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Aspects of Minor Literature in Kurt Vonnegut's *Sirens of Titan, Slapstick, or Lonesome No More!* and *Cat's Cradle*

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to my dear mother, may her beautiful soul rest in heaven, and to my father, for his endless love and support.

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Abstract

The works of American author Kurt Vonnegut are a self-conscious science fiction that attract attention to the untruthful discourses building the modern world. His novels *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!, Cat's Cradle,* and *Sirens of Titan* are scientific dystopias that depict helpless individuals who feel subjugated by their cultures. They belong to discourses that do not represent them and suffer self-delusion and lack of love as they try to find meaning. His characters make his works into a minority literature, based on the model of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their book *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*. The model that is based on three main aspects which are: Language deterritorialization, politicization, and collective value, is embodied in Vonnegut's three works through techniques like estrangement and transgression in the dystopian science fiction text, social judgement, political despotism, the power of science, and finally experimental writing techniques like metafiction, language defamiliarization, the invention of a new language to highlight the language deterritorialization and transgression.

Keywords: Vonnegut, Deleuze and Guattari, Minor Lilterature, Science Fiction, Deterritorialization, Transgression.

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General Introduction

Kurt Vonnegut's American post-war fiction is a literature that preaches humanism and peace. The author sought to emphasize these themes for his conviction that they are missing qualities in society and that their absence led to all the violence of the twentieth century. He is known as a humanist and philanthropist who had much love for mankind. He sought to spread a notion of love that is unconditional and wrote for anti-war themes, yet in a very unconventional style, initiating a new writing tradition that emphasizes the fragmented structure of the text as its main theme.

Experimentation in content and structure comes as a tool used by the author to show life from a different perspective, one that is not fashioned by the mainstream thoughts and culture. His style is mostly characterized by the use of science fiction as a trope rather than for the wish to write interplanetary fantasies for pleasure, it also includes dystopia to allow the social criticism in the text, with special focus on what critics called the Post-Nuclear Age science fiction. The same literary texts also include techniques like metafiction, language deterritorialization, and different forms of estrangement.

The blending of the different aspects of science fiction, language disruption, and metafiction allowed the author to shed light on a particular social group. The community group that is depicted in his works is white, middle class, often struggling to give meaning to life or to find satisfaction away from the influences of power. His protagonists are simple men who only seek peace and a simple living in which human beings would take care of each other rather than hurt each other. They mostly agree on the rejection of war as well as the social and political institutions that lead to it.

The novels of Kurt Vonnegut would often show middle class protagonists who are rather presented as anti-heroes than traditional—glamourous—heroes. This white middle class community is part of a large white majority that is represented by the mainstream in America. Vonnegut often promised that his protagonists would not be waging for war, they would rather show the truth about it. His protagonists are thus a small white minority who has to live within a large—also white—majority yet not withstanding its values and traditions.

Considering Vonnegut's writing techniques, and his emphasis on the limited white group who feel marginalized in their culture, it is thought that the model of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari of the minority literature includes the necessary aspects to argue for the existence of a white minority literature in the works of Kurt Vonnegut. Three works by Kurt Vonnegut include many techniques and aspects of minority literature. *Cat's Cradle, Slapstick or Lonesome No More!* and *Sirens of Titan* are science fiction novels that use this genre as a trope to spot a light on.

One of the common aspects between Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, and that of Vonnegut is the importance of writing. Deleuze and Guattari highlight the importance of writing minority literature through the works of Kafka by stating that it was impossible for him not to represent the experience of his group (the idea of politicization). It was also impossible for him to express himself in the language of the oppressor and thus the fact of using that language was an act of transgression in itself. The third impossibility is that of writing in another language because the language of the oppressor was also that of Kafka. This is common with Vonnegut's experience as the importance of writing and in the language of power was significant to him. He invited his audiences and students to go into the arts and to create something because writing art meant doing something humane.

The importance of writing is related to a feeling of satisfaction for Vonnegut but is also a means to affect generations in his opinion and to change their views, make them more humane before they become politicians. He puts this in a metaphor where he compares authors to canaries in the coalmine that shout when danger is near. He thinks it is the author's role to ring the alarm bell, to attract the attention of society when danger is near.

In *Literary Theory the Basics*, Hans Bertens (2001) relates the concept of the political reading to criticism about issues of gender, Marxism, and race. The political reading of a text is thus a reading that focuses on issues of society, or the groups that are usually marginalized and go through an experience of subversion. The politicization is the exploration of their issues and shedding light on their representations.

Politicization is used by Vonnegut both willingly and unwillingly to reflect common problems and sources of pressure that the individual is exposed to in their society. Vonnegut had complained more than once about the inability of living peacefully in the modern world and about his feeling of hostility towards the politicians who have ruled his country. The issues that are reflected in his novels reflect part of the truth. They are issues any reader can identify with which stands as a motivation to the researcher to investigate and analyze the extent to which his science fiction—fictional—characters may reflect the real world struggles of the individual against social forces and ideological constraints. His characters suffer from the lack of free will, which he depicted in the three novels under discussion.

Previous works by different critics discuss different themes like the postmodern humor where Kevin Brown (2009) emphasizes that it allows the rebellion against traditional writing. Lawrence Broer (1994) focuses more on the reference to the machine as a trope for technological tyranny and that the form of representation of such tyranny is madness, which in Vonnegut's use becomes a writing style ("A Launching Pad of Belief" 4).

Within the theme of the machine, Stanley Trachtenberg (1973) argues that *Cat's Cradle* shows an absurdity that stems from human demands on it, he uses as evidence Jonah's mockery of the scientist figures who defend science through the narrative despite their knowledge of the consequences of the atomic bomb. The work of Robert T. Tally (2010) on the other hand considers *Sirens* as an expression of Vonnegut's humanism, more precisely, his care towards the people who seek meaning in a time where the machine made everything meaningless. Tally thinks that Vonnegut's writing is rather modernist than postmodern because he expresses a certain anxiety about the condition of life, rather than nihilism.

The issue of the helpless middle class individual appeared in multiple novels by Kurt Vonnegut. It is also recurrent as much as the theme of war is, and that is because these two topics matter a lot to him. One of the institutions that Vonnegut hated was *General Electric*, the company for which he worked as public relations

spokesman. He abhorred this company on the basis that it exploited human beings and committed criminal acts against them (Allen, 111-112, 245).

In *Cat's Cradle,* he represented G.E as General Forge and Foundry, the company that sold the Atomic bomb to the government to use it in war but also financed anti-ethical experimentation requested by the military as Ice-nine which caused the end of the world. The theme of politicization occurs when he shows a society that feels marginalized by this company and the people who represent its activities. Unlike Grand narratives, this one shows the wrong side of rationalization of life. The side of the Enlightenment that philosophers had ignored. It shows issues that are minor in grand narratives and that is what makes them a form of politicization.

Another issue that requires politicization is the lack of free will for each of the characters in *Cat's Cradle* which is what pushes them all towards Bokononism at the end, the religion which tells them that it is fine not to understand life. One common expression used by bokononists when things become difficult to understand is "busy busy busy", to avoid trying to bother their brains. The lack of free will in this novel is depicted in the characters' inability to control their lives and faith. They are also unable to control science which is a human invention. The novel is about the meaninglessness and nothingness of the universe.

Other manifestations of free will as politicization occur in *Sirens* which tackles different violations against man. It shows first that human history is not the making of humans the way they think of it. Although the novel depicts it as a form of Tralfamadorian invention, what the author means is that the greatest achievements of man are often misunderstood as men think they control everything. More violations of free will are depicted in Constant's life which changes, the fact that he joins the army of Mars, the erasure of his memory, the fake religion of Mr. Rumfoord, and the way he controls his followers to rebel against Constant and ban him from the earth. The novel also reflects political despotism as one of the main problems individuals suffer from, Constant and Bee are shown as two rebellious characters who are often taken to hospital to have their memories erased, each time they write philosophy or poetry about their status on Mars as manipulated victims.

On this basis, a number of research questions are raised in order to investigate the elligibility of Kurt Vonnegut's works as minority literature:

1. Do the different works of Kurt Vonnegut: *Cat's Cradle, Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!* and *Sirens of Titan* include all the aspects of minority literature as stated by Deleuze and Guattari?
2. How does the use of science fiction and the dystopian universes contribute in the making of transgression, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization?
3. How does metafiction help the author in reaching language deterritorialization and Reterritorialization?
4. Does Transgression, both in form and content, contribute in making Kurt Vonnegut's works minority literature?

First, the novels *Cat's Cradle, Sirens of Titan, Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!* include the basic elements of minority literature as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, merely the deterritorialization of cultural concepts and of language, politicization of the matters of the targetted minority, and the collective Assemblage, that is clearly identified in Vonnegut's experimentation with the form of the novel.

The work of Deleuze and Guattari in their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* states three main aspects of this literature. The first one is that of language deterritorialization, the language of the oppressor is stolen and used by the minority to inscribe their literature. The second aspect is that of politicization where everything that concerns the minority becomes an important political matter. The third aspect is the collective assemblage, in which the artistic performance of the minority author is put to light. It becomes a new writing canon because it breaks with the traditional writing of the mainstream.

Other concepts are needed in the analysis of minority literature, merely defamiliarisation to study the language and concept of displacement. This latter allows the differentiation between the concepts of the majoritarian group and their definition when they switch side and are used by the minority group. The Rhizome displays the ways assemblages and territories develop in a way as to avoid closure. One more concept is that of metafiction, the use of this concept allows the study of

the artistic creativity of the author. Kurt Vonnegut uses this technique particularly because it permits a certain criticism of social constructs in its self-consciousness.

Vonnegut rejected his classification as a science fiction author, because it was a genre treated as low art by critics in his day. Yet, his works fall into this genre due to the elements that they include, merely space and time traveling as well as technological control. The genre has been rejected by Vonnegut because critics often associated it to low culture representations that often occur in such narratives and that Vonnegut also included in his work referring to them as junk. Junk references in his work include rape, grotesque descriptions of characters, incestuous relationships, orgies, and chaos as a result of an end of the world scenario. The analysis shows that his use of such references in addition to science fiction is meant precisely to depict dystopian post-war fiction. His dystopian universes tackle criticism and exposition of rational discourses of science, merely those legitimating its unquestionability.

There have been varying views about the reception of Vonnegut's works and their classification as Science Fiction. The work of Herbert G. Klein (2021) classifies the novel *Sirens of Titan* as part science fiction novel and part parody of science fiction. The critic bases his view on the fact that Vonnegut as an author rejected this classification within the genre. Klein shows that the novel includes basic aspects of science fiction such as the naked figures on the cover page and settings. He argues that the author uses aspects of science fiction for satirical purposes only. Jerome Klinkowitz (2009) argues that his works are auto-biographical collages that refer to his past experiences and present incidents (*Vonnegut's America* 19). In *Kurt Vonnegut*, Klinkowitz argues that Vonnegut's 1960s writing represents perfectly American cultural alterations (16). Yet, the novel *Sirens* was a true shove towards science fiction to the extent that it made it a sub-genre due to the use of popular culture devices (41).

The power of science is depicted in the discourses of the characters who consider it as the most important discovery ever made, yet the incidents in their lives show anxiety about it. The only character who does not manifest such anxiety is Felix Hoenikker, who turns out to be a representative of the legitimating voice of science.

