

I. Maupin's *The Night Listener* as a Trauma Fiction

The objective of this research is to critically examine the personal experiences of the characters in Maupin's *The Night Listener* and prove that they are traumatized in one way or the other due to social stigma. It is to prove that due to the set standards of a certain society or culture, people's sufferings result into cultural trauma.

Gabriel Noone, the protagonist, has been abandoned by his sexual partner, Jess, and thus suffers from the pangs of loss, separation and betrayal. Due to privilege of homophobic sentiments, Gabriel faces his identity crisis because only heterosexuality is regarded as normal sexuality. He also longs to meet Pete in person but cannot meet him due to some unfavorable circumstances. His inability to meet Pete in person leaves him in despair. Gabriel's Pa is a conservative aristocrat who questions his sexuality and feels ashamed of his son's homosexual nature.

The other major character is Pete who is just thirteen years old HIV infected boy and is alienated from the society as HIV patients are not sympathized rather degraded and criticized. Pete is sensitive and delicate both physically and mentally. There are other characters like Jess and Wayne who are suffering from the fear of approaching death caused by HIV. Donna is also not untouched by pain and suffering of life. She has lots of anxiety and dissatisfaction in her married life and divorce. She also suffers from the pain caused by the death of her only son. In this way, almost all the characters have problematic lives.

Homosexualities, AIDs, divorce, death are the issues with which the characters suffer in this novel. These issues are negatively taken and are controversial even in the developed countries like the USA. The characters are suffering because of the society's wrong perception. They are suffering and going through dark alleys of pain and anticipation just because the society has fixed and rigid perception to look at

things. They are discriminated, alienated, frustrated due to the conditions of the so-called civilized society.

Although *The Night Listener* appears to be based on the crucial issues of sexuality especially homosexuality by a gay writer Armistead Maupin, critic Thomas Devon points out the issues of mystery, trust and betrayals by friends, lovers, and family members. He says, “The novel centers on the mysterious Pete, Maupin’s latest is less suspense story than a likable tale about major and minor betrayals by lovers, friends, and family members” (1). But this novel is not only limited to love, trust and mystery. There is the most crucial issue of trauma which is based on the mainstream cultural practices. Almost all the characters in this novel are going through traumatic experiences. Similarly, another critic Steven A. Katz shows the issues of sensitivity of the issues where “Maupin’s long-term domestic partnership with HIV survivor and AIDS activist is reflected in the novels” (1). He further writes:

Maupin’s long-term domestic partnership with an HIV survivor and AIDS activist is reflected in the novels’ sensitive depiction of a community coming together to live with the disease in love and dignity. Finding a national audience through the publication of these six popular novels, Maupin has since gone on to other media including Broadway and television, to promulgate understanding of gay concerns and human rights issues. (1)

Here, Katz points out the hardships of characters while living with disease and expecting to lose their close friends at anytime. He highlights Gabriel’s autobiographical references while commenting upon the novel. But he forgets to notice the traumatic experiences of the characters which is the result of the cultural

stigmas found on the contemporary society. This research focuses on cultural trauma which the characters are experiencing in the novel.

The issues raised by Devon and Steven are ‘mystery,’ ‘betrayal’ and ‘HIV’. Here, mystery deals with the issue of existence of Pete whose presence is contradictory in this novel, whereas betrayal is related to the parental abuse and betrayal by friends. Though these critics are not precise about the traumatic aspect on the characters, the issue of HIV and AIDS is related with the trauma of death experience and homosexuality.

In an audio review Harper Collins writes:

Maupin presents his tale with such polished, effortless elegance that his talent can be underestimated because the sweat behind it is so invisible. Maupin’s melodious, expressive reading reinforces his smooth prose, which is written to be read aloud. Audio is perfect medium for this born storyteller. (3)

Here Collins only focuses on the expressive and melodious nature of his novel but avoids the traumatic aspects of the novel in which the characters are victimized. All the sufferings of the characters which we find during the reading of the novel indicate the traumatic aspect which is created by the culture and society. As homosexuals and HIV patients are discarded from the society, they feel alienation and humiliation as they have to live in the society where heterosexuality is taken as normal sexual activity.

The phenomena of trauma can be defined from two approaches: first psychoanalytic and second cultural approach. According to the first approach, a victimized subject does not disclose the real traumatic experience just like Pete in this novel.

He rather exposes and expresses in a script of his autobiographical story and through telephone calls with the protagonist. But he is afraid and never actually appears in person. Regarding the psychoanalytical approach, Freud's ideas are very much significant. In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer are committed to the view that the "reminiscences that cause hysterical suffering are historical in the sense that they are linked to actual traumas in the patient's life"... "The injured person's relation to the trauma" they wrote, is the "past originally found no outlet" (186-87).

Here Freud and Breuer link the cause of hysteria to the patient's traumatic past experiences which have found no outlet. In this novel too, Pete does not come in front of other people except Donna because he has no trust left regarding human relationships as he was sexually abused by his own parents in the past. Likewise, Gabriel's grandfather committed suicide due to the guilt of being homosexual in a heterosexual society. All these fear, suicidal instinct, distrust are the symptoms of past traumatic experiences of the characters.

Commenting upon the novel Karl Woelz writes, "The thinly- veiled autobiographical and or meta fictive novel appears to be rigueur these days among the most celebrated of contemporary gay writers" (1). Here he compares Maupin with the other gay writers. He focuses on the writer's aspect of confessing his gayness like other gay writers to make people understand about homosexuality in his novel. His comment on Maupin is noteworthy but one of the most important aspects of this novel is the characters traumatic experience due to their homosexuality in the culture where heterosexuality is only regarded as the normal sexuality.

De Prince (2001) found that self-reported betrayal predicted PTSD and dissociative symptoms above and beyond self-reported fear in a community sample of individuals who reported a history of childhood sexual abuse. Individuals who are

victimized in adulthood following an interpersonal assault in childhood perform worse on reasoning problems that involve interpersonal relationships and safety information compared to individuals who have not been victimized. Same is the case of Pet in this novel who is sexually abused by his own biological parents. Death of Wayne by HIV, Jess's suffering due to approaching death, Gabriel's tension of losing friend and his grandfather's suicide, all deal with the issue of traumatic experience.

Critics like Devon and Steven have emphasized upon mystery, betrayal and HIV while talking about this novel. De Prince has pointed toward the after traumatic results but he has not specifically focused upon the cultural trauma that the characters go through. These critics have not been able to explain further what these factors will result in to or they have not talked about the result of these factors. But, present researcher is trying to prove cultural trauma which is the most prominent issue in this novel overlooked by the critics.

Jenny Edkins in her book *Trauma and Memory of Politics* explores how one remembers traumatic events such as wars, famines, genocides and terrorism. She argues that remembrance does not have to be nationalistic but can instead challenge the political systems that produced the violence using examples from the World Wars, Vietnam, the Holocaust, Kosovo and September 11th, through memorials, museums and remembrance ceremonies. Edkins has focused on her view on the traumatic sufferings of war victims but the results of the traumatic experiences are alike may they beware of other sad memories due to troublesome past. All the victims have troublesome present due to the haunting memories and the experiences they are going through so, they live in constant traumatic situation which are psychological and also physical. The victims are so much pre-occupied with their past that they are forced to re-live again and again and thus have anxiety to face other people.

Defining cultural trauma Jeffrey C. Alexander in his book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* writes:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible mark upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. . . . Trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society. (1-2)

According to him, cultural trauma is the result of some horrible experiences which leave mark upon the subject throughout his life and which is socially created not natural. In this novel too characters like Pete, Gabriel, Jess, Wayne, Gabriel's Pa and others are experiencing pain and frustration due to the so called mainstream cultural measurement of normality and abnormality. Our society does not regard homosexuality and AIDS etcetera as normal issues. They regard these as negative and queer thus most of the characters suffer from cultural trauma as this novel focuses on the socially alienated homosexuals, HIV patients and an abused child.

