

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC
RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF- M'SILA**

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N°:

CIVILIZATION



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE &

**The Poetics of Pain through Kurt Vonnegut's
*Slaughterhouse-Five***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial
Fulfilment of Requirements for the Master's Degree**

By:

Miss. Rima SAADAoui

and

Miss. Imane NASRI

2017 / 2018

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2017 /2018

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled, “The Poetics of Pain through Kurt’s Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse-Five*” is our own work and that all the sources we have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents my father and my mother. My gratitude is extended to my sisters Imen, Intissare, Bassma, and lovely twins Amani and Tahani.

I dedicate this work to my dear brothers Bassem and Islah for their encouragement and support. My deepest love and appreciation go to my friend Nabil for his endless help and for the preparation of materials for this study. Special thanks are addressed to my friends Khawla, Salima, Asma, Amina, Amira, Rania. I am also grateful to dedicate this work for the candles of my family Balssem, Maraim, Ibrahim and Shahd.

To my father Nassri Abd El Rahman and my mother Malika and my husband Abd Razak I dedicate this work.

My deepest thank go to my brothers Ilyas and youcef and my lovely sister Lobna for their supports.

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We would like to thank all teachers of English Department who gave us assistance in many ways. There is quite a lot to say, but our words fail to express all our gratitude.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation discusses pain in Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" by the help of New Historicist point of view. The chosen corpus of this study is "*Slaughterhouse-Five*", a novel written by Kurt Vonnegut within post modern features. It is published in 1969, marked Vonnegut's artistic and commercial breakthrough. It is based on Vonnegut's own experiences as a WWII prisoner who witnessed the Allied firebombing of Dresden, Germany. Throughout the work, Vonnegut's protagonist "Billy Pilgrim" is a man who has come "unstuck of time" and suffering from different psychological diseases. Without any forewarning, Billy finds himself suddenly transported to other points in time in his own past or future. Thus, the extraordinary events that happen to Billy from witnessing the Dresden firebombing to being kidnapped by aliens, summarizes many themes of Vonnegut's work; these include the limitation of human action in seemingly random and meaningless universe, escape from reality, suffering and pain. The main purpose of the present dissertation is to investigate and to explore how, pain, horror and sad feelings change the individual personality that pushes him to escape from the real world to a fictional one, because whenever Billy Pilgrim remembers the things happened in Dresden it seems that he sets out for Tralfamadore. Therefore, the study aims, broadly, at elucidating how a pain, trauma, and horror that occurred factually on the historical scenes of WWII are poetically portrayed through the protagonist of Kurt Vonnegut "Billy Pilgrim". To achieve this goal, the study called for a New Historicism approach, because this latter is used to contextualize history within a literary text. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*", is a work that reproduces the historical involvement within a literary context.

Key Words: WWII -Slaughterhouse-Five -Pain -Dresden -Billy Pilgrim- New Historicism

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It is believed that literature is a repository of both art and history at the same time and it is the recording of human experience too. It is not only a sort of artistic manipulation but it also reflects historical and cultural artifact. Literature introduces the readers into new worlds of experiences in which it evokes the feelings and thoughts to enter into true communication with the literary work. Kurt Vonnegut is among many writers who artistically portray the tragedy and trauma of the WWII in such a way that poeticizes pain in his novel postmodern masterpiece "*Slaughterhouse-Five*".

Published in 1969, Kurt Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse-Five*", is one of the representative works of American literature. It tackles the events arising from the author's personal experiences vis à vis WWII; particularly the horrors of the Dresden Bombing.

"*Slaughterhouse-Five*", or firstly entitled "*Duty Dance with Death: The Children Crusades*", is a science fiction novel about WWII experiences and a journey through time of a soldier called "Billy Pilgrim". Billy is disoriented and fatalist American soldier who is captured by the Germans during the Battle of Bulge 1944 and taken to a makeshift prison in Dresden slaughterhouse. Billy survives of firebombing of Dresden in WWII and he has come unstuck in time because of his traumatic experience in the wake of the Dresden air raid. He experiences past, present and future events out sequence and repetitively following a nonlinear narrative. This dissertation hence focuses on the way pain and sad self-experience affect the individual and pushes him to escape from reality as represented in the novel through the protagonist "Billy Pilgrim".

The main purpose of the present dissertation, hence, is to show how trauma, pain and horror that occurred factually on the historical scenes of WWII are poetically delineated in Billy Pilgrim's character. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" is considered as an anti-war novel through delving into the personality of the main character "Billy Pilgrim". Such a choice is fuelled by many other reasons which inform the rationale of the research. Therefore, the study equally

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aims to identify the impact of the war on Billy, examine the factor responsible for his painful experience through a deeper analysis of his character and the way these factors interfere in shaping his personality and investigate how a personal experience can create a significant change on the self of an individual. In addition to that, how does pain as a result of the tragedy of WWII is poeticized in the novel.

This research can be helpful because it elucidates the relationship between history and reality and improves the reader understanding of New Historicism. In addition to that readers can ask questions about how New Historicism copes with literary works at psychological levels more than the historical ones. Additionally the study examines the way Kurt Vonnegut uses it throughout his novel. Therefore, the motoring issue to be tackled in this work can be reformulated as the following question: To what extent does “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”, reproduce the historical experiences of the Dresden Bombing that Kurt Vonnegut himself had gone via poeticizing the pain of the protagonist Billy pilgrim?

For the reason that, the research is going to present an analytical assessment of Kurt Vonnegut “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”, the study called for New Historicism. In the light of this theory, the study aims broadly at showing how Vonnegut uses his work as an effective paradigm to delineate his pain within Billy Pilgrim the leading character of the story using New Historicism as theory to this study. In fact, New Historicism viewed that the literary work is cultural and social outcome shaped by a specific period. It will try to elucidate the motives that make Billy’s suffering from pain, madness and horror through his own experiences relying on postmodernism elements including fragmentation, nonlinear narrative and science fiction. The study has resorted to new historicist criticism to trace the marriage between history and literature at the same time or the political involvement of literature.

Until recently, many researchers have shown interest to Kurt Vonnegut’s “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”, which remains as one of the fascinating and educative novels by this author and which brings the history of WWII to the minds of youngsters and generations to come. The novel is considered to be the main influential and most popular work of modern American literature. Such researchers have carried out numerous studies for the more comprehension of the novel. Those presented ideas related to the subject and their findings and suggestion are reviewed here under the aim of showing the motivation of the main character’s struggle and his traumatized or tragic life.

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Many modern and postmodern critics tried to examine the style and the structure of Kurt Vonnegut and how he implements his literary techniques in narrating the novel on the protagonist “Billy Pilgrim”. This aspect is shown in Jennifer Moody’s “*Mixing Fantasy with Fact*” (2009) which gives a credit worthy critic of the novel “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”. Moody shows how Vonnegut applied different literary styles to achieve his prospects of mixing fantasy with facts by inventing the character of Billy. Thus, Vonnegut portrays realistic events fictionally and also fantastically.

Additional work held by Matheson.T.J “*The Lousy Little Book*” (1984); He believes that the information contained in the book are evidence based regardless of the fact that there are some episodes which have a lot of fiction. According to him dependability of the book in terms of the structure that is used and the style should not be distrusted.

On the other hand, McGinnis Wayne D “*The Arbitrary Cycle of Slaughterhouse-Five*” (1975) who confirms in his article that, the story of Vonnegut just like his character jumps forward and backward as he described the life of Billy. For instance, he shows the experiences of Billy during the fire-bombing of Dresden by the aliens. According to him, the major theme of “*Slaughterhouse-Five*” is to present the historical events of Dresden and that readers need to read deeper to understand the author’s emphatic anti-war stance. This due to the literary techniques that author’s applies in his writing, to make his work unique, interesting and dynamic to all generations.

This dissertation is important in terms of dealing with Vonnegut’s work from deeper perspective. It is an autobiography study of Vonnegut’s protagonist that attempts to investigate the whole reasons behind Billy’s destruction because of the Dresden Bombing. For equally, this work is important in the sense that it tackles a novel from New Historicist point of view. It aims also to discuss New Historicist features embodied in the novel and how it makes the work acceptable and unique for critics. For that reason, new historicist criticism is done to analyze the character of Billy Pilgrim. This literary analysis portrays the self as product of the individual painful experience. Billy’s tragedy is not only the tragedy of an American being affected by the horrific effects of WWII but it is the story of everyman having bad memories in the inner self.

Structurally speaking, the work is divided along three main axes. The first chapter will be devoted to the theoretical foundations that are paramount in order to set the base of this

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study. It is under the heading “The Socio-Historical and Theoretical Background”. It tackles a historical overview of WWII as well as the Dresden Bombing. It is also deals with New Historicism as a new philosophy which appeared to revolutionize the idea of the historicity of literature. Therefore, this chapter treats Modernism and Postmodernism as schools to this new philosophy.

The second chapter under the title “Dragging History into Literature: Poeticizing WWII Pain in *Slaughterhouse-Five*” will be an analytical framework. It will shed light on Vonnegut’s Pain toward the War and its relation to his Character “Billy Pilgrim”. While, the third chapter entitled “Power of Language and Letters Speak Louder of Tragedy: A Stylistic Analysis of *Slaughterhouse-Five*”, aims to express the manifestation of pain in the novel through language.

Chapter One:
The Socio-Historical and Theoretical
Background

CHAPTER ONE: THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Literature has the potential of making different experiences available and generating discussion on previously ignored issue. It has the power to string together various events throughout time and to encourage readers to do the same. Literature can work as an agent of change by creating social awareness and encouraging action. The broadest sense of literature is any single body of written works. Also, it is writing deemed to have artistic or intellectual value. It foregrounds “poetic” effects which is the literariness or poetic of literature. In one time, literature was very significant about conveying emotions, feelings, thoughts even human experience. Hence, through the late waves of changes that literature witnessed, it became more related to history too.

History and literature are disciplines that deal with much more than numbers. They both have to do with feelings, emotions and different ways of thinking. To understand history you must understand the context and to understand literature you must read between lines. Literature and history are both arts that reflect who we are how we think and both can change how we see life. Thus, literature includes written records of events that are history. It allows humanity to have a collective source of memories of events from the past. The hope would be that people would able to learn by reviewing those records and seeing patterns, making connections and generalization about events or attitudes and consequences of those occurrences. The writing down of history allows people to progress beyond one stage of thought or development, building on what has gone before.

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History shape many forms of literature. One tends to get ideas for literature from things that have happened. Sometimes this comes in the form of non-fiction literature and sometimes it comes in the form of allegories or allusions. One cannot fully understand a piece of literature unless he understands its history and the history of those that wrote it. History can shape the way that persons view literature. Literature can also shape the way that persons view history. It is said that history is written by the victors.

As a matter of fact, the relationship between history and literature is complicated with each affecting the other. One main contention of the so-called “new historicist” approach to literary criticism is that history does not simply provide a “context” for literature by many “contexts” and that literature in turn can affect history in numerous and unpredictable ways. The relationship between history and literature saw great debates among historians and critics. As a solution to these debates, New Historicism appeared to solve the problem of historicity of literary text and textuality of historical truth. Since the novel’s main theme reflects WWII tragedies. Chapter one devotes space for New Historicism as the theoretical key to deal with Vonnegut’s novel “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”.

One might say that, New Historicism is a form of literary theory whose goal is to understand history through literature and literature through its cultural context. This approach posits that literary works are not singular or solitary forms, but instead a product of different networks of socio-material practices. It is also a hugely influential approach to literature in the early modern period.

Kurt Vonnegut gets in artistic manner, the events from his WWII experience as well as the Dresden bombing. The WWII was a time of trauma, blood and new philosophical ideas, which help in the change of human mind and their way of thinking as Postmodernism. This new literary movement brings a new literature which is different from the previous one. Like modernist literature, postmodern literature is part of socio-cultural and historical development and can be seen as a specific way of depiction to the postmodern life and culture.

The theoretical section of this chapter is going to tackle a brief overview about WWII and the firebombing of Dresden as a historical event during the war. For equally, it deals with Post modernity and Postmodernism in order to shed light on the sphere where the novel

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"Slaughterhouse-Five" was written and published in 1969. In addition to New Historicism as a literary theory for this study.

I- Historical Background of the Second World War '1939-1945':

The WWII has primarily been retold by western and, more particularly, European historians among them Mark Mazower, professor of history at Columbia University in New York. He portrays in his book *"Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century"*, the idea that Europe's twentieth century as one characterized primarily by violence. It is an era in which ideologies inspired entire people to fight to the death. He covers this idea in his quotation *"no experience was more crucial to the development of the European history than the second world war"*(Mazower 3).

The WWII, 1939-1945, was the central event of the European history and the most destructive and deadliest conflict that the world has ever seen. It affected virtually every corner of the globe. The WWII was not only the largest destructive war in human history. It fundamentally changed social, economic and political trends in Europe, North America and Asia. Moreover, it marched through Europe and across the Pacific and Eastern Asia pitted the Axis powers of Nazi Germany fascist, Italy and Japan against the Allied nation of Great Britain, France, China, the United States and the Soviet Union. Both belligerents were in struggle to gain control and power over the entire world. The period between 1939-1945, six million people lost their lives. It was fought on land, sea and even in air with weapons that have been first used in this Great War in which some historians called it "war to end all wars". In addition to its advance in weapons technology that gave the capacity for all the countries involved in the war to fight in more efficient and more deadly manner.

Some historians argued that WWI did not solve any of the problems which had brought it. Among them A.J.P Taylor who states in his book *"The Origins of the Second World War"* this quotation *"The second world war is a repeat performance of the first"* (100). In this sense the instability created in Europe (1914-1918) set the stage for another international conflict. WWII, which broke out two decades later and would prove even more devastating. Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939 drove Great Britain, France and Poland but with the emergence of the war, more countries joined that ally such as the United States of America, China and the Soviet Union. Therefore the war started by the German

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control, but later on, it was joined by Italy, Japan, Hungary and Romania making the Axis powers. After that the Soviet Union also belonged with them by the invasion of Germany.

After WWI there was many events that would take place to lead up to WWII, these events would be the reasoning that the WWII would even take place. Most of the causes of WWII came out of the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty did not bring peace to Europe after 1919. It certainly helped the rise of Adolf Hitler to power in Germany and some historians believe that it was one of the crucial causes of WWII. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) was a document signed between Germany and the allied powers following WWI that officially ended that war. The treaty enacted severe punitive damages on Germany including seizure of territory, loss of colonies reduction of its military to a symbolic size and requirements it pay reparations to the victor. The historian Georges Clemenceau who talks about the harsh things that were in the treaty in his article *"Writing in 1921 about the need to subject Germany to harsh terms in the Treaty"* saying that: *"finally were there not, as to –day, Germans, beaten but not crushed, ready by a rare blending of shameless trickery and pugnacity to aspire to hegemony"*. Hence, when the Treaty of Versailles was written, the Allies particularly France and England were very angry at Germany and wanted to punish it as harshly as they could. They took away all of Germany's colonies and prohibited them from having a full military. In addition to that, they forced Germany to admit all guilt for the war and they required it to pay a large amount of money in reparations to the Allies. Germans were very upset about the forms of the treaty. They felt that this treaty was extremely unfair to them. This pushed them to get revenge on the allies because they had been deprived of their ability to have a strong military. The German's anger about the treaty helped to bring Adolf Hitler and the Nazis to power that brought WWII about. As Lloyd George stipulates in his article *"Talking about the Treaty of Versailles"* he declares: *"we shall have to fight another war again in 25 years time"* (2).

On the other hand, the Appeasement Policy was among the major reasons that caused WWII. Because it allowed Hitler and the Nazis to build Germany military power until it was strong enough to fight a major war. The term appeasement can be defined as giving in and to someone's demands to maintain the level of world peace in the world and avoid conflict as much as possible. This was the policy of giving Hitler what he wanted to stop him from going to war. It was based on the idea that what Hitler wanted was reasonable and, when his

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reasonable demands had been satisfied, he would stop. Starting from 1933, Britain and France used the Policy of Appeasement to a number of countries, such as Japan, Italy and most importantly, Germany. The Policy of Appeasement was used by the two leaders of Britain and France to maintain world peace more power just when Britain and France gave into him. Then, in March 1939, Hitler attacks Poland and Britain finally declares war on Germany and it was the beginning of WWII. In addition to that, France and Britain chooses the Appeasement Policy because Hitler's complaints seemed reasonable at the time, for example the harsh terms in Treaty of Versailles which was signed on 28th June 1919. Germany was not allowed conscription, air force and their defense and armaments were heavily cut, hence it seemed reasonable to give Germany what they wanted. Even the public was scared of war and believed in peace and negotiations, especially the Prime Minister of Britain, Neville Chamberlain, who first pursued the policy of appeasement. He initiated this policy and discussed it in many works such as his book *"The Makings of the West "*. In this book he confidently announced that he had secured *"peace for our time"* (861).

The Policy of Appeasement did not fully cause the WWII. The Great Depression in October 1929 which started in America also triggered WWII. This event definitely opened a beginning of the road to war. Many countries in 1920s depended for their loans as they had to pay reparations. Even big and powerful countries such as Britain and France were gradually corrupting from poverty and unemployment. Germany was the most affected as lost a lot of their raw materials and resources as they lost a lot of important lands like Alsace-Lorraine, which contained abundant materials for armaments and the Saarland which was a rich mining site. This economic crisis "The Great Depression" affected many historians to tackle with it in their works. Among them the historian André Gunder Frank who stated in his book *"Reflections on World Economic Crisis"* that:

Increasingly economic historians can draw analogies between the development of the present crisis and the period between the two World wars, as well as the crisis of a century ago, which was associated with the so-called great depression of 1873-1895. The latter crisis resulted in the rise of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, but also the end of Pax Britannica, as Britain began its decline from world leadership in the face of challenges from Germany and the United States.

