

I. James Agee & the issue of Historical and Cultural Trauma- An Introduction

Cultural-historical psychology emerged as a response to Cartesian dualism between mind and body in psychology of that time as a deliberate attempt to establish a new paradigm in psychological research that would overcome the narrow objectivism of behaviorism (Watson) and subjectivism of introspective psychology of Wundt, James, and others. It focuses on human development to make genetic claims about the function of mind in activity. These claims could be part of, or a basis for, a return to the unity of human sciences. It also emerged just when the Silver Age, or Renaissance, of the Russian culture was in decline. A major characteristic of cultural-historical psychology was its tendency to integrate knowledge about humans by drawing on various approaches and methods. Cultural–historical psychology, (1).

A basic distinguishing feature of cultural-historical psychology is that "the species-specific characteristic of human beings is their need and ability to inhabit an environment transformed by the activity of prior members of their species. Such transformations and the mechanism of the transfer of these transformations from one generation to the next are the result of the ability/proclivity of human beings to create and use artifacts - aspects of the material world that are taken up into human action as modes of coordinating with the physical and social environment." (3) In this way, research has been done into the effects of literacy (4) and mathematics outside of traditional schooling to understand how cognition develops embedded in a given place and time. (5)

This research entitled, *A death in the Family* deals with the issue of Historical and Cultural trauma project in James Agee's novel *A death in the Family*. Here all the characters are undergoing through historical and cultural effects in their life. Religion is probably the most notable topic of exploration in *A Death in the Family*. It is the greatest cause of discussion and

strife within both the nuclear family of Mary, Jay, Rufus, and little Catherine, and in Mary's extended family. Mary and Hannah are the only two out of all of the family members who deeply believe in God and the Catholic Church.

James Agee in this novel tries to dig out his inner suffocation and pain of his own father's death. By bringing child character, Rufus, a six year child, Agee wants to make comprehend about death. Here, in this novel problem starts when Rufus' father Jay Follet encountered with an accident. Jay is summoned throughout the novel not by his name but he is known after his son's name; 'Rufus' father' or 'his father'. He doesn't have his own identity.

In 1935, Jay Follet at the age of 36 is called from his father's home that his father is going to die soon. That is why he is called to meet him for the very last time and in the very early morning at 3 am after having breakfast made by Mary Follet, Rufus's mother, he leaves with his automobile. But while returning back to home, he is killed in a freak automobile accident near Knoxville, Tennessee. The nuclear & happy family of Mary, Jay, Rufus and little Catherine is shattered after the death of Jay. Agee, here uses childhood as a lens throughout the novel. He uses the child character as a narrator. Much of the narrative of *A death in the Family* is told from the point of view of children & primarily through the eyes of Rufus. Why the novelist, James Agee uses child narrator rather using the matured characters like; Mary or Hannah or Jay's brother, Ralph Follet or Father Jackson.

James Agee in his masterpiece novel uses childhood characters because through the perspective of childhood, we can perceive reality. The interaction between Rufus and Victoria represents Rufus' introduction to the issue of race and to the cultural differences between white and black people in the South. Rufus learns that an innocent question about why Victoria's skin

is dark could be considered hurtful in light of all of the racial prejudice of the time and the place. Even though such prejudice doesn't exist within Rufus' own family or in his head. Again Agee presents a serious issue, racism. Through Rufus' bewildered eyes, exploring it by way of Rufus' innocent questioning, much as he has earlier explored the topic of death in the conversation between Rufus and Mary.

Agee brings the childhood character; Rufus is mostly traumatized by his father's death and seeing all the customs and rituals around him. He is very much fond with father & loves him unconditionally. Actually he is the silencer friend of his father. Rufus is culturally traumatized that is why he always goes back, where he would find his father's existence. That is why one third of the novel we have is flashback.

James Agee was born in 1909, November 27 in Knoxville, Tennessee, United States. His first novel, *A Death in the Family* is an autobiography of his own life. Agee worked also as critics and commentator on the movies. In his fiction, poetry and journalistic writing, Agee's major interests centered on the insecurity of childhood, the historical and cultural conflicts of family life, & the vulnerability of all human beings within society. As a result of his childhood crises, especially the sudden death of his father in 1916 May 18, Agee grew up to be a person overwhelmed by a sense of guilt & personal failure in relation to his writing & his actual life. Agee repeatedly attempted to reconstruct a nostalgic image of an ideal family life.

James Agee's poem, *shining night* is taken as his Historical Cultural manifesto. Here, in this poem we can see his eagerness to live in heaven rather than in the earth. Agee tries to live life in ideal way, where there is lack of pain, problems, and miseries. This poem, *Shining night* is a fine art comes from a book by him entitled; *Permit Me Voyage* published in 1934 by Yale University Press. Here, in this poem, he wishes for to go up to heaven. He doesn't want to live in

earth by tolerating the poor remembrance. That is why, Agee talks about how he "weeps for wonder wandering far alone, of shadows on the stars." This poem highlights on light and shadow, life and death themes that gives us an understanding of life and our place in.

James Agee's *Mother's Tale* is another best allegorical short story. He turned almost too writing homiletic and matriarchal theme. The story is based on mother-centered. The story is from the point of view of a mother cow. This story we can read from two ways; one way to read this story is to simply enjoy the story of a mother cow that worries about the fate of her children. And another way is to read this story is dig deeper for meaning. The first simple meaning could be that this story is really an argument for animal rights and vegetarianism.

Agee was known for his ability to pull readers into a youngster's view of the world, whether he was evoking youthful terror in his analysis of the Halloween scene in Vincente Minnelli's *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) for his *Nation* review; or youthful wonder in his English narration for French filmmaker Albert Lamorisse's story of a boy and a wild horse, *White Mane* (1953); or a languid, sensuous childhood night in the prose poem "Knoxville: Summer 1915." In his harrowing fable "A Mother's Tale," he proved himself a master at depicting violence with an intense, detailed style that makes it as moving and profound as it is horrifying. In all his work, he strove to synthesize disparate literary and dramatic forms, fulfilling his youthful dream of combining "what Chekhov did with what Shakespeare did."

Likewise, *let US Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) is an assignment of Agee working together with his friend Evans. The book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* grew out of an assignment the two men accepted in 1936 to produce a magazine article on the conditions among white sharecropper families in the U.S. South during the "Dust Bowl". It was the time of U.S.

President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs designed to help the poorest segments of the society. Agee and Evans spent many weeks that summer researching their assignment, mainly among three white sharecropping families mired in desperate poverty. They returned with Evans' portfolio of stark images—of families with gaunt faces, adults and children huddled in bare shacks before dusty yards in the Depression-era nowhere of the deep south—and Agee's detailed notes.

As he remarks in the book's preface, the original assignment was to produce a "photographic and verbal record of the daily living and environment of an average white family of tenant farmers". However, as the *Literary Encyclopedia* points out, "Agee ultimately conceived of the project as a work of several volumes to be entitled *Three Tenant Families*, though only the first volume, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, was ever written". Agee considered that the larger work, though based in journalism, would be "an independent inquiry into certain normal predicaments of human divinity". (Literary Encyclopedia)

Agee pulled off realistic metaphoric feats in many media , whether with a memory-suffered novel like; *The Morning watch* , a multipart TV drama- Abraham Lincoln, a movie script- *The African Queen*, or typical essays, reportage and criticism for magazines ranging from "Fortune and Time" to "Life & the Nation." He had an almost alarming versatility. Yet a personal note of his urgency stemming from the conflicts and traumas of his childhood, gave even his most virtuosic work and enormous emotional vitality.

James Agee was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1909. After his father died when he was six years old, his mother sent him to attend St. Andrew's school, where he cultivated a strong appreciation for the Anglo-Catholic Church. He then attended Philips Exeter Academy and Harvard University. Agee wrote *A Death in the Family* shortly after his marriage to Mia

Fritsch, just before his sudden death on May 16, 1955. He never finished the work before his death. The novel was published two years after his death, and it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

A Death in the Family is an unusual novel in that it is both a detailed remembrance and an archetypal depiction of events within any family. It is about marital love and loss, the need for religious faith, and the conflict between urban and rural characteristic of America at that time. It is also (and perhaps more important) Agee's documentation of his life when he was four, five, and six years old.

