RESEARCH ARTICLE

FICTION AND REALITY IN KURT VONNEGUT'S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*

ABDALHADI NIMER ABDALQADER ABU JWEID[1*], ARBAAYAH BINTI ALI TERMIZI[2]

[1,2]Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)

*Corresponding Author:PhD student, Universiti Putra Malaysia

ABDALHADI NIMER ABDALQADER ABU JWEID

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates how Kurt Vonnegut experiments with the narrative structure of his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The study focuses on Vonnegut's experimentation which assents to postmodern innovative virtuosity. On the outset of postmodernism, two critical issues have been raised. That is, the literature of exhaustion and the literature of replenishment dominating modern literature. Accordingly, this study explores Vonnegut's critique of literary exhaustion prevailing modernism's exhausted literary forms in order to provide them with permanent literary replenishment. Vonnegut accomplishes his critique through manipulating the novel's plot, narrator, and character's discourse. It will be argued that Vonnegut mixes real experiences with fictional accounts. For this reason, self-reflexive metafiction being discussed conflates fictional experimental forms with ideological critique which attests to its fictionality in the name of replenishing manipulation. The critique is oftentimes utilized in order to proclaim a literary complex relation which lies between the author and the reader. The central differentiation being made, then, is that accurately postmodern metafiction and what might be considered therapeutic experimentation in a self-justifying manner. Thus, metafiction does not formulate the beginning of new genre signifiers. Rather, it is a beginning of ideological dialogic fiction between the text and the world. The analysis of the novel's plot will rely on Patricia Waugh's self-reflexive metafictional devices. The narrator will be scrutinized by applying Gérard Genette's concept of the focalization factor. The character's discourse is approached via employing Mikhail Bakhtin's modes of dialogic discourse. Vonnegut's experimentation with these narrative elements reveals the postmodern relative assimilation of fiction and reality.

KEY WORDS*:* Dialogism, Focalization, Metafiction, Postmodernism, Vonnegut

I. INTRODUCTION

Kurt Vonnegut writings tend to violate the limits of narrative linearity. His creative fiction renders him a credited renown for being artistic in style and genre. The later part of the twentieth century introduced an unprecedented breakthrough in fictional writings of which Vonnegut "introduces the opposed ideas, which the narrative proper will develop" (Vanderwerken 46). Vonnegut is known as one of the most radical experimental authors at the outset of postmodern literature. From the postmodern critical perspectives, Vonnegut occupies a distinctive place since he incorporates the "personal experience with fictional virtuosity" (Berryman 98).

Vonnegut, thence, propounds his relative experience in a fictional work. Within postmodern relativism, nevertheless, he presents a number of contrastive and experimental perspectives which correlate to each other in postmodern poetics. Of fragmentation and of collectivism, of course, there can be unequivocally "vision regarding reality since each real perspective represents a relative form of value or true authenticity" (Hungerford 27). Yet, Vonnegut's obsession with reality is embodied in his fictional world "beyond many of his initial, obvious successes... Vonnegut really succeeded in *lasting* fashion in coping with the special problem of the author or 'word-smith' in his hypervisual realm (italics in original)" (Meyer 107).

Regarding literary experimentation, Vonnegut coordinates his real personal experiences and fixes them into a fictional world. This is true to the putative political relative triumph and social agitation during the war. Moreover, the spiritual problem inflicted on his work at war is cardinally reflected through its inferred revelation in fiction; by that extreme priority of the primacy of individual quests in life over the common tragic reality. That is, Vonnegut aligns himself with "individuals who record their experience dictated by the relative encounters they meet. It is, indeed, a subjective enterprise held inadvertently by individuals during a specific time span" (O'Donnell 82). Consequently, *Slaughterhouse-Five* becomes a fictional incarnation of his real life and "must humble and frighten his own character which reduces him to abasement...

and traumatically whirls him around the world at the speed of light" (Meyer 102). Vonnegut projects many of his personal life experiences into his novel which exemplifies authentic real life situations "because they are now part of a new textual whole, which has its own phenomenological kind of relationship with factual reality" (Sauerberg 192). Notwithstanding, Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* corresponds to a postmodern experimental strategy in order to respond to the need for literary novelty and innovation.

