

T.C.
FIRAT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANA BİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI



HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN KURT
VONNEGUT JR.'S *CAT'S CRADLE* AND
SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

DANIŞMAN
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi F. Gül KOÇSOY

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ELAZIĞ-2018

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Jürimiz, tarihinde yapılan Seminer savunma sınavı sonunda bu yüksek lisans seminerini başarılı saymıştır.

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ÖZET**Yüksek Lisans Tezi****Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'ın *Kedi Beşiği* ve *Mezbaha 5* Adlı Romanlarında Tarihyazımsal
Üstkurgu****Mahmut Yasin DEMİR****Fırat Üniversitesi****Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü****Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Ana Bilim Dalı****İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı****Elazığ – 2018; Sayfa: V+90**

Edebiyatta tarihin, tarihsel kişi ve olayların kullanımı çok eskilere dayanmaktadır. Birçok ulusun edebiyat tarihi ve tarihsel araştırmaları, tarihsel olay ya da kişileri temel alan yapıtlarla başlatılmaktadır. Geçmişteki önemi tartışılmaz olan tarihsel edebiyatın günümüzde de etkisini artırarak sürdürdüğü görülmektedir. Özellikle 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren edebiyat ve edebi eleştiri dünyasında tarih ve tarihsel edebiyat oldukça önem kazanmış ve bu alanın işlenişi üzerinde farklı yaklaşımlar da baş göstermeye başlamıştır.

Bu çalışma, yukarıda bahsedilen arayışlardan biri olarak, hem tarihle hem de edebiyatla doğası gereği iç içe olan tarihyazımsal üstkurgu kavramını, o kavramın postmodernizmle ortaya çıkışını, temel özellikleri ve günümüz romanlarında kullanım biçimlerini incelemeyi amaçlar. Ayrıca bu çalışma, tarihi olay ve tarihsel kişiliklerin edebiyatta eskiden beri var olan biçimi olarak görülen tarihi romanlar ile günümüzde tarihe farklı bir bakış açısı sunan tarihyazımsal üstkurgu kavramı arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıkları ortaya koyar.

Yine bu çalışmada, postmodern bir alt tür olarak kabul edilen tarihyazımsal üstkurgunun özellikleri ile tarih ve gerçeklik kavramları, Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'ın *Kedi Beşiği* (1963) ve *Mezbaha 5* (1969) adlı romanları incelenerek açılanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarihsel edebiyat, üstkurgu, tarihyazımsal üst kurgu, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., *Kedi Beşiği*, *Mezbaha 5*

ABSTRACT**Master Thesis****Historiographic Metafiction in Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Cat's Cradle* and
*Slaughterhouse Five*****Mahmut Yasin DEMİR****Firat University****Institute of Social Sciences****Department of Western Languages and Literatures****Program of English Language and Literature****Elazig-2018; Page: V+90**

Use of history, historical figures and accounts may be traced back to the very ancient times of literature. Literary history and historical researches of many nations are initiated with works based on historical events or people. It can be seen that historical literature, which has an indisputable importance in the past, continues to increase its influence today. Especially, since the second half of the 20th century, history and historical literature has gained importance in the world of literature and literary criticism, and different approaches have begun to emerge on this field.

This study, as one of the aforementioned researches, aims to examine the concept of historiographic metafiction, which is naturally intertwined with both history and literature, and its emergence with postmodernism, its basic features and the ways of its use in present-day novels. In addition, this study reveals the similarities and differences between historical novels, which are seen as the long-existing form of historical events and historical personalities in literature, and historiographic metafiction which presents a different perspective on history today.

Moreover, the characteristics of historiographic metafiction which is seen as a postmodern subgenre and the concepts of history and reality are explained by analysing the novels of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Cat Cradle* (1963) and *Slaughterhouse 5* (1969).

Keywords: Historical fiction, Metafiction, Historiographic Metafiction, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse Five*

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PART 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. History of Historical Novels in Literature

Writing about history and historical figures in a literary text has always been popular in the world of literature. In many different literary examples, historical facts and personages are the first examples of written literature with the genres such as epics, chronicles or epigraphs. English literature, for instance, is thought to have started with the epic poems explaining and reminding the heroic deeds of former heroes. The story of American literature is generally assumed to have begun long before the US began its existence. The earliest writers were explorers who wrote about their experiences during the first permanent settlement period. Similarly in today's literary world, most of the bestseller books seem to take their subject matter from history and many different versions of arts use history as a base for artistic creativity or at least story-telling. Apart from this popularity seen in literary circles, the concept of history mingled within literature has been attracting numerous critics especially in the last decades of so-called postmodernism. Bearing this popularity and the concern for writing about history in mind, this thesis examines how and why the postmodern literature has turned its face on history with a particular attention to the theory of "historiographic metafiction" along with a special focus on two distinctive works of American writer, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Cat's Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse Five* (1922-2007).

In order to create a firmer ground to set upon the basic theoretical assumptions of historiographic metafiction, this study begins with a brief analysis on the evolution of literature through the twentieth century. Especially focusing on the shift from modernism's often neglecting outlook on history in fiction to the postmodern revolution of including history in literature, it is aimed to reveal the necessity and urge to deal with the history in literature.

One of the main aims of this thesis is to highlight historiographic metafiction. Historiographic metafiction can be classified as a sub-genre under the postmodern novel that opposes anticipating present ideas and norms onto the past and pronounces the

particular specificity of the personal past events. Through the in-depth analysis of the works of Patricia Waugh (1956-) and Linda Hutcheon (1947-), this study examines how the concept of historiographic metafiction derived and evolved from a broader concept of literary fiction. Deeper analysis and comparisons between the traditional historical fiction and historiographic metafiction are presented through the examination of basic theoretical assumptions of both genres. While doing this, it is aimed to distinguish often didactic and traditional historical novels and postmodernist way of dealing with history in self-reflexive metafictional novels.

Postmodernism is a highly critical issue and it can be viewed as a period or an ideology. It tries to oppose what is viewed as elitist isolationism under the philosophy of modernism that isolated history from literature and art from the real world, by using modernist aestheticism techniques towards them. The artistic autonomy is preserved; metafictional self-reflection even focuses on this, however, in this apparently contemplative intertextuality, through ironic inversions of parody another dimension is added: art has a basic association with the 'world' of discourse, politics and society. Literature and history give intertexts in the books, however there is no sign of a hierarchy. Both are pieces of signifying frameworks of culture. We both understand our reality through them and they make our reality. This is one of the lessons that can be learnt from this postmodern form of writing. (Hutcheon, 1989: 30)

View of reality has endured changes throughout history and these changes made the idea of metafiction. Many of the earliest examples of novels in the nineteenth century are mostly in the form of biographies such as *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders*, (1722), *Pamela* (1740), *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Clarissa* (1748), and *Tristram Shandy* (1759). In these novels, there was a sort of external reality but this reality was constrained to the life of a person. However, later novels extend this reality from individual to the society. Novels in the Victorian era are for the most part social novels. Charles Dickens (1815-1870) centers on social distortions caused by fast industrialization, W.M. Thackeray (1811-1863) uncovers the nature of strengthened bourgeoisie. Bronte sisters mention life in the pastoral nature and undetectable parts of human life in their novels. George Eliot (1819-1880) analyzed diverse lives of Southern and Northern England's people completely with female characters. Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) reflects

individuals both by their social and spiritual realities. So it can be stated that obvious reality started to spill out of external to the internal aspects of life. Particularly modernist literary figures like, D.H Lawrence (1885-1930) James Joyce (1882-1941) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) shed lights on the greater world inside the human.

All through the 1950s, the novel turned towards itself as a result of turning from individual to the society and from external reality to the internal one. Therefore, reality of writing itself turned into a subject matter of writing and this process completed the idea of the reality. Fiction acknowledged itself while fictionalizing outsider components and included itself into the writing process. Fictionalizing the fiction is not especially unique in relation to alternate kinds of fiction in this approach. Fiction caught itself in the mirror and by fictionalizing itself, it expanded the view of reality along its lines. Inclusion of reality into the fiction is theoretically named as postmodern fiction.

An alternative reality began to be seen in this postmodern era. Modernist novel's logical setting is not seen anymore. Fiction has different qualities in this era in numerous viewpoints. This fictional distinction makes fictionality of fiction more obvious and features the components of metafiction. Traditional narrations do not have to reflect themselves as a fundamental parameter of literary work; however, in postmodern narrations diverse methods such as the pastiche, bricolage, mis-en-abyme and challenging to the commonly acknowledged parts in fiction with other experimental practices are seen.

Metafiction has not started in the recent years but as an impression of the current age's lives and observations, it has turned out to be more obvious and frequent. Fictional history of humankind and narrating the perception of reality through its own particular point of view by means of language is as old as its own history. Aristotle analyzed fiction which showed itself as poetry in his times as a representation, a mimesis and an imitation. Some renowned works such as the Geoffrey Chaucer's reframing of *Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's plays within a play, use of letters in 17th and 18th century novels, for example, Samuel Richardson's (1689-1761) and Henry Fielding's (1707-1754) narrators that interfere with the ordinary flow of the novel can be seen as pioneers of metafiction and in parodical novels, such as *Tristram Shandy* (1759) by Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)

and Jane Austen's (1775-1815) *Northanger Abbey* (1817) are the earlier examples of metafiction.

Postmodernism demonstrates a specific introversion, a self-conscious change towards the writing itself. As some have contended, it does not really mean to "build up an explicit literal connection with that real world itself" (Kirernidjian, 1969: 238). At the point when postmodernism argues that, relations with the 'worldly' is still at the level of discourse, the world can only be known rather than 'be experienced' through the narratives. The present along with the past have dependably been turned into a text for readers (Belsey, 1980: 46); the apparent intertextuality of historiographic metafiction might be seen as one of the literary indications of this postmodern acknowledgment.

As indicated by Patricia Waugh, metafictional works such as *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) or *The Public Burning* (1977) "propose not just that writing history is a fictional demonstration, ranging events thoughtfully through language to shape a world model, but that history itself is invested, similar to fiction, with interrelating plots which seem to interact autonomously of human design" (Waugh, 1984: 48-49). Historiographic metafiction's general and specific recollections of the contents and forms of writing on history try to familiarize the unfamiliar through narratives but its metafictional self-reflexivity renders such familiarizations as problematic. The reason behind this sameness is that both real and imagined worlds come to us through the records of them, for example, through the texts about them and their actual traces. The ontological line between literature and history is not negated but rather underlined. The past genuinely existed; however, we can know about that past today only by reading its texts, and in that lies its relationship with the abstract literary works. As demonstrated by this kind of current historiographic theory, if history has lost its privileged status as the origin of reality, the lack of the transparency in writing history is a phase before self-consciousness that is formed by metafictional challenges to the expected transparency of the texts which are considered as realist.

"When its critics blame postmodernism for being ahistorical, what is being called as 'postmodern' becomes unclear; without a doubt historiographic metafiction is clearly historical but, in a surprising and unexpected way it perceives that history is not the

account of an undoubtful reality” (Hutcheon, 1989: 10) . Rather, fiction of that kind validates the perspectives of philosophers of history: for example, Dominick LaCapra contends that "the past comes as texts and textualized recollections, monuments, chronicles and so forth” (La Capra, 1985:128) and these texts cooperate with each other in many different ways. This situation does not reject the importance of history-writing; it just reclassifies the conditions of significant worth in fairly less imperialistic terms. So, “historiographic metafiction represents a testing of the ordinary types of fiction and history through its affirmation of their inevitable textuality. The formal connection of history and fiction through narrativity and intertextuality is not presented as a reduction of the fictional value and contracting of the scope of fiction, but as an extension of these” (Hutcheon, 1989:10) .

Upon setting grounds for theoretical assumptions for metafiction and historiographic metafiction in particular, this study presents some examples from notable postmodern novels which have highly self-reflexive and metafictional aspects. Technical devices of historiographic metafiction are given in details at first, and some well-known postmodern fictions are chosen to exemplify these devices. As this study involves a much general overview on the concept, this kind of analysis is thought to fit for this aim. In the last part, some possible and foreseeable effects of historiographic metafiction on the reader and the major results of dealing with the history in that way are discussed. In addition, a more compact understanding of literary fiction and history harnessed with the unique concept of historiographic metafiction is given as a kind of hint or a striking element of questioning for the reader to scrutinize and doubtfully analyze the historical facts and figures mostly seen in contemporary works of fiction.

1.2. Theoretical Background of Writing about History, Metafiction and Postmodern Writing

To better understand the theoretical background and motivation to depict historical facts and characters in literature, one should question and grasp the late modernism and post-modernism. In countless definitions, modernism is summarized as a higher idealism and grand ideas and notions regarding philosophy and literature of the late 19th century. Especially after the World War II, initial objectives of modernism wound up being symbols and explanations behind alienation and dehumanization

according to Lyotard (Lyotard, 1986:120). Following that period, postmodernism challenged the existence of modernism by objecting its assertions to being universal: its trans-historical claims of worth were not seen as taking their grounds from the reason, rather a clear collaboration with authority or as Paolo Portoghesi points out its validity is generally a direct result of "its association with the productive reasoning of the industrial system" (Portoghesi, 1982: 3).

Of the significant number of terms routinely used as a piece of both current social theory and contemporary literature, postmodernism might be the most over and under-defined. Postmodernism is a contradictory concept, Linda Hutcheon shortly describes it as "one that uses and misuse, presents and after that subverts the thoughts it challenges" (Hutcheon, 1988; 3). It cannot be used as a concept which is just a synonym for the contemporary and is generally depicted by a kind of doubt towards grand or metanarratives. When grand narratives of bourgeois liberalism began to fall under strike, institutions went under scrutiny: from the university to the media, from theatres to museums. This kind of a challenge growingly influenced all parts of life.

Lyotard considers the postmodern writer as a philosopher: the works of a postmodern writer are not thought to be laid out by pre-established principles, and it is not correct to judge them by "a determining sets of judgments by applying familiar categories to the text" (Lyotard, 1984: 81). As a direct result of such a philosophical inquiry, postmodern thought argues that there is a new need to make order for the humans but admits that these orders are not typical entities, being created by the human. This sort of questioning incorporates a re-addressing of margins and edges, of what fits in the readers' focus. "Such interrogations of the impulse to sameness and homogeneity, certainty and unity, make room for a consideration of the different and the heterogeneous, the provisional and the hybrid" (Hutcheon, 1988; 42). This is not a dismissal of the past values for the present ones; it is a re-addressing of each within the lights of others. It is a kind of questioning the generally acknowledged values of our way of life, a questioning that is absolutely depended on the things which it questions indeed.

In the 1970s there was an expanding interest in how individuals create, get and reflect their involvement in the world of literature and art. In those years, literary world

began to have an opportunity to read books by Umberto Eco (1932-2016), John Barth (1930-), John Fowles (1926-2005), Thomas Pynchon (1937-) and numerous others in which the emphasis was on self-reflexivity and the procedure of literary production. It was comprehended that supreme control of the strict standards that had a controlling impact on individuals' conduct and types of self-expression could not work any longer. This was a result of the greatly destructive social and political changes that were occurring all around the globe. They hugely affected the consciousness of each individual who no longer cared for the grand narratives which are then open to question but rather wanted to tell his own particular story and make himself heard. So one can express that the ideal opportunity for grand narratives has finished. Humankind reached at a moment that when it looked that the world was made up not by eternal realities but rather by a progression of variable structures and constructions (Hilfer, 1992: 127).

To portray the changes in fiction of the century, Robert Scholes (1929-2016) states that "in the twentieth century it has become increasingly apparent that realism itself, instead of being simply the truest reflection of the world, was simply a formal device like any others, a tool to be put aside when it had lost its cutting edge." (Scholes, 1980: 169) The need for such a renewal and change was progressively felt in the beginning of 20th century with the use of the term "metafiction" by William H. Gass (1924 for the first time and it was defined more extensively by Patricia Waugh in 1984:

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and deliberately draws attention to its status as an artifact so as to pose questions about the connection between reality and fiction. In giving their very own critique of their own strategies for development, such works not just examine the essential structures of narrative fiction, they likewise investigate the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (Waugh, 1984: 2)

In Patricia Waugh's definition, it is fairly important that by uncovering the procedure of its own creation, metafiction demonstrates the way of making reality in a literary work. "However, this is not an end in itself. Metaworks additionally incorporate those literary texts in which the types of fiction fill in as the material whereupon

additionally forms can be forced" (Sadovska, 2008: 65). The connection between the language as a system and the world to which it alludes and reflects turns into a main concern; representation of reality mediated through language emphasizes fictionality; signifier has a tendency to be comprehended through another signifier inside the text losing its association with the signified. Murfin and Ray assert that in postmodernism "literary language is its own reality, not a means of representing reality" (Murfin, 2003: 360), and Hilfer states that "Metafiction diminishes all to discourse while questioning the legitimacy of that discourse" (1992: 128). So one may infer that metafiction theorizes the novel by including a solid philosophical foundation and influencing its structures.

1.3. History of Historical Fiction and Historiographic Metafiction in Literature

In and before the 19th century, history and literature were seen as the members of the same major tree of learning which was in quest of "interpreting experience, for the purpose of guiding and elevating man" (Nye, 1966: 123). Then these two fields encountered a strict partition that brought about the separate disciplines of history and literary studies. (White, 1976: 25). Nonetheless, it is this detachment of the historical and literary texts that is currently being questioned in postmodern theory and it should be seen as more important to focus on what these two types of writing have in common rather than how they have differed. They are both indebted to conceivable outcomes for their quality rather than to objective truth; they are both seen as linguistically constructed textual materials which have traditional forms, and which are not transparent either as language or structure. However these are the lessons that can also be inferred by historiographic metafiction. Similar to those recent fictional and historical hypotheses, this type of novel highlights that fiction and history are both historical concepts as well and that their relations with each other and definitions are historically decided and may change with time (Seamon, 1983: 212).

Discussions about the way to write about history and differences between the history and literature were seen in ancient Greek as well. As indicated by Aristotle the writer of history could talk just of what has happened, of the particular things happened in the past; the poet, however, should discuss what could or may happen and could show more attention to the universal issues. Liberated of the linear limitations of history

writing, the writer's plot could have distinctive unities. This does not mean that the different events happened in history and historical people could not be seen in tragedies: “nothing prevents some of the things that have actually happened from being of the sort that might probably or possibly happen” (Aristotle, 1982: 1451).

History did not have any traditional confinements of possibility or probability. However, since the ancient past, numerous historians have utilized fictional representation methods to make innovative versions of their real and historical worlds. We see the same and also the opposite circumstances in postmodern novels. “It is a method for demonstrating a postmodernist mentality to challenge the paradoxes of historical or fictional representation, the general or the particular, and the past or the present. However it ought to be noticed this challenge is itself paradoxical, since it declines to recover or break up in both sides of the dichotomy, yet it is significantly more eager to manipulate both” (Hutcheon, 1988: 106).

Literary critics have questioned and analyzed the utilization and the fundamental role of history in postmodernism. To sum up the generally acknowledged postmodernist mention of history, some leading critical thoughts might be given as examples. Fredric Jameson thinks that postmodernist ironic review of history is neither aesthetic cannibalization nor a nostalgia (Jameson, 1984: 67). One of the most appreciated and the easiest definition of linguistic utilization of history in literature is seen in Saussurian model of language which takes its roots from the works of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) as indicated by Hutcheon. He recommends that language is a kind of contract that has a social entity: everything that is provided and consequently gotten through language is now stacked with meaning innate in the applied examples of the speaker's way of life (Hutcheon, 1988:25).

After briefly discussing about the motive of utilizing history in literature, it is important to analyze the idea of metafiction and historiographic metafiction in a more profound context. The term metafiction was first used by American author and critic William H. Gass (1924-2014) in 1970. The term itself has been in use quite recently but metafictional texts are as old as the novel in literature. Yıldız Ecevit characterizes metafiction as "fictionalizing the act of writing inside the fictional text". An author

clarifies how he writes the text inside the text itself, or making the problems of writing the real topic of the text or sometimes sharing how he's shaped the text with the reader by putting the reader in the text. "Metafiction is explaining itself inside the text; it is a fiction of a fiction. It isn't essential any longer what an author writes. Focal point of writing and criticizing turned its face to the process how an author writes. So in this age, literary text which was once in an object position now turns into the subject"(Ecevit, 1996: 110). This change in which the writing process turns into the subject of the text, reminding the readers that the act of writing is a sort of amusement, and including them into it, are the real indispensable parts of metafiction. Every one of these highlights is a sort of revolt against the traditional narratology.