In this novel too we can see a war of trust and the visible proofs when the producer Ashe Findlay questions the existence of Pete and refused to publish his book. Gabriel's friend Jess also is suspicious about the boy as the voice of Pete and Donna, his foster, mother is alike. On the other hand, Pete has gone through unimaginable abuse, is infected by AIDS and a small flea can cause him infection and death. This is a remarkable issue as it highlights the issue of presence and absence and the so called presence is still dominant till the end. Derrida's deconstruction of "presence/absence" suggests that assuming absolute presence and absolute absence is a mistake because all kinds of absent things leave "traces" of their presence, and a

thing can be present while being partially absent. In personal relations, past events are not "present" either temporally or spatially, but the past history of the relation has shaped the contours of the present relationship; the present and future history of the relationship is written on a palimpsest containing the faint marks of the past. This is especially the case in highly troubled personal relationships like a failing marriage. When the absent events are intensely present, any present events are interpreted in terms of the absent events. A husband buys flowers for a suspicious wife, and that is read against the background of past betrayals. In literature, much of the meaning of a text comes from what is left unsaid, what is outside the text but faintly presents, what is alluded to and so forth. I can be "present" in one sense to a conversation, while "absent" in another. By using this deconstructive concept of Derrida we can justify the situation of Pete which is dominated by other characters.

This research is based on the traumatic experiences caused by certain cultural norms. Most of the critics have pointed at the homosexual issue. They take the novel as an autobiographical confession of the writer or they comment upon the melodious expressive nature of the novel. Therefore, the issue in the present research is unique and also important to analyze this novel as we cannot overlook the traumatic sufferings of characters which are due to the cultural prejudices toward certain aspects like homosexuality, AIDS, sexual abuse, etcetera.

This study makes significant contribution, mainly in three areas of concern. First, this study highlights the shadowed issue of trauma in all the character of this novel. Second, this research makes a significant theoretical connection between the issue of trauma and the queer experience. Lastly, the study shows the issue of multi titled narrative as interconnected with the multiple characters' traumatic sufferings in different situation deconstructing the binaries of presence and absence shown in the text.

Cultural trauma is a theory which analyzes the individual sufferings due to certain cultural prejudices. This is caused by the conditions and assumptions of a certain culture which regards certain minority aspects of human life as abnormal. Thus, the minority suffers from the social discriminations and alienation. For instance, hetero- sexuality is regarded as normal sexual instinct and homo- sexuality as queer and unnatural. This type of biased attitude creates traumatic experiences on the individual who are going through different experiences from the so called mainstream cultural expectations. Thus cultural trauma is very appropriate theory as a tool to study this novel. While analyzing this novel from the perspective of this methodology, the present research is taking the help of different theorists like: Cathy Caruth, James Berger, Jennifer J. Freyd, Sigmund Freud, Dominick LaCapra, Zurbriggen, L.R Goldberg, Michael Rothberg, Jenny Edkins, J Alexander, Kali Tal and Jacques Derrida.

This research is divided into three chapters altogether. The first chapter introduces the topic, issues, objective, theoretical concepts and a short literature review. The second chapter is a detailed textual analysis with sufficient textual evidence to prove the issues and the third is the conclusive part of our research. In this way, this research will be based upon the cultural trauma which is an important methodology to analyze the individual sufferings and hardships in history. This research focuses on how false myths created by the society cause traumatic experiences and long lasting pain in individuals' life causing into physical and psychological disorder. As different characters in this novel go through horrible sufferings like death, fear, alienation, frustration, identity crisis and existential angst, this study methodology of cultural trauma is highly relevant to analyze this text.

II. Cultural Trauma in Maupin's *The Night Listener*

Traumatic experiences can vary widely including intimate violence, community violence, social isolation or shunning, sexual abuse, social violence like war and political torture, and degrading systems built into the social fabric like racism, poverty, sexism or homophobia. To identify whether trauma is cultural or not, it is essential to look whether it is trauma caused by constructed ideology or a result of unexpected sudden happenings. We should look at social aspects along with individual experiences of trauma. Individuals can heal themselves from their personal experiences but they still live within the context of contemporary society in which ongoing trauma is an inherent part. Our family, community and social settings continue to influence and impact our experiences. Homosexuality is also a human experience lived by certain people who are influenced by the narrow-mindedness and biased attitude of society. Similarly, homophobia is also caused by the biased attitude of the society which leads to cultural trauma. Homosexuality is not unnatural but the social construction of its meaning makes it so.

Homophobia is strong irrational fear or hatred caused from the wrong knowledge due to the socio-cultural biases against homosexuality. It is a strong and unreasonable dislike of homosexual people, whereas homosexuality is the sexuality in which people have relationship with the same sex. They are not traumatized in the very nature of things but it is because of the created conditions of our society. We live in a society where only heterosexuals are considered natural. Therefore, majority of people have homophobic sentiments because they regard homosexuals as sick people. They fear to be close to the homosexuals and also think that they may be contaminated by their sexuality too. This kind of feeling is itself a trauma as they have deep hatred toward the different sexuality.

Homosexuals are also not untouched from this kind of phobia because finding themselves homosexual in the heterosexual world itself is terrible psychologically at first. Therefore, so many homosexuals in the present world live a dual life. People who are other than this suffer through trauma. Homosexuality is considered unnatural by the members of the society and people other than them are disgraced and thus homosexuals are traumatized and left aloof. In heterosexual world, finding oneself as homosexual itself is a traumatic experience. The fact of being a homosexual creates trauma as all the members of society internalize that being homosexual is unnatural or a kind of disease. One does not get vent or outlet to her experiences nor can she cover up the sexuality that she possesses. In this condition an individual lives a split life torn between her sexuality and the world. This situation of dual personality is itself a traumatic experience not only this, homosexuals are not accepted in the society; they do not get sympathy as normal human beings too. Living an open life as homosexual needs really big courage when the world around keep staring at her different sexuality as a disease or the sin of past life.

The setting of the novel is early twenty-first century America, especially California, New York, New Mexico, Philadelphia, Wisconsin and Milwaukee. This setting is very remarkable to highlight the traumatic experiences faced by minority gay Americans at that time because the twenty first century became an increasingly-important time for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual rights and civics advocates in the United States, as the Republican Party under George W. Bush pandered to the social conservative activist base in order to enact amendments outlawing same-sex marriage and other unions through state-level referendum, the height of the movement being in 2004. At the same time, however, Massachusetts, in 2004 and under a Republican governor, became the first state to legalize and issue marriage licenses for

same-sex couples. A year earlier, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Lawrence V. Texas* that consensual sexual activity between adults was protected under the Fourteenth Amendment and therefore all anti-sodomy laws in the United States were rendered unconstitutional.

From 2008 to the present, the tipping point of activism in favor of same-sex marriage came, when California State Supreme Court ruled that the previous proposition which barred the legalization of same-sex marriage in California was unconstitutional under the United States Constitution. Over 18,000 couples then obtained legal licenses from May to November of the same year, when another statewide proposition reinstated the ban on same-sex marriage. This was received by nationwide protests against the ban and a number of legal battles which are projected to end up in the Supreme Court of the United States.

The election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president of the United States (ironically, on the same day as the California ban on same-sex marriage was enacted) signified the beginning of a more nuanced federal policy to LGBT citizens. Obama advocated for the repeal of DADT, which was passed in December 2010, and also withdrew legal defense of DOMA in 2011, despite Republican opposition. Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2010 was also the first major hate crimes legislation in federal legislation history to recognize gender identity as a protected class.

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, attention was also paid to the rise of suicides and the lack of self-esteem by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual children and teenagers due to homophobic bullying. The "It Gets Better Project", founded and promoted by Dan Savage, was launched in order to counter the phenomenon, and

various initiatives were taken by both activists and politicians to impose better conditions for LGBT students in public schools.

In this way, we see the slight progress in the law formation about homosexual yet, there are the nook and corners of human conservative psyche where there is a deep rejection and phobia about homosexuality. This conservatism of human psyche about homosexuality cannot be sensed by the law and there are lots of incidents of abuse to homosexual people in America. The case of this is even worse in the third world or the traditional societies. The cases of harassment faced by the homosexuals are much more than they come in front of media. The question of morality regarding sexuality itself is meaningless because, how can society decide whether or not a person's feelings are acceptable or moral? How can some people make it their life's mission to attack homosexuals for having the courage to love someone of the same sex? Are the questions to be thought deeply? And Armistead Maupin's *The Night Listener* is showing the issues of social discriminations, harassments, alienation faced by the gay couples in twenty first century America.