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The present world crisis seems to be spelling the beginning of the end of Pax Americana and may hold untold other major readjustments in the international division of labor and world power in store for the future .(34)

Therefore some other countries like Japan and Italy believed in expansionism and that building an empire would secure their amount of raw materials and resources. They chose to conquer land which contained abundant materials. Germany was also one of the expansionist countries, as Hitler wanted to fight back for Germany's losses from WWI and from Treaty of Versailles and even decided to move east more land. This resulted what we call the Expansionism as another reason for the declaration of WWII. Hitler looked east for Germany's expansion in Europe. It was in this view that Hitler wanted the addition of living space to strengthen Germany problems, make it militarily stronger, and help make Germany become economically self-sufficient by adding food and other raw material sources. This pushed Hitler to enlarge Germany within Europe. However, he depicts this idea in his book "*Mein Kampf*" saying that:

For it is not in colonial acquisitions that we must see the solution of this problem, but exclusively in the acquisition of a territory for settlement, which will enhance the area of the mother country, and hence not only keep the new settlers in the most intimate community with the land of their origin, but secure for the total area those advantages which lie in its unified magnitude. (Hitler 653)

Just as it was in WWI, Militarism was one of the causes of WWII. After WWI ended, Germany had its military reduced significantly. However, when the Weimar Republic collapsed, and when Germany faced major economic problems in the 1920s, Germany turned to a totalitarian form of government eventually led by Adolf Hitler. Hitler pledged to restore German pride, which he felt was disrespected in the Versailles Treaty. One way to do this was to build up Germany's military. Building up the military also would help to ease the effects of Germany's depression since jobs would be created in the defense and military, nothing was done to stop them. As it has been stated by James F. Byrnes "*Freedom from militarism will*

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give the German people the opportunity, if they will but seize it, to apply their great energies and abilities to the works of peace”(55).

Furthermore, Militarism was important in contributing to WWII. Hitler always appeared in military uniform and did not let the public forget that the German army did not lose in the field, but rather the civilian leadership "betrayed" the army at Versailles. Hitler also used the creation of munitions as a way to increase employment in Nazi Germany. American visitors to Nazi Germany who did not see the early stages of the Holocaust admired the efficiency of the German workplace –they did not realize that the workforce was making weapons for an imminent war. Military parades would be a sign of Nazi Party strength throughout the time the party maintained power. Both Germany and Japan were hit badly by the economic depression. Hence, they turned to the army in order to find a solution to their economic problems and as a way of security too.

Other historians argued that, the hypocrisy of the Americans with their high greed and low commercial motives as the main goals behind this war. They wanted to get control over the entire world and especially against Hitler's foreign policy. As A J P stated in his book *"The Origins of the Second World War": "that of his predecessors of the professional diplomats at the foreign ministry and indeed of virtually all Germans"* (101). During the war, Germany looked as powerful leader than other countries, forming a political group called the Nazi Party under the supreme leader Adolf Hitler. He threatened the balance of peace all over Europe, while the United States of America was in isolationist period. With the increase of war's troubles America found itself obliged to enter the war and defeat Germany and its Axis powers. Germany and Italy declared war on the United States of America in the last years of the war 1941, 1945. Meanwhile, a lot of crucial events happened as the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 by the Japanese, until the year 1944 when the Germans witnessed their last military offensive attack on the battle of Bulge 1944. It is considered the last triumph for the Germans before the direction of the war changed totally against them. Years after, the WWII was finished with the triumph of the victorious allies bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After that the United States of America was claimed that the Japanese would fight to the bitter end and threatened them with utter destruction. Hence, the United States of America used the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 killing an estimated 80, 000 peoples. Two days later, the Soviet Union entered the pacific war and a day after that the

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United States of America dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki in August 9, 1945 and WWII was over. Nickolas Kenneth D was among the historians who were affected by the catastrophic results of those events and he stated them in his book *"The Road to Trinity: A personal Account of How America's Nuclear Policies were Made"* saying that:

The purpose of the bomb was to destroy cities, to kill Japanese, and to destroy the Japanese will to continue the war. So long as mass killing was considered necessary, it should not make any difference whether people died from the blast, the heat, and fires created, or the radiation. War itself is horrible. We wanted to end the war as quickly as possible and minimize the overall casualties, particularly for Americans; at that time we all remembered Pearl Harbor. (198)

WWII ended on August 15, 1945 after the total surrender of Japan. At least 50 million people lost their lives – about 20 million soldiers and 30 million civilians. In order to prevent another devastating war from occurring again, the United Nations was founded to prevent conflicts between countries. Also, Germany was divided into East and West Germany, Austria was separated from Germany and Korea was divided in half along the 38th parallel. However, when WWII ended, the Cold War began between the US and the Soviet Union. It was called the cold war because it did not lead to armed conflict between the superpowers, but was marked by political tension and weaponry stockpiling.

Germany was one of the most important sides of this war, and it was remembered for the Dresden Bombing from February 13, 1945 to April 17, that destroyed the whole city. This idea was demonstrated by the historian Frederick Taylor in one of his interviews saying that:

The destruction of Dresden has an epically tragic quality to it was a wonderfully beautiful city and a symbol of baroque humanism and all that was best in Germany. It also contained all of the worst from Germany during the Nazi period in that sense it is an absolutely exemplary tragedy for the horrors of 20th Century warfare. (Interview with Taylor).

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This big event was called by some historians by "*The Dresden Tragedy*" that affected many writers to write about it. Kurt Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse- Five*" is among them. This tragedy is considered as the destructive event that Germany has ever seen before. Even today it remains one of the most controversial military decisions in modern air war of the WWII. It considers also as a subject of great controversy in academic and public discussions for intention ally bombing civilian targets including women, children, the elderly, cities and homes.

I-1- The Bombing of Dresden

Dresden was the Germany's seventh-largest city. It was the capital of the German state of Saxony during WWII in the European theatre. Dresden, a beautiful city next to the river Elbe was the scene of an atrocity in The WWII. Dresden was the Saxon capital, historic center and a city of sandstone place, castles and baroque apartment block. It recognized throughout the world for its iconic silhouette along the Elbe River. Dresden was nicknamed the *Elbflorenz*, or more commonly "*the Florence of the Elbe*".

At the outbreak of WWII, Dresden was a primary center for military activity, preparing and supplying German units of Army Group South for the invasion of Poland. In addition to that, between 1939 and 1944, Dresden played secondary military role. It was excluded from the fuhrer's order of October 1940, which directed the construction of bomb proof Shelters in 81 other German cities and towers, following the first air raids over Berlin. Despite this exclusion, there were barracks for training and housing troops located north of the Neustadt in Dresden, as well as factories scattered throughout the city. Those factories produced shell fuses aircraft components, gas masks and daily goods including cigarettes, soap, body powder and alcohol (Ibid 35). The city later became a center for telegraph communication following the invasion of the Soviet Union. Like many other German cities, big and small, the military role of Dresden changed with the demands of the war.

During the war, the city's historical and artistic sides were supporting the resident that the city would not be shot by enemies, because it did not hold a power to assault, nor to threat. Tami Davis Biddle in her essay "*Dresden 1945: Reality, History, and Memory*" states that : "*During the war, rumors circulated in Germany about the sanctity of the city due to its art and architecture; Dresdeners themselves did not seem to think that the city would draw the*

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full wrath of the Anglo-American air forces”(425). For equally, David Irving emphasizes on the issue that Dresden’s defense lines were so weak that it was not thought to be bombed by any Allied forces. According to many Dresdeners and German authorities, Dresden was safe enough to be a center to welcome the hospitalized people and refugees. As Irving declares :

Through the middle years of the war, Dresden’s Luftgau IV had stationed strong flak defenses around the city, but as the years passed without their springing into action more than twice, the authorities not unreasonably accepted that the guns were being wasted in Dresden, and dispersed them to the eastern front and the Ruhr... those people who could send their children to Dresden for safety. The allies might bomb one of the more remote industrial suburbs; it was admitted, but never the city center.(77)

Dresden was a special city in the history of Germany. On the other hand, it became a center to host the civilians. Because of these reasons, German authorities trusted the idea that Dresden is one of the safest cities in Germany during the WWII.

However, this did not last for long time because an unexpected chaos happened at unexpected time. During the final months of WWII allied forces bombed the historical city of Dresden. According to Mark Greif:

Most historians agree that the bombing of Dresden on February 13, 1945, was one of the darkest chapters in the allied struggle to liberate Europe from Nazism. One that day, as many as 135, 000 civilians may have been killed, and a city with an irreplaceable architectural heritage was utterly destroyed-all at a point so late in the war that the justification for the carnage seemed painfully lacking. (22-23)

Many world famous buildings fell victim to the bombs. The bombing of Dresden led to the destruction of approximately forty percent of Dresden's housing, with a further thirty six percent slightly damaged, and only twenty percent counted as livable and intact. The collapse of the iconic sandstone-built *Frauenkirch*, the church of Our Lady, on the third day

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symbolizes the complete destruction of the city. The bombing of Dresden began February 13, 1945 and lasted through April 17 –a period of two months. Yet even today; it remains one of the most controversial military decisions in modern warfare.

Code-named Thunderclap, a plan put forth by Allied military leaders to bomb sequentially one large German city after another. The Dresden destruction began the night of February 13, 1945 when Britain's Royal Air Force sent planes to bomb the city. In all, the Royal Air Force sent 800 aircraft over Dresden, dropping incendiary bombs that caused massive devastation by the fires that ensued. The following afternoon, the US 8th Air Force assaulted Dresden with 400 bombers and then continued with more planes on February 15. A brief respite ensued after these February bombing, but on March 2, the US 8th Air Force again bombed the city, using 400 more aircraft. Finally, the destruction of Dresden concluded with the 8th Air Force sending 572 bombers over the city on April 17. In other words, 1249 heavy bombers dropped 2431 tons of explosives and 1475, 9 tons of incendiary bombs, resulting in the destruction of 80% of the city and death of 135, 000 civilians although this number would continue to be disputed throughout much of post war period. Death was primarily caused by extensive burns, carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation in and outside the protective air raid shelters. Altogether, there was approximately ten million cubic meters of rubble, thousands of cindered bodies and a landscape of skeletal buildings that marked the city for weeks, months and years to come (Cooper 179).

On one hand, one may ask why this premier culture city was devastated during WWII continues to be clouded in mystery? On the other hand one may ask why Dresden? How has Dresden been remembered so vividly in public memory and academic history?

References and discussions of the destruction of Dresden are often riddled with misconceptions and taken out of context, blurring the boundary between history and myth. The public narrative and popular memory of Dresden, tells a particular and somewhat different story from the city's official narrative and from academic histories, resulting in multitude of various narratives. Dresden was bombed more than once during the war, as was the case with most major German cities. Yet the attacks on the night of 13th and 14th February are central to the memories of Dresden's wartime role and consequent destruction. According to many war resources information about the bombing remained secret until 1978, when the US Air Force declassified many of the documents concerning thunderclap. Even that the true

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reason for the exorbitant bombing remain ambiguous, The Allies insist the Dresden housed military installations such as barracks, camps composed of makeshift huts, and at least one munitions storage depot. However, the huddled camps were full of refugees not soldiers, and the munitions storage depot housed munitions stores used in mining. In addition to that, the Allies claim that Dresden was the site of a communications center that needed to be destroyed in order to help the Russian Allies approaching from the east.

Given the military reasons advanced for bombing Dresden, the issue even more clouded when we consider the political reasons behind the action. The official US Air Force which naturally, claims to tell the *“real and only truth about the bombing is extremely emphatic on the point that Dresden was legitimate military target”*. So, according to the Air Force, Dresden was legitimate target because of its significance as a crossing for two traffic routes and as a communication center. For equally, they claimed that the Florence of the Elbe had at least 110 factories, among them arms plants and a poison gas factory. Furthermore, another reason which was but minor for the Allies Force was *that “large-scale bombing was almost certainly a major contribution to the final weakening of the will of the German to resist when shock effects of area bombing resulted in nearly total demoralization of an enemy city”*.¹ According to David Irving, the two key reasons for the attack were the use of *“indiscriminate area bombing of population centers..., as means to shatter German moral”* (45). Moreover, the Russians were winning so quickly that Churchill intended to use extensive bombing raids to impress them with superior air forces. Churchill feared being in an inferior bargaining position at Yalta conference, but then the Yalta conference ended even before the bombing of Dresden (Greiner 43-45). In a resume, as the Saxon Kunststadt, city of art, Dresden had a reputation for culture, history, art and architecture. The bombing of such an important cultural center helped reinforce the memory of Dresden's bombing as senseless crime, committed against an innocent civilian city that became a victim of cruel Allied actions. Whatever the reason –or the reasons-the story of Dresden war is a hard one for an American to tell. Because it was designed by the Allies to kill as many German civilians as possible and it was staggeringly successful in achieving that aim.

Nevertheless, the Dresden raids embedded in various discourses on the Air War and in the wider discourse of German victimization. Even today the bombing of Dresden have not

¹ <http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/PopTopics/dresden.htm.p.9>.

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been forgotten. The German past will continue to survive as part and fragments in the present. Dresden has been inscribed in the memory of academics and the public at large as a horrible and violent event of twentieth century warfare.

On the other hand, as contentious and enduring symbol of the destructive force of Aerial warfare, Dresden was readily usable example of both German suffering and questionable allied actions. There is a considerable wealth of material written on Dresden, focusing specifically on the event of February 1945. Dresden has received attention and remains present in the academic domain with literature, images and films produced to keep the memory of this event alive. As recently as 2006, there was a German made of TV film that aired as a two-part mini-series titled "Dresden". It was produced by Team Wrox.

Furthermore, there are elements of both continuity and change in the ways in which the destruction of Dresden has been remembered over the course decades. By the publication of David Irving's *"Destruction of Dresden"* in 1963, new ideas and perceptions even new memories spread about the destruction of the Florence of the Elbe. Twenty years later, the British military historian, Alexander McKee's publication of *"Dresden 1945"* in 1982 providing a personal and historic overview examining the reason for Dresden bombing (McKee 55). Both McKee and Irving after several revisions framed Dresden as senseless crime, transforming the city into a "hellish landscape" shaped by a series of terror bombings. Dresden, in other words, remain a famous massacre with no military or strategic justification (McKee 55).

George Bergander's *"Dresden in Luftkrieg"* in 1977 has been selected from the wealth of German literature written on the Dresden raids, as it provided a detailed and objective account of Dresden within a larger narrative framework of the Air war. On the same topic Elizabeth Corwin's short article, *"The Dresden Bombing as Portrayed in German accounts, East and West"* in 1987 offered a preliminary study of how Dresden was used politically in the Cold War, using German periodicals as reference materials.

In 2004, British historian Frederick Taylor published *"Dresden: 13 February 1945"*. Taylor hoped to transmit the message to his audience that Dresden was one salient example of the destructive force of war and that humanity can no longer afford intolerance and war (xiv). More recently, American military Marshall De Bruhl published *"Firestorm: Allied Airpower*

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and the Destruction of Dresden”, providing a popular history of the Dresden air raids. The book was intended for an American audience to educate and create awareness of the allied efforts during the WWII. De Bruhl provided a readable narrative, focusing on the key figures and main events of the Air War and building up the bombings of Dresden as the climax in a controversial bomber war that targeted and bombed civilian cities (56).

Last but not least, the event of February 1945 is a key example of perfect mixture of trauma, controversy, fear, shock, pain and anger. The catastrophic destruction of Dresden continues to have present day political and social impact. Even the city rebuilds and heals its scars from this past, memorial spaces, constructed sites and commemorative ceremonies preserving the memory of the Dresden bombing, will remain present and active for generations of the present and future.

I-2- Post Modernity and Postmodernism

Most people recognize that things never stay the same, and they were aware that society changed continuously and everything was always on the move. Philosophers and thinkers have throughout time believed that society moved according to immutable and unchanging laws that there was a driving force that drove society onward. As we see in the modern time we have looked toward the evolution of society as progressive one. This progressive movement of society is associated with what has been described as Modernity or Modernism. This later keeps changing through time from Modernity, Modernism to Post Modernity and Postmodernism. Each one characterized by its specific conditions and changes. Of course they deal with the same root “modern”, but they differ in their applications and beliefs.

The term “Modern” has a long history one which has been investigated by Hans Robert Jauss. The word “Modern” in its Latin form “Modernus” was used for the first time in the late 5th century in order to distinguish the present, which has become officially Christian, from the Roman and pagan past. With varying content the term “modern” again and again expresses the consciousness of an epoch that relates itself to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new (342). However, it changes through time by the change of society, people and history.

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The modern period was between 1898 to WWII. Modernity is a broader term used to describe very general tendencies, which emerged in western society in the 18th century. According to Matei Calinescu, modernity or “bourgeois modernity” has its beginning in the Age of Enlightenment (85). Both Harvey and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman described modernity as “*a quest for national human organization attempting to prevail over the forces of irrationality and the untamed force of nature*” (32).

In other words, Hervey describes the project of modernity “*as the scientific domination of nature that promised freedom from scarcity, want and the arbitrariness of natural calamity*” (23). The development of rational forms of social organization and rational modes of thoughts promised liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion, and superstition release from the arbitrary use of power as well as from the dark side of our own human nature (Harvey 12). Some schools of thought hold that modernity ended in the late of 20th century, in the 1980s or early 1990s, and it was replaced by Post modernity. While others believe that, modernity ended after WWII. The Post modern vocabulary contains a subtle demarcation in the meaning of the epoch. There are two terms in use Post modernity and Postmodernism. The terminology is applied to the same epoch; however it contains different aspects of it. The term Post modernity regards the functioning of the epoch within historical frames of time. It relates to dates, facts, geography, politics and other quantitative data. It is also not interchangeable with Post modernity and reflects a character of culture. Postmodernism reflects philosophy, the quality and values, which differentiate it from previous periods. One can say that we live in Post- modernity but we do not necessarily have to live with Postmodernism.

