30s. She died in New York on September 29, 1967, following a stroke and brain hemorrhage. Her final novel, *Clock Without Hands* (1961), was a bestseller but received mixed reviews. She also published *Sweet as a Pickle, Clean as a Pig* (1964), a collection of children's verse, and dictated her unfinished autobiography, *Illumination and Night Glare* (1999), during her final months. McCullers's characters often endure physical and psychological handicaps, complicating their searches for compassion. Her work combines a Southern Gothic embrace of the eccentric with reflections on human relationships, the incompatibility of lovers, and the deep longing for connection. McCullers once stated, "I live with the people I create and it has always made my essential loneliness less keen" (Spencer Carr 1975/2003; see Savigneau, 2001 for more details).

The title of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* was suggested by McCullers's editor and taken from William Sharp's (pseud. Fiona MacLeod) poem *The Lonely Hunter*. Set in a small mill town in the 1930s, the novel introduces John Singer and Spiros Antonapoulos, two deaf friends with speech disabilities. After Antonapoulos is sent to an asylum, Singer moves into a boarding house run by the Kelly family. The narrative then shifts among several characters: Biff Brannon, the owner of a New York café; Jake Blount, a socialist

mechanic; Mick Kelly, a music-loving teenage girl; and Dr Copeland, an African American physician. Each character finds solace in Singer, confiding in him despite his silence. As their lives intertwine, they reveal the struggles and aspirations of marginalized individuals in the South. Mick develops a relationship with her Jewish neighbor, Harry Minowitz, and is profoundly moved by hearing a Beethoven symphony. Brannon's wife dies, and he takes comfort in refurbishing his room and connecting with Mick and Baby Wilson. Dr Copeland's son, Willie, is imprisoned, and Dr Copeland himself battles tuberculosis. Blount shares his socialist beliefs with Singer, and Mick's brother, Bubber, accidentally shoots Baby Wilson, leading to a series of events that deepen the characters' interconnectedness. In Part Two, the narrative ventures into the characters' lives. Mick and Harry's relationship becomes intimate, but Harry eventually leaves town. Mick takes a job at Woolworth's to support her family, sacrificing her education. Singer, devastated by Antonapoulos's death, shoots himself. Part Three offers snapshots of the characters' lives after Singer's death. Dr Copeland, too ill to care for himself, is sent to live on a farm and feels his life's work has failed. Blount leaves town, fearing he caused a young African American's death. Brannon continues working at his café, experiencing a sudden epiphany about the meaning of life, which concludes the novel (Spencer Carr 1975/2003; McCullers 1940/2000).

5. GOTHIC AND GROTESQUE IN *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter takes place in a provincial town modelled after McCullers's hometown Columbus, which seems to have something Gothic in many of its parts. Nearly every room, building or street mentioned in the novel is at least once labelled as "dark," and the repeated usage of words such as "sick," "shadow," "crazy," "blood," "hot," "horror," "fear," "nightmare" and other terms frequent in Gothic novels is enough to answer the question why this novel is frequently associated with the genre of American Southern Gothic (Stamenković 2008).

In the beginning, we immediately run into descriptions of mental illness, as Antonapoulos, Mr. Singer's friend is "taken to the state insane asylum two hundred miles away" (McCullers 1940/2000, 9). Sickness, both of body and mind, as an essential Gothic characteristic, pervades the whole novel. The most memorable episodes dealing with sickness are the ones involving Doctor Copeland. He is the doctor to the poor and underprivileged, predominantly those of African ancestry. These people live their lives in unbearable conditions, still struggling to break free of the scourge of slavery (see Kocić Stanković 2021a, 29–31, and (see Kocić Stanković 2021b for an account of slave life in the South). They are, thus, incapable of stopping illnesses spreading around and the percentage of the population struck by various sorts of diseases is extremely high. At one point, Dr Copeland takes Mr. Singer on one of his rounds to some of the poorest sections of the town and the picture we get on this occasion is terrifying:

> On one occasion he took Mr. Singer with him on his rounds. He led him through cold and narrow passages smelling of dirt and sickness and fried fatback. He showed him a successful skin graft made on the face of a woman patient who had been severely burned. He treated a syphilitic child and pointed out to Mr. Singer the scaling eruption on the palms of the hand, the dull, opaque surface of the eye, the sloping upper front incisors. They visited two-room shacks that housed as many as twelve or fourteen persons. In a

> room where the fire burned low and orange on the hearth they were helpless while an old man strangled with pneumonia. (McCullers 1940/2000, 135)