The novel is autobiographical in the sense that it is about the death of Agee's father. However, it is also an important exploration of the city-country conflict that has characterized American experience from post-Civil-War days through the twentieth century. When Agee was born, Knoxville was rapidly becoming an urban center, yet it was still highly rural compared to the New York City where he spent his later years. *A Death in the Family* documents a period when many American lives were still determined by both rural and city backgrounds of their families. In writing the novel, Agee not only attempts to capture the relationship between himself and his father, but also to evoke a time when his family was in a state of tension between the rural past and the urban future.

Putting together a composite manuscript of *A Death in the Family* was a difficult editorial task, as Agee died before completing the final revisions for the novel. His manuscript contained variant material that fell outside the principal narrative and that he had not yet decided how to incorporate. The editors decided to put the unfinished sections in italics at the end of each division within the work, rather than all together either at the beginning or at the end. This choice on the part of the editors has been a point of discussion by critics of the novel; some have

thought it presumptuous to insert these passages at random junctures, as we have no way of knowing what Agee himself would have done.

The research concentrates more on cultural dimensions for traumatic effect of the event. After the death of Jay Follet, many cultural differences exist to all most all characters. Near the beginning of the story, Mary prays for her religion not to come between her and Jay; it is obviously something that husband and wife feel different about and disagree about. Mary greatly desires to raise her children as Catholic children, but Jay and the rest of Mary's family do not see the point in such action. However, it seems that Jay and Mary have a relationship that is stable enough to endure their differing ideologies. Early on in the story, when Rufus tirelessly questions Mary about death, she answers solely using religious ideology. We see not only that it will be difficult for her to raise her children without them questioning her beliefs, but also that it will be difficult for Rufus to accept such beliefs because they do not logically make sense.

A Death in the Family, we can see how opposed the rest of Mary's family is to her religious beliefs. The two characters who appear most upset are her brother, Andrew, and her father, Joel. They become visibly angry whenever Mary leaves to pray or beseeches God in their presence to forgive her for grieving. The men's anger stems from their opinion that Mary is wasting her passion and intelligence on religious devotion. Nonetheless, they try to remember fact that she derives some comfort from religion, even if it is hard for them to understand or appreciate.

Religion becomes something that is comforting to Mary but that excludes her children. This happens for the first time immediately after Jay's death, when Mary spends most of her time in her bedroom praying. Then, when Father Jackson comes, he cruelly alienates the children and

goes into Mary's room with Hannah and shuts the door. Even after the funeral, when the children embrace their mother, they can feel a change in her when she starts to pray, and they feel isolated.

There is considerable evidence to support the claim that the twenty chapters comprising the basic linear narrative of the novel were only a part of a much longer autobiographical work Agee was planning—the sequential narrative would probably have formed the concluding portion of a projected longer novel. Agee left behind some twenty pages of notes to indicate that he was planning an extensive autobiographical recollection of his childhood, and only some of these memories appear in the published italicized sections. In addition, it is likely that a section titled "Dream Sequence" would have made a more fitting prologue than the "Knoxville: Summer 1915" piece. Regardless of editorial intent, the work stands as a landmark autobiographical novel and a timely exploration of the conflict between America's urban and rural heritage.

To prove the claim mentioned above, the researcher mobilizes the theoretical concepts of Trauma studies, especially that of Cathy Caruth, Kali Tal, Dominick LaCapra, Geoffrey Hartman.

In "Trauma, Absence and Loss", LaCapra tries his best to draw and elaborate the distinction between absence and loss. These states certainly include intellectual clarity and cogency but they have ethical and political dimensions. Post-apartheid South Africa and Post-Nazi Germany face the problem of acknowledging and working through historical losses in ways that affect different groups differently.

Loss is often correlated with lack, far as loss in the past, so lack is to the present and future. By contrast to absence, loss is situated on a historical level and is the consequence of particular events. The nature of losses varies with the nature of events and responses to them and

some loss would facilitate while others are not. Furthermore, the conflation of absence and loss would facilitate the appropriate of particular traumas by those who did not experience them, typically in a movement of identity formation. In this regard, LaCapra writes:

Losses occur in any life of society, but it is still important not to specify them prematurely or conflate them with absences. Historical losses can conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part be completed for, worked through, and even to some extent overcome. Absence, along with the anxiety it brings, could be worked through only in the sense that one may learn to live with it and not convert it into a loss or lack. (712)

Dominick LaCapra in his "Trauma, Absence and Loss" talks about historical trauma and structural trauma in relation to the conflation of absence and loss. In terms of absence, one may recognize that one cannot lose what one never had. The terms can be used with the term, lack too. Structural trauma is related to trans-historical absence and appears in different ways in all societies all lives. Everyone is subject to structural trauma and historical traumas is related to particular events that do indeed involve losses, such as the dropping the atom bomb in Hiroshima or Nagasaki can become a founding trauma. Historical trauma is specific and not everyone is subject to it. LaCapra in relation to it opines:

The belated temporality of trauma and the elusive nature of the shattering experience related to it render the distinction between the structural and historical trauma problematic but do not make it irrelevant. The traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined while structural trauma like absence is not an event but an anxiety producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization. (725)

The terms; acting out and working through are interrelated modes of responding to loss or historical trauma. Mourning might be seen as a form of working through and melancholia as a form of acting out may well be a necessary condition of working through, at least for victims.

Giving emphasis on the part of Historical and Cultural trauma, Cathy Caruth says that it is not just that experience is repeated after is forgetting but that is "only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is the inherent latency of that paradoxically explains in the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience" (10). Her point is that since we cannot experience traumatic event at the moment of its occurrence, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time. Caruth further opines that if latency replaces repression, that is important in its blankness- the space of unconsciousness is paradoxically presence the event in its literally. For history to be a history of trauma it is referential to the extent that is fully perceived as it occurs. She says history can be understood in the inaccessibility of its occurrence.

When we talk about trauma, and its approach, the ideas of Cathy Caruth, one of the leading figures of trauma theory appears to be worth-mentioning. Cathy Caruth, who is very famous for her ideas of latency argues that "trauma as it first takes place in uncertain, but that the survivors uncertainty is not a simple anemia, for the event returns as Freud points out insistently and against their will" (6). Her ideas reinforce the fact that trauma cannot be forgotten. The primary focus of the trauma theory is with the temporary delay as the discourse of the history of history which raises the question of the crisis of truth: a question that asks how we can have access to our historical experience, to a history, that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple access. "Paradoxical through it may sound, a history of trauma becomes "graspable only in the accessibility of its occurrence" –the burden that it places on

comprehension not only unsettles but also forces us to rethink our accepted wisdom of the historical experience (8).

Some critics have paid attention to the thematic analysis of the novel whereas others have tried to dig out distinctive interpretation like religious, spiritualism, structuralism and so on from different angles. Reviewing the novel from spiritualism standpoint, Tabitha relates the novel with spiritualism and adult fiction. She describes:

This was the second time that I read this book in a two year period and it is as gorgeous and grotesque as I remember. "She wanted to hold her niece at arms' length and to turn and admire this blossoming. She wanted to take her in her arms and groan unto God for what it meant to be alive" (120).

"Suddenly there opened within her a chasm of infinite depth and from it flowed the paralyzing breath of eternal darkness. I believe nothing. Nothing whatever" (121).

"Just spunk won't be enough; you've got to have gumption. You've got to bear it in mind that nobody that ever lived is specially privileged; the axe can fall at any moment, on any neck, without any warning or any regard for justice. You've got to keep your mind off of pitying your own rotten luck and setting up any kind of howl about it. You've got to remember that things as bad as this and a hell of a lot worse have happened to millions of people before and that they've come through it and you can too. You'll bear it because there isn't any choice--except to go to pieces. . . It's kind of a test, Mary, and it's the only kind that amounts to anything. When something rotten likes this happens. Then you have your choice. You start

to really be alive, or you start to die. That's all (140-141).