On the one hand, post modernity can be dated after the WWII. As Milner notes, “*some date the actual beginning to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*” (136). He states in his book “*Contemporary Cultural Theory*” (1991) the theorists of Post modernity lived in an age that was decidedly “Post-war”, with the emphasis on the prefix. And that it dates from 1940s with its distinct features:

(A)prodigiously consumerist economy of affluence, initially confined To the United States, dates dispersed throughout the west, the rapid Collapse of the older European imperialisms of the development of new transnational cultural and

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economic forms; and a dynamically expansionist global hyper. Militarism very visibly represented in nuclear weapons system.(137)

The previous development together with social changes from the 1950s onwards makes it possible to give Post modernity the denotation of “Post-war”.

On the other hand, there is a great overlap with what can be seen as the defining features of Post modernity. Andrew Milner notes the term Post modernism “*is as polygenic a sign as they come*” (135-136), which makes difficult to pin point the defining characteristics of Post modernity. In addition, the definition of Post modernity is continued with the fact that, Post modernity is seen by some to be an extension of the epoch before it, Modernism. As Daniel Bell in “*The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*” see Postmodernism as the “*logical culmination of modernist intentions*” (51). Thus, accordingly it would not be out of place to argue then that Post modernity is merely the culmination of modernism. One definition of Post modernity says, Post modernity is a term used to describe the social and political implications of postmodernism. It is used by philosophers, social scientists and art critics to refer to facets of contemporary art, culture, economic, social and political conditions that resulted due to the unique features of later 20th century and early 21st century life features including globalization, consumerism, the fragmentation of authority, and the commoditization of knowledge. Shannon Weiss and Karla Wesley define post modernity in their work “*Post Modernity and Its Critics*” as follow “*Post modernity concentrates on the tensions of difference and similarity erupting from processes of globalization: the accelerating circulation of people, the increasingly dense and frequent cross-cultural interactions and the unavoidable intersections of local and global knowledge*” (12). Despite these obstacles, one can argue that, Post modernity is dominant mode of thought for the post war period especially in the west, and its effect can be seen in the economy thought and social relations.

Hence, Post modernity can be described most usefully in terms of the political and socio-economic systems which develops in what the Marxist thinker Ernest Mandel called it “*the third stage of capitalist expansion*”(4). The result of this is a cultural eclecticism, as summarized in much quoted sentences from the philosopher Jean François Lyotard “*one listens to reggae, watches a western, eat Mc Donald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and retro clothes in Hong Kong*” (75-76). In fact, Post

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modernity is a spectacular epoch due to the variety of its philosophical trends, played out in many social arenas; and a period which has its roots in the 15th and 16th century cultural changes that proposes new references of understanding reality. It refers also to the way the world has changed in this period due to the developments in the political, social, economic and media spheres.

Furthermore, Post modernity was the incentive for the appearance of new literary movements among them Post modernism. Postmodernism has been appeared in complex circumstances after the end of the WW II. Such as, the context of the cold war, the spread of nuclear weapons, the declaration of the birth of human rights, and with the emergence of new philosophies as surrealism, existentialism and absurdism. In addition to the destruction that was expressing to move from Modernism to Postmodernism.

The end of the WWII marked a new phase in literature. After the war, the writers shared a desire for change and a mood of re-creation of political ideology, revolution from fascism and disillusionment with communism. The split between advanced and traditional writing had already existed in earlier modernism. The new literature, Postmodernism, partly reacted against its ideology. The writers at that time wanted to create something new through their attempt to cut off its branch of the past by proposing new method.

Post modern literature is part of cultural and historical development. Also it can be seen as a specific way that depict the past modern life and culture. Critics and scholars of this kind of literature disagree about defining the term “Postmodernism” due to the multiplicity of its concepts and its implications from critic to another. However, Postmodernism theory described as a broad movement that developed in the mid to the late of 20th century, which represents a departure or reaction to Modernism. It is a literary movement or somewhat ambiguous belief system tied to the philosophical and cultural reaction to the conviction of Modernism. Postmodernism is a theory that sees reality as what individuals or social groups make it to be.

In other words, Postmodernism is the term used to suggest a reaction or response to modernism in the late of twentieth century because it rejects what Modernism champions .In fact, Postmodernism seems very much like Modernism in many ways. Modernism for example tends to present a fragmented view of human subjectivity and history as something tragic. Postmodernism in contrast, does not celebrate the idea of fragmentation as something tragic. It rather celebrates that, literature is used to describe certain characteristics of Post WWII literature for example: fragmentation, paradox, or questionable narrator. Because of

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some similar characteristics of Modernism and Postmodernism, critics sometimes became confused to differentiate one from the other. In addition to that Postmodernism theory stipulates the view that, there is no absolute truth and truth is relative and it is not mirrored in the human understanding of it. This aspect is stated most clearly by Stanley Grenz in his book *"A Primer on Postmodernism"* saying that : *"Postmodernism affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate...there is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate"*(8).

Postmodernism views human experience as unstable internally contradictory, ambiguous, fragmented and unfinished world. It tends to reject western values and beliefs as only a small part of the human experience and often rejects such ideas, beliefs, culture and norms.

Concerning the features of postmodern writing, the post modern literature characterizes by a very self conscious break with traditional ways of writing in both poetry and prose fiction. Postmodernism authors are very frustrated for WWII and the cold war. They try to portray it in indirect way, so irony, playfulness and black humor come. This was clear in the works of Jhon Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, and Joseph Heller. Many of them also feature Meta -fiction in their writing, which is writing about writing, an attempt to make the reader aware of its fictionality. Sometime they use the presence of the author to allow the flagrant shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time or to maintain an emotional distance as narrator. Postmodernists also based their writing on the use of the historiography Meta -fiction to refer to novels that fictionalize actual historical events and characteristics. Another technique which is important also is the temporal distortion, fragmentation and non linear narratives, for the sake of irony in which the author can jump forward and backwards in time. Or there may be cultural and historical references that do not fit. This later contributed to the emergence of new literary theory known as "New Historicism", that combines literary and historical texts.

I-3- New Historicism: An Innovative Premise in Literary Theory

New Historicism arose in the late of twentieth century as a result to the historical hermeneutics of structuralism and post structuralism. It comes from its adoption of a

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historicist sensibility much as had centuries. But it coupled with the approach of the so-called “New History”.

New Historicism appeared in Europe primarily in Germany. It challenged the progressive view of history that interpreted history as a linear, uniform process which operated according to universal laws. A view widely held by thinkers from the enlightenment era forward. However New Historicism developed in the 1980s primarily through the work of the critic Stephen Greenblatt, a renaissance Shakespeare scholar, played a major role in the rise of New Historicism. The school developed largely in Shakespeare and English Renaissance Theatre Studies, and gaining widespread influence in the 1990s and beyond. He first used the term New Historicism in his work *“The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance”* 1982 to describe the permeability of literature and history. He discusses Queen Elizabeth’s hostility towards Shakespeare play, Richard II. Greenblatt also argues that literary criticism is always historical in nature and that there is no such thing as pure aesthetics value. Frederic Jameson is another well known new historicist. He is famous for his dictate always historicizing or commanding literary critics to pay attention to the social and historical context in which a work was produced.

New Historicism is an approach to literary criticism and literary theory based on the premise that a literary work should be considered as a product of the time, place and historical circumstances of its composition, rather than as an isolated work of art or text. It is a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to the configurations of power, society or ideology in a given time. Also it is a form of literary theory; its goal is to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through its cultural context. As Charis Baldick’s remark in his book *“Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms”*:

New Historicism is a term applied to a trend in American academic literary Texts and at the same time in contrast with older historicism the ‘textual’ nature of history. As a part of a wider reaction against purely formal or linguistic critical Approaches..., new historicists, led by Stephen Greenblatt, drew new connections between literary and non-literary texts, breaking down the familiar distinction between a text and

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its historical ‘background’ as conceived in established historical forms of criticism. (171)

Literature for New Historicism is a social and cultural creation constructed by more than one consciousness. It cannot be diminished to a product of a single mind. These purely formal approaches lay emphasis on the fact that, the text is produced and actualized in cultural conditions, not in vacuum. The initial endeavor of New Historicism is to relocate the literary text among non-literary “discursive practice” of an age by making use of documents like: chronicles, legal reports, pamphlets. Even through analyzing other forms of arts like painting, sculpture, and music. Nevertheless, history is not viewed as the cause or source of literature. The relation between history and literature is seen as dialectic: the literary text is interpreted as product, producer and source of history. Stephen Greenblatt in *“The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance”* explains the new historicist effort to establish relations between different discursive practices as an attempt *“to develop terms to describe the ways in which material-here official documents, private papers, newspaper clippings, and so forth-is transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic property”* (3). Therefore, if the circumstances of a literary text are impossible to recuperate, the concern of the literary critic should be recover the ideology that gave birth to the text, and which the text in turn helped to spread within the culture (Dogan 82). In addition to that, textuality of history and historicity of text are considered as the main principal for New Historicism. This latter pulls down the line of demarcation between literary and non-literary text, As Renis Paul Ukkun has rightly observed *“New Historicism involves a parallel reading or juxtaposition of the literary and the non-literary text of the same historical period. Both are given equal importance and allowed to work as sources of information and interrogation with each other”* (22-23). This way, the non-literary text becomes not a con-text, but a co-text along with the literary work. The literary text is placed within the framework of the non-literary text which is closely read (Cuddon 424). *“Previous writings about the text are ignored and the text is subjected to fresh scrutiny mainly from the historical point of view”* (Barry 173). This notion of historicity of the text and textuality of history opens up an innovative mode of textual study which intertextuality. *“Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to denote the interdependence of literary text with all those that have gone before it. Her contention was that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon... and that any text is the*

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absorption and transformation of another". It implies that literary text is akin to any other texts pertaining to other disciplines of knowledge in that particular socio- cultural scenario.

New historicists again point out that "*new historical critical approach stresses on the political reading of the text because any text whether literary or non literary is cultural construct and reveals political, social, religious and economical circumstances of the given era*" (Abrams 187). Moreover new historicists do not treat text devoid of its literary qualities, though they suggest that there is no distinction between literary and historical text. As a matter of fact new historicists have their own strategy to study literary text. They take a text as the primary source on which reader's present conditions and his reconstructive faculty operates and thus imposes meaning therein. As M.H.Abrams says:

New historicists acknowledge that they themselves, like all authors, are subjectivities that have been shaped and informed by the circumstances and discourse specified to their era, hence that their own critical writings in great part construct- rather than discover ready-made, the textual meanings they describe and the literary and cultural histories they narrate. (186)

On the other hand, new historicists are greatly influenced by such theorists as Ronald Barthes and Michel Foucault who ascribe significance to text which discursive in nature and denies the presence of "imperial self" of the author but at the same time cannot dismiss the "implied self" of the author "*the author cannot come back into text ()...he can only do so as guest*" (Ronald Barthes 107). In a sense, the writer appears in his writing as disguised in his ideologies which get manifested unconsciously in the text.

The writer appears to be consciously unconscious in order to conceal his identity under the coverings of his ideology and the presence of certain ideologies again reveal that the author is influenced by his own cultural conditions and that he also knows the role he plays in not of a social reformer but just to give the hint to the readers. Thus, a complete suppression of the self is not possible because he is a sensible and sensitive intellectual of the society.(M.H. Abrams 183)

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Accordingly, Abrams states that “*the New Historicists seem to manifest...tendency to decenter, and in extreme cases to delete what is often called ‘agency of author as self-coherent, purposive and determinative human subject. Moreover, the self of the author is in the grip of ‘controllable workings of the unconscious compulsions towards culture’*”(187). New Historicism might have gained momentum in its popularity as a new approach.

I-3-1.Old Historical Approach Versus New Historicism

The old historical method considered literature and history as text and context, while the New Historicism considers them as text and co-text², and refuses to distinguish between literature and history, the aesthetic and the real. The older historical method stated that literature was a reflection of a particular age’s shared ‘world-view’. New Historicism deviates from it in upholding that no age or culture has a signal homogeneous world-view, but is internally divers and hence heterogeneous (Dogan 7-8).

Yet another difference between the Old and New Historicism concerns the significance of the roles played by history and text. Greenblatt says :“...*the traditional historical approach to... finds history to lie outside the texts, to function in effect as the object to which sings in the text point*” (viii). Abrams endorses Greenblatt’s view when he says, “*the view that history, not the author, shapes a literary work and forges its meaning is indeed the crucial features in the shift from traditional historical criticism both to the New Historicism and to the New Politicalism*”(Abrams 365). The old historicism presented history as blocks of periods, one following the other and indicating progress and evolution; the New Historicism “*projects a vision of history as an endless skein of clothes smocked in a complex overall pattern by the needle and thread of power. You need only pull the thread at one place to find it connected to another*” (Porter 765).

A further distinction between the New Historicism and the older method is manifest in the shift of focus from the old objectivity to the new ‘object’ and from history to ‘histories’. New Historicism can be distinguished from the historical method “by its lack of faith in “objectivity” and “permanence” and its stress not upon the direct recreation of the past, but

² Schizophrenia: is a serious mental illness characterized by incoherent or illogical thoughts, bizarre behavior and speech, and delusions or hallucinations, such as hearing voices. www. apa. org< psychology topics.

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rather the processes by which the past is constructed or invented”(Cox and Reynolds 4). Add Cox and Reynolds:

New Historicism tends to regard texts in materialist terms, as objects and events in the world as part of human life, society, the historical realities of power, authority and resistance; yet at the same, it rejects the idea of “History” as a directly accessible, unitary past, and substitutes for it the conception of “histories”, an ongoing series of human constructions, each representing the past at particular present moments for particular present purposes. (4)

The older historical method was of lesser worth in comparison with New Historicism as it was a study of the text in the ‘background’ or ‘context’³ of history. As earlier mentioned, in New Historicism, history becomes the co-text and is a record of written documents. It is these recorded facts in history facts in history which will be subject to a close reading earlier reserved for literary texts. As a result it becomes a witness in proving the textual facts. This makes New Historicism of greater worth than the old method (Dogan 9-10).

To conclude, New Historicism has gained popularity as a critical practice because New Historicism as Carolyn porter argues “*New Historicism frees us from ‘World view’ in criticism and allows us to approach literary texts as agents as well as effects of cultural change, as participating in a cultural conversation rather than merely representing the conclusion reached in that conversation, as if it could have reached no other...*” (782).

³ Co-text: refers to linguistic materials in the surrounding text. www.oxfordreference.com/view/oi/authority.

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Conclusion

The instability created in Europe by WWI (1913, 1918) set the stage for another international conflict WWII, which broke out two decades later and would prove even more devastating. It included massacres and strategic bombing of cities through the use of nuclear weapons from the first time in history. The last months of WWII proved to be the most devastating moments in the history of Germany. In February 13 and 14, 1945 the German city of Dresden was subjected to a horrendous British and American firebombing which destroyed much of the city. Pain truly represented because of the Dresden Bombing, when the entire city with its priceless treasures of art and baroque architecture and thousands of men, women and children were killed. The Florence of the Elbe bombing deserves to be called a senseless crime and an enormous scale massacre that has all the markings of war crime. Indeed, Dresden bombing is a crime against humanity.

The prefix “post” does not imply a new era; rather it indicates a reaction, in the wake of the WWII, against absolute system of knowledge and philosophical certainty which adorned the foundation of modernism. Postmodernism is a comprehensive philosophical and cultural movement that rejects the modernist philosophy fundamentally as a reaction to paradox between its advocated premises and their cultural manifestations. Postmodernism tend to have a disruptive and disorienting effect on various aspects of social life.

In the 20TH century, literature became represent another form of social construct, which is produced by the society and in return is active in reshaping the culture of that society. New Historicism as new theoretical approach tends to study how a work of literature reflects its historical and socio-cultural context, and attempt to understand how a literary work comments on and relates to its context. Therefore, social, political, religious and economic factors of a given society determine the literature it produces. New Historicism ventures this through its suggestion of historicity of text and textuality of history.

Chapter Two:

Dragging History into Literature

:Poeticizing WWII Pain In "*Slaughterhouse*

- *Five*"

Introduction

The nature of history has always been studied and analyzed from different perspectives throughout the centuries. Following a postmodern position, many theorists have explored history and have questioned it critically in the light of the present. Vonnegut's work has great contribution to literature. In a way, he gave central importance on the understanding of literature from historical perspective. He paid close attention to the idea that *Slaughterhouse-Five* a flagrantly fictional novel will hopefully help on the way toward pinpointing the distinctiveness of artistic writing as mediator of historical understanding. Postmodern thinkers also made a great contribution to the theoretical narrative like Vonnegut, who has problematized the representation of the past (WWII) in a fictional way using his own experiences throughout this big event. Vonnegut resorts to the literary and the historical discourses. The combination of these two discourses can be identified because the author includes some of his own personal experiences and historical facts in relation to the war but, at the same time, he incorporates a fictional character, Billy Pilgrim, as the protagonist to give an inside of the war from a different perspective.

Kurt Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse-Five*", "*Duty Dance with Death*" or "*the Children Crusades*", is a science fiction novel about WWII experiences and journey through time of a soldier called Billy Pilgrim. Billy is disoriented and fatalist American soldier who is captured by the Germans during the Battle of Bulge 1944 and taken to makeshift prison in Dresden Slaughterhouse. Billy survives of firebombing of Dresden in WWII and he has come unstuck in time an account of his traumatic experience in the wake of the Dresden air raid. He

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experiences past, present and future events out of sequence and repetitively following a non linear narrative.