In historiographic metafiction, the protagonist continually interferes in the writing process, as it is seen in the works of Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) who presented various fictional devices, (for example, stories within stories, and intrusions from the writer to the narration) that would be in demand toward the end of the twentieth century; so he might be viewed as a precursor of metafiction. Some other famous novels which are "both strongly self-reflexive but paradoxically assert" to historical personages and events including John Fowles'(1926-2005) *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), Salman Rushdie's (1947-) *Midnight's Children* (1981), E.L Doctorow's (1931-2015) *Ragtime* (1975), *Legs* (1975) by William Kennedy (1928-), *G.* (1972) by John P. Berger (1926-2017), *Famous Last Words* (1981) by Timothy Findley (1930-2002) might be viewed as the finest examples of historiographic metafiction. (Hutcheon, 1988: 5)

1.4. Theoretical Assumptions of Historiographic Metafiction and Historical Fiction

The majority of basic investigations of postmodernism frequently center around narrative, regardless of it is taken as three areas: history, literature, or theory. Historical metafiction incorporates these areas: self-awareness of fiction and history as constructed by humans laid the basis for reobserving and reworking past forms and content. This sort of fiction has frequently been seen by critics; however, its paradigmatic nature is ignored and regularly cited as "midfiction" or "paramodernist". For Hutcheon this sort of naming is an indication of the internal contradictions of historiographic metafiction, since it generally works within social contracts to decimate them. It is not just a metafiction; and

it is not simply one another form of the traditional historical novel or the non-fictional novel. In this perspective Hutcheon states: "It has hence turned into a sort of model for the contemporary writer, being self-conscious about its literary heritage and about the limits of mimesis... yet managing to reconnect its readers to the World outside the page" (1988: 5).

Historiographic metafiction rejects ordinary methods to separate historical fiction and facts. It is against the idea that history has a claim of reality, both history and fiction are constructed by human, and they both originate their reality claims from this identity. Postmodern fiction dismisses the fact that the extra textual past is diminished to the field of historiography for the autonomy of art. Historiographic metafiction is also opposed to the theoretical power of history to abolish formalism. Metafictional inclination of it keeps the suppression of fictional and formal character yet it additionally restores the historical identity, in spite of general disputes for the supreme autonomy of art.

Historiographic metafiction share the driving force for the progression of Foucauldian western literary tradition in which narrative is comprehended through the structures and forces of discourse, in which history and power are the focal points and it is Michel Foucault (1926-1984) who first used and afterward abused these continuities that are commonly accepted before him in Western narration. The outcome is Foucault's 'postmodern paradox' in the discontinuous systematization theory, "modern knowledge hunger for not always fully comprehending or not fully representing the discourse" (Said, 1975: 285). Despite its being theoretical, historical or literal, discourse is always discontinuous, yet still it is kept together by the tenets, though not by transcendent rules.

As a fairly recent sub-genre, historiographic metafiction weakens the border between fiction and historiography by questioning the epistemological status of historiography and history. In Hutcheon's terms, the self-conscious recreating of historical material in modern day fiction is one of the defining characteristics of the postmodernism. It reworks "historical context as significant and determining", but in this way, it turns the 'historical knowledge' into a problem (Hutcheon, 1988: 89). Seeing history as also a referent to the "factual past world and a discursive construct", "historiographic metafiction differs substantially from the use of history in the

conventional historical novel where history is seen as an accumulation of facts” which exists out of the text and which can be considered as it 'really was,' is never being questioned (Lee, 1990 : 35).

As Nünning has revealed in more prominent details, it would be exclusively valuable to differentiate historiographic metafiction from other sorts of postmodern historical novel types and it is also vital “to separate between the different structures that historiographic metafiction itself—simply like different kinds of metafiction—may take” (Nünning, 2004: 365). It might be explicit, it might use metafictional devices to explore the epistemological, methodological, and linguistic problems linked with any attempts to develop coherent records of the past. However, historiographic metafiction may also be implicit, it may add its formal concerns of meta historiography in the novel. In both cases, historiographic metafiction deals less with the facts of the history but rather more with the problems which have epistemological elements associated with the rewriting of events happened in history and the history writing.

1.4.1. Similarities and Differences between the Historical Fiction and Historiographic Metafiction

Historical fiction is a genre in which the plot is given in a setting in the past. A fundamental component of historical fiction is that its context is given in the past and focuses on the social conditions, manners and different points of interest of that historical period are presented. Authors often use striking historical figures in these historical settings, enabling readers to question and understand how these people may have reacted to the surrounding events and characters of the age.

Historical fiction as a genre was first seen in the beginning of 19th century with the works written by Sir Walter Scott and similar works began to be seen in other national literary works; for example, Honoré de Balzac from France (1799-1850), James Fenimore Cooper from U.S (1789-1851), and Russian Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). However, the merging of ‘fiction’ and ‘history’ in the works of writing has a long tradition in many societies; in the form of folk and oral traditions which created novels, legends, plays and other fictional works depicting history for modern readers.

Definitions contrast with respect to what constitutes a historical novel. From one perspective the Historical Novel Society characterizes the genre as works "composed no less than fifty years after the occasions described" (Lee, 2018), while critic Sarah Johnson portrays such novels as "set before the last [20th] century [...] in which the writer is writing according to research instead of individual experience" (Johnson, 2005:1). Lynda Adamson, in her reference work *World Historical Fiction*, expresses that while a "generally acknowledged definition" for the historical novel is a novel "about a time period no less than twenty five years before it was composed", she also recommends that people read novels written in the past, similar to those of Jane Austen (1775– 1817), as though they were historical novels (Adamson, 1999: xi).

Postmodern fiction proposes that to rewrite the past in history and in fiction implies exposing it up to the critical outlook of the present, to keep it from getting to be conclusive. It might be said that for novels they incorporate political and social history (Hough, 1966: 113); so historiography is as coherent and organized as fiction. It is not just the novel but history is "significantly betwixt and between" as well. (Kermode, 1968: 235). Historians and authors of historical novels form their subject matters in their works as conceivable objects of narrative depiction, as Hayden White has stated (White, 1978: 56) and they do it with the language and structure they use to show these subjects.

Umberto Eco (1932-2016) has expressed that there are three major types to depict the past: "the historical novel, the swashbuckling tale, and the romance" (1983, 74-75). Historical novels, he states, "not simply recognize in the past the explanations behind what came later, yet furthermore trace process through which those causes began slowly to create their effects" (76). This is the reason that his medieval characters are made to talk like a modern philosopher. Hutcheon would also states that this writing mechanism focuses on a fourth type for depicting the past: historiographic metafiction with its strongly self-conscious approach to manage the way by which this is altogether done (Hutcheon, 1988: 113).

The critical differences between postmodern historiographic metafiction and the 19th century historical fiction are indicated here in this thesis. First of all, it is difficult to make theories in regards to this perplexing sub-genre in light of the way that history

acknowledges an unprecedented number of disconnected roles at various generality levels, in its diverse indications. There is not a consensus on the matter of whether the historical past is dependably revealed as particularized and individualized (that is, exceptional in association with the present) (Shaw, 1983; 26; 48; 148) or whether that past is presented as ordinary and present, or if nothing else as exchanging values along with the time and the present. While perceiving the inconveniences of definition that the historical novel offers with most types, according to Hutcheon, historical fiction might be defined as that which is shown on historiography to the degree that it is blended and impacted by an idea of history as a molding power in human fate and in the narrative (Hutcheon, 1988: 113).

Postmodern historiographic fiction opposes defining characteristics of historical novels in the two distinctive ways. Firstly, historiographic metafiction plays upon the reality and lies of the records of historical events. In historiographic metafictional novels certain historical records are willingly modified with a specific objective to forefront the possible disappointments of history and the potential for both incidental and deliberate mistakes. The second difference is seen in the way that historiographic metafiction uses historical details and facts. Historical fiction transforms these facts to add a dimension of reality to the fictional world. Historiographic metafiction on the other hand, merges but not assimilates the facts. Readers may see the endeavors to affect the narrative order. Historiographic metafiction sees the paradoxical nature of reality of the past and its accessibility which is turned to texts for the readers of today. (Hutcheon, 1988: 114)

Third major defining characteristic of the historiographic novel and the difference between the historiographic metafiction is the transformation of historical characters to auxiliary roles. In various historical novels, historical personages of the past are used to authenticate or validate the world of fiction by their existence, to cover the links between history and fiction. The metafictional self-reflexivity of postmodern novels prevents such a deception, and considers that ontological link as a problem: the agreement between the sources of the factual data about the past or potential need to know about it. (Hutcheon, 1988: 115)

Historiographic metafiction's clear concern for such a reception for its reader, would challenge the accompanying distinction:

The discursive standard that differs narrative history from historical novel is that history brings out testing conduct in reception; historical discipline requires a writer - reader contract that stipulates investigative equity. Historical novels are not chronicles, not as a result of an affinity for untruth, but rather in light of the fact that the writer reader contract denies the reader involvement in the shared task (Streuver, 1985: 264).

Historiographic metafiction generally use two modes of narration, both of which are problematic in terms of subjectivity: multiple points of view or a controlling narrator. However we do not find a subject who is sure of his/her ability to know the past in any certainty in neither of these narrative modes. Postmodernism sets up, separates, and afterward disperses fixed narrative voices that use memory to endeavor to comprehend the past. It both introduces and subverts conventional ideas of subjectivity; it both declares and makes itself fit for shattering "the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of the past" (Foucault: 1977, 153).

Postmodern intertextuality that is seen so often in historiographic metafiction is an indication of both a desire to fill in the breach between present and past and a will to recreate the past in a newer context. It cannot be seen as a desire to "order the present through the past or to make the present look spare in contrast to the richness of the past" (Antin: 1972, 106). Nor it is not an endeavor to maintain a strategic distance from history. Rather it specifically stands against the past of writing as it also takes its origin from other historical texts or documents. References of history are supposed to be genuine; however, there is not such an expectation for a fiction.

Historiographic metafiction demonstrates that fiction is conditioned according to history and history is organized in a discursive way. In addition to these, in the process of writing it manages to widen the discussions about the ideological ramifications of the

link between knowledge and power for history as a separate discipline and for the readers. As the narrator of Rushdie's *Shame* puts it:

History is characteristic determination. Mutant versions of the past battle for predominance; new types of reality emerge, and old facts go to the wall, blindfolded and smoking last cigarettes. Just the mutations of the powerful survive. The frail, the mysterious, the vanquished leave few imprints.... History cherishes only the individuals who command her: it is a relationship of common subjugation (1983, 124).

Historiographic metafiction, as both narrative history and historical fiction, cannot abstain from handling the problem of 'facts' status and of factual evidence, historical records. The problem about this is that how the sources that have documentary features are sent and it is a matter of uncertainty whether these sources can be impartially related or they are just a result of a process which involves the turning them into narrations. The question of how the past is known by the reader is added to the the ontological status of the historical signs of that past. Discussing of these problems in a postmodern view offers some solutions, yet this does not result in a sort of historical relativism. It is against the practice of reflecting the convictions and the norms of the present onto the situations, states, the particularity and specificity of the subjective events in the past. "However, it also confirms that we, as the humans, are constrained in our ability to understand that past epistemologically, due to the fact that we are both observers of and performers in the history. Historiographic metafiction proposes a distinction between "events" and "facts" of the past" (Hutcheon, 1988: 122). Historiography and fiction, create their own ways of consideration; in other words, they choose which events will turn to become facts. This postmodern problem centers on our inevitable problems with the reality and accesability of historical events. Dominick LaCapra has contended that:

"..all documents or artifacts used by historians are not neutral evidence for reconstructing phenomena...which are expected to have some autonomous presence outside them. All documents process data and the manner by which they do is itself a historical

certainty that restrains the documentary origination of historical knowledge” (1985, 45).

This is the kind of approach that has inspired a semiotics of history, for historical archives and documents becoming signs of events which the historian transforms into realities (Williams: 1985, 40). They are signs inside the contexts which have already been built semiotically, subordinate upon organizations (if they are official historical records) or people (on account that they are the reports of first hand sources who might be eye-witnesses). So, as in historiographic metafiction, it is thought that the past was once existed, but the factual information about it is obtained through it is semiotically transmitted (Hutcheon, 1988: 122).

Facts in history writing are discursive and already interpreted meanings. In linguistic terms, the dismissal to recognize this differentiation of fact from event includes what Roland Barthes (1982: 20) called "a conflation of the signified and the referent" which precludes the fact to create the deception that the signifier of history writing is in direct link with the referent. For Barthes, the same illusionary elision is seen in realist fiction as well (1982: 20). Historiographic metafiction restores the signified through its metafictional self-reflexivity about the limits and techniques of meaning generation while in the meantime it does not give the referent a chance to disappear.

Facts that are turned into text by history are discursive, interpreted, signifying facts and they are produced by using brute events. So it ought to be considered if the referent of historiography is the event or the fact, or the reference comes directly from the experience itself. Postmodern fiction plays on this type of questioning, without ever finding a complete resolution to it. It makes the problem of referencing more complex in two ways: in ontological perplexity (experience or text) and in its over-determination of the whole idea of reference. There arises at that point a kind of pressure not only between the original and the created reference but also among different kinds of references that in all though the fiction historical characters might exist together with the fictional characters created in the context of the novel, as they are both subject to the fictional standards

Historiographic metafiction takes the complicated and problematic link between the formal idea of the content and socio-political ideology to the forefront. Similarly it is in need of a concept of ideology that is concerned with oppositional and dominant strategies, because it reveals the logical inconsistencies of their interaction. The modernist and romantic legacy proposes that art is art and that ideological discourse should have no place in the literary work. Aesthetic concerns are also added to this historical partition, in majority of the Anglo-American world it is seen that there is a view that considers art to be unimportant, imaginative and consequently cut off from the historical and social realities of real life. This is a view shared by numerous analysts from various political ranges, from Marxists to the neo-conservatives in an implicit way (Hutcheon, 1988: 179).

Postmodern theory today has also challenged humanism's assumptions. The metatheoretical challenging of the principle of timeless universality behind both art and writing on art has additionally turned out to be frequent in semiotics in art history, in sociology, psychology, and various other fields regularly sorted out around the idea of representation and its connection to subjectivity. Books like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by Fowles or *The White Hotel* by D.M Thomas, attempts to characterize the subject in terms that are somewhat different from those of liberal humanist individualism and human quintessence. There is no transcending of the particularities of the social and historical system. For instance, in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the subject is constituted in a way that postmodern hypothesis would characterize as "the individual in sociality as a social, historical and language-using entity" (Coward and Ellis: 1977, 1). Such a definition might challenge the humanist confidence in the individual as free, coherent, unified, and consistent.

In historiographic metafiction, distinctive methods regarding subjectivity (such as character, narrator, authorial and textual voice) fail to provide a steady support. "They are used, inscribed, entrenched but they are also subverted, abused and undermined. These novels might be irritating for an excessive number of readers precisely for this reason" (Hutcheon, 1988 : 189). Much contemporary hypothesis is also upsetting, and possibly for a related reason. Edward Said proposes when he mentions Foucault's exasperating impact on current hypothesis:

If we tend to consider human as an element opposing the motion of experience, then due to Foucault and what he says of ethnology, linguistics and psychoanalysis, man is broken up in the all-encompassing waves, in the quanta, the striations of languages itself, transforming at last into minimal in excess of a constituted subject, a talking pronoun, settled hesitantly in the everlasting, continuous surge of discourse (1975, 287).

In historiographic metafiction, the writer and the historian seem to write in pairs with others—and with each other. In *G.* the storyteller covers his own particular portrayal with the expressions of Collingwood: "the state of [events] being historically known is that they ought to vibrate in historians's psyche" (Berger, 1972: 55). The novel does not simply borrow from Collingwood's text; indeed a portion of the sources or intertexts, including this one, are given in a prior affirmation. The novel offers the historian's perspective of historiography as both a contemporary action and identifies it with self-knowledge. In a similar way as the novel blends historical and imaginary events and characters, so the textual characteristic blends the novelistic and the historiographic outlook. The disciplines of literary studies and history are challenged by historiographic metafiction's problematic considerations of both historical knowledge and literary depiction, by its creation of facts out of events through distinct literary and ideological practices.

1.5. Literary Examples of Historiographic Metafiction

Historiographic metafiction diverts the intertexts of history to the literature. John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960) for instance, manages to create and expose the historical backdrop of Maryland for its readers by using Ebenezer Cooke's 1708 *sonnet* (of the same name from the novel) and the factual historical records of the *Archives of Maryland*. From these intertexts, Barth changes history, he obtains a particular type of freedom by creating events and characters, by transforming the mode and tone of his intertexts in a parodical way, and by providing links if there are any gaps happen in the original historical record.

Metafiction infers motives of inventing a story through the presence of the writer creator having a text double in the image of the character writer. As a general rule, he is the writer of the book the reader is reading, because of which narration gets a mirror-like character. Authorial analysis on the idea of fiction uncovers the systems used to develop or remake fictional world that is a construct and not a portrayal of the real world. It clarifies the role of allusions, parodies, word games, puzzles, and author's temporal or spatial freedom in metanovel. So, the comprehension of the expression "metafiction" assumes that a metanovel is a literary work that shows fiction and mirrors the process of its creation, or the process of fictionalization at the same time. Ambivalence that always incites question in the genuineness of pictures made by the author, the sentiment of uncertainty concerning the relations between the real world and fiction, and emphasis on communication with the reader have turned out to be intrinsic features of metafiction" (Sadovska, 2008 : 67)

As historiographic metafictional texts create various realities with linguistic signs it might be inferred that historical characters are integral parts of this type of creation. According to the realist conventions a linguistic sign is considered as a referent to the reality, so the creative aspect of language is restrained; so, historical characters are portrayed by the principle of possibility and they are portrayed as real individuals. Traditionally, the protagonist of the novel progresses in time, he gets an education, and generally reaches his adulthood. While the protagonist who is honored with a proper name, familial connections, an age, a familial past, a nationality, and a social role works within these predetermined situations, the created figures in metafiction are possessed with their own particular creations only out of language. In Larry McCaffrey's terms characters in metafiction "are definitions and incorporeal essences which are relegated a name and whose physical attributes are restricted to the shape, sounds and pitch, and rhythm of the words out of which they are made" (McCaffrey, 1982: 156).

The French Lieutenant's Woman by John Fowles can be seen as one of the earliest examples of historiographic metafiction to use many of the technical devices which are attributed to this sort of novel, for example, allusions and intertextual references, analyzing of fictional systems inside the narrative, the writer's inclusion in the novel by interacting with sometimes fictional characters and sometimes specifically targeting to

the readers, questioning the traditions of narrative, showing self-reflexivity, and having different endings, accordingly stressing that the work itself is the fiction instead of its reality. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* specifically criticizes the realism that is seen traditionally during the 19th century that relies upon a single factual truth and a one-sided point of view. It exhibits the possibility of multiple truths and diverse points of view through a self-conscious postmodern narrative method with a new Victorian narrative style.

Fowles creates a nonexistent universe which looks like the original real life, it is indeed an attempt that all authors try to make in their books; nonetheless, he does not finish his story at that point, and stuns the readers when he distorts and even destroys this fictional world in the middle of the story to show that what it is seen as real is relative and invented. Furthermore, he reveals that there might be multiple realities as a result of differing viewpoints. Here, the interpreter, as the first reader, is allowed to trust any of these viewpoints. It may also be seen as a paradox that the irony that is hidden in the tone of the narrator and the destruction of this fictional do not hinder the actualization of the reality, but bolster it and make it be more acceptable. Inclusion of historical characters and settings in this novel seems to succeed in turning this novel into a historiographic metafiction.

Some implicit devices of historiographic metafiction are presented by postmodern historical novels in which narrative techniques and complicated structures mirror the contemporary theories about history. The multiplicity of points of view and the inclusion of different texts from various genres attract attention to the distorting influence of selecting sources, to the historian's concern of confidence in inadequate confirmation, to the conflicts, lack of reliability, and controversial validity of the documents and historical sources, and to the closer link between stories and history. The difficulty of combining the contradictory historical records of course of events leads to undermine the conviction that history might be learnt about objectively.

Rather than its structural or implicit variations, explicit types of historiographic metafiction specifically oppose to the dominant discourses of historiography, openly examining problems which have methodological and epistemological concerns of

recreating the past. The self-conscious analysis of history and the testing of conventional historiographic suppositions such as the neutrality, consistency and the reliability of historical sources are the focal concern and indication of historiographic metafiction.