". . . Catherine ran to her, and cried as if she were made only of tears . . . (304)."

Geoffrey Hartman opines that trauma study is closely linked to a specific ethical or socio-cultural tension which arises from an awareness of the persistence of violence in a culture that no longer condones martial virtue of war.

Various stress-related disorders may result from the trauma experience such as attachment disorder, conduct disorders and dissociate reactions, eating disturbance. Trauma effect may also be evidenced as multiple personalities, paranoia, anger and sleep problem, and difficulty trusting people and difficult relationships.

Trauma theory has opened up many new vistas in the study of mind –body relation among which are psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) and concept of cellular memory. Trauma is concerned with psychosomatic network extending into the body. Relative to trauma research, PNI and cellular memory help to explain the summarization of trauma C.B Pert writes:

Memories are stored not only in the brain, but in a psychosomatic network extending into the body, particularly in the ubiquitous receptors between nerves and bundles of cell bodies called ganglia, which are distributed not just in and near the spinal chord, but all the way out along pathways to internal organs and very surface of out skin.(143)

This shows that memories whether they are sweet or traumatic not only stay in the brain but also in other part of body, which causes somatic disorder.

Kali Tal is a pioneering scholar in the field of Trauma Studies, and her ground-breaking book, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1995), has been widely reviewed,

quoted and cited extensive research included both reviews of the scholarly and psychological literature, and hundreds of oral history interviews conducted with trauma survivors over the span of a decade.

In addition to her work as an academic, from 1986-2005 Tal conducted Writing Therapy Workshops with Vietnam War combat veterans, and sexual abuse survivors. In 1988, Tal founded Viet Nam Generation, Inc., a non-profit 501(c) (3) literary and educational organization that published the *Viet Nam Generation Journal* and sponsored the yearly international Sixties Generations conferences. In her role at Viet Nam Generation, Inc., Tal served as editor and coach for scores of Vietnam veteran writers. From 1989-1993, Tal worked as a consultant in the Oral History Archives and Multimedia Learning Center of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, while the institution was preparing for its opening. In 1990, she founded Burning Cities Press to publish the work of combat veterans who became involved in the peace movement.

She currently follows developments in the field of Trauma Studies, and in the diagnosis and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, updating an online version of *Worlds of Hurt* when circumstances require. Often she is invited to lecture and give workshops. The latest addition to the electronic version of *Worlds of Hurt* was a chapter on “Remembering Difference; Working Against Eurocentric Bias in Contemporary Scholarship on Trauma and Memory.”

Dominic LaCapra, one of the popular critics, in the *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory and Trauma* talks about related goals: to intervene in and clarify some of the recent public controversies regarding Holocaust representation; and to elaborate a theory of historical trauma and its transmission. His contribution to trauma theory and cultural

transmission is extraordinarily lucid and insightful. His theory of trauma focuses on the three psychoanalytic topics: the return of the repressed; acting out versus working through; and the dynamic of transference. A traumatic historical event as LaCapra argues, "tends first to be repressed and then to return in the forms of compulsive repetition" (574). He is primarily with the return of the repressed as a discourse, rather than with physical returns as the genocidal repetition in Cambodia and Bosnia, and he outlines two symptomatic possibilities for the return of historical trauma as discourse.

LaCapra wants to create a position that avoids both redemptive and sublime acting out. This acting out refers to the victim plays in real disastrous situation. He sets out to describe a work through trauma that doesn't "deny the irreducibility of loss or the role of paradox and aporia" (Berger 575) but avoids becoming compulsively fixated. LaCapra states that "If there is no acting out at all, no repetition of the traumatic disruption" (575).

LaCapra describes two important implications of his view regarding the historical trauma. First, trauma provides a method of rethinking post-modern and post-structuralism theories in a clearer historical context. As LaCapra suggests:

The post modern and post Holocaust become mutually intertwined issues that are best addressed in relation to each other. This relation would include a new traumatic understanding of what he calls the near fixation on the sublime or the almost obsessive preoccupation with loss, aporia, dispossession, and deferred meaning. (576)

Secondly, LaCapra provides an original rethinking of the debate over the literary canon, suggesting that a canonical text should not help permanently install an ideological order but

should rather, "help one to foreground ideological problems and work through them critically" (576). Each text would be, in effect, a site of trauma with which the reader would have to engage. But LaCapra doesn't examine the relations between historical trauma and only literary text although literature can be the site of acting out or working through.

There exists a strong need to carry out research in this novel from a new perspective. Without proper study on this issue, the meaning of the text will remain incomplete. Having taken this fact into consideration, the present research will explore the historical and cultural trauma of the every Character, especially the main child character of this novel, Rufus.

II. Projection of Historical and Cultural Trauma in James Agee's *A Death in the Family*.

James Agee's *A Death in the Family* is the exploration of Historical and Cultural trauma experienced by each and every characters of this work. Rufus Follet, a six years child is the protagonist of the novel is being haunted by the past memories of his father's death and circumstances happened after his death. He along with other all characters including his mother Mary; sister little Catherine; aunt Hannah, grandpa Joel, grandma Catherine, uncle Andrew, etc. are traumatized. All the characters seem too much hallucinated and confused after they all hear the death of Jay. Jay is Rufus father and the nuclear and family of Rufus move after the death of Jay.

The novel begins with the introduction of the main characters; Rufus and his father and his mother. His father, Jay Follet is not mentioned by his own name rather 'his father' or 'Rufus' father.' Actually, Jay is suffering for being humiliated by himself that he couldn't read well and write as his son can do better than him. He is a drunkard and has inferior complexity. Jay is found hopeless inferior. His culture and his wife's Mary Follet culture is vast different that is why he can't stand before Mary.

He watched the absorbed faces pushing past each other and the great bright letters of the signs: "Sterchi's". "Georges." I can read them now, he reflected. I even know how to say "Sturkeys." But he thought it best not to say so; he remembered how his father had said, "don't you breg," and he had been puzzled and rather stupid in school for several days, because of the stern tone in his voice." (22)

Jay is from village and he is not educated, that is why he belongs to some uncivilized culture but Mary Follet, she is from city and knows everything. She wants to live with prestige. But quite contrarily, Jay is a drunkard and works and earns less money.

Jay is drunkard. He hides to his wife that he has drunk. After drinking, he became unconscious and praised his son. Rufus heartily respects and loves his father. He is deeply attached with his father. He doesn't want to hurt him and even doesn't want to be boasting before him. Jay starts speaking with other men and says: "that's My boy, he said worryly "six years old, and he can read like I couldn't read when I was twice his age". Rufus felt a sudden hollowness in his voice, and along the ...,and his own heart. But how does he fight, he thought.(24)

The main character, Rufus is deep rootedly linked with his father. Rufus is the silence friend of his father. The entire novel is written in third person omniscient, but in the first and second chapter, we are given Rufus' point of view. He is a sensitive boy. Rufus is normally is educated than him. But does not glorify as brave, powerful. That is why, Rufus' psychology as he would be brave. (23)

A subtle hint of tension within Rufus' family is also present in chapter first. Jay is a drunkard. He belongs to uneducated and barbarian type of family background. That is why, he is culturally inferior. He has sensed that his wife, Mary wouldn't like if she found he is drunk:

His father proffered a Life Saver, Courteously, man to man; he took it with a special sense of courtesy. It sealed their contract. Only once had his father felt it necessary to say to him. "I wouldn't tell your mama, if I were you," he had known, from then on, that he could trust Rufus; and Rufus had felt gratitude in this silent trust. (24)

A subtle hint of tension within Rufus's family is also presented here. One time after they visit the bar on the way home, Jay asks Rufus not to mention to his mother that they have gone there. The purpose of the lifesavers is to hide the smell of alcohol on Jay's breath; we learn that drinking is something Jay feels he must hide from his wife. The fact that Jay goes out again after Rufus is in bed and the fact that Mary evidently does not want him to go indicate that Jay may have a drinking problem.

