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Authorial Anxiety in Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

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Dedication

In the name of Allah, most merciful, most compassionate

First, I want to thank Allah for giving me the strength to finish this work.

I want to thank me, myself, and I

As I finally turn this last page, I feel a wonderful sense of relief wash over

me. But more than that, I feel so grateful to have you by my side

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an endless maze. But your unwavering faith in me, your enthusiastic cheers

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incredible power of family.

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Abstract

This research examines Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1968), focusing on the author's authorial anxiety and how his profound thoughts and persistent worries as a writer influenced the form and content of his work. This will be done through the lens of postmodernism, with a specific focus on the influence of Vonnegut's authorial anxiety on the book's content and the techniques used to portray the war and violence. The profound connections between Vonnegut's identity as a writer and his internal struggles result in unconventional content and specific techniques used in *Slaughterhouse-Five*: dark humour, metafiction, and time jumps. This research paper consists of three chapters. The first one is a theoretical exploration of the problems related to the notion of authorship and their influence on the American postmodern writers. The second chapter will focus on the thematic choices of Kurt Vonnegut that reflect his authorial anxiety. The third chapter will examine the literary devices deployed in *Slaughterhouse-Five* that reflect the author's sense of anxiety.

Keywords: Kurt-Vonnegut – Authorial Anxiety – Postmodernism – time jumps- Metafiction- War and violence.

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Introduction

After World War II, the emergence of postmodernism as a movement resulted in a significant number of novelists adopting a non-traditional style. This style involves the use of techniques that caused readers to feel lost, as the narrative was not sequential which made it difficult for them to comprehend. In a world that looked hopeless, individuals began to lose their uniqueness. Accordingly, Kurt Vonnegut and other postmodernist novelists initiated the sensation of loss. Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2004) is one of the postmodernist American writers who directly employed postmodernist elements in his novels, reflecting the fragmentation of contemporary Western culture with respect to time, space, language, and the human subject. He employs a humorous tone to satirize society and authorities in his novel *Slaughterhouse Five* or *The Children's Crusade: A Duty-dance with Death* (1969). The novel addresses the atrocities of war and the bombardment of Dresden as modelled upon Vonnegut's personal experience of the event.

The bombing of Dresden in World War II, a horrific experience that became a central theme in Vonnegut's work, also sparked a deep anxiety about authorship. This manifested itself in both the content and the form of his writing. Thematically, his recurring exploration of war and violence could be seen as a way of grappling with the authenticity of his own experience, constantly circling the trauma to ensure its truth. Stylistically, his trademark dark humour and fragmented narratives may reflect a struggle to find a voice that could adequately convey the profound meaninglessness he witnessed.

By delving deeper into Kurt Vonnegut's authorial anxiety, this study seeks to provide a better understanding of how his worries, thoughts, and concerns influenced the thematic choices and the techniques used in his book *Slaughterhouse-Five*, especially in portraying the realities of war. The main argument of this research is that Kurt Vonnegut's authorial anxiety in his novel is reflected in the themes he chooses and the literary devices deployed in the

novel. Vonnegut's personal background and wartime experiences, which left a profound impact on him, contribute significantly to the development of authorial anxiety in his works.

This study tries to raise questions that aim to provide a comprehensive exploration of authorial anxiety in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The main argument is that Vonnegut's worries, thoughts, and concerns about writing along with his experiences and the realities of war deeply influenced his techniques and themes.

This study adopts a postmodernist approach to highlight Vonnegut's personal experiences with war, which prompted him to question traditional narratives and portray a more chaotic and subjective view of war. Analysing Vonnegut's use of metafictional elements reveals how his anxieties manifest in his self-conscious commentary on writing. The postmodern approach also explores the fragmented nature of identity and its relation with the deconstruction of traditional forms.

The dissertation, therefore, is divided into three chapters. The first one is a theoretical exploration of the issues surrounding the concept of authorship and their impact on American postmodern writers. The second chapter will aim to elucidate the consequence of Vonnegut's authorial anxiety on his literary work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, by analysing the author's thematic preoccupations. The third chapter will examine the literary devices deployed in *Slaughterhouse-Five* that reflect the author's sense of anxiety

Chapter One: Deconstructing Authorship in American Postmodern Literature:

One of the criteria of studying literature is the concept of authorship. It generally refers to the act of writing, or the process of creating a piece of writing, music, or art. However, authorship in literature is a contentious issue because, in contemporary literary studies, the notion of authorship has become a complex concept that inspired multiple debates. The study of the author's effect on the text takes into account several elements such as the author's life, historical background, and the impact of other literary works and cultural traditions. This chapter will attempt to explore the problems related to the notion of authorship and their influence on the American postmodern writers.

I.1. The Notion of Authorship and its Problems:

The concept of authorship was first used in 1710. Indeed, understanding the concept requires awareness that authorship, especially in humanistic or literary contexts, has traditionally been confined to individual writers (Ede 3). The concept of authorship "reflects an appropriate and necessary connection between authors and their texts" (Ede 2). This means that authors write with a purpose, perspective, and background that shapes their work. Knowing about the author helps us interpret the text's meaning and message more accurately.

There are many attempts to define the term of authorship but this is still a complicated process. However, the evolution of authorship has been shaped by historical, cultural, and legal developments, reflecting changing perceptions of authors' roles and their relationship to their creative works

Historically speaking, the concept of an author's ownership of a text emerged during the Renaissance, particularly with the Statute of Anne in 1710, which granted authors the rights to their work rather than publishers. This development coincided with the advent of the printing press, which facilitated the dissemination of written works. This early form of

copyright did not extend to content.

Despite this limitation, the early copyright system constituted a significant step toward the concept of intellectual property, which was further developed during the Romantic period. The Romantic Movement emphasised the significance of the individual, which resulted in intellectual and creative copyright rules being consolidated during the 19th century. It was not until the mid-twentieth century, when postmodernist critiques of literary theory emerged, that conceptions of individuality were challenged. In particular, Roland Barthes criticised the Romantic idea of independence and ownership, he contended that the aim of the author should be distinct from the text. Barthes challenged the conventional belief that an author's background and personal experiences may enhance our interpretation of their work, by proposing a theory that shifted the focus away from the author. (Kluwer "*Authorship: An Evolving Concept*").

The 20th century saw a shift in literary theory bringing new challenges to the traditional concept of authorship. The theory of the "death of the author," advocated by Roland Barthes, emphasizes on the importance of the text itself and the reader's interpretation over the author's intention. He holds that the reader's interpretation matters more than the author's original intent when he states that "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes 148). This marked a departure from previous views of authorship placing more emphasis on the dynamic interaction between text and reader (Barthes).

With the impact of Barthes' theory, the concept of authorship began to present a range of challenges and complexities, which initiated debate around the concept itself. Some scholars advocate the traditional approach of "intentionalism" where the understanding of an author's intended meaning is crucial for an accurate interpretation of the text. E.D. Hirsch Jr. states in his 1967 book *Validity in Interpretation* "to understand an utterance is to grasp the speaker's meaning. The meaning of a text, like the meaning of any other human action, is its purpose,

its function, its why" (3).

A writer who is successful in creating such an author can craft a work of fiction that is interesting and significant. However, this is not as simple as it may appear because this clarifies the specific type of "author" being referred to and emphasizes the importance of creating a well-developed character (Booth 52). This process requires comprehension of literary style, story plot, and character development. It also involves creating an authorial voice that is distinct, captivating, and appealing to readers. This procedure necessitates originality, proficiency, and a thorough comprehension of the writing craft.-This challenges the traditional notion of an original work with a single author, and instead highlights that the text is interconnected and influenced by other texts (Abed and Abdullah 707).

In *The Intertextual Labyrinth* Kristeva argues that postmodern literature, by foregrounding the instability of meaning and the plurality of voices, invites readers to actively engage in the construction of meaning and participate in a broader exploration of the human condition within a specific cultural context (Kristeva 60-80). According to this framework, the author's persona is formed inside the text and influenced by societal norms rather than being a part of the writing process. As Wolfgang Iser in *The Implied Reader*, emphasizes the dynamic interplay between a text's cultural context and the reader's own background in shaping meaning. This approach challenges the notion of a singular authorial intent and encourages readers to be active participants in constructing meaning, recognizing the influence of their cultural baggage on their interpretations (27-38).

While authorship in literature is often perceived as relating to a one authoritative individual, it covers a greater degree of complexity. The idea that a single author holds complete authority over a literary work's meaning is giving way to a more collaborative view. Recent scholarship, as seen in Lois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today* emphasizes that readers, the text's openness to interpretation, and even the obscurity of authorship in some cases, all

contribute to the creation of meaning in literature. This shift acknowledges the dynamic interplay between these elements that shapes our understanding of a work (112).

Roland Barthes puts forward an argument against the traditional approach to interpreting a text which focuses on the author's background and intention. He says

The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically cantered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice. The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us (143).

According to him, the reader's interpretation and not the author's is what determines the meaning of a text.

Barthes states that the role of the author should be decreased, i.e.; the text should be the focus of literary analysis. Barthes thinks that the text has a structure all its own that is distinct from the author's intentions "The reader of the text may be compared to someone at a loose end...what he perceives is multiple, irreducible, coming from a disconnected, heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives" (Barthes 159). This quote from Barthes argues that the attribution of authorship "closes the writing", that is, it limits the possible interpretations of the text.

The focus should be on the text itself and its inherent structures, not on the author's intentions.