Many modern and postmodern critics tried to examine the problems of traumatized or meaningless life. This chapter will try to investigate a character-centered study of Vonnegut's protagonist to determine other important causes related to his psychological problems. In this paper, the poetics of pain and Vonnegut's treatment are discussed and a new historicist criticism is done to analyze the character of Billy Pilgrim. Vonnegut tactfully shows Billy's suffering throughout his life as witnesses of Dresden firebombing. This situation caused a kind of depression in his life twenty years later and many other psychological problems. Like many writers, Vonnegut uses his writing as an outlet to his painful and disturbing memories. He felt that it was the easy way out and that it was the only to escape the pain and forgot about his tragic experience.

I. Slaughterhouse-Five: A New Historicist Endeavor

The representation of history depends mainly on the perspective, attitude and cultural background of the beholder, which at the same time marks the major flow of historiography. One topic or event will never be identically described by two historians, even if they are given the very same materials and sources to work with. As a consequence historiography can only try to create an image, as true and original as possible. But it is never able to depict everything that happened as it actually was in its full scope. So there were and always will be fictional elements and interpretations in the reports and writings about past events. This leads to the appearance of historiographic metafiction, as a style of writing that emerged during the postmodern era. The historian C.V Wedgwood clarifies this ideas in his quotation "*without the imaginative insight which goes with creative literature, history cannot be intelligibly written*"(4).

Furthermore, historiographic metafiction tries to combine the best of two worlds; that means it combines fictional elements, which is generously uses, and blends it with historical events. This may provide a frame work that is filled with fictional actions and protagonists. Thus it unites the "world" and "literature" (Hutcheon 4). Just like historians are trying to give sense to history, authors of fiction intend to make sense of things that seem to be chaotic or unintelligible and by that create something new in which factual truth and the necessity of reality became unimportant (Engler 26-27). The writer controls only his own fictional reality, whereas the historian realm is reality. So the freedom of the writer enables him to write

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literature that combines both historical facts and fictional elements and by that he creates different views on historical events.

Slaughterhouse-Five was eventually used historiographic metafiction as new perspective of post modern literature to narrate the events of WWII as well as the effects of the traumatic bombing of Dresden. Kurt Vonnegut throughout his novel applies some narrative techniques which closely match the postmodernist diegetic.

I.1. Historiographic Elements in Slaughterhouse-Five

A) Time: A Pain's Dimension

Slaughterhouse- Five as many other novels is structured in a non linear way, in which the story begins at a certain point and follows a straight time line. Sometimes it interrupted by flashbacks. Vonnegut's novel is rather a back and forth and up and down. The protagonist's, Billy Pilgrim, time-travels do not follow a chronological pattern but can be separated into three major time zones. The first is Billy's post-war civilian life as an optometrist "*and then Billy was a middle aged optometrist again*" (Vonnegut 42). In addition to that, there are several smaller time zones in different decades of Billy's life to be visited by the main character, as an example in chapter two of the novel. Billy's story begins at his home in Ilium, New York in the year 1968 shortly after these introductory pages he jumps back to the year 1944, which is the time he joined the army and after basic training is sent into Europe to fight in the Battle of Bulge, one of the last major German military operations in WWII. Vonnegut's novel does not possess a linear timeline. This lack of linearity can be seen as means of showing the reader a different understanding of time. For the protagonist time is no longer a line with beginning and end, but a circle in which everything is predetermined and unchangeable. As a consequence, death is not dead full because a person might be dead in one time but still be alive in another one. Tonny Tanner in his "*Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut*", states that: "*death give him an entirely new attitude to the significance and tragedies of those people who still live in an irreversible, linear-temporal sequence*" (2). Moreover, Vonnegut uses time travel not only to eliminate the need for linear story telling but also to illuminate Billy's fragmentation of life stages and the varied roles he is asked to play over the course of his life time. His identity is fractured and unstable and his time travel also serves as a way of revisiting his trauma and seeing the good moments interspersed with the bad.

B) Fragmentation: As an Escape from Pain

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, fragmentation as a postmodernist technique is obtained through a kind of schizophrenic⁴ dissociation of the thoughts and observations of Billy Pilgrim through whom we use the world (Matz 54). He constantly blends reality and illusion so that a single trend cannot be observed in his descriptions. He mostly applies his schizophrenic mood to the context using time travels. In this context, fragmentation was a technique that well described the pain of Billy Pilgrim.

In this work, Vonnegut uses fragmentation of time, structure and character in order to unify his non-linear narrative. Vonnegut's main character, Billy Pilgrim, travels back and forth in his own life span "*paying a random visit to all events in between*" (Vonnegut 23). The result is Billy's life is presented as series of episodes without any chronological obligations. Vonnegut uses schizophrenia as a basic principal in post modernist fragmentation that the effects of a suppressed childhood, war and a plane crash on Billy's split personality. However, the use of fragmentation in *Slaughterhouse-Five* goes beyond simply dividing the text into short sections to clarify Billy's character illustrating the Tralfamadorians time theory and to maintain the Dresden Bombing as an ongoing and historical event. In addition to that, this fragmentation not only lets Vonnegut play around with time and place, it also reflects the sense of psychological fragmentation that his protagonist is going through. Vonnegut depicts this literary technique "fragmentation" in his novel *Slaughterhouse--Five* claiming that: "*Slaughterhouse -Five is written as a fragmented, non chronological narrative to emphasize the confusion and absurdity of contemporary life. Cyclical in structure, this work randomly shifts through time and space*"(Vonnegut, Jr 404).

On the other hand, through the technique of fragmentation Vonnegut shows his anti-war feelings. As a war effect, the author shows Billy as a fragmented character. Time has been shown as fragmented. The structure and narrative techniques are also fragmented in the novel. Vonnegut shows the fragmented nature of time through his text "*Slaughterhouse-Five*". Due to the fragmentation of time, there is no past, present or future. This view to time existing becomes a lesson by Billy Pilgrim from an alien group. They live in another planet called "Tralfamadore". According to Billy, the alien kidnapped him "*He had been kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians on the night of his daughter's wedding*" (Vonnegut 9). From the planet Billy comes to know the time concept. The Tralfamadorians could see all the moments

⁴ Context: refers to information outside of the text available to a reader through understanding of genre situation. www.oxfordreference.com/view/oi/authority.

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altogether. They have nothing like past, present and future. Billy explains that *“The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very stilly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist”* (Vonnegut 19).

The style of narration of Vonnegut is also fragmented. Non-linear narratives used in this novel to narrate the story. It means there are no beginning, no middle and no end. The narrative starts in the middle of the story, transition back to the beginning of the tale and then flashes forward to the end. Flash back and flash forward are used as narrative technique. Flash back is a technique through which the author shows us past events of Billy’s life. That the author is showing present situation suddenly he starts showing past event which sometime is relevant, sometime is not to present situation.

The protagonist character, Billy, is a fragmented personality that was affected by pain. He has no control over this time travel. Through it is says that he can see past and future through time travel but the truth he is just hallucinating all the events. The idea of “Tralfamadorians” is also hallucination. During the WWII, Billy was in Dresden. He saw the destruction, death and bloodshed due to war. As consequence he loses his mental state and hallucinates.

C) Science Fiction: As New Dimension of Pain

Slaughterhouse-Five is a science-fiction. Vonnegut presents science fiction by referring aliens, Tralfamadorians, and time travel. These two elements have been shown in this text through the protagonist Billy. He is the one who visits the aliens as well as their planet Tralfamadore and experiences time travel. Through the time travel he experiences his past, present even future. He frequently goes any part of his life. But he has no control over it, because it naturally happens to him. Vonnegut describes these aliens or creatures through Billy. Billy says: *“Too feet high, and green and shaped like plumber’s friends. Their suction cups were on the ground, and their shafts, which were extremely flexible, usually pointed to the sky. At the top of each shaft was a little hand with a green eye in its palm”* (Vonnegut 19).

The most shocking thing about the aliens is they experience time as four dimensions. They have the power to watch four dimensions. According to Billy *“...and they could see in four dimensions. They pitted earthlings for being able to see only three. They had many wonderful things to each earthling, especially about time”* (Vonnegut 19). In this book, the

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concept of four dimensions used including space and time which is a scientific term that has no past, no future and no present. The Tralfamadorians have total access to past, present, future and they are able to perceive any point of time. Tralfamadorians are able to see along the time line of earth and know what is going to happen next. They are unable to stop that incident because they believe in predestination or fate. They cannot change their fate. Indeed they do not believe in free will. For them everything is going to happen in their life, will happen and nothing can stop it. So whatever happens they accept it easily. Furthermore, when any one dies they simply utter “so it goes”, because they have no power to change it but to make it as normal. Thus *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a glorification of science fiction. That presented by Vonnegut through the alien planet, Tralfamadore.

1.2. Vonnegut's Experience with War

War is a tragic experience that can motivate people to do any things. Many people have been inspired to write stories, poems and songs about the war. These examples tend to reflect feelings against war. The main issue that WWII raised for writers is how to represent the ultimately inexpressible horrors of that war and at the same engage the reader in a talk that might create the savage indignation. Kurt Vonnegut is no different and his experience with war pushed him to write a series of novels starting with “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”. In this novel Vonnegut has shown many themes and metaphorical issues of time including his participation in WWII and his capture and imprisonment in the German city of Dresden. In addition to that WWII has shaped many of Vonnegut’s philosophies “*with Slaughterhouse-Five Vonnegut was able to deal directly with his war time nightmare*” (Klinkowitz 225).

Kurt Vonnegut published *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1969, two decades after his own experience fighting in WWII and witnessing the bombing of Dresden. These experiences, which are shaped by the narrator of this novel “Vonnegut”, help to shape the narrative of Billy Pilgrim. A man who has become “unstuck of time”. Billy travels between the past, present and future, as well as the alien planet of Tralfamadore, showing his life before and after the war and chronicling his attempts to cope with trauma of his wartime experience in Dresden (Vonnegut 22). Billy witness unspeakable destruction and violence during his time as a soldier and he is never able to truly recover. In this novel the author, Vonnegut, interacts with the idea of fate and heroism in order to reveal the ways in which they contribute to the destruction caused by the bombing of Dresden, as well as war in general.

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Slaughterhouse-Five or *the Children Crusades* by Kurt Vonnegut, is published to explore various themes about life and war. Vonnegut's tragic war experiences in Dresden led him to write on the horrors and tragedies of war. Because the massacre undoubtedly left a huge impression on Vonnegut and his struggle to live with his horrible fact delayed the production of his book for twenty three years. As Klinkowitz states

The destruction of Dresden, destruction of Vonnegut's dream the little dream Vonnegut took with him to war not founded on the rubble of insanity, absurdity and irrationality that he experienced in World War II. His dream was founded on what Dresden symbolized. And when Dresden evaporated so too did Vonnegut's dream. (223)

Vonnegut wanted to write a book from the time that he got home from the war, but his confusion and torment raised his ability to write about the destruction. As Vonnegut states in the first chapter:

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 .But not many words about Dresden come from my mind then not enough of them to make book, anyway. (2)

In addition to that, the narrator, Kurt Vonnegut, states in a conversation with the wife of his old war buddy, Mary O'Hare, that he “ *have written five thousands pages by now, and thrown them all away*”(9), reflecting to the book that he decided to write about the war and Dresden bombings. He later states that if he ever does finish it, he intends to call it “*The Children's Crusades*” , the original intended name for “*Slaughterhouse-Five*” as he said “ *If I ever do finish it, though, I give you my word of honor :there won't be a part for Frank Sinatra or Jhon Wayne. I tell you what, I said, I'll call it The Children's Crusades*” (9).

Indeed, the words that describe the war, the Dresden events and their effect on people who experienced them didn't come easily to Vonnegut. In an interview in 1974, he commented on the difficulties of articulating these experiences: “*I came home in 1945, started writing about it, and wrote about it, and wrote about it and WROTE ABOUT IT*” (Allen 163).

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In a literary voice, Kurt Vonnegut wanted everyone who read his book to know just exactly how bad war is.

Moreover Monica Loeb argues that there are “*Two principals narrator in Slaughterhouse-Five: one who is the actual author, Vonnegut himself, and another, impersonal, seemingly omniscient narrator*”(7). While further claiming that “*One corresponds to the factual side of the story, the other belongs to the fictional world*” (7). It is a convincing point that makes sense in the context of narration as it shifts from the autobiographical style showcased in the first chapter to the telling of Billy’s fictional story (Monica 10). Another author who was fortunate enough to give a critical commentary of *Slaughterhouse- Five* is Charles Harris, who wrote “*Time, Uncertainty, and Kurt Vonnegut; Jr: A Reading of Slaughterhouse Five*”. He believes that “*The novel's main character is not Billy Pilgrim, but Vonnegut*”(Harris 228-243). In the book Vonnegut changes from third person to first person, indicating that he was among the soldiers. Harris notices that when the paths of Billy and the narrator met up at Dresden, there is a brief period of person shift. In this context, the narrator Vonnegut uses “us” and this simply because Vonnegut is there too. (Brandon 10). In addition to that Harris explains Vonnegut's sudden change in person as this: “*He, too, had suffered capture and malnutrition and the devastating firebombing. He, too, worked in the corpse mines and saw a friend shot for plundering a teapot from the ruins*”. (6).

Accordingly, Vonnegut’s switch in person one more reinforces with the audience that this is his story of figuring out his confusion and he wants to reiterate the fact that he was experiencing the same things Billy Pilgrim was experiencing. Later in the book, even Vonnegut himself becomes a character, when describing Dresden. Vonnegut shifts to first person plural when he writes “*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 innkeeper’s stable. Authorities had found us there*” (Vonnegut 106). This shift in tense suggests that the story is not Billy Pilgrim’s but Vonnegut’s as well” (Harries 274). Furthermore, it is important to note that although Billy Pilgrim is not Vonnegut and Vonnegut is not Billy Pilgrim, they do share trait that suggest that Billy is created in the image of Vonnegut (Harries 278).

Vonnegut’s connection with Billy and the other characters allow him to discuss human reaction to death and traumatic events. Because he uses his characters in particular Billy Pilgrim to portray his beliefs. An antiwar feelings shown through numerous characters, dominates the whole novel from the beginning to the end. Moreover Vonnegut’s antiwar

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feelings create a major theme that emerges from *Slaughterhouse-Five*. While talking to O'Hare in the opening chapter of the novel, Vonnegut says "*There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre*" (19). The historian Cox Sebastian clarifies the idea in his book entitled "*The Dresden Raids: Why and How*" saying that: "*Is not an answer to the tragedy of war, but a response*" (3). Thus Vonnegut uses the characters he creates to show his reaction to the war.

Billy Pilgrim is used to show the terrible consequences of war. Billy's time in the war greatly affected him and his outlook on the world. He believes that "*War is not a heroic contest between the forces of good and evil but a senseless slaughter with many victims and no villains*" (Marvin 113). When Billy comes home from the war, he does not often speak about war he saw or how he felt. But he tries to distance himself from the memories of war as much as possible. Vonnegut uses "*Billy's innocence and positivity to help Vonnegut (to) focus the reader's attention on the brutality of war*" (Marvin 124). He even tries to appeal to the readers, attempting to make them feel empathy for Billy. The reader sees the sad figure of Billy Pilgrim suffering through a war he believes is pointless and the reader begins to observe the horrors of war that Billy is feeling (Marvin 124).

Vonnegut also uses other characters to portray his antiwar theme. Marvin says "*He (Edgar Derby) is the most admirable character in the novel, which makes his senseless death all the more lamentable*" (126). Vonnegut uses Derby's death to compound the reader's feeling that war is pointless. Derby was a forty-four years old teacher with a wife at home, and his only crime was taking a teapot. But, because of this simple gesture, he loses his life after surviving the entire war, a prisoner of war camp, and the firebombing of Dresden (Vonnegut 12).

The most blatant antiwar discussion in the novel occurs in the opening between Vonnegut and Mary O'Hare. She fears the fact that the "*Book will portray the "babies" or "children" fighting in war as grown men and these babies will be played by war-loving, dirty old men*"(14). But Vonnegut convinces Mary that "*The novel will show the savageness and horror of war*" (14). Moreover the author uses his characters to express his antiwar feelings. He cannot express his feelings on the war and Dresden firebombing directly because he believes "*There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre*" (Vonnegut 19). The conclusion Vonnegut comes to after examining the causes and effects of Dresden is that there indeed is no moral, only "Poo-tee-weet" (Vonnegut 215). It is the only rational thought on a war Vonnegut can find. He cannot explain or even comment on the death and destruction he

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has seen in Dresden. This strengthens the idea that, war can have terrible consequences even on those who survive the war physically and return home as Vonnegut and Billy Pilgrim do.

Vonnegut entire purpose in writing this novel was to release the feelings that he had bottled up inside of twenty three long years. He wanted others to know what happened to him during the war. Many times Kurt Vonnegut attempt to remove himself from the situation like Billy Pilgrim did. But he did not have Tralfamadorians to take him away. Hence he wrote about his own experience in the WWII that never wants to live throughout or see happen again. Veas-Gulani Susanne states in her book *"Diagnosing Billy Pilgrim: A Psychiatric Approach to Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five"*: *"Billy and Vonnegut carry many similarities throughout the novel, just like Billy, Vonnegut was taken as a POW and witnessed the firebombing of Dresden"* (175).

The firebombing of Dresden not only killed thousands of people, but also killed souls of those that survived. Vonnegut's creative anti-war novel shows the audience the hardships of the life of a soldier through his writing technique and personal experience. In a way, this book can be seen as a literary representation of the mental process of someone who has experienced great mental trauma. It follows the narrative technique that Holmgren Troy suggests are common when expressing traumatic memories and experiences in literature, such as *"repetition, fragmentation, gaps or ellipses, lack of chronology and shift of verb tenses"* (85-86). In a way or another, Vonnegut uses Pilgrim as way to express his deepest hard feelings, and healing himself emotionally by reliving the event, through Pilgrim *"Although Slaughterhouse-Five on the surface is Vonnegut's Dresden novel, one much deeper level it is also the story of Billy Pilgrim, a man so tormented and haunted by the burden of the post that he finds it necessary to "reinvent" his own reality"* (Simpson 32).