Dr Hoenikker hurts people around him because of his amorality and short-sightedness. He never means to hurt anyone because he has no knowledge of what it means to have feelings or to care about any human being, including his children. The Hoenikker children are the first victims of Dr Hoenikker, they grow up living in delusion, lacking intelligence and seeking for care. His other victims are all the human beings around the earth because his invention urges the end of life on earth.

The idea of politicization sheds light on the characters who face domination by emphasizing their inability to control their life decisions. The different forms of oppression in the novel can be considered as Bourgeois Society, represented in Rumfoord who creates a colony on Mars and pushes human beings to fight a war of his own making.

Another issue that is revealed in the novel and that plays the role of politicization is the presence of a Bourgeois society in the novel and its impact on the characters. Vonnegut's characters are subjugated by powers that marginalize them as those of social conceptions, culture, and politics. The presence of the Bourgeois society is more apparent in some novels than in others. In *Cat's Cradle* for example it is slightly felt in the pressures that are exercised over each of the characters. It is more represented in the power and ideology that has legalized science as the highest quest that can ever exist and made it unquestionable albeit the creation of the atomic bomb.

In *Slapstick*, the Bourgeois society is depicted in a more classic perspective. The protagonists are victims of their parents and then of their culture, which stands as forms of power that decide what happens in their lives. The same Bourgeois society is disrupted by the creation of the extended family, Vonnegut's only successful utopia. This latter only survives because it destroys all forms of government in the United States. In *Sirens,* the presence of a Bourgeois society is more apparent in the form of a totalitarian form of government led by Rumfoord, who exercises dictatorship on Mars, then, controls human minds on earth by convincing them of his ability to tell the future, while he was able to travel in time and space, then creating a new religion that made him more powerful.

In the novel *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!* the violation of free will is directly followed by a de-naturalization of the main characters. The novel actually shows the protagonists leading a secret life in their mansion, abandoned by their parents, living by their own values. The two protagonists have their own world so their mode of living is the only norm they know. They are treated as irrational and are surprised by expectations from society who separates them, throwing them thus into loss and delusion.

Most of Vonnegut's characters are anti-heroes, they also split into loners and sufferers, the ones making the miseries of the others like Dr Felix Hoenikker, Newt Hoenikker, and Jonah the narrator. Vonnegut's characters are also anti-oedipal. They revolt against the forces that subjugate them, they reject the inherited values which led their lives to delusion, and often try to create their own territories by choosing different modes of living than the ones they have been subjected to.

The one aspect that gives quality to Vonnegut's works unlike the use of the science fiction elements is the fact that he experiments with the text, particularly with the form, as to make the theme of the text in the structure, using Klinkowitz' words. This latter reports that the language of Kurt Vonnegut in his post-war novels uses a language so subversive that it represents American middle-class values (Klinkowitz, *Kurt Vonnegut* 87). James Lundquist focused on the use of humour in Vonnegut's works, more precisely on cosmic irony, insisting on the theme that the joke of an absurd universe that is full of wrong accidents like wars, is actually on human beings themselves (Lundquist, *Kurt Vonnegut* 67). Lundquist also considers Bokononism as an expression of hope for man. For him, the novel *Cat's Cradle* uses a language that is amusing but also has a strong purpose which is that of warning humanity against a catastrophe (37).

This dissertation adopts a New Historicist approach to discuss the constituents of a minority literature in the works of author Kurt Vonnegut by shedding light on the cultural aspects that have led to the feeling of alienation and subjugation that drove him to represent such characters on the one side. The approach is used to study aspects of alienation, lack of freedom, and violation of free will in chapter two as

basics of the dystopian novel. It also analyses transgressions, deterritorializations of common cultural concepts, Assemblage and Chaos in the three novels in the third chapter. The fourth chapter is discussed from a post-structuralist approach where the linguistic deterritorialization is put to light as well as the subversive-writing techniques, merely those of metafiction, self-reflexivity and parody. The analysis also tackles the Bokononist language as a form of defamiliarization.

The first chapter seeks to present an overview of science fiction as a genre, its development and definitions. The goal in this overview is to highlight the aspects of the genre and their existence in the works of Kurt Vonnegut, merely those of cognitive estrangement, time traveling, and the power of science. The chapter relies on the works of Richard Bleiler and Everett Franklin Bleiler on the Gernsback years, considering them as the real beginning of science fiction as genre. The chapter also states the different stages of science fiction as classified by Kevin Alexander Boon in his essay "The Episteme-ology of Science Fiction" (2006), with special focus on the third stage, the Post-nuclear science fiction.

The study also discusses dystopia as a form of writing and explores its main constituents, as they are basic elements in the works of the targeted novels. The dystopian text puts in the centre the subverted individual who then becomes a subject in a minority group. Finally, the basic concepts of Deleuze and Guattari are explored in the study to discern their definitions, limitations, and contexts. Understanding deterritorialization also leads to a detailed study of Sheklovskij's concept of language defamiliarization. The concept of politicization also entails a study of the anti-oedipus as approached by Deleuze and Guattari, and finally the collective assemblage which also requires a mastery of the rhizome for the researcher to be able to speak about flowing deterritorializations, then re-territorializations.

Chapter two discusses the status of Vonnegut's characters as victims of surrounding forces that control them, merely socio-ideological. The analysis includes the classification of Vonnegut's literature in what is known as high and low art in order to explain the references to low culture that often occur in his writing.

The chapter also discusses the position of science as untouchable, metaphorically, referring to it as a God due to the large power it has. This principle is further criticized in the novel on the basis that it is presented as a limitation of personal freedom of individuals who live under despotism.

Despotism is also discussed in the novel *Sirens of Titan* through an exposition of mind-control and the violation of free will in the lives of the protagonists. The objective in such analysis is to show the constituents of dystopian fiction in Vonnegut's works and the extent to which they highlight the existence of subverted individuals.

The three novels show different kinds of power that are exercised over the characters and which manifest a form of a conflict of man against society and against the powers that control him. The point is to shed light on the different forms of repression that the common man goes through in the modern world, that are not necessarily linked to color or religion but to ideology and culture. In these minority groups, the criterion of oppression is not color, nor language or race, but it is the exercise of power against the common man.

Love in the novel is presented as the main issue of Americans. As the characters display loneliness and a sense of loss due to the lack of love, they also show transgression when they create their own forms of receiving and giving this feeling. Thus, it is presented in chapter three as a form of struggle in the life of the common American due to its absence, then a transgression as it is regained by the characters. The chapter also discusses grotesque assemblages as forms of transgression. This point seeks to highlight how the two siblings escape the normal life which alienated them to find alternatives that are grotesque and hideous.

In *Sirens,* these assemblages take form in the shape of extra-terrestrial concepts that are usually unkonwn in human life. Fake religion is also presented both as tool of repression by the system and as an assemblage for freedom. The status of the protagonist alters from territory to another in a chaotic system to break with the rules. Chaos is a celebration in the three novels, although some characters attempt to create meaning to regain faith in their lives and their values.

In chapter four, Vonnegut as an anti-conformist makes his writing fashion that includes literary offenses at the level of language, but also disruptions of common narration. He experiments with writing by interfering directly in the narrative to introduce the goal of his work before the novel is read, yet keeps the meaning blurry until the narration is finished. He breaks with time linearity both in the telling of the story, but also in the conceptions of time in his alternate universes. Even in his settings, the depiction of outer space and planets is done purposefully to allow him to stage plots and events that are not common.

Chapter One: Overview of Science Fiction, Dystopia, and Deleuze and Guattari's Minor Literature

Chapter One: Overview of Science Fiction, Dystopia, and Deleuze and Guattari's Minor Literature

1.1 Introduction

Science fiction is often defined as an act of storytelling that may include different genres but is not a genre in itself (Mendelsohn 1). However, critics have conflicting views about this form of writing as some of them do classify it as a distinct genre, like the work of Adam Roberts (Bould et al. xix). The historians of Science Fiction refer to its birth and origin to explain its characteristics, particularly, the conditions in which the name was coined. Critics report that there have been several works written before the twentieth century that can be categorized as SF, i.e., before the appearance of the concept. These works included some of the aspects of the genre, which later became basic criteria for the classification of literary texts as science fiction in the twentieth-century (Evans 13).

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus* (1818) is often considered as the first SF novel, yet, other novels written earlier, like Thomas More's *Utopia*, are also put under this classification (Roberts 3). None of these early SF works was written for the sake of writing a fiction about science, like the later writers; who appeared in the twentieth century and popularized the genre. The works published in the 1920s represented the real beginning of the genre as a distinct and independent way of writing. This was the so-called "Magazine Period" (Atterby 32), or what Everett Franklin Bleiler and Richard Bleiler termed the "Gernsback Years", (also used as a title of their book on the matter). This new artistic form introduced themes and techniques that are not common in traditional realist literature and were characterized as new and different.

The Gernsback years defined the basic aspects of this genre as well as its reputation and impact on readership. The name Gernsback was the name of editor Hugo Gernsback, born in Luxembourg and settled in America, who started publishing the magazine *Amazing Stories* in 1926 and coined the term "scientifiction" (Bleiler & Bleiler xi).

1.2 The Gernsback Era

Hugo Gernsback started publishing magazines around the year 1909. His earliest magazines entitled *Popular Electrics* and *Modern Electrics* included stories about science but not much fantasy about it. These magazines were rather "science faction" magazines than science fiction as he mentioned in his magazine *Wonder Stories Quarterly* in 1930 (qtd in Bleiler & Bleiler xii). He attempted to include some scientific fantasy in these magazines, as he published his own novel "Ralph 124C 41+" in *Modern Electrics*. Likewise, in the 1920s he started publishing his new magazine *Science and Invention* in which he devoted an entire issue to scientific fantasies, which he entitled the "Scientific Fiction Issue" in 1923. This issue included four real science fiction stories, which are: a part of Ray Cumming's " Around the Universe", G. Peyton Wertenbacker's "The Man from the Atom", J, Huckle's "Advanced Chemistry", and "Clement Fézandié's "The Secrets of the Supertelescopeé" (Bleiler & Bleiler xii).

In 1924, Gernsback revealed his intention to publish a magazine entirely devoted to science fiction, in which he coined the portmanteau term "scientifiction" (xii). It took him two years to decide to print that magazine for the lack of interest by the audience (Gernsback qtd in Bleiler & Bleiler xii). The same word, scientifiction, gained more popularity in 1926, which encouraged Gernsback to finally publish his *Amazing Stories*.

Amazing Stories was the kind of magazine that printed the picture of the planet Saturn and a comet tail above (xi). The beginnings of the magazine consisted of reprintings of classical literature like the works of H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe among others. The magazine gained great popularity and the publisher needed writers to provide him with Science Fiction stories. The only authors that Gernsback could find were amateurs who struggled with the genre merely because of their little knowledge of science and thus their inability to fantasize about it. Gernsback tried even writing contests to find authors but these attempts were not successful. The same struggle was faced by other competitors to the magazine, merely *Astounding Stories*

of Super-Science published by William Clayton and Arthur J. Barks. As Barks attempted to write some science fiction, being a recognized pulp fiction author at the time, his attempts were considered "pathetic" for the lack of knowledge about science (Bleiler & Bleiler xxii).