From another side, Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and historian who makes the focus on the discourse and context surrounding a text, argues that the meaning of a text is shaped by the historical, social, and political context in which it was produced. He has a similar position like Barthes as a challenger of the traditional view which emphasizes the

author's role as the originator and authority behind the work, yet he believes that the author is not totally "dead," but rather a concept that has been formed over time and not a physical person. According to Foucault, Foucault argues that texts construct the idea of an author, rather than simply reflecting a pre-existing authorial intent as he says in his essay "What is an Author? " :

An author's name is not simply an element of speech (as a subject, a complement, or an element that could be replaced by a pronoun or other parts of speech). Its presence is functional in that it serves as a means of classification. A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others. A name also establishes different forms of relationships among texts (6).

In contrast to Barthes, Foucault transforms the writer into a function that plays a role and then follows another function after fulfilling his original role.

For Foucault, the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of texts (10). Governing this function is the belief that there must be at a particular level of an author's thought, of his conscious or unconscious desire a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another or to cohere around a fundamental and originating contradiction (10).

In contrast to Foucault's support for Barthes' idea that "it is language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes 143), Foucault also asserts that this does not render the author non-existent. He does not want those who read him to believe that authorship is a "dead issue" that Barthes has already resolved. He acknowledges that writing needs to have an author and creator, just like other forms of art.

The Question of Empowering and Disempowering the Author, by Antonio Calcagno and Foucault, explores various conceptions of authorship and different perspectives in generating and interpreting meaning. Calcagno and Foucault contend that "[r]ather than an absolute

death or disappearance of the author, Foucault wishes to argue that there is an emergent shift in the way we view authors, but this shift does not preclude the notion of the author having certain content, power, and critical functionality" (37-8). Foucault doesn't believe authors are completely irrelevant in the face of a text. He proposes that our understanding of authorship undergoes a significant transformation. This doesn't mean the author has no influence or meaning, but rather that their role and impact are shaped by the text itself.

In order to solve the conflict between the intentionalist and the anti-intentionalist, Wayne C. Booth presented the idea of the implied author in his 1961 book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. This idea serves to distinguish the perceived authorial presence established within the text from the actual author who wrote the piece. He says "We understand the author, then, not as the man who did the writing but as the man the writing makes.... We define, then, the implied author as the one who chooses the point of view, the one who writes in the style, the one who creates the fictional world of the story" (Booth 71-2).

It is important here to distinguish between the real author and the implied author. The real author is the physical writer, while the implied author is an abstract entity influenced by the text's stylistic choices, language, and presentation. The implied author, or "second self," creates a separate persona for the writer establishing a different state of mind compared to their everyday life (Shen 81).

Regarding all these challenges and developments in the conception of authorship, postmodernism in literature reflects a general crisis or a problem of anxiety for the writers. It is characterized by a sense of exhaustion among authors who felt blocked in terms of creativity. To navigate this, they began using metafiction and intertextuality, defying conventional literary norms in the process. This anxiety about the act of writing itself becomes a real challenge for them, leading to explorations of fragmented narratives and the deconstruction of traditional forms.

I.2. Understanding Anxiety of Authorship:

Writing is a helpful way to share one's ideas and feelings with the others and a site where the writer creates a world of his own. However, for some writers the process of writing is a stressful and anxious task, as in the case of the postmodern writers. "Anxiety of authorship" is the anxiety that faces the author while producing his work. Colleen M. Story suggests that "Writer's anxiety is described as having feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical symptoms like increased blood pressure when faced with a writing task" ("*What Is Writer's Anxiety and How Can You Get Past It?*")

Authorial anxiety may consist of different symptoms. Harold Bloom proposed his "anxiety of influence" idea back in 1973. According to this theory, poets and writers are deeply influenced by the works of past generations, an influence which creates a complicated and frequently opposed connection between the new generation and the traditional body of literature. The poet adopts something from a powerful predecessor, who subsequently functions as an internal motivator or role model that the poet measures himself against and seeks to surpass. This is the source of poetic influence (Bloom 61).

Writing anxiety can take many different forms. One of these is imposter syndrome where the writer feels like a fraud and questions their talent, feeling fear from appearing as someone who does not deserve to be a published author. Another common anxiety is the fear of rejection which can be associated with submitting work and facing potential rejection from publishers or readers. Lastly, perfectionism can be a huge source of anxiety for writers. The pressure to create a flawless work can lead to procrastination or crippling self-doubt (Onyema "*Understanding Writer's Anxiety: Uncovering Its Causes*").

Writers who suffer from anxiety can also face writer's block which is experienced differently by writers in terms of what causes it and how long it lasts. Although it can take decades for the writer to recover, but for others, it might happen for a short time. It has four

basic causes: behavioural, cognitive, motivational, and psychological prompts ("*Writing papers makes me anxious!*"). Psychological factors frequently involve pressures that impair cognitive function or mood. Blocks relating to motivation frequently result from a fear of failing. In addition, perfectionism and an obsession with details are the root causes of those classified as cognitive causes. Last but not least, behavioural shifts like postponement are the most typical source of writing anxiety ("*Writing Papers Makes Me Anxious!*").

These anxieties can impact the author's career just as the content of his literary work. The literary situation after WWII led postmodern writers to question the validity of traditional literary forms and to experiment with new techniques such as the use of unreliable narrators, pastiche, intertextuality, and dark humour. All these can be regarded as symptoms of authorial anxiety.

I.3. Anxiety of authorship in postmodern American Literature:

Analysing particular examples from postmodern American novels reveals a wealth of information regarding the creative challenges that American postmodern authors encountered. Themes, narrative styles, and ultimately the reception of their works by audiences and critics are all influenced by the internal struggles or tensions faced by writers. Not only do their novels possess innovative content, but they also play a significant role in challenging established conventions and reshaping the American literary landscape. Consequently, they are considered landmark texts in a period of general skepticism and anxiety.

Significant authors contributed with significant insights about the dilemma of authorship and writing obstacles. For instance, John Barth in a significant essay entitled "*The Literature of Exhaustion*" (1967) identifies himself as an American student of Nabokov and Borges. After rejecting realism as an old practise, Barth classified his own writing as "novels which imitate the form of the novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author" (72). He believes that the conventional role of the author as the exclusive source of meaning and intention is no

longer applicable in this genre of literature.

Actually, Barth's first two books, *The End of the Road* (1958) and *The Floating Opera* (1956) were semi-realistic. Later, he criticized traditional forms in his later more ambitious works like *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960), mocked Greek and Christian myths in *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966), and the novel in form of letter in *LETTERS* (1979). Postmodernism questions the author's control over meaning, empowering readers through experimentation with form (Hutcheon 81). For instance, Barth's novel *LETTERS* (1979), which is an epistolary novel, is told solely through letters. It subverts traditional narrative expectations. The reader must puzzle together the story from fragmented information. This form might emphasize the limitations of communication and the difficulty of constructing a complete picture of reality.

Of similar significance is Thomas Pynchon's work that has often been associated with absurdist philosophy which suggests that the human condition is inherently irrational. This philosophical outlook posits that searching for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world can lead to feelings of anxiety and despair. Pynchon's literary explorations often delve into the disconcerting and chaotic nature of our existence, reflecting the absurdist notion that the quest for significance in an irrational universe can be both perplexing and distressing. (Abd Alredha and Mhodar 2764)

In *V* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), Pynchon creates a complicated storyline through the use of paranoid world as a mental tool. Pynchon's fiction is predicated on the idea that entropy and the breakdown of moral and physical energy were inevitable. He is one of the most important postmodern authors who uses elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction, songs, pop culture references, and well-known, obscure, and fictional history to portray the fragmented nature of contemporary life.

Most importantly, the most well-known figure of the 1960s and 1970s is Kurt Vonnegut. He is regarded as a leading satirist and representative of the American counterculture. His

writings are excellent resources for understanding some of the key concepts and literary devices of postmodern literature. They're not just rife with irony and black humour, but they also do not hesitate to tackle heavier subjects like murder, paranoia, governmental oppression and the atrocities of World War II. Having been a soldier and a prisoner from 1944 to 1945, Vonnegut's personal experience with the war had a significant influence on both his life and his writing in which he perfectly portrays his anxiety as an author.

Slaughterhouse-Five is hailed as one of Vonnegut's most celebrated and thought-provoking works. It is regarded as his greatest, fusing a World War II theme with an absurd blend of time travel and aliens. The following chapters, hence, will attempt to explore Vonnegut's novel as a manifestation of his authorial anxiety.

Chapter Two: Kurt Vonnegut's Traumatic Experiences and Thematic Choices in Slaughterhouse-Five:

This chapter examines how Vonnegut's personal experiences in WWII influenced the themes of his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. It explores Vonnegut's battles with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the moral need to accurately portray the horrors of war in writing and how they influenced his authorship. The chapter will explore the anxiety of Kurt Vonnegut reflected in the themes of the book where Vonnegut examines themes that demonstrate his anxiety regarding his profession, along with the thematic choices by Kurt Vonnegut, contribute to the authorial anxiety found in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

II.1. Kurt Vonnegut's Experiences of Trauma and Anxiety of Authorship:

Vonnegut's anxieties as an author are stemmed from larger personal struggles. He is a renowned American writer who had to endure a lot of hardships in his life including World War II, mother's Suicide, depression, financial struggles, rejection and Frustration from publishers before finding success. These hardships led to his experience of trauma. Trauma is defined as "a disordered psychic or behavioural state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury" or "an emotional upset" (Merriam-Webster).

