

## **I : Memory in Vladimir Nabokov's *Transparent Things***

This research is an attempt to examine representation of traumatic life of people in Nabokov's novel *Transparent Things* thereby diagnosing the main causes as well the attempts made by people in order to get rid of the present ongoing problem. Along with the activities of Huge Person, the narrator of the novel, activities of several other people whom he encounters in the city during his rehearsal for the magazine, are analyzed so as to observe their responses in the critical condition. The broken relationship of the family never gets resolution despite several attempts. Cultural identity of the city is lost along cultural decadence which is impossible to be restored from Huge Person's magazine. As the characters are confined within personal gain, selfishness and misunderstanding, there is no possibility of reconciliation and reunion among them rather the gap among them becomes wider and wider thereby making their trauma transparent never to be consoled through their insignificant efforts.

This novel is about the story of Hugh Person who recalls his three visits to Switzerland while he returns for his fourth and final visit. Once as a young man with his father, then as a man on a job for a publisher, then with his wife he had visited Switzerland. Hugh's past is one caught up by murder, death, a failed career and a marriage reduced by spousal murder. This is a chronicle of a melancholic journey of a lone man and his journey now living in Newyork. He falls desperately in love with a shallow woman Armande in Switzerland. While working as a proofreader for a publishing company he is haunted by his past time and again. He has good relationship with another writer named Mr. R .who is also suffering from familial pain. Both

characters want to get rid of their pain from the publication of the special edition of the magazine about the reformation of the city but they can never complete it.

Traumatic theme of the book is supported by its setting. It is based on activities of Huge Person, where he meets different people of the city during his preparation for the visiting. American city surrounded with cultural decadence due to misinterpretation of modern music by Christoff further intensifies the traumatic situation and it is also backed up by the unnamed narrator. The cultural identity crisis in the city is supposed to be restored with Huge Person's new edition of magazine. Huge Person stays at a deserted hotel which is dark and gloomy. Gothic elements including the omnipresent control of darkness, forsaken sites, the scenes set at the cemetery and others increase trauma of the characters. Moreover, the strategic application of non-performance – visiting for which Huge Person is assigned and around which the overall narrative moves – also serves to engender trauma. Huge Person even does not know the schedule of his magazine. The whole city is traumatized by misunderstanding, broken family relationships, cultural decadence as well as nostalgia towards past. The parents never fulfill their parental responsibilities; their selfishness crosses boundaries because they provide love and affection to their children on the basis of their success and achievement.

Though Huge Person is assigned to solve the problem of the city in order to console the trauma of people, he too suffers from intense fear, panic, anger, frustration and irritation. His primary aim is to work through his own trauma caused from indifference, inattention and abandonment from his family members through his magazine because his family members are assumed to read magazine, through which he can prove his talent. As the paper never published, Huge Person's as well as the city's

trauma remains transparent. Person is psychologically depressed and traumatized and suffered from melancholia and loses the terms of his life. He remembers nothing of his schedule and has no recollection concerning the arrangements for the Thursday night magazine. Though he makes various attempts to recover people and places from their pasts and imaginatively to reconstruct personal histories so as to assuage the anxiety, guilt, and regret of the present, he never becomes successful. Like Huge Person other characters in the novel including, Armande , Mr. R and Julia are also suffering from trauma. Their trauma is also related to their Family's negligence and indifference.

Mr. R, once a prestigious writer, is now degenerated into neurotic and drunkenness and wants to rehabilitate him through the writing. He has to prove himself as a good writer in order to not only work through his trauma but also to gain love and affection of his wife. His psychological trauma is presented together with his physical wound that he got when he was in Russia, is described as:

Your wound, your silly little wound! That's your real love, Leo, that wound, the one true love of your life! I know how it will be, even if we tried, even if we managed to build something all over again. The music too, that would be no different. Even if they had accepted you tonight, even if you became celebrated in this town, you'd destroy it all, you'd destroy everything, pull it all down around you just as you did before. In addition, all because of that wound. Me, the music, we are neither of us anything more to you than mistresses you seek consolation from. (16)

Person's trauma is also caused from his detachment from his wife Armande. He wants to get rid of his problem through reunion with his wife and son by proving his skill in the

writing. Gustav is traumatized due to misunderstanding with his daughter, Armande and within their misunderstanding Boris too is traumatized. Boris becomes the victim of Huge Person and Armande's separation. In the last of the novel, neither the writing takes place nor does the reconciliation and reunion among these families happen. Armande leaves Huge Person, Rosa leaves Christoff, Christine leaves Hoffmann, and Miss Collins leaves Mr. R thereby sustaining their trauma transparent despite their various attempts.

*Transparent Things* is a difficult, perplexing and uniquely challenging book (60). Moreover, Barry Lewis analyzes: "With a dreamlike lack of obvious logic, this is not an easy read, but its enigmas are absorbingly difficult – and funny" (Lewis 107). Anita Brookber calls it "a novel of outstanding breadth and originality: almost certainly a masterpiece" (40). Novel's success lies in its combination of different techniques with variety of themes:

Nobokov has constructed in *Transparent Things*, as in *Alice in Wonderland* an alternative world, with its numerous mirrors and doorways, with alternative rules and random possibilities. This is a world where the landscape takes on a dreamy quality. As if to remind the reader that all is not what it seems, each section of the novel is framed with a scene in which Huge Person invariably wakes up in panic or is roused from sleep by an insistently ringing telephone. (Luo 77)

Alice's fantastic experiences in *Wonderland* and Huge Person's peculiar experience in the European town are compared focusing on absurdity, oddity and nonsense activities that they perform. Gary Adelman goes so far as to suggest that the realm of *Transparent Things* is entirely solipsistic, since all the other characters apart from Huge Person "exist

only in reference to himself, as points of view on himself” (Adelman 178). In other words, they are not rounded, psychologically credible characters but merely projections of certain emotions or patterns of behavior and serve a particular purpose in Huge Person’s dream. There is no distinction between the past and present, which freely merge as they do in dream fantasies. This is a chronicle of a melancholy and masochistic journey of a lone man to locations of personal significance, in retrospect, in his tragic life.

Describing the book, Salman Rushdie claims that it is “courageous, complex, and rather beautiful . . . about a lost soul, endlessly circling, unable to connect with a world that knows him” (qtd. in Kellaway 7). For Wood, the story is “a long metaphor for deferred and displaced anxiety” rather than the straightforward representation of dream since “the point about anxiety is that it does not occur only in dreams” (174-75). Susie Mackenzie calls it a “controlled hallucination” (12). As Huge Person visits his past and future selves in his dream in order to frame his predicament of isolation and insignificance, Page Norman calls the nature of protagonist as “a mixture of self-deception and self-justification” (166). The present novel provides unnecessary and dreamlike elements heightening absurdist and existentialist themes. Highlighting its imaginary and fantastic quality, it is described as:

The fairy tale qualities of the novel, with its imaginary games and battles, magnificent sunsets and pastoral grassy fields, are juxtaposed with scenes of urban traffic and car-parks, identical apartments and artificial lakes, as well as deserted city squares and night streets. Unhappy memories of the past, the weariness and anxieties of travelling, the pressures and demands

of society are also in contrast with enticing fantasies of rest, comfort, and tranquility. (Luo 77)

Creating the imaginary and fantasy world, Nobokov shows that the real world is forever shadowed by the possibility of alternative worlds and alternative lives. Moreover, he further describes the novel: “The absurdities and nightmarish qualities of the world in *Transparent Things* not only reflect a dark world of desolation and alienation, but at the same time provide Nobokov with opportunities for irony and even hilarious comedy” (78). Maya Jaggi finds that “Huge Person is trapped in a prolonged anxiety and dream” (28). In this sense, *Transparent Things* dramatizes the predicament of a bewildered editor.