The early years' attempts at popularizing scientific fiction as a new genre failed because the selected writers had to belong to a particular background that allows them to master scientific notions and fantasize about them. One more reason is that the gains they made from writing were very insufficient for a decent living, so writing was a secondary activity for these authors, who practiced other occupations. Luckily for the genre, it was saved by non-professional authors who wrote scientific fiction for the sake of amusement more than to make any profit of it. Most of these writers were practitioners or physicists who were already familiar with the scientific jargon, and could write these stories easily. They wrote one quarter of the original stories published by the magazine from 1927 to 1930 (Bleiler & Bleiler xxii).

The genre was often associated to pulp fiction because it was printed on pulp paper (xiii), and because the early pulp writers attempted to write their science fiction stories in unsuccessful attempts. Yet, it is necessary to mention that pulp fiction and science fiction are different from each other. As science fiction is a genre, born by the 1920s in science fact magazines, mostly concerned with scientific inventions and space travel[1], Pulp fiction is a form of popular fiction printed on cheap paper from 1880s to the 1950s, produced merely for profit and dubbed as a low art. It is a literature made famous by "mass production, affordability," and an audience composed of middle class and limited income only (Server xi).

Pulp fiction was made possible thanks to the rise of education rate and invention of advanced printing machines, as well as transportation means, which made literature and journalism available for the commons at a very affordable price. It was named "penny dreadfuls" for its easiness of access and the purpose for which

[1] Definitions of science fiction are discussed in page 23

it was produced, i.e: profit. It presented horror stories, sensational narratives, delinquency and libertinism in the mid-nineteenth century. (Server xi)

The editors of pulp fiction thought that the only way to keep such literature vivid and profitable was through publishing thrills, so they kept the same familiar plots and characters in different stories. It was written by what is referred to as "driven craftsmen" because it was produced on demand and not for pleasure. Main figures in this literature are Jack London, Bram Stoker, Baroness Orczy, and Zane Grey. From the 1900s to the 1930s pulp literature developed to cover different genres like crime, romance, fantasy, and adventure, to move to World War I stories, spy narratives, and erotic fantasies (Server xiii).

It was by 1931 that a number of authors could practice writing science fiction as a full time job and still be successful at it. These were trained professional and semi-professional writers who came from scientific backgrounds. It was a period in which science fiction gained popularity and acceptance as a "valid area in popular fiction" (Bleiler & Bleiler xxii). Names like John W. Campbell, Stanton A. Coblentz, Raymond Z Gallun and Edward Hamilton among others led such popularization by publishing in different SF magazines like Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* and *Weird Tales*. The number of early SF works cannot be exactly defined because other writers published in other non-classified magazines and books (xxii-xxiii). By the years 1938 and 1939, science fiction was transmitted to another level of popularity with the appearance of writers like Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert A. Heinlen and others (xxv).

In 1929 Gernsback started thinking of contemporary aviation technology as the next field to lead in the technological world so he created what he referred to as "aviation science-fiction" published in a new magazine entitled *Air Wonder Stories* (Bleiler & Bleiler 541). The latter presented what Gernsback called "flying stories of the future", implementing by that, that these narratives were narratives of the future (qtd in Bleiler & Bleiler 541).

Gernsback favoured fantasies about the future because he believed that imagining technological inventions in literature could lead to their creation. He thought that these stories could "prove an incentive in starting some one to work on a device or invention suggested by some author of scientifiction" (qtd in Bleiler & Bleiler 545). Gernsback firmly believed that the SF in his magazines could be educational, and that it could provide knowledge to readers, that they could not find in other sources. He started publishing these stories as informal tools for teaching (Atterby 33), yet, for financial problems related to the impossibility of printing, such promises could not be fulfilled (Bleiler & Bleiler 541).

The stories of the Gernsback magazines between 1928 and 1931 tackled themes of catastrophism and destruction on earth like earthquakes and floods. The futures that are depicted in these stories are far futures (compared to the time in which these stories were written) and thus are culturally and technologically different (Bleiler & Bleiler xvii). They also presented themes of invention in which new discoveries are made. These themes include "lost race" and "hidden people", in addition to "space operas" which usually is a war taking place in space or between stars and planets, and the usual theme of space travel. These stories covered six different story patents, which are "conflict, crime and detection, eros, exploration, exposition[2], and things-go-wrong" (xxii).

Differences between pulp fiction and SF fall merely in what Everett Franklin Bleiler and Richard Bleiler call the "ingredient X" which exceeds mere fiction or narrative techniques (xiv). It is the expression of an important theme related to social values and the individual, which makes SF much more than entertainment, and ranks it within serious literature.

The Gernsback SF did not represent much of the world events of its period; for example, none of the social problems of the 1920s to the 1930s in the USA like

[2]A story mode in which the purpose in exposing a particular thing and its functioning, focus on the aspect of exposition rather than narrative (Bleiler & Bleiler xxii)

the Great Depression and its consequences, was reflected in this literature. It was thus categorized as a "literature of despair and catastrophism" for it tackles the theme of the things-go-wrong. Topics that gained popularity in this period were related to new discoveries and fantasies not usually possible in the real world, like death rays and communication with Mars (Bleiler & Bleiler xvi). These topics also covered fantasies about the end of the world like astronomic catastrophes, interplanetary collisions, and supernatural powers.

Harry Harrison referred the beginning of SF from the 1920s to the 1950s to pulp magazines, denoting it is a "pulp magazine phenomenon" (1). Before the blink of an eye, science fiction developed into something very different by the second world war, a transition referred to by Kingsley Amis, author of *The Golden Age of Science Fiction* as popping from "Chaucer to *Finnegans Wake* in less than fifty years", adding that in the 1960s it started leaving the branch of literature to shift to scientific exactitude, which for him, was deceiving and demeaning for the genre (qtd in Harrison 3).

1.3 Defining Science Fiction

Early attempts at writing science fiction before its birth came from authors who experimented with a new form of writing that included science, before it reached its actual status (or its later definitions as is shown in this chapter). Harold Harsey, editor of the pulp magazine *The Thrill Book,* made a call for narratives that presented the "unusual, the mysterious, the occult, the harrowing," as well as communication with different unseen worlds using "miraculous but logical happenings" (qtd in Bleiler & Bleiler xii). Although this is a pulp magazine, the call was made in 1919, before the term scientifiction was coined, and writing a fiction that includes science was something new and rare. The call for participation refers to the mysterious as miraculous but also "logical", which creates a point of difference from other fantasy literature which depicts the usual but superstitious with no logical justification. Later definitions of science fiction emphasized the element of rationality, expressed in

different words, like the cognitive and the novum for critic Darko Suvin[3], or the Structual Fabulation, a term used by critic Robert Scholes to refer to the function and scope of science fiction (qtd in Roberts 10).

After a thorough analysis of the birth and beginning of Science Fiction two things became unquestionable. SF started in the Gernsback years, with what Hugo Gernsback referred to as "Scientifiction" in 1926 (Bleiler &Bleiler xi), and the main themes in this literature have to do with scientific discoveries that are different from the common and the usual, space travels, depictions of the future and stories about catastrophes and destruction of the earth (Bleiler & Bleiler xi).

Adam Roberts cites a number of critics who refer the term SF to any literary work that is classified as scientific fiction, sold as such, or termed as such, without providing any particular feature to the genre, but considering it as a product made for marketing (2). Brian Atterby on the other side, flags it as a job for writers (implementing by this that it is merely a source of income), a marketing object for publishers, and "a collection of visual images and styles", all these being results of the magazine period which adopted this writing style merely for profit, especially through the economic crisis and threats of bankruptcy that haunted the publishers through the first half of the twentieth century (Atterby 32).

Science Fiction is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a fiction that emanates from imagination, about scientific discoveries or environmental changes usually set in the future. It includes depictions of the future and interplanetary as well as time travels (qtd in Roberts 2). Adam Roberts goes on with this definition to emphasize the difference between SF and traditional realist fiction, to insist that it breaks with the aspect of verisimilitude (2).

Other definitions refer this genre to a literature that depicts worlds that are different from the world in which we live, being thus classified as a form of "fantastic

[3] See definition by Darko Suvin on page 22

literature" (Roberts 1). Such a definition is incomplete because it classifies SF as a form of fantasy, while other scholars studied the genre more thoroughly and came up with definitions that emphasize the difference between SF and fantasy. SF does not cover "fairy tales, surreal fictions… or magical realism" which are forms of imaginative fiction as explained by Adam Roberts (3).

Literature has proven that not all SF texts include space and time travel, yet are based on imaginary worlds that are alien (4). The difference between an SF text and a fantasy is related to the presence of the element of science (scientific discovery/ experiment), unlike fantasy, in which the alien or different world is due to the supernatural (like the transformation of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, which is not a result of a scientific experiment or invention) (Roberts 5).

Imaginary inventions in SF, as well as future universes, are inspired from pre-existing scientific theory, which serves as evidence for their rationalism in the SF text (Mann 6). A suitable example is the reversal of the theory of Evolution in Kurt Vonnegut's *Gàlapagos*, a novel in which human beings, living in an island, evolve through a million years to transform to what he refers to as "fisherfolks", creatures that are half human, and half fish. Though the future depicted here is different from the real world of the author, the theory used to justify it was pre-existent and agreed upon by scholars (evolution), even if it is reversed in a humorous way.

Darko Suvin joins the previous definitions of Science Fiction and adds the word "novum", latin for new, to refer to the new worlds that are different from the usual. The novum for Suvin is the element which separates the SF text from all other forms of literature (Roberts 60). In the "The Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre" Suvin defines SF as a literary genre that requires the element of "estrangement" and cognition to mark its difference from other forms of literature. He insists on the alternative environment as opposed to the usual or the common world (qtd in Roberts 7).

Cognition is presented by Adam Roberts as the aspect of SF that prompts readers to understand the "landscape of a given SF book" (8). The definition of Suvin thus implicates three main elements in the SF text. The first is a point that makes the idea new compared to the usual worlds and thus creates a break with the actual time. Estrangement, which is an alienation, is not only new to the real physical world but also strange and alien to it. Cognition is what makes this estrangement rationally true and scientifically possible, without which the work is mere fantasy. Without estrangement, the text is only scientific, thus the novum is a composition of estrangement, difference, and scientific rationality, as argued before by George Mann concerning the pre-existent knowledge (Mann 6).

For Suvin, the existence of the two elements (estrangement and cognition) in a literary text leads to a juxtaposition between the SF world and the real world. The alien world of SF becomes meaningful in opposition to the actual one, and challenges its conventions of the usual and the ordinary, by presenting other possible worlds (Roberts 8).

Robert Scholes subscribes to the same argument, when he refers to SF as the "Structural Fabulation", in a book under the same title. He argues that the particularity of the SF text is in its metaphorical strains (qtd. in Roberts 10). What the earlier definition referred to as estrangement and cognition, or the depiction of different worlds, is considered a Fabulation by Scholes. The Fabulation is a fiction that illustrates a world that is entirely different and "discontinuous" from the usual but which challenges the real world "in a cognitive way", as defined by Scholes (qtd in Roberts 10). Yet, just like the estrangement, the fabulation includes all the forms of fantasy without sticking to science fiction.