In the case of Kurt Vonnegut, trauma is caused by the horrors he endured during World War II which influence both his life and his career as a writer. From January 1943 to June 1945, Kurt Vonnegut was a member of the United States Army. His experiences as a POW in Dresden and with the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge left a lasting impact on his life and provided him with traumatic experiences (Guise... [*andWorld War II*] *Slaughterhouse-Five*).

Germans launched a counteroffensive in December 1944, capturing 23,000 and encircling 6,697 captives, resulting in an increase in American losses. Vonnegut, who was captured,

observed that bayonets were useless against vehicles. Cold winter worsened German conditions and prisoners, disrupting shipping and supply chains, making it harder for Red Cross aid to reach Allied POWs.

Vonnegut recounted the pivotal event in Dresden's history in a letter sent to his father saying "On about February 14th the Americans came over, followed by the R.A.F. their combined labors killed 250,000 people in 24 hours and destroyed all of Dresden—possibly the world's most beautiful city. But not me". Vonnegut's letter recounts Dresden's destruction, highlighting massive casualties and the city's beauty lost. The abrupt "But not me" throws survival into stark contrast, suggesting survivor's guilt or the absurdity of war's randomness. His captors who were still alive forced him to search for, bury, and burn human remains. One of the most severe airstrikes of the war was launched by the Allies when he was a prisoner of war in a well-insulated meat locker, and he only survived by luck that made the residents cursed them and threw rocks at them (Khaleel 93).

In addition, Kurt Vonnegut's family suffered greatly after the Great Depression, including his mother's suicide and his sister's breast cancer death only a day after her husband's death in a train accident. The memories are so haunting that they continue to be a source of reflection even years later, and they have even formed the basis for a plot in a story Kurt Vonnegut, a black humourist, believed that there was no greater absurdity than that war.

Vonnegut's belief that there was no greater absurdity than war makes him suffer from a post traumatic disorder after the deaths and destruction Vonnegut witnessed along with what he endured in the concentration camps from cruelty and what he heard of horrific and terrible stories (Mostefaoui 5). Despite the fact those twenty-three years have passed and he appears to be living a secure life with a decent job and a family. The manner, in which he narrates his life events, the people around him, and his experiences at war, as well as his insomnia and involvement in alcohol and telephones late at night, could be regarded as distinct examples in

this regard (Sadjadi and Bahrami 81-82).

Dealing with trauma can be incredibly disorienting. The overwhelming emotions and experiences can shatter a sense of normalcy and stability. Traumatic events can also fragment a person's sense of self, leading them to question their identity, core beliefs, and safety in the world. Additionally, trauma can distort how someone perceives time, making flashbacks feel like reliving the event and causing time to seem to slow down during the traumatic experience itself. The disorientation is consistent with trauma research, which indicates that traumatic events can interfere with a person's sense of self and time (Carruthers 7-24).

Almost all of Vonnegut's writings demonstrate how deeply affected he was by World War II and the bombing of Dresden. Vonnegut is also reported to attempted suicide. This suggests the emotional toll the war took on him. Evidently, Three of Vonnegut's novels, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Mother Night*, and *Cat's Cradle*, tackle the war as their central theme. Also, two other novels: *The Sirens of Titan* and *Player Piano*, heavily parody war.

This led him to develop a Nihilism belief that life has no inherent meaning or purpose. While Vonnegut acknowledges the bleakness of war and the randomness of death, his characters often search for meaning, even if it is fleeting. This suggests a resistance to pure nihilism. Absurdism, on the other hand, argues that humans seek inherent meaning in a universe that is fundamentally meaningless. This is where Vonnegut aligns more closely.

II.2. Kurt Vonnegut's Thematic Choices:

As stated above, Vonnegut's past experiences and trauma have influenced his choice of themes of *Slaughterhouse Five*. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut creates an illustration of war's psychological effects through the character of Billy Pilgrim, a WWII veteran who had trouble with the aftermath. The firebombing of Dresden is one poignant example of the brutality of war, but Billy's fragmented memories and his detached manner are reflective of that psychological wounding. The content amounts to a prescription: create meaning in a

world forever marked by war create and confront its horrors. The four main themes explored in his works are: war and its absurdity, time travel, death and free will.

Starting with the theme of war, Vonnegut is claiming that humanity is nothing more than a shadow of its human condition that it has been brought down by wars. He compares soldiers to babies little more than as he calls it infants (Mala et al. 2) , as he states "you'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful" (7).

A more detailed consideration yields a more critical view of the glorified wars (and warrior) narratives prevailing in much of these writers' work. It sounds like the medieval literature that mythologizes knights and glory. Modern era differs a lot since it's an era of business and all are a part of this race, while in earlier times individuals only fought for the sake of good. Thus it ends up being an anti-war novel instead of a novel of war with its allure as war. In this case, the war participants demeaned even babies by likening them to themselves (2).

In *Poo-tee-weet? Unintelligent Things to Say About a Massacre: Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five and US interventions in the post-WWII era*, Kelly A. McArdle states that the focus on the bombing of Dresden as a means to drive home the truly horrific realities that come as a cost of war, introducing the idea that the action cannot be justified and that the one consistent aspect of war is it is not fair (21). By centering this devastating event, Vonnegut challenges justifications for war and emphasizes its indiscriminate brutality.

The complete destruction of Dresden is documented in this quotation from *Slaughterhouse-Five* "There was a fire-storm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn" (83). This directly provides a chilling portrayal of the devastation that Dresden suffered at the hands of the Allied bombing

campaign. It employs a compelling visual imagery to convey the totality and indiscriminateness of the firestorm. The quote serves as a powerful indictment of war and the devastation it inflicts on both the built and natural environment.

The violence and ruthlessness of war, particularly among veterans, are evident in the Germans and dogs who work together in military operations "The Germans and the dog were engaged in a military operation . . . when reported as news or history, gives many war enthusiasts a sort of post-coital satisfaction " (24). Veterans express excitement and a twisted fascination with taking each other's lives, highlighting the devastating impact of conflicts on humans and wild animals. The involvement of animals in warfare, which humans initiated, could be seen as a direct consequence of human-waged warfare, causing destruction of nature and animals (Mala et al. 3).

On the other hand, Işık, a doctor of philosophy, says that the things that happened in Dresden never allowed him to move on from his memories. As a result, he decided to incorporate his experiences into the character of Billy Pilgrim (358). In a 2011 publication, Tang posits that the traumatic experience of Kurt Vonnegut has irreversibly affected his heart, despite the absence of any overt symptoms. In contrast, Billy experiences a mental breakdown while caged it is noteworthy that Vonnegut's breakdown occurred while he was laughing at Cinderella's performance, not during the actual atrocities of combat (45). This suggests a possible link between seemingly harmless experiences and the emotional toll of war.

This clarifies that the breakdown belongs to Vonnegut and highlights the unexpected nature of the trigger (45).

On the other hand, Al-Ma'ani says, "Vonnegut tries to reflect the victimized articulation of the experience through the war which caused his trauma" (25). The way the author portrays the victim in the story is through the character of Billy Pilgrim. At the centre of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is Billy Pilgrim, a young American soldier who becomes unstuck in time after a

harrowing experience during World War II. This trauma manifests in unexpected ways, as seen in his episodes of uncontrollable crying. Interestingly, Billy would often find himself shedding tears without any apparent reason, but nobody had actually witnessed this happening. It was a private act that only the doctor was aware of.

This clearly shows that Billy is deeply affected by the traumatic experiences he faced on the battlefield. To address this, the doctor instructed Billy to take a nap every day, hoping it would alleviate some of his concerns. Another instance that highlights the impact of Billy's traumatic past and the violence of war on his psyche is when he sleeps. During this time, he tends to kick, whimper, and even cry, which is why nobody wants to sleep beside him. It's a clear indication of how the war has left a lasting mark on him (28).

The devastation of the conflict had a profound effect on Billy's life in the aftermath of the war. Mustazza states Billy "returns home safely, yet exhibits a state of emotional numbness" (15). Vonnegut "deliberately illustrates Billy as a passive and innocent character to show the reader the destruction of war" (Marvin 124). Furthermore, Billy's desire for death, rather than life and the experience of such a painful ailment, is evident (4-5, Mala et al.).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut argues against war and its effects on various aspects of life, including veterans, survivors, and the environment. He mocks the idea of courage and motivation to fight for one's country, comparing them to infants. Vonnegut's portrayal of war as dangerous and unjust contradicts the natural order "There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre" (9). His helplessness and disappointment stem from his experiences of violence and traumatic events, which have led him to engage in fantastical pursuits to escape the distressing reality. Vonnegut's portrayal of the suffering of war survivors, such as Billy, serves as a stark reminder of the suffering that can result from past traumatic events and violence.

The absurdity of governments and the needless devastation caused by war are the main

themes of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. According to a 1987 interview with NPR's Tom Vitale, Kurt Vonnegut expressed a strong commitment to portraying war in a realistic and unflinching way. He believed that the true horrors of war had been obscured by artistic portrayals that glorified it:

My own feeling is that civilization ended in World War I, and we're still trying to recover from that," he said. "Much of the blame is the malarkey that artists have created to glorify war, which as we all know, is nonsense, and a good deal worse than that — romantic pictures of battle, and of the dead and men in uniform and all that. And I did not want to have that story told again. (Vonnegut 00:53)

Through tackling the Dresden event, Vonnegut illustrates the actual effects of death and damage in war, shedding light on how it affects both troops and civilians. The book questions whether war is necessary. Vonnegut questions the reasons for the attack, even though historians believe that it was the right thing to attack Dresden in order to oppose Nazi Germany. According to him, the bombing was motivated by retaliation and had minimal strategic importance for the war effort.