Barry Lewis points out that many bizarre scenes in *Transparent Things* embody displacement and condensation and he argues that those psychological aspects of dream work are equivalent of ‘metonymy’ and ‘metaphor’ in the literature (Lewis 105). Lewis pinpoints abundant metaphorical examples of displacement in Huge Person’s narration. Regarding identity crisis, he further says:

*Transparent Things* is about the elusiveness of identity and the treachery of memory, regret and the hope of redemption. Though its atmosphere is dreamlike, it actually is hyper-realistic, portraying with enigmatic precision of a very high order “real” life as each of us actually experiences it. Like all truly important literature, it raises more questions than it answers. (107)

Its central focus is hyper-reality. It goes beyond everyday real life situation thereby incorporating absurdity, dreamlike and uncanny elements.

John Carey describes “This is a book about stress, a problem of epidemic proportions in our culture that modern fiction largely ignores” (qtd. in Lewis 106). It is also praised for its creation of dreamlike different world in which people can enjoy forgetting their pains and sufferings:

This is *Transparent Things* by Vladimir Nobokov, one of his least-regarded novels, but to me his best and one of the best books ever written . . . It’s cyclic structure (the last chapter ends where the book began) which makes me feel like I’ve gone into a maze, but rather than feeling panicky, it makes me feel soporific and almost sedated. It’s a sort of Alice in Wonderland for grown-ups, with a dream-like, beguiling quality which draws the reader into the strange world contained in its pages. (Robbins 428)

The strange world that *Transparent Things* has created is very important. It raises many contemporary concerns that the mainstream literature has left. Nobokov’s novels are preoccupied by memories, their potential to digress and distort, to forget and to silence, and above all to haunt. The protagonists of his fiction seek to overcome loss by making sense of the past through acts of remembrance. They deceive, rather than reveal themselves through story telling.

The novel chronicles his many engagements connected with the preparations for the writing and a number of increasingly puzzling interactions with the local people encountered during his wanderings around the city. The novel ends on an inconclusive note, following the curious non-occurrence of Huge Person’s magazine on the night of the writing and the protagonist preparing to leave for Helsinki, the place of his next

professional engagement. Though Vladimir Nobokov is not labeled as a writer of historical fiction, most of his writings until now are set against the backdrop of World War II, particularly the atomic bombing in Nagasaki, the postwar decline of British Empire, and Japan's invasion to China. These historical scenarios provide Nobokov with a context to explore the emotional and psychological trauma the war has inflicted on the protagonists, thus reminding the contemporary reader of the significance of remembering the past. His fiction also presents a picture of how individuals cope with their personal loss and how they go through the painful process from self-deception, to self-denial and last to self-redemption and Nobokov always ends his fiction with a hopeful note, giving the reader a sense of optimism toward the life ahead.

Trauma is a personal, unique experience that can and must not be generalized. All of the novel's characters suffer from different experiences which has traumatized them differently and to varying degrees. Trauma refers to an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person, often leading to neurosis. It is an event or series of events or context that is emotionally overwhelming and depressing. The individual feels helpless or powerless to control the events or situation. Trauma is used mostly in medicine and psychology. But, there is a current effort to borrow the concept of trauma from medicine and psychiatry and to introduce it into sociological theory and even in literature; the authors exploit the notion of trauma in order to show the actual condition of people in the historical context. Trauma leads to great distress and disruption.

Originated from the Latin, meaning 'wound,' trauma is widely used to refer to emotional shock following a stressful event or, more generally, to an experience that is



deeply distressing. In this case trauma refers to a psychological rather than a physical wound. It overwhelms an individual's ability to use normal coping mechanisms to adapt to a situation. It disrupts an individual's frame of reference i.e. beliefs about themselves and the world. Disruptive behaviors of the characters are presented as the results of shocking events in their lives. Deaths and loss of their near and dear due to war, violence, and terrorism and so on are the primary causes of trauma. Traumatic people lose the normal pace of their like and show abnormal activities indigestive to the standard and established norms and values of the society. Moreover, trauma is generalized as:

. . .trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled receptive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is central and requiring image of trauma in our century. (Caruth 181)

Trauma is resulted from the sudden and unexpected events that threaten the psychic condition of people. The understanding of trauma has frequently been dominated by interpretations rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition. According to this approach, defense mechanisms are a key issue and successful therapy requires bringing the experience out into the open – its articulation. Although analogies between psychoanalytically perceived individual trauma and collective trauma may be useful, in a cultural analysis of trauma attention should be focused on “reflexive processes of communication, interaction and symbolization” (Whitbeck 126). Although most of the definitions of trauma are limited to

“threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity,” many events may be traumatic even if life threat or injury is not an issue (Briere 169).

Sometimes, many events are not traumatic even if they are upsetting and life threatening. Such situation applies in case of *Transparent Things* with its focus on absurd life of the protagonists.

In *Transparent Things* traumatic life of people is explored and presented with subtle details. In their absurdist world, people are in search of their identity which is their worthless practice and as a result they are traumatized. Trauma in this novel is resulted from loss, denial, maladjustment, nostalgia and identity crisis of the characters. Huge Person’s anxiety is rooted in his painful past and the toxic relationship with his parents, particularly the authoritarian and overly demanding father. Traumatic past of the characters cannot be erased from their life as a result it has great effects in their present life. The cultural loss of the city is also related with its degraded past, which requires reformation. All the senior citizens cannot fulfill their responsibilities. They become selfish and selfishness and dissatisfaction becomes the main cause of their trauma. The dreamlike elements of the novel also support its theme – in reality the whole novel is the extension of a dream. The overall narrative is closely tight with the theme of trauma which the characters cannot work through or act out in spite of their continuous attempts.

Thus, the novel is the first-person account of Huge Person of three days spent in a highly mysterious Eastern European city. In his preparation of magazine, he meets various people and lives an absurdist life. His primary aim to regain his parents’ love and affection through the writing fails. Moreover, his broken relationship with his wife and son does not improve. The traumatic situation is highlighted through strategical

application of unnamed narrator W. The plight and predicament of many families is interwoven with the story of Huge Person. The children in all of these families are traumatized due to the negligence and inattention of their parents. Though Huge Person is assigned an important task of improving city's cultural decadence cause due to misinterpretation of modern music by Christoff, the great musician and editor, he is never successful to do anything and in fact he never gives the writing. In order to analyze such situation of the novel, it is analyzed from the perspective of trauma. The characters try to work through ongoing trauma through music as well as their mutual relationship with their senior ones. The research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is introduction that examines the writer's concerns with trauma in his writings and literature reviews as well as his biological information. The second chapter is related with the textual analysis with theoretical modality in imbedded form. The final chapter summarizes the overall research squeezing its crux and kernel.

