

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

Andrea Hapalová

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Jméno a příjmení:	Andrea Hapalová
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Jepson, Jill. *No Walls of Stone: An Anthology of Literature by Deaf and Hard Hearing Writers*. Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1992.

Moore, Matthew S., and Linda Levitan. *For Hearing People Only: Answers to Some of the Most Commonly Asked Questions about the Deaf Community, Its Culture, and the Deaf Reality*. 2nd ed. Rochester: Deaf Life Press, 1993.

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

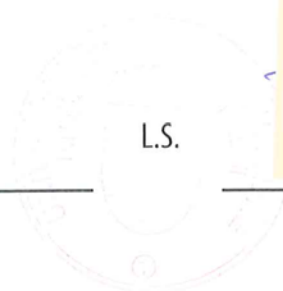
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**Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.**  
děkan



**Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.**  
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## **ABSTRAKT**

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

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

## **ABSTRACT**

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

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

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*“This moment will just be another story someday.”*

Stephen Chbosky

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

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## INTRODUCTION

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

Mild hearing loss only has an affect on low sounds like whispers. People do not tend to mind and it does not affect their daily lives. They are able to communicate with people without any problem and if by any chance they do face problems they can use hearing aids to make the needed sounds amplified. Moderate hearing loss causes problems with hearing voices so there a chance the person can have trouble with catching up in a conversation. At this point severe hearing loss does require hearing aids so a person could get through daily life. Finally, profound hearing loss only allows people to hear extremely loud noises and music. In this case a cochlear implant would be a suitable option. Hearing aids are unfortunately able to help every single person with hearing impairment. It can only amplify sounds and noises and transfer those to the person's ear. However, if the person's hearing is one of the more severe cases, they probably cannot help them out.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1 HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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

## 1.1 Hearing Aids

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

## 1.2 Types of Hearing Loss

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

### 1.2.1 Sensorineural Hearing Loss

Also known by its acronym SNHL. It can be present from birth or caused by any of following factors such as aging, obesity, exposure to loud noises, diseases, smoking, infections, head trauma, tumours and medication. If exposed to noises over 85 dB damage can be done to stereocilia, auditory hair cells, located in the inner ear or to the auditory nerve, which carries signals from the inner ear to the brain.<sup>8</sup> Despite that hearing loss can go unnoticed till 30 to 50 percent of stereocilia is impaired. Just to demonstrate how easily anybody’s hearing can

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

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

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

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

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

### 1.2.2 Congenital Hearing Loss

As the name speaks for itself this type of hearing loss is congenital, already present at birth. It is one of the most frequent chronic conditions that affect children. It impacts approximately "1 to 3 babies per 1,000 births." Nowadays mostly all developed countries are in possession of hearing screening equipment, which can detect babies' condition early stage. It is recommended to be done within the first 4 to 5 weeks but it is possible to be done till 3 months of age.<sup>12</sup> Babies whose condition was discovered early have "a better chance of developing language, speech, and communication skill."<sup>13</sup> According to the statistics from 2014, 96.1 percent of babies in the United States had their hearing screening done by the age of 1 month.<sup>14</sup> Another statistics from 2014 shows that out of nearly 4 million tested babies was 6,163 impacted with permanent hearing loss.<sup>15</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 1.2.3 Conductive Hearing Loss

This is the less common type of hearing loss, which appears when there is an obstruction or harm done to the outer or middle ear. Hence sound cannot be transmitted to the inner ear. Soft sounds might be barely heard and louder sounds might be faint. If it ends up being only temporary or permanent depends on the cause. Outer ear is typically affected by earwax build up, stuck foreign objects, inborn defect microtia (disturbs a proper formation of an external ear.<sup>16</sup>), swimmers' ear (bacteria found in water gets stuck in the ear canal<sup>17</sup>). For instance middle ear is affected by rupture in an ear drum (a result of trauma, ear infection, intense noise, sudden change in pressure), otosclerosis (atypical bone growth), or tympanosclerosis, which appears when a person's body does not create sufficient amount of calcium and their ear drum becomes thicker, tougher and registers a loss of its clarity and flexibility.<sup>18</sup> Conductive hearing loss can sometimes be repaired by medication or medical procedure in minor cases such as removal of earwax build up. However, otosclerosis and other severe illnesses are more complex and uneasy to treat and there is a possibility they result into a permanent hearing loss.<sup>19</sup> In spite of that hearing aids and bone-anchored hearing aid can and often are used to enhance hearing.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.2.4 Mixed Hearing Loss

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

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

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

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

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

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

these two combined they are most likely to worsen the hearing more than only one of them on its own would.<sup>21</sup>