I.3. The Soldiers' Suffering: A New Historicist Scrutiny

Vonnegut was forged into anti-war author by his experience with war in various roles. This first experience with the effects of war began at birth. Vonnegut witnessed one of the most destructive events of WWII, the firebombing of Dresden and its aftermath. As a child, a soldier and a prisoner Vonnegut experienced several aspects of war and found that the only common themes were destruction and suffering. However, he was grown in a period of destruct and anger directed at Germans. WWII had pitted Americans against Germans and caused dis-crimination and prejudice against German Americans from their fellow citizens. During the start of the war and the beginning of the year 1944 Vonnegut was shipped to

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Europe and his division was sent to western Germany. During the battle, one of Vonnegut's comrades was shot and left behind. The abandonment of the soldiers by the rest of the division led Vonnegut to the realization that they were not heroes, they were just young men scared and doing everything they could to stay alive. Later on he recalled what it was like being a scout: "*Out whole purpose was to either step on mines or to draw fire. Nobody knows what's out there and we're so fucking smart we're going to find out*" (qtd. in Shields 59). He clearly resented the role and felt used by the Army. The lack of concern for his safety of his fellow infantrymen like the one they left behind, haunted Vonnegut after the war.

The most disturbing parts of Vonnegut's biography are the descriptions of the prison camp and the lives of the prisoners of war. They were starved, forced to march endlessly in the bitter cold, stuffed into box cars without enough room to move, and that was all they even got to the prison. Upon reaching the prison, an Australian prisoner who was part of the royal Air Force Bomber Command watched the American's entrance. He recalled what the Americans endured: "*Stepping over the bodies of comrades who slumped to die in the snow, jolted for days in cattle-trucks and boxcars that were strafed and bombed by Allied air fighters, the Americans are macabre burlesques of men*" (61). Filing into the prison, the men were "*so shocked by their experiences that many are little more than animals stumbling erect*" (qtd. in Shields 61). Also, the American soldiers were not considered by the Germans as real soldiers. They were considered them as babies, weak and inferiors. As an example, after the Americans had time to clean themselves and shave, the English Colonel said to the oldest American prisoner:

You know- we've had to imagine the war here,
and we have imagined that it was being fought by
aging men like ourselves. We had forgotten that
wars were fought by babies. When I saw those
freshly shaved faces, it was shock. 'My God, my
God'-I said to myself, it's the children's Crusade.
(Vonnegut 106)

In addition to that, "*The soldiers were irregulars, armed and clothed fragmentally with junk taken from real soldiers who were newly dead*" (Vonnegut 52). They were marched in the snow for long distances to reach the prison and avoiding the German soldiers who were searching through the woods to find any survivors. Then Vonnegut and some of his fellow prisoners were moved to Dresden to work in a vitamin factory.

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Fellow soldiers in the prison camp served as models for many of Vonnegut's characters in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. One of the most resounding themes of the novel is that soldiers were not big, brave heroes but instead they were either at the end of childhood, scared and unprepared, or old and overburdened by the deprivation that came with being in war. Fellow prisoner Edgar Derby who was executed for stealing a teapot in the ruins of Dresden as Vonnegut states in his novel "*The irony is so great. A whole city gets burned down, and thousands and thousands of people are killed. And then this one American foot soldier is arrested in the ruins for taking a teapot. And he's given a regular trial, and then he's shot by a firing squad*" (6).

On February 13, 1945 the air raid sirens sounded in Dresden. As a cultural center, somewhat separated from the war, Dresden was never thought to be in any danger, the citizens walked home hardly hurried by the sirens (Shields 69). Dresden was the single most destructive event of WWII, including the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It was the job of the American prisoners to try to clean up after the attack. Vonnegut was put in the group that was tasked with removing bodies from basement shelters where all of the oxygen was sucked out by the fiery tornados caused by the bombs dropped above. Vonnegut remembered that the basements "*looked like a streetcar full of people who'd simultaneously had heart failure. Just people sitting there chair, all dead*" (Shields 74). Down in the bombs the prisoners "*fought off hysteria when limbs of corpses snapped off or yanking a gas mask hose pulled off a head*" (Shields 75). Later on, Vonnegut would not describe such a gruesome scenes in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, but he had the smell of mustard gas and roses follow the protagonist throughout his whole life, it was the smell of the bodies he excavated from the Dresden basements. Perhaps he never describes these scenes because they are too painful to remember. Compared to the soldier who remembered, Billy Pilgrim, through what he could depict his experience and suffering from war.

I.3.1. Billy Pilgrim's Diseases: Pain in Poetic Tone

Kurt Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse- Five*", tells the story of Billy Pilgrim and his experience before, during and after the WWII. Furthermore, the novel has no linear structure, often skipping back and forth between different periods of Billy's life with no apparent order. The novel covers a great deal of Billy's personal life both before and after the war "*Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant stage of fright, he says, because he never know what part of his life he*

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is going to have to act in next”(Vonnegut 12). Throughout the novel, Billy experience a series of extraordinary and seemingly paranormal events including aliens and time travel “*As a time-traveler, he has seen own death many times, has described it to a top recorder*” (Vonnegut 71).

The best word that describes Billy is “weak”. Billy is not a strong person, either psychologically, physically or mentally. He is described in the book as “*a funny-looking child who became a funny- looking youth-tall and weak shaped like a bottle of Coca-Cola*” (Vonnegut 12). In many ways he is the exact opposite of how one would imagine the hero of a war novel to be. It is very fitting, then, that Billy is not the hero of this novel and should not be conceived of as such. Rather, Billy is a classic representation of an anti-hero a term which could be described as a main character in a story that does not have the attributes a conventional hero would have, such as courage and strength (Niclas 3). Furthermore, Billy is instead a simple, weak and funny-looking man who happens to be drafted into a war. He is ill-equipped to be a part of. Even his name, Billy is a more childish form of the name William and further helps to depict how utterly unheroic this protagonist really is.

Moreover, this portrayal of Billy is developed further during his time in the army where he continuously annoys his fellow soldiers with his importance. He is in constant need of saving and is regularly berated since “*it was absolutely necessary that cruelty be used, because Billy would do anything to save himself*” (Vonnegut 43). Billy is well aware of his shortcomings, repeatedly asking the others in his squad to “*go on without me. He said again and again*” (Vonnegut 18). He is described as “*he was cold, hungry, embarrassed and incompetent. He could scarcely distinguish between sleep and wakefulness now on the third day found no important differences either between walking and standing still*” (17). It is clear that Billy has no motivation to even get out of the war alive. It is not because Billy does not value his life; he simply does not have the mental strength to keep going in extremely stressful situation (Niclas 4). Despite this weak-mindedness and despite getting captured as a prisoner of war “*Billy saw service with the infantry in Europe, and was taken prisoner by the Germans*” (Vonnegut 12). Billy manages to survive the war and became a successful optometrist and starts his own family “*he married his fiancé, finished his education, and was set up in business in Ilium by his father-in-law*” (Vonnegut 13). Billy does not escape the war as a stronger man than he was before; he only becomes more damaged, as can be observed through his new found view on the world as well as his emotional distance from people close to him (Vonnegut 14).

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There is no doubt that Billy Pilgrim is an incredible fascinating and troubled character. Although "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" is a story about the horrors of war and the novel cannot be fully appreciated without also putting focus on the main character and his mental struggles.

Firstly, the title page of "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" describes the novel as "*somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore*" (Vonnegut11). This quote may give the impression that Billy himself suffers from schizophrenia, and that his antics and experience with aliens and time travel are simply results of this disease. Upon further analysis, however it becomes clear that this is an overly simplified view of the nature of Billy's character. As previously stated, the word to in that sentence is "manner". The quote is not used to describe Bill's nature, but rather the manner in which the story is told. That is to say "*Schizophrenia is an adjective used to describe the stories rather than the character*" (Kimblad 4). Still, many of the events that occur may seem as if they could explained by attributing them to Schizophrenia, and for that reason it is useful to state the symptoms of the disease and how it relate to Billy.

On the surface, it appears as if Billy does indeed show several symptoms that are common among those suffering from schizophrenia. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIH) "*these symptoms include losing touch with reality, hallucinations, delusions, and lack of pleasure in everyday life*" (2) . Resuming that Tralfamadoreans do not exist outside of Billy's own mind. One can come to the conclusion that Billy is in fact losing touch with reality. His repeated times traveling together with his encounters with the alien race are evidence for this, and they may fall into the hallucination category. As Vonnegut states "*he has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963*" (Vonnegut 12).

Delusion are described as "*false beliefs that are not part of person's culture and do not change with the person believing in his or her delusions even after other people prove that their beliefs are not true or logical*" (NIH). Billy is extremely stubborn about his belief in the Tralfamadoreans, even his daughter tries to reason with him about the absurdity of them:

"*Where did you get a crazy name like Tralfamadore*"? (Vonnegut15).

"*That what the creatures who live there call it*" Billy (Vonnegut 15).

She says, adding to that "*it's all crazy. None of it is true! There is no much planet as Tralfamadore*" (Vonnegut 37). Instead of acknowledging that, his ideas would see illogical

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and unbelievable to any other reasonable person. Billy simply states that the reason no one else know about Tralfamadore is because it cannot be detected from earth, thus justifying his view as completely reasonable (Billy 15). Despite these symptoms pointing toward the disease, Schizophrenia is not an accurate diagnosis of Billy Pilgrim. Although it could be argued that his visits with the Tralfamadoreans are hallucinations, these would be the only case of hallucinations experienced by Billy, making claims of Schizophrenia circumstantial at best (Veel-Gulani 175). In other words, Veel-Gulani believing that “*Billy does not suffer from hallucination at all but rather his fantasies seem more the result of a vivid imagination that he uses as a sense-making tool to deal with his war trauma*” (176). Therefore, the more suitable diagnosis for Billy is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The Gole Virtual Reference Library describes PTSD as a “*Psychological disorder that develops in response to an extremely traumatic event threatens a person’s safety and life*” (505). According to GVRL, those suffering from PTSD may experience a number of different symptoms, one of which is repeatedly “*(re-experiencing) the traumatic event vividly in their thoughts, perceptions, images or dreams*” (505). GVRL goes on to state that those re-experiencing this events “*may be aware that they are recollecting previous experience, or they may have hallucinations, delusions, or dissociative flashbacks that make feel as though the trauma is actually recurring in the present*” (505). Furthermore, another symptom of PTSD is “*the consistent avoidance of people, objects, situations and other stimuli connected with the event*” (GVRL 505). Those suffering from it often “*shut down emotionally and became incapable of expressing certain feelings, especially those associated with affection and intimacy*” (GVRL 506).

PTSD is not only caused by the directed involvement in a traumatic event, but may also be caused by witnessing such an event, because of this veterans who witnessed the horrors of war first hand are the most likely sufferers PTSD.

As the case with Billy Pilgrim, this sort of mental trauma is not only caused by traumatic experience during adulthood. It is abundantly clear that Billy suffers from events that happened during his childhood as well, which more than likely stems from his dysfunctional relationship with his parents. One of the more obvious instances of this is when young Billy is thrown into the deep end of the swimming pool by his father (Vonnegut 22). Billy experiences the scene as “*like an execution and being numb as his father carried him from the shower to the poof*” (Vonnegut 22). “*Little Billy was terrified, because his father*

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had said Billy was going to learn to swim by the method of sink-or-swim. Thus father was going to throw Billy into the deep end and Billy was going to dawn well swim” (Vonnegut22). An event such as this could easily have a lasting effect on a young child, and Billy living the event as an adult suggests that this is indeed the case for him.

Further evidence of his father’s actions having a lasting effect on Billy comes when he checks himself into the hospital after feeling like he is going crazy after the war *“he was treated in Veteran’s hospital near lake placid, and was given shook treatments and released”* (Vonnegut 12). Although the doctors agree that *“he was going crazy”* (Vonnegut 12), they deny that it is as a result of the war. It is worth to mentioning that although PTSD was a real disorder when the novel was written, it was not officially recognized as one until 1980 (GVRL 505). Therefore, there would be no way for doctors to diagnose Billy with PTSD. Instead, doctors claim that *“Billy was going to pieces because his father had thrown him into the deep end of the Y. M. C. A. swimming pool when he was a little boy, and had then taken him to the rim of the grand canyon”* (Vonnegut 12).

The latter event is something that happened to Billy when he was 12 years old, standing with his parents at the rim of the Grand Canyon. As they stare down the canyon, Billy terrified that he is going to fall in and die (Vonnegut 44). His mother touches him, and Billy proceeds to wet his pants *“Billy hated the canyon. He was sure that he was going to fall in. His mother touched him, and he wet his pants”* (Vonnegut44). Billy was never a strong person, being pictured as weak and showing clear signs of emotional trauma even during the war when nothing has to happen to him yet. It is mainly after the war is over.

Although in a highly conventional manner Billy is described as having *“come unstuck in time”* (Vonnegut 29) and regularly travels back and forth in time. He cannot decide for himself where or what point in time he will travel to as he is *“spastic in time, he has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren’t necessarily fun”* (Vonnegut 29). This form of time travel is a concept introduced at the beginning of the second chapter of the book, at the same time as Billy himself is introduced *“Billy first come unstuck while the Second World War is in progress”* (Vonnegut 16).

This is a theory that has been supported by a number of different critics, including J.A Martino who argues that

In response to the horrors of his experience in the war, Billy’s weakened mind creates a kind of

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temporality that denies the linear flow of time, its concomitant Bergsonian freedom, and the inevitability of death and that the power of Billy's memories to affectively move him in space and in time is such that overtakes his conscious thought.

(1)

Thus, Billy is never truly living in the present; the mental trauma that he suffered during the war has taken over Billy's mind in such a way that he constantly re-experiences these dark moments of his life (Martino 4). Although Billy does relive moments of his life, his time travel is not in any way physical it is purely psychological in nature (Kimblad 10).

The first instance of becoming unstuck in time described in "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" comes on a day when "*Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his weeding day*" (Vonnegut 12), and it is not coincidence that Billy here is older than at any other point of the novel. Although, it is stated that "*Billy first become unstuck in time during World War II while leaning against a tree after trying to make his way back to his lines after a battle*" (Vonnegut 22). Accordingly, every event in the book therefore takes place in the past, through the memories of old senile Billy who due to his PTSD is forced to relive them. This explains how Billy is supposedly able to travel forewords in time, expressing events that would not have happened to him yet. Remembering events for Billy follow a straight timeline. Billy starts out as newly enrolled soldier before being captured and held prisoner by the Germans. Then, he witnessed the firebombing of Dresden before ultimately returning from the war (Vonnegut 23).

Reiko Nitto, argues that "*there is a correspondence between what Billy is experiencing and the flashbacks that he endures as a result of it, stating that although the scene during Billy's normal days move back and forth in time(...) there is also a pattern: they correspond to Billy's emotional reaction to his war memories*" (8). This leads to the conclusion that, although Billy does jump back and forth in time between the non-war related periods of his life, his destinations do indeed have reasoning behind them (Reiko 12).

In addition to that, Billy is never described as getting angry at anyone, and only shows one type of emotional vulnerability: the weeping (Vonnegut 50). When Billy is having a conversation with his daughter, because she is trying to convince him that all his talk about aliens is crazy, he never gets angry "*Billy's anger was not going to rise with hers. He never got mad at anything. He was wonderful that way*" (Vonnegut 15). Billy is described being under doctor's orders to take a nap every day in order "*relieve a complaint that Billy had:*

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everything so often, for no apparent reason Billy Pilgrim would find himself weeping" (Vonnegut 31). Billy never weeps in public *"nobody had ever caught Billy doing it, only the doctors knew"* (Vonnegut 31). The war has clearly done major damage to Billy's mental and emotional state. Billy therefore keeps his emotions bottled up inside, and this is the cause of his weeping (Kimblad 10).

I.3.2. Billy's Emotions toward War: A Silent Pain

To the outside world, Billy maintains a completely apathetic persona. Even in regards to the war, Billy Pilgrim seems to either not care or refuse to talk about the war. When his wife Valencia asks him about the war, Billy only gives her vague answers *"You must have secrets about the war. Or not secrets, I guess, but things you don't want to talk about"* (Vonnegut 61). She says to Billy, to which he simply responds with *"No"* (Vonnegut 61). Billy never talks to anyone about the war or his experiences because he is in a constant state of mentally trying to block that period from his life since talking about experiences would surely cause Billy to break down (Kimblad 11). This becomes evident in the next line of dialogue, in which Valencia asks if the war was awful *"was it awful?"*(Vonnegut 61), although simply giving the answer *"sometimes"* (Vonnegut 61). Billy is always going to be mentally traumatized and forced to live and relive with the memories of the horrors he experienced *"Crazy thought now occurred to Billy, The truth of it startled him"* (Vonnegut 61).

According to many critics, Billy try to avoid talking and remembering the war, is an integral part of his ability to cope with his trauma. Also, avoidance and psychic numbering serve as a protective shield for Billy, and as Veel-Gulani puts it, offers him *"the possibility to live an outwardly normal life"* (172). In fact not only is Billy unwilling to talk about the war, he even unable to talk about it.

Billy suffering from trauma, pain and psychological disease make him avoiding interact with others even his own family as it stated in the novel. Further evidence of Billy's damaged mental state is found in his relationship with others; especially his wife. In the novel Billy marries a woman called Valencia, but even Valencia loves Billy, he is not able to reciprocate those feelings (Vonnegut 54). On the contrary, Billy seems to almost resent her *"Billy didn't want to marry ugly Valencia. She was one of the symptoms of his disease. He knew he was going crazy, when he heard himself proposing marriage to her"* (Vonnegut 54). The disease in this case is Billy's inability to feel any real emotions such us "love". He is well

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aware that he does not, and will never, loves Valencia but also knows that he will never be able to love anyone (Kimblad 12). Nevertheless, Billy therefore marries Valencia not out of love, but rather in order to live a comfortable and relatively normal life.