There are a lot of symbols used in the novel which indicate the traumatic aspects by the help of plot, setting, characterization, and etcetera. One of the most prominent symbols in the novel is the title itself. The title *The Night Listener* itself is quite symbolic indicating the dark aspect of traumatic situation. This title is linked to a show 'Noone at Night' which is a cult radio programme about homosexual couples. It is a mid-night programme and one of the listeners is Pete. Pete is a regular listener of this programme and through this programme he comes in contact with Gabriel, the protagonist. Due to the unexpected betrayal which he faced from his own parents he cannot trust faces but the voices only. About his situation Donna says, "...Pete trusts voices more than he can ever trust a face. That's why your show was so humanizing

for him. He could invent faces that didn't threaten him" (143). This novel is like a tribute to Pete by the protagonist as his manuscript about his painful life was rejected by the publisher when he was restricted to meet him because of his sensitive situation. Thus the title addresses Pete as the 'night listener' who takes refuge upon such radio programs even in the middle of the night because due to his traumatic past he cannot rest and sleep as normal people. As Neil J. Smelser quotes Van der Kolk;

When the trauma feels to be integrated into the totality of a person's life experiences, the victim remains fixated on the trauma. Despite avoidance of emotional enrollment traumatic memories cannot be avoided; even when pushed out of waking consciousness, they come back in the form of reenactments, nightmares, or feelings related to the trauma... recurrences may continue throughout life during periods of stress. (5)

Here, Van der Kolk describes as recurring memories often resulting in certain eccentric results. Pete's condition in the novel is just the same. He cannot even face people due to his troublesome past which is still torturing him as he was abused from his early childhood by his own biological parents. The book he writes about himself and desires to publish is a kind of therapy or enactments to come out from the trauma that he faced once and is reliving it in his memories.

On the other side, the word 'night' in the title denotes darkness. The traumatized people live in darkness as they are afraid of light. They live in isolation and are alienated from the society. They find it very difficult to trust people as they have been tormented and thus find safer to remain by themselves in darkness. It is not that they hate light or they do not want company of people around; rather they are incapable of taking the risk of trusting somebody in that case, only the voices are

trustworthy than the real people. The abuse and harsh treatment given to them at certain point of life has made them stigmatized. Therefore, the title more or less represents all the characters who suffer through cultural trauma. This represents the dark part of traumatic experiences resulting in haunting memories, fear, lack of confidence, pain, frustrations and activities like ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ to fight with trauma.

Keeping the company of Hugo, the dog, is a way of ‘acting out’ by the gay partners Jess and Gabriel as the so called social animals called human beings are not so with them. In fact, people are shy and fearful to speak to them, giving them company as love is a far away thing. Hugo has another symbolic implication in the novel as well. Hugo is an old mutt and part Australian shepherd and part jackal. He has some similarity to the lives of stigmatized people in the society who are the victims of cultural trauma and are waiting for their death. His upcoming death symbolizes the approaching death of Jess, whereas his death represents the death of HIV positive victims. Although the dog called Hugo is weak and old and in a way waiting for his death, he is not weak in giving love to his master, Gabriel, rather he is the only companion to Gabriel when he is abandoned by his gay partner, Jess. He remains with Gabriel until his last days. About Hugo, Gabriel shares with Pete: “He is the best. So loyal. We have an old mutt named Hugo. Part Australian shepherd and part jackal” (76). From this dialogue of Gabriel we see the caring and loving attitude of him. Although the homosexuals have different sexual orientation, they are equally kind and loving. Both Jess and Gabriel show utmost care and love towards the dog. This treatment demonstrated by them reveals the fact that they are compassionate, humane and loving people. They are different from the majority of the people living

in society, but it is not true that their feelings are false and unnatural. They are equally loving and driven by the abstract feelings of a pure heart.

Another symbol is a motorbike belonging to Jess. It was not used by Gabriel as he found it unreliable and would fail him anywhere on the way before actually reaching his destination. It is a strange coincidence that Jess when abandoned Gabriel took the same bike and Gabriel was stunned to see the bike moving on the road with much swiftness than he had ever thought. Gabriel utters the following words about the motorbike as he sees it moving so swiftly and showing certain reliability: "I'd never trusted that machine. Now, as I watched it roar off down the hill, I realized why: It had always seemed made for this moment" (4). This unexpected swiftness of motorbike is quite symbolic. Generally it is indicating that life is full of mystery and surprises. And it is hinting toward unexpected upcoming surprises in Gabriel's life in particular. On the other hand, it symbolizes hopeful future of Jess. It indicates that like the motorbike Jess will have much more active life in spite of his HIV. This symbol is latter proved when Jess states that his "viral load is Zero" and he "is growing T cells"(96). This reference in the novel too denotes the hopeful future for the HIV patients who with their zeal and desire to life, can fight with the so called incurable disease and can live their life with dignity.

There is a recurring symbol of the moon in the novel. This symbol is also used in other novels by the writer. There are two moons. One is on the water tank which is seen from Pete's window, and is the fake and another, the real one in the sky. About these two moons Gabriel narrates:

There were two moons in the sky now: the real one, which had crept from behind the clouds, and the spectral blue globe of the water tank. I didn't bother to search for Roberta, because that game was finally

over. If I needed proof of anything now, it was proof of my own humanity. I felt so utterly two-dimensional, as if I had been the imposter all along. Much as my father had done, when faced with the love of a child, I'd lost my nerve and retreated in panic and distrust.

(283)

Here, Gabriel goes to see Pete because he was filled with doubts regarding his existence but Donna says that Pete has already died and cremated also. Then, Gabriel wishes to look Pete's room and sees the moon from there. In the war of doubts and trust his trust wins as he sees the room exactly as Pete has described and he feels guilty for distrusting Pete.

Pete's mysterious existence can be compared with these two moons as his existence seems both fake and real. There are a lot of doubts about the existence of Pete which remains as it is without the visual proofs. The moon keeps on changing its shape at certain points it disappears and again comes. Pete is like the moon in this whole novel who disappears when Donna says that "Pete died last Monday" (290) but again comes back in phone call saying: "Don't freak out, okay? I know what mom told you, but she was just trying to get people off our backs. She told Ashe I was dead so we could get our lives back again" (326). In this way, he says he is alive and the report about his death was fake but, never comes concretely in the novel. The implication of this symbol is also a romance that is highly imaginative, unattainable and unpredictable.

The "Jewelled Elephant" is another symbol in this novel. The meaning of this is to exaggerate something, to fake or to romanticize something. It means something which is not true or made. This suggests the doubt of Jess regarding Pete's existence. He thinks that maybe Pete does not exist and Donna is fooling around with Gabriel

creating pathetic false story of a sexually abused boy suffering from HIV to publish her book. He says: “His voice is exactly the same like hers... It’s just a higher pitched, more childish version... To make absolutely sure. Somebody’s been jerking your chain, sweetie” (136). Another thing that it refers is Gabriel’s craft to make the story beautiful as a writer. About his work as a writer he says: “Like a magpie, I save the shiny stuff and discard the rest; it’s of no use to me if it doesn’t serve the geometry of the story. This makes me less than reliable when it comes to the facts.... He had even name for it- The jeweled Elephant Syndrome- after a story I once told him about an old friend from college” (2). Both the moon and Jewelled elephant are traumatic in the sense that it brings the doubts, distrust and futility in Gabriel’s life.

The first chapter includes a narrative about Gabriel’s friend. That directly refers to cultural trauma and hypocrisy of white western mind regarding race. It tells about an incident where western parents “back in South Carolina” were against the marriage of their son Boyd with a local Indian girl(2). They didn’t attend the marriage simply because they were worried about to have “dusky grandchildren” (2) but latter when they realized the girl was from high caste and from rich family, they regretted for not attending it. This shows how the cultural biasness and hypocrisy creates split in families and relationship between parents and their children. This also shows how superficial are the cultural norms and values regarding the discriminations based upon race, sexuality, class and ethnicity.