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

## 2 AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

The language, which is typically spoken among hearing impaired people in America is called American Sign Language, its abbreviation is ASL. As any other language ASL has also got its own, one of a kind, grammatical rules and syntax. The origin of the language begun in early 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>22</sup> when “Old French Sign Language and what’s now called “Old American Sign Language” were combined together. Therefore, ASL was formed by combining “FSL and an indigenous sign language.” Even though plenty of signs were acquired from FSL there have always remained a few original “American” signs. The language has evolved thoroughly freely of English. The way sentences are built and word usage is not depended on English nor British Sign Language. Since ASL is a “living and ever-changing language” it keeps on developing. From a linguistic point of view, signs are divided into two groups: iconic and arbitrary. If a sign is iconic it means the form of the interpreted symbol is closely associated with the meaning “(house, tree).” On the other hand, if the symbol and the meaning are not anyhow related, they are considered to be arbitrary signs “(easy, morning).”<sup>23</sup> As a sign language ASL does not involve auditory expressions but visual. It is built on facial expressions and body language.<sup>24</sup> As the time goes on iconic signs are progressively changing into more arbitrary, new signs are being invented, old signs either stop being used or are changed.<sup>25</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## 2.1 D/deaf

Individuals who identify as culturally Deaf (uppercase D) tend to be active members of the Deaf community. They are mostly already born deaf and may have other deaf relatives. Nevertheless, plenty of people who were born to hearing parents or acquired hearing loss during their life can still be a part of the Deaf community. Generally, they rather use sign language to communicate and it might also be their first language, English being their second, but not always. They may attend deaf schools or programs where they become deeply involved in Deaf culture.<sup>28</sup> Deaf people are proud of their identity and do not consider deafness as a disability but “as a ground-breaking cultural achievement that will go down in history.” Annually multiple events are held and culturally Deaf people attend them. They hold up signs, wear Deaf Pride merch and march for recognition.<sup>29</sup>

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

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

<sup>28</sup> “The Difference Between d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing,” Gemma Matheson, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://blog.ai-media.tv/blog/the-difference-between-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing>.

<sup>29</sup> “d or D? Who’s deaf and who’s Deaf,” Caroline O’Neill, last modified February 24, 2003, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/opinion/d\\_or\\_d\\_whos\\_deaf\\_and\\_whos\\_deaf.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/opinion/d_or_d_whos_deaf_and_whos_deaf.shtml).

were born to a hearing family, grew up in the hearing world and were barely or not at all in contact with the Deaf community.<sup>30</sup>

That being said not every deaf person has to be a part of the community. People do not turn into members of the community out of feeling honoured for being deaf. Nevertheless, it is people whose perspective towards deafness is that it is an essential part of who they are, they mostly interact with other deaf people and are active members of Deaf culture. It is more common for the community members to attend “residential schools for deaf children,” and learn and use primary ASL to communicate over “speech and speechreading.” Although, it is not unusual that a deaf person associates themselves more with hearing society or that they are somewhere in the middle of “the deaf and hearing worlds.” What influences a deaf person to identify as a part of the community is mainly age at which they lost their hearing. The older the people are the more unlikely is for them to identify with the community. Typically, people who have not lost their hearing completely but only partially are less likely to associate with the community. In other societies it is common to pass cultural identity “from parent to child,” however, that does not happen in this society considering many deaf children have hearing parents who prior might as well have never come in contact with deaf people. Whether to be or not to be a part of the community is solely a personal decision every deaf person makes at some point of their life.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.2 Deaf–Mute

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

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<sup>30</sup> “The Difference Between d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing,” Gemma Matheson, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://blog.ai-media.tv/blog/the-difference-between-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing>.

<sup>31</sup> Jill Jepson, *No Walls of Stone: An Anthology of Literature by Deaf and Hard Hearing Writers*, Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 3.

not truly mute.” When one person shares an information with other human being and they do understand it and are able to reply to it it is considered to be real communication.<sup>32</sup>

### 2.3 Deaf and Dumb

The first recorded positive statement regarding deafness was made by Rudolf Agricola in *De Inventione Dialectica* in 1521, he declared that deaf people are capable of learning a language. Preceding this even there were frequently made negative comments on deafness such as Aristotle’s infamous line “Those who are born deaf all become senseless and incapable of reason.” He was convinced deaf people were affected and handicapped because they could not use their voice like hearing people could, therefore he thought they could not develop cognitive abilities.<sup>33</sup> The problem with deaf literature back then was that its writers were hearing and were not educated enough to capture deaf people’s real troubles and struggles in life nor succeeded at their portrayal. About the last 100 years were the crucial ones for the community since that is when deaf people’s writing started being published in papers. Their writing was authentic, they were writing about their personal experiences and the way they perceived and regarded the world.<sup>34</sup>

This ‘deaf and dumb’ label offends hearing impaired people. As already mentioned above, deaf people are not silent whatsoever.<sup>35</sup> They communicate with sign language, lip reading, vocal expressions, facial expression and more. Voice is not required to be used for communication. If it was then communicating with others would only hearing people’s right, and that is not the case. Deaf people are not stupid people which the ‘dumb’ refers to. Hearing impaired people constantly keep on proving that they “contribute to the society at large.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Community and Culture – Frequently Asked Questions,” National Association of the Deaf, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Jack R. Gannon, *Deaf Heritage A Narrative History of Deaf America*. Silver Spring: National Association of the Deaf, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Carol Padden, and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 93.