Sauerberg remarks on literary novelty are contiguous with the provocative response to Vonnegut's personal life in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. But it is a different response. It is a response to modernism's "exhausted" literary forms. So, the principle focus of this study is on the experimental strategy utilized by Vonnegut as a fictional response to the fictional "used-upness" prevailing literary forms in modern literature. I will specifically argue Vonnegut's technical experimentation with the plot, narrator, and characters' discourse as a critique of modernism literary exhaustion.

Therefore, three-fold objectives will be achieved in studying the novel's narrative structure. First, two self-reflexive devices will be examined in the light of Patricia Waugh's metafictional outline. These devices comprise, 1) a story addressing the specific conventions of story components, like the plots and narrators; 2) and a story which features itself as a physical object. These devices will be applied to the analysis of *Slaughterhouse-Five*'s cyclical plot. The second objective is to discover the extradiegetic narrative level by applying Gérard Genette's concept of the focalization factor in order to scrutinize the novel's narrator. Third, the exploration of the polyphonic discourse of the novel's characters is going to be pursued by applying Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic novel. Together, these three elements epitomize Vonnegut's narrative experimentation within postmodern fiction.

II. Self-Reflexivity in *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Slaughterhouse-Five tells the story of Billy Pilgrim, an American soldier during War World II. Billy's story is told in a cyclical plot recounting the events in flashback. Billy experiences many events

and encounters different people at different situations as the story goes on. One of Billy's experiences is initiated and told by an unreliable narrator; whereby an experience of time travel takes place. Being an ill-trained soldier, Billy rejects war fights and fronts. Thus, he is caught by the Germans in a battle and sentenced to imprisonment. He is transported to different places; one of them is Luxembourg. Then the Germans imprison him in a slaughterhouse in Dresden.

Billy flees the prison as the allies bomb it letting the prisoners escape. After the war, he is captured, and thus, deported to the U.S.A. When the war ends, he develops psychological problems; and he gradually gets over them by being introduced to a friend novelist called Kilgore Trout; and after a short time he gets married to Valencia. Then, he survives a plane crash and tells his stories in Dresden in flashback as he stays in the hospital. He is now left alone by the death of his wife, Valencia. At the end of the novel, he is attended by his daughter, Barbara, who takes him round New York City. When they return home, Billy falls asleep and time-travels back to his experiences in Dresden.

From the beginning of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy recounts his story in Dresden when the novel ends. This end, in turn, is the beginning of the story. The most visible technique of this narrative initiation is the cyclical plot in which the "event" or "change of state is the key and fundamental of narrative" (Toolan 14). In modern fictional plots, the efforts of novelists, Wayne Booth argues, is often "dictated by the effort to help the reader grasp the work" (xiii). Unlike modernism linear plot sequences, *Slaughterhouse-Five* sets up the plot in a cyclical pattern. As argued in the introduction, self-reflexive metafictional devices pose the question of a story which addresses the specific conventions of the story. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the conventional plot is manipulated. The linear narration disappears; and it is replaced by a cyclical plot. In *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984), Patricia Waugh discusses the nature of self-reflexive metafictional device. Waugh specifically describes self-reflexivity in terms of "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions

about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2).

Hence, re-representing fictional forms in a literary work touches the core conceptual characteristics of metafictional writings when the fictional events "might be seen as boasting the archetitle of all narrative" (Heller 26). In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy, for example, refers to his personal presence in the story by using the subjective pronoun "I" in the plot: "when I was somewhat younger, working on my famous Dresden book, I asked an old war buddy named Bernard V. O'Hare if I could come to see him. He was a district attorney in Pennsylvania. I was a writer on Cape Cod. We had been privates in the war, infantry scouts" (2). Consequently, the token of reality is appropriated by the actual events which happened during the war.

The categorical manipulation with "the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted discourse *how* (italics in original)" (Chatman 19). This fiction argues the nature of a literary work and its "narrative understanding provides us *both* with a poetics *and* an ethics of responsibility in that it propels us beyond self-reference to relation with others (via analogy/empathy/apperception). This extension of the circle of selfhood involves an 'enlarged mentality' capable of imagining the self in the place of the other (italics in original)" (Kearney 173). In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, for example, Billy tells his friend explicitly about his book. It is presumably in response to authorial conscious feeling of the status of contemporary fiction and its possible future. As a deduction, Vonnegut writes inherently on the problem of fictional exhaustion. At the same time, he consciously proposes the possibility of writing innovative fiction. This interplay between reality and fiction is carried out by Billy's commentary: "'Listen,' I said, 'I'm writing this book about Dresden. I'd like some help remembering stuff. I wonder if I could come down and see you, and we could drink and talk and remember'" (3).