The senselessness of this brutality makes the reader think of Billy's death at the hands of an enraged former colleague. Roland Weary, the soldier captured with Billy in Germany, held Billy Pilgrim responsible for his capture and subsequent death. While on his deathbed, Roland admitted to another soldier, Paul Lazzaro, that he blamed Billy for his capture by the Germans. Lazzaro promised Roland that he would ensure that Billy died, blaming his death on Billy's responsibility for the death of Roland. Over thirty-five years later, Paul Lazzaro, true to his promise to Roland Weary, hires a talented assassin to kill Billy Pilgrim (66).

The horrors of war can shatter our sense of meaning. This incident, a stark example of the brutality inflicted Bernard O'Hare, an old war buddy of Vonnegut's, receives a visit from the author. Bernard's wife Mary expresses concern that Vonnegut's portrayal of war might focus on

heroism instead of the tragic loss of young lives. Billy Pilgrim as the main character was a chaplain's aide who was sent to the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 and was later captured by the Germans. Billy and the others are eventually rescued in the slaughterhouse in Dresden where animals are slaughtered. It is later discovered that numerous other shelters have collapsed killing everyone inside. Later, Valencia, Billy's wife, dies from carbon monoxide poisoning while traveling to see her husband, who was on the point of death in a Vermont plane crash.

At the end of the war, Edgar Derby, a middle-aged school teacher who looks after Billy in the POW camp, is put to death for stealing a teapot "All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really was shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really did threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. And so on. I've changed all the names "(1). This incident reflects the fundamental meaninglessness of existence caused by the horrors of war.

Forced to face the harsh reality of life and death in a way that contradicts their conventional understandings of the world, the characters begin to question the meaning and purpose of their existence when they are exposed to the extreme violence and suffering of war. Like when Billy stumbles through the bombed-out city of Dresden with other American prisoners of war. The once vibrant city has been reduced to a wasteland of fire, death and destruction. Billy witnesses horrific sights - charred bodies, mangled limbs and the screams of the injured. The overwhelming sensory overload and sheer scale of the devastation leaves Billy numb and disoriented. He questions everything he thought he knew about the world. The senseless violence of war shatters his sense of innocence and purpose. The repeated phrase "So it goes" reflects Billy's struggle to make sense of the situation and cope with the emotional trauma (24-39).

Man seeks purpose for his existence because he believes there must be a rational explanation if only he could discover it. However, even though Man's quest for meaning is

rational, the world he lives in is not reasonable, which is why the ridiculous predicament results from his illogical denial of his need for clarity (Anderson 19). Our quest is a reflection of our desire to understand ourselves and the world around us, and to find a sense of direction and fulfilment in our lives. Still, we must also recognize that sometimes the answers we seek may not be readily apparent or easily. It is people's denial of their need for clarity and understanding that can lead us into a state of confusion and absurdity:

- Why me?

- 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?

- Yes.

- Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There is no why (35).

War, with its randomness and suffering forces Billy and the reader to confront the absurdity of existence. There might not be a preordained meaning to lives, and suffering might just be a part of the human experience. By accepting the lack of inherent "why" the quote suggests a way of coping with the uncontrollable aspects of life. It doesn't mean giving up on finding meaning, but rather finding it within the present moment and the choices we make.

By embracing the desire for meaning and purpose, and by seeking to understand the world around the people, we can move towards a greater sense of clarity and fulfilment in our lives. According to Vonnegut, realizing this absurdity is a crucial part of being human. He thinks that people could find purpose in their lives by accepting that death is inevitable (21). In his works, Vonnegut questions, "Life is a scheme of things in which man discernible purpose, no obvious reason for his own existence." For him, black humour seems to be a way of coming to terms with an unpleasant, illogical reality (21).

This question is not new, according to Erich Fromm. It originates from man's particular struggle to understand his identity and purpose in this world. Fromm sees that, "The reason, that man's blessing, is also his punishment. He sees death as his end. He is never free from the contradiction of his life, and even if he wanted to, he could never get rid of his thinking; as long as he is living, his body is what makes him want to live" (30). In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut explores the idea of reason as both a blessing and a curse through the character of Billy Pilgrim and his experiences of war and travelling through time. By way of portraying this duality of reason, Vonnegut in no way calls for abandoning but just demands an admission of its inadequacies. He calls for seeking meaning and purpose despite the actualities of existence, with which Billy struggles throughout the novel.

Billy's intelligence enables him to observe and comprehend the world, including the tragic events such as the Dresden firebombing and the loss of lives. He observes the terrible events with a detached rationality, saying "so it goes ", but his inner turmoil is evident. Furthermore, he employs his reasoning to establish coping mechanisms, finding solace in the Tralfamadorian philosophy and time travel, which enable him to dissociate from the present and evade the grim truths of war. In contrast, Due to his experiences, Billy grapples with existential dread, contemplating the meaning of life and the inevitability of death. His fractured mental state hinders his full engagement with the world, leading to detachment instead of connection. Also, Billy's reasoning enables him to perceive the absurdity of war, recognizing the senseless destruction and loss of life, thus showcasing the inadequacy of human logic in the midst of violence.

The modern world has led to a fragmented sense of self and a lack of overarching meaning in life. According to the literary critic Max F. Schultz in *The Unconfirmed Thesis: Kurt Vonnegut, Black Humor, and Contemporary Art*, Kurt Vonnegut's work reflects this struggle for meaning in a world without a central guiding principle, he states, "the self as a verifiable, definable, even

possible, entity has vanished in our century, particularly in the past two decades, in the ironic acceptance of a world without metaphysical centre, one fragmented into multiple realities" (15). Vonnegut is conscious of this fragmentation, and his books attempt to offer a purpose for existence beneath the follies of the modern world, exploring the reality of twentieth-century man (22-3).

Vonnegut uses the character Billy to portray a world in which the self is fragmented. The search for meaning is a continuous struggle. The experience of Billy Pilgrim is a great example of the fragmented self who jumps back and forth between memories and exists in multiple realities. Vonnegut's dark humour and absurdity illuminate the randomness and meaninglessness of war that was the firebombing of Dresden in this case, that very clearly defied any kind or level of logic. Billy dumps all his detached observations in such an emotional disconnect, which pretty much sums up his effort to find meaning "in a world gone mad with suffering" (McClatchy 252). The novel is a critique of war altogether, showing how it dehumanizes people, as well as meaninglessness in conflict, yet out of this bleakness is Billy's attempt to find some kind of meaning in his exposures to Tralfamadorians' philosophy.

According to Vonnegut, the only absolute in human philosophy is existence itself. Like other black humourists, Vonnegut has little faith in the achievements of the human race or in its future. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, he does not seem to support the idea that man is capable of solving his own issues or to acknowledge the validity of fundamental concepts. Max Schultz could counter that "these novelists write out of a philosophical sense of the indeterminate as being the only reality available to man today" (24-7).

Billy Pilgrim's marriage to Valencia is a clear example of his lack of purpose in life. He marries Valencia despite his acknowledgement that she is ugly: She was one of his illness's symptoms. When he heard himself asking her to marry him and pleading with her to accept the diamond ring and be his lifelong partner, he realized he was insane (Vonnegut 49). This shows

that Billy is unwilling to marry Valencia because of her appearance, but he does so anyway because he sees marriage as a necessary part of life. For Billy, Valencia and his family are merely pieces of his life; they have no real significance or worth. Existentialism is consistent with this perspective on life in general and marriage in particular, as it asserts that neither has any inherent value.

Billy's comments regarding the Slaughterhouse saying that the circumstances are ridiculous is evident from five distinct events. First, the firebombing itself becomes for Billy a testament to the absurdity of war. He might utter his signature "so it goes" and add a chilling description of the scene. Second, a middle-aged optometrist, he is thrown alongside young soldiers. This jarring contrast between his civilian life and the war's brutality might make him ask the question as to the purpose of his capture. Third, irony is deepened when the group, Billy included, finds shelter in a Dresden slaughterhouse. Seeking refuge in a place associated with death only furthers the absurdity. Billy might make the following irrational comment regarding the situation. Fourth, the discovery of collapsed shelters makes the point even more home. Initial relief at the quick discovery of shelter gives way quickly to horror at the realization other shelters collapsed killing civilians. Fifth, the time traveling element with Billy adds another degree. To become "unstuck in time" means that Billy will do everything over again, including the bombing of Dresden.

Throughout the story, Billy witnesses friends, civilians, and opponents die beside him. These scenes lead him to regularly wonder what the point of war is. Yet, ironically, even the most terrible and unexpected tragedies lack empathy for him since he believes those events and their outcomes are absurd. The actions can sometimes make humanity consider the possible consequences. This is the essence of a thought-provoking where Kurt Vonnegut famously states in *The Brothers Vonnegut: Science and Fiction in the House of Magic*, by Ginger Strand as saying "Every new piece of scientific knowledge is not a good thing for humanity". The quote reminds the reader to consider the potential consequences of his actions and the impact they may have on

the world around him.

Paul Lazzaro swears to kill Pilgrim in the future and claims to be seeking revenge for Weary's death, which Weary attributes to Pilgrim. However, despite how violence and war are portrayed in the book, it is not irrational. It offers two opposing theories of death that blend in the end. The first, symbolized by the expression "So it goes," in which it is used when he remembers death or someone else's death, so he suggests that death is an inevitable aspect of life, these two concepts are not well understood because they are regarded as something happened more than one time in the story" (47).