<sup>36</sup> “Community and Culture – Frequently Asked Questions,” National Association of the Deaf, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>.

## 2.4 Writing a Visual Language

The first obstacle that comes with wanting to have a written version of ASL was how can a language expressed visually, 3D, be transformed into a written form. ASL is an astonishing language with an extensive vocabulary. The formation of signs and the way they are gestures is how emphasis is expressed in the language. Many writers struggle with how to point out that a certain part is in fact signed not spoken out loud. In a novel called *Sign of Attraction* is for example used so called classifier – a visual representation denoted from a sign used to construct scenes as demonstrated bellow.<sup>37</sup>

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

It is up to every author to choose the way they want to express signing. Translating ASL word for word is not quite quintessential because it ends up sounding illiterate. For instance, in English everybody would be say “My newspaper arrived late.” however, if it is translated into ASL it would be “Late arrive newspaper.” Considering the grammatical aspect of the sentence, it is a complex sentence, grammatically correct. So how is a visual language expressed in a written form and how can it be deducted that a character is using ASL? The following are the most common types of showing signed parts.<sup>38</sup>

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

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

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<sup>37</sup> “ASL: Writing a Visual Language,” Laura Brown, last modified May 19, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/05/19/asl-writing-a-visual-language/>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

visibly emphasised and differentiated from the rest. And in 5 it is emphasised as well by using capital letters, which is known to be used when somebody is yelling. The author of already mentioned novel *Sign of Attraction* prefers using quotation marks and italics (example 1) to distinguish ASL from English. Some might still disagree with the usage of quotation marks withing the community but what every member of the Deaf Community can agree on is that they wish ASL was respected the same way as any other spoken language.<sup>39</sup>

Not all writing authors are a part of the Deaf Community and that is why their approach differs. Obviously, a hearing author who only writes about a hearing loss and their knowledge of the community is limited to what they have researched will most likely not have the same understanding as a writer who is a part of the Deaf Community. It is essential to take into consideration the deaf culture and obstacles they have to tackle on daily basis. For example, a hearing author Whitney Gardner does consider herself a part of the community. She was introduced to it at an early age when she started taking ASL lessons at high school. She even expressed an interest in becoming and interpreter one day and keeps ties to the community<sup>40</sup>. In her book called *You're Welcome, Universe* italics is not used, only quotes as in any other language would be used.<sup>41</sup>

### 2.4.1 American Sign Language Orthography

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

#### Stokoe Notation

This method of capturing visual speech was established by William Stokoe who was a professor at Gallaudet University. In the past American Sign Language was generally considered to be some sort of a broken English. That was until Stokoe who was involved in helping others see that ASL “was (and is) a language on its own.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “ASL: Writing a Visual Language,” Laura Brown, last modified May 19, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/05/19/asl-writing-a-visual-language/>.

<sup>40</sup> “Interview with Whitney Gardner about *You're Welcome, Universe*,” Andrea Shettle and Natasha Razi, last modified March 3, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/03/03/interview-with-whitney-gardner-about-youre-welcome-universe/>.

<sup>41</sup> “ASL: Writing a Visual Language,” Laura Brown, last modified May 19, 2017, <http://disabilityinkidlit.com/2017/05/19/asl-writing-a-visual-language/>.

<sup>42</sup> “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

He is an author of a book titled A Dictionary of American Sign Language, which was released in 1965. Its purpose was not to use it for writing complete sentences but “so signs could be looked up by location, handshape and movement.”<sup>43</sup>

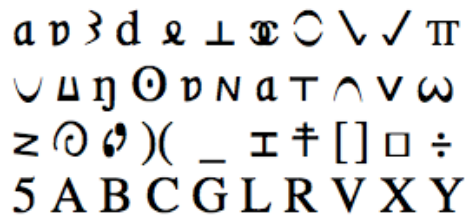


Figure 1 - Stokoe Notation

Source: A Dictionary of American Sign Language, 1965

The system is “written left to right, and uses subscripts, superscripts and diacritics. Each sign is written location first, handshape second, and movement third.” This method is frequently used by linguists and researchers.<sup>44</sup>