Scholes adds the term structural to Fabulation, considering the universe as a "structure of structures" (qtd in Roberts 11). The Structural Fabulation is thus for Scholes a fiction covering human situations. It is a fiction of a world that is entirely different from the real one, which starts from pre-existing knowledge as a starting point for its fiction, yet, its goal is not much scientific but rather making bearable a

human condition that is new through scientific evidence. The word *Structural* refers to the universe as a "structure of structures", that is, it is not just an expression of fiction in a scientific language but much more than that, it is a fiction about the universe which uses science to make its anticipation cognitively right and rational (qtd in Roberts 11). Science for Scholes is just a "starting point" (11).

In *Reading by Starlight, Postmodern Science Fiction* (1995), Damien Broderick refers to contemporary SF as a "species of storytelling", that is born in a period of crucial technological and scientific change. He considers that this contemporary SF affected the modes of productivity, as it is characterized by:

> (i)metaphoric strategies and metonymic tactics, (ii) the foregrounding of icons and interpretative schemata from a collectively constituted generic 'mega-text' and the concomitant de-emphasis of 'fine writing' and characterisation, and (iii) certain priorities more often found in scientific and postmodern texts than in literary models: specifically, attention to the object in preference to the subject. (Broderick qtd in Roberts 12)

Therefore, an SF text is one that includes the aspects of logical creativity and difference, a shift away from the physical real world that is scientifically accurate. This shift is also characterized by fabulation as part of its artistic creativity, and includes metaphors, foregrounding, and inspirations from pre-existing scientific theories. One more characteristic is the "de-emphasis" of the traditional forms of writing, and a move towards more experimental forms and icons.

1.3.1 The Stages of Science Fiction

The outlined history of Science Fiction as a genre from birth as reported earlier delineates more or less three different stages of the development of science fiction. The first stage is referred to as the early age in which SF as a concept was not coined yet. This early stage includes works written in the seventeenth century as fantasies about the universe and the relationship between man and the outer world, like Thomas More's *Utopia* up to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus*.

The following stage begins in the early twentieth century, with the rise of the Gernsback Magazines in which writing fantasies about science was done intentionally. This was a literature that celebrated scientific inventions and tried to depict future utopias including visits from the outside world, time travel, and an advanced technology. Though some of these fantasies depicted unfortunate endings as consequences to science, yet most of them started as a celebration of this great discovery. The third stage in the development of SF is the post-war Science Fiction which voiced the fears and worries of the people after the war. The threat of a nuclear war was very near and writers depicted it in stories about a devastated universe, set in the future, which entails that science could bring the end of man.

The American critic and filmmaker Kevin Alexander Boon named three main stages of science fiction: Early Age Science Fiction (12), Modern Age Science Fiction (13), and Post-nuclear Age Science fiction (17). The differences between these stages of science fiction according to Boon lay in the perception of science, as opposed to the role of God, nature, and the position of man in the universe. Each stage approaches man, God, science, and the universe differently. The third stage is more related to the future of man and death than the other stages, as it perceives science as a danger to man (Boon 20).

Each of the three stages reflects the ideology of the time in which they were written. Boon defines SF as a literature that mirrors the "structure" of the scientific knowledge related to the time and place in which it occurs (10). That is, any differences, shifts, or developments in its themes and perspectives are merely related to the context within which it is written. It is referred to as the "barometer for cultural shifts" (10), for its ability to manifest the type of knowledge reached and practised at a particular period in time.

Boon indirectly infers that modern history went through three main phases in its development which he summarizes in his three stages of SF:

> In the early age of science fiction, the individual was subjugated to God and the human race as a whole. In the modern age of science fiction, the

> individual was overshadowed by the eternal laws of nature. But in the post-nuclear age of science fiction, despite the period's inclination toward dark indeterminacy and chaos, the individual is valorised (21)

The three periods are divided and based on the role of science through the listed eras. The period in which the individual was "subjugated" to God was a period in which man expressed a fear of God as opposed to a rejection of science, merely the seventeenth century, the period of the advent of the age of reason. In the nineteenth century the individual then is immersed in the laws of nature, of science, and thus religion loses its sacred position. The post-nuclear age, as is entailed by the name, occurs after the atomic bomb is dropped on Japan during the Second World War. It prophesies doom and chaos but considers man as the centre of the universe, though he is doomed to death.

1.3.1.1 The Early Age of Science Fiction

This period concerns the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in which human beings started to discover science but were still scared of it (Boon 11). The religious was so sacred that no scientist could dare to provide scientific explanations to phenomena that happened around them (11). French philosopher Voltaire's ideas published in his work *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1773) accelerated the rise of the age of reason as it transmitted scientific discoveries in "public discourse" (qtd in Boon 10-11). It was a starting point both in literature and philosophy for writers to start musing about science. Yet, it seems like the earliest attempts at representing it in literature were more related to a fear of the "laws of nature", than an excitement (12).

Boon refers to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus*, as an example of an Early age science fiction. He considers Victor Frankenstein's experiment as an intrusion in the domain of God and thus the scientist, by trying to play the role of God ends up making an ugly creature, a monster. The early age science fiction includes plots of scientists trying to take authority from God and place

it in science. While the theory is always scientifically true before the experiment in the story, the result is monstrous and horrifying (13).

The new wave of science continues to grow until it turns to an obsession, after the works of two distinguished philosophers. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche denied God's control in his famous sentence "God is dead" in *The Gay Science*, followed by Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution in his *The Origin of Species*. These two works shifted power from God to science, thus making it the most sacred in the universe, leading to the beginning of the next stage in SF: The Modern Age of Science Fiction (13).

1.3.1.2 The Modern Age of Science Fiction

This stage refers to the literature written in the twentieth century, in which science is elevated to a very sacred position as opposed to religion. The shift was marked by the author H. G. Wells in his *The Island of Doctor Moreau* who animalises human beings then infects their brains with a "deification of himself" (qtd in Boon 13). Wells' novel, as well as most of the literature of the period, depicts science as the only possible form of salvation, able to guide humanity to paradise, "usurping" by this the position of God and replacing him (Boon 13).

The stories of the Modern Age Science Fiction are written from different perspectives, most of them trying to depict a high level of development and progress through scientific inventions. Yet, most of these stories (like Arthur C. Clarke in *Childhood's End*, which not only posits science and knowledge at the centre of the universe but also claim its ability to destroy religion all at once) were presented as a form of "inferior thinking" (Boon 14). It is actually represented in darkness, which also represents a lack of knowledge, while in the early age science fiction darkness represented the absence of God (and faith) (16).

The worship of science and its position as a source of hope quickly lose influence as the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the year 1945. This brings about the third stage of science fiction, the most relevant to the topic

under discussion, the Post-Nuclear age science fiction. A literature written after the end of the second world war and which depicted a disillusionment of a generation and devalued science from its sacred position, on the basis that it can also harm man (17).

1.3.1.3 Post-Nuclear Age Science Fiction

The Post-Nuclear age science fiction refers to the works written after 1945, taking as a point of difference the use of the atomic bomb at war. Unlike the modern age science fiction, this age breaks with the idealization of science. It is also referred to as the "atomic annihilation" by American critic Donald E. Morse, an age in which people expected destruction and lost trust in science (Morse 83). It was no longer a means to make man's life better but a real danger against the sustenance of humanity. The spirit of the age was summarized by Martin Luther King, who said: "We have genuflected before the God of science only to find that it has given us the atomic bomb, producing fears and anxieties that science can never mitigate" (King qtd in Boon 17). The "God of science" is a reference to the sacred position allotted to science during the modern age, and which turned out to be a mistake. Science was considered as sacred and above supervision for its ability to reveal truth, yet, it revealed itself to be a real danger for human survival on earth and a lack of supervision could lead to the destruction of man.

In a criticism of the discourses used to legitimize the power of science, Kurt Vonnegut satirically discussed the expression "scientific truth" saying "I thought it was going to make us so happy and comfortable ... [instead] we dropped scientific truth on Hiroshima" (*Wampeters, Foma, and Granfalloons* 101). He was actually among the writers who were bothered by the fake discourses used to legitimate uncontrolled scientific experiments, and the fact that they were used by government. Instead of comfort and happiness, what happened to scientific truth after 1945 is that it served as a weapon of war and murdered hundreds of innocents.

The Post-Nuclear age thus, is an age in which people lost faith in science, their dreams of a better future (happiness and comforts), and of utopias, were fading and reduced to delusions. A new age of chaos and loss began. The human self was dropped into an abyss of meaninglessness and emptiness. Boon says that in the post-Nuclear age people realized that they are simply "part" of the "natural universe", and the physical world is not meant to serve human beings (Boon 18). In literature, writers started to turn to existentialism to reflect the complicated situation. In the 1950s, a new hero was introduced in the literary texts. The new hero has no inner goodness, no particular purpose, no belief by which he can make sense of the universe around him, he is simply a "loner" (18). This character is referred to by Kevin Alexander Boon as the Post-Nuclear Hero (19).

1.3.2 The Representation of Evil in Science Fiction

As previously stated in the stages of science fiction, while the modern age SF showed an optimism about science and the possibility of making a Utopia (making a more developed world, better, and easier life). This period also depicted fears about possible futures as direct consequences of science. The invention of radium and the possible dangers it entailed served as incentive for a few writers who started to depict the evil side of science (Haynes 39).

Early representations of science as dangerous started with H. G. Wells who wrote about a nuclear war in his novel *The World Set Free* (1914). In this novel, he explored the psychological aspect of a scientist who realised that he made a dangerous discovery, able to hurt human beings (like an atomic bomb) (qtd in Haynes 39- 40).

The 1970s to 1980s in literature included more themes related to destruction because of the events of the Second World War. The individual in such literature is represented as helpless, irrelevant, hopeless, and expecting a nuclear war to wipe out life on earth (41).

The films and literature of the period represented the worries of the society of the period. After all, this was a community that had just ended with the world war

and started the cold war. Scientific inventions were becoming more and more dangerous, and themes of ungovernable power became recurrent. The most prevalent fear of the period concerned the morality of the scientists. The idea that scientists and their inventions could be harmful for human beings left no hope for the dream of a better world. In literature, these fears were translated into depictions of alien invasions, Radium Rays, atomic weapons, environmental devastation, giant insects, revived dinosaurs and biological warfare (Haynes 42)

1.3.3 Science Fiction and the Prediction of the Future

Most of the science fiction written after the Second World War was referred to by Kevin Alexander Boon as Post-Nuclear age science fiction[4]. It is merely about the prediction of the future of the earth and of man under the power and lead of science. In "Introducing the Future, The Dawn of Science Fiction Criticism", Harry Harrison refers to the writers who try to depict stories of the future as apocalyptic, calling them "military doomsayers" (Harrison 4). While explaining the point of this kind of fiction, Harrison quotes British scholar I. F. Clarke who referred to it as a "school of military endeavour" which has a didactic purpose, merely related to raising awareness concerning arbitrary and unwise political decisions. Writing the future has also been referred to as "alternative Histories", and is recognized as a real literary genre only while classified as Science Fiction. (Harrison 4)

Alternate history can be written in three different forms. The first one is a story that is set in the past (a usual past that is common to the one known by the reader), an incident occurs and changes the future, thus creating an alternate future that the reader is not familiar with. In the second model the story is set in the past but this past is interrupted by a time traveller who changes the future by adding new inventions or objects. The third model is a story set in the present, yet this present is different from the one known by the reader because something happened in its past and changed it

[4] More information on page 29

(5). Most of these alternate universes feature catastrophic and chaotic scenarios set in the future. All the alternate histories do not necessarily have bad endings, but a large number of them do, particularly those of the Post-Nuclear age science fiction. Such narratives that are set in the future, and that predict chaos and catastrophe are referred to as Dystopias in literature.