By focusing on the transforming events into facts and using the historical signs into the depiction of history historiographic metafiction also crosses other limitations between literature and history, between fact and fiction, and between the genuine and the imaginary (Hutcheon, 1988: 57). In the metafictional self-consciousness and the structure of such novels as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), Nigel Williams' *Star Turn* (1985), *Witchcraft* (1987) and Penelope Lively's *City of the Mind* (1991), the readers can see the paradoxical relation of literature with history. Through their complicated ways of historical recreation and their historiographic self-consciousness, the novels by Lively, Rushdie, Barnes and Williams demonstrate that a historical truth unavoidably relies upon the specific tendencies of the historian. By asking the question of how much we can know about the past, their books not only scrutinize the reality and objectivity of the facts, but they also bring up the question of how much we can ever be known concerning the past (Nünning, 2004: 367).

Different techniques are utilized together with the parody in metafiction to destruct the familiarization of conventional novels. Some of these techniques are:

- frame story narration (it is a literary technique whereby an initial or main narrative is introduced, at least to a limited extent, to set the stage either for a more emphasized second story or for a set of shorter stories.)
- fiction within a fiction
- taking the writer or the reader of a novel as a subject matter of the novel itself
- depicting the writer as a character in the novel
- reflection of writer inside the novel clearly
- commenting on the novel inside the novel,
- Creating imaginary biographies,
- characters being conscious that they are fictional and they live in novel,
- characters that behave unexpectedly in a novel
- Structural tools that are extremely systematized or randomized,

- deconstruction of narrational traditions,
- non-linear flow of narration,
- spatial and temporal disengagement in the narration,
- self-reflective imagery, intertextual references and use of popular genres.

All these methods show the artificiality of the novel. (Karabostan, 2006: 20)

Metafictional novels regularly feature the intervention of the starts and breaking points. Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951) can be a good example of this. This story does not have a beginning and an end. The reader can pick the viewpoint on which he/she can move backwards or forward arbitrarily. Julio Cortazar's *Hopscotch* (1963) can be another striking example. The author presents two diverse reading alternatives. One of these two alternatives is the normal reading style beginning with the first page onwards and the other is the order given by the writer toward the end of the book beginning with the page seventy-three and goes ahead with randomly ordered chapters.

In metafictional books, characters and their names are given in a metaphorical relation. Such names remind that all fictional names may depict the referred things or individuals and the referred things are also the result of a denotation (naming) process. In real world, referred things are ever-present before the depiction; however, in fictional world an entity cannot exist unless there is a depiction. Metafictional novels alienate the text from the view of reality by concentrating on linguistic quality of the text. Metafictional novels show that literary fiction cannot imitate this real world, yet they can do it on the discourse that sets up the world and clarifies it.

Metafictional books uncover not just the fallacy of the texts looking for "truth" but the fallacy of the historical literature as well. Individuals and the events can be coordinated with the general people and the events in reality, but with the demonstration of historical writing these individuals and events are reinterpreted. Their interpretations and personalities dependably change with the adjustments in the context. Unlike the traditional omniscient narrator, the narrator in metafiction recognizes two phenomena by remarking on the fictional process rather than the content of the story. The author tries to hold his/her own "genuine" identity as the creator of the text. However, when he goes into the text his own particular reality is also tested, the author understands that the language

of the text made himself simply like he made the language of the text. Paradoxically, the author is situated inside the text as he imposed his existence outside the text.

In an age where all the different genres of literature have become fluid and made it hard to distinguish them from each other, it is highly important to draw a line between what is real and what is fiction. Within the lights of discussions and examples given here in this study, it is aimed to scrutinize the different approaches and theoretical background of dealing with history in a fictional text while enjoying the pure delight of reading and inquiring the hidden history within the truth or the hidden truth behind the history.



PART 2

2. HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN THE WORKS OF KURT VONNEGUT

2.1. Kurt Vonnegut's Biography

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. is an American writer who was born in Indiana in 1922. His family is one of the German settlers who came in the U.S in 1850s. Kurt's father was an architect such as his grand father and his mother was a daughter of a wealthy family as a member of Indiniapolis society. The negative opinions against the Germans following the World War I forced his family to abandon their German culture with a way to show that they were also American patriots. Although his parents were fluent German speakers, they did not teach Vonnegut German and made him feel "ignorant and rootless" (Marvin, 2002 :4).

The financial wealth and prosperity of Vonneguts was lost within a couple of years. Liebers' brewery was shut down in 1921 following the alcohol ban in the United States (U.S.) and during the days of Great Depression Sr. Vonnegut's architecture office did not go well. (Sharp, 2006: 1360). Other children of Vonnegut's family had completed their education at private schools, but Vonnegut Jr himself had to go to a state school instead. It was not important for him, but his parents were badly affected by economic downturn (Marvin, 2002: 3). The family tried to regain wealth and Mrs Vonnegut began writing short stories to magazines such as *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post* so Kurt Vonnegut Jr. can be said to have his wirting ability to be inherited from his mother.

Vonnegut started Shortridge High School in Indianapolis in 1936. While he was studying there he became one of the supervisors for the school daily newspaper, *The Shortridge Echo*. He stated that his time with the *Echo* made him to write for larger crowd of people instead of writing for a lecturer, for him this experience was "fun and easy". "It just turned out that I could write better than a lot of other people", Vonnegut stated (Farrell, 2009: 4).

After leaving the school in 1940, he started Cornell University in New York. His family encouraged him to consider studying a practically satisfying and 'useful' discipline so he began the department of biochemistry, however he was not succesful in that field and did not even have much interest on his studies. He also had a column on the

college's daily paper, *The Cornell Daily Sun*. His column was titled "Innocents Abroad" which had jokes from different publications. He later wrote an article named "*Well All Right*", about the philosophy of pacifism which he supported against the U.S intervention in World War II (Boomhower, 1999).

Eventually, Pearl Harbor attack caused the U.S. to enter into the war. He was in the Army for Reserve Officers' Training Corps, however his low scores in his training and an ironical article in Cornell's daily paper caused him to lose his place there. He was set on academic internship in May 1942 and withdraw it the next January. No longer qualified for an understudy delay, he confronted likely enrollment into the U.S Army. Following a number of delays and unsuccessful probations he decided to enroll in the army in March 1943 (Shields, 2011: 45-49). Vonnegut had an education on firing and maintaining howitzers and later on mechanical engineering at the Carnegie Institute of Technology and the University of Tennessee as a part of his army training (Farrell, 2009 : 5). In 1944, the training was halted because of the D-Day intrusion in Europe, and Vonnegut was sent to an infantry unit in Indiana, where he was prepared as a scout (Shields, 2011: 50,51). On May 14, 1944, Vonnegut found that his mom had killed herself by overdosing pills as a result of depression (Farrell, 2009 : 6).

Just a couple of months after his mother's suicide, Vonnegut was sent to Europe with the duty of intelligent scout with the Army. In December 1944, he battled in the Battle of the Bulge (Farrell, 2009 : 6). During the fight, U.S army was invaded by German armed forces. More than 500 soldiers from the division were slaughtered and more than 6,000 were captured including the Vonnegut Jr himself (Farrell, 2009 : 6). Vonnegut was brought to a prisoner camp in Dresden. During the struggling journey to the camp, the Royal Air Force attacked on the trains and murdered around 150 men. Dresden was very important in his life as he states that it was the "first big city [he had] ever observed". He had to live there in a slaughterhouse during his captive stay in the the city, and he worked in a manufacturing plant that is used for producing malt drinks for pregnant women when he was a prisoner of war (Vonnegut, 2008).

In the middle of a cold February of 1945 on 13th, Dresden became a target of dramatic attack organized by the Allied powers. In the following days, the Allies occupied the city with a disastrous firebombing. Hopefully he had a chance to survive these attacks by hiding himself in a meat locker which was a relatively safer place three stories underground. "It was cool there, with corpses hanging all around", Vonnegut said. "When

we came up the city was gone ... They consumed the entire damn town down" (Hayman, 1977).

After the war, he came back to the U.S, 22-year-old Vonnegut married to his long-lasting childhood love on September 1, 1945. Then they moved to Chicago; there, Vonnegut started education in the University of Chicago to study anthropology. He also worked as a journalist for the *City News Bureau of Chicago*. But eventually, Kurt Vonnegut Jr. left the University with no degree when his thesis was dismissed by the department.

He began working as a marketing expert for General Electric (GE) in Schenectady, New York research center. While working for GE, Vonnegut had his first article, titled "*Report on the Barnhouse Effect*", published in 1950 in *Collier's* (Farrell, 2009: 8). He wrote another story, after he received some training on creative writing from the fiction proofreader at *Collier's*, Knox Burger, and succeeded in earning money from it by selling it to the magazine. Burger suggested him to stop working for GE and to begin full time writing. He moved to Cape Cod, Massachusetts to write more, and left his job in GE office in 1951 (Farrell, 2009 : 8).

In Cape Cod, where is an ideal place for a writer with its pastoral nature Vonnegut wrote articles for magazines, for example, *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Cosmopolitan*. In 1952, his first novel, *Player Piano*, was published. The novel has a fictional setting in which the Third World War has just finished and machines and robots have replaced factory workers (Marvin, 2002 : 25).

Player Piano is a reflection of Vonnegut's time as a worker at GE. He criticizes the urge to climb the business ladders, one that in *Player Piano* is quickly vanishing as computerization rises, forcing even the administrators to leave their jobs. His protagonist, Paul Proteus, has a wife who is very ambitious, a manipulating assistant, and a compassion for poor people. When he was sent to live among the poor people (who have all the physical products they need, however not much feeling of reasoning) as an undercover agent by his manager Kroner, he leads them to a revolution in which the reader can see some vulgar scenes such as crushing the machines or burning the museums (Allen, 1991 : 30).

In *Player Piano*, Vonnegut uses many different methods that the readers would be accustomed to see in his later works, for the first time. The parodical, drunken figure Shah of Bratpuhr, who is a foreigner for this tragic U. S where corporatism is the major

way of life, makes various types of critical questions that a citizen would not dare to ask. This kind of an outsider guest would repeat all through Vonnegut's works (Allen, 1991 : 28).

Player Piano has been given positive audit and linked positively with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Vonnegut began to be cited as a "sharp-eyed satirist". But not many of the critics saw the novel as especially vital. A few versions were printed whereby Vonnegut got a reputation of a sci-fi author, a genre held in negative feelings by writers around then (Marvin, 2002 : 25).

After *Player Piano*, Vonnegut kept on writing short stories to different magazines. In 1954 he and his wife had a third child. With an enlarging family and no financially profitable books yet, Vonnegut's short stories supported the family. In 1958, his sister died of tumor two days after her husband died in a train crash. Vonnegut adopted their three children—James, Steven, and Kurt, aged 14, 11, and 9 respectively (Farrell, 2009 : 9).

While struggling with family problems, Vonnegut kept on writing. *The Sirens of Titan* (1959) is about a Martian attack of Earth, as observed by a former tycoon, Malachi Constant. He meets Winston Rumfoord, an aristocrat space explorer, who is trapped in a time twist that enables him to show up on Earth each fifty nine days. The tycoon discovers that his activities and all the important historical events are controlled by a race of automated aliens who come from the planet named Tralfamadore. Those aliens need a new part that must be created by a developed civilization to repair their space craft and go back to their home. Some human structures, for example, the Kremlin and the Pyramids, are signals from the aliens to their vehicle that they might hope to wait for the repair to happen.

Rumfoord, whose story is similar to the real life of Franklin D. Roosevelt, also physically looks like the former president. Rumfoord is portrayed as: "he put a cigarette in a long, bone cigarette holder, lit it. He push out his jaw. The cigarette holder pointed straight up" (Allen, 1991: 39). In his book about Vonnegut and his works, William Rodney Allen expresses that Rumfoord foreshadows the fictional politicians who will have important roles in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* and *Jailbird* (1991 : 40).

Mother Night, published in 1961, got little attention when it was first published. Protagonist of this novel is Howard W. Campbell Jr., who is an American citizen who goes to Germany under the Hitler regime during the war as an undercover agent for the

U.S., and promotes to one of the most important positions of the regime as a radio propagandist. After the war, the spy operative office rejects to demonstrate his innocence and he is detained by the Israelis and later kills himself. Vonnegut later wrote in a foreword to a newer version, " we are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be" (Shields, 2011: 171). Literary critic Lawrence Berkove compared the novel with Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, to delineate the propensity for "impersonators to escape by their pantomimes, to wind up what they mimic and in this way to live in a universe of illusion" (Morse, 2013 : 19).

Another short story by Vonnegut published in 1961 was "*Harrison Bergeron*". In this story setting is a dystopic future where all people are equal. In order to create such an equality beautiful individuals are forced to be deformed and the intelligent or strong people are forced to wear gadgets that nullify their advantages. Fourteen year old protagonist, Harrison is a genius and athlete who had to wear very difficult "handicaps" and detained for his attempts to topple the government. Later on he escapes and hides himself to a TV studio, gets rid of his handicaps, and also liberates a ballet dancer from her lead weights. As they are trying to escape, they are captured and executed by the Handicapper General, Diana Moon Glampers (Leeds, 1995 : 46). In his biography published in 1976, Stanley Schatt proposes that the short story demonstrates "in any leveling procedure, what truly is lost, as indicated by Vonnegut, is grace, beauty, and wisdom" (Schatt, 1976:156). Darryl Hattenhauer states that the story was a parody on American Cold War, false impressions of socialism and communism (Hattenheuer, 1998 : 387).

According to Allen, in his another work *Cat's Cradle* (1963) "Vonnegut hit full stride for the first time"(Allen, 2015: 53). Jonah, the narrator of the novel, wants to write an ordinary story about Dr. Felix Hoenikker, one of the fictional creators of the atomic bomb, hoping to cover his humanistic side rather than scientific aspect. Hoenikker has also developed another dangerous substance to the humankind apart from the bomb, ice-9, solid water stable under normal circumstances at room temperature, and if a molecule of it is touched to water, every bits of it turns to ice-9. Second half of the book is spent on the fictional Caribbean island of San Lorenzo, where Jonah explores a religion called Bokkononism, whose holy books give the novel the ethical core science does not supply. After the oceans swung to ice-9, killing the most of humankind, Jonah walks on the frozen surface within a hope to have his story survived (Morse, 2003 : 63).

Vonnegut takes an accountant he knew on Cape Cod as a role model for the major character of *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1964), who was a specialist in clients in an awful situation and had to comfort them quite often. Eliot Rosewater who is portrayed as a wealthy son of a senator from Republican Party, attempts to offer some kind of amends because he feels very guilty of killing civilian firefighters. For this reason he serves in a volunteer fire office during the war, and offers some amount of cash to the people who are in need. Stress from a battle for control of his charity works pushes him over the edge, and he is put in a mental healing center. He recuperates, and puts an end to the monetary fight by pronouncing the neighbouring children of his district to be his heirs. Allen considered *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* "a cry from the heart than a novel under its authors's full intellectual control", that showed the familial and emotional stresses Vonnegut was having at that time (Shields, 2011: 182).

After he worked two years at the University of Iowa in writer's workshop and lecturing one course each term, Vonnegut was granted a fellowship for a research in Germany. When he won it, in March 1967, he was turning into a notable writer. He used the grant to travel in Eastern Europe, including to Dresden, and he found that numerous noticeable structures were still in ruins there (Shields, 2011: 220).

Vonnegut had been writing on his war experiences at Dresden since he came back from the war, however he had never felt sufficient enough to compose anything worthy to himself or his publishers: Chapter 1 of *Slaughterhouse-Five* recounts his difficulties (Allen, 1991 :83). Published in 1969, the novel brought fame to Vonnegut. It portrays the life of Billy Pilgrim, who was born in 1922 and survives the bombing of Dresden like Vonnegut himself. The story is in a non-linear form, and it includes a considerable lot of climaxes—Billy's death in 1976, his kidnapping by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore nine years earlier, and the execution of Billy's companion Edgar Derby in Dresden for stealing a tea pot, uncovered in the story's first pages. (Allen, 1991 : 51) *Slaughterhouse-Five* got positive reviews, with Michael Crichton writing in *The New Republic*, "he writes about the most excruciatingly agonizing things. His books have assaulted our most profound feelings of dread of automation and the bomb, our deepest political faults, our fiercest hatreds and loves. Nobody else writes books regarding these matters; they are inaccessible to ordinary novelists" (Shields, 2011 : 254). The book went instantly to the highest point of *The New York Times* Best Seller list. Vonnegut's prior works had

appealed to numerous university students, and the antiwar message of *Slaughterhouse-Five* resounded with a generation set apart by the Vietnam War.

Following the publishing of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut had an opportunity to have the reputation and financial security. He began to be seen as a hero of the flourishing anti-war movement in the U.S. He was invited to talk at various events, and gave university speeches around the country. In addition to working as a lecturer at Harvard University in creative writing in 1970, Vonnegut gave lectures at the City College in New York as a distinguished professor in 1973–1974 academic year. He was later chosen Vice President of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and given honorary degrees by Bennington College and Indiana University. He also wrote a play called *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, which was staged on October 7, 1970 at New York's Theater de Lys (Marvin, 2002: 11).

In the meantime, Vonnegut's own life was not going well. His wife Jane had converted to Christianity, which was contrary to Vonnegut's atheistic feelings, and with five of their six children she left home. The couple had disputes over their different ideas on religions until Vonnegut moved from their Cape Cod home to New York in 1971. He called these familial disputes as "painful", and said the separation was an "appalling, unavoidable accident that we were badly prepared to understand" (Marvin, 2002: 10). The couple separated and they remained friends until Jane's death in late 1986. Apart from his marriage problems, he was deeply affected when his child Mark experienced a psychological breakdown in 1972, which made Vonnegut's unending melancholy far worse, and led him to take Ritalin. When he gave up on taking the medication after a couple of years, he began to see a psychologist every week (Marvin, 2002 : 11).

Vonnegut's problems happened in various ways; most particularly however, was the painfully slow advance he was making on his next novel, *Breakfast of Champions*. In 1971, Vonnegut decided to stop writing it. When it was published in 1973, it was harshly criticized. In Thomas S. Hischak's book *American Literature on Stage and Screen*, *Breakfast of Champions* was called "amusing and outlandish", but critics noticed that it "lacks substance and seems to be an exercise in literary playfulness" (Hischak, 2012 : 31). Vonnegut's 1976 novel *Slapstick*, which focuses on the relation between him and his sister, faced a similar destiny. In *The New York Times'* review of *Slapstick*, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt said Vonnegut "seems to be putting less effort into [storytelling] than

ever before ", and that "it still seems as if he has given up storytelling after all " (Lehmann –Haupt, 1976).

In 1979, Vonnegut wedded to a photographer Jill Krementz. With Jill, he adopted a little girl, Lily, when the infant was three days old. In consequent years, his notoriety resurged as he distributed a few satirical books, including *Jailbird* (1979), *Deadeye Dick* (1982), *Galápagos* (1985), *Bluebeard* (1987), and *Hocus Pocus* (1990). Although he remained a productive author in the 1980s Vonnegut battled with depression and attempted to commit a suicide in 1984. Two years after this incident, Vonnegut was seen by younger generation when he played himself in Rodney Dangerfield's film *Back to School*. The last of Vonnegut's fourteen books, *Timequake* (1997), was, as Vonnegut biographer Gregory Sumner stated, "an impression of an aging man confronting mortality and testimony to a troubled confidence in the resilience of human awareness and agency" (Sumner, 2014). Vonnegut's last book, an accumulation of essays entitled *A Man Without a Country* (2005), turned into a bestseller (Smith, 2007).

In a 2006 *Rolling Stone* interview, Vonnegut cynically expressed that he would sue the Brown and Williamson tobacco company, the producer of the Pall Mall-marked cigarettes he had been smoking since he was fourteen, for false advertising. "What's more, do you know why?" he said. "Because I'm 83 years of age. The lying mongrels! On the package Brown and Williamson promised to kill me" (Grosman, 2007). He died in the evening of April 11, 2007 in Manhattan, because of brain injuries that he had when he fell in his home. His death was reported by his wife Jill. Vonnegut was eighty four years old (Smith, 2007). By the time he died, Vonnegut had written fourteen books, three short story collections, five plays and five non-fiction books. A book made out of Vonnegut's unpublished pieces, *Armageddon in Retrospect*, was compiled and after his death published by Vonnegut's son, Mark, in 2008.