**SignWriting**

In 1974 a dancer Valerie Sutton came up with a new system for writing not only ASL but signed languages overall. She was asked to do so by the University of Copenhagen since her previous success of developing a writing system for dance moves. It is purposely meant to be used for any signed language. It “uses many symbols, including symbols for writing non-manual features.”<sup>45</sup>

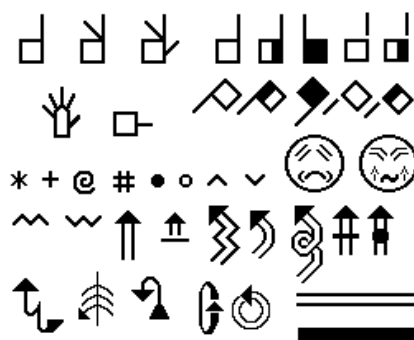


Figure 2 – SignWriting

Source: Sutton SignWriting Symbols, 1974

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

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

This writing system is written “top to bottom in columns, and symbols can be rotated in 8 directions and placed anywhere in the writing area. Symbols indicating location, handshape, and movement are mixed together and arranged to create a picture of the sign.” This writing style remains to be used by a general ASL public till this day.<sup>46</sup>

**HamNoSys**

Nowadays still popular writing system that has gone through four amendments and was developed in 1985 at the University of Hamburg and therefore is named Hamburg Notation System, or HamNoSys. Yet again this writing system was not designed for a particular sign language but can in fact be used to capture any sign language in the world. It partially offers “non-manual features” (facial expressions, body language). However, full sentences cannot be captured with HamNoSys.<sup>47</sup>



Figure 3 - HamNoSys  
Source: HamNoSys, 2004

The way HamNoSys works is that “it is written left to right, and uses subscripts, superscripts and diacritics.” The order the signs follow is “handshape, orientation, location, actions.” HamNoSys was intended to be used in an academic field.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 3, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

**SignFont**

A writing system SignFont was specifically designed for ASL at the Salk Institute in California in 1987. The author is a philologist Don Newkirk and the book was published under the title SignFont Handbook. This writing style was aimed to be used by academics.<sup>49</sup>

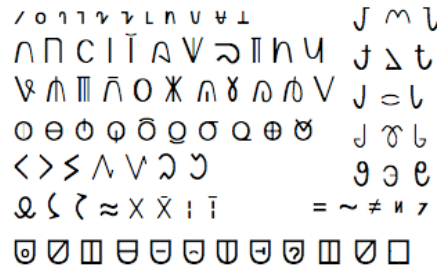


Figure 4 – SignFont

Source: SignFont Handbook, 1989

These symbols are written in a following order “handshape, contact region, non-dominant handshape, non-dominant contact region, location, non-dominant location, movements.”<sup>50</sup>

**ASLphabet**

The year of 1990 was when Samuel Supalla began his research on a clarified writing method for ASL. The deaf philologist used SignFont as its base. With the cooperation of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf “a sign language dictionary for kids” was introduced. Supalla named this writing system ASL-phabet. It is intended to be used for children educational purposes. The relatively limited set of symbols was cautiously chosen and yet again this writing system was not meant for entire sentence formation.<sup>51</sup>



Figure 5 – ASLphabet

Source: ASLphabet, 2001

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

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



In the picture above can be seen the symbols of this writing system. It consists of “22 handshapes, 5 locations, and 5 movement types.” The sign order is “handshape, location, movement.” And as the previous ones, it is written from left to right as well. Although, the difference is that this style serves only as a dictionary.<sup>52</sup>

### si5s

Robert Arnold Augustus began working on si5s in 2003. At the time he was a student at Gallaudet University and aimed to create a written system for ASL so he could write his Master’s thesis elaborating on this topic. His ASL writing system was first released “to the world at Deaf Expo in July 2010.”<sup>53</sup>



Figure 6 - si5s

Source: si5s, 2010

This writing system is meant to be physically written on paper. The reason being “symbols can be rotated at any angle and placed anywhere in the writing space.” The way it works is that “[s]ymbols and lines are arranged to form a picture of each sign, and the signs are arranged from left to right.” Since 2012 students accepted to Gallaudet University have been obligated to learn si5s, considering it was constructed for the public use.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

## Gloss

The meaning of glossing ASL is that a range of visual signs are transformed into a written form so they could be constructed in the sign language but to capture that English terms are applied symbolize every visual sign.<sup>55</sup>

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

Figure 7 – ASL Gloss

Source: English to ASL, Daniel Manzano, 2018

It has been years since glossing first started being used for teaching ASL as well as in numerous textbooks for ASL users. Although, it is usually not used in written conversation between two individuals on a regular basis but by academic staff.<sup>56</sup>

## 2.5 Lip Reading

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

<sup>55</sup> “American Sign Language has no widely accepted written form, though many ways to write ASL exist,” Symbol Font for ASL, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://aslfont.github.io/Symbol-Font-For-ASL/ways-to-write.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

location, good lighting, rephrase and repeat, carry a pen and a piece of paper, look directly at the person who is lip reading.<sup>57</sup>