Commenting on the literary elements of a fictional work is considered a self-reflexive feature. Waugh describes such self-reflexivity in metafiction per se. Furthermore, fictional works affiliate the nature of fictional conventions to "explore the

possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh 2). Most significantly, the story addresses the conventions of the generic fundamentals by drawing textual comments on the possible creation of story techniques. Victor Erlich traces the story fundamentals back to Aristotle when "the *logos* (the events) represented the story and *mythos* (the plot, rearrangement or discourse) (italics and parentheses in original)" (239-40). In this way, metafictional self-reflexivity assimilates "the relationship between fiction and reality" (2). Therefore, the quasi-real textual hits integrate reality with the fictional events of the story.

In line with this, *Slaughterhouse-Five* contains evident comments on the possibility of constructing fiction. This is true to the specific hints made by Billy's narrative comments on his book. More specifically, the convention of the story climax is directly negotiated by Billy. In Billy's book, there is an ironic story about the decapitation of Edgar Derby. As argued earlier, self-reflexive devices encompass the technique of a story addressing the specific conventions of fictional stories, like plot, climax, narrator… and so forth. Here, the climax is addressed in *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a fictional convention. When Billy recalls his experiences during the war, he remembers his book; and the parodic construction of its climax: "'I think the climax of the book will be the execution of poor old Edgar Derby,' I said. '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 (italics in original)'" (2).

Billy's life, thereupon, is revealed to us by the author. Since the crucial technique of metafictional self-reflexivity is the fictional conventions, the reader is brought into the fictional play. By the same token, the reader absorbs the metafictional self-reflexivity and projects his subjective insights on the appreciation of fictional works. This is because the works are "doing things we value for the sake of something else" (Suits 15). This emphasis upon the book's subjective notes circulates Vonnegut's metafictional strategy.

Vonnegut meticulously tackles the issue of storytelling and its aesthetic techniques. Hitherto, he puts it indirectly in Billy's words: "'don't you think that's really where the climax should come?' 'I don't know anything about it,' he said. 'That's your trade, not mine'" (2).

Moreover, the formal existence of metafictional expressions elucidates the authorial comments. The approximate scope of the author's forward narrative portrayal of the tangible "content" of his work because the "fictional *content* of the story is continually reflected by its *formal* existence as text, and the existence of that text within a world viewed in terms of 'textuality' (italics in original)" (Waugh 15). The original "textuality" of *Slaughterhouse-Five* ushers Billy's earlier declaration of his book as a "masterpiece" (1). There are different factors and real-life situations make Billy composes a fictional book about his real experiences. Nigel Fabb calls these experiences "the inherent complexities and multiplicities of literary form as aesthetic" (2). Thus, authentic relativism leads the book to inclusive details about Billy and his decisive moments during the war. As he was imprisoned by the Germans, he tends to recount his story. Remembering Dresden, for example, triggers Billy to write about his appalling experience. He executes this and composes a book though. Consequently, his memory serves as a dynamic impetus for his personal experience: "but not many words about Dresden came from my mind then-not enough of them to make a book, anyway. And not many words come now, either, when I have become an old fart with his memories and his Pall Malls, with his sons full grown. I think of how useless the Dresden-part of my memory has been, and yet how tempting Dresden has been to write about" (1).

In such instances, Vonnegut provides an interpreting authorial judge or the applier of textual discretion to some extent. Just so, he affords "moratorium on representational topics" (Pavel 182). The story of Billy is metafictionally recounted. Waugh discusses this attribute by asserting "the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction" (6).

In centralized analogy between the metafictional elements and the text, there is a latent acquaintance through the narrative principles. *Slaughterhouse-Five* amalgamates an array of foundational metafictional facets composing the literary nature of its plot. The specific hint in the first episodes consolidates all the metafictional peculiarities which characterize the physical attributes of the climax: "the name of the book was *The Big Board*. He got a few paragraphs into it, and then realized that he *had* read it before-years ago, in the veterans' hospital. It was about an Earthling man and woman who were kidnapped by extra-terrestrials. They were put on display in a zoo on a planet called Zircon-212 (italics in original)" (86).