In the novel *The Night Listener*, there are many traumatized characters because of their sexuality. For example, the protagonist Gabriel is a homosexual. In his adolescence, when his sexuality was discovered, his family especially his father did not accept him but disgraced him. Latter he regretted for not making things easier to him when Gabriel was a child. He confesses this to his son which Gabriel narrates;

“... Against the sound track of my mother’s labored breathing my father said something unexpected; that he’d known I was gay –or sensed it, at least- since I was child, and that he was sorry he hadn’t brought it up earlier and made life easier for me” (263). Due to such bitter treatment received from the kins and society, he was forced to live an isolated life. Not only Gabriel himself, his family has history of suicide. About this situation he tells: “If my family didn’t want me, I would build a family of my friends and lovers and to hell with anyone who couldn’t cope” (260). This feeling of Gabriel, shows that he was strong enough to leave his family if they objected his sexuality and he was ready to live an isolated life as well. But along with his revolutionary attitude toward the discriminations he was facing regarding his sexuality even inside the family, he quite understands as well. He understands that being a parent of homosexual the parents have quite a heavy anxiety on them because they are worried about their children’s future. While seeing from the eyes of his mother he writes:“...she was worried about the way the world would treat me, and the life I’d lead latter. May be it seemed all right now, when I was young and reckless, but what would it be like when I was older, when I was fifty, say, and lonely and childless?”(256)

This feeling of Gabriel’s mother from his side represents the feeling of all homosexuals’ parents as they are worried about their child’s future where homosexuality is not accepted as natural and normal. This shows that the discovery of homosexuality equally traumatize the family members of homosexuals especially their parents.

According to Caruth, trauma refers to the “wound that is not healable” (4). And we can come across the characters who are reliving the past traumatic experiences again and again, who have lost their faith in any human relation,

characters who are forced to finish their life. Gabriel's grandfather commits suicide because of his homosexuality. He was ill-treated and humiliated by the society which led him to finish off his life. This incident is never discussed in the family and the real cause of his grandfather's death is always buried inside the mystery until Gabriel himself finds out. Gabriel regards this incident as the "first Gabriel Noone's untimely death" (310). When Gabriel questioned why his grandfather committed suicide her sister answered with the single word "Prostate". Gabriel narrates this as following: "Darlie replied with a single whispered word-"Prostrate"- as if it explained everything. How thoroughly Southern that was: the assumption that an eighty-year-old who'd lost his "manhood" might naturally be driven to take his life" (310). The manhood is directly linked to the heterosexual males in most of the society and being man if one loses his heterosexuality that means a subject of humiliation. Gabriel's grandfather's death also represents the generation gap and also the horrible condition of the gay life in that time. This shows how distressed the old man was when he was exposed as a gay and how helpless he was in front of the crowd who mocked him for his sexuality because of which he took his life.

There are references of many closeted homos. Jess's doctor Barb is also hinted as a lesbian and described as "a gentle, dapper dyke who wore men's suits and retro wire-rimmed glasses"(96). There is a man named Mr. Wide load who has a family but is a homosexual and keeps sexual relation with Gabriel also but when Gabriel tells he is a queer like him he becomes angry and says: "Fuck you. I'm not queer"(236). Pete's father is also a closeted queer because he raped his own son and made videos too. There is another character named Dick Burbage, who is also a closeted homo at first. He was closeted in the first phase of life and living a double life but latter he comes openly accepting his sexuality. About his homohood Gabriel narrates:

...Dick Burbage's homohood was probably more aesthetic than carnal. Like a number of queers, he was drawn to the club by its lovely old house full of lovely old things. These guys were discreet around the dinosaurs, but even my father's beloved Centurions had its own secret coterie of girly-men (313).

This narration by Gabriel, hints toward many other closeted gays and lesbians who used to gather in secret clubs to enjoy the company of other queers when they were not accepted openly in the society. Not only this these references about closeted homos says about the then America where due to fear of society and homophobic thoughts so many homos were afraid to disclose their sexuality. This was leading to the sexual crimes and split in human personality resulting in trauma and psychological disorders.

People's misbehaviors toward the homosexuals and their homophobic psychology can be seen in the different incidents narrated in the novel. There are also the historical cruel details about the discrimination toward the homosexual people in this novel. For example Matthew Shepard, an open gay who was "shot dead by the 'cowboys'" (153). The topic of Matthew Shepherd is discussed with many characters and many times in the novel. About his death Jess reports; "A couple of cowboys picked him up in a bar. Tide him to a fence and pistol-whipped him to pulp. In front of their fucking girlfriends"(126). This, description of Shepherd's death is really horrible and an act of debased attitude. And while narrating about this to Gabriel, Jess's eyes were filled with tears about this, from Gabriel's words: "The pent-up passion of that big, gentle, wounded heart" (126). The act of Strom is, senator's avoiding of the subject altogether is also a crucial detail of the discrimination that

homosexuals faced during the American society. These details are the examples of the struggles of so called queers who were ill-treated by the society.

Pete suffers from AIDS and is reported to be very fragile, prone to diseases and is in the hospital. “There he lay, scaffolded in chrome and entangled in tubes...” (46) Going through this kind of disease and expecting death in any time is another traumatic experience which is shown in this novel. When Pete hears his doctors talking about his death he feels scared and cries on the phone call with Gabriel. And when he questions Gabriel if he is afraid of death or not Gabriel replies, he fears death more than anything because after death you are no more center of attention. These references give us the glimpses of the Trauma caused by the fear of death while facing the diseases and the preconceived idea of society which regard homosexuality and HIV as negative.

HIV is also considered negative as HIV victims are not treated normally even by own parents and close kins. HIV victims are tortured and humiliated by using various means. They are most of the time ill-treated and taken as burden. HIV is detailed as a major cause of stigma in the book. HIV in the first place is the source of physical pain. The HIV victim suffers through constant fatigue, neuropathy, the night sweats and diarrhoea and the society adds the mental pain not by taking it as a natural disease like other and sympathizing the HIV patients, rather it humiliates disgraces and hates. This creates trauma in the people. We can see in the novel so many characters like Jess, Pete etc. suffering from this disease. And there is a reference to the doctor’s treatment to the HIV patients when Pete says; “I am Scared, Gabriel. . . I heard them talking this morning. When they were draining me. . . . They talk about me like I’m deaf or something. Like I’m not even there” (115). He is telling this in response of the doctor’s talking about his death in front of him or just as the Gabriel

says “the body-shop mentality of hospital”(115). This reference tells that even some of the doctors in the treatment of HIV patients treat inhumanly to the HIV patients and make that healing profession a trauma.

Due to HIV or AIDS the victim not only suffers but their family members, friends are also affected from the upcoming catastrophe in their loved ones life. In the novel we see not only Jess but his lover Gabriel too suffering from it and also Pete’s situation is also troubling Donna and Gabriel both. Because of AIDS only Jess has to go in a way from his friend. The pain of separation kills not only the infected one rather it is equally harsh on the non-Infected family members and friends as well. Gabriel is demolished by a lyric which describes the similar condition: “ Oh, my friend forgive me that I live and you are gone. There’s a grief that can’t be spoken, there’s a pain goes on and on”(82). The sexuality other than the homosexuality is bound to be traumatic similarly; the diseases are also the cause of trauma to different characters.

Sexuality in itself is not the cause of trauma. Sexualities are the natural differences but they come to be traumatic when it is judged by the biased attitude. Social stigmas are the cause of traumatic sufferings of different characters because no individual can transcend the ideology of the time in which he or she is living. If certain things are taken negatively in the society all the members are affected from that attitude and if they are living different kind of which is not regarded as the natural one, they are victimized.