According to a study only 30 to 45 percent of the English language is distinguishable during lip reading. Lip readers often have to rely on understanding the context and guessing what they could not catch.<sup>58</sup>

A stereotype is that if a hearing impaired person is able to read lips it is the best way to communicate with them. This just shows the understanding and attempt to help out hearing people oftentimes lack. Lip reading is tiring, exhausting and not half as efficient as an actual sign language. It is not uncommon for lip readers to get lost in the conversation, so just by doing a thing such as learning new language, sign language, it could ease someone's life.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "What is lipreading?," Hearing Link, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.hearinglink.org/living/lipreading-communicating/what-is-lipreading/>.

<sup>58</sup> Christine Chong-hee Lieu, Georgia Robins Sadler, Judith T. Fullerton, and Paulette Deyo Stohlamann, "Communication Strategies For Nurses Interacting with Deaf Patients," *Clinical Practice* 16, no. 4 (August 2007), 239-244, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5936730\\_Communication\\_strategies\\_for\\_nurses\\_interacting\\_with\\_deaf\\_patients](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5936730_Communication_strategies_for_nurses_interacting_with_deaf_patients).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

### 3 DEAFNESS IN LITERATURE

Deaf characters in literature are often portrayed as unlikable and typically they do not leave a mark on the readers. Frequently there is only some kind of a mention of them, their characters do not have time to evolve.<sup>60</sup>

In *The Canterbury Tales* can be found a woman character, The Wife of Bath, who is described as a gap-toothed deaf. There is a mention of her having five husbands and searching for the sixth one, she seems to enjoy being independent and in the centre of attention, she believes “she is God’s gift to men.”<sup>61</sup> After a fight she and her husband have she turns somewhat deaf.<sup>62</sup>

By God, he hit me on the ear, one day,  
Because I tore out of his book a leaf,  
So that from this my ear is grown quite deaf.  
Stubborn I was as is a lioness,  
And with my tongue a very jay, I guess,<sup>63</sup> (sic)

The book called *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* portrays a character as well, Quasimodo. A child left behind, later on adopted. His description is rather negative he is badly misshapen, has a hunchback, a protuberance sticking out of his torso and a mole so big it covered his eye. Apart from the harsh description he is a human being with the kindest heart, which is connected “to the cathedral itself.” The only way he communicates is through the alluring sound of the Notre Dame’s bells he adores so much. Paradoxically, the entire city of Paris finds joy and pleasure in his bell ringing although, they constantly reject him and cannot stand the way he looks. Quasimodo actually translates to “half-made.”<sup>64</sup>

“He shows himself; he’s a hunchback. He walks; he’s bandy-legged. He looks at you; he’s one-eyed. You speak to him; he’s deaf. And what does this Polyphemus do with his tongue?” “He speaks when he chooses,” said the old woman; “he became deaf through ringing the bells. He is not dumb.”<sup>65</sup> (sic)

<sup>60</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

<sup>61</sup> “The Canterbury Tales,” PACE University, accessed May 5, 2020, <http://csis.pace.edu/grendel/prjs3e/INDEX.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

<sup>63</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, (Clayton: Prestwick House, 2009), 1.

<sup>64</sup> “Hunchback of Notre Dame,” Sparknotes, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/hunchback/characters/>.

<sup>65</sup> Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 92-93.

The daughter of Jim in the work of Mark Twain *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Jim is illustrated as a loving father yet he is not aware that his own daughter Elizabeth is deaf and mistreats her. Jim is a person of colour and a slave. Back in the days slave owners were abusing their slaves because they believed Negro “did not have the same feelings as white people” and used this to justify their actions.<sup>66</sup>

Elizabeth, age four, went through a severe case of scarlet fever. One day when she seemed to be better and back to normal Jim asked her to shut the door but she kept on standing on the same spot with a smile at her face, which made Jim angry so he repeated the same sentence but louder, yet again no response from Elizabeth. He got furious, slapped her and left the room. Unfortunately, what Jim did not know was that Elizabeth had gone deaf as a result of the illness.<sup>67</sup>

When I came back, the door was still open. The child standing in the doorway, looking down, crying, with tears running down her face. [...] “Oh, poor little thing! Let the Lord God Almighty forgive poor old Jim because he is never going to forgive himself as long as he lives! She was completely deaf, and she couldn’t speak either. And I’d been treating her so horribly!”<sup>68</sup>

The same novel also includes another mention of deafness. Characters the King and the Duke pretend to be brothers and on a top of that the Duke pretends being deaf and they make up their own sign language to talk with one another.<sup>69</sup>