1.4 Dystopia

It is hard to find a fixed and complete definition of dystopia as a literary genre, for, although the books and papers dealing with it are countless, a straight forward definition has not been made. All attempts at explaining this concept relate it to its previous, and opposite, counterpart, which is utopia. The concept is being defined by some critics in relation to what utopia is not. Others seem to define it as the failure of a utopian project and thus conclude that dystopia is what happens when a utopia goes wrong (or the truth about a utopia).

Critics like American professor Keith Booker chose to define dystopia in relation to modern philosophy because he found a direct link between the visions of philosophers like the German Frankfurt school philosopher Theodor Adorno, and the arising concept. Adorno was a firm critic of the enlightenment thought and of the impact of the enlightenment over society and culture. He believed that the ideology of this enterprise is more authoritative and hegemonic than experimental, as it claims to be (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 13). This lack of freedom in the enlightenment thought and especially in the way it is implemented in society for him, led to the birth of an anti-utopia. The attempt of the enlightenment in making a perfect world is obstructed by a failure which led to a world of inequity and inconsistencies. The lack of freedom as seen by Adorno in the enlightenment generated totalitarian practices over the subjects, like the Fascist and Nazi systems, thus referred to as dystopias by Adorno himself, and other philosophers (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 12-13).

1.4.1. Definitions of Dystopia

Dystopia is originally a Greek word, composed of two terms which are: *"dus* and *topos*" which mean a bad place that is unappreciated and full of illnesses (Claeys 4). In short, dystopia is a reference to a bad place, the complete opposite of a good place, that is, utopia (4).

Dystopia has various definitions, differing both in time and in perspective, yet, all agree on the negative conditions of man and the near impossibility to fix them, It has been defined on two levels, one related to the actual dystopia in society, and the second, in literature. Both dystopias have been defined as a work that opposes utopia, yet, each in their own respect. In a real life situation, it is defined as what might happen if a political utopia is attempted to be made. Examples of attempts at making utopia are merely twentieth century totalitarian regimes because they imposed certain rules and codes of behaviours trying to make strict systems, which ended up repressing people and limiting their freedom. Another aspect of the utopia in twentieth century is the belief that science can ensure progress, that it is the only way man will have a decent living, and reach an ideal life (Claeys 271).

Dystopian fiction is a mode of writing that illustrates the fears of authors, or groups of people, about the conditions of their lives. It usually comes in the form of a fiction set in the future, and serves as a warning of what the future might be like, under political pressure and technological dominance (Burford 61-62). The main concern of dystopia is man's delusion and loss of control, merely the loss of personal freedom, freedom of choice, and the means of survival (33).

Dystopia also includes representations of fears about the future of humanity under the control of technology. It is opposed to utopia because it criticizes the premises of this idea, and the aspects that are concerned as the keys of a success of a utopia. The dystopian society attempts to put an end to that cruel way of living, either

by a revolution (as in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*[5] (1985), or anarchy as in Anthony Burgess' *The Clockwork Orange* (1962)[6]).

Dystopian universes are alternative worlds, sometimes set in the future, sometimes simply imaginative, which are characterized by doom, hopelessness, and destruction. In these universes, the forms of governments are totalitarian; they undergo the consequences of a nuclear war, or a natural disaster.

American professor of English literature at the University of California Robert C. Elliott argued that the modern depictions of dystopian (imaginary) societies lurk with elements of the old utopia. He considers that utopia has become a "bad word", because it runs the risk of becoming true. He even refers to Utopia as the "enemy" (qtd in Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse* 16). To back up his argument, Elliott refers to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Yengeny Zamyatin's *We*, which depict utopian dreams of utopias becoming true, then turning into real chaos and despotism (16). By this argument, Elliott demonstrates the truth about the intimate relationship between utopia and dystopia to consider them similar, the one to the other, even complementary since what begins as a utopia ends as a dystopia.

Indeed, the fascist states of the twentieth century like Stalinism were also referred to as "communist dystopia[s]", defined first as the opposite, or the "antithesis" of Utopia, or failed utopia (Claeys 5). The communist dystopia is an infernal state "brought about by attempts to construct unrealizable ideal systems" (Rosefielde qtd in Claeys 5). The above statement thus shows that the relationship between the two concepts is intimate.

The genre has evolved to what is known as dystopian science fiction, a literature that serves both purposes and includes the techniques of both concepts. This term was used to refer to most of the literature that depicted the future as apocalyptic

[5] Dystopian novel written by Margaret Atwood about a totalitarian rule that enslaves and abuses women.

[6] Dystopian novel set in the future about a rebellious young man who resists the attempts of the authoritarian system to reform him.

or undergoing negative consequences of a bad scientific discovery or invention, always set in the future. The works that have been cited earlier as beginnings of dystopian literature are also classified by the critics who coined the term dystopian science fiction as belonging to this group (Burford 33).

Actually, the two terms (science fiction and dystopia) are often referred to and discussed simultaneously in many works of criticism and anthologies, because they have common characteristics and techniques. After the 1950s, or the period which created what is referred to as the post-annihilation science fiction, literary works started including techniques used in both types of writing; merely a negative depiction of the future, and the important role of the machine and technology in changing the present and shaping the future (Claeys 271-272). Thus, both forms of literatures meet after the Second World War because they share the same goals and techniques (merely bourgeois society criticism as expressed by Keith Booker (*The Dystopian Impulse* 91).

1.4.2 The Elements of the Dystopian Universe

Most definitions of dystopia agree on the occurrence of three basic elements (among others). These elements are the despotic government, lack of freedom, and the prediction of a future of doom. The term became widely used in the twentieth century, though it made its first appearance two centuries earlier. The earliest uses of the term dystopia meant the opposite of a utopia, or the good place (as opposed to the previous translation of the term). It takes as a starting point the world of a utopia, then creates an opposite world that includes all problems and inconveniences possible to happen in a utopia, coming up with a bad place (Claeys 5).

Dystopian worlds are not always set in the future but are different from the physical world of the author. They are alternate worlds that represent different ways of existence. They are particularly characterized by doom and hopelessness, usually as consequences of scientific and political abuses of human beings. The dystopian world does not dwell in its perilous fate but includes individual attempts at rejecting

the imposed system either by rebellion or by exploring alternative ways of living (Clayes 269).

Booker considers the modern world a dystopia because the twentieth century in particular led to a number of drastic events, merely due to modernization, but also of the wish to enlarge territories and power. The two World Wars as well as the tragic turn of the power of technology served as basic elements of a dystopian world (Claeys 271). The first literary texts to depict the modern world as dystopian are merely Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Georges Orwell's *1984.* These works show the beginning of a new era in culture and in literature which also coincided with the events that have shaped the three stages of science fiction, previously discussed in this chapter (Clays 271, Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 7).

1.4.3 Dystopia in Literature and Writing

Novelists like George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Margaret Atwood depicted states in which individuals were watched everywhere and deprived of the smallest forms of freedom. Their novels were not only fantasies about alternative futures, but expressions of a doom authors expected to happen in the future, as a result to the shocking events of the two world wars and scientific discoveries of the era (Claeys 448). In *Cat's Cradle* (1963), Kurt Vonnegut not only represented the despotic government but also a future in which life on earth is destroyed because of science. The reason for which he made such a depiction because he strongly believed the way science was used in war was urging the destruction of life on earth. He did not think that science in itself was bad, but that the way it was used by human beings (like the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki) was wrong and could accelerate the end of man.

1.4.3.1 Themes of Dystopian Literature

The impossibility of setting a fixed definition of dystopia as a genre lies in its variety and diversity which makes it impossible to centre it to only one model. It is sure that it refers to a world which is disturbed by hostility and threats of destruction,

but while some dystopias show little endeavour in the literary side of the work and serve more as tracts, others focus more on a depth of characterization and experimentation with plot (Claeys 273).

The characters in a dystopia are made to resist power, they either try to create shelters to protect themselves from destruction if it is natural, or resist and rebel against hegemony. It includes themes about social issues that the authors in question seek to solve, like freedom, and values of humanism (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse*, 17).

Beatrice Battaglia identifies three levels in a dystopian narrative that connect the reader with the story and with the protagonist. The first level depicts a world described as "monstrous", controlled by the machine. The reader identifies with this world by way of the daily life details. The settings stage environments that inspire feelings of loss, meaninglessness, and self-delusion. The protagonist is thus tempted to resist and fight back. At the second level the protagonist is driven to resist by motivations of a better world, inspired either from a past experience or an inner feeling. The resistance takes a common value. In the third level, the protagonist loses the fight and control is given back to monstrous force he/she had been resisting. The ending remains open to always leave a possiblity for the protagonist to regain power (Battaglia 53). Yet, in most dystopias, the fear is that of seeing a utopia happening rather than a dystopia, because as there is hope for survival in the latter, the first offers none but promises of control (Rosefielde qtd. in Claeys 5).

The themes of dystopia have been changing through time because of the world events and developments. The nineteenth century dystopia tackled four main themes, the first of which is terror after revolution; the second is the potential threat of science transforming from a means of progress to destructive weapon, the third is the genetic control of family, and the fourth is the idea that mechanization turns human beings into senseless creatures. Depictions of political despotism in dystopia had already

started after the French Revolution, especially with the tragic turn of events after the Jacobin terror[7] (Claeys 271).

The twentieth century dystopia had quite different themes due to the world events and predictions of a chaotic future as a result of technological change. The post-World War II era was a period of fear in which people expected doom and destruction. In dystopian literature, themes of despotism, fascist governments, and supremacy of technology over humanity were most recurrent (Claeys 271).

Revolutions in dystopian fiction defend freedom and humanist themes that the author thinks are necessary, or missing in their own society (Claeys 269). The problems in the worlds depicted by dystopia do not centre around a future of totalitarian systems or weapons causing destruction. They are worlds in which "chaos" is the only thing there is, so they predict the kinds of worlds that would exist as consequences to political despotism and mass destructive weapons (Claeys 4). Dystopia is even referred to as a failed utopia because it simply represents the things that went wrong while attempting to make a utopia.

1.4.3.2 Despotism and Dystopia

The link between utopia and dystopia was established after a study of the content of Thomas More's *Utopia*[8] (raising the question what a utopia is) (Claeys 6). The study revealed that writing (or even making) a utopia, with the rules of an idealist state, actually leads to the making of a dystopia. More's *Utopia* is a country in which everything is controlled by the state. The citizens who do not conform to the norms of the city are referred to as *barbarians*[9], and are required to follow the rules of the *civilizer*. The country seems to be built on the foundation of an imperial regime which

[7] The French revolution of 1789 was followed by the rise of a political club named the Jacobins who used violence to *punish* the sympathizers of the King.

[8] *Utopia* by Thomas More is political satire published in 1516 about a fictional island called Utopia. The book is a narrative that attempts to show how life should be in an ideal country. It reflects a very structured lifestyle that is closely similar to life in monasteries.