## **II : Representation of Traumatic Life in *Transparent Things***

The present research examines the representation of traumatic life of people in *Transparent Things* by Vladimir Nobokov thereby discerning the root causes behind such condition as well the attempts of people to work through in order attain normal pace of life. The overall plot structure is tight together through the theme of trauma as all the characters in the novel have to undergo traumatic condition of different enormity. It incorporates the frustrated activities of Huge Person during his three-day stay in the hotel for the preparation of his upcoming writing and his inability to control the situation. As a victim of amnesia, he forgets everything and as a result he is obliged to live a traumatic life. He is in the wrong place at wrong time and he cannot give his writing and as a result the problem of the city supposed to be solved through his writing and right interpretation of modern music, remains same. Moreover there is misunderstanding among old and young generations. Parents measure their children through their achievement and success, on the basis of which they provide their love and affection. This becomes the sole cause of trauma not only for the family of Huge Person but also for the families of Hoffman, Mr. R, Gustav and others. In such situation, the older generations want improvement through music and its cultural interpretation while the younger generation attempt to get rid of their problems by showing their talent to their parents. Thus the story of *Transparent Things* revolves around preserving native culture through music and regaining love and affection of the parents through personal achievement and success.

Vladimir Nobokov's *Transparent Things* depicts the story of editor Mr. Huge Person. Hugh Person, a somnambulant editor, is the novel's protagonist, whose life is narrated by an ethereal presence – the ghost of a novelist known only as R. – who haunts

Person as an author haunts his characters. Composed of 26 short chapters, the novel follows Person as he visits Switzerland where, on a previous visit, his father died unexpectedly, and where, on a separate occasion still, he met R. through whom he met his wife, Armande. His present trip is full of nostalgia, but as Person tries to break temporal boundaries to experiences past by closing spatial ones, the narrator exposes the thinness of reality in the present. Armande is the spark that ignites Person's mundane life, and which pushes him beyond his comfortable existence. Out of his depth, but rooted firmly in time, unexceptional circumstances lead to exceptional actions for Hugh Person as he makes his way towards a state of 'being' As a result, he ends up as this fantastic edition. He thinks that if he gives this crucial writing, it will heal everything. But, it's too late. Whatever has happened with his parents has happened long ago. And there's the story of Mr. R, an old man who is trying to make good on a relationship that he's completely messed up. He thinks that if he can bring it off as a writer, he'll be able to win back the love of his life. Those two stories take place in a society that believes all its ills are the result of having chosen the wrong academic values. All the characters attempt their best to get rid of their ongoing problems but in vain. Writing therapy is applied to console people but Huge Person never gives his magazine though he does his rehearsal throughout the novel. The trauma binds the overall narrative of the novel.

Contemporary thinking about trauma has been rooted in the work of scholar Caruth, heralded as having produced some of the most pioneering work on trauma to date. In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive

phenomena (Caruth 156). Sztompka defines cultural trauma as the culturally defined and interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of a society, and presents a model of the traumatic sequence, describing typical conditions under which cultural trauma emerges and evolves (449). He further defines it as:

The most noticeable symptom of a condition conducive to trauma is that people talk about it and want to do something about it. Even in the most repressive regimes, if they cannot talk publicly, they more than substitute for it in the private circles of family, close friends, and acquaintances. The condition of cultural disorientation, accompanied by social concern and expressed by intensified emotional, intellectual, organizational activism, provides a necessary background for the cultural trauma to appear. It is by no means a sufficient condition. Precipitating traumatizing situations or events, and cultural reinterpretations of these, are the next stages of the traumatic sequence. (456)

Assuming that collective trauma is a concept referring to very diverse traumatogenic events, one may – albeit with reserve – agree with the statement that a given situation may be traumatogenic in one socio-cultural context and non traumatogenic in another – at least in regard to the initiation of the reflexive process of memory. Thus, the cultural process of collective trauma is not restricted to the psychological dynamics of mechanisms of defense and adaptation – ‘dealing’ with trauma or ‘working through’ trauma. A traumatogenic event must be associated with a strong negative affect that accompanies defining a tragedy, shame, a collective catastrophe, in order for it to have a traumatic impact (40–41). Trauma has these features: revolution, racial riots; forced

migration or deportation, ethnic cleansing; genocide, extermination, mass murder; acts of terrorism or violence; assassination of the political leader, resignation of a high-ranking official; opening secret archives and revealing the truth about the past; revisionist interpretation of national heroic tradition; collapse of an empire, lost war (Caruth 452). The cultural understanding of trauma is in no way undermined by the fact that trauma has an affective dimension.

The very beginning of *Transparent Things* arouses traumatic situation of the characters. Huge Person arrives at a deserted hotel, which strikes him as “claustrophobic” and “gloomy” (3). Nobody is there to welcome him. In the absurdist situation, he forgets his commitments and details of his stay in the city. The claustrophobic aura of the opening scene is supported by the rest of the text in which the protagonist finds himself either in gloomy interiors, narrow alleys or in empty, desolate spaces, which are shrouded in darkness. The setting is often endowed with elements of the Gothic, such as the ubiquitous reign of darkness, forsaken sites, let alone the scenes set at the cemetery. The disturbing atmosphere of the city is intensified by the aura of an oppressive system which appears to be in control of it. These situations of the novel also support the theme of trauma.

Huge Person gets lost in the maze-like city experiencing the fear of having overslept and missed an important event and the fear of being completely unprepared for a crucial exam, which is the upcoming visiting. Countless times Huge Person describes his feelings as a mixture of intense fear, panic, anger, frustration and irritation. As the narrative unfolds, Huge Person seems to understand that he is regarded as the messianic remedy that will save the citizens from their emotional lethargy. Regarding himself as an

honest, well-meaning person, he tries to be kind to everyone and to do his best to help, but as the different demands overlap he painfully finds he cannot cope with them all.

*Transparent Things* pervades a constant fear of the small daily duties or various commitments that might divert the protagonist from his true vocation or from his great task he might have done.

Trauma in *Transparent Things* is emerged with the characters past activities and their present responses. Their reaction to the unsatisfactory past hampers their present life. The present plight and predicament of the characters is ridden with the sense of loss or some kind of torturous life they lived. Cathy Caruth describes trauma as “a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events” (115). Trauma is inextricably linked with forgetting, as traces of the original traumatic experience often stay hidden beneath the surface of memory. The memory of trauma is narrated differently to conventional routes of recall, and often takes the form of “bodily sensations, behavioral re-enactments, nightmares, and flashbacks” (115). While trauma is often discussed in relation to violent events that have a harrowing outcome on the individual’s body or mind, there are also traumatic experiences that deal with a more pervasive sense of absence or loss, and traumas of identity that tell the subject that they are not who they think they are. Many of Nobokov’s characters experience this more pervasive sense of loss, often compounded by occurrences of involuntary memories as well as their own acts of self-deception.