[T]hey all come and shook hands with the king and thanked him and talked to him; and then they shook hands with the duke and didn’t say nothing, but just kept a-smiling and bobbing their heads like a passel of sapheads whilst he made all sorts of signs with his hands and said “Goo-goo—goo-goo-goo” all the time, like a baby that can’t talk.<sup>70</sup> (sic)

Deaf characters are a part of Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well. Sarah and Frances better known as Misses Tutti and Frutti are both deaf. Miss Tutti does not want to accept that she is deaf and lives in silence on the other hand Miss Frutti made use of a huge ear trumpet in fear of missing out on something. On Halloween a group of children took an

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<sup>66</sup> “What does Jim’s story about the way he treated his deaf daughter in Chapter 23 of “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” tell us about him?,” Dymatsuoka, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-does-jims-story-chapter-23-about-way-he-53555>.

<sup>67</sup> “Analysis of Jim’s story,” EJV345, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.writework.com/essay/analysis-jim-s-story-po-little-lizabeth-huck-finn>.

<sup>68</sup> Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (New York: William Collins, 2010), 159.

<sup>69</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

<sup>70</sup> Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (New York: William Collins, 2010), 168.

advantage of their deafness and sneaked into their home, stole all of their furniture from the living room and hid in their cellar.

“I heard ‘em!” was the cry that awoke the Misses Barber’s neighbors at dawn next morning. “Heard ‘em drive a truck up to the door! Stomped around like horses. They’re in New Orleans by now!” Miss Tutti was sure those traveling fur sellers who came through town two days ago had purloined their furniture. “Da-rk they were,” she said. “Syrians.”<sup>71</sup> (sic)

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place a short story written by Ernest Hemmingway portrays an old deaf drunk who tends to stay up late at the café, drinking alcoholic beverages. There are two waiters at the café a young one, who rushes to get home and an old one who does not. The old one is understanding, wondering what could have led the old drunk to attempt suicide last week. He comes to a conclusion it must have been “nothing” meaning “life’s meaninglessness” according to the old waiter.<sup>72</sup>

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

“Why?”

“He was in despair.”

“What about?”

“Nothing.”

“How do you know it was nothing?”

“He has plenty of money.”<sup>73</sup> (sic)

The old drunk is wealthy but money does not fix anything in his situation. At one point of his life he was married but does not have a wife anymore. He tried to kill himself and failed so the only way he can bear with his depression is by going to the café and sitting there for hours. Even though he is deaf he can sense the “quietness of the night time and the café,” he enjoys sitting in the café on his own because it does not make him feel so alone.<sup>74</sup>

Jerome D. Salinger captured deafness in his book *The Catcher in the Rye* as something partially glorious. Holden, the protagonist and the narrator, romanticizes how improved and easier his life would be if he was deaf.<sup>75</sup>

I’d pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes. That way I wouldn’t have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody. If anybody wanted to tell me something, they’d have to write it

<sup>71</sup> Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1988), 230.

<sup>72</sup> “Old Waiter,” LitCharts, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-clean-well-lighted-place/characters/old-waiter>.

<sup>73</sup> Ernest Hemmingway, *A Clean Well-Lighted Place*, (Mankato: Creative Education, 1990), 1.

<sup>74</sup> “Life as Nothingness,” Sparknotes, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.sparknotes.com/short-stories/a-clean-well-lighted-place/themes/>.

<sup>75</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

on a piece of paper and shove it over to me. They'd get bored as hell doing that after a while, and then I'd be through with having conversations for the rest of my life. Everybody'd think I was just a poor deaf-mute bastard and they'd leave me alone..<sup>76</sup> (sic)

He debates how he would meet a pretty deaf-mute girl, they would get married, have children, purchase loads of books and “teach them how to read and write by ourselves.” He does not even consider a possibility of learning a sign language. He only dreams of distancing himself from the rest of the world and if they needed to tell him something they would “have to write it on a goddam piece of paper.”<sup>77</sup>

### 3.1 “Deaf” Literature Read by Deaf People

Frequently deaf characters seem to possess qualities such as powerlessness and inadequacy. They tend to distance themselves and live in their own world. People around them typically feel sorry for them but sometimes they can also be unnecessarily mean to them. They have problems with fitting in and barely ever are able to communicate with other characters. They are often alone and lonely..<sup>78</sup>

Students at the Learning Center for the Deaf do not seem to associate with the “negative portrayals of deafness.” The students are convinced deaf characters should be more genuine, reflect them, their ability to communicate, have friends and be smart. However, it is unusual for deaf literature characters to possess any of these features. These characters and their interpretation of deafness is actually so far off the reality that they appear to be negligible, their only purpose being literary text figures..<sup>79</sup>

“I confess I have read very few texts with deaf characters, and I'm not sure I can think of one off the top of my head. [...] I wondered if I had ever read anything that had deaf characters in it. ... I felt no connection to them at all.”<sup>80</sup> (sic)