The episode involving Willie's suffering in the state prison exemplifies the dual presence of sickness: the mental sickness of the guard, who can leave three human beings in a room where they almost freeze to death, and the physical sickness inflicted on these individuals as a result (particularly Willie, who develops gangrene in his feet). Portia explains, "They quickly taken Willie and them boys to the sick ward and their legs were all swolled and froze. Gangrene. They sawed off both our Willie's feet. Buster Johnson lost one foot and the other boy got well. But our Willie – he crippled for life now. Both his feet sawed off" (McCullers 1940/2000, pp. 254–255). Sickness also permeates Mick's life, as her sister, Etta, is slowly consumed by an unnamed disease: "Etta was still so sick that she couldn't sleep crowded three in a bed. The shades were drawn and the dark room smelled bad with a sick smell" (McCullers 1940/2000, p. 307).

The section describing the circumstances surrounding the death of Alice Brannon, Biff's wife, is one of the more disturbing parts of the novel. Alice develops cancer, which remains undiagnosed until after her death. Consequently, she tries to live as if she were healthy. Biff notices that Alice is not well and that her mental functioning deteriorates along with her physical condition, as evidenced by instances such as when she marks a special dinner less than it is supposed to be marked and does not discover the mistake until much later. One afternoon, Biff hears a sudden cry of pain from their room and "hurrie[s] upstairs. Within an hour they had taken Alice to the hospital and the doctor had removed from her a tumor almost the size of a newborn child. And then within another hour Alice was dead" (McCullers 1940/2000, pp. 121–122). This leaves Biff astounded, facing his wife's death in his own manner:

> Biff sat by her bed at the hospital in stunned reflection. He had been present when she died. Her eyes had been drugged and misty from the ether and then they hardened like glass. The nurse and the doctor withdrew from the room. He continued to look into her face. Except for the bluish pallor there was little difference. He noted each detail about her as though he had net watched her every day for twenty-one years. Then gradually as he sat there his thoughts turned to a picture that had long been stored inside him. (McCullers 1940/2000, 122)

Along with sickness, there are further Gothic aspects in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*: the characters' omnipresent tendency to indulge in dreams and nightmares. These dreams are symbolic, unusual, and frightening, which adds to the Gothic atmosphere. The symbolism is particularly noticeable in the more mature characters and conveys some of McCullers's main messages. For instance, Singer dreams of seeing Antonapoulos at the top of a flight of stairs, kneeling and holding something up in his hand. Antonapoulos is "naked and he fumbled with something that he held above his head and gazed at it as though in prayer." Singer kneels behind him, with Mick, Biff Brannon, Jake Blount, and Dr Copeland ("the one with the moustache and the girl and the black man and the last one") all kneeling behind Singer: "They knelt naked and he felt their eyes on him. And behind them there were uncounted crowds of kneeling people in the darkness. His own hands were huge windmills and he stared fascinated at the unknown thing that Antonapoulos held." This worshipful image perfectly depicts the relationships in the story: Singer worships Antonapoulos, whereas the others worship Singer. The dream's end adds to the overall feeling of suspense and fear: "The yellow lanterns swayed to and fro in the darkness and

all else was motionless. Then suddenly there was a ferment. In the upheaval the steps collapsed and he felt himself falling downward. He awoke with a jerk. The early light whitened the window. He felt afraid" (McCullers 1940/2000, 217).

Blount's dream is also quite symbolic. Near the end of the novel, he has a recurring nightmare. Prior to hearing the dream itself, we learn about his efforts to remember it. The nightmare often escapes him upon waking, adding to its mysteriousness. The way McCullers describes Blount's struggles with this nightmare suggests that the nightmare itself is alive:

> A dream haunted him. It had first come to him four months ago. He would awake with terror – but the strange point was that never could he remember the contents of this dream. Only the feeling remained when his eyes were opened. Each time his fears at awakening were so identical that he did not doubt but what these dreams were the same. He was used to dreams, the grotesque nightmares of drink that led him down into a madman's region of disorder, but always the morning light scattered the effects of these wild dreams and he forgot them. This blank, stealthy dream was of a different nature. He awoke and could remember nothing. But there was a sense of menace that lingered in him long after. Then he awoke one morning with the old fear but with a faint remembrance of the darkness behind him. (McCullers 1940/2000, 280)

Near the end of the novel, in its third section, Blount manages to capture the contents of his recurring dream, revealing much symbolism: "He did remember now. Every other time he had been unable to get the dream straight in his waking mind." He dreams he is in a crowd carrying a covered basket, feeling anxious because he does not know whom to give it to and "he could not find the place to leave it." This dream symbolizes Blount's desire to find kindred spirits who also believe in socialism, or even communism, so he can share his "basket" of beliefs. In the dream, Blount has been carrying the heavy basket for a long time; similarly, his socialist beliefs have burdened him for a long time, as there are few people with whom he can share them to ease his thoughts: "And in the dream there was a peculiar horror in wandering on and on through the crowd and not knowing where to lay down the burden he had carried in his arms so long" (McCullers 1940/2000, 348–349).