Theme of trauma in the writings of Vladimir Nobokov is interwoven with the sentiments of loss, denial, maladjustment, nostalgia and identity crisis. These traumatogenic factors give haunting wound for people. The intensity of trauma in the



novel is very high. In an interview with Maya Jaggi for *Wasafiri* in 1975, Nobokov talked about the link between a lost equilibrium in childhood and the imperative to express and address the lack of balance through art, and, in Nobokov's case, through writing novels:

The thing that has gone wrong in the past might have been . . . something as simple as childhood coming to an end, discovering that the world is more complicated than the world of childhood. It's my feeling that a lot of creative people and those strongly motivated in politics derive a lot of that motivation and drive from something that's out of line way back . . . it's a strange thing to do to write novels. You don't, unless there's a very strong reason. . . . It's all about having some equilibrium that's been lost.

Sometimes it's associated with some horrific thing, like being abused as a child, but often it's not as blatant. . . . Perhaps it's because most of us do have something wrong that we're drawn to the arts, to books and films.

(Jaggi 22-3)

Trauma in human life starts from the feeling of loss. Nobokov experienced this loss of equilibrium from his early childhood when his family never returned to Japan after an extended time living in Hugu Person. The decision to stay in Hugu Person and not return to Japan proved to be a sudden severing of Nobokov's strong emotional ties with his grandfather. He too suffers from nostalgia.

*Transparent Things* dramatizes the causes of wound in the life of people and their consequences along with the responses of people in different situations. This stems from the writer Mr. R's physical wound that he sustained in Russia many years before. The wound has been a great irritation and pain for him, but it has also become for him an 'old

friend'. His wound fascinates him and he would touch it and caress it while conducting an orchestra (86). Mr. R gives his wound plenty of attention and tries to draw others into an obsession over their own wounds, as exemplified in the episode when he comforts a widow at a funeral by encouraging her to 'caress' her wound that will be with her for the rest of her life, and to do it while it is 'raw and bleeding'. The wound has become for Mr. R not only a source of comfort, but also the main focus of his life. This wound, described by Shaffer as the "incarnation of his masochism and narcissism" is Mr. R's real obsession, and his music and the love of his life, Miss Collins, are relegated to second place. Mr. R perceives the wound to be incurable, that it will never heal, despite Huge Person's suggestion to him that he should seek specialist help. This extreme pessimism masks an indulgent, self-absorbed and self-inflicted suffering that blinds Mr. R to the possibility of any form of relief. He even becomes drunkard and attempts suicide. From his point of view, the only consolation to the ache of the wound is his music; even a possible reunion with Miss Collins will only ever be just a consolation for him. In this sense, Mr. R's working through his ongoing trauma is listening to music or engaging in relationship with Miss Collins.

Vladimir Nobokov's *Transparent Things* is an unusual tale of displacement, which presents the reader with a series of improbable temporal retentions and pretensions as Huge Person, the novel's narrator, negotiates the disturbingly permeable borders of past and present, self and other, in an imaginary, though ostensibly an Central European city. The novel exemplifies the trauma fiction aesthetic in a number of ways: in its refusal of closure; in its discontinuous temporality; in its representation of the trans-generational transmission of trauma; and in its structuring of trauma as an

unrepresentable event only accessible through belated repetition “in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (Caruth 4). We know from Caruth’s definition what happens to victims of trauma, but *Transparent Things* is a case study in the outcome for those who inflict it. Such infliction is traumatic in itself, the perpetrator equally incapable of processing the events as the survivor. Unwittingly suffering, and dramatically unable to turn his Gordian sword upon himself, Huge Person constitutes an insulated mystery in plain sight. From the description of Huge Person’s activities as stated by Barry Lewis traumatic life can be traced:

Huge Person, an internationally acclaimed writing editor, is the victim of an inexplicable amnesia. He arrives on a Tuesday at an American town, somewhere in the heart of Europe, without a schedule. But this is not just another venue on his tour: it is the home of his partner, Armande, and child, Boris, facts that have curiously slipped his mind . . . alongside the dream-story of Huge Person's European surgeon exists another story, Huge Person's real story. While Huge Person grapples with the complications of his schedule, Armande and Boris, incidental characters--the daughter and grandson of the hotel porter--impinge on Huge Person's attention until it slowly becomes evident that they are not wholly unfamiliar to him, that they are, in fact, his wife and child. (104)

Trauma, in its psychoanalytic variant, has been described by Cathy Caruth as the response to ‘unexpected or overwhelming violent events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.’ Vladimir Nobokov’s *Transparent Things* insists upon the magnitude of

power our traumas possess over our waking lives; whatever illusions of functionality we may impose upon ourselves and others, we are all always engaged in smoothing over the cracks where our traumas lie. To make matters worse, the characters populating the novel are self-conscious about their own nostalgia, sabotaging even the security offered by an imaginary past.

Mr. R's trauma is related mainly to his physical wound and other effects it invites in his life so it is not limited to physical body but becomes tormenting factor with emotional and mental touch. Mr. R suffers much from this pain. The scene in which the doctor amputates Mr. R's left leg with an 'oily' hacksaw found in the boot of Hoffman's car expresses his traumatic condition. The horror of the episode is undermined by the doctor's unjustified assertion that Mr. R 'was attempting suicide' and Huge Person's distracted and comparatively trivial phone call to Armande, and by Mr. R's bizarre mixture of serenity and anger. His trauma can be observed in the following scene:

As I searched through my pockets for some coins, I could see through the glass panel the figure of the surgeon walking slowly towards the supine Mr. R, the hacksaw held tactfully behind his back. Geoffrey Saunders and the others were circling uneasily, looking down into their tin cups or at their feet. Then the surgeon turned and said something to them, and two of the men, Geoffrey Saunders and a young man in a brown leather jacket, went over reluctantly to join him. For a few seconds the three of them stood looking down grimly at Mr. R. (30)

Mr. R becomes wounded throughout his life and at the same time his psychological trauma becomes even deeper. He is haunted by the memory of the scene in which doctor

used hacksaw for treating his wound. It is the memory of a “particular spring morning” when he and Miss Collins have recently arrived and moved into their new home in the city. In this episode, they are both sitting outside resting in the fresh air and sunshine. They have not spoken to each other until midnight when Mr. R decides to make his way into their bedroom to make amends. Though innocent and trivial, carries for Mr. R the incredible weight of Miss Collins’s personality, to such an extent that he turns away from the door and goes to sleep in the living room. Since the occurrence of this event, their relationship becomes cold and never fully recovers. Their failed relationship makes their life perpetually traumatized.