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

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<sup>76</sup> Jerome D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 107.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 94.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 95.

enthusiastic member of the Deaf community. The student has never experienced being “treated as an abnormality or as a disability” for her deafness.<sup>81</sup>

Two different students consider Quasimodo from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to be bogus and insulting. One of the students commented that Quasimodo’s deafness and disfiguration points out how “In the past, society viewed deafness on a par with mental retardation and other unwanted disabilities. People pitied them.... The old view is outdated and inaccurate.” The other student observed that Quasimodo does not fit in the community and is viewed as an inconvenience. Deaf people’s desire is not to be considered as an inconvenience but rather be somehow beneficent to the society. This for sure is not the memo they want hearing people to remember. Readers of the Deaf community feel distressed and let down by such an awful representation like Quasimodo. They are worried such phony characters could mislead the readers who do not know anything about the Deaf community and give them a false idea about it.<sup>82</sup>

Another wrong impression could have been given by *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Jim’s gloomy response when he found out his daughter is deaf reminded another student of her parents’ reaction. She confessed her parents mourned just like Jim did, however, learning how to communicate in a sign language made it easier for them to overcome the fact their daughter went deaf. Her parents realized “being deaf is not a bad thing” it gives people an opportunity to be a part of a community and their culture, which is a plus and definitely not a reason to feel sorry for somebody. The novel illustrates deafness as “nothing more than a tragedy.”<sup>83</sup>

Another student continues on Twain’s other representation of deafness in the same novel and that would be the two characters the Duke and the King who not only faked being brothers but mainly the Duke pretended being deaf. Their made up sign language is not in any way like the real one. It demonstrates how back in the days ASL used to be disdained and recognized as “animal-like or low class.” Nonetheless, he is pleased with how the story line developed and considers Twain to be “ahead of his time.” He was able to capture the contrast between incomprehensible signs and real sign language.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 95.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



“Twain was clearly against {a negative] perspective of deaf people.... I thought it was really cool and rare to see criticism of that kind of behavior against deaf people in that time.”<sup>85</sup> (sic)

This research was conducted among students and former students of the Learning Center for the Deaf in Framingham.<sup>86</sup>

Even the experience of deafness has been likened to the materials from which walls are built: stone deaf; deaf as a post. [...] We have no choice now but to break down the barriers that separate us. At this time in history, we can no longer live with walls.<sup>87</sup> (sic)

Only because deaf characters are not portrait the way they should it does not mean the literary works have to be disregarded. Those works can still be read and enjoyed but the readers should analyse them and think about what they would change in order to address them more accordingly.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Patricia A. Dunn, Dyannelle Fields, Kelly Kim and Casey Spencer, “Disabling Assumptions,” *The English Journal* 105, no. 4 (March 2016): 95.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Jill Jepson, *No Walls of Stone: An Anthology of Literature by Deaf and Hard Hearing Writers*, Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Trent Batson, and Eugene Bergman, eds. *Angels and Outcasts: An Anthology of Deaf Characters in Literature*. (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1986).

## 4 CARSON MCCULLERS

Carson McCullers was born on February 19, 1917 in Columbus, Georgia originally named Lula Carson Smith. Her father owned a relatively prosperous jewellery shop in her hometown. At first, she pursued the idea of becoming a musician, which led to starting to take piano lessons when she was only 10 years old. As a child McCullers used to constantly ill but once she was suffering from rheumatic fever, a time when she was forced to abandon music and it actually led to her writing beginning. When she was about 17 years old she moved to New York where she attended the well known Juilliard School of Music.<sup>89</sup>

As she moved to New York she completely dropped music and went after her new devotion – writing. Nobody knows whether McCullers truly wanted to attend Juilliard or if she planned moving to New York to become a writer all along. She signed up for “creative writing classes at Columbia University and New York University while working odd jobs.”<sup>90</sup>

At relatively young age McCullers already gained success for her first work *Wunderkind* printed in the December 1936 issue of *Story* magazine, she was only 19 at the time. The subsequent year she got married to James Reeves McCullers Jr., which later on turned out to be quite a rocky ride for them both. They were both jealous types, James McCullers was a writer as well and beside that they both had an alcohol problem.<sup>91</sup>

McCullers first novel published in 1940 *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* obtained humongous “critical praise and commercial success.” The following year the couple got divorced and she also published her second novel *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. It was not as successful as the previous one, it got a lot of negative reviews, but still managed to have “some commercial success.” Yet again the novel elaborates on being lonely and isolated. Maybe the reason for many negative reviews this time around could be that it was more provocative, scandalous, than the first one. It talks about issues such as “impotency, bisexuality, infidelity, bestiality and murder,” which could have been partially influenced by her own personal life and marriage, she and her husband both identified as bisexual and had affairs behind each other’s back.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> “Carson McCullers Biography,” Biography Editors, last modified April 12, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/writer/carson-mccullers>.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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