Another character with a mysterious dream is Biff Brannon. He experiences a daydream right after his wife's death, while watching her dead body. He dreams of children on a gold strip of sand, possibly connected to the fact that his now-ended marriage was childless, and his daydream compensates for what is no longer possible:

> The cold green ocean and a hot gold strip of sand. The little children playing on the edge of the silky line of foam. The sturdy brown baby girl, the thin little naked boys, the halfgrown 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. Biff bowed his head. (McCullers 1940/2000, 122)

The overall atmosphere McCullers creates for her characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is a gloomy one. She uses different techniques to create such an environment – we can almost feel the oppressive weather conditions in all of the seasons of the year, we face the presence of darkness and shadows at various, usually unnamed locations all over the town, nearly smell the odors that are felt all around and realize that death, fear and suffering are omnipresent in the world of the unnamed town.

The weather descriptions present in the novel not only give the readers a sense of being quite unbearable, but they also seem to contradict each other. In summer, the nights are sometimes "black, sultry" and "hot" (McCullers 1940/2000, 13 101) and on other occasions "dark [and] rainy" (McCullers 1940/2000, 85). During the days the sun feels "like a hot piece of iron pressing down on his head" and this makes the town seem "more lonesome than any place he [Blount] had ever known. The stillness of the street gave him a strange feeling […] everything had come to a sudden, static halt." (McCullers 1940/2000, 59). Natural hazards do not seem to avoid this place either – the storms come quickly, and we can even sense fury in the descriptions pertaining to the weather:

> Out in the street again he saw that the clouds had turned a deep, angry purple. In the stagnant air there was a storm smell. The vivid green of the trees along the sidewalk seemed to steal into the atmosphere so that there was a strange greenish glow over the street […] There was one metallic crash of thunder and the air chilled suddenly. Large silver drops of rain hissed on the pavement. An avalanche of water blinded him. (McCullers 1940/2000, 344–345)

The descriptions of various locations around the town are also essentially Gothic. One such description is provided in an early "Blount section." It details one of his wanderings through the streets of the town which ends with reaching the Weavers lane, possibly the darkest section of the town:

> The streets became narrow and unpaved […] The two-room shacks, each one like the other, were rotten and unpainted. The stink of food and sewage mingled with the dust in the air. The falls up the river made a faint rushing sound. People stood silently in doorways or lounged on steps. They looked at Jake with yellow, expressionless faces. He stared back at them with wide, brown eyes. […] At the end of Weavers Lane there was a vacant block. It had once been used as a junk yard for old automobiles. Rusted pieces of machinery and torn inner tubes still littered the ground. […] Weavers Lane was dark. Oil lamps made yellow, trembling patches of light in the doorways and windows. Some of the houses were entirely dark and the families sat on their front steps with only the reflections from a neighboring house to see by. (McCullers 1940/2000, 61–65)

Jake Blount, who operates the machinery at a local carnival named "the Sunny Dixie", has a chance to visit various locations in different parts of the town, but this seems to bring no diversity as he explains that "The locations were changed but the settings were alike – a strip of wasteland bordered by rows of rotted shacks, and somewhere near a mill, a cotton gin, or a bottling plant" (McCullers 1940/2000, 152). It gets no different when we get to the descriptions of indoor spaces. The picture we get from McCullers's portrayal of Blount's room is one that ought to fill us with fear.