Furthermore, Billy's lack of love for Valencia comes in the second chapter, when Billy cheats on her with another woman, whose name he cannot even remember, at a new year's party "*he certainly had a spoonful now, and he was being unfaithful to his wife Valencia for the first and only time. He had somehow persuaded a woman to come into the laundry room of the house*" (Vonnegut 23). This drunk full woman asks Billy what it was he wanted to talk about. It is never explained that Billy had wanted to talk to the women about anything, but his response is "*It's all right; said Billy*". Because "*He honestly thought it was all right*" (Vonnegut 24). Many critics conform that this vague replay seems to indicate that Billy feels no remorse for cheating off his wife, having convinced himself that being unfaithful was okay because of his lack of sympathy someone he did not love.

I.3.3. Billy's Pain from A Tralfamadorian Escapist Dimension

In the novel so heavily influenced by the real-world experiences of Vonnegut, it seems strange at first to include aliens from the fictional planet of Tralfamadore as a significant plot element to the story (Kimblad 12). The Tralfamadorians are instead a manifestation of Billy's own troubled mind. There is also evidence pointing toward the fact that this alien race is heavily influenced by the works of Kilgore Trout, a science fiction author whom Billy becomes obsessed with. When viewing the Tralfamadorians as a coping mechanism for Billy rather than an actual, supernatural alien race, their inclusion would make a perfect sense in context of the story.

One of the best compelling indications that Billy experiences with Tralfamadorians never happened outside of his own mind as come in the chapter 5. When Billy was lying in the hospital bed next to Eliot Rosewater, a former infantry captain, he described as "*dealing with similar crises in similar ways*" (Vonnegut 51), which point to the fact that Rosewater is suffering from the same Post-Traumatic War Disorder as Billy "*they both found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in war*" (Vonnegut 51). This veterans dealing with same issues as Billy, is the one who introduces him to science fiction novels, and most notably the science fiction author Kilgore Trout "*it was Kilgore Rosewater who introduced Billy to science fiction, and in particularly to the writings of Kilgore Trout*"(Vonnegut 50).

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Furthermore, Kilgore Trout quickly becomes Billy's favorite author and science fiction became the only sort of tales he could read (Vonnegut 55). In fact Billy's affection by this writer pushes him to create the Tralfamadorians and these ideas rose through the reading of Trout books, particularly "*the Big Board*". This novel features "*a man who is abducted and put on display in a zoo on an alien planet*". This is obviously similar to what Billy experiences, as he also abducted by an alien race and put in zoo" (Spicer 6). Also Billy was affected by Trout's other book called "*The Gospel from Outer Space*" in which an alien "*Shaped very much like a Tralfamadore makes a study of Christianity in order to discover why Christians found it so easy to be cruel*" (Marvin 190). In all likelihood, from this book Billy got the appearance of the Tralfamadorians who are described as being "*two feet high, and green, and shaped like plumber's friend. Their suction cups were on the ground, and their shafts, which were extremely flexible, usually pointed to the sky. At the top of each shaft was a little hand with a green eye in its palm*" (Vonnegut 14).

Kilgore Trout works and his science fiction skills help Billy Pilgrim, along with Rosewater, cope with the mental trauma that the war has left them with. As they lie in their hospital beds "*they were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was the being help*" (Vonnegut 51). Billy, quite literally, re-invents the universe in his own mind in order to incorporate the Tralfamadorians into his own reality. In fact, without the Tralfamadorians and their philosophy, Billy would have no reason to keep living.

Josh Simpson agrees that "*the Tralfamadorians are created by Billy as an escape mechanism using trout's novels as his influence, further pointing out that although war psychological wounds Billy Pilgrim(...) the ideas contained in Kilgore Trout's science fiction novels are, ultimately, responsible for his complete divorce from reality*"(267). It is a point that is important to make, as it highlights the fact that psychological trauma alone is not the cause of Billy's escape mechanism, but also the influence of Trout's novels (Simpson 269).

Billy's creation of the Tralfamadorians, push many critics to shed light on the importance of why exactly the Tralfamadorian philosophy of life is important to Billy. At first, when Billy is first abducted and the color of his feet changes too and turn to blue and ivory. He asks the Tralfamadorians one question "*Why me*" (Vonnegut 38). The answer that they provide is an example of the view they have on free will "*Why you? Why us for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment simply is*" (Vonnegut 39). According to the Tralfamadorians philosophy, everything was predetermined there is no cause neither effect for this action i.e. there is no reason for why Billy being abducted (Vonnegut 40). As the

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Tralfamadorians would describe it “*a bug trapped in amber (...) trapped in the amber of this moment*” (Vonnegut 38). Also, Tralfamadorians declare that, out of the hundreds of planets they are familiar with, earth is the only place one with any talks of free will “*said the Tralfamadorian, I wouldn’t have any idea what was meant by free will*” (Vonnegut 43). In fact, free will is therefore an unnatural concept and Billy accepts this philosophy as fact.

Furthermore, among things and philosophy that Billy liked in the Tralfamadorians that they do not see a person’s life as straight timeline from point (A), birth, to point (Z), death i.e. life and death is drastically different from that of humans. Billy states that, the most important thing he has learned from the Tralfamadorians was that “*when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future always have existed, always will exist*” (Vonnegut 14).

Veel Gulami comes to the conclusion that “*Tralfamadorians philosophy which opposes trying to make sense out of occurrences, helps Billy to deal with the horrible events and their consequences by reinterpreting their meaning*” (179). After adopting the philosophy of the Tralfamadorians, Billy is able to escape his PTSD and live on outwardly normal life in which his emotions never get the best of him, save for the aforementioned weeping.

As a conclusion, Billy Pilgrim the protagonist of “*Slaughterhouse-five*” is a clearly troubled individual whose mental state can only be truly understood through careful analysis. Billy’s character serves to give the reader a more complete understanding of the novel. In fact, Billy does not physically travel through time; he is merely re-experiencing the traumatic events of his own mind. This together with his emotional shielding and completely apathetic view on life as well as his non-relationship with other characters and family are strong indicators that Billy is suffering from a severe case of PTSD. One should not describe Billy as crazy or insane, nor would we make the claim that he is schizophrenic. Billy Pilgrim is simply a man who has suffered through a tremendous amount of mental trauma and is constantly battling the effects of his PTSD, while doing everything he can in order to function in the real world. Ultimately, the only real solution is to create own universe in which to live.

From Greenblat's new historicist view, it came clear that. Both Vonnegut and Billy Pilgrim were traumatized by a devastating war. Pain was their common division. The thing is artistically shown by the author in which history tragic pain was brought on spaces of the novel.

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Conclusion

Through the analysis, one can conclude the following result. *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut is the tale of WWII soldier, Billy Pilgrim. His wartime experiences and their effects lead him to the ultimate conclusion that war is unexplainable. Billy becomes “Unstuck in time”. He is constantly journeying through time; at one moment he is a flourishing optometrist and the next he is a prisoner of war in Germany. Billy is forced to deal with an existential crisis presented forth by the great destruction he witnesses. The fact of matter is that, Billy “becomes Unstuck” as coping mechanism to deal with his traumatic experiences during the war. Billy attempts to reorganize his life’s events and cope with a disorder known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Vonnegut uses his character, Billy Pilgrim, to express his anti-war feelings. He cannot express his feelings on the war and Dresden firebombing directly because he believes there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. In addition to that, after Vonnegut examining the cause and effects of Dresden, he could conclude by the bird’s call “Poo-tee-weet” is the only rational thought about the war Vonnegut can find. He cannot explain or even comment on the death and the destruction he has seen in Dresden. This strengthens the idea that war can have terrible consequences even on those who survive the war physically and return home as Vonnegut and even Billy Pilgrim do.

Billy finds his own explanation of the bombing and death of so many innocent people. He turns to the Tralfamadorians belief that deaths were unpreventable and had to happen because that was how they were supposed to happen. Neither he nor anyone else could change what destiny had decided would occur. At the thoughts of these deaths and all death Billy sees, has only one reaction “so it goes”. Vonnegut uses Billy as an example of how humans should not react to war. Billy speaks of death as if it was casual and it had not real consequences, but in reality death causes extraordinary pain and suffering on daily basis. For equally, when Billy comes home from the war, he does not often speak about what he saw or how he felt. He tries to distance himself from the war as much as possible.

Chapter Three:

Power of Language and Letters Speak Louder of Tragedy: A Stylistic Analysis of *"SLAUGHTERHOUSE - FIVE"*

Introduction

In Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" a fictional character named Billy Pilgrim is used to depict the various themes about life and war. Vonnegut went through some harsh times in Dresden which ultimately led to him writing about the tragedies and emotional effects that come with war. By experiencing the war first handed, Vonnegut is able to make a connection and to relate to the traumatic events that the soldiers go through. Through the use of Billy Pilgrim and the other characters, Vonnegut is able to show the horrific effects of unbearable pain that the war can have on these men, not only during the war but after as well. From the very beginning Vonnegut portrays a strong sense of anti-war feelings, which he marks most apparent through Billy Pilgrim. Vonnegut constantly shows how the war can have an effect on an individual and the consequences it can cause as the character Billy Pilgrim.

Among other things, tragedy dramatizes the hard and serious trauma of WWII as well as the Dresden bombing. Pain, war and death have been a pervasive theme which is embodied in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. This idea was clarified by the historian Robert Tally in his book "*Vonnegut and the Great American Novel: A postmodern Iconography*" saying that: "*the human fatalism of Slaughterhouse-Five suggest one way of looking at the disjointed, often painful, experience of social life in the United State in the Twentieth century*" (85). A soldier and prisoner of war Billy Pilgrim suffers and his life becomes meaningless, and troubled with bad memories. The painful experiences of death and the tragedy of the war pushed Vonnegut to depict them in his main character Billy Pilgrim. Billy constantly has flashbacks thinking about his experiences and the pain he went through. Because he realized that the only way he could cope with the hard times was to use death as an escape. When times got tough after the war he also only turned to death as an escape. He felt that it was the easy way out and that it was the only to escape the pain and forgot about his tragic experience.

Like many writers, Vonnegut uses his writing as an outlet to his painful and disturbing memories. The firebombing of Dresden was certainly painful and disturbing. Vonnegut throughout his novel, he uses his character Billy Pilgrim to portray his experiences during the war. It seems that Billy cannot escape the horrors of WW II. However, to insulate himself from those painful memories, using his experiences and encounters with other people after the war. Billy creates the fictional planet Tralfamadore where he forgets everything has relation with war.

II. Stylistic Section of Slaughterhouse-Five

II.1. Imagery

Kurt Vonnegut writes his novel "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" with an ulterior motive in mind to awaken his readers and to make them ponder upon the human situation. His use of language has more refined and distinct purpose. Images illuminate and clarify to give the reader an experience of déjà-vu. In this way, figurative language may widen and deepen the reader's impression. All figurative language involves "*a complex interaction of thoughts and emotions*" (Edward 39). In particular, it appeals to the human imagination which has already been shown, is an important survival mechanism for Vonnegut. One critic, Ursula Brumm, finds "*human imagination hungry for images*" (362). In this sense, figurative language provides a link between the author and inner worlds. In Billy's case, that means between his everyday reality and his time travels there is always pain. In spite of the fact that, *Slaughterhouse-Five* treats a serious subjects even a morbid one, its tone is frequently humorous, particularly in the use imagery. It seems as if the author has consciously chosen this approach in order to reach a wide reading public (Monica 23). Of course, humor is also just about the only reaction possible in the face of the absurd world depicted in Vonnegut's novels. Vonnegut admits that "*laughter is a response to frustration, just as tears are, and it solves nothing, just as tears solve. Laughing or crying is what a human being does when there's nothing else he can do*" (Standish 64). As a child he had learnt that by being funny he could get some attention which otherwise was difficult task, since he was "*the youngest kid in my family by far*" (Scholes 106-107). Vonnegut then sees joking as a way of adjusting to life and as a means of attracting attention.

Vonnegut's imagery attracts attention, not always because of its startling or humorous effects, but often as an elucidation of central points or ideas. Since war is the main subject of

the novel it naturally becomes the focus of central imagery. There two types of imagery pertaining to war such as auditory imagery and olfactory imagery.⁵

II.1.1. Imagery Pertaining to War's Pain

Since the central subject and theme of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is war, there is naturally quite a lot of imagery in it pertaining to war. Some emphasize the sound or smell of war and will each be treated in separate subsections. Weapons are described in a variety of ways. There are "Potato masher grinds" (Vonnegut 36), "bullets the size of robins eggs" (Vonnegut 168). A bullet is metaphorically called a "lethal bee" (Vonnegut 29). These comparisons with familiar quotidian objects are probably made in order to concretize the war (Monica 23).

Military vocabulary is even applied to nature, as trees in the German woods are found to be planted "in ranks and files" (Vonnegut 34). On his way to see Bernard O'Hare, to gather material for writing the book, Vonnegut stops with his daughter and her best friend to look at the Hudson River. War was apparently on his mind, because the carp they observe in the river are described to be as being as atomic submarines (Monica 26).

Most of the war imagery is frightening, naturally emphasizing the negative effects of war. However, Vonnegut does not indulge in gory details when it comes to war, except, in the case of Weary's obsession with Trout (Monica 28). In another quite extended metaphor on the subject of war, he creates instead a coy, amused tone when comparing a military operation to sexual intercourse

The Germans and the doge were engaged in a military operation which had an amusingly self-explanatory name, a human enterprise which is seldom described in detail, whose name alone, when reported as news or history, gives many war enthusiasts a sort of post coital satisfaction. It is in the imagination of combat's fans, the divinely listless love play that follows the orgasm of victory. It called mopping up. (Vonnegut 45)

This sequence of images emphasizes the reaction of "Combat's fans" or "war enthusiasts" who derive a sick sexual satisfaction from descriptions of war (Irving 245). The

⁵ Olfactory imagery : is a kind of imagery pertains to odors, scents, or the sense of smell . <https://www.en .m. Wikipedia . org/wiki/imagery>.

idea of showing war enthusiasts as being almost perverse also coincides well with Vonnegut's original promise to Mary O'Hare: to glorify war and to create no parts for heroes (Vonnegut 22). Vonnegut's war imagery on the whole "*serves this purpose of deglorification by emphasizing the noisy, negative and concrete effects of war. Furthermore, it reinforces the main subject and theme of the novel*" (Monica 45).

II.1.2. Auditory Imagery⁶

Sound is used to reinforce the negative effect already established by war. Bombs naturally make a tremendous noise when falling to the ground. Down in the meat locker the bombs falling above sound like "*giant footsteps which must have made the people below feel small and powerless*" (Vonnegut 152). There is an antitank gun that makes a "*ripping sound like the opening of the zipper on the fly of God Almighty*" (Vonnegut 30). Valencia's car, after her accident in which it lost its scouts system "*sounded like a heavy bomber coming in on a wing and a prayer as she drove up to Billy's hospital*" (Vonnegut 185).

In all, the sounds in the novel "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" are "*strong and negative, pertaining to war or merely emphasizing unpleasant sounds of suffering*"(Monica 65). In addition to that, throughout the novel there are also sirens going off, further denoting an atmosphere of war and imminent danger (Vonnegut 40). Nevertheless, in addition to sirens and other distinctly negative loud sounds, there are references to big dogs barking in many places in "*Slaughterhouse-Five*". The sound of those dogs further reinforces Billy's fear of war and death in the German woods (Monica 34).

The very first time dog barking is in the German woods as Billy is coming unstuck in time "*somewhere a big dog was barking*" (Vonnegut 37). However, in few pages later the dog barks again, this time its voice sounds like "*a big bronze gong whose effect is achieved with the help of fear and echoes and winter silences*" (Vonnegut42). Vonnegut here makes the suggestion that it is a combination of fear and a wintry location that magnifies the dog's sound. A big dog also barks somewhere when Billy is kidnapped by Tralfamadorians, one again demonstrating the existence of fear before the unknown" (Vonnegut 65). When the Americans arrive at the prison camp, exactly the same two sentences quoted above are repeated, as Billy once again faces something new and unknown "*somewhere a big dog*

⁶ Auditory imagery : is a form of mental imagery that is used to organize and analyze sounds where there is no external auditory stimulus present .(Hubbard . T.L 2)

barked. With the help of fear and echoes and winter silences, that dog had a voice like a big bronze gong. (Vonnegut 71).

However, the tremendous fear associated with barking dogs is greatly reduced as the dog in question is identified and described. Not only was it a friendly German shepherd. It was also a female among all the soldiers. A dog that had no notion of what was going on: *“the dog, who had sounded so ferocious in the winter distances, was a female German shepherd. She was shivering. Her tail was between her legs. She had been borrowed that morning from a farmer. She had never been to war before. She had no idea what game was being played. Her name was Princess”* (Vonnegut 45). Monica Loeb states that, *“This description shows the tame truth behind the vicious sound”* (44).