The homosexual characters who are traumatized ‘act out’ or ‘work through’ to come out of the pain and suffering. According to LaCapra: “In post-traumatic acting out . . . one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes . . . In working through the past in a manner enables survival or a reengagement in life” (22-23). It means, acting out is

post traumatic activity or symptoms where a victim is always lost in his past trauma time and again. In acting out the victim loses the differentiating in the various tenses, present, past and future as one gets submerged in the past thoughts and actually starts reliving the traumatic past. The victim totally forgets that she has a different present and also an unknown future waiting for her. Since the person who is acting out cannot forget the traumatic past rather goes back to it again and again, this creates series of pain as it may create a more or less unconscious desire to remain within the trauma. It also generates resistance towards the counterforce. LaCapra writes; “Those involved in mourning understood not simply as an isolated grieving or endless bereavement but as a social process that may be at least partly effective in returning one to the demands and responsibilities of social life.” According to LaCapra, the society has created its own standard and does and don'ts for the people living in a certain place. It has its own social and cultural rules and regulations. For example in some societies of the world the woman must cry loudly and for days if her husband or any close kins die. If she does not cry at the death of her kin, she is tortured as she acts other than the society's code. Therefore she acts out and in a way tortures herself in a different way to act out the past traumatic events as a matter of social code or to keep faith or to show condolence toward the demised soul or kin.

In this novel also we see Pete crying while talking to Gabriel remembering his past tortured life many times. In a way by remembering and talking about the past he is reliving it and acting out. Similarly we see Gabriel crying in the public while he knew about Jess's extra affair with his motorcycle buddy. He also cries while talking with Pete about his critical relationship with Jess. By this act he is also acting out by reliving the broken relationship and friendship. Donna also keeps Pete closed and shows over protective tendency toward Pete which creates the acting out situation.

Supporting Pete's fear to face public she rather pushes him to his loneliness where he is encouraged to rethink his traumatic past events. Gabriel's Grandfather commits suicide while he was over sensitive and fearful about his sexuality's exposure and commits suicide. This suicide is also an extreme result of acting out as he finds himself queer and unmatched individual in the heterosexual society. These characters are constantly reliving their past or traumatic event rather than remaining in their present. They are also oblivious of the unknown future which might bring them joyful events and just wasting their life in misery by focusing themselves only in negativity.

Whereas working through is the victim's effort to come out of trauma. Unlike 'acting out', in case of working through, the victim is able to distinguish between the past and the present. One acknowledges the traumatic past and feels sad about it but one takes initiative to live the present which is here and now with the victim. One also accepts that she has an opening towards the unknown future. While working through one cries and shares ones suffering and also remembers the traumatic past but one has the possibility of making distinctions between the time or the traumatic event which exists no longer and one remains open to the new situations that one faces . The act of crying and remembrances of traumatic experiences here act as the medium of lay out or emptying oneself to move forward. One does not resist the counterforce to her traumatic past events. In this novel, Jess is the character who has a traumatic past as he is a homosexual character and an AIDs victim. He is the perfect example of the character who is trying his best in 'working through'. Jess crosses all limits to start a new life. He even decides to leave his lover Gabriel to start a new life.

While going through these two acts the victims cry in their aloneness, in the darkness. But, in working through the activities and reactions of the characters leads them toward the liberation from their traumatic past and in acting out the characters

are trapped in the traumatic memories and are unable to come out and are thus reliving the trauma time and again. While working through they even share their situations through electronic media concealing their real identities. In the novel also we see the protagonist broadcasting a story of an imaginary homo couple named Jamie and Will. This show represents partially the story of the California living protagonist Gabriel and Jess. Thus many people think those characters as Gabriel and Jess themselves. For example in a conversation with Gabriel when Pete guesses that Jess addresses him as Sweetie or Babe and when Gabriel asks how he knew? He replies: "Because Jamie calls Will that on 'Noone at Night'". About those characters Gabriel comments: "Except that those guys aren't us" (42).

On the other hand, Pete outlets his traumatic sufferings by writing a manuscript about his life. He desires to publish a book about his life so that he could share his feelings to the world. About the book Donna says:

It wasn't being published that meant so much to him! It was being believed! And he lost that the minute you doubted him. Is that so hard to understand? How would you like it if somebody came to verify you? That book was his therapy, nothing more. It was the only way I had to bring him out of his blackness. . . (289)

So to publish the book on his life, accepting what happened to him and writing out the memory in the pages was a kind of therapy for Pete to come out to the normal life from his traumatic past. By writing the book he expresses his traumatic past and get relieved of the pain and suffering which makes him more available to the present and he opens himself to the unknown future. He is even learning to trust people and not to fear them. When Gabriel tells that he wants to meet him he becomes happy but doubts Donna if she would allow or not. Yet he hates fear which is proved from his dialogue

that "... But she passed her fear on to me. And that was the last thing in the world I needed" (161). Not only this, he also takes refuge in Gabriel's fatherly affection to forget his horrible past where he was sexually abused by his own parents. His act of secretly calling Gabriel even after Donnas' revelation of his fake death to separate him from the outer world is an example of working through and also a quite revolutionary act of this boy to face the people, to keep on trusting. This shows that even after being deceived by his biological parents he wants to take a chance to live again by trusting relationships and by accepting that every time the situation is not the same and there can be good people too.

Gabriel being abandoned by his sexual partner Jess suffers from the pangs of loneliness and thus takes refuge upon Pete. He shares his feelings, sexuality and the various painful stories with a boy who is very young than him. Which is also an act of 'working through'. In the following conversation in comparison to Gabriel Pete seems full of trust than Gabriel.

Pete: "You know what?None of this means shit."

Gabriel: "None of what?"

Pete: "This sex stuff. Forget about it."

Gabriel: "I wish I could."

Pete: "He is coming home, Gabriel."

Gabriel: "I can't say that for sure."

Pete: "May be you can't but I can."

Gabriel: "Pete."

Pete: "He is your buddy, man. He is family. I know you guys. And I know when somebody loves somebody"(53).

In this conversation we can see how intimate their relationship is. Here, Gabriel is sharing about his separation with Jess and confessing his doubt about their reunion but Pete is giving him certainty that Jess will be back.

Likewise, Jess is a victim of HIV and is waiting for his death. His life is stigmatized due to the nearing death. He faces a queer situation. He finds his death nearer when he is with his lover, Gabriel. This is even understood by Pete when he comments: “No...you were like...really insecure. You thought everything was about you, even when it wasn’t. And you treated Jamie ...or Jess or whoever the fuck it was...like he was already dead or something”(45).According to Pete, Jess has to leave him and go to other people where he can forget his death for a little while and had to find company of other friends where he can manage to escape his death for a while though he is not untouched by the pain of separation from his gay partner, Gabriel. We cannot figure out exactly what is going on inside him.

These characters certainly work through to come out of the misery and sadness they are in but the reality is they end up with very less solutions as the society and the people around them have put them in invisible chains of conditions and ideas. Homosexuals being a minority, also, has strengthened the heterosexual society to impose the idea that they are not natural and bound to remain aloof as they cannot be part of the society. In the novel, the protagonist like, Pete, cannot come in the public as he cannot trust anyone from this society since he had been sexually abused by his own parents.

The homophobic characters cannot accept the fact that anybody could be other than the heterosexual. They are so fearful and filled with disgust toward the homosexuals. In the novel Gabriel’s father is a homophobic character, who forgets his filial love and responsibility when he comes to know his son’s sexuality. He cannot

accept his son and abandons his son as he is ruled by the condition that homosexuality is queer. As manhood is only linked with heterosexual males other than heterosexual are neither put under male nor under female. Due to this discrimination of society and culture to accept one's own family member as gay is a very difficult act. Gabriel's father is helpless as he is also a part of society and cannot remain untouched by it. Gabriel knows his father's situation thus, understanding his father's state Gabriel writes:

I know it wasn't easy for pap, having co-opted by such a homo. I had being programmed to be him, after all: a partner in his bank, a conservative, a practicing aristocrat. But now, by his own account, he had become a road-show version of me. Dewy-eyed shop girls and waiters, clocking the name on his credit card, would ask him for his autograph only to discover he wasn't the Gabriel Noone. (62)

Through his eyes Gabriel analyzes his father's condition that represents the entire father's reaction when they discover that their child is a homo. Gabriel's father is a banker and he wants his son to join his profession. Not only this, he had already faced one tragedy of his own father's death as he was unable to fight with the society and was so ashamed to expose his sexuality that he took his own life. Thus, Gabriel's being homosexual was the bitter truth and the cause of trauma to him and his entire family members.