Buildings seem to be equally Gothic on the inside. For instance, we learn that Portia's house is dark except for the "checkered moonlight on the floor". Besides this, "The rooms had a colored smell, and they were crowded with cut-out pictures on the walls and the lace table covers and lace pillows on the bed." (McCullers 1940/2000, 176) The oppression of space is particularly noticeable in Mick's case as she feels that her town, her house and her room are forms of restraint. In this description her room is almost prison-like and her perception of the house makes us believe that she is sleeping in a dilapidated mansion reminiscent of Poe's (1839/2003) House of Usher:

> In bed she lay awake. A queer afraidness came to her. It was like the ceiling was slowly pressing down toward her face. How would it be if the house fell apart? Once their Dad had said the whole place ought to be condemned. Did he mean that maybe some night when they were asleep the walls would crack and the house collapse? Bury them under all the plaster and broken glass and smashed furniture? So that they could not move or breathe? She lay awake and her muscles were stiff. In the night there was creaking. Was that somebody walking – somebody else awake besides her. (McCullers 1940/2000, 311)

Although the issue of death, in the context of this novel, has been mentioned on several occasions so far, there are even more events connected to death and to the people's perception of it. McCullers shows the ability to make death almost an additional character in the novel, as its presence is simply felt at different locations. A good instance of this are Biff's thoughts after his wife's death: "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." (McCullers 1940/2000, 237) Blount's encounter with death seems to be very brutal – at his workplace he finds a dead body in an awful condition:

> On an April morning he found the body of a man who had been murdered. A young Negro. Jake found him in a ditch about thirty yards from the showgrounds. The Negro's throat had been slashed so that the head was rolled back at a crazy angle. The sun shone hot on his open, glassy eyes and flies hovered over the dried blood that covered his chest. The dead man held a red-and-yellow cane with a tassel like the ones sold at the hamburger booth at the show. Jake stared gloomily down at the body for some time. Then he called the police. No clues were found. Two days later the family of the dead man claimed his body at the morgue. (McCullers 1940/2000, 286)

Perhaps the most memorable instance of death in this novel is Mr. Singer's suicide. After reading a note in which "it was written […] that Antonapoulos was dead" (McCullers 1940/2000, 324), he seems to lose his desire to live anymore, as his only true friend is no longer alive. This is when he decides to commit suicide in a manner that is at the same time extremely shocking and undoubtedly grotesque:

> Singer put a berry in his mouth and though the juice had a lush, wild sweetness there was already a subtle flavor of decay. He ate until his palate was dulled by the taste and then rewrapped the crate and placed it on the rack above him. At midnight he drew the windowshade and lay down on the seat. He was curled in a ball, his coat pulled over his face and head. In this position he lay in a stupor of half-sleep for about twelve hours. The conductor had to shake him when they arrived […] But the unrefracted brilliance of the sun, the humid heat, oppressed him. He returned to his room with swollen eyes and an aching head. After resting he drank a glass of iced coffee and smoked a cigarette. Then when he had washed the ash tray and the glass he brought out a pistol from his pocket and put a bullet in his chest. (McCullers 1940/2000, 326)

Exploring the grotesque can be mostly oriented towards the grotesqueness of characters. One can notice that McCullers tends to present characters of various ages living in the same environment, so as to account for different perspectives. We can notice that, as they grow old, the oppressive power of the community has a negative impact on the way they think, behave and even look. The ones who are considered grotesque seem to be able to invoke sympathy in the reader. Anderson explains the feelings that grotesque characters can summon in the following manner:

> You see the interest in all this lies in the figures that went before the eyes of the writer. They were all grotesques. All of the men and women the writer had ever known had become grotesques. The grotesques were not all horrible. Some were amusing, some almost beautiful, and one, a woman all drawn out of shape, hurt the old man by her grotesqueness. When she passed he made a noise like a small dog whimpering. (Anderson 1919/1992, 21–22)

Another common tendency in McCullers's writing is the isolation and loneliness of grotesque characters. Whenever they attempt to connect with others, they fail. This is particularly evident in the descriptions of John Singer, Jake Blount, and Biff Brannon in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (Stamenković 2008). Characters labelled as grotesque are seen as different by the majority, which hinders many aspects of their lives. Singer commits suicide, Blount leaves town wondering if he is responsible for Lancy Davis's death, and Brannon ends the novel in despair, highlighting their inability to integrate into the small-town world. In such communities, being different often equates to being grotesque. Sherwood Anderson notes that small-town life can turn anyone into a grotesque, with the process being faster and more intense for those who are different. These grotesque characters are constantly rejected by their world, yet readers feel closer to them with each chapter.