II.1.3 Olfactory Imagery

In *“Slaughterhouse-Five”* only unpleasant smells are used for imagery. The author characterizes in the novel as *“an old fart”* (Vonnegut 2). Weary constantly *“smells of bacon, an odor he cannot get rid of”* (Vonnegut 30). For equally, Billy bed in Ilium *“smelled like a mushroom cellar with its electric blanket turned up high”* (Vonnegut 116). Rosewater’s beloved books in the hospital *“gave off a smell that permeated the word-like flannel pajamas that hadn’t been changed for month, or like Irish stew”* (Vonnegut 87). In sum, the smells are merely emphasizing negative aspects of characters or objects. Monica Loeb in her study *“Vonnegut’s Duty-Dance with Death- Theme and Structure in Slaughterhouse-Five”* declares that:

One recurring simile directly connected with war can be said to set the very smell of the novel: the odor of ‘Mustard gas and roses’ twice it is used to illustrate the author breath when drunk (Vonnegut 4/6), and once the breath of some other drunkard, over the telephone (Vonnegut 63). When inverted into ‘roses and mustard gas’ it represents the stench of cottoning corpses in the final chapter. (104)

The International Peace Research Institute claims that mustard gas has practically no odor. However, other international sources, state that its smell can be reminiscent of onion or

horseradish, if not completely pure. This would be close to a drunk's bad breath. Still, the combination of a poisonous gas with roses, a thing of beauty and fragrance, is peculiar.

Late at night, when Vonnegut stays up thinking about his famous book about Dresden recalling the war, he has some drinks and his foul breath reminds him of a similar small experienced in Dresden in quite a different situation (Vonnegut 16). This olfactory image also links the living drunk with dead. Life still goes on, in spite of the decay producing the same smell in mouths as well as corps mines. These images may combine life and death in the smell of roses and gas respectively. The alcoholic who is slowly drinking himself to death may have a premonition of death in life by means of his foul breath, reminiscent of the stench corpses (Monica 124).

III. Symbols

Slaughterhouse-Five could be considered as a symbolic novel. Nevertheless there are certain central symbols in the novel that should be dealt with, for instance, the singing birds or the recurring fire sirens. Symbols are very much part of the structure of the work. In "*Slaughterhouse-Five*", as in most literature, symbols are used to enrich the work by stimulating the thoughts and emotions of the reader. In fact, language is symbolic, as N.A. Whitehead he goes to state that "*symbolism...is inherent in the very texture of human life*" (234).

Symbols coincide well with these ideas of the "indefinable" and "hidden meanings". As far as similes or metaphors are concerned, there are always two elements being compared. A symbol, in this sense, is like half a metaphor (William 5). This is why any definitive definition of symbol is impossible, since the other half of the analogy remains implicit. Symbol defined by William Tindall as "*A symbol seems the outward sign of an inward state*" (5). "State" in this definition means thought or feeling. For Tindall, "*a sign is an exact reference to something definite and a symbol an exact reference to something indefinite*" (5). In other words, Alex Preminger has stressed the economy, even the advantage, of using symbols to express or evoke complex ideas "*thus, an idea which would be difficult, flat, lengthy, or unmoving when expressed prosaically and by itself, may be made intelligible, vivid, economical, and emotionally defective by the use of symbols*"(6).

In Vonnegut's novel, symbols certainly serve this purpose of provoking abundant associating in minimum of space. The major symbols of *Slaughterhouse-Five* mainly fell into

two large groups. On the one hand, there are those that center on Billy and his existential problems, his fear and need to escape. On the other hand, there are symbols associated with the themes of renewal, hope and the knowledge that life still goes on, in spite of all catastrophes.

III.1. Symbols Pertaining to Billy's Life Situation

A) Dresden: A Hellish Pain

In *Slaughterhouse -Five*, Kurt Vonnegut uses several symbols that express Billy's pain and to illustrate his own inconceivable war experiences. Billy's war experience in Dresden seems to become the epitome of the inhumanity he has already sensed in life. In fact, beautiful and non-strategic Dresden is utterly destroyed is enough to make the city into a symbol of the human inclination to destroy. Stanly Schatt has suggested about Dresden as becomes "*symbol of the human potential for destruction and senseless slaughter*" (118). The same idea states by Peter Reed "*Dresden becomes the symbol, the quintessence of Slaughterhouse-Five*" (186). Many critics agree with those above critics, since Dresden's destruction is very central to the novel. With the help of historical parallels and the comparison with cruelty found in individuals such as weary who virtually indulges in torture. Vonnegut constantly focuses on this nuclear setting and event in his novel.

B) Sirens

The sirens of Dresden serve as audible symbols of potential danger and fear. Sirens sound three times in *Slaughterhouse-Five* according to many resources. Vonnegut states "*sirens went off every day, screamed like hell, and people went down into cellars and listened to radios there*" (Vonnegut 129). However, the enemy planes were always directed to some other target, because Dresden only manufactured cigarettes, food, and medicine, no weapons (Vonnegut 129). This situation prepares the way for the holocaust to come. While Derby was speaking for his American ideals, the air-raid sirens of Dresden once again "*howled mournfully*" (Vonnegut 141). The Americans then took refuge in a meat locker and this time the attack was fact. David Irving in his book about Dresden reports on sirens from Dresden "*in some areas they did sound, but the time of the second attack the electric power had failed so that no sirens sounded any longer and that is why people were then completely taken by surprise*" (142).

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Billy is scared one more by a siren. He is standing in his optometry office when the fire siren “*housed in a cupola atop a firehouse across the street simply announces that it is noon*” (Vonnegut 50). He naturally associates the sound with wartime experience “*he was expecting World War Three at any time*” (Vonnegut 50). The sound of the siren effect on Billy too much, when he closes his eyes the sound of the sirens brings him directly back to the war in which he had participated. Nevertheless, any sirens or alarm naturally means apprehension for Billy. It sounded in order to issue a warning of approaching danger (Monica 145). Sirens are very important in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, because Vonnegut seems to imply that mankind needs a warning, not only in war time or not only for Billy. In this sense, Vonnegut’s novel is an alarm. Those who respond to fire alarms, firemen are almost the only example of enthusiastic unselfishness to be seen in this land (Trout 17).

C) Duty Dance with Death

Slaughterhouse-Five is a war novel about the historical incident of the Dresden firebombing, but as the subtitle suggests it is also “*Duty Dance with Death*”, which means “*No art is possible without a dance with death*”(21). As Klinkowitz clearly observed: “*...death...provides the novel iXone hundred deaths, of all forms of life, do appear, an average often per chapter, far more separate incidents of death than in even conventional war stories*” (Reforming 87). Death is the most painful experience in war; therefore, to find out the true nature of death is important in the dissension of the Dresden firestorm.

Death does appear in various forms throughout the novel, which is exactly the way death approaches and surrounds us. Whether it is the death of a minor fictional character or the death of an important historical figure, it is unpredictable and avoidable. As the war story of Billy Pilgrim proceeds, we encounter several minor characters’ death. Roland Weary, the torture maniac dies of “*Gangrene that had started on his mangled feet*” (79). Edgar Derby, the high school teacher, is put on a trail and shot dead for stealing a teapot, which the author wants to put as the climax of the story because the “*irony is go great*” (Vonnegut 5). Though Billy can fortunately escape the firebombing of Dresden and survives from an airplane crash, Billy is doomed to be killed by Paul Lazzaro, who wants to revenge Billy for Weary’s death. Billy’s father dies in hunting accident and his wife, Valencia, dies from a car accident while she is driving to see Billy in the hospital injured by an airplane crash. Billy’s mother dies of disease and old age, and she asks Billy an unanswerable question in her last few words “*How did I get so old? The narrator’s father dies from natural causes*” (Vonnegut 210). From these

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various causes of death, Vonnegut reminds readers the reality of human existence that “*Even if wars didn’t keep coming like glaciers, there would still be plain old death*” (4). In addition to the fictional reality, Vonnegut also offers death of the historical reality. There were about 135, 000 people killed in the Dresden firebombing, Robert Kenneby and Martin Luther king are both shot dead, “*Every day my government gives me account of corpses created by military science in Vietnam*” (210). Moreover, there are other forms of death that we usually don’t pay any attention to or feel sorry for “*The champagne was dead*” because “*it didn’t make a pop*” (73). “*Body lice , and bacteria, and fleas were dying by the billions*” (84). And “*the water was dead*” as “*bubbles were clinging to the walls of the glass, too weak to climb out*” (101).

No matter what kind of death the author is describing, whether it is the natural, the disastrous, or the grotesque, he gives the brief statement “so it goes” as conclusion. It seems that the author does not care anymore about the death of hundreds of victims killed in the war than a lifeless object, such as a bottle of champagne. The painful experiences of death and the tragedy of the war seem to be simplified and trivialized by the overly reductive sentence. However, if we truly understand the nature of death and human existence, then “so it goes” is never reductive or redundant. It functions as the wisdom to realize human morality and the necessity to accept it. No matter the kind of death mentioned is tragic or trivial, natural or accidental, heroic or pathetic, they all co-exist with other kinds of human experience and have the same ending. Thus, there is nothing particular and extraordinary about death since we have living with it and will finally have to face it. The purpose of the juxtaposition of the various forms of death and to give the same comment on them is to remind readers the commonness of death. As Schriber suggests “*War is simply the absurdity of daily life raised to its highest power, and Slaughterhouse-Five is peppered with daily and wartime absurdities until its innards became a series of anti-norms, or ordering principles at variance with the expected, the reasonable*” (183). William Rodney Allen also points out this perception of death projected in the novel to affirm the positive and unsentimental function of the seemingly nihilistic and pessimistic “so it goes” (22).

Vonnegut contends that an artist must suffer to produce art, no art is possible without a dance with death. And he signifies this in *Slaughterhouse-Five’s* second subtitle “*A Duty Dance with Death*”, introduced. Billy’s Pilgrim is changed with instance of death-dancing. Ever the predestination, Billy’s dance, moreover, the phrase “*Duty Dance with Death*” is

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connected to the idea that soldiers fought in the war because it was their duty, and the whole experience was a dance with death- death was never far away and they were constantly dodging to avoid it, thence the dance. Billy performs a “*Duty Dance with Death*”, like many other soldiers who were sent to war. Billy doesn’t sleep; he travels to the other places of his life in his breaks from that dance. Thus Vonnegut tried to deal with his terrifying memories about all deaths that he had seen by giving their memories an artistic expression as he stated in his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* “...*danced with it, festooned it, waltzed it around...decorated it with streamers, titillated it...*” (17). Only through art we can somehow transcend death and “play” with it, deal with it and look at it as just one of the episodes of life. As Jadwe noted regarding the dance with death in *Slaughterhouse-Five*: “*it is only through the transcendence of art and creativity that the death could be atrophied*” (41). It was Vonnegut’s method through his attempt, we can also experience the atrophy of death, albeit passively. The extent to which someone succeeds in this is deeply personal.

The “Dance with Death” was obligatory for the “Children” that were sent to war, no matter how inexperienced, unprepared, unequipped and mentally and physically unprepared they were, like Billy Pilgrim. It was either “Dance with Death” or punishment by death for those who refused to go. In one of his travels, Billy finds the book the execution of private Slovik by William Bradford Huie. In a short reference, the author provides the necessary knowledge: Slovik was the only American soldier since the civil war that was executed by the Americans for desertion. The judge’s reasoning for Slovik’s death penalty was that it was a necessary measure “...*to maintain that discipline upon which alone an army can succeed against the enemy*” (Vonnegut 37). This excerpt appears right after Billy has been thrown to the battlefield, unarmed, unfit and unwilling to survive.

Billy was preposterous - six feet and three inches tall, with a chest and shoulders like a box of kitchen matches. He had no helmet, no overcoat, no weapon and no boots. On his feet were cheap, low-cut civilian shoes which he had brought for his father's funeral. Billy had lost a heel, which made him bob up-and-down, up- and- down. The involuntary dancing up and down, made his hip joints sore. (Vonnegut 26-27)

He was made to perform that very duty- dance, and there could not be a more awkward dancer than he was, through the juxtaposition of the excerpt about Slovik with the episode about Billy's pathetic 'introduction' to war.

III.1.1. Symbols Pertaining to Renewal, Hope and Rebirth

A) Spring Time and the Color Green

The final scene of the novel takes place in spring time which, by its very contrast to the general war setting, assumes symbolic value. One day, when the prisoners are released and the war is over “trees were leafing out” (Vonnegut 186). The dominant color of this scene is green. Of course, the springy trees are green and there is an abandoned wagon that is green as well. Earlier, Billy has been riding in it. The curious fact is that the wagon is also “*coffin shaped*” to serve as reminder of death (Monica 155).

In general, spring time naturally symbolizes a rebirth of nature and the color green has traditionally been associated with the return of spring, which renewal fertility, life, resurrection and hope. According to De Vries in “*Dictionary of Symbols*”: “*spring time are also a feminine color*”. It also may signify “*freshness*” and “*innocence*” as well as “*peace*”, which exactly what reins at the end of “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”. According to Monica Loeb “*the spring time and color green emphasize on the idea that, life goes on after any holocaust and terrible. There seems to be no stopping of trees leafing out or of birds singing. Still, death is omnipresent in the form of the coffin-shaped wagon; this composite image of birth and death encapsulates life in a nutshell*” (156).

B) Poo-tee-weet

A massacre can never be justified. In the book *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, Billy decides to write a book about his experiences in Dresden. It is a city in Germany that was bombed by the Allied Forces in WWII in order to destroy its railroad and freight yards. As Billy relates the events, he also tells his life's story, up until the day he dies clearly because he was abducted by aliens who called themselves Tralfamadorians and they thought Billy how to see any given moment in time as they do. The bombing of Dresden remains to be one of the most controversial moments in the entire war because the city was almost totally destroyed and civilian casualties were staggering ,approximately 25,000 people died, although this figure has been changed many times for propaganda purpose. Vonnegut

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covers this idea in the quotation “*Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is except for the birds. And what do the birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like Poo-Tee-Weet?*” (Vonnegut 19).

The literal and figural meanings of these words are one and the same: whatever there is to say about a massacre always comes out the same. The author’s point is made by the word ‘birds’. Birds bring to mind innocence, peace and calm. After the Dresden massacre, there was nothing, everything was destroyed (an image of wasteland). The author’s attitude is very sarcastic because he seems to make very little of what actually happened. When Vonnegut writes “*and it always is*”, his words create emphasis on the next ones, “*except for the birds*” (Vonnegut 19) . There is irony in the fact that the author uses a bird tweeting to show the innocence of it after a massacre. After all, what else can a bird say?. The quote is significant because it conveys the author’s feeling toward war.

Furthermore, it can be said by means of Billy’s point of view of war, Kurt Vonnegut wanted to show his own perception of the war. In the first chapter, while giving his book about Dresden to Sam, Vonnegut says:

It is a short and jumbled and jangled sam, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quite after a massacre. And it always is, except for the birds. And what do birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like ‘Poo-Tee-Weet’. (Vonnegut 19)

This statement clearly shows Vonnegut’s feelings against war and the non-sense of it.

The birds ‘Poo-Tee-Weet’, which actually means nothing, may also present the absurdity of war which is illogical like the birds words. The clearest message and Vonnegut’s attitude toward war might be summed up in the incoherent words of birds. However in the last chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut concludes the book with a rather interesting phrase “*Birds were talking. One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, ‘Poo-Tee-Weet?’* (215). Vonnegut’s purpose with this phrase is directly outlined in chapter one. As a way of continuing his return into the book’s forefront, Vonnegut ended the book just how he said he would at the beginning of chapter, Vonnegut uses the phrase ‘ Poo-Tee-Weet’? twice, located

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on pages 19 and 22. On page 19, Vonnegut says, “*And what do birds say?*” *All there is to say about a massacre, things like “ Poo-Tee-Weet?”* (19). Vonnegut directly foreshadows that will later happen in the book. On page 215, the survivors of the massacre are clouded in silence: they do not know what to say. However, the bird breaks the silence, just like Vonnegut said it would, by saying “Poo-Tee-Weet”. On page 22, Vonnegut says: “*It begins like this: listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck of time. It ends like this: Poo-Tee-Weet?*” (22).

As a way of connecting the overall frame story from chapter one when it seemed Vonnegut himself would be the main character, he returns to his story at the end to connect with Billy Pilgrim. Then he ends the story exactly how he said he would, and how I had been anticipating for some time, with a bird. With nothing to say about the horrific bombing themselves, the survivors can only remain silent, but birds are never silenced. To birds, the firebombing was just another event in their lives, so they should just go on tweeting like they know it would happen anyways. Perhaps Vonnegut is connecting the birds to Tralfamadorians. Both seem to go on with their lives as if it’s all part of the plan and death is unavoidable. So it goes.

In other words, “*listen*” says the narrator at the end of the first chapter of Kurt Vonnegut’ *Slaughterhouse-Five*. After much struggle, he has managed to write about his experience of the firebombing of Dresden in WWII. He has finally finished his “war book”. This story, he announces “*ends like this: Poo-Tee-Weet*” (22). Sure enough, almost two hundred pages later, the last words of the novel are “*Poo-Tee-Weet?*” (215), is not a part of the lexicon. The context tells us that it’s the sound of a bird, something that the main character of the novel, Billy Pilgrim, hears in the aftermath of the massacre. And for that reason, it does offer a certain kind of sense. It means something in the audible and ostensibly interacting with the protagonist.

It should also be clear that this phrase “Poo-Tee-Weet” in the novel that takes on a comical touch, affirms the reality, the absurdity of man’s existence. It clearly shows that words cannot convey any sense to human in the postmodern setting. It is only a bird’s incoherent language that signifies the reduction of the human’s and their lives into an absurd pictorial frame. Generally, the quotation “Poo-Tee-Weet” shows us that, there is a bird in the story asks Billy after the massacre “Poo-Tee-Weet”? Vonnegut used it to tell the reader that the war has no meaning; it has no aims or benefit. And the bird ask Billy why this war? and

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the use of this bird and the question of “Poo-Tee-Weet”? ,shows that the writer is against the war because of his awful experience in it.