2.2. World View of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

In the introduction section of *Slaughterhouse-Five* Vonnegut relates meeting film producer Harrison Starr at a party. He asked him whether the book he was working on was an anti-war novel. "I guess" answered Vonnegut. Starr reacted "Why don't you write an anti-glacier novel?" This underlined Vonnegut's conviction that wars were inescapable, yet that it was still critical to guarantee the wars were simply wars.

Kurt Vonnegut's mix of anti-war assessment and satire made him one of the most popular writers of the 1960s. Vonnegut expressed in a 1987 interview that, "my own feeling is that civilization ended in World War I, and we're still trying to recover from that", and that he wanted to write novels focusing on war without praising the war itself. Vonnegut had not intended to publish again, but his anger against the George W. Bush led him to write *A Man Without a Country* (Vitale, 2011).

Slaughterhouse-Five is the Vonnegut's most famous novel best known for its themes which have anti-war feelings, but the writer expressed his ideas in ways beyond the depiction of the destruction of Dresden. He has one character, Mary O'Hare, who was in the opinion that "wars were partly encouraged by books and movies", made by "Frank Sinatra or John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men" (Freese, 2013: 101). Vonnegut made various comparisons between Dresden and the Hiroshima in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and wrote in *Palm Sunday* (1991) that "I learned how vile that religion of mine could be when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima" (Leeds, 1995: 68).

Wars that used nuclear weapons are mentioned in almost all of Vonnegut's works. In *Player Piano*, the computer EPICAC has the control of the nuclear arsenal, and is responsible for deciding whether to use high-explosive or nuclear weapons. In *Cat's Cradle*, Jonah's real reason of writing is to write a record of what some famous Americans had been doing while Hiroshima was bombed.

Vonnegut was a humanist and an atheist, serving as the honorary president of the American Humanist Association (Niose, 2007). In an interview he expressed that his ancestors who came to the U.S. did not have a faith in God, and he took his atheism from his parents (Leeds, 1995: 480). He did not however despise the people who believe in a religion, hailing church associations as a kind of a large family. Vonnegut was a freethinker like his great-grandfather Clemens. He sometimes attended a Unitarian church, but with little consistency. In his work *Palm Sunday*, Vonnegut says he is a "Christ-worshipping agnostic" (Vonnegut, 2009:177) in a speech later on he gave, he called himself a "Christ-loving atheist" but he also stated that he was not a Christian.

Religion is seen frequently in Vonnegut's works and his speeches. He used a rhetoric focusing on religion in many of his speeches and was inclined to use such expressions as "God forbid" and "thank God". He wrote his own version of the *Requiem Mass*, which he then had translated into Latin and set to music (Wakefield, 2014). In *God*

Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian, Vonnegut goes to paradise after he is euthanized by Dr. Jack Kevorkian. When he is in paradise, he interviews twenty one deceased celebrities, including William Shakespeare, Isaac Asimov and Kilgore Trout (a fictional character from his novels) (Kohn, 2001). There are many different characters in his works, establishing new beliefs and religion is often seen as a major plot device, for example in *Player Piano*, *The Sirens of Titan* and *Cat's Cradle*. In *The Sirens of Titan*, Rumfoord announces that The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent. *Slaughterhouse-Five* has Billy Pilgrim who does not believe in any religion himself, nevertheless become a chaplain's assistant in the army and display a large cross on his wall. In *Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut created the religion of Boknonism.

Vonnegut did not particularly sympathize with liberalism or conservatism, and mused on the credible simplicity of American politics. "If you want to take my guns away from me, and you're all for murdering fetuses, and love it when homosexuals marry each other [...] you're a liberal. If you are against those perversions and for the rich, you're a conservative. What could be simpler?" (Zinn and Arnove, 2009 : 620) Regarding political parties, Vonnegut said, "The two real political parties in America are the Winners and the Losers. The people don't acknowledge this. They claim membership in two imaginary parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, instead" (Vonnegut, 2006).

Vonnegut overlooked more mainstream political ideologies in favor of socialism, which he used to think could be an important substitute for what he saw as social Darwinism and a soul of "survival of the fittest" in American society (Sharp, 2006: 1364) trusting that "socialism would be a good for the common man" (Gannon and Taylor, 2013). Vonnegut would regularly return to a statement by socialist and five-time presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs: "As long as there is a lower class, I am in it. As long as there is a criminal element, I'm of it. As long as there is a soul in prison, I am not free" (Zinn and Arnove, 2009: 618). Vonnegut expressed disappointment that communism and socialism seemed to be unsavory topics to the average American, and believed that they may offer beneficial substitutes to contemporary social and economic systems (Sharp, 2006 : 1325).

2.3. Historiographic Metafiction in *Slaughterhouse Five*

On February 13, 1945, Allied forces comprising of British and American bomber jets dropped 3,000 tons of bombs upon the city center of Dresden, which was then an

undefended city with not having a major strategic significance and they transformed that city into a fiery inferno. Large explosives caused the first destruction, which was extensive and then, incendiary bombs were used to deal with what was left. Among the things that were destroyed in Dresden, a civilian cultural center, were approximately 135,000 human beings. In that night, the ancient capital of Saxony was exposed to overflowing, since 630,000 permanent residents were added to its 30,000 prisoners of war of different nationalities and at least 600,000 refugees fleeing from the advancing Red Army, who had neither a proper home nor a chance to seek the protection of an air-raid shelter. With their attack, the Allied Forces caused an unprecedented spectacle of annihilation, which transformed an overcrowded city into "one big flame [that] ate everything organic, everything that would burn" (SF,178)¹ and killed about 135,000 civilians. (Austin, 1989 : 363)

Just a couple of the inhabitants managed to survive. One of the survivors was an American prisoner of war named Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Together with around one hundred other prisoners and their German guards, he survived the holocaust in a meat locker located far beneath the burning surface. On the following day, when he went out he saw what man and his weapons can do. For nearly twenty-five years after that day, he sought to write about what he had seen, to plumb the depths of his terrible experience and thus to explore its meaning and significance. *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) is the result of Vonnegut's long effort. The novel was born out of his determination not to forget what had happened even though, as he states in the first chapter, "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre" (SF, 19).

The eventual result of Vonnegut's endeavor to deal with his Dresden experience was his "anti-war book" (SF,3) *Slaughterhouse- Five, or The Children's Crusade* (1969), of which he says it was "a therapeutic thing" and made him "a different person unique novel can hardly surprise, since any writer who tries to reconstruct a historical atrocity of such unimaginable proportions by means of traditional fictional strategies, that is, by storifying the event through an individual narrative perspective, is bound to fail, for the sheer number of casualties transcends the limits of personal empathy" (Freese, 2009: 18). So, a historical novel about the bombing of Dresden is not only beset by the genre-specific problems of reproducing the past through the epistemological limitations of the present,

¹ Page numbers in brackets with the abbreviation of SF refer to Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade* (New York, 1970).

but also defeated by the limits of the human imagination. This is the reason why Vonnegut needs to fall back on different narrative strategies and why *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a story that defies all generic classifications and introduces strange new ways of dealing with the grievous lessons of history.

Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse Five*, is the story of a man who “has become unstuck in time” (SF 16). Billy Pilgrim, who is the protagonist of the novel is born in 1922 and brought up in Ilium, New York. He takes his undergraduate degree from Ilium School of Optometry, where he meets his future wife, Valencia Marble, whose father is the owner of the same optometry school. After his charge as an assistant of a chaplain, he enrolls to the famous Battle of the Bulge and becomes the prisoner of the German lines. Before his capture, Billy sees his life span entirely from beginning to end which signifies the starting point of his time travels. During the boxcar railway transportation of the war prisoners of which Billy is a part, he starts to travel in time. When the crowded war prisoner group arrives at the camp in Dresden, they are forced in to manual labor such as manufacturing malt syrup for pregnant women. The camp is located on the lands and buildings of a former slaughterhouse in which Billy and some other war prisoners take shelter during the bombing of Dresden by the American forces. Although Dresden has not been expected to be the target, Allied aircraft creates a firestorm by dropping bombs followed by saturation bombing, causing the estimated civilian deaths of up to 135,000 at a single night.

Slaughterhouse Five opens with the confessions of a narrator claiming that “All this happened, more or less.” and his assurance that he has “changed all the names” (SF, 1). In the very first chapter, he underlines the fact of how much work of labor and time he has spent on the book and he has only written this book with the aim of getting free from the memories of the Second World War, in which he has enrolled. “I would hate to tell you what this lousy book cost me in money and anxiety in time...I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a masterpiece or at least make me a lot of money, since the subject was so big” (SF, 2).

The experiences of the protagonist are molded into that of the unnamed narrator because the narrator functions as an invisible outsider who follows Billy Pilgrim in his every step. As Thomas F. Marvin indicates “creating the character of Billy Pilgrim allows Vonnegut to present his experiences indirectly, as if they had happened to someone else”

(2002: 131). Furthermore, when Kurt Vonnegut's biography is concerned, the book turns to have three layers in which the narrator, the protagonist and Kurt Vonnegut himself are mixed. The real world of Kurt Vonnegut, the fictional world of the narrator and the super fictional world of the protagonist enable the reader re-consider the subject point of the narrative. It is striking that from the very beginning the narrator tells about himself and his life, all of which are exactly the same experiences of Kurt Vonnegut. There is an ironic subversion of the literary codes; for example narrator and the writer cannot be the same person and should not be taken as such, contrary to this realistic view, the creator and the created one merge in the narrative. In her book, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Patricia Waugh defines the different worlds in *Slaughterhouse-Five* as follows:

The real world (how Vonnegut comes to write a book about the fire bombing of Dresden) is here set against a fictional world (the bombing seen through the eyes of Billy Pilgrim...) and ultrafictional world with which Billy communicates, the planet Tralfamadore. The latter, however, is explicitly an art-world. Its artificial form and philosophical beliefs are echoed in the form of the novel we are reading with its overtly spatial structure...(Waugh, 1984: 128)

The novel shifts through time and space, recording Billy Pilgrim's ghastly experiences in World War II, his unhappy marriage and dull postwar life as an optometrist in Ilium, his nervous breakdown, and his visits to an alien planet known as Tralfamadore on which Billy learns about their philosophy of time and death. As Tony Tanner has stated Billy Pilgrim's time travel "entails not only undergoing the war time experiences, but also getting involved in the fantasies which Vonnegut has invented" (Tanner, 1971 : 194-195).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut criticizes the realist representation of war. In the first chapter of the book, the author emphasizes the difficulties of writing an ordinary novel about such a severe historical event as the destruction of Dresden, which he saw as a first hand eye-witness when he became a prisoner of war there. Regardless of how he endeavors to reconstruct the bombing into a novel, Vonnegut finds himself tangled up by the perplexing inclination of novels to praise the things they disapprove. Vonnegut expresses his opposition to the turning the agony of the masscre into a kind of novel several times in the book on different occasions. For Vonnegut, the best way to adapt to

such a devastating experience is to compose a very distinctive style novel, that is an anti novel.

The final answer the book offers to the solution of war seems to be only the chirping of the bird “Poo-tee-weet?” (SF, 43) which is discouraging rather than calming because no word can convey such agony. Vonnegut’s fiction is a reply to history, in a manner very much like the leitmotif of the novel, “So it goes”. Marguerite Alexander alludes to Vonnegut’s fragmented style in the novel by claiming how the experience of Dresden has transformed his fictional mode. The restraint of language implies that language itself lacks the resources to deal with such events. The omnipresent authorial voice registers the response of hapless and powerless humanity when confronted such catastrophes (Alexander, 1990 : 56).

Vonnegut’s choice to call the novel *The Children’s Crusade* is inspired by Charles Mackay’s *Children Crusade* in his *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* first published in 1841. Mackay tells of a shameful Crusade, arranged by two monks who raised an army consisting of 30,000 children from different European cities who thought that they were going to Palestine. “Most of the children were shipped out to of Marseilles, and about half of them drowned in shipwrecks” (SF, 18). The other half of the children were sent to Algeria where they were traded as slaves. Mackay calls them “idle” and “deserted” who “generally swarm in great cities, nurtured on daring and ready for anything” (SF, 18). Vonnegut states ironically that the only appealing thing about war is that “everybody gets little something” (SF, 76). Mackay’s point is that wars bring nothing good but only bloodshed: “Now what was the grand result of all these struggles? Europe expended millions of her treasures, and the blood of two million of her people; and a handful of quarrelsome knights retained possession of Palestine for about one hundred years!” (SF, 18).

In a parodic manner, Vonnegut demonstrates that the wars are in fact nothing but the *Children’s Crusade*, fought by children (SF, 74). In the novel, the soldiers in the World War II, similar to the children collected for the crusade, have no idea what they are doing in the war. The only characters who see war as a glorious thing like Roland Weary, Colonel Wild Bob, and Rumfoord are given as absolutely ridiculous parodies. Vonnegut in reference to *Children’s Crusade* makes the reader realize that history is relativistic. The author finds that people inappropriately exaggerate and distort the

violence and atrocity of war into heroism and romance. The original text taken from Mackay, who believes that the *Children's Crusade* is more horrifying than the ten Crusades, gives Vonnegut an opportunity to stand back and let history speak:

“.... the Crusaders were but ignorant and savage men, that their motives were those of bigotry unmitigated, and that their pathway was one of blood and tears. “Romance, on the other hand, dilates upon their piety, and portrays, in her most glowing and impassioned hues, their virtue and magnanimity, the imperishable honor they acquired for themselves, and the great services they rendered to Christianity” (SF, 18).

Vonnegut incorporates Mackay's text as pastiche for the second time when he brings about the parody of “*The Three Musketeers*” (SF, 39-40). Ironically, different from the musketeers in Alexander Dumas's book, these ‘Three Musketeers’ cannot stick together and survive because of Billy's clownish behaviours and wrongdoings which end in catastrophe (SF, 29-30). Vonnegut also mentions ‘the Three Musketeers’ as a candy bar in various occasions. ‘The Three Musketeers’ candy bar recalls his experience as a reporter for the *Chicago City News Bureau*. One day, as he has to cover the death of a young veteran who has been squashed in an elevator accident, the woman reporter eating ‘Three Musketeers’ candy bar asks Vonnegut whether his contact with the dead man's wife has affected him emotionally or not. Vonnegut's reply is quite interesting: “I have seen lots worse than that in the war” (SF, 14). This is actually the only scene that Vonnegut mentions his horrific experience so explicitly. The candy bar foreshadows Billy's fiancé, Valery's appetite for sweets. On the following pages, Vonnegut keeps relying on more historical facts. Mary Endell's book, *Dresden, History, Stage and Gallery*, published in 1908 employs the author this time to draw analogies between the destruction of Dresden and Dresden as the city of art and prosperity.

The episode of the encounter between the narrator and Mary, the wife of his war buddy O'Hare, indicates that traditional war novels or movies inappropriately praise heroism and justify brutal killings. The exposition of the writing process by the author is actually a denial of the traditional war production of John Wayne. The movie adaptation of the book would then star “Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men” (SF, 17). Vonnegut parodies the realism in war novels and the heroic deeds of males in war movies. The brutality of war can be screened

“backwards, then forwards again” (SF, 54) in films, but cannot be fully covered in fiction. In films, “fires can go out; dead or wounded soldiers are made whole; bombs fly back into planes which fly backwards to friendly cities; the bombers are dismantled and minerals used for bombs are returned to earth” (SF, 54). The title of Trout’s book *The Gospel from Outer Space* recalls American movies of the 1950s, such as, “It Came from Outer Space”, “ Plan 9 from Outer Space”, “The Thing from Another World”, or “Invaders from Mars”. These movies reveal American people’s hysteria that they are constantly under attack. Vonnegut tends to attack war tradition in American fiction, especially Hemingway who preys on romance and love in war. In his mention of Stephan Crane’s book *The Red Badge of Courage* (SF, 69), he brings forth the difference between traditional war novel and his anti-novel. After reading the book, Billy Pilgrim enters a “morphine paradise” (SF, 69) full of giraffes in a garden and loses contact with reality.

Since Vonnegut is incapable of writing a realistic novel about the past, these incorporations of the past into the text of present denote parody. By closing the gap between the past and present, Vonnegut rewrites the past in a new context from his own point of view. What is paradoxical for him is his inability to lay bare the truth of massacre because for him no one could in fact have “had any good war stories to tell” (SF, 43). As his character Billy who is trapped in the amber of time (SF, 56), Vonnegut feels the restraint of history. He allows “loony” (SF, 85) Billy Pilgrim to journey in the past, present and the future because in this case, he feels free to provide a narration to present the event of the Dresden firebombing without making a cause-and-effect reasoning of it. No matter how the juxtaposition of the fragmented events and episodes in the past, present and future is all related with each other, there is no chronological time-sequence in the novel. The reader constantly shifts from present tense that Vonnegut uses to future that is used by Billy Pilgrim from past tense of the historical facts to Billy’s travels in time and space. Although it is hard for the reader to map all these time warps, the author supplies information from the Tralfamadorian concept of time: “ It is an illusion we have here on earth that one moment follows another, like beads on a string” (SF, 24). Unlike Billy Pilgrim, humans are all stuck in time; therefore, they feel great sadness for death and cannot escape from this catastrophic moment in life because they can only relate to their surrounding in three dimensions. Besides, the Tralfamadorian notion of time is simple and neat: “All time is all time. It does not change” (SF, 61). “All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist” (SF, 25).

Vonnegut draws parallels between the atomic bomb and fire-bombing of Dresden. He merely attempts to illustrate the insanity of war and the scale of destruction. By the most conservative estimates, it is declared that 135,000 people were killed in Dresden in the attack. That means more civilians were left to die by the atomic bombs that were fired by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the World War II.

Vonnegut demonstrates a great distrust of the official histories which impinge upon the present and one's ability to imagine it; the past according to Walt Disney coexists with the response of the Air Force public relations officer who responds to Vonnegut (also working in public relations at the time) that information about Dresden, some years after the massacre, is still secret. Similarly, Billy Pilgrim learns that the story of Dresden is not included in the official Air Force History of the war, and Billy, who was at Dresden, has a difficult time convincing the Air Force historian he was even present at the massacre; the experience of those who survived Dresden is not accounted for in the official narrative, and Billy's presence is an embarrassing fact.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the distrust of linear narrative and official history imply each other, and Vonnegut attempts to use linear narrative in order to point to the "width and depth of the present." In a short while Vonnegut correctly concluded that the cause of O'Hare's uneasiness was his wife, Mary. O'Hare's wife, the writer goes on to explain, misunderstood his purpose in writing about Dresden. She feared that it was going to be a book that would glorify war and which, in time, would be made into a movie with specific roles for "Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men" (SF, 13). Mary angrily reminded Vonnegut that not real men do not fight at wars but children do; and she made it clear that she did not want any more wars in which her own children might have to die. It was then and there that Vonnegut got the subtitle for his novel. In order to assure Mary that he had no intention of writing a book to glorify war, he promised to call the work "*The Children's Crusade*" (SF,13). Mary accepted Vonnegut's assurance. A short time later, she let Bernard return to Dresden with Vonnegut, who had obtained Guggenheim money to do further research for the novel (SF,1).

In the second chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five* Vonnegut begins the development of the story of Billy Pilgrim, a "Sad Sack" type soldier in World War II. Billy, like the writer, was caught by the Germans and later survived the destruction of Dresden while a prisoner of war. Vonnegut does not drop from the picture entirely, however; for as he tells

about Billy, he occasionally reminds the reader of his own participation in some of the fictional character's wartime experiences. A simple "That was I" is used from time to time in reference to a minor background figure in Billy's story (*SF*,109). In this way Vonnegut manages to tell the reader that he really was in Dresden and that some events related in this story actually took place. (Austin, 1989: 165)

After completing the major section on the life of Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut returns in the last chapter (the tenth) to the original autobiographical frame. He reflects upon the deaths of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, comments upon the daily body counts issued from Vietnam, and pauses to note the passing of his own father. Then he says that, according to Billy Pilgrim, the Earthling most admired by Tralfamadorians is Charles Darwin—"who taught that those who die are meant to die, that corpses are improvements" (*SF*,182). Next Vonnegut remembers his and O'Hare's flight to Dresden. He recalls how O'Hare found in a book of facts that the population of the world will double by the year 2000. To this bit of information Vonnegut replied with barely suppressed sarcasm: "I suppose they will all want dignity" (*SF*, 184). Dignity, Vonnegut certainly knows, is not very easy to find in this world. (Austin, 1989: 172)

The general antiwar tone of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is most effectively and poignantly set by the scene in which Billy Pilgrim watches an old war movie backwards. Although the passage is fairly lengthy, it is worth considering in its entirety:

The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb doors, exerted a miraculous magneticism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes. The containers were stored neatly in racks. The Germans below had miraculous devices of their own, which were steel tubes. They used them to suck more fragments from the crewmen and planes. But there were still a few wounded Americans, though, and some of the bombers were in bad repair. Over France, though, German fighters came up again, made everything and everybody as good as new ... When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders,

separating the dangerous contents into minerals. Touchingly, it was mainly women who did this work. The minerals were then shipped to specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground, to hide them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again (*SF*, 63-64).