In moments of intense emotion throughout the novel, Agee links his characters to nature imagery. In the scene when Jay and Rufus sit on the rock, for example, Agee uses images of nature to link the father's and son's human emotions to intransient material things, thereby showing the universality and eternal presence of these feelings in human relations:

he saw that his father's eyes had become still more clear and grave and that the deep lines around his mouth were satisfied; and looked up at what his father was so steadily looking at, at the leaves which silently breathed and the stars that beat like hearts. He heard a long, deep sigh break from his father, and then his father's abrupt voice: "Well..." and the hand lifted from him and they both stood up. (28-29)

By personifying images such as leaves and stars, Agee makes everything in the scene appear to have a life of its own. The fact that the boy feels that everything his father sees has its own life behind it highlights the complete adoration he feels for his father.

In this novel, the female character, Mary, Rufus' mother is historically and culturally traumatized by her relationship with her husband, Jay and his family. Jay's family don't like Mary that is why, she along with her husband and children are living separately. After knowing

the health condition of her father-in-law, she has gone in deep contemplation and starts to monologue with herself:

And yet, clearly as she felt that she realized what the bereavement would mean to Jay' mother, and wrong as she couldn't help feeling that even more, his death would mean great relief and release. And it occurred to her, he'll no longer stand between me and Jay. (55-56). The character is uncertain what should be talked or thought on the behalf of her father-in-law. But again she regrets and prays: "At this, her soul stopped in utter coldness. God forgive me, she thought, amazed; I almost wished for his death!" She clasped her hands and stared at a stain on the ceiling. (56). She is psychologically depending on God. She is religious woman. That is why she starts to pray God to forgive her bad intention: O Lord, she prayed; forgive me my unspeakable sinful thought. Lord cleanse my soul of such abominations. Lord, if it be Thy will, spare him long that I may learn to understand and care for him more with Thy merciful help. Spare him not for me but for himself Lord. (56)

Mary is religious woman. She blindly follows rituals. She is from urban area and preferred single family. She doesn't want to be intervened by her in-laws, which indicates the cultural disturbance in their family.

The main child character, Rufus along with his little sister, Catherine are being taught by their mother about the phenomena of death. Mary tries to define death by her religious view. She tries to teach them about death according to her belief and culture:

"Granpa Follet is very sick. Uncle Ralph phoned up very late last night, when all of us were asleep. Granpa has had one of his attacks." "What's attack?" "Eat your cereal, Catherine, Rufus, eat yours. His heart. Like the one he had time last fall. Only worse, Uncle Ralph says. He wanted very much to see daddy, just as quick as daddy could come." "Why?" "Because he loves Daddy and if..... Eat wicker, or it'll all be nasty and cold, and then you know how you hate to eat it. Because if daddy didn't see him soon, Granpa might not get to see Daddy again." (59)

Agee uses the points of view of children to explore some of the heavy issues that the novel, raising them in an innocent, untrained way that sheds new light onto each circumstance and gives us a fuller sense of the human truths that the narrative conveys. It offers the novel's first exploration of the complicated topic of death; instead of analyzing or interpreting them himself, Agee uses the questioning voice of a child. This technique is effective because Rufus is an intelligent and sensitive child; we are invested in finding out how his mother will respond to his queries, as he raises important points.

Mary further explains about the reality of death. She tries to input in Rufus and Catherine's mind that death is taken by God, the super powerful one:

"Because Granpa is getting old, and when you get old, you can be sick and not get well again. And if you can't get well again, then god lets you go to sleep and you can't see people anymore." "Don't you ever wake up again?" "You wake up right away, in heaven, but people on earth can't see you anymore, and you can't see them." "Oh." "Eat," their mother whispered, making a big, nodding mouth and chewing vigorously on air. They ate. (60)

Rufus speaks aloud for the first time in this chapter, and he tirelessly questions his mother about where his father is going and why. His questions grow progressively more serious, and while the whole exchange is humorous, it carries undercurrents of meaning that resound later in the story. Indeed, all of the questions that Rufus asks about Grampa Follet are questions that everyone must ask themselves later as they recoil from Jay's death. Furthermore, the way in which Mary responds also foretells how she will react later—she turns to religion for answers. However, at this point in time she does not seem intent on convincing Rufus of the importance and authority of religion; she merely wants to fend off the discussion and send him on his way to school.

Rufus is confused on his mother's explanation. That is why, he further inquires to clear his curiosity:

"Mama," Rufus said, "When Oliver went to sleep did he wake up in heaven too?"

"I don't know. I imagine he woke up in a part of heaven God keeps especially for cats." "Did the rabbits wake up?" "I'm sure they did if Oliver did." "All bloody like they were?" "No Rufus that was only their poor little bodies. God wouldn't let them wake up all hurt and bloody, poor things." "Why did God let the dogs get in?" "We don't know, Rufus, but it must be a part of His plan we will understand someday." "What good would it do Him?" (60)

Rufus's dissatisfaction with the answers religious dogma provides is indicative of not only his own views, but also the views of Jay and much of Mary's own family. Aunt Hannah is the only one who shares Mary's religious faith; no one else can really understand it, and some are even somewhat repulsed by it. Rufus's questions find more faults with Mary's explanation than Mary can successfully account for to a child that does not have faith and is merely curious. Indeed, the

novel as a whole does not lend religion any special authority; it merely presents religion as one of a number of potential coping strategies. It seems contradiction within a family regards culture.

The very weak character in this novel Ralph, Jay's younger brother. He is culturally and historically inferior. His family background is a drunkard and that's why he is unable to get rid from this behavior. In this novel, this character always seems in unconscious mood. He can't decide whether he is loved by his mother or not. He even can't believe his own wife although she is afraid of him. He is in a fully paranoid condition. Sometimes he blames to himself and sometime he blames to mother's love and wife's faith:

"And looking at himself now, he neither despised himself nor felt pity for himself, nor blamed others for whatever they might feel about him. He knew that they probably didn't think the incredibly mean, contemptuous things of him that he was apt to imagine they did. He knew that he couldn't ever really know what they thought, that his extreme quickness to think that he knew was just another of his dreams. He was sure, though, that whatever they might think , it couldn't be very good, because there wasn't any very good thing to think of. But he felt that whatever he thought, they were just, as he was almost never just. He had no doubt whatever, just now, that she really did love him, had never stopped loving him, and never would. (71-72)

The fact that Ralph has such a bad alcohol problem is not surprising in light of the fact that the narrator has hinted that Jay enjoys drinking as well—alcoholism is partly an inherited disease. Ralph is one of the least likable characters in the novel, and it shows his weakness and insecurity is more fully characterized than at any other point in the novel.

This character is not sure of him. He doesn't have self respect. Historically and culturally he is awkward. He suspects upon himself. He has inferior complex:

He knew even that she was especially gentle to him, that she loved him in a way she loved nobody else. And he knew why he so often felt that she did not really love him. It was because she was so sorry for him. It was because she had never had and never possibly could have, any respect for him. And it was respect he needed, infinitely more than love. Just not to have to worry about whether people respect you. (74)

While Ralph is standing by his sick father's bedside, he keeps thinking of excuses to leave so that he can have another swig from the bottle. It is painfully obvious to all present what he is doing; he knows this, but he is unable stop.

The more Ralph drinks, the more self-critical he becomes, until at the end we understand that he feels he has no more power than a baby. Ralph is, both literally and figuratively, the baby of the family—Jay is not only older, but also a much stronger and more mature character.