More clearly, the question “Poo-Tee-Weet” is mentioned twice by Vonnegut. In the first chapter, when discussing the difficulty that he had writing the anti-war novel, Vonnegut explains “*There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre*” (19). Since the bombing of Dresden is a massacre, there is nothing intelligent to say about it. Hence, the last some of the novel occurs shortly after the bombing of Dresden, Vonnegut ends with a nonsensical and unintelligible question “*Poo-Tee-Weet?*”. By ending the novel by this way, by asking question that makes no sense, Vonnegut drive home the point that war makes no sense and that the bombing of Dresden was a senseless act. Furthermore, “*Poo-Tee-Weet?*” is a question and not statement of fact. Thus, Vonnegut ends with a nonsensical question that the reader cannot answer intelligibly.

Finally, Vonnegut chooses to end the book with “*Poo-Tee-Weet?*” in order to allude to the uselessness of commenting on something as horrific as a war. And those humans are the only animals capable of such destruction, and the birds are left to question this horrific act because animals are innocent victims of war.

C) So it goes

Death is nothing more than a moment compared to the past which goes on as if it were the present. Every second goes on after repeating in scenes never letting a person die. This view on death reassure someone into thinking they are truly living, never really dead, it can make them more likely to actually live their life well. Even cause them to survive in situation where life and death are the stakes where everyone else dies, but knowing that you are alive and well sometimes else can cause you to live through this hurried event (Sandy 3). “So It Goes” is the view on life given to us by Billy Pilgrim and the Tralfamadorians from the book “*Slaughterhouse-Five*” by Kurt Vonnegut. Can this view actually cause you to live a longer and better life! Or it just by removing the crippling fear of death and the negative effects of lost loved ones.

After the firebombing of Dresden, when the soldiers emerge out of a slaughterhouse, they fined the entire city desolate and destroyed. As the soldiers wander out of the slaughterhouse Vonnegut writes:

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Absolutely everybody in the city was supposed to be dead, regardless of what they were, and that anybody that moved that represented a flaw in the design there were to be no moon men at all. 35,000 civilians were killed in the raid, almost twice the number who could later die at Hiroshima.
(180)

Vonnegut's character, Billy Pilgrim, has been burdened by the war, and became unstuck in time. Billy experiences deaths of hundreds, including friends, enemies and even himself, which may have possibly changed him to be less-affected by death and to just say "So it goes" and really not care and move on. Thus "So it goes" may not be meant literally rather it can be seen as a sort of protection mechanism for Billy to secure himself (Sandy 8). In that way, he may accept and move on from the fact that death is inevitable for everyone, and he cannot do anything about it. But in fact, he is internally still very vulnerable in the aspect of moving on from the pain of death.

True, the quotes are mentioned in the novel 100 times. "So it goes" is uttered every time anything dies in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. It not only reveals Billy's acceptance of death but basically the acceptance of losing control in everything (Scoular 12). Quit literally for Billy, he is unstuck in time and he has been abducted by aliens. Billy by himself shows how he has no control of his life what so ever. So, his life is presented as something uncontrollable, something he cannot even hope or dare to change "*Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next*" (Vonnegut 27). In this way Kurt Vonnegut's "So it goes" can be accepted as philosophical commentary.

In fact the human mind is a mysterious and wonderful thing. A simple idea can change its entire thought mindset and fate. Related to this, a "*Placebo is a mind trick doctors sometimes use to cure small or quite large problems with the human body and mind. The ill person is given a useless sugar pill, but is told that it is a miracle pill that will cure him of all his ailments*" (Cynthia 2). Though the pill itself does nothing for the body; the mental effect it cause are phenomenal. The brain thinking that it will now get its body back into health. This same thing may be applied to this novel. Sandy Ludewig in his essay "*So it goes Vonnegut 53*" states

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While there were no doctors with magic pills involved; the idea its 'Self idea' of mindset can be seen as one. This theory on life and death took away the pain given by the deaths of so many people. Instead of moping around and mourning for his friends, comrades and even complete strangers death, Billy Pilgrim quickly moves on with his life with the creation of simple words so it goes and returns to his fight. (3)

For an ordinary person, seeing deaths caused by the firebombing in the WWII would have been too much. For Pilgrim these atrocities could have made him give up and join them in their death; but according to him they were alive in the moments before the first flame. They were alive in the years before the war. They were living happily in their city unaware of their pending destruction. In fact Billy creates this thought in order to cope with those dead persons. Because, if Billy thought of those victims as were actually being dead, with no continuing past along with a frozen future, he might have fallen right there without any reason to go on or he may have gone insane.

The Tralfamadorians in all of their glorious wisdom utter "So it goes" in the face of death. Kurt Vonnegut in all of his glorious wisdom gives this phrase life through his character Billy Pilgrim in the novel (Scoular 8). In other words, this idea of "So it goes" was first brought to Billy's attention when he was abducted by the Tralfamadorians and taken back to their planet. The Tralfamadorians can see in four dimensions and they view time as past, present and future all occurring simultaneously. Because of this the Tralfamadorians have no real need to worry about death. They believe that people only die for that one moment but they still live on in both the past and the future (Vonnegut 14). As Billy states

The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it very silly for people to cry at his funeral. 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

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like 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. (Vonnegut 14)

So, in response to death the Tralfamadorians just simply say “So it goes” and they go on with life. They believe there is nothing we can do to stop fate or things happen. Billy affected by their thought “*when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is so it goes*”(Vonnegut 14). This represents that, since the person can’t control anything that happens in life he should just try to be happy about what’s good and accept the bad as something that would’ve happened regardless.

Moreover, with every death Billy said “So it goes”. This latter quickly turned into became a mournful chant to respect the soul of the dead. This change of tides tells us that this is just the way it is and has to be. But soon the premise behind this chant changed, “So it goes” it turned eventually began to represent into a collection of the dead. This twist shows the reader the force that death had in the story and the unavoidable truth that no matter your view you will still die at some point. Vonnegut is trying to tell us that we have no choice when it comes to death. Death is fate we cannot reason with it or change it in any way. We just have to acknowledge it and move on. This can be an idea which is hard to accept for most people. Billy Pilgrim know he could not change the fact that at some point, he going to die. Therefore, Pilgrim died like so many other characters in the book with “So it goes” being his only words on it. If fate is the reason for everything, then “So it goes” has no effect on him. The idea of “So it goes” was planted by the Tralfamadorianse into Billy Pilgrim’s head (Vonnegut 16). In other words, it was the way in which Pilgrim invented from something that he made up in the recesses of his mind to deal with the horrors of death.

Bryan Scoular expresses the meaning of “So it goes” in a “*letter to the Editor of the New York Times*”, he states:

So it goes is used whenever there is a mention of death. At times it used tragically and other times absurdly. This phrase repeated more than 100 times, comes to represent the randomness of death-how death can come to any one at any

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time- and to convey a sense of fatalism during wartime. That is the constant repetition of “So it goes” makes readers ask themselves about the meaning of death and the incalculable human costs of war. (8)

Furthermore, Albert Cacicedo and Donald Greiner think “so it goes used to create distance by repeating those three words over and over again; the significance of the event it is linked to becomes smaller”(4). However, some other critics tried to use the phrase to give Billy a psychological diagnosis like Arnold Eden stein, and Susame Veas-Gulami. According to them “*the repetition of the phrase shows Billy passive and emotionless reaction to tragedy and death*” (179). In addition to that Peter Reed in interpret this expression he declares that

So it goes becomes more and more powerful throughout the book. The repeated phrase becomes something like an incremental refrain, building meaning with each restatement. At first it seems funny in an ironic way. Then it begins to sound irritating, almost irrelevant. Gradually we realize that our irritation is right, that the punctuating refrain is forcing us to look at another then another death, and we are won over to the device, our resentment now directed to the fact which it emphasizes, that too many people are killed. (17)

So according to him, “So it goes” becomes some kind of beacon, constantly catching our attention and screaming to us: “look! Something died over here! And you’ve seen this phrase way too many times”. It makes sure we don’t get as accustomed to death as we normally do in a book about war.

Vonnegut is trying to tell the readers that some parts of life are inevitable and must be acknowledged, but there are numerous aspects in life which must be changed. Vonnegut argues that we must utilize our beyond abilities in order to learn and change. Thus, the destiny of future can be adjusted by our act.

“So it goes” mirrors that, people should change what they can, but accept something are beyond their control. Death is often something that people cannot control or avoid, especially with the backdrop of war. One has to accept it and move on or terminally stuck in

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the grief of death. Add for there, in the existentialist philosophy people are encouraged to accept the consequences for their behavior and to acknowledge that sometimes events are beyond their control.

Conclusion

Vonnegut uses the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, to show the reason of how people should not react to tragic situations as Billy does. Vonnegut is using the poignant story of Billy as an example of what can happen when a person feels that life has no meaning and one has no control over one's destiny. If people feel that they cannot work harder to get further, then their passion to improve themselves and society will fall apart. Billy definitely has the ability to recognize what he cannot change and may even have the power to change the things that he can correct, but in fact he is lacking the judgment to perceive the difference between the two.

Through the novel Vonnegut expresses his anti-war opinions. He uses his character Billy to show the effects war can have on many different types of people. In each case the result is tragic. Furthermore, Vonnegut promised Mary O'Hare the book does not glorify war but shows the tragedies, sorrow and pain that result from it. In fact, the novel is not a book about men who enjoy and want to glorify it; as Vonnegut promised Mary O'Hare there won't be part for Frank Sinatra or John Wayne in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut's connection with Billy and the other characters allows him to discuss human reaction to death; pain and traumatic events that may make the person feel his life has no purpose.

A prevailing message of *Slaughterhouse – Five* is to enjoy the good memories in life and accept the bad ones. Billy understands that death and destruction are inevitable and he is not alarmed by the knowledge of when and where he will die. Instead Billy wants to share with the world, before he leaves it, the most important lessons he has learned: the doctrine of the Tralfamadorians . Billy is not no longer embarrassed by the past and paralyzed by the future he had made a contribution to mankind , however small , and this doctrine could live on past his own life .

GENERAL CONCLUSION

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The research at hand tackled Kurt Vonnegut's "*Slaughterhouse-Five*" from a new historicist approach. As so many writers who took into account some historical facts, Kurt Vonnegut employed his personal experience during the war -being a (POW) - to write his seminal novel. The main problematic of this research was to investigate how pain was delineated in the novel through his protagonist "Billy Pilgrim", But it entailed devoting a theoretical and historical part to deal with key concepts related to WWII, Modernity and Postmodernism and New historicism.

The present research is a New Historicist study of Kurt Vonnegut "*Slaughterhouse-Five*". Throughout the research, we have tried to cover the work from a theoretical background of WWII. It was a very big and harsh event which shook the soul of the twentieth century world. In fact Germany was one of the most damaged countries in this war and it was remembered for the Dresden firebombing from February 13, 1945 to April 17, 1945 that destroyed the whole city. Dresden a beautiful city next to the river Elbe was the scene of atrocity in the WWII. WWII was a clear hint for coming changes in Europe which gave a raise to different philosophical orientations among them Postmodernism.

Post modernity came at the aftermath of the end of the WWII, and it changed all aspects of life, even the styles of writing. This is what can be clearly seen through *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut as a postmodern novel.

During that time, there were long running debates about applying history within literature but New Historicism marked the end of all those problems. New Historicism appeared in a good time within a Post modern context. It is an approach to literary criticism and literary theory based on the premise that a literary work should be considered as a product of the time, place and historical circumstances of its composition, rather than an isolated work of art or text. Its goal is to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through its cultural context. So, through *Slaughterhouse-Five* Vonnegut portrays his painful

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experience in WWII within his character “Billy Pilgrim”. New Historicism is the theory that best fits the context of our study.

In this paper, the poetics of pain are discussed and a new historicist criticism is done to analyze the character of Billy Pilgrim. The study found out that Vonnegut shows Billy’s suffering throughout his life as witnesses of the Dresden Bombing. He even uses his writing as an outlet to his painful and disturbing memories. Writing about the tragic bombing of Dresden according to Vonnegut is the only solution to escape the pain and forget about his tragic experience. Vonnegut’s entire purpose in writing this novel was to realize the feelings that had bottled up inside for twenty-three long years. He wanted others to know what happened and to remove himself from the situation like Billy did, but he did not have Tralfamadorians to take him away, so he did the only thing he knew how: he wrote. He wrote every agonizing word about the experience that he never wants to live through or see happen again.

Kurt Vonnegut portrays the life of a soldier who is sent to Europe when the WWII started. He resorts to the literary and historical discourses in order to depict the hard and serious trauma that the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, has as a result of being a witness of the injustices and fury of the war in Dresden. The combination of these discourses is clearly inserted and stated in the novel when Kurt Vonnegut combines between his personal skill, writing, and the historical facts regarding WWII.

Billy is the victim of WWII especially the firebombing of Dresden. He experiences the harsh reality of WWII. Billy has lost his mental capacity, in the same way as many soldiers after they returned from being involved in war, into a time traveler.

Billy is a man who has become “unstuck in time”. He travels between the past, present and future, as well as to the alien planet of Tralfamadore. It is the place in which he escapes to forget his painful memories, because he could not cope with the trauma of his war time experience in Dresden. In fact, Billy cannot fully escape with the realities of his life even through time travel; so he creates the fictional planet of Tralfamadore to remove himself from pain and suffering.

Billy lives in a world full of contradiction between his real and unreal life. He suffers from a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and he was badly haunted by many other diseases. His war experience and mental disorder forced him to reconstruct the concept of

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time. Billy was not aware of the fact that some things are real and some other situations are part of his imagination. Thus, he uses his time traveling to escape from reality and expresses his wish to have a world “Tralfamadore”, where there is nothing to do with war.

The author makes the events in the novel seen as if they are simultaneous. The structure and the style that Kurt Vonnegut integrates in composing the story is perfect considering the fact that the novel was written several years ago. It creates a good literature foundation to the upcoming writers, and enables them to understand the techniques that they need to use when narrating a fiction or imagery story as “*Slaughterhouse-Five*”.

Slaughterhouse-Five is a successful piece of literature because it created meaning out of a past event and brought it into public discussion. Vonnegut’s novel is in part responsible for bringing the destruction of Dresden into the public eye. By writing about the Dresden bombing, Vonnegut shares his painful experience with readers and to create empathy for those who suffered. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an important novel because it is not just a novel; it also dabbles in non-fiction. This book is a work of literary merit because it presents a new outlook on war, death, destruction, and desolation. It shows the difficulty of going through war, and it gives the audience a glimpse into how truly devastating war can be. Vonnegut’s novel is a piece of evidence that art has the power to draw on past events using “poetics of pain” in a new way to a new generation. Through the analysis of Kurt Vonnegut’s novel one can understand that no writer can live outside of the history of his country and society i.e. the writer does not write on a cloud because he lives in a society where he influences and gets influenced.

The stylistic scrutiny demonstrates the power of language in interpreting the pain caused by the Dresden bombing in the pages of literary piece. Throughout the novel, Vonnegut punctuates each horror with the words “so it goes”. So it goes means that’s just the way it is and life goes on. It is a way of accepting events in life as fate, and there is nothing humans can do to change anything. For equally, in order to describe the horrors of war Vonnegut uses a straight forward style as well as black humor in order to convey the absurdity of war. By using this style Vonnegut forces the reader to confront the fundamental horror and absurdity of war.

Furthermore, *The Children’s Crusade* has a heavy symbolic weight in this particular book. *Slaughterhouse-Five* may be about war, but it sure as hell is not about heroes. It’s a

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book about innocents sent to fight a war they do not understand, who suffer terrible things for no reason. This sounds a lot like a Children's Crusade.

The last words in the book are "Poo-Tee-Weet" and a bird speaks these words. The jabbering bird symbolizes the lack of anything intelligent to say about war. Everybody is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, expected for the birds. Poo-Tee-Weet seems the appropriate conception to say in order to describe the horror of the Dresden firebombing.

As future prospect, the three chapters were not far enough to analyze Billy Pilgrim's tragedy. So we will attempt use a psychoanalytical approach to study the theme of escapism in the future.

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة موضوع الألم في رواية الكاتب الأمريكي "كورت فونجيت" تحت عنوان "المذبحة الخامسة" وذلك من خلال وجهة نظر بعض التاريخيين الجدد، تهدف الدراسة إلى توضيح العلاقة بين النص الأدبي والنص التاريخي من حيث اشتغال هذه الرواية على الجانبين، كما تسرد لنا وقائع تاريخية بلسان أدبي. ويعتبر "كورت فونجيت" قامة من قامات الأدب الأمريكي حيث تميز أسلوبه في الكتابة باستعمال بعض خصائص وتقنيات عصر ما بعد الحداثة . وقد تم نشر هذه الرواية سنة 1969 حيث ذاع صيتها لأنها قدمت أحداث الحرب العالمية الثانية بطريقة مبتكرة. و تلخص "المذبحة الخامسة" معاناة فونجيت خلال الحرب العالمية الثانية من كونه سجين حرب بالإضافة إلى انه كان شاهد عيان علي وقائع التفجيرات المأساوية التي طالت الأيقونة الألمانية، درا سدن. تظهر معاناة كورت فونجيت من خلال "بيلي بيلقريم" الذي فقد السيطرة علي نفسه كليا وأصبح عرضة لمختلف الأمراض النفسية بسبب ويلات الحرب، حيث أدت هذه الأخيرة إلى انهياره النفسي، وبالتالي فان الهدف التي تتوخاه هذه الدراسة هو التعرف عن الكيفية التي تم من خلالها مقارنة الألم الذي تسببت فيه تراجيديا التاريخ متمثلة في الحرب العالمية الثانية بطريقة شعرية علي صفحات رواية ما بعد الحداثة. ومن خلال مقارنة هذه الرسالة مقارنة تاريخية جديدة وبتخصيص تحليل أسلوبه في اللغة الرواية تبين لنا أن الكاتب نجح الى حد بعيد في نقل المعاناة التاريخية عبر نصوص الأدب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحرب العالمية الثانية - المذبحة الخامسة - الألم - دراستن- بيلي بيلقريم -
التاريخية الجديدة