The non-linear plot with its gothic scenes and dreamlike uncanny elements haunted by the traumatic past increases the theme of trauma and heightens the significance such traumatic experience. Pioneers of trauma theory are Caruth, Felman and Laub. Equally important are Van der Kolk, Van der Hart, Georges Bataille and Harold Bloom. Trauma is elaborated as:

Trauma is a result of a complex interplay between life experiences (including personal history, specific traumatic events, and the social and cultural context) and the developing self (including self-capacities, ego resources, psychological needs, and cognitive schemas about self and world). . . An experience is traumatic if it (1) is sudden, unexpected, or non-normative, (2) exceeds the individual’s perceived ability to meet its demands, and (3) disturbs the individual’s frame of reference and other central psychological needs and related schemas. (McCann and Pearlman 10)

Trauma refers to an event, series of events, or context that is emotionally overwhelming. The individual feels helpless or powerless to control the event or situation. Trauma, after all, is an incomprehensible event, and defies all categorization and representation. If there must be any kind of representation, Caruth calls for modes that are as unsettling as the event itself (qtd. in Leys 269). Similarly, Walter Benn Michaels postulates that the horrors of trauma can only be expressed if language does “not [transmit] the normalizing knowledge of horror but horror itself” (268). Since trauma is defined as a radical break with previous references of which the symptoms make themselves known belatedly, LaCapra counts “writing trauma” as one of those potentially recurring symptoms. Gradually, writing trauma allows a victim to come to terms with the traumatic past and thus forms an elementary component of the healing process. In literary terms, writing trauma can “achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms” (LaCapra 186). But the actual representation of trauma is impossible as it has multiple manifestations in the same situation.

Nobokov’s novel parodies the broad cultural failure to answer this imperative and instead endlessly reproduces the pathology of trauma and trauma culture to comic effect. At the Thursday night magazine, it is hoped that Mr. R will appear as the savior of the city, righting the temporal crisis with a magazine that will generate a curative narrative and restore order, perhaps through a kind of linearity that the inhabitants of the city sense is missing. However, instead of providing a kind of curative balm, R’s writing becomes an allegory of a mass culture of narcissism and the playful non-closures and temporal disruptions of the novel itself. In the end, R takes things too far, he collapses, and it is his wound that is left centre stage: ‘Let them see it’ he proclaims (42). The response of Miss

Collins, the city's self-appointed counselor, is emphatic and seems to provide an overt commentary on the affective excess parodied in the novel.

For Miss Collins, Mr. R's relation to his traumatic past has become monstrous; it is no longer concerned with healing the self, but only with legitimizing a paralyzing melancholia. Mr. R's desires are not directed at restoring an idealized past, nor even constructing a provisional narrative to allow him to be reconciled to the present. His willful failure to represent his traumatic past does not correspond to any ethical imperative; rather, Mr. R exploits the structuring of trauma around aporia to locate his subjectivity in a groundless melancholia. As such, *Transparent Things* represents an extravagant parable about the excesses of a culture saturated by melancholia.

The emotional wounds experienced by Hoffman and Mr. R are similar - they reflect the emotional trauma of characters that experience rejection from those closest to them. They are unable to live up to their respective partners' expectations and find themselves unable to receive love and acceptance. These wounds appear to have been triggered by seemingly trivial actions those closest to them. Cathy Caruth points out in *Unclaimed Experience* that there is a delayed effect to trauma, and through "its delayed appearance and its belated address" the wound attempts to communicate to us "a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). It is interesting that the word wound was the original meaning for trauma (3). The delayed mental effect of trauma leads to a haunting of the mind, where the wound of a memory persists throughout an individual's life. It is in the desire to fix these wounds and make up for past inadequacies that these two characters strive towards their utmost for Thursday night's writing: Hoffman in his

organizational duties for the writing, and Mr. R in recovering from alcoholism to perform his role as a writer again. Both of them have spent a large part of their lives striving to fix the wound that still causes them pain and refuses to let them go, but they ultimately fall under the weight of public expectation that accompanies their huge ambitions. In his interview with Jaggi, Nobokov describes the idea of the wound:

It's something you cannot fix or heal; all you can do is caress it. If creative people are driven to writing novels, politicians to leading parties or revolutions, by some inner thing, success is never going to fix it; the most it can be is a consolation for the thing they lost early on. Mr. R thinks late in life that even love of a woman can only be a consolation, but nevertheless, he thinks it's worth having. These people don't get even that, that's why they are transparent. (23)

These people, the characters in *Transparent Things*, receive very little or no consolation by the end of the novel. All of them appear to be works-in-progress, and the mind-boggling events of Thursday evening's writing may well have shaken them out of their unrelenting stubbornness, but the novel withholds from the reader any sense of resolution for these characters. It is the memory of their own respective wounds and the need to fix the wound or make some kind of compensation to comfort the pain of the wound that drives them in their professions. The only character who appears to have come away fairly unharmed is Stephan who, after giving a brilliant magazine in the absence of his parents, realizes his ambition to be a writing editor and the need to leave the city to seek further training. He is the only character who seems to have come to some kind of people about his past and his ambitions, even though his wound of not having his parents'



acceptance still exists. In this sense, he too cannot remain untouched with the sense of trauma and his trauma is even deeper than that of other characters.

Trauma seeks the disintegration of family relationships, culture and even civilization due to various reasons. It finds out the reasons and possible consequences of clash among family members when there is misunderstanding among family members mainly old and young generation:

Traumatizing events or situations may produce dislocations in the routine, accustomed ways of acting or thinking, change the life-world of the people in often dramatic ways, and reshape their patterns of acting and thinking . . . potentially traumatizing events or situations: unemployment, inflation, lowering of living standards and degradation of prestige, poverty, rising crime, a flow of immigrants, and corruption among the political elite.

(Sztompka 456)

Due to traumatizing events, the daily routine of the people is also changed. People lose their track of life and are compelled to do as per the demand of the time. The meaning of ‘trauma’ has become broader – once referring to the psychological experiences of individuals, this term was extended to the collective experience of traumatized communities or – as in the concept of trauma – beyond the borders of directly affected participants. Once trauma was confined within only psychology, but with the development of different theories and trends, it has got entry into cultural and historical aspects.

All the characters in *Transparent Things* have some kind of emotional and psychological wounds or traumas to deal with. Stephan, the aspiring young musician who is hampered by the burden of his parents’ high musical expectations and their perpetual

disappointment in him, longs to break free from the shackles of his parents and the limited city they live in to pursue his musical training in a less stifling environment. Hoffman, Stephan's father and a hotel manager, is becoming emotionally estranged from his wife Christine and has spent much of their married life trying to live up to what he perceives as her expectations of him and to gain her acceptance. In Mr. R, Stephan and Hoffman we see the unraveling of three characters that have spent many years of their lives striving to gain some form of acceptance from those close to them. Hoffman, in particular, bears the wound of a 22 year-old memory that made him realize that he could never be equal to the history of Christine's upbringing.