Trauma hits a person after a lapse of time. The period of time between the actual event and the trauma is known as period of latency. As Cathy Caruth stresses in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*:

Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that it is much unassimilated nature- the way it was precisely not known in the first instance- returns to hunt the survivor later on. Trauma is not fully known is therefore not available to consciousness until it

imposes itself again. It can be manifested repeatedly in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. (4)

Caruth systematizes the concept of trauma as discussed by Sigmund Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in which, repetitiveness of trauma is illustrated through the actions of a soldier who wounds his beloved in a battle and then wounding her again unknowingly invites trauma against his will. People think they all have trauma in their lives. They apply the word loosely to such routine events from being tied up in traffic to arriving at airport without picture ID college students say the final exam was traumatic. These specify occasional stresses in our life. For those who suffer violence trauma is a specific, devastating, and often long-lasting wound.

One which is transformed into conscious material easily and under conditions which frequently arise and another in the case of which such a transformation is difficult, can only come about with a considerable expenditure of energy, or may never occur at all. We can the unconscious which is only latent, and so easily become conscious, the "preconscious", and keep the name "Unconscious" for the others. (Freud, 101) Ralph, is too much drunkard, he is every time busy in drinks. He wants to escape from reality, family, wife and responsibilities. He often seems in unconscious mind: And here tonight it comes like a test, like a trial, one of the times in a man's life when he is needed, and can be some good, just by being a man. But I'm not a man. I'm a baby. Ralph is the baby. Ralph is the baby." (72)

Cap is seen as a symbol of innocence and childhood that is about to be taken away from Rufus when his father dies. It is the last instance of absolute happiness that we see Rufus experience in this novel:

"And there his Aunt Hannah made a proposal which astounded Rufus with gratitude. She turned to him and said, "And now if you'd like it, I'd like to give you a cap." He was tongue-tied; he felt himself blush. His aunt couldn't quite see the blush but his silence disserved her, for she had believed that this would make him really happy. Annoyed with herself, she nevertheless couldn't help feeling a little hurt. (78)

In encouraging Rufus to get the cap that he wants, Hannah is also encouraging him to listen to his own individual preferences. She reflects that she does not want to cause tension between Rufus and Mary, but she feels that, in this instance, Mary would get Rufus the cap herself if she knew how badly he wanted it. There is a culture to wear cap as a noble way, that's Mary wants to Rufus to have noble one. But Rufus as his age asks for colored and fancy one. That is why, here we can find cultural differences because of generation gap.

Hannah, the important character in this novel had suffered the pain of losing own husband, family. She had experienced the trauma, which she couldn't forget. After Hannah suspects the death of Jay, she remembers her past. In Cathy Caruth's view/ideas reinforce the fact that trauma can't be forgotten. The primary focus of the trauma theory is with the temporary delay as the discourse of history which raises the question of the crisis of truth:

A question that asks how we can have access to our historical experience, to a history, that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose path there is no simple access." Paradoxical through it may sound, a history of trauma becomes "graspable only in the accessibility of its occurrence"- the burden that it places on comprehension

not only unsettles but also forces us to rethink our accepted wisdom of historical experience. (8):

While she was speaking, she was with her voice, her eyes and with each word opening in Hannah those all but forgotten hours, almost thirty years past, during which the cross of living had first nakedly borne I upon her being, and she had made the first beginnings of learning have to endure and accept it. Your turn now, poor child, she thought; she felt as if a prodigious page were being silently turned, and the breath of its turning touched her heart with cold and tender awe. (127)

After the disclosure of Jay's death, every character in this novel deeply traumatized. The happy and nuclear family of Jay, Mary, Rufus and little Catherine's life shattered. Not only that the other characters too effected by Jay's death. They start to say sorry to Mary:

And his wife, while she mended, was thinking such a tragedy. Such a burden for. Poor dear. Mary. How an earth is she to manage. Of course it's still entirely possible that he isn't passed away. But that could make matters even more tragic, for both of them. Such an active man, unable to support his family. How dreadful, in any event. Of course, we can help. But not with the hardest of the burden. Poor dear child. And the poor children. And beneath such unspoken words, while with her weak eyes she bent deeply to her mending, her generous and unreflective spirit was more deeply grieved than any thought for resoluteness could have made it. How very swiftly life goes! (137-138)

Here in this one-side dialogue, Mary's mother, Catherine is sad and thinking about her daughter's forthcoming life situation. After she comes to know about the death of Jay, her son-in-law, she

can't hold herself. She starts to grieve for Mary and her children. Here, Agee tried to show us both inner thought of his characters and how their thought manifest in speech is a testament to his perceptiveness about the nature of human interaction.

Geoffrey Hartman opines that trauma study is closely linked to a specific ethical or socio-cultural tension, which arises from awareness of the persistence of violence in a culture that no longer condones martial virtues of war. In this novel, religion plays as contradictory role. Here, the two female characters; Hannah and Mary blindly follow religion that is why they think that Jay's death is because of God's wish and fate of them. But another two characters; Joel and Andrew are the anti religious nature. They rejected that it's not the God but it's the accident; reality.

Jay's death is not shown to us directly rather it is narrated by the other character. His death is narrated by Andrew very minutely which we can imagine as we are watching that incident very live. All the family members of Mary are badly traumatized while hearing the accident of Jay:

"He said he was on his way home, about nine O' clock, coming in towards town, and he heard an auto coming nearer and nearer, and he thought, there is somebody that's sure got to get some place in a bad hurry" ("He was hurrying home," Mary said) "or else he's crazy" (he had said "crazy drunk." (152)

The family traumatized by Jay's accident. The whole family can't get rid from the past incident.

Andrew explains every minute detail about the accident. All the characters; Mary, Hannah, Catherine, Joel are affected by the narration of accident of death of Jay. All the characters are moving along with the narration of Jay's accident:

"He looked at each of them in turn. In a light vindictive voice he told them, He says it was just a chance in a million." "Good God, Andrew," his father said. "Just that one tiny area, at just a certain angle, and just a certain sharpness of impact. If it had been even a half an inch to one side, he'd be alive this minute." "Shut up, Andrew," his father said harshly; for with the last few words that Andrew spoke, a sort of dilation had seized Mary, so that she had almost risen from her place, seeming larger than herself, and then had collapsed into a shattering of tears."
(157-158)

Andrew is alternately considerate and callous; it is kind of him to sit on Catherine's good side, but somewhat cruel of him to tell Mary that it was only a one in a million chance that a concussion would kill Jay. But Andrew has also taken care to get all the details about the death correct so that Mary would have no doubt that Jay died instantly and did not suffer.

After hearing every minute detail from Andrew about the accident, Mary is badly traumatized. She starts to murmur by herself. She starts to cry for forgiveness to God: "O God, forgive me," Mary moaned. "Forgive me! Forgive me! It's just more than I can bear! Just more than I can bear! Forgive me!" (158) Mary apologizes because when Jay was called by his home that his father was seriously sick; at that time Mary thought about her father-in-law's death. She even thought that after his death everything would be gone right. That is why Mary asks for that forgiveness to the God.

When Mary is shattered and acted like in unconsciousness. Hannah moves, Joel aside and stooped before Mary, taking her wrists and talking earnestly into her streaming hands:

"Mary, listen to me. Mary. There's nothing to ask forgiveness for. There is nothing to ask forgiveness for, Mary. Do you hear me? Do you hear me, Mary? Mary nodded within her hands. "God would never ask of you not to grieve, not to cry. Do you hear? What you are doing is absolutely natural, absolutely right. Do you hear! You wouldn't be human if you did otherwise. Do you hear me, Mary? You're not human to ask His forgiveness. You're wrong. You're terribly mistaken. Do you hear me, my dear? Do you hear me?" (158).

Hannah goes to Mary and tells her it is only natural to grieve, and that she must stop asking God's forgiveness for doing so. It is good that Hannah intervenes, as she is the only other religious person and therefore probably the only one Mary would listen to on that point. Their conversation demonstrates once again how alone the two women are within their family in terms of their religion.