This scene expresses the hope that is central to *Slaughterhouse-Five*— which is, that the senseless destruction caused by war will be stopped. In reality, however, Vonnegut knows that stopping war is not so easy and that, unlike the situation depicted here, the moments of pain and death which take place in real wars cannot be undone or simply rolled back. Many of the terrible moments which Vonnegut focuses upon in this novel are locked within his own memory. Both Vonnegut and Billy Pilgrim know what it is to be prisoners of war, to see their fellow soldiers die, and to witness the destruction of a beautiful city and the annihilation of most of its inhabitants. But in dealing with these harsh realities of war, Vonnegut departs from the approach taken in so many antiwar novels. It is perhaps surprising that, while death and suffering are mentioned on almost every page of the novel, the author makes no real effort to assault his reader's sensibility with graphic and gory details. Even when describing the aftermath of the Dresden bombing, Vonnegut is rather vague. Speaking of the ruins of Dresden and the surrounding area, Billy Pilgrim says only that "It was like the moon" (*SF*, 154). Then, when Billy and some other prisoners are forced to bring out bodies from the cellars of ruined buildings, Vonnegut does mention a nauseous smell which resembles a combination of "roses and mustard gas" but he relies primarily upon the simple, though pointed, expression "corpse mines" to communicate the full horror of the moment (*SF*, 185).

One attitude which Vonnegut attacks in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, an attitude that fosters massacres like the Dresden bombing, involves the conviction that some acts of war, though inherently inhumane, are morally justified by a right and just cause. This kind of reasoning is, of course, just another way of saying that the end justifies the means. At one point, for instance, Vonnegut quotes from the forewords of David Irving's *The Destruction of Dresden*. Although Irving is highly critical of the bombing, the forewords were written by two former military officers who were directly involved in the attack and who take a different view of the incident. General Eaker, an American, condones the bombing by calling attention to the many deaths that were caused by the German's own war effort. He suggests, therefore, that the bombing was absolutely necessary "to

completely defeat and utterly destroy nazism" (SF,161). The other officer, British Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, seems to be more deeply moved by what took place in Dresden but implies that it was just "one of those terrible things that sometimes happen in wartime, . . ." (SF, 161-62). Now Vonnegut does not say that it is never necessary to fight an enemy; but what he does object to is the notion that the cruel destruction of an enemy is good, that it is morally right to fight evil with evil. Such killing, the author clearly declares, is never "good" for any reason whatsoever. Vonnegut's position is no doubt based upon his concern for the victims of war, but he is also interested in those men who act as the agents of destruction, for the toll, though different, is heavy on both sides in any massacre. While the victims lose their lives, those who do the killing lose something equally important: their basic humanity. For example, there is an old argument used by many pacifists which proclaims that it is impossible for a person to kill another man if he views that man as a human being, or as an individual. The argument goes, if one does kill, if he does thus deny the humanity of another, then he in effect denies or forfeits his own humanity. (Austin, 1989: 184)

Vonnegut seems to be using a similar line of reasoning, especially when he refers to a novel by Kilgore Trout who is Billy Pilgrim's favourite author who is indeed fictional. In this novel, *The Gutless Wonder*, Trout tells the story of robots who drop "burning jellied gasoline on human beings." These robots, Trout explains, "had no conscience, and no circuits which would allow them to imagine what was happening to the people on the ground" (SF,144). The suggestion here is clear: genuine human beings do not, could not, cause their fellows such suffering. There are some things that should never be done—even in the name of a "right" cause. Here Vonnegut's point stands as an excellent response, and as a pertinent warning, to Eaker and Saundby; to Bertram Rumfoord, a character in the novel who also defends the Dresden bombing; and even to President Harry Truman, whose similarly reasoned support of the atomic attack on Hiroshima is included in the text (SF, 160-61).

Roland Weary and the colonel known as "Wild Bob" stand as particularly good illustrations of Vonnegut's child-soldier idea which shows itself in the naming of the novel as "*Children's Crusade*". Weary is a soldier at the age of eighteen from Pittsburg who, because people have always rejected him, takes great pleasure in being brutally mean. Roland, for instance, is characterized by his childish fascination with the instruments and means of torture, and he finds it especially amusing to terrorize Billy

Pilgrim with his tales of savage cruelty. But, most of all, Roland gets a very special thrill from pretending that he and the two infantry scouts make up a modern version of "The Three Musketeers" (*SF*, 36). Roland Weary sees himself as a brave hero, but Vonnegut and the reader see him for just what he is—a big kid. "Wild Bob," a much older man than Weary, does not come off any better. This colonel, who is from Cody, Wyoming, of all places, wanted to be loved by his troops and to lead them in grand battles. (Austin, 1989 : 185)

Apparently "Wild Bob" had seen too many western movies and identified too closely with their brave, though highly improbable, heroes. At any rate, "Wild Bob's" enthusiasm for war resulted in just one thing: the loss of every man in his regiment, "a lot of them children" like their commander (*SF*, 57-58). Certainly Weary and "Wild Bob" represent a significant setback for the cult of hero-worshippers. Vonnegut's suggestion that men at war are very much like children has another implication, one that is particularly important in his characterization of Billy Pilgrim. For, if some of these men are childlike in their attitudes and behavior, such as Weary and "Wild Bob," others are also childlike in their innocence, in their ignorance of man's potential for evil and of the extremes of human suffering.

There is a scene in which Billy Pilgrim, shortly after his capture, looks down to see a reflection in the "golden boots" of a German soldier. According to the narrator, these boots were the soldier's prize possession, and he is said to have told a recruit that by looking at their highly polished surface "you'll see Adam and Eve" (*SF*, 46). Billy, who has not heard this story, proves that the old soldier is right: ". . . Billy stared into the patina of the corporal's boots, saw Adam and Eve in the golden depths. They were naked. They were so innocent, so vulnerable, so eager to behave decently. Billy Pilgrim loved them" (*SF*, 46). Of course, Billy can see only one reflection in the boots—his own. So, symbolically, Vonnegut shows that Billy Pilgrim is like Adam and Eve. He is like the original children before the fall; he is innocent, helpless, and ignorant of the world's terrors (Austin, 1989 : 186).

The first time Vonnegut suggests that his hero is to be looked upon as a Christ-figure is in the scene which pictures Billy in the German railway car. At this point he has just been blamed for the death of Roland Weary and has, in effect, become a scapegoat of sorts. Vonnegut next relates that Billy, who is shunned by the other prisoners, does not

rest upon the crowded floor with the men but that, instead, he stretches out "at an angle on the corner-brace, self crucified" (*SF*, 69).

Later on, when Billy leads the parade of prisoners through Dresden, he is dressed in the "little impresario's coat" which was given to him by the German guards (*SF*, 131). As Billy and the other Americans walk down a busy street in Dresden, the people stop to watch the procession and take great delight in staring at a most amusing sight, Billy Pilgrim in his funny little coat (*SF*, 130-31). Although Billy is naively unaware of his own ridiculous demeanor, and even though it might be stretching a point somewhat, there is some justification, given Vonnegut's earlier allusions, for viewing this scene in comparison with Christ's long march with the cross. Each situation is underscored by a tone of mockery and humiliation, and Billy, like Christ, is about to experience the most terrible moment of his life. That Vonnegut is completely serious in this effort to picture Billy as a Christ-figure may seem open to question. At least the evidence presented thus far is inconclusive. But the author's intention becomes much clearer towards the end of the novel. After the war, yet while Billy is still in Dresden, he and a few other recently freed prisoners ride about the ruined city in a wagon drawn by two weak and struggling horses. Two Polish doctors, a man and his wife, angrily admonish Billy for the condition of the horses. And when Billy, who has not paid any attention at all to the state of the animals, sees them, he suddenly bursts into tears—though he "hadn't cried about anything else in the war" (*SF*, 170). Immediately, Vonnegut inserts a rather pointed comment:

Later on, as a middle-aged optometrist, he would weep quietly and privately sometimes, but never make loud boo-hooing noises. Which is why the epigraph of this book is the quatrain of the famous Christmas carol. Billy cried very little, though he often saw things worth crying about, and in that respect, at least, he resembled the Christ of the carol:

The cattle are lowing,
The Baby awakes.
But the little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes (*SF*, 170).

As Peter Reed notes, Vonnegut, by saying that Billy resembled Christ in at least "that" respect, is certainly implying that there are perhaps other ways in which the two

could be compared. In effect, the writer apparently wants to make sure that his reader does make the connection in at least this one instance (Reed, 1972 : 185).

Within the context of *Slaughterhouse-Five* there are allusions to two Christ stories—the original and Trout's. In each case, Billy resembles to Jesus Christ in his innocence and his suffering. In short, Billy Pilgrim and all men in his situation resemble Christ to the extent that they too, are innocent victims of inhumanity and madness. Their innocence is ravished when they are first subjected to the evils of this world, and because they have "no connections," they are likely to suffer greatly, perhaps fatally, as a result of their forced initiation. Vonnegut further asserts that Billy and his fellow nobodies deserve better. For, since they are human beings, they are all sacred, or, as Trout's novel implies, they are all—figuratively, at least—potential Sons of God (Austin, 1989: 190).

Vonnegut's characterization of Billy Pilgrim as a suffering innocent, as a quasi-Christ figure, is not mere sentimentality. Indeed, such a characterization is basic to the main thrust of the author's anti-war argument. One of the most obscene things about war, Vonnegut clearly implies, is that individuals caught up in its outrageous absurdity are reduced to hapless pawns—to bewildered, uncomprehending victims. Certainly the situation described in this novel conveys that idea. Who, in fact, can even make any sense of the events depicted? Billy Pilgrim, the most inept of all soldiers, survives while Roland Weary dies from gangrene and while the two infantry scouts are cut down by a German patrol (*SF*, 46). Edgar Derby, the most forthright and sober of the American prisoners, conducts himself admirably during his captivity “only to be tried and shot for taking a worthless teapot from some ruins” (*SF*, 186). Then, the greatest madness of all, Dresden, an architecturally beautiful city with no real military importance, is reduced to rubble and ashes in one of the "finest" Allied victories of the war. Such is the logic of war, and it is into this kind of insanity that Billy and millions just like him are plunged, where they are destroyed. The Christ imagery, then, is an effective way to dramatize the horror of this situation, to equate one act of blatant cruelty and madness with a rather familiar pattern of human behavior. At the same time, this imagery accentuates the gravity of what takes place by showing that the suffering of any human being is a thing to be lamented and decried. This point comes across clearly in spite of the fact that Billy Pilgrim is not like Christ in every respect. With a clear difference from the Jesus Christ, Billy surely has no purpose and is totally ignorant of the role he plays. If anything, though, these

discrepancies make Billy's case all the more frightening, and all the more terrible (Austin, 1989 : 190 -191).

Probably one of the most crucial scenes in the novel takes place on Tralfamadore, when Billy tries to tell his alien captors about the ferocity of man and the horrible wars he wages on Earth. Billy genuinely expects to shock the Tralfamadorians when he tells them about seeing "the bodies of schoolgirls who were boiled alive in a water tower [during the Dresden firestorm]" and when he declares that he has lit his way "in a prison at night with candles from the fat of human beings." "Earthlings," Billy asserts, "must be the terrors of the Universe! If other planets are not now in danger from Earth, they soon will be" (*SF*,100), but the Tralfamadorians, to Billy's surprise, do not share his fear of war's horrors or put any stock in his belief that Earthlings will eventually destroy the universe. The Tralfamadorians, it seems, already know that wars are always taking place throughout the entire universe, and they know, too, how the universe will end: "We blow it up, experimenting with new fuels for our flying saucers. A Tralfamadorian test pilot presses a starter button, and the whole universe disappears" (*SF*, 101).

Implicit in the Tralfamadorian view of the universe is a clear and honest recognition of the basic absurdity of life. The Tralfamadorians, and finally Billy himself, know that there is no rational way to explain the fundamental character of the universe: All events are determined because all events are determined; there is no "why." This view represents an attempt to face life as it is, though it is not subject to criticism. However, given such knowledge, it is open to question how Billy and his alien friends then go about the business of living. It is true that they can live without a heavy burden of guilt; but, unfortunately, their recognition of absurdity, and their sense of being free from blame, becomes an excuse for passivity and indifference. It leads to an uncomplaining acceptance of absurdity, or they find it very easy to say "So it goes" and thus to tolerate any type of evil. Since they can do nothing to stop evil, they merely look the other way.

The world that Vonnegut describes in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is not a very attractive one and, unfortunately, Vonnegut can offer little hope that it will get any better. Nevertheless, he reminds the reader—by implication more than by argument—that one has a responsibility to be a human being, which means “caring about one's fellows and caring enough about oneself to resist being a mere pawn” (Austin, 1989: 200). Considering the kind of world man has to live in, that course of action presents a real

challenge. In all likelihood, though, it is only by acting in this manner that a man can hope to give his life any meaning at all. It offers perhaps the only way he can create a few moments of sanity in an apparent eternity of absurdity.

The disastrous bombing of Dresden is at the focal point of Billy's consciousness and is substantially more real to him than his dull life as an optometrist in Ilium, New York. Since as was shown before, Billy's time travel adventures have such a dream-like quality that it is impossible and useless to attempt to decide if he really travels in time to visit the Tralfamadorians and to return to Dresden just before the bombing. Moreover, such a question is irrelevant. Important thing is that Pilgrim often feels that he himself was attracted to Dresden because of the fact that it was the most tragic thing happened to him in his life. When he goes there, however, he uses the Tralfamadorian concept of time travel to escape whenever he comes closer to the bombing day. The night before the real bombing of Dresden, for example, the narrator states that "Nothing happened that night. It was the next night that about one hundred and thirty thousand people in Dresden would die. So it goes. Billy dozed in the meat locker. He found himself engaged again, word for word, gesture for gesture, in the argument with his daughter with which this novel began" (SF,142).

Billy Pilgrim walks in a forest with his friend Roland Weary when he first "unstuck in time" (SF,37). Suddenly he finds himself as a little boy with his father at a pool. While he is trying to learn swimming from his father, Billy sinks to the bottom of the pool. He unconsciously sees somebody rescuing him, and resents it (SF,35). Billy next jumps in time to 1965 the day he visited his mother (SF,38). His mother summons all her strength and whispers with great anguish to her son, "How did I get so old?" (SF,38) Immediately after this visit she dies and Billy goes to a waiting room where he finds himself reading *The Execution of Private Slovak*, a book which declared itself to be a "true account of the death before an American firing squad of . . . the only American soldier to be shot for cowardice since the Civil War. . . ." (SF,39) Billy reads in the book that according to the judge, Slovak has directly opposed the authority of the government, and the future discipline depends upon a resolute reply to this opposition. "If the death penalty is ever to be imposed for desertion, it should be imposed in this case, not as a punitive measure nor as retribution, but to maintain that discipline upon which alone, an army can succeed against the enemy. There was no recommendation for clemency in this case and none is here recommended. . . ." (SF,39)

At this point it may become clear to the reader that Billy's journey through time is following a certain pattern, one based upon association of ideas rather than association of sensations. Billy is perfectly helpless while at the bottom of the swimming pool, just as helpless as his mother who passes out after summoning all her strength to ask one question; "it is this idea of helplessness that links these two memories with the plight of Private Slovak" (Schatt, 1976: 144). Slovak was helpless before a government that demanded that he obey orders without question, perhaps without thought. When Slovak pondered his plight as a soldier during war time he became afraid and committed an act of cowardice, for which the government executed him. While the narrator can dismiss Slovak with a Tralfamadorian "so it goes," Billy cannot; this soldier's story reminds him, perhaps, that the fire bombing of Dresden was carried out by men who were just carrying out orders. Pilgrim jumps in time away from this unpleasant memory to a Little League banquet he attended with his son. A coach there declares, "I'd consider it an honor just to be water boy for these kids." (SF,41) The logic behind Billy's connection of Slovak and this exhilarated coach is apparently precisely the attitude that Slovak's government expects of him in Vonnegut's view. Billy's next jump in time is based upon his association of the word water, which the coach used, with a New Year's Eve in which he seduced a lady to come into the "laundry room of the house and then sit there up on the gas dryer which was running" (SF,41).

Even this act is related to Billy's experience in Dresden since it is an abhorrence for human suffering caused by his observation of the fire bombing there that results in his loveless marriage to Valencia. The very fact that it is a loveless union may account for the fact at one point implied that Billy is in the laundry room "being unfaithful to his wife, Valencia for the first and only time." (SF,41) Since it is his only transgression, it is still possible for him to retain reader sympathy which is necessary in *Slaughterhouse-Five* since Billy's Dresden experience, his desire to purge himself of such memories, and his fixation on the human suffering he witnessed there, are essentially those of Vonnegut and are consequently the very heart of the novel.

It is also undeniable that, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an explicitly politically motivated novel, speaking out against the horrors of war through the example of Dresden, something which is easily reconciled with Vonnegut's public statements on the subject. Quite often, and quite explicitly, Vonnegut spoke out against America's propensity for warmongering, an urge which he considered highly unproductive and which stood

opposed to his humanist beliefs. Writing often in satirical, sarcastic tones, Vonnegut was scathingly critical of the political establishment's condoning of war and destruction. "His critic often coincides with disillusionment with science as we have seen in novels such as *Cat's Cradle* but is not entirely absent from *Slaughterhouse-Five*. He often raised the question of scientific truth and its usefulness to humanity" (Langdon, 2014: 27).

One of the most overt critiques of American society and politics in *Slaughterhouse-Five* comes in the form of a dialogue between Billy Pilgrim and a surgeon he encounters in Dresden:

There at the corner, in the front rank of pedestrians, was a surgeon who had been operating all day. He was a civilian, but his posture was military. He had served in two world wars. The sight of Billy offended him, especially after he learned from the guards that Billy was American. It seemed to him that Billy was in abominable taste, supposed that Billy had gone to a lot of silly trouble to costume himself so. The surgeon spoke English, and he said to Billy, —I take it you find war a very comical thing. [...] Billy wanted to be friendly, to help, if he could, but his resources were meagre. His fingers now held the two objects from the lining of his coat. Billy decided to show the surgeon what they were. "You thought we would enjoy being mocked?" the surgeon said. "And do you feel proud to represent America as you do?" (SF, 63)

The incident quoted above appears insignificant at first. Billy has recently travelled through time and is confused about his surroundings – a parade through the Dresden streets. There are two very important aspects of the passage which needs to be highlighted. The first is the surgeon's contempt for Billy purely on the basis of him being American. The surgeon automatically associates Billy and his American identity with a nonchalant attitude towards war, assuming that Billy finds it comical. He asks Billy, rhetorically and in a sarcastic tone, whether he feels proud about the way he is representing America. The representation of America to which the surgeon is referring relates to the parade which Billy was participating in at the time of their encounter. The festive nature of a parade through Dresden is highly inappropriate considering the circumstances of war and the impending bombing of Dresden. This context makes the parade appear foolish and mocking, making light of the seriousness of war and this is

what the surgeon takes issue with and which he immediately associates with Americans as a whole. The surgeon finds this frivolous approach to war, insulting and calls Billy out for his ignorance.

The collapse of the American dream appear through Billy's life after the war. Valencia is a parodical character that mocks of consumerism, since she eats candy bars all the time while she is making void promises to lose weight in order to be more attractive for Billy. Billy's son is taken to jail as a teenager before he joins to the Green Berets and heads out to Vietnam. When he is returning to the office Billy stops at a traffic light in a sub-urban area where the poor people generally live and drives away in a hurry when a black man attempts to talk to him. Vonnegut was in a clear reaction to the social problems of the 1960s, which caused the burning of several American cities in riots about the racial differences, the deaths of politically heroic figures such as John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, and the increasing speed of the Vietnam War. An important reason of *Slaughterhouse-Five*'s huge influence it had was that it was published during the time of the Vietnam war, and so conveyed its message against the war to large groups of people who were really eager to stop the war. In such a book that has powerful passages, one of the most powerful messages is given at the end of the novel, in chapter 10 Vonnegut states: "Robert Kennedy, whose summer home is eight miles from the home I live in all year round, was shot two nights ago. He died last night" (SF, 182). One of Robert Kennedy's electoral pledges in his campaign for the presidential elections was to stop the war, and when he was killed that hope of stopping the war seemed to die with him. For Vonnegut it must have been appeared that Dresden was going on once more in Vietnam.