[9] Italics for emphasis

builds colonies in different areas when overpopulated, and chases the indigenous who do not surrender to the new regime. The basic elements that ensure the survival and sustenance of this utopia are merely "war, empire and the ruthless suppression of others", which also make a dystopia in other contexts. (6).

Culture and society are also controlled in *Utopia* to impose virtue and morality, thus, the government uses surveillance to discipline the behaviors of the people. The country possesses "no bars, no pubs… [the politicians have] no scope for conspiring in secret… always under the observation of their fellow citizens…" (More qtd in Claeys 6). Other social rules obliged the people to dress the same, show passports when moving from one neighborhood to another, exchanging habitations periodically, and even an imposed bed-time which was eight p.m. The text written in 1516 was not considered as showing a subversive ruleback then, yet, modern interpretations consider it partly dystopian for the drastic turn of events in the twentieth century (and the rise of totalitarian systems in this era).

American author Chad Walsh defines dystopia in relation to utopia considering that it is a fictional society in which life is worse than any form of living in the real world (Clayes 275). He refers to it as an "anti-utopia" which is not simply a criticism of a simple utopia, but also a criticism of the actual world (Walsh qtd in Claeys 276). In this sense, it can be considered that dystopian fiction is an anti-utopian fiction, or a fiction about an imaginary world that shows a life of despotism and inequality, in which individuals live under the constant threat of destruction or prosecution.

Booker thinks that dystopia is part of a *failed* utopia because the two share some common aspects. He considers that the same method of government followed in More's *Utopia*, also occurred in the Stalinist[10] regime in the twentieth century (*Dystopian Impulse* 17). It is a system characterized by the use of violence,

[10] After Joseph Stalin, the main governing system in the Soviet Union from 1927 to 1953. It is mostly known as a totalitarian regime.

repression, and imprisonment, imposed by intolerant governments to keep their subjects under control. Thus, in this approach, dystopia is not a reversed, or failed utopia only, but the actual condition of life under a totalitarian system, reason for which critics refer to totalitarian governments of the twentieth century like Stalinism as dystopias (Claeys 5).

1.4.3.3 Dystopia as Social Criticism

The imaginary worlds in dystopia are referred to as "alternative" because they depict different ways of experiencing the world. Keith Booker thinks that when literature opposes the imaginary world to the real world, it fulfills the function of social criticism (*Dystopian Literature* 3). Such function is achieved when the text of the imaginary world sheds light on issues and threats from the real world, as well as ways of survival. By doing so, the literary text points the failure of the detainers of power in providing solutions in the real—physical—world's problems. Booker states that some thinkers argue that literature "plays a critical role, opposing its imaginative visions to existing or potential ills and injustices in society" (3). Thus, dystopia is a social criticism that presents an alternative world, by which an individual or group, can figure out different ways of making their better.

In *Dystopian Impulse*, Keith Booker mentions defamiliarization[11] as a key concept in effective dystopian narrative. He considers that by distancing the narrative in space and time, thus recontextualizing the story, events, and society, "fresh perspectives" are reflected permitting a different way of approaching the threats and problems previously thought of as inevitable (19). Such themes are seen as having more prominence than in the traditional utopia. They are set in the future and depict totalitarian societies, and pervasive science.

Using defamiliarization; the displacement of the narrative in time changes definitions and general conceptions of things, thus leading to an alternate universe.

[11] See 1.6.1.1 Language Defamiliarization on page 48

Even Science Fiction texts have switched to the apocalyptic representation of science through the defamiliarization of the narrative, and depiction of its development in the future (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 19). This is in reality a social criticism that starts from an unveiling of the author's environment to criticizing the basic doctrine that had led there. The future setting is meant as a suggestion of possible results (19).

The reasons that have led to the perception of the utopian project as a negative one are merely related to the emergence of science as a "discourse of authority" (Booker, *Dystopian Literature,* 5), starting from the eighteenth century. As many ideas and projects about the making of an ideal world through science, had there been, thoughts about the different ways in which this could go wrong had also arisen.

The search for an ideal world could be the object of utopian literature. Exceptions of literary works that focus their attention on possible threats as results of the search of the ideal are Dystopian literature, presented as utopia (3). Other critics refer to dystopia as "the anti-thesis of a utopia. A hellish state brought about by attempts to construct unrealizable ideal systems" (Rosefielde qtd. in Claeys 5). It has been concluded that utopia and dystopia are not as intimate because "utopia was a society surrounded by a wall designed to keep others out, and dystopia are intended to keep its inhabitants in" (Claeys 8). The technological discoveries of the past century have led to a rising disbelief in the possibility of utopia. The thought that idealism can be reached through human reason became a debatable topic, as the social environment was negatively affected by the technological developments (8).

The theme of social criticism occurs in both science fitcion and in Dystopia which imbricates them. The two genres meet in their representations of imaginative literature, while science fiction permits the depiction of a future universe characterized by scientific inventions, dystopian literature depicts the same future universes as chaotic and apocalyptic (*Dystopian Impulse* 19).

1.4.3.4 Science in Dystopian Literature

One of the definitions of dystopia entails the idea that it is a narrative of the future. They are "imaginative fiction" set in the future to depict a life that is different from the present of the reader and which represents a warning. Such experience is characterized by obedience and the lack of hope (Pfaelzer qtd in Burford 33). Most definitions agree on the alternative world as a common aspect. This world is fictional and is set in a different era than the actual time of the author and targeted readership. Fitting explains that the depicted alternative world comes in the form of a threat to man's stability and security (qtd in Burford 33).

Alexandra Alridge considers that dystopia is not an inverted utopia but rather a shift in attitude in the twentieth century that tended to show merely the devastating effect of science and technology on man, which, using her own words, were "alienating" for him (qtd in Claeys 278). Dystopia is often related to utopia mainly because it criticized the scientific principle which was the leading force towards hopes of establishing a utopia based on science, referred to as "the dream of reason" (Alridge qtd in Claeys 278).

Just like the Romantic Movement in Europe, and different movements that arose after the 1940s (after the end of WWII), dystopia highlighted the pervasive effect of the enlightenment. Gorman Beauchamp goes on to redefine utopia, based on its role and constituents in the modern world as dependent on science and technology as basic elements. He defines it saying "a systematic intensification of all the repressive restraints of actual civilization… [and thus] happinesss can be guaranteed… only at the sacrifice of [man's] freedom" (qtd in Claeys 278)

Beauchamps refers to the systems meant to endure life-development and success as well as technological inventions as "repressive restraints" because, just like Adorno, he thinks that these systems have controlled and limited the lives of men, even marginalized them (qtd. in Claeys 278). The entire system of the enlightenment is being put under scrutiny in the late twentieth century on the basis that the hegemony

of rationality (which initially came for freedom) became repressive of thought and of behavior.

By placing at the centre of culture and education only rationality, man is deprived of his freedom of choice. Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer present an attack on the enlightenment in their 1947 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* saying:

> [The] enlightenment is as totalitarian as any system. Its untruth does not consist in what its romantic enemies have always reproached it for: analytical method, ... but instead in the fact that for enlightenment the process is always decided from the start. When in mathematical procedure the unknown becomes the unknown quantity of an equation, this marks it as the well-known even before any value is inserted (Adorno and Horkheimer 244).

The idea of the enlightenment in this reasoning is not wrong in itself, as it focuses on materialization and mathematics as the basis of thought. Yet, the application of this thought is judged subversive because it turns reflection into "instrument" (using the two authors' words) (245). The enlightenment is denounced for its limitation of thought. Thought is supposed to move from assumption to experimentation, for Adorno and Horkheimer, they thus conclude: "Knowledge consists of subsumption under principles.Any other than systematically directed thinking is unoriented or authoritarian." (248)

Within the same stream of thought, French philosopher Jean François Lyotard argues that science gained such an important position that it discredited the arts and narratives in general. Yet, in so doing, science needs to justify itself and has built its own "discourse of legitimation" in which it relates itself to a "grand narrative", meaning, any discourse of development and improvement (Adorno and Horkheimer 481-482). Another reason for which this discourse is considered too ambitious is that it ignored the possible threats of giving too much freedom to science, like mass destruction weapons and catastrophe.

The criticism of science started after the Second World War. It became obvious, especially after the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, that science in the hands of men was not fulfilling the technological development goal only. Science was becoming harmful for man. Kurt Vonnegut used to describe science as "scientific truth" and said that what America was doing during the war was trying to find scientific truth, then it "… dropped scientific truth on Japan" referring to the atomic bomb (Vonnegut, *Wampeters* 1).

The twentieth century events raised "doubt, suspicion, skepticism, anomie, and anxiety" about science (Claeys 314). Science became the enemy of man because it made mass destruction weapons and the "civilized" man (who lives by the standards of rationality) was "ready to behave worse than any savage" referring to man's lust for power and the use of science in violence (Claeys 314).

Keith Booker equally speaks of a modern Bourgeois society described by Adorno and Horkheimer, which for them is highly oppressive using the ideology of science and reason. This society he believes is similar to totalitarian societies in dystopian literature, reason for which he relates their vision regarding science to the definition of dystopia, He thinks they are complementary (*Dystopian Literature* 13).

Warnings about the future of science came up in literature as early as Plato in his work *Laws,* in which he argued that innovation and development might have a devastating effect on human life (qtd in *Dystopian Impulse* 5). Others, like Jonathan Swift, started to feel the threat and wrote about the dangers, on the spiritual side of man, of an excessive trust in science (qtd in *Dystopian Impulse* 6).

The uncontrolled power of science during the nineteenth century was a pushing force towards its denunciation in dystopian writing. The reason for which science was faced by such resistance was the way it was practiced. The principle by which science has been implemented was proven to be pervasive. As previously

noted[12], Adorno states that the principle of science does not allow the freedom of experimentation.

Claeys also asserts that the period of the 1960s carried more fear about the end of the world, but also human extinction and loss of freedom, which were reflected in the literature of the period (271). Examples are Vonnegut's *Gàlapagos* where human beings come to extinction and the survivors evolve to half fish, or *Cat's Cradle* (1963) which ends life on earth because of a scientific invention.

Claeys quotes a few critics who think that the search for perfection in utopianism and despotism are quite similar. He cites the work of Friedrich Hayek who posits that communism and fascism started as forms of utopia to achieve "social democracy" (qtd. in Claeys 263). The fact of trying to make an ideal state led to the use of violence instead of reason. Thus, the attempt at making a utopia is easily turned into an actual totalitarian environment, a dystopia (Popper qtd. in Claeys 263). To conclude the matter, historian Jacob Talmon found that utopianism is only possible to happen under dictatorship, since it takes obligation and violence to achieve it (qtd. in Claeys 263). Thus, a literature that depicts a dystopian environment and that is meant to shout a resistance, or a rejection of power, is to a considerable extent, a minor literature.

1.5 Deleuze and Guattari on Minor Literature

The French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari defined the concept minor literature in their book *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature,* based on Franz Kafka's novel *The Metamorphosis,* in which they come up with a model composed of three aspects that identify a minor literature. The concept concerns a literature written by a minority group in the language of the majority that usually makes the act of alienating. It is a work of art that covers a number of characteristics and aspects including a common experience leading to the political drive, the

[12] See page 36

collective value, and most particularly, the language deterritorialization, which presents itself as an act of subversion (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 16).