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

## 5 DEAFNESS IN *THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER*

John Singer is in the centre of it all and thorough the entire novel he causes readers to feel emotional and at times heartbroken. He is warm-hearted, understanding, well-tended and hardworking. His eyes are a mixture of grey and green, he is a good listener of everyone in the town “for they felt that the mute would always understand whatever they wanted to say to him. And maybe even more than that.”<sup>93</sup> Singer finds out how he can connect to people, if only Antonapoulos showed him the same fondness Singer would be the happiest man alive. Nevertheless, Singer’s desire and utopian achievement is by far not recognised by Antonapoulos. Even though they are together they are lonely, they are dependent on one another, however, their communication entirely fails. Them both being hearing impaired makes them feel even lonelier and they are bitter about it. Singer represents loneliness and grief. He shares his loneliness with all other characters and his relationship with Antonapoulos illustrates the relationship of everyone else in the town. In Mick’s eyes Singer is “God,” meanwhile Dr. Copeland sees him as a kind white male who offers his shoulder to cry on to everyone. They thoroughly believe Singer’s quietness and a constant smile on his face hide behind the tremendous compassion of themselves. From Singer’s point of view their company makes him feel a bit less lonely. His thoughts are with Dr. Copeland, Mick, Jake Blout and Biff Brannon when he walks out of the town and wonders to find Antonapoulos.<sup>94</sup>

And Mick—her face was urgent and she said a good deal that he did not understand in the least. And then Biff Brannon at the New York Café. Brannon with his dark, iron-like jaw and his watchful eyes. And strangers who followed him about the streets and buttonholed him for unexplainable reasons.<sup>95</sup>  
(sic)

Others trusted Singer and whenever needed they poured their hearts out to him, meanwhile, he is just being polite and empathic. He always leaves without saying anything, which implies it is expected from him, to disappear without leaving a trace so “the mystery of Singer” stays unanswered. Singer is carrying the embodiment of loneliness on his shoulders throughout the novel. Although, he himself is profoundly lonely he is the one who is capable of taking away other people’s loneliness.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 94.

<sup>94</sup> “An Analysis of the Characters in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,” Yang Zhao, accessed May 6, 2020. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/metss-16/25862906>.

<sup>95</sup> Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 320.

<sup>96</sup> “An Analysis of the Characters in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,” Yang Zhao, accessed May 6, 2020. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/metss-16/25862906>.

Spiros Antonapoulos, known as just Antonapoulos, is an obese Greek who is deaf-mute as well. He is Singer's long-standing friend. Antonapoulos and Singer lived together, both in the same room, different beds for more than ten years. Sadly, the novel does not reveal how they got to know each other. Antonapoulos is the opposite of Singer, he is guarded, does not talk about his emotions, their conversations are mainly one sided because Antonapoulos barely signs. When Antonapoulos's mental health gets bad expeditiously he is quickly moved to the asylum. Singer does not give up on his friend and plans his life according to the occasional visits of the asylum, for which he has to travel 12 hours by train, he never forgets to bring Antonapoulos candy and other presents. Meanwhile Antonapoulos always seems to be grumpy, sick or both during Singer's visits. He does not appreciate nor value Singer's gifts and rarely discusses anything with him. Singer tries his best to have a physical and emotional connection with Antonapoulos, being someone who could relate to him, but from his side the effort is not returned. Antonapoulos is irritated, mad, bitter, pessimistic and causes problems. Hereafter he dies from nephritis, all alone in the mental institution. When Singer discovers his friend died, he settles on committing suicide.<sup>97</sup>

...there was something heavy in his pocket. For a while he rambled with bent head along the streets. 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.<sup>98</sup> (sic)

In his final moments he is depressed and crushed by Antonapoulos's death. Needless to mention people who used to talk their mind to Singer now started missing him terribly.

But truly with the death of that white man a dark sorrow had lain down in his heart. He had talked to him as to no other white man and had trusted him. And the mystery of his suicide had left him baffled and without support. There was neither beginning nor end to this sorrow. Nor understanding. Always he would return in his thoughts to this white man who was not insolent or scornful but who was just. And how can the dead be truly dead when they still live in the souls of those who are left behind? But of all this he must not think. He must thrust it from him now.<sup>99</sup> (sic)

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<sup>97</sup> Michael Eli Bower, *The Handicapped in Literature: A Psychosocial Perspective*, (Denver: Love, 1980).

<sup>98</sup> Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 325-326.

<sup>99</sup> Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, (London: Pocket Penguin, 2016), 331.

## CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASL	American Sign Language
dB	Decibel
SNHL	Sensorineural Hearing Loss

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