During its reconstructing the narratives about the war in general, *Slaughterhouse-Five* also exclusively reviews World War II by drawing an explicit parallel with it to the events occurred in Vietnam War. By using the time travelling and fractured narrative devices that connects the attack on Dresden to Vietnam, the depictions of World War II by the narrator provides a narrative exclusively focusing on the deaths of innocent civilians and concentration camps unlike the heroic sieges and raising the nationalistic flags. Vonnegut here uses the vision of Vietnam which is rather ambiguous in moral terms to emphasize the more disturbing, inconceivable aspects of a so-called 'war with a good cause' (Jarvis: 2009: 65).

Billy Pilgrim takes his passive acceptance philosophy from the Tralfamadorians. They explain him that a person should not always ask for the possible reasons of why somethings happen; he should just let them to happen. When Billy asks, “How—how did I get here?” they react:

“It would take another Earthling to explain it to you. Earthlings are the great explainers, explaining why this event is structured as it is, telling how other events may be achieved or avoided. I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might see a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is” (*SF*,85,86).

Since in Tralfamadorian view of life everything simply is, a person should not question what is happening or believe that a person or something could have a chance the change the flow of events. When Billy asks how the universe ends, the Tralfamadorians say, “We blow it up, experimenting with new fuels for our flying saucers. A Tralfamadorian test pilot presses a starter button, and the whole Universe disappears.” Billy responds, “If you know this . . . isn’t there some way you can prevent it? Can’t you keep the pilot from pressing the button?” The Tralfamadorian guide answers, “He has always pressed it, and he always will. We always let him and we always will let him. The moment is structured that way” (*SF*,116–117). This philosophy rejects the human capacity to prevent any event. By accepting the end of the universe and similar other disasters, they reject the human potential for a change.

Vonnegut scorns this philosophy by associating it to the ideas of the people who are in favour of the destruction of Dresden. When Billy is hospitalized after a tragic plane crash, he has to share his room with Professor Rumfoord, who is composing a book about Dresden. Rumfoord tells Billy, “It had to be done,” which resembles the Tralfamadorian view regarding the end of the universe. Billy acknowledges this reasoning because of the ideology he has taken from the Tralfamadorians: “It was all right. . . . Everything is all right, and everybody has to do exactly what he does. I learned that on Tralfamadore” (*SF*,18). Vonnegut’s linking of Rumfoord’s ideas on the inevitability of the attack on Dresden with the acceptance showed by Billy demonstrate the result of the Tralfamadorian philosophy.

Vonnegut also ridicules the philosophy of passive acceptance by associating the Tralfamadorian philosophy with the Germans' ideology at war. When Billy is taken to the Tralfamadorian spaceship, he asks, "Why me?" The Tralfamadorians respond, "That is a very Earthling question to ask, Mr. Pilgrim. Why you? Why us for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment simply is. Have you ever seen bugs trapped in amber? . . . Well, here we are Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There is no why" (SF,76–77). This dialogue resembles a scene that happens in a German prisoner camp. One of the American soldiers makes a remark that a German soldier guard does not approve; the German then hits the American on the face harshly. The American asks the guard, "Why me?" The guard replies, "Why you? Why anybody?" (SF,91). This kind of acceptance of the existing situation causes to the destruction of Dresden or to the holocaust of the Jews, and it is this sort of ideology to which Vonnegut himself is firmly against.

2.4. Historiographic Metafiction in *Cat's Cradle*

Cat's Cradle, first published in 1963, was accepted in 1971 as the equivalent of or in lieu of the Master's thesis Vonnegut had failed to complete in the late 1940s at the Anthropology Department of University of Chicago. *Cat's Cradle* stands as the first example of the author broaching the subject of his experiences in Dresden and the trauma which accompanied it, but they acknowledge that he does not do so as explicitly as in the later *Slaughterhouse-Five*. It is without a doubt a politicised work of fiction but, like the novels which succeed it, it demonstrates experimentation in narrative form and style. In *Cat's Cradle* (1963), Vonnegut encourages the reader to think about humanity's one of the most important problems, and it is also one of the biggest problems that people find it hard to confront: the growing possibility of totally destroying the world by the people's own stupidity and people's extreme reverence on science and technology.

The narrator and central figure in *Cat's Cradle* is a man named John. As he begins the story, however, he tells the reader to call him Jonah explaining only that he sees himself as a Jonah "because somebody or something has compelled . . . [him] to be certain places at certain times, without fail" (CC, 11)². Like the Jonah of Biblical fame, this character experiences a great deal of misfortune, but the nature of the force that causes

² Page numbers in brackets with the abbreviation of CC refer to Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*

his suffering remains mysterious and unknown. At any rate, Jonah, as he is now known, gets quickly into the significant facts of his history. He begins his unusual account by relating how "two wives, 250,000 cigarettes ago, [and] 3,000 quarts of booze ago" he began gathering material for a factual book called *The Day the World Ended*, a book about the day the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima (CC,11). It is this project which leads to Jonah's involvement in the wild chain of events described in *Cat's Cradle*.

Jonah envisions his book as one which will emphasize "the human rather than the technical side of the bomb," so he sets out to learn how that day—August 6, 1945—passed in the home of the late Dr. Felix Hoenikker. This scientist, it is explained, was "one of the so-called 'Fathers' of the first atomic bomb" (CC,14). After doing a bit of research, Jonah finds that Dr. Hoenikker's younger son, Newt, is a member of his old fraternity at Cornell, and he writes to Newt in the hope that this son can give him some interesting material. Newt responds to Jonah's query, but since he was only a small child in 1945, he is able to supply the writer with very few details. On that day, Newt recalls, his father stayed home from his work at the General Motors Company in Ilium, New York, and spent most of his time walking aimlessly about in his bathrobe, smoking his cigar and playing with a loop of string (CC,15). Having given such scanty information about the day of the bomb, though, Newt does go on to tell Jonah how things are presently going for the three Hoenikker children. Angela, the only girl, is at long last married and living in Indianapolis; Frank, the elder son, is wanted by the police and was last seen in Florida; and as for himself, Newt explains that he has now fallen in love (CC,21-22).

Nearly a year goes by after this initial correspondence with Newt, and during that time, Jonah neglects his work on the book. Then, while involved with another writing assignment, he has to pass through Ilium, New York, and decides to use the occasion to find out more about Dr. Hoenikker. During his stay in Ilium, Jonah gets some very interesting information from a local bartender, a friendly neighborhood hooker, and a monument salesman. According to these people, the members of the Hoenikker family were a pretty strange lot. The old man, they all agree, was a peculiarly distracted person, and the children were odd in their own respective ways. Angela is described as an extremely homely girl who devoted most of her youth to her father and brothers after the death of Mrs. Hoenikker, and Frank is recalled as a secretive and unfriendly youth who was tagged with the nickname "Secret Agent X-9" (CC,25). Only Newt seems to be fairly "normal," but his relatively conventional personality and behavior are more than offset

by his physical appearance: Newt, a midget, stands only four feet high. Perhaps just a bit shocking, Jonah is also told that Dr. Asa Breed, Hoenikker's former supervisor at the lab, is widely believed to be the father of all three Hoenikker children (CC,28). Together with Dr. Breed Jonah has scheduled an appointment to learn more about the nature of Hoenikker's work.

During his meeting with Breed, Jonah finds himself unable to suppress a "gut" feeling that most scientists are morally irresponsible for inventing weapons to be used by imbecilic politicians and crazed generals (CC,34). So, quite naturally, he and Breed do not get off to a very good start. Breed, however, does try to alter Jonah's opinion of scientists by explaining that a researcher cares only about his work and that, in adding to man's store of truth, he makes a most valuable contribution to society (CC,36). To illustrate how the brilliant mind of the late Dr. Hoenikker worked, for instance, Breed relates how a Marine Corps general once asked the scientist to invent something to make mud solid. The Marines, this general said, were tired of being bogged down in all that muck and slime. Dr. Breed then goes on to explain how Felix approached the problem. Hoenikker concluded, says Breed, that a "seed," a crystalline substance of some sort, could be introduced which would cause the water in mud to "freeze" at a relatively high temperature, say 130°F. As a result, there would be no more mud. Although Dr. Breed insists that such a substance does not exist, that Felix died before going on with the project, Jonah's mind begins to reel when he envisions the possible consequences of using such a "seed," which Breed calls ice-nine. If ice-nine were used to freeze the mud, Jonah reasons, then, in a type of chain reaction, it would also freeze all adjacent water: nearby puddles, underground streams, rivers fed by the streams, lakes, and finally, the oceans themselves. Breed admits the theoretical validity of Jonah's hypothesis, but fully exasperated with the attitude of this scientific layman, he orders Jonah to leave his office and the lab (CC, 38-41).

In spite of the frightening scenario which he imagined while listening to Breed, Jonah soon forgets all about ice-nine and the Hoenikker family until he reads a magazine article about a banana republic called San Lorenzo. From this article he learns that the second-in-command on this small island is Felix Hoenikker's missing son, Frank. What really arouses Jonah's interest, however, is not his discovery of the place of Frank Hoenikker but, instead, the picture of a strikingly beautiful girl named Mona Monzano, the adopted daughter of the island's president. Convinced that she is the most desirable

woman in the world, Jonah is elated when he is sent to San Lorenzo to write a story about Dr. Julian Castle, a playboy miscreant turned humanitarian.

On board his flight for San Lorenzo, Jonah meets several other people who are also headed for the small tropical island. Among these other passengers are the Crosbys and the Mintons. Mr. Crosby is a manufacturer of bicycles from Chicago who has decided to move his factory to the "freedom loving" country of San Lorenzo in order to escape "pissant" unionists and meddling government agencies (CC, 66). Horlick Minton, on the other hand, is the new ambassador to San Lorenzo from the United States (CC,70). Aside from these people, though, two other important characters board the plane when it stops in Puerto Rico—Angela and Newt Hoenikker. Much to his disappointment, Jonah learns that Angela and Newt are going to the island to attend the wedding of their brother and Mona Monzano, Jonah's dream-woman (CC,81).

Arriving at the airport in San Lorenzo, the Americans learn immediately that there is something unusual about life on the island. On the wall of the small terminal, for instance, is a wanted poster with a picture of an old Black man named Bokonon, who is, it seems, the head of an outlawed religion called Bokononism (CC,94). Any islanders caught practicing the religious rites of this cult are punished by death on the "hook"—an extremely barbarous and most intimidating form of execution. Before they have much time to reflect upon the significance of this situation, however, Jonah and the others are whisked to reviewing stands to await the arrival of the island's president, "Papa" Monzano. A special ceremony has been planned to honor Ambassador Minton, and the other Americans are to take part as guests.

Jonah goes on to a local hotel which just happens to be owned by Philip Castle, the son of Dr. Julian Castle. But almost before he has a chance to settle in his room, Jonah receives a phone call from Frank Hoenikker. Frank, it seems, wants to speak with him in person as soon as possible on a matter of great urgency. Jonah presses for an explanation, but Frank will say no more than that he needs to discuss something of personal importance—to himself and to Jonah. When Jonah arrives at Frank's house, the elder Hoenikker son is not there, but he does meet with Angela, Newt and Dr. Julian Castle. It is Castle who tells Jonah more about the outlawed religion of San Lorenzo. Castle explains that Bokonon, or Lionel Boyd Johnson (a name which is probably intended to suggest Lyndon Baines Johnson), was shipwrecked on the island many years earlier with a Marine deserter named McCabe. Astonished by the poor conditions on the island, the

two men managed to assume control of the government and set out to raise the standard of living. But, like most Utopian schemes, the dream of Johnson and McCabe failed. Then, Johnson decided to invent a new religion which would give the people harmless lies to make their lives better and happier. He had McCabe outlaw the religion in order to stir up a little excitement and enthusiasm for the game, and he promptly went into seclusion. Johnson's plan actually worked.

The people of the island suddenly found that they had parts in a wild and amusing drama they could understand—and which took their minds off their many troubles. Evil (McCabe) was in power in the city, and good (Bokonon) was a recluse in the jungle. At first, Castle relates, no one was really punished for being a Bokononist, but as time went by, both McCabe and Johnson began to feel the pressure of their roles. Then a few people were put to death, though McCabe was never seen in a really serious effort to capture Bokonon himself. Papa, McCabe's major-dome, became president after McCabe's death, and he has continued the long, established ritual of chasing Bokonon and making the practice of his religion a capital crime. What most surprises Jonah, however, is Castle's assertion that virtually everyone on San Lorenzo is really a follower of Bokonon and that the principal ritual, the kneading of feet, is practiced in secret all over the island (CC, 117-20).

Jonah is outraged and disgusted by the irresponsibility of the Hoenikkers, for he knows now that ice-nine is not only in San Lorenzo but also in the United States and Russia. But, at Frank's suggestion, he and the others forgo recriminations and quickly try to clean up the mess. They hide Papa's body and go over the floor of his room with blow torches to destroy any remaining particles of ice-nine. After the ceremony they plan to announce Papa's death and then burn his body on a funeral pyre (Austin, 1989: 106).

Jonah and the Hoenikkers return to the presidential palace for the ceremony, and everything seems to be going as well as can be expected. But just as Minton finishes his speech one of the airplanes participating in the subsequent air show begins to trail smoke and crashes into the seaward wall of the palace. The wall begins to break apart, and the Mintons, standing near the edge, topple into the water below. Then, from a position of relative safety, Jonah is struck by a sickening feeling of horror as he sees Papa's body, which is contaminated with ice-nine, slide through a hole in the wall and fall into the sea. Almost instantly, the ice-nine works just as he feared it would. The ocean becomes ice-nine; the sun, distorted by violent atmospheric changes, looks like a "sickly yellow ball,

tiny and cruel"; and the sky is "filled with worms"—black, twisting tornadoes (CC,172-74).

People start running in every direction, and Jonah and Mona are among them. These two, fortunately, seek shelter in an old dungeon and stay there for three weeks while the storms rage outside. There is not a sound from their short-wave radio, and Jonah concludes that the icenine has frozen the whole world. When the storms finally subside, Jonah and Mona leave the dungeon and are surprised to find no bodies. Walking to the top of a nearby hill, however, they learn the reason for this noticeable absence of corpses. Here there are thousands of frozen bodies in a small clearing, and it is obvious that these people committed suicide with ice-nine. It is also clear that they destroyed themselves at Bokonon's urging, for on a nearby boulder is this penciled note:

To whom it may concern: These people around you are almost all of the survivors on San Lorenzo of the winds that followed the freezing of the sea. These people made a captive of the spurious holy man named Bokonon. They brought him here, placed him at their center, and commanded him to tell them exactly what God Almighty was up to and what they should do now. The mountebank told them that God was surely trying to kill them, possibly because he was through with them, and that they should have the good manners to die. This, as you can see, they did (CC, 182).

Bokonon had signed the note himself, and before Jonah can stop her, Mona also follows the old man's advice and places the blue-white frost of ice-nine to her lips.

Frank, Newt and the Crosbys also survived the storms, and they later find Jonah walking around all alone. He goes with them, and for nearly six months they live as best they can in a frozen, deadly world. During this time Jonah begins working on his book again in an effort to pass the time and to feel that he is doing something constructive. But then one day he gets the urge to go to the top of the hill where Mona and the other San Lorenzans died. Jonah feels the need to take with him some kind of symbol to commemorate man's final days, though he can think of nothing appropriate. While thinking about this problem, Jonah spots an old Black man by the side of the road. This man is Bokonon, and he tells Jonah what he would do if he were a younger man:

" . . . I would write a history of human stupidity; and I would climb to the top of Mount McCabe and lie down on my back with my history for a pillow; and I would take from the ground some of the blue-white poison that makes statues of men; and I would make a statue of myself, lying on my back, grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who" (CC,191).

The story ends at this point, and the reader is left to assume that Jonah follows Bokonon's advice. It seems that Jonah's history of human stupidity is *Cat's Cradle* itself.

Vonnegut, in effect, reiterates the often stressed point that the seed of man's destruction lies within himself. In this work, then, the author's principal concern focuses upon the problem of diagnosing the cause of man's irrationality, his penchant for folly and stupidity, and upon the need to find an approach to life which can help man to cope with the world he has to call his own.

In this novel all of Vonnegut's attitudes toward Bokononism, all of his attitudes toward illusions in general, are communicated either directly or indirectly through Jonah, the narrator. Jonah, like the other characters in *Cat's Cradle*, is rather thinly drawn and often verges on becoming a kind of one-dimensional, stereotyped figure. Yet, to a great extent, Jonah's lack of in-depth characterization seems to make him particularly appropriate as this novel's protagonist. Vonnegut, after all, is concerned here with describing a situation and a set of problems which seem to have reached a head in the modern era, and there is no doubt that his "hero" in this case is definitely a man of the modern world. Like so many of his twentieth-century counterparts, for instance, Jonah is a man whose personal identity seems vague and ambiguous. It is significant—symbolically, at least—that Jonah's last name is never mentioned, though there are some veiled hints (CC, 56), and that the reader is left to wonder exactly why "John" becomes "Jonah." In addition, Jonah is also styled as a cynic who has apparently given up on the "truths" of his own time (nationalism, religion, and so on) and who, as a result, is left to face the unsettling probability that life is indeed meaningless. Thus it is this man of the modern world who emerges, quite fittingly, as Vonnegut's prime candidate for Bokononism.

As explained in the plot summary of the novel, Bokononism was supposedly "invented" by Lionel Boyd Johnson (Bokonon) in an effort to help the downtrodden people of San Lorenzo live with "the awful truth" about their lives— "that life was as

short and brutish and mean as ever" (CC,119). The main premise of Bokononism is that "humanity is organized into teams (or Karasses), teams that do God's Will without ever discovering what they are doing" (CC,11). It is also the teaching of this religion that all things happen not by accident but as they are meant to happen. Thus the people of the small island are invited to imagine that their lives do have some meaning and purpose, but they are told as well that they can never know what that meaning or purpose is. Johnson makes no effort whatsoever to convince the people of San Lorenzo that his religion is really true; on the contrary, he makes every effort to show that Bokononism, like all of man's truths, is based upon foma, or lies. Johnson even begins his book of religious writings, *The Books of Bokonon*, with perhaps the most startling disclaimer imaginable: "All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies" (CC,14).

Bokononism, then, is offered for just what it is—an illusion. Some readers may be repulsed by the idea of a religion that is admittedly and shamelessly untrue; but as Jonah notes when he begins his commentary, anyone "unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded upon lies will not understand this book either" (CC, 14). Jonah's comment is important, for *Cat's Cradle* points to a cruel paradox at the center of life itself which all thoughtful men must finally acknowledge: "the heartbreaking necessity of lying about reality, and the heartbreaking impossibility of lying about it" (p. 189). Vonnegut suggests that the reality of human existence which man really knows is fairly terrible. Although humans sometimes need to deceive themselves to make their conditions more appropriate, they cannot ignore the concrete proofs of human suffering or the concern that there is nothing meaningful in this life. Thus the best thing that they can ever do, and maybe the one thing they really must do is to create gentle illusions which can help them to live a better life with a situation that seems as hostile to their tranquility and happiness, even if it is not to their actual presence (Austin, 1989: 115).

Dr. Vox Humana is the only Christian minister on San Lorenzo, and in the act of promoting his faith, he has willingly modified the religion to make it at least fairly acceptable to some San Lorenzans. His rather unique approach to Christianity involves quite a change in conventional religious ritual and calls for the use of a Bible, a bell, a butcher knife and a chicken. Vox Humana has made these changes because he takes the motto of his university very seriously. And this motto is "MAKE RELIGION LIVE!" (CC,145). To Vox Humana, religion is good only to the extent that it "lives" for the people—to the extent that it does them some good. Because he is ready to change his own

religion in order to achieve this end, Vox Humana certainly demonstrates that he places his concern for people above any imagined absolutes such as dogma and creeds.