Cultural trauma is the traumatic experiences that an individual faces as the result of majority's considering certain minority aspects as unnatural, horrendous, weird, ugly and unconventional to the socio-cultural aspects. It also occurs when someone is exposed with some unexpected event, act of violence, harassment and sudden social transformation and change. In the story Pete is also having traumatic

situation because he was bitterly abused by his own parents which was unexpected. Trauma can occur to an individual as well as to the group due to sudden bitter happenings to that particular group or cult. In this novel the writer wants to show how the homosexuals are collectively traumatized by the homophobic attitude of the society. This kind of collective trauma damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. As a result, either a homosexual should hide her sexual reality she should live an isolated life because for them Society no longer exist as an effective source of support. This gives them the feeling that they no longer exist as a connected pair in a larger communal body.

According to Ron Eyerman cultural trauma is a sudden loss of identity and meaning, a separation from the mainstream society, which affects a group of people having some degree of cohesion. This trauma may not necessarily be experienced by an individual or a group or everyone. In another word, it may be a past history but some events may be necessary to establish a significant cause as a trauma and accepted it as trauma by the related group which may take time. He also takes cultural trauma as the cause of collective identity formation. He says: “The trauma . . . is collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity formation of people. . . . As cultural process, trauma is linked to the formation of collective identity and the construction of collective memory” (1). Regarding the formation of African American identity he further writes:

In this sense, slavery was traumatic in retrospect, and formed a “primal scene” that could, potentially, unite all “African Americans” in the United States, whether or not they had themselves been slaves or had any knowledge of or feeling for Africa. Slavery formed the root of an emergent collective identity through an equally emergent collective

memory, one that signified and distinguished a “race” a people, or a community, depending on the level of abstraction and point of view being put forward. (1)

Here, Ron Eyerman says that in the identity formation of African American slavery acts only as a primal scene or the root cause which helped to unite all the African Americans living in America. Though all the African Americans were not the witness of the slavery, the very traumatic history of slavery was the cause of the formation of distinguished collective memory of that racial group and also the cause of the construction of collective identity to fight against the history of slavery. This way the cultural trauma plays an important role to form the collective memory and the collective identity of certain victimized group belonging to specific culture, race, and even sexuality.

In this novel too we can see common experiences of homosexual group as their identity formation. We come through characters fighting for their equal representations and rights in the novel. For example, the protagonist Gabriel and Jess are working together in media in the midnight radio program to share the homo sentiments by telling the story of two imaginary homo couples. They are even planning to go to Hollywood making the visual storytelling show to meet the broad audiences which is also the act of collective homosexual identity formation. Gabriel is more concerned about the suicide of his grandfather because of his sexuality. Both of their rage toward the murder of Matthew Shepherd's is also an example of their collective identity formation. Jess' act of finding another HIV contaminated friend and staying away with Gabriel is also an act of collective identity formation because he becomes comfortable with the group of homos having AIDS. This is because he thinks that those can better understand his position than Gabriel who is HIV negative.

He even feels interested to Pete when he knows that this guy is also suffering from the same disease like him and suggests him to use cocktails for his treatment. Regarding Pete's treatment he says; "I hope she has him on the cocktail . . . Lots of kids are doing it now. He should be on it as soon as possible" (103). Jess never shows interest in Pete and he doubts his existence throughout the novel but when he hears about Pete's disease he is ready to give suggestions about the treatment and interacts with him. This act of him also hints his consciousness toward his collective identity as an AIDS victim.

Trauma caused due to certain social ideology is not natural phenomenon rather it is something constructed by the society. Trauma in itself is not unnatural rather it is caused due to sudden heart rending events which people cannot forget and remain traumatized. The cultural trauma is different as it is constructed, if people grow in their understanding and really become open then there will be no such thing as cultural trauma. In the various times in the history homosexuality is defined with different terms. For example, in nineteenth century it was termed as psychological disorder and people in this group were treated inhumanely in the hospitals. It was practiced as sodomy also. In Greek period, it was regarded as an ideal relationship among men; there are certain African cultures like Nzema in Ghana where same sex marriage exists. Therefore, homosexuality is not only biologically imperative but the effect of historically conditioned familial and social influence. It is an inhuman act when we discriminate somebody just due to a socially constructed ideology which won't remain same forever. Someday this definition regarding homosexuality will again change in course of time and new finding and all the humanity will regret to do so.

Betrayal is also a cause of trauma. In this novel we come through the characters who are the victims of betrayal by their family members and friends and thus having a traumatic life. A traumatic effect is produced upon a character when trust is broken by people that we are convinced will protect us and give us security or when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger. Here Pete has been deceived by his own parents during his childhood. His parents had constantly exploited him by making a sex video by using him and that has caused an extreme trauma in him. While talking about his parents Pete says:

He never used my name, and neither did...you know his wife. Sometimes their customers called me little boy blue, but those two never called me anything. Just 'Hey, you' and shit like that. I didn't even know my name until I went to school and the teacher read it out during roll call. I couldn't believe it when mom started using it. (118)

Here Pete uses words like 'him and 'his wife' for his biological parents and "mom" to Donna who has adopted him now and taking care of him. Once in one telephone conversation he confesses to Gabriel that he had never called his biological father "dad" and he regards him as just a "Sperm donor"(117) His father began beating him when he was two years old and started raping him when he reached the age of four. His mother too videotaped the secession and shared them with other grownups who liked that sort of things. Not only this, he was sold to different people for prostitution. Therefore, he recalls his childhood as a bitter memory under his parent's shocking treatment toward him until he reaches to Donna's hands. This incident of Pete is an extreme example of betrayal. Likewise, Jess's going with another boyfriend leaving

Gabriel alone, Donna's divorce with her husband, Jess's fathers sending him out from the home when he was just a young child, Donna's lie to Gabriel that Pete is dead, etc. all resemble betrayal more or less.

In *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Jenny Edkins writes: "For the child, abuse involves betrayal by the person the child should most be able to trust. For the conscript, it is the state that breaks faith and deceives. Both cases involve relations of power" (4). According to Edkins, betrayal can only possible in close relationships or the relationships which has trust. Jenny Edkins adds that trauma basically is originated from the force and violence or it is related with power. Sometimes it also involves witnessing the horrific deaths of others. In case of trauma caused by betrayal, the victim often is stigmatized by the traumatic past, thus, remains in a trauma forever or for a long time. Edkins' view on trauma is objectified in the novel in the case of different characters who suffer from traumatic memories like Pete, who cannot forget the sexual abuse done to him by his father. Donna, who herself is blind and with scars in her body resulting from the abused she faced when she was very young. Jess, who is skeptic for everything because he was betrayed by his own father and forced to leave home. Gabriel, who cannot forget his grandfather's death etc.

Donna is a divorcee and living a lonely life when her life partner no longer stands by her side. She recalls her marital memory as a sad event in her life. The reason of her blindness and the scar on her arm was the result of abuse that she faced when she was just a young girl. About that Gabriel tells: "May be her life was as bad as yours, and she wanted to make things easier for somebody else" (329). According to Gabriel Donna was over protective because she herself was not able to overcome from the past she lived. So, she was too much cautious about Pete's health. Similarly,

Jess was beaten and thrown out of his house by his father when he was just sixteen.

While talking about Jess's life Gabriel says:

Jess's mother had died eight months earlier in car wreck in Alabama, a trauma that had driven Jess's father to finally seek connection with his children. Jess deeply resented this latter-day conversation. Here was the man who had beaten him routinely as a child, who had thrown him out of the house at sixteen, who had all but ignored Jess's medical death sentence.(93)

Here, we see how troublesome Jess was in his early childhood and in his adulthood when thrown away from the home and discarded by his father. Due to this betrayal he faced in his life, he was always skeptic and doubtful. Even when he was diagnosed HIV positive there was nobody to ease him from that pain not even his buddy Gabriel.