Minor literature is not a term to denote a particular pre-established literature of a recognized minority but concerns the act of writing against the grain within a context controlled by a great literature[13] that is also subversive. Writing in the language of a great literature reveals itself as an inevitable, but also a natural, step to voice new experiences that contradict the former's values and model (18).

The two philosophers think that questions about marginal literature or other forms of peripheral literatures must all be covered within the designation and definition of minor literature, only if, they are written in the language of power. The designation includes "marginal", "popular literature", "proletarian" under the term minor, which is dubbed as "objective" by the two philosophers (18).

The act of writing in a majoritarian language, even if the language is the original tongue of the author, is considered as an act of revolution when the speaker is considered alien to their original identity. Kafka actually reinforces the necessity of distancing one's identity from the constructs of the majoritarian language, to depict oneself as the "nomad", thus ensuring difference. He goes on saying that to achieve this alienation one must "steal the baby from its crib", the baby being a reference to the language (qtd. in Deleuze and Guattari *Toward a Minor Literature* 19). The meaning is to take the language from its common, usual context, deterritorialize it, use is as a nomad, or an alien, differently and independently from its usual context and related connotations.

[13] Term used by Deleuze and Guattari to refer to traditional writing, or the literature of the majority. It reflects thoughts and beliefs of the majority group but ignores the existence and interests of a minority group.

1.5.1 Aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's Theory of Minor Literature

The act of producing a minor literature entails the actions of deterritorialization and assemblage, which are inseparable. Language in this process loses its function of representation (which is its ordinary use) as it begins to create meaning rather than reproduce previously existing conceptualizations, yet it recovers this loss by reterritorializing itself. Meaning controls the signification of the composition of sounds (utterances) be it direct or indirect (metaphorical). After the deterritorialization of language, it is reterritorialized by assigning new meaning to the utterances. Meaning exists because words are differentiated from each other, that is, its intimate attachment to a subject which causes its "enunciation" and produces the intended meaning, in ordinary use. It is predestined, previously intended for a particular subject and message. It is extensive and representative, which is not what minor literature does (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minority Literature* 20).

A minor literature is a writing that the "minority constructs within a major language" (16). It is a literature that comes from within, from a group that is considered as marginal and is often oppressed. Thus, the reappropriation of the language of the oppressor and its use by the marginalized to express an experience that has been castrated, is the function of "deterritorialization" (16).

1.5.1.1 Language Deterritorialization

This concept is built upon the works of Austro-Hungarian author Frantz Kafka, particularly his 1915 novel *The Metamorphosis*, in which he breaks the boundary of language and uses German to speak while being a Jewish in Prague. Deleuze and Guattari highlight three impossibilities related to writing in German for the Jews of Prague in the early twentieth century. The first is the "impossibility of not writing", because experience is very important to record in literature. The second is the "impossibility of writing other than in German" because that would separate the Prague Jews from their "Czech territoriality". The third impossibility is that of "writing in German" because it is the language of the "oppressive" group and is

denied to the Jews of the Prague, they are considered as a restricted group, although German was a language of a minority in Prague, the Jewish were "excluded" from this minority (16-17)

Language deterritorialization is an act of transgression because it deconstructs boundaries between the minority and the majority groups. The most essential aspect of minor literature according to Deleuze and Guattari "is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization." (16). Deterritorialization thus becomes the centre of a minority literature, although there are other possible characteristics. It is thus an unauthorized interference in the language of power. It dethrones the power of the majoritarian group when it *stains*[14] the language with the traces of the lower (or popular) culture. In so doing, language is no longer the property of the detainers of power and is transferred to the side of the subaltern. It then brings it down to open for new affects (also becomings in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari), and possibilities, to finally reach disclosure (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 16).

Deterritorialization is the act of re-appropriation of language from the control of the oppressor to the world of the oppressed. While both oppressor and oppressed may belong to the same culture; the majoritarian oppressor controls the language and injects it with meanings and connotations that only refer to its power and superiority. Deleuze and Guattari think that by depriving the minority (or the oppressed) of their language, they are being distanced from their territory (17). The language is thus re-appropriated for a specific use, it is "appropriate for strange and minor uses", by the minority group (17). The idea of not writing in such a language becomes an impossibility in front of a national consciousness that requires the right for the act of writing. The result is thus a subversive act of writing in the language that has been seized by the oppressor but used against it in an act of deterritorialization.

[14] Italics for emphasis

Although the term that is used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Toward a Minor Literature* is a deterritorialization of language, this concept is explained in different terms in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*. Understanding one term by Deleuze and Guattari will often lead to a study of other books by the same authors to cover all its meanings. Thus, the study of Deterritorialization in *A Thousand Plateaus* seems to be more accurate for a cultural displacement. Yet, the language Deterritorialization is analysed and understood through an exploration of the Russian Formalist concept of Defamiliarization.

1.5.1.2 Language Defamiliarizaiton

The literature of resistance includes acts of defamiliarization and of subversion. Defamiliarization is an estrangement of meaning and sometimes its deferral. The term was coined by the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovskij to mean a difference in the perception of the term. Difference occurs when the meaning is produced, not through the invention of a new term but through creating a relation with a new meaning that has not been thought of before. By this creation of meaning, language resists automatization—or habitualization—which is defined by Shklovskij as an "economy of the mental effort" (Crawford 210). In habitualization the reader uses very little effort in thinking about meaning. Meaning is direct and includes no insinuation to what might have been. Meaning should always be in the making, using Jacques Derrida's terms, meaning must be always "yet to come" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 97), to ensure its development and constant—horizontal—progress.

The development of meaning is entangled with the connotations it may have and signs it leaves in the mind of the reader or receiver. The particularity of defamiliarization lies in its ability to alter meaning, which becomes variant, continuously evolving and flowing Shklovkij relates the function of defamiliarization to the function of art, stating that the point is to create "perception" by "overcoming … automatization" (qtd in Crawford 210).

Automatization is a habitualization, or a familiarization of the status quo. It is seen as dull and passive, because perception (understanding) remains blocked (centred) in the boundaries of the usual, common. The status quo includes normality, it entails mechanization within the world of the same, the common. Shklovskij refers to it as an economy of mental effort, a way of accepting the status quo and living within the boundaries that have been created by mainstream culture. Interpretation, without the mental effort, is a passive process in which understanding remains static.

Defamiliarization is a tool of renewal of understanding of things. It reinforces perception by showing things from a different angle. It shifts the perceived object from its "typical association into radically different ones!", thus giving the object a different perception, or using the same words, a new context within which it can "operate" (Crawford 210).

Defamiliarization occurs on the level of the poetic language, as pposed to the practical language which is more straightforward and passive. For Shklovskij the main role of this device is its ability to break (or even subvert) the "theories of the economy of mental effort in art" (qtd in Crawford 210). Defamiliarization is thus a tool which fights habitualization (translated as automatization), thus making a reference to lassitude and reluctance in thinking about art and the individual's environment. Defamiliarization creates difference by opening the possibility of imagination, thus creates the possibility for an object to be anything other than how it is originally perceived.

In short, Shklovskij thinks that "the function of art is the creation of perception, by the overcoming of automatization" (qtd in Crawford 210). Art is presented as a freedom from the limits of automatization. Not only it is a way out of it, but its main function is connected to the act of creativity. Art must create something new and different to "overcome" the habitual which is dull. This creativity falls at the level of understanding (perception), and thus the efficacy of art falls in its creation of new meaning, out of the usual.

Automatization is presented as a danger that "consumes things" while art through its creativity of perception and new understanding is there to

> recover a sensation of life… [its] goal is to give the sensation of things as seen, not known; the device of art is to make things "unfamiliar", to ncrease the difficulty and length of their perception… art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object (Shklovskij qtd in Crawford 210)

The renewal of perception "recovers" the meaning and "sensation" of life by making possible a new understanding of objections, the way they are "seen" or perceived, rather than the way they are commonly thought of. Art demystifies the object from its structured image which is a constructed conceptualization that is controlled by surrounding forces related to mainstream culture and common understanding. The defamiliarized object in art is looked at upon what it actually is and not what society and culture say it is. The perception is brought clear of all possible constructs usually related to it and the object is naked, ready to be related to other possible perceptions that look nothing like the first.

For Shklovskij the defamiliarized perception becomes itself the origin as the meaning is dislocated from its past memory and renewed. The object is described as if discovered for the first time, devoid of any external influences or traces emanating from outer forces (Tolstoy qtd in Crawford 210). The new perception comes as a "textual space", a different side for the perception of the object (210). The operation unveils a "fresh and uneffaced side in a sort of textual space for our perception" (210). Thus, Shklovskij's defamiliarization occurs through a shift in meaning that is space- and time-related, and the term regains a power of escaping fixed meaning.

Perception is actually created and becomes effective through a "break down in the indifferent recognition of automatization" (210). The success of defamiliarization occurs when it creates a meaning that is different and independent from the traditional. It can be thought of as the process of *breaking down* the indifferent power of familiarity (habitualization). Language defamiliarization, thus, allows the author to deterritorialize a language that was subject to automatization and use it to reflect

issues of minorities that such a language was denied from uncovering, such issues are politicized by definition for their status as minor, which is the second aspect of minor literature.

1.5.1.3 Politicization

The fact that a minor literature is composed by a marginal group makes their individual concerns a political matter, for its conflicting and problematic context. In every situation, the individual or social issues reflected in this composition are directly related to other factors that are economic, bureaucratic, or other, that affect its significance and perspective. The issues that are intentionally avoided in great literature, "[take] place in the full light of day" in minor literature. The situation is metaphorically compared to an oedipal conflict between father and son in the words of Kafka while in fact it is the reflection of a conflicting relationship between individual (or a group) against power.

The contrast of interest between the two types of literatures falls in what seems to be the interest of a few in Great literature and is revealed to be an essential matter of assertion and survival for an entire group in minor literature (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 17).

> In major literatures, ... the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background; this is so much the case that none of these Oedipal intrigues are specifically indispensable or absolutely necessary but all become as one in a large space. (17)

Deleuze and Guattari speak of an "Oedipalization of the universe" when addressing the issue of the individual against the surrounding forces, and which they compare and assign to the individual's relationship with the father (based on Kafka's work) (10). The authority that is exercised from a father on the son is also a reflection of other authorities imposed on the father himself that are political, social, and cultural.

In the Oedipus relationship, the father is depicted as the origin of submissiveness of the child to the outer forces, "The father with his head bent—not only because he is guilty himself, but also because he makes the son feel guilty and never stops judging him. Everything is the father's fault" (9). The father is made guilty in the Oedipus circle not because he limits the freedom of his child, but because he never tried to look far beyond his reach, to a life that is *not* what he actually lives. The idea in this sense is not to find a life that is better, but a life that is different and to look-up other ways of being (10).

In analyzing the Oedipus in Kafka's work, Deleuze and Guattari make a direct link between the Oedipus relationship including Gregor Samsa, Kafka's protagonist, with his father, and the status of the colonizer and colonized in German Prague, Jews, and Czechs. The two cases show a need to overcome the power of authority, not into rebelling against the representative of power, but into living differently, what Deleuze and Guattari often refer to as lines of escape (*Toward a Minor Literature* xxvii).