In Agee's book this religious aspect finds its articulation in the figure of Mary, the mother of the child Rufus. Mary's is the voice of religious faith sorely tried by the inexplicable and seemingly needless tragedy of her husband's death, one of many voices that range from belief through the various shades of agnosticism of her siblings to the full-on atheism of her father. In the stunned aftermath following the news of Jay's death, Mary intermittently senses her husband's presence in the room:

When she came through the door of the children's room she could feel his presence as strongly throughout the room as if she had opened a furnace door: the presence of strength, of virility, of helplessness, and of pure calm. And even while she whispered, his presence became faint, and in a moment of terrible dread she cried out "Jay!" . . . "Stay with me one minute" . . . and in some force he

did return; she felt him with her, watching his child. . . . but she could realize only that he was fading, and that it was in-deed good-bye. . . . And now he was gone entirely from the room, from the house, and from this world. "Soon, Jay. Soon, dear," she whispered; but she knew that it would not be soon. She knew that a long life lay ahead of her . . . before they met once more. (19)

The other members of the family variously believe or disbelieve Mary's experience, as is their disposition, Agee not committing himself to any one view.

After the death of Jay, all the family members are gathered in Mary's home. She is seriously traumatized that is why she acted as if Jay's soul comes in her house, her room to converse with her. She is hallucinated and begins to converse with no one:

It's Jay, Mary whispered. "I know it now. I was so wrapped up in wondering what on earth... Jay Darling. Dear heart, can you hear me?" Can you tell if you hear me, dearest? "Can you?" can't you? "Oh try your best, my dear. Try your very hardest to let me know." But O, do hear me, Jay. I do pray God with all my heart you can hear me, I want to assure you. "Don't be troubled, dear one. Don't you worry? Stay near us if you can. All you can. But let not your heart be troubled. They're all right, my sweetheart, my husband. I'm going to be all right. Don't you worry. We'll make out. Rest, my dear. Just rest. Just rest, my heart. Don't ever be troubled again. Never again darling. Never, never again. (177-178)

Mary and Jay had very good relationship. They lived very peacefully. They loved each other very much. That's why, even after the death of Jay, Mary is suffering historically. Her culture believes that even after once death, one can talk with the spirit, whoever believe in religion. She

becomes unconscious although she isn't drunk. Her brother and father try to stop her but she continues her one-sided conversation.

Mary is totally hopeless. After the death of her husband, Jay, she can't find any way. That's why, she is hallucinated:

Mary, in God's name what is it? "It was Jay, Andrew." "It was something . I haven't any doubt of that, but good God, Mary." "It was Jay, all right. I know! Who else would be coming here tonight, so terribly worried, so terribly concerned for us, and restless! Besides, Andre, it – it simply felt like Jay." (178)

The feeling of Jay's present even after his death is signed about Mary's hopelessness. She thinks that her life would be happy and smooth enough after that event. She is in traumatic pain, sorrow, which make her life frustrated and depressed. She finds her life emptiness and vacuum after her husband's death.

Mary is still in traumatic state of mind that she keeps on talking with Jay thinking that he is still with her:

Jay. My dear. My dear one. You're all right now, darling. You're not troubled any more, are you, my darling? Not any more. Not ever any more, dearest. I can feel how it is with you. I know, my dearest. It's terrible to go. You don't want to. Of course you don't. but you've got to. And you know they're going to be all right. Everything is going to be all right, my darling. God take you. God keep you, my own beloved. God make His light shine upon you. And even while she whispered,

his presence became faint, and in a moment of terrible dread she cried out "Jay!"
(181-182)

Mary goes on talking in unconscious. But she accepts that Jay is with God. She is fully religious woman. She only assures herself that everything will be fine. She blindly follows religion.

In this novel, we have hint of discrimination between white and black. The white children of school jeer and tease the the nigger boy Rufus. Rufus is the main child character and he is psychologically affected by White boys, who always ask his name and make fun after his name:

Uh-Rufus, Uh-Rastus, Uh Johnson, Uh-Brown, Uh-What ya gonna do when the
rent comes roun? And others yelled, "Nigger's name, nigger's name," and chanted
a verse that he had often heard them yell after the blacks of colored children and
even grown-up colored people,

Nigger, nigger, black as tar,

Tried to ride a lactic car,

Car broke down and broke his neck

Poor nigger wanted his nickel back.

Three or four; instead of running, stood screaming his name and these verses at
him, and the word, "nigger," jumping and down and shoving their fingers at his
chest and stomach and face while he stood in abashment, and followed by these,
he would walk unhappily home. (205-206)

The specter of racism becomes evident once again in the boys' teasing, as they taunt Rufus with a rhyme including other names that black people used, such as "Rastus." The last line of the rhyme emphasizes the economic poverty of black people at that time, implying that blacks do not have

enough money to pay their own rent. Indeed, the narrative takes place just fifty years after the end of the Civil War, a time when racism is still a prominent part of Southern society.

Rufus, a six years child is historically and culturally traumatized by his own name. His name is taken as fun, which makes him confused and troubled:

You were given that name because it was your great-grand father Lynch's name, and it's a name to be proud of. And Rufus: don't ever speak that word 'nigger'. But he had felt that although may be she was proud of a name that everybody laughed at? Once when they were less noisy, and one of them said to him, quietly, "That's a nigger's name, he had tried to feel proud and had said; It is not either, it's a very fine old name and they yelled, "Then your granpa's a nigger too," and ran off down the street yelling, "Rufus is a nigger, Rufus' granpa's a nigger, he's a nigger, he's a nin-ger," and he'd yelled after them, "He's not, either, it's my great-granpa and he is not!"; (207-208)

The narrative never tells us where Mary is from. If she is from the South, she must have been raised in an enlightened family that was not racist in any way. Indeed, this section is the second instance in the novel when Mary tells Rufus that there is no difference between black people and white people. She says that Rufus is a fine name for any person. Earlier on, she insists that Rufus never mention the way that Victoria smelled. Mary is clearly extremely sensitive to plight of black people at the time; even though Rufus likes the way Victoria smelled, Mary knows that any comment could be taken the wrong way due to the racially charged society of the time.

Rufus gives a moving glimpse into the tensions and repressions of his family circumstances:

"When you want to know more about it" (and her eyes became still more vibrant)
"Just, just ask me and I'll tell you because you ought to know." How did he get hurt, Rufus wanted to ask, but he knew by her eyes that she did not mean at all what she said not now anyway, not to this minute, he must not ask, and now he didn't want to ask because he too was afraid; he nodded to let her know he understood her. (238)

When Mary calls both little Catherine and him and discloses that their father was dead and when she asks if they want to know about how their father had been in accident then Rufus acts very maturely and understands the environment that it's not good to ask about it and he nodded that he doesn't want to know about the accident.

Little Catherine is 3 years old child. In this novel, her child psychology is too clearly shown. She is very young that is why she is in confusion that why her mother, Mary feels awful after death of Jay. She is very much young that she can't distinguish anything:

"Granpa Follet is very, very sick. But Mama didn't feel awful then, she feels awful now. But why didn't he come back when she said he would? He went to heaven and now Catherine could remember about the heaven, that's where God lives, was up in the sky. Why'd he do that? God took him there. But why'd he go there and not come home like Mama said? Last night Mama said he was coming home last night. We would even wait up a while and when he didn't and we had to go to bed she promised he'd be here at breakfast time and now it's breakfast time and she says he won't come home ever anymore." (243)

Agee lets us inside Catherine's head, the limited ability of her comprehension highlights the enormity of the emotional complications that always surround a death. Catherine is too much young to comprehend about death. According to her child psychology, heaven is that place, where God lives and takes her father.