In *Metafiction and Metahistory* (2007), Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn discuss the historical dimension of metafiction. They argue that "the notion of historical truth, as a straightforward opposite to fiction, can hardly go unchallenged" (16). Consequently, historical intrusion into literary texts allows the author to insert some factual circumstances into his/her writing. Accordingly, the reader can view real insights introduced into the text in a stylistic manner. The kind of history promulgated in "the realistic story trappings are finally reduced to an allegory of the functioning of the narration" (Hutcheon 12).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy's case assimilates Vonnegut's appropriation of writing fictional plots. Writing fictional plots encapsulates the author's manner and how this manner is projected in his work where "there is here an intriguing cultural loop in circulation" (Fekete xiii). When Billy tells his story in the novel's first episode, he recapitulates what happened to him in a fictional story. He strictly mentions his daughter's pens and colors and other stationary to write his story: "I used my daughter's crayons, a different color for each main character. One end of the wallpaper was the beginning of the story, and the other end was the end, and then there was all that middle part, which was the middle" (3). Here, there is a striking reference to Vonnegut's manipulation of Billy's plot in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a story which begins in the middle of the novel. This manipulation exudes from Vonnegut's postmodern experimental style.

Billy's story is, exceptionally, told by Vonnegut's omniscient narrator. We are now provided with the author's story of Billy which begins in the second episode. Thus Billy's story at war is told omnisciently from the middle of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The handling of this narrative position is assessed under the extradiegetic narrative point of view. The extradiegetic narrator is classified within the focalization factor. It tells the main story of the characters in fictional works. Accordingly, the following section scrutinizes the extradiegetic narrator in *Slaughterhouse-Five* which tells the story of Billy Pilgrim form an omniscient point of view.

III. *Slaughterhouse-Five*'s Extradiegetic Narrator

Gérard Genette is given a great credit for coining the concept of the focalization factor. He had originated the term in relation to narrative theory. The focalization factor comprises the narrative vision or angle by which the story is told. Hence the story represents a certain scene and some actions taking place over that scene. The focalization factor provides some point of recognizing that scene. It is thus divided into two narrative categories; the speaking subject of narrative events and the viewer of those events. For this reason Genette poses two central questions regarding this narrative duality i.e., "the distinction 'between the question *Who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective*? And the very different question *Who is the narrator*? - Or more simply, the question *Who sees*? and the question *Who speaks*? (italics in original)" (186).

In duality, the fictional events are presented in a sense of being confined to certain narrative point of view. The focalization factor provides a "fundamental difference between the narrator's story and the way that story is presented. The 'internal' perspective of the narrator cannot conform to the 'external' perspective of the event" (Richardson 25). This duality is conducted by a sort of legitimization of narrative perspective. In *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985), Mieke Bal contends that the focalization factor is the "most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation available to the narrative text, whether literary or otherwise"

(116). Since perceptibility exerts influential intrinsic play on the "technical construction of narrator" (109). The focalization factor, hitherto, is an absolute terminology for the narrative stance through which "the story is presented in the text through the mediation of some "prism," "perspective," "angle of vision," verbalized by the narrator though not necessarily his" (Rimmon-Kenan 71).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the extradiegetic voice combines some authorial discursive utterances to manipulate the extradiegetic narrative position. Such position is exemplified in the intrusion of the authorial metafictional comments while narrating the whole story. In this section, I mainly focus on the extradiegetic narrator. Correspondingly, Vonnegut experiments with the extradiegetic narrator. His technical experimentation with this narrative position entails his critical vision of modern exhausted forms. Since modernism literature presents the fictional elements through narrative independence, Vonnegut introduces his authorial judgments via manipulating of extradiegetic narrator in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

In the previous section, it has been argued that Billy's story is told in flashback. At the end of *Slaughterhouse-Five* he tells his story in Dresden during World War II. The events are told from his point of view. The maverick amplitude of his story begins with an attentive imperative lexicon "listen" which attracts our attention to the story. In the second part, however, his story is told from Vonnegut's omniscient narrator. At the first glance at part two, Billy's story is directly told with an observant vigilance: "Listen: Billy Pilgrim has become unstuck in time" (10). The extradiegetic narrative position circulates around "the insight that the agent that sees must be given a status other than that of the agent that narrates" (Bal 101). The focalization factor requires a degree of mediation between the narrative perspectives, the "eye that" sees and the voice "that speaks" (O'Neill 85). Furthermore, the speaker of the focalization factor "is here not just narrating the general sensibility of the community but also depicting its shared field of vision and thus providing an unusual and fascinating collective focalization" (Aldama 4). Rimmon-Kenan

ascribes this mediation to the story, whereby "the story is presented in the text through the mediation of some 'prism, 'perspective, 'angle of vision,' verbalized by the narrator though not necessarily his" (71).