In addition, Vonnegut is famous for his exploration of the concept of time. He portrays characters who endure time travel experiences. Many writers throughout history have explored the concept of time travel in their science fiction works, but few have achieved the lasting impact of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut effectively portrays the idea of time as something relative through his skilled utilization of structure and point of view, leaving a lasting impression on readers for years to come. The story explores time through a non-linear format, focusing on Billy Pilgrim's perception of time. The story uses repetition and dark comedy to explore the repetitive nature of time.

Billy Pilgrim has been "unstuck in time" at any given moment in his existence. He could find himself unexpectedly in the past, present or future (23). "Unstuck in time" maybe read as Billy's release from captivity. Consequently, Vonnegut's story and Billy's have become rather independent, as the story progresses. Thus, Billy's experiences become so central that they seem to exist separately from Vonnegut's direct commentary. Now that the conventional understanding of time has been disregarded, the storyteller can place Billy in whatever era they choose. To provide us with a realistic depiction of what it was like to live through a war, Vonnegut grants Billy the ability to travel across time to places like Dresden (Khaleel 94).

Time travel is one of the themes of the novel. Billy time travels frequently and encounters

aliens in the novel, and Vonnegut explains this as the result of Billy's visit to Tralfamadore planet. Bloom (2009) believes that the reader is prompted to realize that Billy's symptoms indicate the presence of schizophrenia. Vonnegut's work demonstrates the brutality of war and the impact of its aftermath on survivors.

Indeed, traditional time travel stories have a fixed frame. The majority of time travel stories revolve around a traveller who is sent back (or forth) in time to see how different decisions have different outcomes. Time travel can therefore be used as a means by which Vonnegut exploits to the reader the reality that actually there was great deficiency of humanity and spirituality on earth as a result of the war thus causing people like Billy to desire escapism and seek asylum on other far-off places like the imaginary Tralfamadore where creatures are not doubly endowed with mortality as those on Earth (Shrestha 122).

Owing to the complex bureaucratic systems with which modern man must argue, he longs to go back in time and alter history in order to significantly alter the course of the present (Khaleel 92). In *Slaughterhouse-five*, Billy is abducted by extra-terrestrials from the planet Tralfamadore, who educate him that time does not move in a linear fashion as humans perceive it. For them, all moments occur concurrently and are organized accordingly. The narrator introduces Billy as follows

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. All moments, past, present and future, arranged themselves in a great branching chandelier, and Billy could wander through the chandelier, up one branch or down another, as freely as strolling through the rooms of a house. ... Billy wasn't preoccupied with the past. He could see it all anyway. It all existed and Billy could choose to look at any part of it (Vonnegut 23-4).

The time of the novel thus becomes Tralfamadorian time. Instead of being given as a clear, linear story, the events are mixed, partially narrated, and developed afterward.

Vonnegut's work may imitate the Tralfamadorian novels, which are meant to be read "all at

once" with "no beginning, no middle, and no end" Vonnegut employs or creates a novel technique of storytelling by presenting a sequence of episodes out of chronological order. According to him, it's the most effective way to illustrate how ridiculous war is (Khaleel 93). In his commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Salman Rushdie says:

It is perfectly possible, perhaps even sensible, to read Billy Pilgrim's entire Tralfamadorian experience as a fantastic, traumatic disorder brought about by his wartime experiences—as 'not real.' Vonnegut leaves that question open, as a good writer should. That openness is the space in which the reader is allowed to make up his or her own mind (Rushdie).

Time in the book is subjective and is set by the characters who are experiencing it. For instance, a British POW who is taken prisoner in Germany at the beginning of the war constructed a "timeless" prison camp, the routine of his life has shielded him from the past and the "outside" fight. Valencia and Billy's daughter Barbara, on the other hand, represents "normal," lived time. Barbara finds Billy's claims of a four-dimensional universe offensive since she believes life to be linear.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut delves into the bewildering effects of trauma and the psychological aftermath of conflict. He portrays the concept of a shattered and distorted sense of time to illustrate the disorienting nature of horrific experiences. This allows him to convey the deep and lasting impact of trauma on the human psyche.

Billy Pilgrim's transitions between several eras of his life are a coping strategy for horrific events in his past. Vonnegut admits in *The New York Times* interview in October 25, 1970 that he used his chaotic approach and refused to present the events linearly to illustrate the ridiculousness of war and the firebombing of Dresden, which left Billy Pilgrim with such horrible memories "I wrote the book to find a way to cope with the fact that I had been happy in Dresden for months while people were being killed all around me".

Billy uncontrollably unexpected flashbacks to happier times, such as his wedding or his optometry office, provide a brief escape from the horrors of Dresden. These jumps turn into an exhausting attempt to run from the oppressive present. This escape route is not a real solution, though. Avoidance can be a common trauma response, as noted by academics like Orr (1999), but it does not address the underlying problems.

Kurt Vonnegut confronts the challenge of fictionalising historical events as Thomas F Marvin mentions in his book *Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion to Popular Contemporary Writers* that "Time travel allows Vonnegut to create the impression that readers are looking at events as they happen, rather than through the mists of memory. But because most readers do not believe in time travel, the technique also highlights the artificiality of any writing about the past"(Marvin 114). Billy's time travel breaks traditional narratives by allowing viewers to witness events in real-time as if the reader is present when the action happens.

In Vonnegut's story, it is also the case that Billy has come to be a little independent. The narrator is no longer restricted to the orthodox notion of time; the narrator now can take Billy into whatever time he wants (Khaleel M.A 94). To give the reader an accurate picture of what it was like to live through a war, Vonnegut gives Billy the ability to travel through time to Dresden, for example "Billy Pilgrim has become unstuck in time" (10).

At any point in his life, he can suddenly find himself at a different point in his past or future. The concept of "unstuck in time" means that Billy has become free. This is what Marvin claims "Time travel allows Vonnegut to create the impression that readers are looking as events as they happen, rather than through the mists of memory. But because most readers do not believe in time travel, the technique also highlights the artificiality of any writing about the past" (Marvin 114).

The reader is then made aware of Billy's complete life story as well as his emotional side

through Vonnegut's unique way of revealing Billy's biography. The reader is given a comprehensive understanding of his true nature via Billy's frequent leaps between past and present. After graduating from high school, Billy, an ophthalmologist in Ilium, New York, enlists in the war and is captured by the Germans. Upon his return home, he marries his fiancée. Billy's jet crashes on the way to an optometrist convention, killing everyone but Billy. He relocates to New York City and publishes a newspaper article and radio speech on his visit to the alien planet Tralfamadore.

Billy discovers that he is "time tripping" among those on that planet. The Tralfamadorians do not believe in time since they believe it does not exist. Billy's capacity for time travel aids the author in making connections between the three main events of the novel: Billy's time spent on the alien planet, his everyday existence in Ilium, and the terror of the conflict in Dresden (Khaleel 95).

The Tralfamadorians see in four dimensions; instead of the three dimensions of space that humans are limited to understanding, the Tralfamadorians see the humans' three dimensions plus time. One can move between moments of life and death becoming "unstuck in time" because Tralfamadorian believe that all moments of time exist simultaneously. This encourages the reader to accept death as a natural part of life.

The narrator wonders about Billy Pilgrim wrestles with the concept of eternal life presented by the Tralfamadorians. He acknowledges it, but lacks enthusiasm.

If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadorian is true, that we will all live forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice (Vonnegut 99).

The idea that death becomes a temporary moment robs it of its meaning, potentially making life seem meaningless. However, Billy finds some comfort in the ability to revisit happy

moments within this endless cycle, suggesting a desire to cling to positivity in a universe that may feel increasingly meaningless.

In a linear timeline, cause and effect dictate our actions. We make choices based on past experiences and anticipate future consequences. However, when time becomes unstuck in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the traditional cause and effect chain breaks down.

In what relates to the theme of free will, the novel goes deep into the complexities of the free will, examining how war, time travel, and the Tralfamadorian all play a role in challenging the notion of it. According to Vonnegut, people are mere automatons who went through life without really considering their actions. He sees them as slaves to external forces, and even when they recognize the manipulation, they are unable or unwilling to change their circumstances.

The individuals who did exercise their free will were considered "characters," who have chosen to exercise their free will was always present, and individuals have the power to reject the external forces and claim their free will. But this is a difficult task in a society that actively works to obstruct access to free will. In *Slaughterhouse-five*, Vonnegut identifies religion and warfare as institutions that aims to deny individuals access to free will, and instead encourages them to focus on external purposes. This prevents people from exploring their inner selves which are necessary for true self-discovery and the exercise of free will.

In Vonnegut's view, most people were not content with what it meant to be human, and this was due to societal norms that dehumanized them based on his own experience as a drawing from personal experience, Kurt Vonnegut himself served in World War II and was captured during the Battle of the Bulge. He witnessed first-hand the brutal treatment of soldiers and the disregard for their individuality. Like the dehumanisation of Billy and his fellow soldiers who are treated as expendable resources rather than individuals. They are given numbers like dog tags on them, trained without mercy, and thrown into dangerous situations with little regard

for their welfare. For example, the constant threat of being court-martialled for even minor infractions creates a sense of fear and powerlessness.