Rufus is always jeered by his school boys. He wants their acquaintance and acceptance and respect. That is why he uses emotional blackmail tactic towards his school boys:

Tried his best to quieten his face and told them, shyly and proudly, " My daddy's dead." Of the first three who came up, two merely looked at him and the third said, " Huh! Betcha he ain't"; and Rufus, astounded that they didn't know and that they should disbelieve hi, said, " Why he is so!" "Where's your satchel at?" said the boy who had spoken. "You're just making up a lie so you can lay out of school." "I am no laying out," Rufus replied. "I was going to school and my Aunt Hannah told me I didn't have to go to school today or tomorrow or not till-not for a few days. She said I mustn't. So I am not laying out. I'm just staying out." And another of the boys said, "That's right. If his daddy is dead he don't have to go back to school till after the funerl." While Rufus had been speaking two other boys had crossed over to join then and now one of them said, "He don't have to. He can lay out cause his daddy got killed," and Rufus looked at the boy gratefully and the boy looked back at him, it seemed to Rufus, with deference.(255)

This shows the immaturity of Rufus. He takes advantage of his father's death. His child psychology believes that if he shares this kind of sorry news to his school boys then they will stop to jeer by calling 'Nigger boy,' 'Nigger's name.'

Later on Rufus realized that he does wrong by publicizing his father's death only to get respect and love from school boys and other people:

He felt so uneasy, deep inside his stomach, that he couldn't think about it any more. He wished he hadn't done it. He wished he could go back and not do anything of the kind. He wished his father could know about it and tell him that yes he was bad but it was all right he didn't mean to be bad. He was glad his father didn't know because if his father knew he would think even worse of him than ever. But if his father's soul was around, always, watching over them, then he knew. And that was worst of anything because there was no way to hide from a soul, and no way to talk to it either. He just knows, and it couldn't say anything to him, and it couldn't say anything to it. It couldn't whip him either, but it could sit and look at him and be ashamed of him. "I didn't mean it," he said aloud. "I didn't mean to be bad." I wanted to show you my cap, he added, silently. He looked at his father's morsechair. Not a mark on his body. (264-265)

Rufus bragged about his father's death to other; his school friends. Later he apologizes in the living room but he can't be relieved because he can no longer apologize directly to his father. The closest person in his life is his father. He is very much excited to show new cap bought by Aunt Hannah to his father, but he can't do this. Because Jay's life is finished permanently in earth.

In this novel, religion plays vital role. The Father-like figure Jackson's character is shown in nasty way. Father Jackson instead consoling the children, rather he tries to impose the so-

called manner to them. Rufus and Catherine's child psychology takes Father Jackson as nasty person that's why they hesitate and even afraid with him:

Children must not stare at their elders, he said. "That is ill-bred." "Huh?" both of them asked. What is "stare," they wondered; "elders"; ill-bred?" "Say, 'Sir,' or 'I beg your pardon, Father.'" "Sir?" Rufus said. "You," Father Jackson said to Catherine. "Sir?" Catherine said. "You must not stare at people- look at them, as you are looking at me," "Oh ,," Rufus said. Catherine face turned red. "say excuse me, Father." "Excuse me, Father." "You," Father Jackson said to Catherine. Catherine became still redder. "Excuse me, Father." Rufus whispered. "No prompting, please." Father Jackson broke in, in a voice pitched for a large class. "Come now, little girl, it is never too soon to learn to be little ladies and little gentlemen, is it?" Catherine said nothing. "Is it?" Father Jackson asked Rufus. "I don't know," Rufus replied. "I consider that a thoroughly uncivil answer to a civil question," said Father Jackson. "Yes," Rufus said, beginning to turn cold in the pit of his stomach. What was "uncivil?" "You agree," Father Jackson said. "Say, 'Yes, Father.'" "Yes, Father," Rufus said. "Then you are aware of your incivility. It is deliberate and calculated," Father Jackson said. "No," Rufus said. He couldn't understand the words but clearly he was being accused. (276)

Here shows how the so-called Father Jackson, the Christ follower plays with the psychology of the children. His figure is too nasty.

Rufus and Catherine, the child psychology change according to the circumstances and events. Their child psychology doesn't like Father Jackson, who teaches them manner and speaks nastily. That's why Catherine can't speak before him. But another character, Walter Starr,

a neighbor knows very well to tackle with child's psychology. Thus, Rufus feels good as he felt good when he used to be with his father:

Well down home, believe it or not, we got a box that music comes out of. Would you like to hear it sometime?" Uh-huh." "Good. We'll see if that can't be arranged. Soon. Now would you like to know what they call this box?" "Uh-Huh." "A gram-o-phone. See? It sounds very much like grandma phone, but it's just a little different. Gram-o-phone. Can you say it?" "Gram-uh-phone." "That's right. Can Baby Sister say it, I wonder?" "Catherine he means you." "Gran-muh-phone." "Gramm-uh-phone." "Gram-muh-phone." That's fine. You're a mighty smart little girl to say a big word like that." "I can say some ever so big words," Rufus said. "want to hear? The Dominant Primordrial Beast." "Well now, that's mighty smart. But of course I don't mean smarter than Sister. You're a lot bigger boy." "Yes, but I could say that when I was four years old. She's almost four and I bet she can't say it. Can you, Catherine? Can you?" "Well, now, some people learn a little quicker than others. It's nice to learn fast but it's nice to take your time, too." He walked over and over and picked Catherine up and sat down with her in his lap. He smelled almost as good as her father, although he was soft in front, and she looked happy.(283)

Walter Starr is a quite yet consistent presence throughout the entire story. He is far more sensitive than the priest. He is far more sensitive than the priest. He tells the children that they are welcome anytime at his home if they want to come listen to the gramophone.

Here we have serious matter of racism. Historically and culturally there is the difference between Black and White. Black had undergone through lots of struggle, that's why it's their inherited nature that they smelled:

"Mama," he said later, when she was out shopping, "Victoria smells awful good."
"Hush, Rufus," his mother said. " Now you listen very carefully to me, do you hear? Say yes if you hear." "Yes." "Now you be very careful that you never say anything about how she smells where Victoria can hear you. Will you? Say yes if you will." "Yes" "Because even though you like the way she smells, you might hurt her feelings terribly if you said any such thing, and you wouldn't want to hurt dear old Victoria's feelings, I know. Would you, would you, Rufus?" "No."
Because Victoria is-is colored, Rufus. That's why her skin is so dark, and colored people are very sensitive about the way they smell. Do you know what sensitive means?" (103-104)

Here presents a serious issue—here, racism—through Rufus's bewildered eyes, exploring it by way of Rufus's innocent questioning, much as he has earlier explored the topic of death in the conversation between Rufus and Mary.

The interaction between Rufus and Victoria represents Rufus's introduction to the issue of race and to the cultural differences between white and black people in the South. Rufus learns that an innocent question about why Victoria's skin is dark could be considered hurtful in light of all of the racial prejudice of the time and the place—even though such prejudice does not exist within Rufus's own family or in his head:

"Why is your skin so dark?" He saw her bright little eyes thrust into him through the little lenses and he felt a strong current of pain or danger. He knew that something was wrong. She didn't answer him immediately but peered down at him sharply. Then the current passed and she looked away from him, readjusting her fingers so that she took his hand. Her face looked very far away, and resolute. "Just because, chile," she said in a stern and gentle voice. "Just because that was the way God made me." "Is that why you're colored, Victoria?" (106)

After declaration of independence too Blacks didn't get all the rights and facilities, what they are deserved. They had to live with great self demoralization. Because of the history and culture they couldn't live proudly as did by Whites. James Agee tries to explore the historical and cultural problem even in time by bringing character like Victoria in this novel.