Despite his many favorable traits and harmless nature, John Singer is marked as strange. "His eyes had a quick, intelligent expression. He was always immaculate and very soberly dressed" (McCullers 1940/2000, 3–4). Mick also views him positively, almost as a God-like figure. The first day he rings the doorbell to ask about a room, "she had looked a long time into his face" (McCullers 1940/2000, 242). She forms a special bond with him, seeing his difference as a good thing:

> Mister Singer was the only one who seemed to know what it was all about. Maybe this was because he didn't hear that awful noise. His face was still calm, and whenever Bubber looked at him he seemed to get quieter. Mister Singer was different from any other man, and at times like this it would be better if other people would let him manage. He had more sense and he knew things that ordinary people couldn't know. (McCullers 1940/2000, 92)

Nevertheless, he stands out for several reasons. The primary reason is that he is a deaf-mute, which speaks more about Southern society than about Singer himself. In this environment, physical disability is viewed as dangerous. The community where Singer lives shows a stark lack of tolerance toward anyone who does not conform to their standards. Additionally, the town's inhabitants seem to have little understanding of medical facts. Despite the prejudice and cruelty integral to small-town life, Singer does exhibit some unusual behaviors, such as his odd walks around town. These behaviors spark curiosity and create a veil of mystery around him, especially after his friend Antonapoulos is sent to an asylum, while other character traits make him equally conspicuous in this small-town setting.

Antonapoulos himself is also depicted as grotesque. He is described as "an obese and dreamy Greek. In the summer he would come out wearing a yellow or green polo shirt stuffed sloppily into his trousers in front and hanging loose behind. When it was colder he wore over this a shapeless gray sweater. His face was round and oily, with half-closed eyelids and lips that curved in a gentle, stupid smile" (McCullers 1940/2000, 3–4). He is described as avaricious, selfish, and careless, such as when he "took the rent money from the vase on the mantelpiece and spent it all on the slot machines." He even once "got drunk and threw a bowl of macaroni in [Singer's] face" (McCullers 1940/2000, 203). Being the only character in the

novel who can communicate using sign language makes him Singer's best friend. John Singer blindly considers Antonapoulos his great friend, not realizing that the Greek is lazy about using his hands to sign unless talking about eating, drinking, or sleeping. Yet, McCullers evokes sympathy for Antonapoulos, suggesting his behavior is symptomatic of his mental illness. Antonapoulos's portrayal supports Sherwood Anderson's (1919/1992) idea that grotesques struggle to connect with others and often remain isolated (see also Stamenković 2010, 2012). Those with disabilities face even more intense isolation. Elsewhere, people with special needs might receive help or be ignored, but in a small-town environment, they attract negative attention. In this setting, Singer amplifies the novel's grotesque elements:

> The mute never smiled until several seconds after the funny remark had been made; then when the talk was gloomy again the smile still hung on his face a little too long. The fellow was downright uncanny. People felt themselves watching him even before they knew that there was anything different about him. His eyes made a person think that he heard things nobody else had ever heard, that he knew things no one had ever guessed before. He did not seem quite human. (McCullers 1940/2000, 24–25)

The mystery surrounding John Singer deepens when "one day in July, Singer suddenly went away without warning. He left the door of his room open, and on the table in an envelope addressed to Mrs. Kelly there were four dollars for the past week's rent. [...] When his visitors came and saw this empty room they went away with hurt surprise. No one could imagine why he had left like this" (McCullers 1940/2000, 92). Singer's suicide ensures his mystery remains unsolved, adding to the grotesqueness of his character. Particularly intriguing is Singer's perception of those who come to talk to him. Initially, he appears tolerant, but we later learn that he finds them "strange people and always talking – but that he liked to have them come" (McCullers 1940/2000, 93). This reveals that they are as strange and grotesque to him as he is to the world, preventing them from forming relationships that could improve their lives. The potential to overcome isolation dies with Singer's suicide, leaving those who found solace in him feeling hopeless.

Jake Blount appears grotesque from the outset, and McCullers portrays him as an enduring enigma. The first description of Blount emphasizes his contradictions and unexpected traits, creating a physical image that is both incompatible and difficult to imagine, making Blount's physique grotesque:

> It was the morning of May 15, yes, that Jake Blount had come in. He had noticed him immediately and watched. The man was short, with heavy shoulders like beams. He had a small, ragged mustache, and beneath this his lower lip looked as though it had been stung by a wasp. There were many things about the fellow that seemed contrary. His head was very large and well-shaped, but his neck was soft and slender as a boy's. The mustache looked false, as if it had been stuck on for a costume party and would fall off if he talked too fast. It made him seem almost middle-aged, although his face with its high, smooth forehead and wide-open eyes was young. His hands were huge, stained, and calloused, and he was dressed in a cheap white-linen suit. There was something very funny about the man, yet at the same time another feeling would not let you laugh. (McCullers 1940/2000, 16)