Genette's formulation of the narrative voice specifies the situation and the origin of the story. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy's story is extradiegetically narrated. The description of his sleep, for example, is initiated from the extradiegetic perspective. Now the narrative "prism" presents the whole events to the reader: "Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. 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. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between" (10).

Here the motion of Billy's travels is inaugurated from the same perspective. This narrative perspective is extradiegetic. The extradiegetic narrator describes the movement of Billy throughout different places. The striking point is the variable representations of Billy's actions. As discussed in Genette's argument, the narrative variable accentuates the narrator position. Vonnegut is seemingly conscious about the position of the narrator in his novel. Therefore, he inserts his authorial observations through the plot. In such a way, he devices another narrative perspective, or, to put it in Genette's words, he is "narrating actively" (213). The token of narrative point of view here encompasses Vonnegut's capacity to depict reality. He creates an imaginary world of Billy's story and time-travel. Furthermore, he mixes Billy's travels with real events happened to Billy's during his lifetime. Nonetheless, Billy relates his experiences to real life situations. He begins his story in flashback when *Slaughterhouse-Five* ends. But his fictional story is recounted from another narrative angle. Vonnegut extradiegetic narrator holds all the events in Billy's life to a fantastic plot occurring in a time-travel. On the subject of this fictional scope, the author deliberately utters some narrative events. Genette treats this authorial fictional presence in the light of writing styles. The author's writing mode

decides the narrative perspective he/she uses. Similarly, the reader is introduced into narrative scenes in order to:

> identify the narrating instance with the instance of "writing," the narrator with the author, and the recipient of the narrative with the reader of the work: a confusion that is perhaps legitimate in the case of a historical narrative or a real autobiography, but not when we are dealing with a narrative of fiction, where the role of narrator is itself fictive, even if assumed directly by the author, and where the supposed narrating situation can be very different from the act of writing (or of dictating) which refers to it. (213-214)

A more interesting kind of overt extradiegetic perspective is that of Billy's experience. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy's story is negotiated by the narrator. He lives peacefully in America after returning from Dresden. But he is still confined to his previous tragic experience which makes him imagine the people around like ficticious creatures: "these fictitious people in the zoo had a big board supposedly showing stock market, quotations and commodity prices along one wall of their habitat, and a news ticker, and a telephone that was supposedly connected to a brokerage on Earth" (87).

People factiousness is approached by the extradiegetic narrator who carries out the author's ideology. Vonnegut compromises his technical experimentation by virtue of the extradiegetic narrator. Yet, he manipulates the extradiegetic perspective by introducing his subjective vision of the literary narrator in postmodern fiction. He comes up with creative narrative point of view to the end that fiction would be kept alive and safe of literary exhaustion. But most importantly he accomplishes his experimental strategy through the characters' dialogic discourses.

IV. Dialogic Discourse

There are a number of fictional dialogues in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. These dialogues convey the characters formal speech interaction among each other. The fictionality of their dialogues clarifies the type of discourse they use. Fictional language is important to the story's dialogic discourses since "the reality of language lay not in the abstract norms of theoretical linguistics but out there, in the endless multiplicity and richness of actual speech" (Knowles 4). In different episodes, there are interactions between Billy and other people like his wife, Valencia. The novel's fictional discourse goes along with the typical enunciation of speech and what it carries out. Therefore, the characters' discourse interacts inherently in the course of the plot. Yet, for the purpose of this study, the characters' discourse is noteworthy different. It is the actual essence of the novel.