*Transparent Things* is set in European and American landscape with a disembodied narrator travelling elsewhere and staying in hotels. In this novel, Nobokov explores the idea of the exile as orphan – the larger themes of alienation and disconnection of the contemporary world. Huge Person expects attendance and approval from his parents. However the parents never show their presence and their absence haunts the entire novel. Though they inevitably fail, all the children like Huge Person, anxiously and desperately, try to please and win approval from their parents, terrified of disappointing them. Throughout his sojourn in the foreign land, Huge Person is preoccupied with thoughts of his parents' coming to hear his magazine: he is sure he will show them this time, finally, how brilliant he really is. There are two anticipated scenes, both imaginary, of the parents' arrival. The following scene shows his imagination of feeling lost and helpless with the feeling of his parents' arrival:

I suddenly saw my mother and my father, both small, white-haired and bowed with age, standing outside the railway station, surrounded by

luggage they could not hope to transport by themselves. I could see them looking at the strange city around them, and then eventually my father, his pride getting the better of his good sense, picking up two, then three cases, while my mother tried in vain to restrain him, holding his arm with her thin hand, saying: 'No, no, you can't carry that. It's much too much.' And my father, his face hard with determination, shaking off my mother saying: 'But who else is going to carry them? How else will we ever reach our hotel? Who else is going to help us in this place if we don't help ourselves?' All this while cars and lorries roared past them and commuters rushed by. (91)

Huge Person desperately waits for the arrival of his parents but he is not sure whether he can show his talent to his parents and make them happy in order to gain their love and affection or not. He says, "Surely it was not unreasonable of me to assume they would come this time? After all, I'm at the height of my powers now. How much longer am I supposed to go on travelling like this?" (66). This desire to please the parents, to not let them down or disappoint them, is similar to the exile's longing to appease the sense of torment for forsaking the past and a homeland; in a sense, the desire for success and fame is also part of the process of making amends.

Trauma has a long-lasting effect in our life. It may sometimes change the way of life. It is imperative for everyone to come out of the traumatic condition. Traumatic condition makes the life characters fragmented and disorganized. Once the trauma symptoms clearly emerge that continues the character's narrative, unfolding the convoluted path each character takes in his travel through trauma.

In his essay “Reflections on Exile,” Said makes this connection between exiles and orphans: “Exiles are always eccentrics who feel their difference . . . as a kind of orphan-hood” (182). Exiles and orphans both bear an original loss, and spend their lives trying to “reconstitute their broken lives” by creating narratives of seeming coherence in recognition of the loss (177). Many Japanese people who leave their country after the Second World War feel exiled in the western country and such feeling remained in their children and grandchildren as well. Criss of identity remains in them, they are suffered from nostalgia and inferiority looms large in them. Mr. R, as a portrait of Huge Person in his old age, explains that he has a “pain not and emotional pain or wound of heart bout simply a wound” (16). His condition is mentioned as:

For some time Mr. R appeared to be rehearsing something in his head, his lips mouthing the odd word, and it did not feel appropriate to say anything to him . . . It's a wound. I got it many years ago and it's always given me trouble, bad pain. Perhaps that's why I drank so much. If I drink, I don't feel it. . . . After a moment I said: 'You're referring to a wound of the heart, Mr. Mr. R?' . . . I had a wound. I was injured, very badly, many years ago. In Russia, The doctors weren't so good, they did a bad job. And the pain's been bad. It's never healed properly. (16)

Mr. R’s trauma is associated with physical pain that he got when he was in Russia. He got never ending and never healing pain due to which his mental as well as psychological pain is increased. He is emotionally paralyzed, physically exhausted and psychologically retarded. His hopelessness is paralleled with that of Huge Person. He imagines the reconciliation between him and his wife and dreams of a farm house: “We’ll find

something else, another cottage maybe. Something surrounded by grass and trees where our animal can enjoy itself. Our animal, it won't like it here" (18). This imagination is resulted from his frustrated mentality. His only way to solve his problem is to improve his relationship with his wife and live a peaceful life.

In *Transparent Things*, the three clusters of families play various roles as extensions or variations of Huge Person's history: Gustav, the hotel porter, his daughter Armande, and her son Boris; Hoffman, the hotel manager, his wife Christine and their son Stephan; and finally, Mr. R, the disgraced writer, his ex-wife, Miss Collins, and Bruno, the dog. Nobokov adopts a method he calls 'appropriation' to tell the story of Huge Person's life: "He would bump into people who are versions of himself at various stages in his life . . . By meeting this gallery of characters, you've covered his life" (32). Huge Person desperately wishes to make up for what he has lost, and the presence or rather the absence, of his parents, haunts the novel. The parents are forever hovering in the background, though almost always in unhappy episodes of the narrator's memories, which are replayed through equally anguished relationships between children and their parents – Armande and her father Gustav, Boris and his father Huge Person, Stephan and his parents.

Dominick LaCapra says that there are two ways of dealing with mental disturbance one is acting out and another is working through. If we deal with the term with the way of acting out it is related with recurrence as he says that trauma is a kind of obligation. It is a behavior which the patient repeat compulsorily. People relate the past to present and become unhappy and disturbed. Because of something unpleasant events in their past, they become mentally disturbed and tortured. One event in one situation takes

is connotative meaning. One kind of event gives torture to another episode or situation as he comments:

There are two very broad ways of coming in terms with transference, or with one's transference implication in the object of study: acting out; and working -through. Acting - out is related to repetition, and even the repetition - compulsion - the tendency to repeat something compulsively. This is very clean in the case of people who undergo a trauma. They were still fully in the past to exist in the present as if they were still fully in the past, with no distance from it. They tend to relive occurrence intrude on their present existing, for example in flashbacks; or in nightmares or in words that are compulsory repeated and that doesn't seem to connection from another situations in another place.(233)

Here, time and again the traumatic events are repeated and gives tortures to us. Those bad dreams are like our wound which gives us pain for the time being. After sometime that fact wound becomes heard.

Person is psychologically depressed and traumatized. He is suffered from melancholia and loses the terms of his life. On his arrival in the city, he could remember nothing' of his schedule and has already missed his first appointment; he has no recollection concerning the arrangements for the Thursday night magazine at which he is expected to perform and the name of the writer, Mr. R. The novels' narrators variously attempt to recover people and places from their pasts and imaginatively to reconstruct personal histories so as to assuage the anxiety, guilt, and regret of the present.