Even Biff Brannon, who we could see has a relatively tolerant attitude towards those who are different, has problems defining Jake Blount. We get a feeling that Blount represents way too big a threat for the hermetic community. The way Biff captures Blount's behavior is also full of contradictions and mystery. He does not have trouble accepting the way Blount looks, but he finds his behavior quite difficult to understand:

> He regarded Blount steadily with half-closed eyes. Blount was not a freak, although when you first saw him he gave you that impression. It was like something was deformed about him – but when you looked at him closely each part of him was normal and as it ought to be. Therefore if this difference was not in the body it was probably in the mind. He was like a man who had served a term in prison or had been to Harvard College or had lived for a long time with foreigners in South America. He was like a person who had been somewhere that other people are not likely to go or had done something that others are not apt to do. (McCullers 1940/2000, 21)

When we consider Blount's behavior, we might label it, if not strange, then at least extreme. Blount's presence throughout the novel often brings unrest or a sense of disturbance due to his firm plans for social change. In a larger community, these plans might be ignored; in McCullers's small town, they are simply unforgivable. Blount is extreme not only in his social visions but also in all the ideas or beliefs he encounters. For instance, during his days of faith in Jesus, he went so far as to say, "one night I took a hammer and laid my hand on the table. I was angry and I drove the nail all the way through. My hand was nailed to the table and I looked at it and the fingers fluttered and turned blue" (McCullers 1940/2000, 151).

Singer considers Blount a lunatic: "The one with the mustache I think is crazy. Sometimes he speaks his words very clear like my teacher long ago at the school. Other times he speaks such a language that I cannot follow" (McCullers 1940/2000, 215). Overall, Jake Blount, with all his grotesqueness, remains a mystery to the town, just like Singer.

The third grotesque character, Biff, is perhaps the least physically grotesque of the three men. Nevertheless, his behavioral issues reveal bizarre patterns that make him grotesque on the inside. Like Singer, he is distanced, perceptive, and silent. However, none of Biff's observations coalesce into any greater insight or understanding of humanity; he fails to draw complete conclusions from the strings of thoughts McCullers records. Instead, his observations and ideas remain isolated fragments, offering only puzzling and contradictory impulses that are never adequately explained. When we see Biff interact with his wife, Alice, at the beginning of the novel, it is clear they feel no love for one another after fifteen years of marriage. This example highlights the difficulty of communication, even between spouses. The community seems to create grotesques who can hardly form any formal bonds. We also learn that Biff is impotent, though it is unclear whether this condition is exclusive to his relations with Alice or extends to other women as well.

It is evident that Biff has unsettled anxieties, but their exact nature is never made clear. He keeps his life fragmented: separating the past from the present (with the future almost entirely absent from his thoughts), his life upstairs in his room from his life downstairs in the restaurant, and his marital relationship from his sexual life. Each daily newspaper has its own place in his archive, symbolizing the fragmentation of his vision and understanding. We also learn that Biff beat Lucile's husband when he boasted about beating her. His conversations with her after her husband's death seem to offer a glimmer of hope for establishing a connection. However, their relationship does not develop, and his isolation only deepens. After Alice dies, Biff begins to sew and use his wife's perfume, revealing an unexpected feminine side to his personality. Neither Biff nor McCullers integrate these conflicting impulses, suggesting that Biff himself is unable to resolve these inner conflicts. Instead, these conflicts multiply, making him less able to reach out to others and establish any meaningful relationship.

Besides the grotesque nature of its characters, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* also contains grotesque situations. The most prominent character in this regard is Mick Kelly, who experiences something akin to the so-called "Alice Effect" (see Wolfreys 1997, 68). The grotesque took on a new form with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) by Lewis Carroll. In these books, Alice encounters various grotesque figures in her fantasy world. Carroll makes these figures less frightening and suitable for children's literature, yet still utterly strange. These characters, by bending reality, teach Alice about life and have a positive impact on her. In contrast, the grotesque nature of McCullers's characters has a more detrimental influence on Mick's life, leaving her sad and confused by the end of the novel. Mick is surrounded by a much grimmer world filled with problematic and sometimes dangerous characters. McCullers creates an atmosphere of gloom and fear in scenes where Mick wanders into the richer part of town to listen to other people's radios. Mick finds a "fine and secret place. Close around were thick cedars so that she was completely hidden by herself" (McCullers 1940/2000, 117). The music she listens to is often "black-colored – a slow march. Not sad, but like the whole world was dead and black and there was no use thinking back how it was before. One of those horn kind of instruments played a sad and silver tune. Then the music rose up angry and with excitement underneath. And finally the black march again" (McCullers 1940/2000, 118). The most grotesque event is Mick's discovery of John Singer's body after his suicide. This highly stressful and adverse event profoundly impacts Mick, as her connection with Singer was one of the few bright spots in her bleak community. Losing Singer means losing a source of comfort and a part of her hopes for the future:

> The blood was all over his neck and when her Dad came he pushed her out of the room. She had run into the dark and hit herself with her fists. And then the next night he was in a coffin in the livingroom. The undertaker had put rouge and lipstick on his face to make him look natural. But he didn't look natural. He was very dead. And mixed with the smell of flowers there was this other smell so that she couldn't stay in the room. (McCullers 1940/2000, 351–352)

Instances of the grotesque in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* confirm that, within the Southern Gothic tradition, grotesqueness can be viewed as a social consequence. The place, although a human "artifact", has a modifying effect on its inhabitants. It seems the creation has found a way to affect or even harm its creator. The existing rules that govern the community make the interaction between the place and its people quite unfortunate—the place turns Gothic, and its inhabitants become grotesque. In the already hermetic small-town world, we find even more hermetic characters, gradually consumed by the ideas and truths of provincialism. Unable to connect with others, they form a cocoon, which reduces their lives to themselves and their oppressive environment, with a constant feeling of imprisonment. McCullers's portrayal of the grotesque is gloomy and almost depressive. She leaves no room for amusement, as most of her grotesque characters appear tragic and hopeless.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter is undoubtedly a true example of American Southern gothic literature. It contains numerous elements recognized as the fundamentals of this subgenre of fiction, and our analysis pinpointed several instances in the text where these

elements could be identified with great certainty. First of all, the paper showed how gloomy weather and decrepit exterior and interior locations were used by Carson McCullers to create an atmosphere of perennial hopelessness and despair. The entire narrative is, furthermore, riddled with sickness, particularly emphasizing mental illness, while death practically plays a role of a separate character – omnipresent, brutal, and shocking. In addition to these gothic elements, the novel also excels in depicting the grotesque, both through certain characters and the situations in which they find themselves. McCullers presents her grotesque characters as isolated and lonely, indulging in dreams and nightmares, which are often highly symbolic and frightening, taking on a life of their own. As already mentioned above, the devastating interaction between all of these elements eventually creates a vicious circle in which the characters cannot escape their doomed small town nor can the town itself rely on its inhabitants to break this circle and free themselves and their town from their dreadful fate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*: Miloš Tasić's participation in the study was supported by a grant from the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (No. 451-03-137/2025-03/200109).*

REFERENCES

Anderson, Sherwood. 1919/1992. *Winesburg, Ohio*. London: Penguin Books.
Bacon, Simon. 2018. *The Gothic: A Reader*. Lausanne: Peter Lang.
Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1968. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Botting, Fred. 1995. *Gothic*. London: Routledge
Bryant, Joseph A., Jr. 1997. *Twentieth Century Southern Literature*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
Carroll, Lewis. 1865/1871/2003. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. London: Penguin Books.
Cornell University. 2000/2012. "The Fantastic in Art and Fiction." Accessed July 1, 2024. https://web.archive.org/web/20240115052742/http://fantastic.library.cornell.edu/.
Defoe, Daniel. 1722. *Moll Flanders*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/9685.
Ellis, Markman. 2000. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.
Fiedler, Leslie. 1966. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Delta.
Hogle, Jerrold E., ed. 2002. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hugo, Victor. 1831. *Notre-Dame de Paris* or *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, translated by Isabel F. Hapgood. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2610.
Kaliff, Anders. 2001. "Gothic Connections: Contacts Between Eastern Scandinavia and the Southern Baltic Coast 1000 BC – 500 AD." *Occasional Papers in Archaeology* 26. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 34–45.
Kocić Stanković, Ana. 2021a. *The African American Experience: An Introduction*. Niš: Faculty of Philosophy. DOI: 10.46630/aae.2021
Kocić Stanković, Ana. 2021b. "Visual Representations of Native Americans in Colonial America". *Facta Universitatis, Series: Visual Arts and Music*, Vol 7, Issue 1: 75–85. DOI: 10.22190/FUVAM2101075K
Kocić Stanković, Ana and Marko Mitić. 2022. "Gothic Elements in Representations of a Pandemic: Borislav Pekic's Rabies". *Interlitteraria*, Vol 27, Issue 2: 18–29. DOI: 10.12697/IL.2022.27.1.3
Leopoldseder, Hubert. 1973. *Groteske Welt*. Bonn: Bouvier-Verlag.
Leroux, Gaston. 1911. *Phantom of the Opera*, translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/175.
Lewis, Matthew Gregory. 1796. *The Monk*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/601.
Lloyd-Smith, Allan. 2004. *American Gothic Fiction*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
Mašović, Dragana. 2002. *Sudbinski snovi/The Dreams of Destiny*. Niš: Zograf.
McCullers, Carson. 1940/2000. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. New York: Mariner Books – Houghton Mifflin Company.
O'Connor, Flannery. 1960. "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction." University of Texas, Department of English. Accessed July 1, 2024. https://www.thinkingtogether.org/rcream/archive/Old/S2005/127/OConnor%20Grotesque.pdf.