A character of equal interest is Ambassador Horlick Minton. Minton and his wife, Jonah tells the reader, represent "a flawless example of what Bokonon calls a duprass, which is a karass composed of only two persons" (CC,64). In short, the love between Minton and his wife is discriminate. But Minton rises above this limited love and shows that his feelings for his wife have not in fact made him totally blind either to human suffering or to human folly. In his speech honoring the Hundred Martyrs to Democracy, for example, Minton surprises his audience with a strident denunciation of war, nationalism and human stupidity in general. He refers to all men killed in wars as murdered children and adds that "if we are to pay our sincere respects to the hundred lost children of San Lorenzo, ... we might best spend the day despising what killed them; which is to say, the stupidity and viciousness of all mankind" (CC, 170). In closing, Minton quotes a poem from Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* which ends by questioning the meaning of the expression "Pro Patria." Minton translates the phrase as "For one's country," and he then remarks with surprising bitterness, "Any country at all" (CC,171).

Although Minton does not use the term granfalloon in his speech, it is clear that he is not far from Bokononist thought. Bokonon defines this term as a 'false karass', a meaningless association of people; and at one point Jonah explains that examples of a fals karass, a granfalloon, are "the Communist party, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Electric Company, the International Order of Odd Fellows—and any nation, anytime, anywhere" (CC,67). Thus Minton's speech shows that he sees nations and national ideologies in much the same way as Bokononists—as meaningless associations of people bound together by very bad and very dangerous illusions. It is to Minton's credit that he, an ambassador from one of the world's largest granfalloons, is moved to a sense of outrage over the needless pain and death caused by such "groups." In effect, Minton's concern for his friends is more than his devotion to his own granfalloon.

Dr. Asa Breed provides the misguided rationale for the scientific movement during his talk with Jonah. Here Breed explains that knowledge is an end in itself, "the most valuable commodity on earth" for which no price is too high (CC,36). But too often, Vonnegut knows, that price is paid in terms of human suffering, as when scientific

progress results in bigger and better weapons to kill people. So it is clear to Jonah that he, like Miss Faust (Breed's secretary), cannot see how scientific truth "all by itself, could be enough for a person" (CC,44). Human beings, Jonah senses, need far more to make life worth living. Certainly they need more than Breed and his science can give them. While Breed is used to state the conventional justification for the scientific quest, it is Dr. Felix Hoenikker who best illustrates, through his own actions, what such an illusion can do, and what terrible and irreversible harm it can cause. In gathering material for his book, for example, Jonah learns that the seemingly harmless Dr. Hoenikker was in actuality a most dangerous type of person. Much like a child, Dr. Hoenikker was constantly asking questions and looking for answers, all of which he saw as a marvelously amusing game. Newt tells Jonah that on the day of the atomic attack on Hiroshima his father spent much of his time playing with a piece of string, making what is generally called a cat's cradle by stretching the string around the fingers of both hands. At other times, Newt relates, his father might be fascinated by turtles, by children's toys, or even by the complex mechanism of an atomic bomb.

Felix Hoenikker had neither the time nor the patience to be bothered with caring about other people. He believed that science could determine ultimate truth, and he let the quest for that truth act as a substitute for love. As a result, Hoenikker ignored the needs of his wife, and after her death, he also ignored the needs of his children. This matter cannot be considered lightly. For, as Peter Reed suggests, Hoenikker's failure to care for his love-starved children goes a long way toward explaining why each of them eventually sought to buy love and security with chunks of the old man's ice-nine. It might be said that in short, this man's failure to love led to some pretty catastrophic developments at least indirectly (Reed, 1972: 112).

So for all Hoenikker's faith in his science, it might be questioned just what this illusion gave man. The answer is simple and painful: It gave man a false assurance that he could use science to explain all things, or to do all things, and it gave man a device with which he could, and did destroy himself. Out of a ridiculous scheme of a Marine general and from the brilliant, though misguided, mind of Felix Hoenikker comes the idea for and the development of ice-nine (Austin, 1989: 125).

At one point, for instance, Jonah suggests "that scientists are heartless, conscienceless, narrow boobies, indifferent to the fate of the human race" (CC,35). Such criticism is no doubt exaggerated— just a bit overdone. However, Jonah later makes a comment which probably stands as a reasonably accurate expression of his creator's genuine feelings: “ ‘What hope can there be for mankind,’ I thought, ‘when there are such men as Felix Hoenikker to give such playthings as ice-nine to such short-sighted children as almost all men and women are?’ ” (CC, 110,164)

Immediately, Jonah recalls that the answer to his question is in *The Fourteenth Book of Bokonon*, which states the problem in this way: "What Can a Thoughtful Man Hope for Mankind on Earth, Given the Experience of the Past Million Years?" The answer is "Nothing" (p. 164). "Nothing" seems to be a fairly reasonable estimation, for in this case the harmful illusions of science and the capriciousness of men combine to bring about the final cataclysm. After reflecting upon the events described in the story, it is difficult to see how the novel could have ended any other way. Bokononism offered no real challenge to man's folly or to his faith in the illusions of science. Indeed, even on the small island of San Lorenzo, its one and only stronghold, the power of Bokononism was gradually subverted by the influence of the more popular illusion. The very presence of Frank Hoenikker, a man who is certainly a reflection of his father, insured that subversion. It was Frank, after all, who gave Papa the ice-nine and who convinced the old man that science is a useful magic.

The humor in *Cat's Cradle* is not limited to Vonnegut's startling vision of the end of the world; however, in fact, he attacks many of man's most cherished false truths by making the reader laugh at them. Hazel Crosby's consuming passion for affiliating with all Hoosiers is a case in point (CC,65-68). Her attempt to find significance and meaning in the mere fact that certain people come from a particular area of the United States is totally ridiculous, but by bringing the reader to laugh at Hazel, Vonnegut does more than display the stupidity of one individual. He enables the reader to see that all ‘granfalloon’ like that to which Hazel belongs, are founded upon little or nothing. So this criticism of Hazel Crosby extends to all those individuals who define themselves and their roles in relation to such empty things as nationalism, party loyalty or a common personal background. Since most people identify in some way with at least one granfalloon, the

reader who laughs at Hazel should realize, if he is at all honest and perceptive, that he is also laughing at himself. Laughing at one's self can at times be a rather sobering experience and thus a good form of therapy for those who take themselves and their truths a bit too seriously.

Religious motives can also be seen throughout the novel with metafictional examples. Image of Jonah is one of the major examples for this. In spite of the fact that Vonnegut focuses on the passivity of his Jonah figure, he appears to be aware that at the core of the Jonah story there is a clash between the benevolent forces of human and celestial love and benevolence and those malignant forces of human selfishness and mercilessness. God demands Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the people that they must repent their evil ways before it is too late. The tale ends with an ambiguous note when God saves the repentant citizens and then draws an analogy between His love and subsequent mercy for the now repentant thousands of Ninevites and man's paltry feelings of pity for an inconsequential gourd that He destroyed to teach an angry Jonah the meaning of divine love. Jonah is more than a mere passive child who is taught a lesson by a divine taskmaster, however; instead of a clear portrait of him, the Bible actually offers an enigmatic picture of Jonah that is darkened by clouds of ambivalence. In *Cat's Cradle* there is considerable transaction between science and religion as two predominant ways of thinking. Vonnegut carefully weaves the characters' beliefs and conversations as well as the events in the novel to make some serious claims about the debate.

Beginning with the most prominent issue of *Cat's Cradle* then, we must turn to Bokkonon and the curious belief system of Bokkononism. Central not only to the novel, but also to most of the debate and scholarship on *Cat's Cradle*, is the question of the role of the fictional religion of Bokkononism and how, as a metaphor for religion in general, it stands in opposition to science. In order to fully understand and analyse this issue, a brief exploration of Bokkononism is necessary.

Bokkononism is the prevailing religion of the people who live in San Lorenzo and later on, after reading the books of Bokkonon, John too becomes a Bokkononist. While he does not convert until later on in the novel, we can assume that his writing is shaped by his later

conversion to Bokononism, evidenced by his regular references to the books of Bokonon and

his unique perspective on past events, as well as the time of writing as stated in the novels' closing chapters. Bokononism is, of course, a religion begun by Bokonon (born Lionel Boyd

Johnson) who, after washing up on the shores of San Lorenzo started to formulate his belief system along with his partner Earl McCabe. The religion was devised as one way of establishing San Lorenzo as a utopian society. One of Bokononism's central premises, however, is that it is a "collection of harmful untruths" or foma which one lives by. Bokonon himself is regularly quoted saying that everything he says is a lie, a paradoxical statement typical of the confusing and contradictory nature of Bokononism.

It is this complex paradox of a belief system which is placed at odds with science (often embodied in the person of Dr. Felix Hoenikker) throughout the novel, but not in the sense that one is directly opposed to the other, as many believe the case to be with contemporary religion and science. However, it is Bokononism's claims here "which regularly undermine the truth claims of science". (CC,9) This is the usefulness of a "religion founded on lies" which John is talking about (CC,9). While the religion may seem to be framed by the lies upon which it is created, it is this provisionality of truth (as a sort of description about subjectivity) which becomes useful when it is shown against the already granted objectivity of science. What is being conjured here is not a claim that religion helps people to do good things rather, its real value lies in its capability to deconstruct other truth claims by using carefully created lies. Paul L. Thomas states that "Vonnegut uses Bokononism to pull us back far enough from our own religion, our own religious experiences and mythologies, so that we can see this fabricated religion being overtly honest about its dishonesty and yet still meaningful" (2009 : 33).

Thus Vonnegut's main use for Bokononism is not simply to debunk science, but also religion itself as he forms a kind of double-critique, something which will continue to become familiar as we analyse the novels which succeed *Cat's Cradle*. Crucially however, science is very rarely redeemed in the novel and is often seen to be the cause of a lot of trouble. Thomas claims that the most significant evidence of this is the fact that it is science which is held responsible for the invention of ice-nine which leads to the end

of the world (Thomas, 2009 :11). He neglects to acknowledge, however, the role of the wielder of ice-nine, namely, Papa Monzano. Papa Monzano, at the time of his death and the release of ice-nine, is the president of the Republic of San Lorenzo. Although Bokononism is outlawed in San Lorenzo it is revealed at the moment of his death that Papa Monzano is a devout Bokononist (like everyone else on the island) and indeed is driven to suicide via ice-nine by that very religion.

Thus, while science is the creative power that is behind ice-nine it is man and his beliefs, moral codes and religions who have the real responsibility for how it is used. Vonnegut prescribes the reader that religion and science without morality need to be waried of. Humans should ensure that they do not totally refrain either from science or religion, and they need to be aware that each has positive elements and negative ones as well. The interplay between (and debates around) the usefulness and goodness of both science and religion are not far from Vonnegut's mind as demonstrated in his non-fiction collection. In *Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloons*, aptly named after three of the central Bokononist concepts, he says:

A great swindle of our time is the assumption that science has made religion obsolete. All science has damaged is the story of Adam and Eve and the story of Jonah and the Whale. Everything else holds up pretty well, particularly the lessons about fairness and gentleness. People who find those lessons irrelevant in the twentieth century are simply using science as an excuse for greed and harshness (CC,13).

The quote above exemplifies Vonnegut's thoughts in the conflict between religion and science and provides an obvious reference point for the arguments made in *Cat's Cradle*. Science does not nullify religion, and religion is not entirely opposed to science. Rather, the two must exist together, complimenting each other. As Robert T. Tally puts it, Vonnegut is aware that "human, all-too-human behaviour inevitably leads to ruin." (Tally, 2011: 185) However, *Cat's Cradle* is trying to show us that we must approach the situation diplomatically. We must ask ourselves what religion can offer, and what science can offer and consider all

of these together. Vonnegut's double-critique thus demonstrates the negative aspects of both, while highlighting the positives as well.

In her essay titled "*Vonnegut's Self-Projections*", Kathryn Hume raises the question of how Vonnegut projects himself, or aspects of himself, using varying narrative styles. According to Hume, Vonnegut projects a part of himself into all of his stories and the various narrative styles provide different possibilities and ways of facing and describing (or even explaining) personal issues. Taking Vonnegut's experience of the Dresden bombing as central to his "self", Hume notes how the different narrative styles, developing over the course of three major novels provide different ways of dealing with the same problem: war. Of the single narrative perspective in *Cat's Cradle* she notes that it "describes well enough, but proves too disengaged" (Hume, 1990).

Hume's analysis provides important insight into the ways in which the narratives differ across the three novels and also how these various projections of Vonnegut's self serve as stepping stones to dealing with the trauma of Dresden (an important informative element when analysing *Slaughterhouse-Five*). Paying closer attention to *Cat's Cradle* though, we can begin to consider the way in which the choice of first person narrative impacts the novel's specific concerns.

Cat's Cradle is in fact Vonnegut's first novel which employs this narrative point of view. By writing from the perspective of John, Vonnegut chooses one single point of view of the events in the story and is able to delve deeply into the mind of his main character, but is limited in his capacity to explore the thoughts and feelings of more minor characters. Throughout the novel though, this inability to express the thoughts of others is tangible, as Vonnegut "strains against the limitations of using a single projective spokesman" (Hume, 1982 : 180). This "straining" which Hume refers to is brought to our attention once again by the fact that John, the protagonist, is working on his project of writing a book and the story we are reading is tracking that writing process. We have here an example of the use of metafiction in which the novelist is aware of the narrative process and the act of writing, even as he is performing the act. This is evident in the narrative

structure of the novel – and the syntax – where self-consciousness on the author’s part is displayed. What is unique to *Cat’s Cradle* is the fact that the protagonist has set out to write one kind of book — the story of Felix Hoenikker and the atomic bomb — and has ended up writing something completely different. Most curiously, the narrator continuously asks us to question his “Truth”. The first four chapters of *Cat’s Cradle* outline some of the narrator’s intentions. They stand as a kind of prologue, being most likely written after the book’s completion and certainly after John’s conversion to Boknonism (Langdon, 2014: 9).

Be that as it may, I intend in this book to include as many members of my karass as possible, and I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on Earth we, collectively, have been up to. I do not intend that this book be a tract on behalf of Boknonism. I should like to offer a Boknonist warning about it, however. The first sentence in The Books of Boknonism is this:

—All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies.

My Boknonist warning is this: Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either. So be it. (CC,8)

By drawing attention to the untruth of his own writing, John is reminding the readers to question the claims of writing and to try to understand the layers involved in textual production. What is particularly important though is the way this is then extrapolated to the idea of the usefulness of religion. Even those founded on lies are useful, according to John, and if we cannot understand that we should stop reading. This claim forms the basis for the continuing debate which rages throughout the novel, as noted earlier.

The relationship between religion, text and narrative is significant here. Firstly, the function of metafiction in this particular quote, and in the text as a whole, is grounded in Vonnegut’s use of a first person narrator. Because of the

unique personal tone and inevitable onesidedness of a first person narrative, we are all the more astonished by the claim of absolute untruth. John reminds the reader to disbelieve almost everything he says, but also not to disregard everything simply because it is a lie. This is a principle he has taken from Bokononism, the religion built entirely on lies. The intensity of self-awareness and self-criticism here is very much like that found in *Slaughterhouse Five* but is exacerbated by the personal first person narrator. He explicitly says that his book is a lie, and this is unique to *Cat's Cradle*.

Secondly, we have the use of various textual references throughout. *The Books of Bokonon* of course form the foundation for Bokononism and are referenced and quoted at regular intervals throughout the novel. Not only does this draw greater attention to the role of the text in the production of truth reminding us also of the major religious texts of culture, such as the Bible but it reminds the reader of the narrator's reliance on external texts and the voices of other authors in the production of his own, weaving an intricate pattern linking these texts. Complicated as it may seem, the choice of first person point of view and textual referencing combined with a claim to the truth of the untrue (or foma) makes an important statement about the role of the author and is a prime example of this kind of postmodern textual awareness, typical of Vonnegut's work.

Finally, it is noted later on in the novel, when John begins to read the books of Bokonon, that it is a book without an end and that new chapters and sections are constantly being added as Bokonon writes them. We get the sense that the book is working towards some end which we do not yet know. This haphazard building of a text is then mimicked by the structure of *Cat's Cradle* itself has one hundred and twenty seven very short chapters, each appearing as a small building block combining to form a complete structure. The short chapters also show similarity with the Book of Bokonon so Vonnegut here gives an impression that the book is written in bursts, the same way the Bokonon writes his book.

By using this information, we may make the argument that a thread can be drawn from Bokonon, to John to Vonnegut through the similarities in style and

the common awareness of the shortcomings of textual production, a kind of multi-layered metafiction. As Bokonon writes his book, so John comes to learn more about Bokononism and reads how it moves slowly towards an end point. As he reads the reader becomes aware of the impending apocalypse as a result of ice-nine and the end to which he is headed. This mirrors the production of *The Books of Bokonon* but also the production of *Cat's Cradle* itself as it is being narrated by John and written by Vonnegut — there is this constant sense of writing, producing itself and producing the reality of the story. These layers of meta-fiction, when closely inspected, demonstrate the true complexity of Vonnegut's project with regards to *Cat's Cradle*. However, it is important finally to note the effects of this kind of textual layering with regards to the question of religious and scientific truth. Vonnegut is trying to discredit preconceived notions of the antagonisms between science and religion, we can safely argue that the blurring of lines between text, author and reader (and reading and writing as closely related acts) mirror in some ways the proposed interconnections between science and religion. If, as Thomas proposes, Vonnegut wishes to demonstrate that science and religion need to take lessons from each other — that they are not mutually exclusive — then we can argue as well that a part of the way in which this argument is made manifest, is through the structural realities of the text.

Like the interaction between author, text and reader (in a metafictional sense) produces new layers of meaning or even 'truth', so in the same way science and religion should also interact to produce 'truth' in the world. If we were to have one without the other it would be irresponsible and, like *Cat's Cradle* teaches us, may end in a disaster of epic proportions. Truth for Vonnegut lies not in science or in religion exclusively, but rather in a combination of various elements of both. In the same way, we cannot reach the truth of a text by only looking at reading or writing, but rather we must look at how reading and writing are not mutually exclusive — each has a role to play in producing the other and, finally, in producing the 'truth' of a text.

War, for Vonnegut, is a subject which is hugely significant, and as Hume suggests, underpins almost all of his writing (Hume, 1982). *Cat's Cradle* deals explicitly with the implications of powerful weapons systems and the ways

humans both wield them and deal with the consequences of their usage. In the case of this novel, it is the fatal powers of ice-nine which humanity is faced with. When setting out to write a book documenting the work of the famous scientist who is the creator of the atomic bomb, Dr. Felix Hoenikker, the narrator of *Cat's Cradle*, John, has no idea that he will soon face an apocalyptic disaster himself. The dangerous substance known as ice-nine, created by Dr. Hoenikker as a solution to the hindrance of muddy swamps for US marines, is able to freeze any liquid immediately upon contact. Some of it was preserved after Dr. Hoenikker's death and each of his children now possesses a small amount. Not only that, but some of it has been passed on to Papa Monzano, the leader of San Lorenzo, and when he decides to kill himself by swallowing a piece of ice-nine, the result is the freezing of surrounding waters around the island in an apocalyptic way. It seems all too easy to draw comparisons between events like Hiroshima (or indeed, Dresden) and the events of *Cat's Cradle* and that is because in many ways, it is. Like the dangerous intensity of a nuclear bomb, ice-nine has a potential to wipe out an entire population in a single piece and to cause huge amounts of environmental damage. Wielded only by those in power, the responsibilities of having and using ice-nine are almost identical to the ones faced by the owners of nuclear weapons. However, these are not new ideas. It is already known that nuclear weapons are dangerous, just like the reader know from the beginning of *Cat's Cradle* that ice-nine is dangerous. Rather, Vonnegut wants to draw attention to something more complex than the simple evils involved with powerful weapons and their use.

On her essay on the role of war in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Rachel McCoppin notes that Vonnegut "uses the topic of war and his black humour to advocate the existential component of individual responsibility for one's actions in the modern and postmodern world" (Mc Coppin, 2009:57). While *Slaughterhouse-Five* undoubtedly draws our attention to the tremendous destructive power of war and weapons (like fire-bombing) and highlights the personal struggle of seeing and experiencing that kind of destruction, *Cat's Cradle* falls more into the category described by McCoppin. Ice-nine is without doubt a destructive substance, and the reader is made keenly aware of this fact, but the

novel pays more attention to the individual reactions to these events, and their understanding of responsibility.

In his familiar, deliberately detached tone, Vonnegut describes the reaction of the three Hoenikker siblings to the death of Papa Monzano and the release of ice-nine.