However, Kurt Vonnegut also believes that the capacity to become a "character" Vonnegut's exploration of characters becoming aware of their fictional nature is a way to explore themes of metafiction, existentialism, and the power of storytelling itself. As a result, no one in his characters can be held responsible for their actions, making existence nothing more than a hopeless and unending loop of victimization (Shroeder 75- 7).

Despite this, Billy's search for meaning hints at a human desire to find agency and control even when events seem predetermined. The novel does not offer a definitive answer to the question of free will, so it pushes the readers to consider their own beliefs about choice and control in a world that can often feel chaotic. As it reflects Vonnegut's anxieties about the futility of war and the challenge of creating art in a world filled with violence.

According to Robert Merrill, Vonnegut is interested in quietism, which is a philosophy based on the idea that responsible people cannot influence modern life (177). Billy is unable to feel influenced by the events in his life because of his fervent quietist views. Vonnegut wants us to understand the catastrophic consequences of adopting such views [quietism] (Merrill 178). Rather than advocating for a quietist ideology, Vonnegut highlights the challenge of ignoring life's events through Billy's story. He invents the fictional character Billy Pilgrim to show why people should not react to tragic circumstances the same way that Billy does.

Through the tragic story of Billy, Vonnegut shows what can happen when a person feels that life has no meaning and that they have no control over their fate. The prayer, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom always to tell the difference " (28) is hung on the wall of Billy's office. While Vonnegut admits that there are certain phenomena beyond human control, he also emphasizes

that there are things that man can alter. Like Billy Pilgrim's kindness because despite the chaotic and often brutal events Billy experiences, he demonstrates acts of kindness throughout the novel. For example, he helps save Roland Weary from being executed by the Germans, and later shows compassion towards Edgar Derby in Dresden. These acts, though seemingly small, show Billy's agency and his ability to choose to act with kindness, even amidst the horrors of war.

Though this is only half of the lesson, Vonnegut wants the reader to understand "that it would be nice to possess the courage to change the things we can" (Harris 137). Vonnegut states, "Billy looked at the clock on the gas stove"(34). He had to wait an hour for the saucer to reach. Swinging the bottle like a dinner bell, he entered the living room and turned on the TV. Here, Billy, who has seen many events in his life, wastes time by drinking and watching TV.

This tale sequence best illustrates the idea that free will is a human illusion. Billy believes that life has no purpose and that he must spend his days doing what fate has decreed. We are left wondering what the point of existence is because of Billy's life (McGinnis 55). Billy believes that existence has no purpose and that he must spend his days carrying out the will of fate. It is evident from Billy's frailty and helplessness that the answer to the question is "man must arbitrarily make his own purpose" (McGinnis 55). Billy believes that everyone should seek their own purpose in life, as they do not have one from birth.

Billy believes that he won't need to look for his purpose because it will surely come to him through his predetermined fate. Even if it appears that having free will is a necessary quality of being human, in a world where fate and circumstance have such a powerful hold on existence, the sense of free will wanes. According to Sieber, Billy Pilgrim's name is a metaphor for the postmodernist movement which is a voyage through chaos that stands for the unknown, the meaninglessness of life, and the randomness of existence.

Vonnegut's characters grapple with the absurdity of war and existence, but they still try to find ways to live and connect, even if it's through dark humour or fleeting moments of joy. However, he was able to use his experiences to create powerful literature that continues to resonate with readers today. Kurt Vonnegut's authorial anxiety is not solely reflected through his themes, but rather through his innovative literary techniques. Vonnegut's use of unconventional narrative structures, unreliable narrators, and dark humour all serve as expressions of his underlying unease.

Chapter Three: Postmodern Techniques as Expressions of Anxiety in *Slaughterhouse-Five*:

The third chapter will examine the literary devices deployed in *Slaughterhouse-Five* that reflect the author's sense of anxiety. Kurt Vonnegut's horrific wartime experiences will be examined in this analysis, focusing on how they influenced his narrative techniques. The argument will be made that Vonnegut utilizes these techniques to create a fictional narrative, while simultaneously weaving his actual experiences with them. Even though the story deploys a number of technical choices, the main techniques that reflect the author's state of mind are dark humour, metafiction and Time-Travel.

III.1. Dark Humour as the Mask of Sadness:

"Black humour" is one of the key strategies that set Vonnegut apart from other postmodern authors. Black humor is common in postmodernism, Vonnegut's dark wit and sardonic delivery in the face of war's absurdity make it a signature element of his work. It is a technique of absurdism that is used to illustrate all the ridiculousness in the world. Todd F. Davis explains Kurt Vonnegut's use of humour in his book *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade; or, How a Postmodern Harlequin Preached a New Kind of Humanism*. He says:

Vonnegut uses humour to face what for many seems impossible to face: the lack of definitive control over human existence. His humour entails the absurdity of everyday events that consonantly thwart our intentions to make sense of the world, and, perhaps what makes Vonnegut the master of such humour is his ability to build absurdity upon absurdity, story upon story, toward a thunderous punch line that in the end appears to be an admonition to the reader not to journey down the dark path of absolutism but, rather, to embrace the free play of life in an attempt to help humanity (56).

That is to say, Vonnegut's humor serves to confront the unsettling reality that humans lack

absolute control over their own existence. His comedy is centred on the ridiculousness of everyday events that continuously frustrate our efforts to make sense of the world. In this way, he urges readers to accept life as it happens naturally and make an effort to better humanity.

The author's black humour in *Slaughterhouse-Five* exposes the flaws of Billy's passive coping mechanism, rejecting blind acceptance as a response to life's absurdity. The author's black humor in *Slaughterhouse-Five* exposes the flaws of Billy Pilgrim's passive coping mechanism. Vonnegut's signature dark wit, for instance, highlights the absurdity of Billy's repeated acceptance of the phrase "so it goes" in response to every tragedy, from a crushed insect to the firebombing of Dresden. This relentless repetition, punctuated by the dark humor, forces the reader to question the adequacy of Billy's resignation in the face of life's absurdity. As one scholar puts it "Vonnegut uses black humour at times to explore this so-called masculinization and maturation, the text is not a black comedy because it rejects Pilgrim's quietism as a legitimate way to handle the absurdity of existence" (Kunze 42).

Vonnegut's use of black humour in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is evident in his portrayal of war and violence. Consider the scene where Billy Pilgrim, abducted by aliens while fighting in World War II, encounters their non-linear perception of time. This alien concept places Billy "unstuck in time" (14) where he experiences moments from his life seemingly at random. The humour, dark and unsettling, arises from the absurdity of this situation. Billy, a soldier meant to be focused on the linear progression of war, is instead flung through his life, highlighting the powerlessness and meaninglessness of war in the grand scheme of time.

Through such use of black humour, Vonnegut is able to satirize the horrors of war and the human condition. Robert Scholes argues that one of the ways in which the horror that Vonnegut identifies in contemporary society is able to be considered is through the humour

present in his works. It provides sufficient support and strength to enable us to endure the distressing aspects of our reality without attempting to conceal them. It can be argued that comedy has the capacity to delve into the depths that tragedy is often afraid to explore. It can be also argued that the comic is the only form that has the capacity to consider absurdity (Scholes 1- 23).

The nuclear age has played a significant role in shaping Western society, and black humour has arisen as a necessary response to this new reality. However, black humour cannot be reduced to simple satire. While satire is a crucial element of this type of humour, it must also go beyond it. The absurdity of modern life cannot be fully captured through satire alone. "Black humour" must be able to offer a more nuanced, complex understanding of our world that goes beyond mere criticism. It must be able to explore the contradictions and paradoxes of our existence offering a way for us to cope with the challenges of modern life while also making sense of it.

Nevertheless, Vonnegut stated in *Head Booklist* "I find the label mystifying". It appears that Vonnegut realized that black humourists, in contrast to satirists, frequently conclude that nothing in life is valuable to preserve and that no cause is worth risking one's life for. He adds

I have told my sons that they are not under any circumstances to take part in massacres, and that the news of massacres of enemies is not to fill them with satisfaction or glee, I've got four boys of military age and none of them are going, It's a decision they reached on their own, I've certainly not brought any leverage one thing I've said to them, too, is that if I were them I would go .Out of morbid curiosity. This exasperates a lot of people. But, knowing myself, I think I probably would go, although I'd be sick about it the minute I got over there and realized I'd been had"(Vonnegut).

Vonnegut despises massacres and respects his sons' military choices. However, he admits potential "morbid curiosity" about war, sparking interpretations of hypocrisy and the inherent

complexity of war. The father's internal struggle with the anxieties evoked by war is intriguing. The quote presents a nuanced perspective, acknowledging the brutality of war while acknowledging the human fascination with conflict. This allows the reader to contemplate the complexities of war and individual choices.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut uses black humour to create a mock-serious tone that often leads to absurdity. The book follows Billy, his fellow POWs, and the guard detail in a meat locker that serves as a bomb shelter during the Dresden bombing. The term "meat locker" highlights the authorities' view of the prisoners as animals rather than human beings(77). Dresden's assassins are American prisoners' Allied soldiers, not Germans. The sarcastic tone juxtaposes the hopelessness of death with the human condition of life and family.