Poe, Edgar Allan. 1839/2003. "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Black Cat" in *The Complete Illustrated Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. London: Bounty Books.
Punter, David. 1996. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day. Volume I*. London: Longman.
Radcliffe, Ann. 1794. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3268.
Richardson, Samuel. 1740. *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/6124.
Richardson, Samuel. 1747–1748. *Clarissa Harlowe; or the History of a Young Lady*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/9296.
Ringe, Donald A. 1982. *American Gothic: Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
Savigneau, Josyane. 2001. *Carson McCullers: A Life*, translated by Joan E. Howard. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
Senior, John. 1959. *The Way Down and Out: Occultism in Symbolist Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Shakespeare, William. 1610–1611/1996. "The Tempest" in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
Sharp, William (pseud. Fiona Macleod). 1904. *The Lonely Hunter*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.themediadrome.com/content/poetry/sharp_lonely_hunter.htm.
Shelley, Mary. 1818/1994. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. London: Penguin Books.
Spencer Carr, Virginia. 1975/2003. *The Lonely Hunter: A Biography of Carson McCullers*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.
Stamenković, Dušan. 2008. "Provincialism, Gothic, Grotesque: Davies's *Fifth Business* and McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Novi Sad: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad.
Stamenković, Dušan. 2010. "Semantics of the South: A Cognitive Semantic View of the Concept of South as Illustrated in two North American Gothic Traditions: Davies's Fifth Business and McCullers's The Heart is a Lonely Hunter". In: *A View from afar: Canadian Studies in a European Context (Canadian Studies in Europe, Volume 9)*, edited by Niamh Nestor et al., 125–137. Dublin/Brno: The European Network for Canadian Studies/MuniPress.
Stamenković, Dušan. 2012. "Conceptualization of the South in Southern Gothic Literature: Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Image Schemas". *Arctic & Antarctic – International Journal on Circumpolar Sociocultural Issues*, Vol 6: 7–25.
Stoker, Bram. 1897/1994. *Dracula*. London: Penguin Books.
Sullivan, Jack, ed. 1986/1989. *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*. New York: Random House.
Tristan, Frederick. 1980. *Le Monde à L'éenvers*. Paris: Hachette/Atelier Massin.
Walpole, Horace. 1764. *The Castle of Otranto*. Project Gutenberg Etext. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/696.
Wolfreys, Julian. 1997. *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida*. Palgrave Macmillan.

NEOBIČNE RAZGLEDNICE SA AMERIČKOG JUGA: GOTIKA I GROTESKA U ROMANU KARSON MEKALERS *SRCE JE USAMLJENI LOVAC*

U ovom radu se analiziraju elementi gotike i groteske u romanu Karson Mekalers Srce je usamljeni lovac*, unutar specifičnog okruženja koje pruža američki jug. Nakon opisivanja najvažnijih odlika samog juga, s jedne, i definisanja gotičke književnosti i groteske (i u širem i u užem značenju), s druge strane, autori sagledavaju brojne karakteristike gorenavedenih koncepata koje se nalaze u romanu. Tu spadaju, između ostalog, i tmurno vreme i mračan i oronuo ambijent grada u kojem se odigrava radnja. Analizom dalje pokazuje kako roman obiluje izolovanim i usamljenim grotesknim likovima koji se prepuštaju sanjarenjima, dok bolest, naročito ona mentalna, i smrt vrebaju na svakom koraku. Autori takođe konstatuju i to kako se ovi likovi često nalaze u grotesknim situacijama koje se skoro po pravilu završavaju tragično i bez ikakve nade. Svi ovi nalazi ukazuju na to da je analizirani roman smešten duboko unutar književne tradicije američke južnjačke gotike.*

Ključne reči: *Američki jug, južnjačka gotika, groteska, Karson Mekalers, Srce je usamljeni lovac*