Frank came back with brooms and dustpans, a blowtorch, and a kerosene hot plate, and a good old bucket and rubber gloves. We put on the gloves in order not to contaminate our hands with ice-nine. Frank set the hot plate on the heavenly Mona's xylophone and put the honest old bucket on top of that. And we picked up the bigger chunks of ice-nine from the floor; and we dropped them into that humble bucket; and they melted. They became good old, sweet old, honest old water. Angela and I swept the floor, and little Newt looked under furniture for bits of icenine we might have missed. And Frank followed our sweeping with the purifying flame of the torch. The brainless serenity of charwomen and janitors working late at night came over us. In a messy world we were at least making our little corner clean (CC, 142).

In this seemingly random and relatively mundane paragraph we see the curious reaction of the Hoenikker siblings and John to impending apocalyptic disaster on the island of San Lorenzo. It is the very mundaneness of this scene which, in Vonnegut's typically contradictory fashion, epitomizes what he is trying to say about responsibility for disaster. We know that, if it weren't for the Hoenikker children (and their father, of course) there would be no ice-nine on San Lorenzo. They are directly responsible for the freezing of the ocean and the death of thousands on the island because they brought it there in the first place. But in this scene, they are able to calmly assess a small area of damage and make their little corner clean. The mundane and calm way in which they deal with the situation is so astonishing to the reader so as to draw criticism: How, in the face of such serious damage, are they able to calmly clean up and remain ignorant of their role

in the damage as well as of further consequences? At no point do they admit their role in the event, and Vonnegut is careful to subtly remind us of this through the tone of the passage (Langdon, 2014 : 12).

Secondly, the repeated trope of the humble bucket or honest old bucket works to reinforce the plainness, as it were, of the situation the Hoenikkers are in. By attracting the attention of the reader to the simple bucket, and later the good old, honest old water which results from melting ice-nine, Vonnegut is further simplifying and indeed, deliberately nullifying a seriously tragic situation. Not only has someone just committed suicide, but the whole island faces a grave danger. The Hoenikkers, however, are simply going about the business of cleaning up as if nothing had happened at all. This is an inappropriate reaction, and through Vonnegut's sarcastic tone, or what McCoppin and others have called "black humour", the readers are made uncomfortable by the simplicity of the scene and thus repulsed by it. This functions as a critique of the human reaction to apocalyptic weaponry and draws our attention to the way in which individual responsibility for one's actions is either ignored, or down-played.

As mentioned before, in contrast to the traditional novel technique, aiming to attract the attention of the reader to the realistic features of the narrative from the very first page, the narrator underlines that the narrative which he is about to tell is nothing but a bunch of lies. That is, Vonnegut's first departure from the traditional novel technique is signaled on the first page of *Cat's Cradle*. This departure especially takes its root from the two main sources: the references and allusions to religion and scientific progress.

One of the clearest references to religion is that; the name Jonah and his three-day imprisonment symbolize the Biblical character Jonah and his three day adventure in the belly of a whale. Jonah manages to survive without freezing by staying in a cavelike place for three days on San Lorenzo and he admits that even he had been given a different name, it would have been Jonah not because he has been unlucky for others, but because somebody or something has compelled him to be at certain places at certain times, without fail (CC 7). He also adds that "conveyances and motives, both conventional and bizarre, have been provided, and, according to plan, at each appointed second, at each appointed place this Jonah was there" (CC 7).

In the *Old Testament*, The Book of Jonah tells about the story of Jonah, who refuses the task given by God and does not inform the residents of Nineveh that they should be virtuous and believe God. Following his refusal, Jonah escapes to Tarshish by boat and God creates a devastating storm, ruining Jonah's boat. However, God gives Jonah a second chance and creates a whale in whose belly Jonah appeals to God's power after three days the fish vomits Jonah out and he notifies the Nineveh residents of the upcoming revenge of God. Jonah's story is reported also in the New Testament and his voyage is depicted as in the following lines: "For Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew, 12: 40). Not only in the Old and the New Testament, but also in the Qur'an, Jonah is depicted as the devoted messenger of God. In *Cat's Cradle*, Jonah thinks that he is doomed to go to San Lorenzo, become a Bokononist and be the next president of the island since he is assigned by Frank Hoenikker (the symbol of scientific development). (Tekin, 2010 : 60)

Vonnegut illustrates the sum of the whole, or a collection of brief stories about events that may or may not have occurred not to offer a deeper, divine meaning but rather undermine the attempts of average people to see the truth. While *the Bible* may be unchallenged by the faithful, the general view of the world changes with each new theory or scientific discovery made about it. Thus, there is no absolute truth anywhere. Vonnegut's book within a book, *The Books of Bokonon*, just like *Cat's Cradle*, warns the reader and even yells at them still in the first page, "—Don't be a fool! Close this book at once! It is nothing but foma!" (CC, 166). However, similar to the beginning lines of *Cat's Cradle*, this is certainly a curiosity raising the strategy of *The Books of Bokonon* for the reader since Jonah cannot help reading the book which starts with depiction of all the creation:

In the beginning, God created the earth, and he looked upon it in his cosmic loneliness. And the God said, - Let Us make living creatures out of mud, so the mud can see what We have done.' And God created every living creature that now moveth, and one was man. Mud as man alone could speak. God leaned close as mud as man sat up, looked

around, and spoke. Man blinked. -What's the purpose of all this?' he asked politely. Everything must have a purpose? asked God.

-Certainly' said man.

-Then I leave it to you to think of one for all this,' said God.

And

he went away. (CC, 166)

The creation myth of Bokonon shows parallelism with the creation myth of Christianity. In *The Old Testament*, the first book is called Genesis, opening with the words "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). In Bokononism, the belief that God is the creator of the earth is common; however, the belief in the concept of heaven is missing and it consists of a witty conversation between God and the first human. It is ironic that Jonah finds Bokononist creation myth as "trash" and Bokonon admits the same thing in the following pages of *The Books of Bokonon* saying "Of course it's trash" (CC 166). That is, the meaning of our existence is vague but it may become clear so long as we shape our thoughts in the way we find a place to ourselves and feel like home on earth and believe in achieving our own ideals.

A criticism against the incontrollable development in science is also found Vonnegut's *Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon*: "scientific truth was going to make us so happy and comfortable. What actually happened when I was twenty-one was that we dropped scientific truth on Hiroshima. We killed everybody there" (Vonnegut, 1989: 161). The disappointment about the misuse of scientific progress is one of Vonnegut's main concerns in forming his narrative. In his opinion stating the mere facts is not enough to be effective, it has to be simple and also can only be achieved by the power of words. Likewise, his choice of the narrator's name as John is not a coincidence when the first sentence of John's gospel is considered. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John, 1:1). Thus, the narrator also believes in the efficiency of *Calypsos*, the short song-like gospels of *Bokonon*, all of which has a theme, parodying the gospels of Christianity. However, unlike the Biblical figure John who is also believed to prophesize the coming of Christ, the narrator John of *Cat's Cradle* does not announce a rescuer' figure. Repeatedly, the hope for human kind is told to be lost yet, the only way of salvation is produced by making up lies and shaping one's life on the

grounds of those lies. Furthermore, science is not always a way out for the betterment unless it is used for the benefit of humanity. In *Cat's Cradle*, the hope for the progress of science is diminished by the figure of Felix Hoenikker who is indifferent to the possible danger of his experiments. Newt Hoenikker, Felix's youngest son, shares with the narrator a personal memory of his father which illustrates that the elder Hoenikker had no understanding of the moral nature of sin. "After [the first test of the atomic bomb], after it was a sure thing that America could wipe out a city with just one bomb, a scientist turned to Father and said, —Science has now known sin. And do you know what Father said? He said, —What is sin?" (CC 17).

In contrast to *The Day World Ended* as John wishes to name the text in its early drafts, the title *Cat's Cradle* is a reference to the children's game which is played by two children passing a string back and forth by pulling it different shapes over different fingers without letting the tension out of the string. The aim of the game is nothing but "to have fun making something out of nothing" (Marvin, 2002: 91). *Cat's Cradle* refers to the struggle of building up a life in a meaningful way. It is also significant that Felix Hoenikker tries to play cat's cradle with little Newt and, he remembers finding the game highly confusing for a child and he concludes that playing it only results in puzzlement. He states that "No wonder kids grow up crazy. A cat's cradle is nothing but a bunch of X's between somebody's hands, and little kids look and look and look at all those X's...[...] No damn cat, and no damn cradle" (CC 105). This also echoes the quotation of Marvin in that human beings are fingers which work hard to give a shape to a meaningless world nevertheless, they generally cannot achieve to do so. While the narrator believes that "God Almighty had some pretty elaborate plans [for him]" (CC 47), Bokonon tells that "God never wrote a good play in his life" (CC 150). It is certain that life, with all its components (or strings), is a cat's cradle (Tekin, 2010 : 67).

Horlick Minton reminds the reader of the intertextual references in *Slaughterhouse Five*. On the memorial day of Hundred Martyrs to Democracy (which is the symbol of the San Lorenzoans killed on their way to attend World War II), Minton makes a speech emphasizing that the people who are killed in wars are children and "what a paradise this world would be if men were kind and wise." (CC 160) He also refers to a poem, from *Spoon River Anthology* which was published in 1915 and written by Edgar

Lee Masters. This factual poem collection includes poems in free-form all of which discuss the characters and their patriotic experiences in wars. The titles of the poems are entitled with the names of the person narrating it. The one that Minton quotes is called Know It. Hoheimer, the name of the person who narrates that he had wished to be in jail rather than being at war. Hoheimer appears to tell a poem from his grave on which is written “Pro Patria”, a phrase he does not know the meaning of. It is significant that in Latin “pro patria” means “for one’s country” and Hoheimer has no idea that he is dead for the sake of his own country, ironically, reminding the reader of Billy, who prefers to be away from the war fields, looking for a safe shelter. It is ironic that an American ambassador of San Lorenzo quotes a poem conveying an anti-war message and also claiming that children “do die like men thus making possible the manly jubilation of patriotic holidays” (CC 158). The pacifist ambassador Minton is a parodic figure by which Vonnegut criticizes the American authorities that seem to be proud of war victims and nevertheless be in favor of peace without generating it in real life.

Representing a parodic frame of religion and science, *Cat’s Cradle* also includes metafictional elements, reminding the fictionality of the book to the reader as well as revisiting the historical events of America of the 50’s with Vonnegut’s employing of the metafiction technique. As in the example of *Slaughterhouse Five*, in *Cat’s Cradle*, the narrator (John or Jonah as he is introduced in the first sentence) begins the narrative commenting on the idea of writing a book. He states that he sets himself to research about a book dealing with the atomic bomb, especially with the day when the first bomb was fired. However, unlike many historical journals, reports or articles about its scientific aspect, he underlines the fact that his book would discuss what the American people (especially the remarkable ones) were doing on the day the first bomb fell. Echoing the narrator of *Slaughterhouse Five*, John demands from the reader :

—Listen!! to the story in the first chapter of the book
that is titled *The Day the World Ended*:

Listen:

When I was a younger man- two wives ago, 250,000
cigarettes ago, 3,000 quarts of booze ago...

When I was a much younger man, I began to collect material for a book to be called *The Day the World Ended*.

The book was to be factual.

The book was to be an account of what important Americans had done on the day when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima Japan. (CC, 7)

“ The technique of metafiction comes to surface when John talks about his conscience which would not let him quit writing” (Tekin, 2010 : 76). Once more, John reminds the reader that he has to keep writing (so as to finish the narrative and fulfill his task which is to convey to the reader what he has seen in San Lorenzo). The act of writing, as he implies, is a work that is indispensable for the narrator to convey his story of survival. As the elder Castle concludes, a person who “is deprived of the consolations of literature dies in putrescence of the heart or atrophy of the nervous system” (CC 145), and he requests that both of the writers (John of *Cat’s Cradle* and Philip Castle of San Lorenzo: *The Land, the History, the People*) continue writing. This is also a metafictional reference since both writers are employed within the narrative by Vonnegut and both of them are depicted as they have a single task which is composed of narrating what they have seen in San Lorenzo within a Bokomonist framework. As a result, with its narrative style, *Cat’s Cradle* symbolizes a piece of writing that mocks the human’s consolation of literature about the scientific events which possibly shapes the destiny of living.

CONCLUSION

The connection between postmodernism and history is one of the most controversial areas among the critics. While postmodern and poststructuralist thought have regularly been identified as discrediting history, the critics are deeply engaged with the question of how to comprehend our relationship with the past. For Fredric Jameson, postmodern narrative is historical and hence politically risky, playing only with images which are taken as pastiche examples and aesthetic structures that generate degraded historicism. However, Linda Hutcheon views postmodern fiction as historical since it sees history through parody, and thus keeps its potential for cultural critique. Historicism is the name Jameson gives to what he sees as turning historical styles without political contradictions to a more aesthetic style. Since all history is seen as mythologized and marketed, artists and theoreticians should provide a new sense of history in order to recuperate a meaningful history from postmodernism's degradation of history (Perçinel, 2006: 89)

In Hutcheon's terms, historiographic metafiction blends the metafictional self-reflexivity with a parodical depiction of history. She asserts that this blending seems indecisive "between brute events of the past and the historical facts we construct out of them" (Hutcheon, 57). For Hutcheon historiographic fiction refers simply to the past and the production of history rather than the aesthetic past.

Hutcheon's emphasis is principally on the writer as a creator. In *Poetics of Postmodernism*, she rejects the postmodernism's connection to history as being reactionary and claims that this situation "ignores the actual historical forms to which artists return" (Hutcheon, 39). Hutcheon asks: "Which 'facts' make it into history?" and "whose facts?" (Hutcheon, 71). Although both Jameson and Hutcheon cover similar areas, they approach history rather distinctively because of their different orientations.

Hamid Shirvani sees the distinction between Jameson's and Hutcheon's views of postmodernism in an essay. Shirvani contends that their different records of postmodernism can be defined by sexual differences. For Shirvani, Hutcheon as a female and feminist embraces postmodern difference that gives a "chance to promote a decentered multicultural society" (Shirvani, 1994: 296) while "Jameson is worried about the disintegration of his cultural authority" (Shirvani, 1994:293). On the other hand, in "Postmodernism, or, the Anxiety of Master Narratives" Brian McHale proposes that

Hutcheon neglects to incorporate the master narrative of feminism in postmodernism as a safe haven for social critique since her claim is not to possess master narratives (McHale, 1992: 21-22). McHale further contends that Jameson's Marxist view of postmodernism is more effective because he respects Lyotard's critique of master narratives less anxiously as being "an unreconstructed totalizer" though Hutcheon is wrong about the consequences of "endorsing a master narrative" (McHale, 1992: 24).

According to Robert Scholes, *Slaughterhouse Five* signifies the problem of writing fiction about historical events (Scholes, 200). Through the presentation of the historical event of the Dresden bombing, Vonnegut calls attention to historiographic metafiction. He opposes reflecting the beliefs and standards that is seen in present onto the past by asserting the specificity and particularity of his individual past. Vonnegut deconstructs the realist version of history. As he criticizes the realist version of history, he disagrees with the idea that history as a text surely enjoys a special status in relation to reality. The historian's work is essentially different from the author's work. The historian traditionally works within a confined area and combines his data in a more systematic way. Vonnegut suggests that the novelist lives in the world as well as the world living in the novelist. As "a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations" (SF, 11), the author can only claim his fictional world. The incorporation of the documentary source forces the reader to accept that history is nothing but a human construct and it is as fictional as a novel.

Vonnegut is taking the simple or mundane events of war and making them so mundane as to render them ridiculous, thus offering a kind of postmodern critique. John's conclusions in *Cat's Cradle* on the effects of disaster are perhaps the most astonishing, revealed towards the novel's end:

A curious six months followed—the six months in which I wrote this book. Hazel spoke accurately when she called our little society the Swiss Family Robinson, for we had survived a storm, were isolated, and then the living became very easy indeed. It was not without a certain Walt Disney charm. (CC, 24)

To claim that a post-apocalyptic world is not without a "Walt Disney charm" and that living became very easy is preposterous. Like the immediate reaction to the release of ice-nine, this explanation of living on the devastated island is equally blasé, another clear indictment of the characters' failure to grasp the gravity of the situation on

San Lorenzo. No one has claimed responsibility, and unrealistically, the characters have managed to live on in relative harmony. This is in direct opposition to Vonnegut's usual summation of the effects of massive destruction as a result of human warmongering or powerful weapons. With this information, *Cat's Cradle* can be read as a postmodern critique of both the use of nuclear weapons and the individual responsibilities of those in power which seem to fail when these weapons are used.

Thus, through the catastrophic events following the release of ice-nine on the island of San Lorenzo and the characters' uninspired reactions to it, Vonnegut attracts attention to the seriousness of deadly chemical substances. Furthermore, the similarities to *Slaughterhouse-Five* here are clear and the early development of Vonnegut's style may easily be seen as it appeared in his later novels.

Cat's Cradle was Vonnegut's first venture into political satire, and an analysis of contemporary religious and scientific debate, but not without a word on war, the great shaper of his life and work. Placing *Cat's Cradle* historically, it should be reminded that it was written during a time of war for America. With the Second World War not all that far from their minds, Americans found themselves on the brink of a second war with Vietnam, a war which brought its own unique forms of destruction including napalm, a weapon not dissimilar from the firebombs of Dresden. It was a war which made little sense to many Americans and one which most were vehemently against, including Vonnegut himself. He was seeing history repeating itself and after years of agonizing over it, he finally published his —Dresden novel.

In an age where all the different genres of literature have become fluid and made it hard to distinguish them from each other, it is highly important to draw a line between what is real and what is fiction. Within the lights of discussions and examples given here in this paper, it is aimed to scrutinize the different approaches and theoretical background of dealing with history in a fictional text while enjoying the pure delight of reading and inquiring the hidden history within the truth or the hidden truth behind the history.

In this study, first, it is aimed to give a brief overview on the evolution of writing about history in literature focusing on the shift from modernism to postmodernism. Postmodernism created a much more skeptical approach on all the narratives and as a result, it paved a way to grasp and interpret history and historical accounts in an alternative way. So, the term historiographic metafiction is presented here as a proper technique to narrate and read history with special references to two works of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Originality Report



SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

ÖĞRENCİ BİLGİLERİ	
Adı-Soyadı	Mahmut Yasın DEMİR
Öğrenci Numarası	121201108
Enstitü Anabilim Dalı	Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları
Programı	Yüksek Lisans (İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı)
Danışmanın Unvanı, Adı-Soyadı	Dr. Öğr.Üyesi F. Gül KOÇSOY
Tez Başlığı (Türkçe)	Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'ın <i>Kedi Beşiği</i> ve <i>Mezbaha 5</i> Adlı Romanlarında Tarihyazımsal Üstkurgu

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE

Yukarıda başlığı belirtilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam ...91..... sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, ...03.../09...../...2018..... tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezin benzerlik oranı % ...26..'tür.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler:

- 1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç,
- 2- Kaynakça hariç
- 3- Alıntılar hariç/dâhil
- 4- 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Yukarıda bilgileri verilen öğrencinin Yüksek Lisans tezi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yönetim Kurulu tarafından belirlenen azami benzerlik oranlarını aşmadığını ve tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Dr.Öğr. Üyesi F. Gül KOÇSOY

Danışmanın Adı-Soyadı
(İmzası)

Prof.Dr. Mehmet AYGÜN

Anabilim Dalı Başkanı
(İmzası)

Lisansüstü tezler, savunma öncesinde intihal program raporu ile birlikte enstitüye teslim edilir.

İntihal raporu ile ilgili olarak etik kurallar dâhilindeki benzerlik oranları ilgili Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu tarafından belirlenir. (Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu tarafından tezin, intihal kapsamı dışında değerlendirilmesi için TURNITIN'den alınan raporda "benzerlik oranı"nın, "alıntılar hariç" en fazla %10, "alıntılar dâhil" % 30'u geçmemesi şeklinde kabul edilmiştir).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Mahmut Yasin Demir was born in Turhal in 1983. He spent most of his time during his education and graduated from English Language and Literature Department at Faculty of Letters of İstanbul University, in 2005. He worked at some private companies and universities in İstanbul between 2005 and 2010 as a translator and a lecturer. In 2010 he moved to Elazığ and worked there at Fırat University as a lecturer for 6 years. In September 2016, he left Fırat University and started working at Alaaddin Keykubat University, in Alanya. Since then he has been working as a lecturer at that university. He has some studies in the fields of English Literature and American Literature.