Nonetheless, Peter C. Kunze contends that despite Vonnegut's use of black humour, his writing is not a black comedy. Since the novel rejects Billy Pilgrim's acceptance of the absurdity of life. For instance, Billy Pilgrim's adoption of the Tralfamadorian doctrine that holds that "nothing can be changed" and "everything happens for a reason" is finally rejected in the book. Billy Pilgrim rejects the Tralfamadorian doctrine, recognizing its limitations and shortcomings. He realizes that this fatalistic worldview hinders his ability to process his experiences and confront the complexity of his past. As a result, he seeks a more active and meaningful life, rejecting the Tralfamadorian doctrine in favour of a nuanced understanding of agency and choice. Billy's acceptance of Tralfamadorian belief is challenged when he saves Edgar Derby from suicide after witnessing Dresden's firebombing, a war survivor overwhelmed by life's meaninglessness.

Rather than being humorous or absurd, the tragic events in Pilgrim's life such as his time in the military and the death of his family are shown as profoundly moving and tragic. Billy is an unprepared soldier who was drafted. He experiences the brutality of the Battle of the

Bulge, his capture by the Germans and the bombing of Dresden. His personal tragedies, including his inability to form lasting relationships and the loss of his wife Valencia, compound his trauma.

By finding value in oneself, one can develop the resilience to navigate life's challenges and find fulfilment on their own terms (Anderson 20). When faced with the dismal prognosis of life, people may react with scorn, resignation, or defiance. However, Vonnegut suggests that an even better reaction is laughter, or knowing how to take a joke, by taking a humorous approach to life's difficulties and absurdities, one can find perspective and resilience. This involves recognizing the inherent humour in the human condition, and not taking oneself too seriously. Laughter can also be a way to cope with the inevitable disappointments and tragedies of life.

By finding joy and humour in the midst of difficult circumstances, one can maintain a positive outlook and find strength in the face of adversity (20-1) June A. Anderson claims in his book that Kurt Vonnegut was well-known for his use of absurdist themes and dark humour in his writing. He expressed in his writings his acceptance of the harsh fact that life ends in death. This idea is emphasized in his works, where he frequently depicts people who are having a hard time making sense of their existence in a chaotic and meaningless world.

A better term to describe what Vonnegut often does in his fiction would be "gray comedy," (Kunze 42). "Gray comedy" is a combination of a restrained sense of hope and absurdist black humour (Kunze 42). This rejection of Billy Pilgrim's quietism ultimately positions Vonnegut's work as a commentary on the human condition rather than a mere black comedy. Hope exists, or at least the belief that there is hope for the future. So, in the case of Vonnegut, black humour is the humour that is discovered during sorrow, despair, or fear. It can show itself as a personal suffering or as a generically miserable perspective on life in general.

There are incidents in *Slaughterhouse-Five* that make the reader laugh even though the

book may not be full of funny moments and delightful satire. In one scene, an alcoholic Billy is shown desperately searching for the steering wheel of his car: "He was in the backseat of his car, which is why he couldn't find the steering wheel" (21). In an alternate chapter, Billy is "unstuck" in time while watching a television program, which causes him to see a war video backwards and then forwards(34).

Additionally, the phrase "So it goes" and dark humour are frequently used in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* to provoke a particular emotional response from the reader and to underscore the pointlessness of death. In A New Yorker interview Selman Rushdie states " "So it goes" is not a way of accepting life but, rather, of facing death. It occurs in the text almost every single time someone dies, and only when death is evoked".

Throughout the novel, the Tralfamadorians use the phrase more than a hundred times. As the reader reads the book, the phrase starts out as ironically humorous but gets more and more annoying and disrespectful. Every death in the novel is punctuated with this statement, which forces the reader to consider each one separately. According to Wepler Ryan the narrator provides an explanation of the meaning of the phrase at the beginning. According to the temporal framework of the Tralfamadorians who capture Billy, all moments are simultaneously present. Consequently, the Tralfamadorians perceive a deceased individual as being in an unfavourable state during that specific instant, which they acknowledge by saying "so it goes." The fatalistic nihilism conveyed by the phrase "so it goes" diminishes the significance of each death it is associated with, reducing them to a morally and emotionally inconsequential level (107).

This perspective on the world involves believing that existence is meaningless and that everyone will eventually pass away. The Tralfamadorians teach Billy that time is not a linear thing and that, thus, his death has already happened and he cannot alter the circumstances leading up to it. Billy finds comfort in the idea that a dead body is just a person who, while

"just fine" at other times, is "in bad condition in that particular moment"(13).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, death is portrayed less as the end of a person's existence and more as an unavoidable event. For example, Billy "has seen his death many times"(66) from his time travels, so when the time comes, he is hilarious and at ease on his deathbed. Thus, one should avoid focusing on or thinking about death for a long amount of time.

Following his shooting by Paul Lazzaro, Billy experiences death. The narrator does not state that Billy dies, but rather that Billy "swings back into life again"(67). Billy's complete acceptance of death raises the possibility that the Tralfamadorians are a creation of his own imagination, a sophisticated coping mechanism designed to explain the many fatalities he witnessed during the fighting. Billy's belief that death is merely an experience allows him to have hope that all the people who were killed in the Dresden bombing are still alive and well somewhere.

In the view of this, the reader can evidently conceive the novel as an example of satire even though Kurt Vonnegut's writing goes beyond the conventional definition of satire which makes it impossible to characterize him purely as such. In *Slaughterhouse Five*, Vonnegut explores themes of fate, war, aliens, and the meaning of life itself in a cynical way. Thus, for the most part, he uses satire to convey his sense of cynicism. It is a literary device in which an author uses absurdity to convey a point by mocking other people's writing, social customs, or other works of art. It, usually, blends humour with sarcasm ("*Satire in Slaughterhouse Five*").

Like other forms of art, satire explores the nature of reality. Satire, on the other hand, emphasizes and exaggerates aspects that seem real but are actually not, in contrast to other creative genres that concentrate on capturing reality. This kind of artistic expression questions our views of reality and makes us think critically about things we often take for sure by using comedy, irony, and exaggeration to focus on societal concerns, human behaviour, or political events.

Leonard Feinberg, in *Introduction to Satire* claims "like other arts, the best satire is concerned with the nature of reality. Unlike other arts, which emphasize what is real, satire emphasizes what seems to be real but is not" (19). This is, in fact, applicable to *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

When asked about his work as a satirist in an interview, Vonnegut's response was a prime illustration of his ability to blend and "put on" humour, satire, and ridicule. He says

People ask me to define satire and you know? I've never even bothered to look it up I wouldn't know whether I'm a satirist or not. One thing about being a chemistry major at Cornell, I've never worried about questions like that. It was never important for me to know whether I was one or not (4).

Vonnegut's disposition toward self-satisfaction is seen in his minimizing of his use of satire, even though it is a defining feature of his work.

From every perspective, it is evident how he skilfully manipulates the people, time, location, and narration, consistently incorporating a touch of dark humour that elicits both laughter and tears. For this reason, certain commentators referred to him as a black humourist, a designation he typically attempted to avoid (Dano 274). This shows that Vonnegut might not have written satire on purpose, but rather employed it to highlight social injustices or spark debate. This is evident, for instance, when Vonnegut produces an unexpected contrast by showing the war through the perspective of a protagonist who seems like a child. This presents the reader with a surprising and thought-provoking way to face the brutal realities of war.

Furthermore, Vonnegut deploys other techniques, akin to satire, to express his philosophical inquiries about death and war. For instance, in his book *All This Happened, More or Less': Making Sense of the War Experience Through Humor in 'Slaughterhouse-Five' and 'The Sirens of Titan*, Rosemary explores how Kurt Vonnegut explores challenging

subjects playfully and sarcastically by utilizing irony and allegory. The author points out that by employing these strategies, Vonnegut was able to establish an emotional detachment from his subject matter, which consequently gave him the ability to address these subjects from a different angle. Vonnegut was able to make provocative claims and criticise the religious establishment that defends war as being in line with God's purpose by employing irony and metaphor.

Science fiction, accordingly, is manipulated to convey Vonnegut's ironies. Ellen Cronan Rose puts it this way about the author's playful perspective on the genre: "Vonnegut doesn't take science fiction seriously" (15). She believes that other writers take science fiction much more seriously than Vonnegut does. Vonnegut, according to her, uses humour and satire to comment on several aspects of culture and society. In doing so, he subverts the conventions of science fiction and offers an unusual perspective on the genre.

In terms of characterisation, the war and its absurdity really affected Kurt Vonnegut in his choices when it comes to his character, that's why he makes Billy as an immature character. Kurt Vonnegut's choice of using a character like Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five* may not have had any definitive reason, but it served several literary purposes. One of the primary purposes was to highlight the trauma of war. Through Billy's childlike perspective, the loss of innocence that war inflicts is emphasized. Billy's young age and lack of preparedness to witness the horrific events force him to retreat into a childlike state as a coping mechanism. This showcases the devastating impact war can have on a young, unprepared mind.

Furthermore, the trauma Billy experiences manifests in his childlike behaviour, dissociation, and time travel. This unconventional portrayal reflects the psychological damage war can cause and the difficulty of processing such experiences. By portraying Billy as vulnerable and childlike, Vonnegut evokes empathy from the reader. We see the war through his innocent eyes, making the horrors of combat even more disturbing and highlighting the

importance of empathy for the victim.