Characters' discourse experimentation is adjacent to Vonnegut innovative literary fashion. As an adherent to postmodern experimentation, he introduces some authorial commentaries through the characters' speech. These commentaries serve as an illustrative remark of the nature of postmodern fiction. This new kind of fiction aims at replenishing the literary exhaustion dominating modern literary forms. Particularly, modern fiction creates characters discourses independent of the author's ideology. However, postmodern fiction calls for the authorial relative position in the dialogues of fictional characters in order to see "textual intentionality as multidirectional" (Barthes 5). In the following dialogue, the importance of writing experimental fiction is exposed symbolically when Starr and Billy talk about an "anti-war" book:

> I said that to Harrison Starr, the movie-maker, one time, and he raised his eyebrows and inquired, 'Is it an anti-war book?'
> 'Yes,' I said. 'I guess.'
> 'You know what I say to people when I hear they're writing anti-war books?'
> 'No. What do you say, Harrison Starr?'
> 'I say, "Why don't you write an anti-glacier book instead?'"
> What he meant, of course, was that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers. I believe that too. (2)

The first trace of "anti-war" book is close to discourse theoretical terminology. The intrusion of

the author's comments into his/her literary text is appraised by the concept of "dialogism" which means "multi-voicedness" in fictional writings (Bakhtin 279). In addition, different speech positions and posits formulate general conceptualization of the author's external ideology. Such ideology is not confined to social or cultural peripheries; it is confined to textual semiotics. This is the intersubjectivity of dialogism to recognize "what happens in literary semiotics is but one version of a general situation which is gradually coming to be recognized as an inescapable feature of our ways of thinking about texts and signification" (Culler 39).

The significant aspect of the fictional discourse is the "voice" through a "novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (Lodge 86). Tracing the authorial voice in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, there are different multiple "voices" which incarnate the author position. In the aforementioned dialogue between Starr and Billy, the authorial ideology is implicitly tackled by the characters' explicit dialogue. In this manner, the characters convey the author's technical ideology. Vonnegut, likewise, interlopes his technical ideology within the novel's discourse. Thus, he fuses Billy's real life experience with the fictional piece which Billy intends to write. This time, Billy talks with O'Hare about the essence of his book. He intends to write a "trafficker" book full of thrilling literary techniques: "as a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations, I had outlined the Dresden story many times. The best outline I ever made, or anyway the prettiest one, was on the back of a roll of wallpaper" (3).

Billy's dialogues are central insight to both the characters and the author. What is instituted at the moment of discrepancy between the author and the fictional text is a polyphonic fabric. The text presents a number of conflicting voices which form a unified voice. This voice is touted to be the author's intrusion into the characters' dialogues. Here, the temporal dimension plays an effective role. The measurement of the authorial intrusion into the text

is not quantified by specific time span; instead, it lets the author gets through the textual stuff as "synchronic" or "diachronic" temporalities. Michael Gardiner, in *The Dialogics of Critique* (2002), approximates the effect of synchrony and diachrony in the dialogic texts. These dual elements are compelling to the enunciation of the author's voice. Gardiner claims that "hence, the sentence is the basic building block of discourse, a phenomenon which is qualitatively different from language-as-system. This movement from system to discourse marks a number of important changes: diachrony replaces synchrony; semantics supplants the sign; and function or process attains prominence over structure" (127).

The interplay between the author's abstract voice and its concrete ramification through the characters' discourse is rather creative and groundbreaking. There must always be some connection between the authoritative figurative presences that could collapse into another voice, whereby dialogic condensation gets infused. Vonnegut is a representative of a barefaced dialogic temporality in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In the eighth episode, for example, Billy is introduced to a friend novelist Kilgore Trout. Billy and Trout begin a conversation about the novels which are written recently by Trout. As the conversation goes on, they negotiate the sense of wonder in writing fiction. This idea triggers Tout's desire to win prestigious awards if he writes in wonderful science fiction forms:

> 'What are you?' Trout asked the boy scornfully. 'Some kind of gutless wonder?' This, too, was the title of a book by Trout, *The Gutless Wonder*. It was about a robot who had bad breath, who became popular after his halitosis was cured. But what made the story remarkable, since it was written in 1932, was that it predicted the widespread use of burning jellied gasoline on human beings. (71)

Here, Vonnegut is conscious about literary forms. These forms provoke a sense of wonder through fictional contexts. Moreover, wonder is supposed to venerate the course of events in order to bring elucidative transference. The form of wonder is a corollary of novel genre which "stands

to the other genres as the textuality of incarnation to the textuality of transcendence" (Pechey 106). Trout's novel is, for example, emblematic of this kind of authorial transference. It seems to be paradoxical to confer the author a textual degree by approximating his/her position in the novel. In *Speech Genres and other Late Essays* (1986), Bakhtin argues that the author's voice can be inferred within the context frames. The technique of transference is used as "transcription" in dealing with the "interrelation" between the characters' discourse and the authorial voice; Bakhtin comments:

> The transcription of thinking in the human sciences is always the transcription of a special kind of dialogue: the complex interrelations between the *text* (the object of study and reflection) and the created, framing *context* (questioning, refuting, and so forth) in which the scholar's cognizing and evaluating thought takes place. This is the meeting of two texts —of the ready-made and reactive text being created—and, consequently, the meeting of two subjects and two authors. The text is not a thing, and therefore the second consciousness, the consciousness of the perceiver, can in no way be eliminated or neutralized (italics in original). (106-7)

In line with this, Vonnegut inherently introduces his authorial voice in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. When Billy meets Trout for the first time, he conjectures Trout's melancholic tone. Then the conversation proceeds between Billy and Trout. Billy gets startled by Trout's despondency. A tampering symmetry arouses between Billy's astonishment and Vonnegut's critical voice. This is the credible concession of Vonnegut's critique of the state of contemporary exhausted literary forms which, in turn, are allegorized in Trout's professedly "lugubrious" mood:

> As Trout lugubriously slung the bag from his shoulder, Billy Pilgrim approached him.
> 'Mr. Trout-'
> 'Yes?'
> "Are-are you *Kilgore* Trout? (italics in original). (77)

Trout and Billy antecedent conversation develops throughout the rest of the episode. They exteriorize a figurative authorial voice. It is not enough, though, to just note what happens between them, for my analysis must come to grips with the significance of their indicative dialogues. The techniques to assume are the overt narrative ones. Among these techniques are; standards of speech openness, superadressee, and a logical totality are jettisoned in favor of the underhand plot enactment which Billy is hatching. Tim Beasley-Murray, in *Micheal Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin: Experience and Form* (2007), alleges that the authorial voice and the fictional dialogues are adapted by means of the totality of fragmented textual voices. Beasley-Murray is ambient to a cognate acquaintance throughout the author-character intersection. The textual dialogic fragments consecutively align to recognize a "superaddresse." Therefore, the "orientation towards the superaddressee is an orientation towards a totality by the standards of which the partial and unfinished fragments of dialogue are always implicitly judged" (122). Connecting this to *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the superaddresse emerges when Montana Wildhack asks Billy to tell her stories: "tell me a story,' Montana Wildhack said to Billy Pilgrim in the Tralfamadorian zoo one time" (76).

There is a relevant affiliation between the author and the text. Vonnegut construes this relationship by intervening in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, whereby the independent characters' discourses are influenced by the authorial comments. *Slaughterhouse-Five* allows the authorial comments to interact with the characters' voices. Conformity to discourse exchanged dialogues into a habit sets the speaking subject free. That is, traditional unilateral speaking subject is violated because dialogism "is a reality of discourse precariously suspended between twin impossibilities: an experience of one as two which, if realized, would bring us back to one again by reducing two to a mechanical sum of two units" (Gardiner 111).

The characters' dialogues change according to the authorial narrative violation. The changes activate the authorial manipulative technique. The case of Kilgore Trout, for example, clearly indicates

Vonnegut's' voice. Trout is doubtful and does not believe that Billy will appreciate his writing styles, especially nonfiction like newspapers. He consequently suspects himself as a professional fiction writer because "the world" does not relate to his writing style. His writing stirs bizarre, yet, innovative techniques. As Billy recognizes Trout as a writer, Trout reaction is not expected because he still thinks that he is not a man of letters. The following excerpts jots down Billy's question and Trout's surprising reaction:

> 'Yes.' Trout supposed that Billy had some complaint about the way his newspapers were being delivered. He did not think of himself as a writer for the simple reason that the world had never allowed him to think of himself in this way.
>
> 'The-the writer?' said Billy.
>
> 'The what?' (77)

The effects of dialogic discourses in *Slaughterhouse-Five* are prompted by the main dialogues between Billy and the novelist Trout. The novel's dialogism is, then, the structural equilibrium between the monologic mode and the dialogic mode. What we also perceive is the way the novel's discourse is predominantly insinuated. Gardiner argues that this is the basic pattern of discourse which involves the author's "individual" and the characters' "dialogized" utterances. Gardiner explains:

> It is worth following up this issue of 'individuation', for if dialogism is the substratum of all monologism – if from within a sense of the ubiquity of the dialogical we are enabled to 'see' or 'hear' monologism for what it is and does, if (that is to say) we are freed from the mystification of its naturalness – then it is also true that a dialogized heteroglossia as it were *needs* the moment of individuation whose hypostasis generates the monological genres (italics in original). (111)

Being a postmodern novelist, the argumentative implication of Vonnegut's monologic voice is to invent experimental literary techniques. He fundamentally manipulates the characters'

discourses via an authorial self-reflexive interruption. This ideological literariness appears at the very end of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Yet, it is explicitly uttered by Vonnegut's extradiegetic narrative perspective. Now the novel is almost told. For example, when Vonnegut's extradiegetic narrator ends Billy's story he pauses then concludes: "so a new technique was devised" (97). This implied technique captures the fluidity of the authorial abstract voice in becoming a fictional experience. Thus, it explicitly embodies Vonnegut's obsession with devising innovative literary devices to avoid literary exhaustion.

V. Conclusion

This article has analyzed Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The analysis has escorted a qualitative study which has been a subject to narrative scrutiny of the novel's plot, narrator, and characters' discourse. The analysis has also pinpointed the originated experimentation within postmodern literature. In my analysis, the main argument has been that of revealing the critique of modern literary exhaustion. In view of this postmodern narrative, Vonnegut extols artistic grandeur. His glaring experimental style imparts "the slogan of the decade" (Anderson 37).

The first pattern dovetails the core postmodern artistry adroitness compelling "only way we have to argue in favor of postmodernist philosophy is still an appeal to history" (Vattimo 139). This pattern has been centrally the novel's plot. In modern literature, the antecedent construction of fictional plots was the linear time sequence. The events follow each other in a consecutive fashion leading to the endpoint. The first move in making sense of a novel is to try and see this sort of broad pattern in the text to grasp the larger concerns of the novel. However, I have examined the postmodern cyclical plot of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Resultantly, I have studied two self-reflexive devices, namely, a story addressing the specific conventions of the story and a story that features itself as a physical object.

Through the second pattern, I highlighted the development of the narrative point of view. Close examination of the narrative perspective has been conducted to discover Vonnegut's

manipulation with the narrator. By using the concept of the focalization factor, I have explained how the discrepancy between "who sees and who speaks" in the novel can be ambivalent. The analysis extracts, then, have provided sufficient relationship between these perspectives. More precisely, the narrative speaking subject in *Slaughterhouse-Five* utters the author's (Vonnegut) voice. I have thence deliberately drawn attention specifically to the extradiegetic level of the focalization factor. Being so, Vonnegut "refuses to create scapegoats and he uses an ironic humour which both allows the reader to pity the human condition and to acknowledge the absurd and the irrational" (Rogers 472).

The rest of my analysis has focused on the third pattern. This pattern is mainly the characters' discourse. As the characters interact with each other, they express some authorial insights. It is because *Slaughterhouse-Five* presents metafictional explicit hints. It also evinces situations that we know will be resolved by the authorial metafictional comments through the characters' discourses. Therefore, the coincidence of the authorial comments and the characters' discourse affords us with a double-discourse perception. The dual affiliation of the author-character discourse has been analyzed by handling the concept of dialogism in which the novel's discourse can reconcile opposite voices with one textual ideology. Hence, my objective has been to explore Vonnegut's manipulation of the characters' discourse to articulate his own literary voice. Vonnegut, consequently, addresses "the very forces perceived to contribute to the prophesied death, or at least debilitation, of the novel and of the reader actually also reinvigorate and keep both very much alive today" (Madden vii).

Ultimately, the theoretical framework has focused on three narrative concepts, namely, the self-reflexive devices, the extradiegetic narrator, and dialogic discourse. I have respectively depended on Waugh's *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984), Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), and Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981). The analysis has also elaborated these narrative concepts by relevant theoretical studies.

Thus, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a legitimate fictional piece since it has a historical dimension; whereby postmodernism experimentation "seems possible to conclude that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to *moralize* the events of which it treats (italics in original)" (White 14). The result is a postmodern critique of modern "used-up" literary modes. The seemingly authentic replenishment for such "used-upness" is the artistic experimentation with the plot, narrator, and characters' discourse. This solution subsumes a representation of fiction and reality simultaneously which have been my study's core subject.

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