LaCapra describes acting-out and working-through as two processes by which persons and societies deal with traumatic historical pasts. LaCapra associates acting-out with a repetition compulsion, repeating the trauma and re-inscribing its power to wound, and working-through with the generation of alternate relations between people that counter those destroyed by trauma and that continue to be threatened by acting-out. If we think about these terms in terms of psychological understandings of trauma, LaCapra's arguments seem to give with how psychology makes sense of trauma. Acting out is a process where traumatized victims commit actions that somehow repeat negative emotions/actions associated with trauma and working-through counters this process. It is described as "a mechanism by which the patient expresses drive, fantasy, desire in an action and it is introduced with close connection with phenomena such as resistance, transference, repetition, compulsion and remembering" (3). It is worth saying that both LaCapra thinks acting-out is an inevitable and often necessary part of the healing process as he says:

. . . for people who have been severely traumatized, it may be impossible to fully transcend acting-out the past. In any case, acting-out should not be seen as a different kind of memory from working-through -- they are intimately related parts of a process. Acting-out, on some level, may very well be necessary, even for secondary witnesses or historians. On a certain level, there's that tendency to repeat. (2)

LaCapra is concerned, specifically, with historical trauma and how societies come to terms and make sense of these traumas: "A crucial issue with respect to traumatic historical events is whether attempts to work through problems, including rituals of

mourning, can viably come to terms with...the divided legacies, open wounds, and unspeakable losses of a dire past” (698). While LaCapra is not explicitly analyzing magazine, societal attempts to repair the social fabric inevitably occupy the space of magazine at some point – rituals of mourning being just one of many kinds of magazine.

Huge Person relives and repeats his traumatic familial past through his relationship with Armande and her mother Armande, although in keeping with the structures of traumatic experience, Huge Person’s original trauma must remain undisclosed and unrepresented. As Cathy Caruth writes, “Trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic re-experiencing of the event thus carries with it . . . the impossibility of knowing that first constituted it” (10). In *Transparent Things*, this abandoning of the traumatic site is also figured in part through Huge Person’s migration, as he makes his way through the incomprehensible border territory that is the city, in which he is continually leaving and unexpectedly arriving back home. This is also to say that Huge Person is repeatedly and unwillingly returning to the site of his trauma. Huge Person’s trauma gets expressed in his migration, alcoholism, adultery, abandonment – as played out through the uncanny life. Although the novel is focalized through Huge Person, it would be erroneous to imagine that Armande, Stephan, Mr. R, and others are projections of a consciousness desperate to work through a childhood trauma. Rather, it is the trauma that speaks first and that is the central subject of the novel.

Trauma can become a condition of everyday life where the subject’s residence in a city that had experienced wars, terrorist attacks, ethnic or communal violence can trigger a series of narrative repetition of the violence and the traumatic memories



associated with it. Memories of a violent past can often obscure the fine line between reality and imagination actuating a sense of confusion and incomprehension. Eyewitness accounts of genocides and other ethnic and communal conflicts testify to this state of delirium indicative of the pervasiveness of assault that stretch beyond the realms of physical to the psychological and cultural.

Huge Person's working through his traumatic condition can be observed with his conversation with Armande, in which he expresses his desire of travelling to Switzerland again. In order to feel relaxed and get solace from his present traumatic condition, he engages himself not only in imagination but also he travels a lot:

I have to keep going on these trips because, you see, you can never tell when it's going to come along. I mean the very special one, the very important trip, the one that's very important, not just for me but for everyone, everyone in the whole world . . . And you see, once you miss it, there's no going back, it would be too late . . . I've seen it happen to other people, Boris . . . And, you know, they regret it for the rest of their lives. They get bitter and sad. By the time they die, they've become broken people. So you see, Boris, that's why. That's why I've got to carry on for the moment, keep travelling all the time. (13-14)

Huge Person keeps travelling, in search of not only fame and recognition but also a meaningful role and standing in society; his desire "to do something useful that would change the world for the better" which however misguided and compromised. On the other hand, it has to do with the wound he has. As Nobokov explains, "A central thread is that the book's about a person for whom something has gone wrong way back in his life,

and a lot of his energy, the motivation behind his acquiring his expertise and his brilliance as a musician is his thinking he can fix this thing one day” (Jaggi 27). Yet, Huge Person, for all his detachment and aloofness toward Armande and Boris, constantly expresses weariness in travelling and a desire to settle down. Toward the end of the novel, there seems to be some conciliation in this telephone conversation between Huge Person and Armande:

I promise, I won't be travelling much longer now. Tonight, if it goes well, you never know. That might be it. 'And I'm sorry I haven't found anything yet. I promise I'll find something for us soon. Somewhere really comfortable' . . . The line remained silent and for a second I wondered if Armande had gone away. But then she said in a distant, dreamy voice: 'We're bound to find something soon, aren't we?' . . . We'll find something' . . . I'll be coming as quickly as I can. So try and be ready, both of you.

(32)

Huge Person at last comes to terms to some extent through a lot of working through process. He becomes ready to accept his social responsibility. But in overall in *Transparent Things*, the characters are forced to remain in perpetual trauma. Huge Person too never performs in the editing for which he was assigned, neither was he able to regained love and affection from his parents. The house, a symbol for settled life, familial affiliation, community connection, is never found. Feeling betrayed disappointed and destroyed, all women characters abandon their search for house: thus Armande leaves Huge Person, Rosa leaves Christoff, Christine leaves Hoffmann, and Miss Collins leaves Mr. R. In the end there is neither reconciliation nor consolation.

The present novel addresses the painful story of an orphan connecting with the pain of exile as a never-healing 'wound.' Person's unhappy childhood is re-accentuated with the room of the hotel that he feels as his childhood bedroom: "the sense of recognition growing stronger by the second" (8). He says, "memory came back to me of one afternoon when I had been lost within my world of plastic soldiers and a furious row had broken out downstairs. The ferocity of the voices had been such that, even as a child of six or seven, I had realized this to be no ordinary row" (8). Huge Person becomes peculiarly attached to the hotel room but feels engulfed by a desperate sadness. While the novel is about contemporary anxieties over relationships between private life and public space, individual and community, parents and children, wives and husbands, art and politics or even reality and unconsciousness, most importantly, it is about a foreigner's traumas and anxieties associated with dislocation and disorientation. Perpetually haunted by echoes from other times and spaces, orphaned exiles are thrust into unknown landscapes and communities with no hope of referring to existing codes, rules and customs.

Children are profoundly wounded by their self-absorbed and insensitive parents; lovers alienate each other across an emotional abyss. The culture-obsessed inhabitants of the city do not recognize true talent when it appears; they disapprove of creativity when it does not fit their expectations. Sustaining the nightmarish atmosphere of this tale, its tone is alternately sinister and farcical especially since all the characters express themselves in long, dense monologues. *Transparent Things* dramatizes one of the great contemporary concerns – the neglect of family relationships, with special emphasis on the plight of children deprived of the love of one or both parents, and the aftermath in adult life of

such emotional injuries. Trauma is resulted from lack of communication among the family members mainly in the five families: Mr. Huge Person, Mrs. Armande , Mr. Hoffman, Mrs. Hoffman and Mr. R, Miss Collins .