Billy Pilgrim, a professional optometrist, goes by the name Billy instead of his more professional-sounding name, William. Despite the fact that it does not sound very professional, his father-in-law, who set him up in practice, encouraged him to go by Billy for business reasons. He believes that it would stick in people's memories and make him seem slightly magical as there were not many grown Billy's around. However, this name also assigns an immature and childish-like nature to his character, which is evident from Barbara's statement, "if you're going to act like a child, maybe we'll just have to treat you like a child" (61). It is ironic that the name Billy makes people think of him as a friend because he felt like an outcast for most of his life. It is only after he meets the inhabitants of Tralfamadore that he finds a sense of belonging.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut employs a multitude of techniques to interweave humour into the fabric of a profoundly disturbing narrative. This dark humour is not intended to minimise the horrors of war or death. Instead, it becomes a coping mechanism for the characters and a lens for the reader. It creates a novel philosophical perspective, one that acknowledges the absurdity of existence. Dark Humour serves as a coping mechanism for the individual and a lens for the reader, allowing him to grapple with life's tragedies and find fragmented beauty and resilience in the face of the seemingly meaningless.

III.2. Metafiction as Reflection of Anxiety:

Kurt Vonnegut uses metafiction in *Slaughterhouse-Five* to portray the protagonist's post-war angst by defying standard storytelling conventions. Thus, the protagonist's profound experience is shown through the fragmented narrative and self-serving components. This is done through several techniques.

First, there are two separate narrators who appear in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, intending to subvert the traditional notion of the narrator. One could argue that identifying and

evaluating the stylistic techniques and strategies that Vonnegut uses throughout the book require a comprehension of the book's narrative style. Vonnegut's opening line, which mentions the "anxiety" writing cost him, blurs the line between author and narrator. This suggests that he was anxious about the quality or reception of the book, and that the writing process itself was a metafictional element:

I would hate to tell you what this lousy little book cost me in money and anxiety and time. When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, 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 (1).

Examples of the novel's self-reflexive narrative structure can be found throughout the text. For instance, at the book's beginning, the author states, "Listen, I said, 'I'm writing this book about Dresden'" (3) making it clear that he is writing the book specifically to recount the experiences he went through while being in Dresden (3). Also, the novel's first few pages feature an introduction from the author detailing the difficulties of writing about Dresden and his writing obstacles. Vonnegut tells the reader, in the first section, that the novel's plot is based on his memories of the World War II bombardment of Dresden.

Vonnegut assumes the role of the narrator in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. From the outset, Vonnegut establishes his role as a character within the novel, clearly articulating his objectives with respect to the unfolding narrative. Furthermore, he provides a list of the opening and closing sentences of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut discloses that he was indeed held captive as a prisoner of war during the Dresden bombing, which lends credibility to his subsequent portrayals of Billy Pilgrim in Dresden. With the exception of the initial and concluding chapters, in which he discusses his own life, Vonnegut only occasionally allows himself to be incorporated into Billy's narrative. He frequently manifests his existence by

consistently uttering the phrase "so it goes" following each reference to death. This remark serves to blur the boundaries between Vonnegut as the narrator, a character, and the author (*"Slaughterhouse-Five: Questions & Answers"*).

The Third person is the narrator once the author starts delivering his story. In the midst of the story, the narrator reports that "An American near Billy wailed that he had excreted everything but his brains" (58), although Billy may be present at the event, it is the third-person narrator who provides the specific detail. He whispers "There they go, there they go," after a short while. He is talking about his intelligence. "That's who I was. That was me. That person was the author of this piece" (58). Here is where the reader may see an indication of metafictional narration as the author steps into Billy's story.

The last chapter, in which the author appears as a separate character in the narrative, is another instance of metafiction. He says

Billy Pilgrim was meanwhile traveling back to Dresden, too, but not in the present. He was going back there in 1945, two days after the city was destroyed. Now Billy and the rest were being marched into the ruins by their guards. I was there. O'Hare was there. We had spent the past two nights in the blind inn-keeper's stable. Authorities had found us there.

They told us what to do (100).

In his narrative, Kurt Vonnegut directly inserts himself as a character alongside Billy Pilgrim, thus breaking the fourth wall, the invisible barrier between the story and the reader, and blurring the lines between reality and fiction. By stating that he was present with Billy in Dresden, Vonnegut suggests a personal connection to the events of the story. This could be interpreted as a means of acknowledging the author's own experiences that served as the inspiration for the novel. Alternatively, it could be viewed as a metafictional technique employed to enhance the reader's engagement with the narrative.

III.3. Time-travel Technique as an Exhibition of Trauma:

Vonnegut makes a significant use of time-travel technique. Billy's shifting of time enhances the structure of the story as a nonlinear narrative. The reader experiences a shift in perspective when reading a story that jumps back and forth in time because Billy's horrific recollections are inserted into the narrative. Billy is a figure that shifts between his birthdate and the moment he was abducted to the planet Tralfamadore, two distinct periods in time. The narrative does not tell Billy's life story in chronological sequence, where each event is told one after the other.

In the book, the Tralfamadorians reveal the following about the relativity of time:

All moments, past, present and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just that way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever (12-3).

Vonnegut breaks the reader's conception of time down with his Tralfamadorian view of time. His aim to reconstruct time and reality as a relative entity is reflected in his fragmented narrative style. Using the Tralfamadorian interpretation of time, Vonnegut challenges conventional idea of sequential time.

Billy's trauma is represented by his back-and-forth travels while narrating his eerie past experiences. Billy's warped perspective of time and reconciliation of the horrific memories he travels back to be made possible by the Tralfamadorians' simultaneous existence of the past, present, and future.

In conclusion, the combination of black humour, metafiction, and time travel in *Slaughterhouse-Five* serves as a powerful reflection of Kurt Vonnegut's anxieties as an

author. Black humour enables him to confront the traumatic realities of war in an honest and unsettling way. The use of metafiction enables Vonnegut to express his doubts and anxieties about the creative process itself, thereby blurring the distinction between reality and fiction. Finally, the concept of time travel reflects the disorientation and trauma caused by war, mirroring the fragmented nature of memory and the struggle to find meaning in a seemingly absurd world. These techniques are employed in a novel that is both complex and thought-provoking, and which lays bare the emotional toll of war and the challenges of confronting its harsh realities.

Conclusion:

This dissertation asserted that *Slaughterhouse-Five* is profoundly influenced by Vonnegut's anxieties as a writer. The novel features a story where the protagonist experiences his life's events in what appears to be a random order where the ending comes before the beginning. This structure reflects the fractured psyche of a war veteran. The analysis of the novel delved into examining how the author's deliberate use of an unconventional narrative structure is a deliberate expression of his authorial anxieties caused by war trauma. It also examined how the deconstruction of traditional forms and the fragmented nature of identity within the text serve as a representation of Vonnegut's personal challenges and anxieties.

In addition, the work examined Vonnegut's use of metafictional elements to illustrate how his anxieties manifest in his self-conscious commentary on writing itself. Specific elements such as the nonlinear narrative, time jumps, lack of clear chronology, dark humour, and metafictional narration demonstrate Vonnegut's anxieties about his authorial identity and reflect his concern about his limitations as an. In the end it analyses the fragmented structure of the novel as a reflection of the author's struggles.

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Résumé

Cette recherche examine le roman de Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1968), en se concentrant sur l'anxiété d'auteur de l'auteur et sur la façon dont ses pensées profondes et ses inquiétudes persistantes en tant qu'écrivain ont influencé les choix thématiques de son travail et les techniques utilisées. Cela se fera à travers le prisme du postmodernisme, avec un accent particulier sur l'influence de l'anxiété d'auteur de Vonnegut sur le contenu du livre et les techniques utilisées pour représenter la guerre et la violence. Les liens profonds entre l'identité de Vonnegut en tant qu'écrivain et ses luttes internes donnent lieu à un contenu non conventionnel et à des techniques spécifiques utilisées dans *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Ce document de recherche se compose de trois chapitres. Le premier sera une exploration théorique des problèmes liés à la notion d'auteur et de leur influence sur les écrivains postmodernes américains. Le deuxième chapitre se concentrera sur les choix thématiques de Kurt Vonnegut qui reflètent son anxiété d'auteur. Le troisième chapitre examinera les dispositifs littéraires déployés dans *Slaughterhouse-Five* qui reflètent le sentiment d'anxiété de l'auteur

Mots-clés : Kurt Vonnegut – Angoisse auctoriale – Postmodernisme – Fragmentation narrative – Métafiction – Guerre et violence

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث رواية كيرت فونيجوت "المسلخ الخامس" (1968) مع التركيز على قلق المؤلف كمؤلف وكيف أثرت أفكاره العميقة ومخاوفه المستمرة ككاتب على الاختيارات الموضوعية لعمله والتقنيات المستخدمة. وسيتم ذلك من خلال عدسة ما بعد الحداثة، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على تأثير قلق فونيجوت كمؤلف على محتوى الكتاب والتقنيات المستخدمة لتصوير الحرب والعنف. إن الروابط العميقة بين هوية فونيجوت ككاتب وصراعاته الداخلية تؤدي إلى محتوى غير تقليدي وتقنيات محددة مستخدمة في "المسلخ الخامس". تتكون ورقة البحث هذه من ثلاثة فصول. سيكون الفصل الأول استكشافاً نظرياً للمشاكل المتعلقة بمفهوم التأليف وتأثيرها على الكتاب الأمريكيين ما بعد الحداثيين. سيركز الفصل الثاني على الاختيارات الموضوعية لكورت فونيجوت التي تعكس قلقه كمؤلف. سيفحص الفصل الثالث الأجهزة الأدبية المستخدمة في "المسلخ الخامس" والتي تعكس شعور المؤلف بالقلق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كورت فونيجوت - قلق المؤلف - ما بعد الحداثة - تجزئة السرد - الخيال الميتافيزيقي - الحرب والعنف.