Rufus, who loves and is attached with his father so closely attends in praying and psychologically traumatized. He is hallucinated and imagined his father as if he is there with him, in the darkness:

"Dead. He's dead. That's what he is; he is dead"; and the room where his father lay felt like a boundless hollowness in the house in his own being, as if he stood in the dark near the edge of an abyss; and could feel that droop of space in the darknes; and watching his sister's face he could see his father's almost as clearly, as he had just seen it, and said to himself, over and over: "Dead. Dead"; and looked with uneasiness and displeasure at his sister's face, and so uncomprehending. And Catherine saw him stuck down there in the long box like a huge mute doll, who would not smile or stir, and smelled sweet and frightening, and because of whom she sat alone and stiffs and too clean, and nobody was kind

or attentive, and everything went on tiptoe, and with her mother's willingness a man she feared and hated put his great hand on her head and spoke incomprehensibly. Sometime very wrong was being done, and nobody seemed to care or to tell her what or to help her or love her or protect her from it and there was her too-clean brother, who always thought he was so smart, looking at her with dislike and contempt.(297)

In this context, it is shown that Rufus badly misses his father. He is attending in the last prayer. Jay's body is in the coffin box and he feels bad. Catherine feels insecure because there is nobody at that moment to look after her love her. Here, it is clearly given the human nature that elder are always tries to rule and order to the younger one; like Rufus always asks his sister to do this and that and tries to show his elder image.

Agee let us see inside minds of his wife, his children, his parents, his brother-in-law in detail as each character grapples with this new hole in his or her life, trying to grasp the loss and make sense of it. Jay's wife Mary and her Christian faith are contrasted with the character of the organized church in the character of Father Jackson, who refuses to read the complete burial service over Jay because he had not been baptized.

Catherine in the midst of the crowd and hustle-bustle can't get care and still searching for her father. She is wondering for her father. Her innocence can't understand that her father is no more and he won't come any more. The whole family is traumatized and they are sure that life won't be same as before. Mary's life won't be changed even after her maternal love.

Andrew, at the end, experiences conflict between his feeling that he must believe in God and his feeling of disgust for organized religion. He twice calls Father Jackson a "son-of-a-bitch," which

Rufus knows is a very bad thing to call anyone. Rufus, seeing how deeply Andrew despises the church, does not understand how Andrew can both hate religion and love Hannah and Mary, who pray often and hold deep religious convictions. Rufus thinks that Andrew must only pretend to love the women, yet secretly hate them. But then Rufus thinks that Andrew truly does love Hannah and Mary, and Rufus does not understand how Andrew could hate them and yet love them at the same time. Rufus does not see religion as one of many beliefs characterizing a person, but as a part of a person; he does not understand how Andrew could hate religion so much and yet love two women who are very religious.

The butterfly appears as a symbol of hope in the narrative. Andrew does not know whether or not God exists, but the butterfly gives him hope that there may be a higher power—a hope that is comforting because the butterfly was beautiful. Rufus is comforted because his uncle is comforted; he feels that somehow the story of the butterfly makes things alright. But then Rufus feels confused again when Andrew gets angry about Father Jackson; Rufus does not understand why a moment ago his uncle seemed to believe in something that he now speaks of with such disgust.

The narrator presents the walk between Rufus and Andrew through Rufus's eyes, so we do not get to see what Andrew is thinking when they walk back in silence. It is a strange way to end the novel; Andrew appears angry and pensive, while Rufus dwells on the question of whether or not Andrew hates Mary. It is impossible to say whether or not Agee would have chosen to end the novel in quite this way if he had had a chance to revise and edit the work. In another sense, however, it is likely a more thought provoking and realistic ending than a happier, more conclusive ending might have been.

The research as a whole concentrates on the analysis of historical and cultural disturbance or trauma experienced by the major characters. After the death of Jay whole family undergoes through trauma. In the end of the novel, Andrew describes the burial to Rufus when perfectly magnificent butterfly settled on the coffin. Andrew believes that that butterfly has got more of God in him than Jackson will ever see for the rest of eternity. Mary's father, perhaps as only a loving parent can give her hard but honest advice: "it's bad enough right now, but it's going to take a while to sink in...it'll be so much worse you'll think it's more than you can bear or any other human being. And worse than that, you'll have to go through it alone, because there isn't a thing on earth any of us can do to help, beyond blind animal sympathy. In this way, the characters' experience of historical and cultural trauma is explored throughout the study.

III. Historical and Cultural Trauma and Past Memory

After the discussion and analysis of James Agee's *A death in the Family*, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the projection of historic- cultural trauma is the major contention of the novel.

James Agee's *A Death in the Family* revolves around the historical and cultural trauma experienced by each and every character including the main child character Rufus. Rufus is the protagonist of the novel. The narrator spends more time relating his point of view than any other characters. We learn through a series of stories that Rufus is an intelligent and sensitive little boy. At the end of the novel, we are not entirely sure what he makes of his father's death. Rufus understands that death is a permanent condition, but the full weight of grief has not yet struck him. He is too much puzzled with the rituals and customs done home to grave yard.

Rufus' character emphasized throughout the novel is his need to fit in with and be accepted by other children. Badly wanting to make friends, he allows children to make fun of him because he feels that there may be a few among them who secretly like him, or else they would not talk to him at all. Rufus can't understand the concept of teasing for fun; he thinks that the boys would not insist on teasing him over and over unless they liked him. Because he himself is innocent of malice, he cannot perceive it in others.

In many ways, Rufus exemplifies two conflicting views of childhood portrayed in the novel. He is as adult as any other character in the story with regard to what he sees and perceives in other people. The language Agee uses to describe Rufus and his experiences, especially in the italicized section of the novel is very poetic and often abstract, more complex than language Agee uses to describe any other character's point of view. In other senses, however, Rufus is very

much a child. His inability to fully comprehend his father's death, for example, is typical of small children; Rufus is not sure what the death is supposed to mean for him personally.

Much of the narrative of *A Death in the Family* is told from the point of view of children and primarily through the eyes of Rufus. Agee uses childhood as a lens through which to perceive reality; a child's lack of guile is the best narrative avenue to present many of life's complications, as such presentation allows us to draw our own inferences. Children typify the questioning stance that every character in the novel must eventually embrace when faced with Jay's death.

James Agee was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1909. After his father died when he was six years old, his mother sent him to attend St. Andrew's school, where he cultivated a strong appreciation for the Anglo-Catholic Church. He then attended Philips Exeter Academy and Harvard University. Agee wrote *A Death in the Family* shortly after his marriage to Mia Fritsch, just before his sudden death on May 16, 1955. He never finished the work before his death. The novel was published two years after his death, and it was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

A Death in the Family is an unusual novel in that it is both a detailed remembrance and an archetypal depiction of events within any family. It is about marital love and loss, the need for religious faith, and the conflict between urban and rural characteristic of America at that time. It is also (and perhaps more important) Agee's documentation of his life when he was four, five, and six years old.

The novel is autobiographical in the sense that it is about the death of Agee's father. However, it is also an important exploration of the city-country conflict that has characterized American experience from post-Civil-War days through the twentieth century. When Agee was born, Knoxville was rapidly becoming an urban center, yet it was still highly rural compared to

the New York City where he spent his later years. *A Death in the Family* documents a period when many American lives were still determined by both rural and city backgrounds of their families. In writing the novel, Agee not only attempts to capture the relationship between himself and his father, but also to evoke a time when his family was in a state of tension between the rural past and the urban future.

Putting together a composite manuscript of *A Death in the Family* was a difficult editorial task, as Agee died before completing the final revisions for the novel. His manuscript contained variant material that fell outside the principal narrative and that he had not yet decided how to incorporate. The editors decided to put the unfinished sections in italics at the end of each division within the work, rather than all together either at the beginning or at the end. This choice on the part of the editors has been a point of discussion by critics of the novel; some have thought it presumptuous to insert these passages at random junctures, as we have no way of knowing what Agee himself would have done.

There is considerable evidence to support the claim that the twenty chapters comprising the basic linear narrative of the novel were only a part of a much longer autobiographical work Agee was planning—the sequential narrative would probably have formed the concluding portion of a projected longer novel. Agee left behind some twenty pages of notes to indicate that he was planning an extensive autobiographical recollection of his childhood, and only some of these memories appear in the published italicized sections. In addition, it is likely that a section titled "Dream Sequence" would have made a more fitting prologue than the "Knoxville: Summer 1915" piece. Regardless of editorial intent, the work stands as a landmark autobiographical novel and a timely exploration of the conflict between America's urban and rural heritage.

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