According to LaCapra, trauma has phases like acting out and working through. Acting out is remembering the traumatic past and reliving it in the memories. The people who are going through the acting out phase find their present and future blocked as they constantly remain with their past experiences. In the novel there are many characters like Jess, Pete, and Donna who are going through this phase. Donna has adopted Pete, a thirteen year boy and has taken emotional refuge upon him to escape from her loneliness. She treats Pete with utmost care and gives him all the love and freedom in the world. Since Pete is infected with HIV, it is not an easy job to take care of him financially as well as he needs to be constantly taken to the hospital. In Donna's words:

What do you know about anything? That child couldn't eat off a plate when he came to me. He barely knew what a fork was for, or what it was like to sleep on anything but a pile of dirty rags. He wouldn't talk

for a month, and he had scars in places you can't even imagine. Do you know what that's like? To live in terror for years- and to believe that it could happen again at any time? (289)

She is telling about the critical condition of Pete with Gabriel and how she has managed to bring him into the normal state of life. By looking after Pete, she is trying her best to work through and to get recovery from her bad marital life and the loss of her only child. All these activities of Pete are the post trauma symptoms where even if he is in safe place and the torture had ended he is still reliving it or unable to come outside from it.

Jess cannot forget his traumatic past and relive them so is the case with Pete. But both of them are working through as well because Pete to come out his bitter past has written a biography about his painful past and he is sharing his feeling to Gabriel. Likewise, Jess too is living an individual life even if he is already HIV positive to come out of his bitter past and fear of death. When Gabriel talks about being ready to let him die in his arms Jess tells his feeling: "I dreamed. I dreamed all the time. I wanted to live and I worked like hell to do it. And sometimes so alone, Gabriel. Because you just left it all up to me. You just made speeches about loving a dying man and forgot about the details. I was the one who took care of you" (173).

This dialogue of Jess reveals his effort of working through. Here, he confesses that he is rather interested to live and enjoy the life to fullest even if he had few days left in his life. He is complaining Gabriel for just talking about loving and expecting his death but not helping him to live the moments at his disposal. He further confesses that due to this he took refuge to other fell as who were also going through the same experiences in their lives. Also he separated with Gabriel to have his own neutral

space where he can read, think and be alone. He started doing experiments with cocktail medicines and at end his virus was zero and he was completely recovered.

Jess is skeptic, and hardcore most of the times because he had a rough childhood and near death experience. Due to this trauma he faced in his life he behaves like that to every person and situations. When Gabriel shares about Pete he disbelieves him, and questions upon Pete's existence. He says that may be Donna and Pete are same and are fooling Gabriel. In his own words he says:

How much plainer do I have to make it? His voice is exactly the same as hers. It just a higher pitched, more childish version the rhythms are the same and the ...intonations or whatever you call it. It's really obvious once you listen for it. That's why I stayed on the phone so long. To make absolutely sure. Somebody is been jerking your chain, sweetie." (136)

In this way,he is doubtful toward the entire person and the situations. His skeptic attitude is the result of the trauma he faced or post-traumatic stress disorder. He even hated the Christmas. About him Gabriel reports: "Jess of course, had mechanisms of his own. A rough childhood and a decade of near-death experience had turned him into a hard core skeptic. He distrusted most things until they were proven certainties, until they seem incapable of disappointing or betraying" (130).Even if he is skeptic most of the time he is very soft at hearted too. He tells the miraculous reassurance of Pete and his relation with Gabriel as that of Christian trinity. He tells Gabriel's father as 'father', Gabriel as the 'son' and Pete as the 'Holy Ghost'. Pete is nowhere proved but always gives a feeling of his presence thus; he gave that name to him. Not only this, he cries reading the incident about Mathew Shepherd, he cries while caressing Hugo, while cementing it, and while reading Gabriel's literature about Pete.

The trauma of separation from the dear ones is also beautifully shown in the novel. As the narrator himself is separated and narrating his feeling about it, it is quite touching and heart rending even if it doesn't last long. The incidents of meeting with new people, having misunderstanding, separations are also a part of human culture. Even if they are normal and natural how such unexpected events brings traumatic experiences for short or long time, and how the victim is occupied by the feeling of complains and insecurity, is expressed from the first person point of view. Gabriel, most of the time shares about him and his relationship with Jess with Pete. When he faces Jess's going away from his life which he had never imagined, he suffers a lot. About Jess he says: "I was more sure of him than anything I'd ever believed in. My parents... my work... Christmas" (107). Even if Jess is away when Pete asks if he still loves he replies; "Oh yeah. I can't imagine not." (108) About Jess's dating outside he says:

We were at a side walk café, and he told me, and I started crying and talking really loud. Which is not like me in a public place. . . . This was just one of the people he was dating. I thought we were having a life together, and he was out dating. . . . it hurt too much every time I thought about it. . . we just turned into strangers. He started playing queer punk rock music really loud, which he knew I hated." (106-7)

This dialogue of Gabriel while talking with Pete reveals how traumatic is the broken relationships. When he asks Jess about his motorcycle buddy and Jess confesses he is going along with him recently, he feels hurt. Gabriel was hurt so much and it was very painful for him so, he cried in the public place in front of Gabriel. He says Jess is his husband and he wants him to be in his life only. The separations and unexpected turns in relationship are also a major cause of trauma in people.

There is another reference from the narrator's life which shows how homosexuality is made awkward and point of amusement even in a group of kids. Once when Gabriel was of Pet's age, going to the west in a bus trip with other children he was humiliated and bullied by the co-visitors for the hat he chose. He got a shameful nick name 'Penishead' and a lot of torture which he never forgets throughout his life which Gabriel narrates as:

Alas, the hat was less suggestive of Steve McQueen than of Tom Mix in one of those silly silent westerns. I learned this the hard way when I wore the bulbous monstrosity back to bus, only to be greeted by a burst of rude laughter and a new nick name-Penishead- that would dog me for the rest of the trip. . . I shed tears that night when we bunked at a nearby army base. . . I was never happy at camp. . . I became Designated Dork- an easy mark for the other boys. (131)

This shows even the school going kids have internalized the wrong ideology regarding homosexuality. Gabriel narrates how he was mocked by the fellow children when he choose a hat and how he cried afterward and didn't enjoy the trip at all. It shows being a girlish is a characteristic of failure and mockery. Growing up with a different choice is also a very troublesome and even child who doesn't know anything about sexuality also regard someone as gay when that person is not choosing like the majority wants. It's very hard to be yourself and have your choices when it is different than the majority. To realize being a different individual in terms of your private choices is also horrible in American society. And how hard to find that your every choice can be a matter of joke and humiliation in front of a group. As the writer is Gay himself, we come across such sentimental and touching incidents which make us sad and thoughtful for a moment.

The American Dream is part of the package of progressive society wrapped up nicely for American school children. A dream, taught to children by parents and teachers, which says: grow up, have a family, a nice house, a reliable car and a career. The American Dream: taught to all American children, yet, homosexual children grow into homosexual adults and suddenly the American Dream is not accessible. How does this make sense? How can all American children grow up believing in their ability to pursue and achieve the American Dream, just for some to be told their lifestyle doesn't fit the mold? This type of serious question is raised against the contemporary American society where to find one homosexual; to live one's life being homosexual is a curse due to cultural trauma.

To feel trauma faced by the homosexuals- who spend their life fearing the day their sexuality would cause others to judge them- we can imagine a world where sexuality could cause loss of family, friends, career and even your acceptance in church. That is a world where regardless of how carefully you choose your words, one day you could lose everything because of your sex life. Not a sexually deprived life of rape, incest, or bestiality; rather, a regular monogamous sex life between you and the person you love...your spouse. There are no scientific reasons for discriminating homosexuals yet our society cannot take homosexuality as normal. Most of the people regard homosexuality as the pollution of modern world and they have a misconception that there were no cases of homosexuality as such. This concept is wrong because we can see the many references to homosexuality in all religions too which proves that homosexuality is not today's invention. Moreover there was homosexuality but it was always closeted and hidden in past. Therefore to traumatize the individuals in terms of sexuality is always bad because a human must get equal rights, respect and protection which is not yet fulfilled.