Like Huge Person, Stephan, the son of Mr. Hoffman and Christine, is traumatized due to lack of attention and love from his parents. He too wants to regain his parents' love and affection as well as appreciation by means of a successful piano magazine. But he never becomes successful. Here, the distressing factor causing trauma for many of the characters is the notion that a child has to earn parents' love by means of achieving success. Armande feels neglected and excluded from his parents' love. He tries his best to show his talent to his parents but his father does not believe, even Huge Person realizing his talent convinces Hoffman regarding this though he prefers the sour taste of failure:

there was this one, single hope. I refer, off course, to our son, Stephan. If he'd been different, if he'd been blessed with at least some of the gifts her side of the family possess in such abundance! For a few years, we both hoped. In our separate ways, we both watched Stephan and hoped. We sent him to piano lessons, we watched him carefully, we hoped against hope . . . then in the last few years it became useless to pretend any more. Stephan is now twenty-three years of age. I can no longer tell myself he will suddenly blossom tomorrow or the next day. I've had to face it. He takes after me . . . Each time she looks at him, she sees the great mistake she made in marrying me . . . (84-85)

In this way, this family of Hoffman is ruined and frustrated. There is no harmony and coordination among the family members. Neither there is good relationship between parents

nor with their son. Though piano magazine is taken as a means of solution, it does not work. All of them are equally traumatized.

Like the family of Huge Person and Hoffman, the family of Mr. R too is untouched from the effects of trauma. Mr. R, once a prestigious writer, now is degenerated into neurotic and drunkenness. The attempt to rehabilitate him through the writing ends up in a fiasco. Miss Collins remains his wife, but she uses her maiden name because she has been estranged from him for two decades. Like Hoffman, he wants to recover his wife's affection by means of building up an external prestige and image. Similarly like Hoffman, in order to get rid of his ongoing trauma, he wants to utilize his son figure [dog] for self-restoration. Bruno is Mr. R's beloved dog, functioning as a child substitute: "we could keep an animal" and "we could love and care for it together. Perhaps that was what we did not have before . . . we never had children. So, let's do this instead"(43). In order to solve his present problem and getting rid of the trauma, he thinks of surrogate child and wants to keep himself together with his wife.

Another family that fights with the trauma is the family of Gustav. Gustav, the hotel porter, his daughter Armande and his grandson Boris are living a problem-ridden life of scarcity and dearth. There is conflict between father and daughter and the son becomes the victim of their misunderstanding: "There were, furthermore, clear signs that the trouble, whatever it was, had started to make its mark on Boris . . . The porter had noticed how every now and then, particularly at any mention of his home life, a cloud would pass over the little boy's expression" (9). Huge Person turns out to be father to Boris and husband to Armande.

*Transparent Things* has made use of a whole cast of characters mostly lonely and tortured souls, many of them are driven by a need to redeem themselves in the eyes of their parents. There are many truly heartrending moments regarding the struggles of the children to gain love and affection of their parents. Moreover, due to their busy life as well as their negligence, the parents do not fulfill their parental responsibilities turning their family culturally barren and ruined. Though they are worried about the decadence and disorder, they cannot search right solution. The only solution they assumed to improvement through writing does take places. In this sense, their trauma remains transparent and remains forever.

Thus, *Transparent Things* is the story of transparent and unhealed traumatic account of Huge Person and other characters, whose life becomes hellish due to loss, denial, maladjustment, nostalgia and identity crisis. There is not coordination, cooperation and mutual feeling among family members, mainly there is generational and conceptual misunderstanding that results conflict and clash and sets foundation for traumatic life. Huge Person's writing, though assumed, cannot become panacea for their present problem. The children cannot be attached with their parents through their achievement because none of them get chance to show their magazine. The cultural decadence cannot be resolved. Despite their numerous attempts, the working through process of the characters cannot get success as a result they are compelled to live with perpetual trauma.

### III: Working through of Trauma in *Transparent Things*

After thorough analysis and interpretation of *Transparent Things* from the critical perspective of psychological trauma, the researcher comes to conclusion that the present novel dramatizes traumatic life of people caused due to various reasons mainly the sense of cultural loss, misunderstanding among family members, maladjustment to the changing situation, identity crisis and conflict arisen from these traumatogenic factors. The novel interweaves the different traumatic stories of four families mainly Huge Person, Hoffman, Mr. R and Gustav interlinked with the activities of Mr. R and Huge Person. The traumatic situation of the novel is supported by unnamed narrator and its setting with deserted hotel where Huge Person stays, the ubiquitous reign of darkness, forsaken sites, the scenes of the cemetery and so on. Moreover, it incorporates the activities of only three days, during which Huge Person engages himself in his perpetration of the magazine visiting different people, knowing the problems of the city along with causes; however it deals with many of other activities performed in the past in order to know the present problems.

*Transparent Things* is the strange story of the editor Huge Person who arrives in an American European city for a magazine in an evening to try and resolve the political and cultural problems in the city. The problems are never really revealed and neither is Huge Person's involvement to resolve it. Though taken as the messiah to bring peace and harmony in the city, Huge Person too has his own trauma. He is deserted from his parents and through his magazine; he wants to regain love and affection from his parents because they are supposed to attend the magazine. Moreover, he wants to be reunited and reconciled with his wife and son respectively Armande and Boris, who live in the same

city. Huge Person's attempts to end his detachment and aloofness toward Armande and Boris through this magazine remains same and at last Armande leaves him dismissing his proposal to live together. He cannot improve his relationship with his parents too despite his all attempts. In this sense, his trauma remains transparent throughout the novel.

Like Huge Person all the characters in the novel suffer from indifference, inattention and apathy from their parents. The paradox is that in order to gain love and affection of their parents, these children have to prove their talent, skill and capacity. Armande and Boris are representatives among them, who despite their several attempts become unsuccessful. Their painful stories are unheard by their parents so they are emotionally injured. Disinterestedness and lack of communication become the cause of family trauma. However, in this situation, parents attempt to work through their trauma with the help of their children. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman want Armande's success in his musical career in order to console them. Huge Person's family has the same case. Mr. R on the other hand uses Bruno, the dog as child figure in order to improve his relationship with his wife, Miss Collins as they cannot give birth to child.

*Transparent Things* mingles the traumatic stories of different characters. Along with Huge Person, Hoffman and Mr. R's families, Gustav's family has the same traumatic story to be resolved. Gustav's relationship with his daughter, Armande is ruined and rusted. Boris is victimized within their broken relationship. Parents in all the families of *Transparent Things* do not fulfill their parental responsibilities as a result there is disorder, disharmony and chaos in these families. There is no harmony and coordination among members in these families. Victimization and traumatization of the children makes them frustrated and discouraged so they cannot perform as per their



parents' expectation through love and affectation of the parents is assumed to be regained through well magazine.

Thus, *Transparent Things* tells the unsuccessful stories of many families united by visiting to be performed in Thursday night. Christoff wants to regain his position as renowned Editor and musician; Huge Person and Armande also want to show their talent through the magazine in order to gain love and affection of their parents. Similarly, Mr. R and Hoffman want to prove them as good writers through this magazine and want to be reconciled with their wives. In this sense, the traumatic stories of these families are intermingled in the novel through the writing. Despite their various attempts, the writing is never performed and the condition of these families remains the same being transparent forever. In this sense, unnamed narrator with surname Huge Person only, American city with its deserted hotel, darkness, forsaken sites and scenes of cemetery, and the title *Transparent Things* are strategically harmonize in order to highlight the traumatic condition of the novel.

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