This is traumatic when two people in a committed relationship have to fear losing everything they have worked their whole lives to obtain. Such is the world in which homosexuals live. A world dominated by heterosexual societal standards, which endlessly discriminate against anyone who does not fit the socially acceptable role. Funny thing about society, socially acceptable norms change throughout history. Homosexuality was also termed differently in different centuries. It was termed as a psychological disorder in the nineteenth century; it was also practiced as sodomy throughout the history. What is acceptable in one era doesn't necessarily translate to the next era. Still the people do not take homosexuality's biased discourse as socially constructed and they regard the sick ideology of society about homosexuality as natural and show discriminations toward such people and the victims go through cultural trauma. This is quite inhuman and dark side of human history which must be reformed soon.

As Trauma caused by the social assumptions are socially constructed and are dehumanized part of human history we should discourage this from every way possible. The lifestyle differences are part and parcel to the great diversity which embraces American society. No two people are exactly alike, though all have similarities. With so many variations of the American citizen, why shouldn't there be variations in the American Dream? Americans pride themselves on diversity, yet, Americans are also very judgmental. Hell, everyone's judgmental, that's part of the human experience, making judgments. For all our similarities and differences, we tend to agree no one has the right to dictate morality. This novel's showing American discriminations, dehumanization, prejudices, rejections, humiliations toward different sexuality thus, it is also a mock upon the American dream and so called Americans in general. An American writer who is gay himself is disclosing the reality of the

American society and its thought who on the surface regard themselves as the most open and free people but in reality they are the real hypocrites.

There is a reference of a film star who is lesbian and who narrates a film on homophobia but refuses to talk about her sexuality. She is doing so because she is afraid to disclose her sexuality in public and that way she is living a double life. This way, even the educated celebrities are also afraid of the discriminations that they must face. Also there is a reference of Hollywood who is not co-operative with gay issues. When Jess talks about a Queer story telling show upon Gabriel he tells; “I know these Hollywood pricks. They will cut your guts out when you are not looking, and expect you to be grateful. We are not gonna let that happen.”(98) This line directly critique the Hollywood film industry which being a reputed film industry in the world is discriminating toward sexuality. This dialogue is spoken by Jess while reporting to Gabriel about his upcoming visual show and while saying this he is indicating the big brother attitude of White heterosexual Americans expecting a gay to be grateful toward them. They make the homosexuals feel grateful for getting chance for featuring them as if homosexuals are not supposed to get chance in Hollywood.

Besides, the references of refugees, divorcees, betrayed women in the name of love and abused women are also glimpses of trauma. The quivering scenario regarding Pete’s existence, doubts, lack of visible proofs, hot discussion between Jess and Gabriel etc. are equally disturbing issues in the novel which even troubles the reader until the end. This indecisiveness is also a part of trauma. By giving the open ended storyline Maupin had left all his readers curious about Pete in dilemma or they are left restless without having any clue about the character. This ending is also a resemblance of the traumatic aspect of this novel. Traumas are always disturbing and if it is social trauma it is even more troublesome because being a social being human

have always deep expectations from their fellow beings. When they face discriminations and rejections from their own race it becomes too traumatic and sometimes even unrecoverable. Social trauma is not natural or accidental like the traumas caused from some accidental cause like natural disaster. They are rather constructed or more catastrophic than the natural ones. In this novel, Maupin has highlighted the issues related to the cultural trauma resulting from the social construct. Basically he has highlighted the issues related with the people's attitude toward homosexuality, HIV, child abuse and so on. He shows the betrayals done by very near and dear relationships.

The real parents are shown rude and barbaric towards their own children. Pete and Jess are the examples of such cases. Donna's childhood life is also indicated as sad and traumatic resulting from the torture done by her close ones. Even if the Pete's father is the criminal for abusing his own child his crime is based on the social attitude toward homosexuality. As he raped his son he is also a homosexual but a suppressed one. He cannot come forward accepting his sexuality perhaps may be due to the social insecurity as society never takes homosexuals as the normal ones. His repressed sexuality is the result of such a vicious crime. This issue of Pete is very sensitive. On the surface it shows Pete's father as culprit but deep down it points the society for being guilty. As society is closed toward the homosexuality homosexuals are mostly closeted and suppressed resulting in criminals. Through this narrative the writer wants to tell that if society start accepting the individuals or things as it is, there are chances to lessen crimes. Thus, this novel is quite remarkable to show the cultural trauma that people are facing even in the twenty- first century and specifically in America. This further indicates the condition of cultural trauma in the uneducated and traditional societies.

III. Narrativization of Trauma in Armistead Maupin's *The Night Listener*

Armistead Maupin's novel *The Night Listener* explores the various causes resulting into cultural trauma. It presents a society which has its set standards and limitations due to which people like Gabriel, Jess, Pete and Donna have to suffer for being different from the social expectation. Human beings are born with unlimited freedom and actually cannot live under any rule but the society that they are living in has its rules about almost all aspects of their lives like sexuality, living style and even about incurable diseases like Aids. About sexuality, only heterosexuality is considered as normal and natural sexuality and it is acceptable. If people living in the society happen to be otherwise than this sexuality, the society cannot accept that, for example the gays and lesbians are not accepted as they are stigmatized, humiliated and tortured by their own kins. They are alienated and hated, thus they suffer through cultural trauma as the characters in this novel do.

This novel highlights cultural trauma which is not natural rather it is a construct of the society where the victims go through two processes of 'acting out' and 'working through'. Some of the victims continuously go back to their traumatic past and lose sense of their present and future. For example, Donna is always over conscious about Pete's protection and lives a lonely life being unaware of the situation that Pete needs to come out from fear. It is very difficult for such people to come out of trauma. On the other hand, some other characters go through the process of 'working through'. They have some sense of the present which is in their hands and instead of thinking about the traumatic past and being worried about it they remain open about the future. For example, we see Jess who even leaves his friend to stay aloof when his thought of staying with Gabriel makes him remember his upcoming death due to HIV. He makes new friends, tries different medicines to fight with the

disease and succeeds to reduce the intensity of trauma. To relieve themselves they use various means: they express their feelings through various means. Some of them write books, some express through electronic media and some share directly to the people whom they can trust like Pete.

People haunted by cultural trauma try to relieve themselves through various means. Although they cannot be recovered completely they try their best to get some relief. They act out and work through to decrease the intensity of the burden of trauma. This novel itself is an act of narrativization, as the author himself is trying to express his experiences in this autobiographical fiction as a gay writer. By writing his own story, he is actually working through and getting relief. Although he will not be able to come out of the trauma just by writing this book, it provides some relief to come out of traumatic past, opens to the present and to the unknown future which has its own promises.

One of the major findings of the research is that cultural trauma is the construct of the society. It is not natural rather it is the outcome of the prejudice of the society. The society that we are living has its own set of rules. Due to such situations if people happen to be a different from the so-called social norms and values, they are ill-treated and excluded which causes cultural trauma. We see different references of characters who become the victim of biased social ideology. This research analyzes the situations of the various characters in the novel like Gabriel, Pete, Jess, Donna and so on. On the surface, it seems they have different causes for their trauma but when we closely look at them they are all suffering through cultural trauma. Gabriel and Jess are homosexual partners. Both of their family abandoned them when they came to know about their different sexuality. Likewise, Pete has been sexually abused by his own biological parents and has HIV

and he suffers through his traumatic past. People having AIDS are taken negatively thus Pete is ill-treated even by the doctors.

The research also makes it clear that people going through cultural trauma have similarities in the way they feel and think. Usually they are not able to trust other easily as they have been constantly tortured by the various ways of the people of the society. They are not accepted thus they live in isolation which increases the burden of their trauma. Some of them live dual lives in order to survive in the society but their lives too are not far from torture. In this novel, the existence of the character Pete is questioned. Nobody can say for sure whether he exists or not. He cannot face the people due to his fear and only takes the help of electronic means thus, others doubt his existence. This situation of Pete represents the situation of all the people who are traumatized by their past.

This novel presents various characters with their first hand experiences and their sufferings resulting from cultural trauma. Therefore, this research through the novel exposes and explores the situations of people suffering from social discriminations, loneliness, fear, betrayal and so on. Armistead Maupin is very capable to show the issues resulting from cultural trauma through first person point of view.

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