Thus, there is a direct link between the Oedipus father-child relationships and the minority-majority relationship. The *father* (or in less metaphorical terms the group) is responsible on the status of the child as submissive for doing "nothing but lower[ing] his head, submit to a power that is not his own, enter into an impasse, by betraying his origin as a Czech Jew from the countryside" (11). The minority group is both the father and the son, but their writing is an act of rebellion in which the author (or the child) seeks ways of being free, not from the father, but from the powers that this latter did not fight.

This explains Deleuze and Guattari's claim about politicization in minor literature when they say that everything takes a political value in it. The minority group is given such a small space and this latter "forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. (17). By adopting an oedipus attitude, the minority group sets to find an escape through their writing. Just like the child, the escape is from the forces that control them at a superior level.

In Kafka's work, there is no group that escapes control but the child who has been victim of his father's submissiveness, who outbreaks in his own way when he becomes adult. He becomes a cockroach to "find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum" (13). Through Kafka's escape and the relationships that are drawn with minorities by Deleuze and Guattari, it becomes clear that the minority builds their own refuge through writing. In such case, everything they write is political and receives a stylistic value as a new writing tradition, this, Deleuze and Guattari call the collective assemblage (18).

1.5.1.4 Collective Assemblage

The third aspect of minor literature is seen by the two scholars as an opportunity to decentre great literature by avoiding the writing canon of the masters and adapting a new writing tradition. This aspect would shed light on different authors, that are not necessarily good writers but who reflect the experiences of marginal groups (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 18). This characteristic is the collective assemblage, also referred to as collective value, in which the things that are said by an author represent a common concern for their group, and are "necessarily political" (for their status as marginal).

> precisely because talent isn't abundant in a minor literature, there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that "master" and that could be separated from a collective enunciation. Indeed, scarcity of talent is in fact beneficial and allows the conception of something other than a literature of masters (17)

Just like the second characteristic of politicization, in which a minority's issues are always political, the third characteristic completes the image by giving it a collective value (17). It considers all forms of writing in a minority as a new tradition and as breaking from the common

Yet, because in the external world of the author the political mobility or resistance is not always successful, or even existent, in literature it finds a chance to

free itself. The possibility of literature is an opportunity for the author to make worlds that are different and new compared to the one in which they live. These worlds do not necessarily have to refer back to the author's group, culture, or their personal views. They are an assemblage, which is related to no particular party from the real world and which brings together certain points to make a new world possible (18).

Deleuze and Guattari approach literature as a "machine" which produces a "revolutionary machine-to-come" as a reference to a world yet to come, or that can be possible in a near or far future (18). Literature is the only "machine" that is able to produce such deterritorialized, and different worlds, with which certain people can identify. "The message does not refer back to an enunciationg subject who would be its cause, no more than to a subject of the statement (sujet d'énoncé) who would be its effect" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 18).

The assemblage is a creation of meaning but without reference to any particular subject or group, or object, a free creation of meaning within what Deleuze and Guattari called a rhizome[15], a collection of multiplicities. It is born out of nothing, no pre-existing structure, it only creates itself. Meaning begins to exist after an enunciation, it becomes and identifies after the enunciation is made not before. It is not an assemblage if they already identified with it, it is a collective assemblage because they become this assemblage after it is made, "enunciated" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 33).

A thorough understanding of the collective assemblage requires a good analysis of the challenging idea of the assemblage. The assemblage, being part of the rhizome, has no beginning, nor end. An assemblage in fact:

> has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier, we will not look for anything to understand it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it

[15] Refer back to 1.5.1.5 Rhizome on 55

> does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 4)

The main focus in the assemblage is not on what it might be related to, but rather what it leads to. The assemblage thus draws new "intensities" and "multiplicities" which find a home within this composition and begin a new becoming. The assemblage includes both deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The first occurs when the multiplicities collide to compose an assemblage together, the multiplicities are brought together because they are attracted by something in common. They find themselves in the same territory inside the rhizome, together they constitute a stratum of meanings and new affects. Subjects that identify with these assemblages will be going through a sort of a becoming.

1.5.1.6 Rhizome

It is impossible to study and analyze Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature without referring back to their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which they introduce and define their major concepts, which serve as material for their book *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*. Their concepts of deterritorialization and collective assemblage are highly connected to the rhizome.

In order to understand the rhizome, it is important to understand the two scholars' vision of literature, and of books in particular. They summarize the entire concept in one utterance, "a book has neither object nor subject" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 3). A book is a composition of multiplicities that are various and distinct. They compare the content of a book to botanical roots, stating "in a book… there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification" (3). The lines of a book are the different interpretations and direction that might be taken by a meaning during its

evolution. The lines of flight are the lines which ensure the continuous flow of meaning as it escapes closure (9).

The rhizome is a composition of a text, which is made of multiplicities that evolve horizontally, like the rhizomatic roots of a plant. Unlike the tree-like development of ideas (and of roots) which is vertical (and hierarchal), the rhizome is a continuous development which escapes points of closure and multiplies into larger, unlimited, number of ideas all the time. It relies on deterritorialization for its continuous flow. The reference to the tree is meant to explain the functioning of the rhizome by showing their differences. The tree actually stands for a closed system in which everything must span from a main taproot, it refers to cultures which follow a "root-foundation" like Western Culture (*A Thousand Plateaus* 12).

In literature, the tree is a classical book that imitates the real world. However, the rhizome in writing decentrers language into many dimensions (8), then begins an Assemblage, which is a connection of multiplicities that are not governed by a pre-existing system, nor do they voluntarily refer to a particular subject or object (4). The rhizome is a set of free, detached, assemblages. In the assemblage, the book is disconnected from outside influences and is forever open to interpretation. Reality is not an influence in an assemblage, nor a standard to be followed (23).

Deleuze and Guattari state a difference between the rhizomatic development of ideas and the tracing (unlike Derrida's concept of the Trace). The tracing for Deleuze and Guattari is an image of previous constructed and stated strata, and thus it lacks originality and freedom. The tracing is a reterritorialization and a representation of what has previously existed (13). The rhizome is compared to a map, it has multiple entrances and countless destinations and it is always open to change and renewal (13) (just like defamiliarization with Shklovskij, it is a matter of temporary perception which is ready to change by the production of new meanings in case of deterritorialization). It is a system that connects any part of the text to any other part and still makes it readable (21). In fact, it is the principle by which the *A Thousand Plateaus* is actually written.

Writing the rhizome means that the text has neither beginning nor end, it only has middles which keep expanding and multiplying. The middle is where the process happens, where lines meet and expand. According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is in American and English literatures that this logic is most practiced in writing (25).

1.5.2 Resistance and Transgression in Literature

Transgression is the act of going over boundaries that are set by a law or power. It is an act of violation. It is an act in which the transgressor is aware of the confines they are transgressing, but also affirm their subversion (Jenks 2). According to the Irish philosopher Richard Kearney, imagination is itself an act of transgression in literature, and it became so since the first transgression made by human beings ever, the Original Sin (qtd in Booker 2).

Acts of transgression in literature have often been considered as acts of creativity as well, In the previous discussion Deleuze and Guattari mentioned that the act of writing differently was an opportunity for creativity and for the birth of new worlds, that are different from the common in great literature (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 17).

Many narratives in Western tradition include the act of transgression as an essential part. Starting from Adam's original sin, which is described by Dante in his *Paradiso XXVI* as an act of "trespass" and that human beings will always try to find difference (qtd. in *Techniques of Subversion* 1). The British poet John Milton ascribes the possibility of the acts of transgression to language as a main territory. His poem *Paradise Lost* depicts Satan's transgressions as brave and glorious, was a reflection of his deep and unrevealed views as a "political revolutionary". He somehow depicted religious and political failures from his age in the triumph of Satan in his work. The American critic Keith Booker ends up assuming that the first step towards transgression in literature is possible thanks to the confusion of languages which started back in the Tower of Babel (2).

The Russian Formalists considered transgression as a basic tool to reach literariness in writing, merely in overcoming boundaries that have been set by traditional literature before. The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin considered wrong to think about literature as a "closed series", because it would blur vision as to the subversive power of the text against ideologies and external forces. By such a precision, Bakhtin is making the assertion that literature can be a tool of resistance against political hegemony (2).

Among the difficulties of writing transgression in literature is that its impact is not instantaneous. It is not a movement that will send the people protesting in the streets but happens slowly, sometimes even unwillingly. The act of transgression occurs when the text dismantles the political structures and unveils their indirect methods of control. Some critics and poets would even assert that it is the role of poetry to be "troubling" and to reflect unpleasant images of reality. The impact of transgressive literature is that authors can attract the readers' attention to their miseries (4).

It is within postmodernist literature that the acts of transgression would occur the most. Although some critics have put to doubt postmodernism's ability to reflect transgression on the basis that the dominant culture remains always more powerful in representation (6). Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon suggested that the uses of techniques like parody would put to dialogue the two voices (that of the dominant culture and that of the transgressive) (6). The transgressive literary works must represent oppressive voices "because they must have something to transgress" (Hutcheon qtd in *Techniques of Subversion* 7).

Other techniques of subversion include Bakhtin's concept of the Carnivalesque, which is a type of language in which "high" and "low" cultures are brought together. In this situation, the low culture is that of folk culture, which is representative of freedom and spontaneity, the "high" culture is more related to oppression and order (qtd in *Techniques of Subversion* 8).

Because in the real carnival everything is permitted, the carnivalesque creates an environment that is characterized by social equality. It is a tradition in which everyone shares the same social rank without superiority, usually that which differs from the general ruling system. In the Carnivalesque, it is said, "The body is ... figured not as the individual or 'bourgeois ego' but as a growing" (Robinson). Bakhtin considers it as an opportunity for a "second life", a form of a rebirth (Bakhtin 6). It is the opportunity to rebuild life in a more spontaneous style, away from all forms of socially approved and imposed structures (Robinson). What makes the transgressive aspect of the carnivalesque is its imitation and parodying of the social constructs and manifestations of power, in addition to its distinct way of expression (Jenks 163), such is possible in the technique of metafiction.

1.6 Metafiction

Metafiction is defined by Patricia Waugh as a form of writing that is aware of its artificiality. It "draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh, *Metafiction The Theory and Practice* 2). Within the same definition she posits that the self-consciousness of the metafictional text, or what she refers to as the text's "critique of [its] own method of construction" (2), allows to uncover possible untruthfulness of the world in a way as to show that not only the written text includes fiction.

Metafiction is a form of writing that fulfills the function of revealing the gap between the real and fiction and bringing to light the artificiality of a literary work (3). The play in representation between the imaginary and realistic, and this blurring of universes is presented as a consequence of "an increased social and cultural self-consciousness" (3). It leads to an apprehension of the role of language in constructing and manipulating culture, as well as the human perception of "reality" (3). Metafiction shows the uncertainty of representation where it fails at depicting truthful images. It attracts attention to the importance of a work by showing how the process of writing happens (4). Thus, the novel's self-reflexivity mirrors the structures by

which society is made in the novel and the extent to which they refer to the realist structures through the author's commentary.

Representations of social structures in the traditional novel put the individual in the centre of the social machine of behaviours that is ready to execute prescribed orders (Waugh 11). Yet, in the post-modern novel, where metafiction tends to manifest itself the most[16], it tends to shed light on the conflict of the individual against governing forces in a more self-conscious manner, because these forces are not as easy to discern as they are in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (11).

Self-reflexivity in the postmodern text facilitates social criticism through an exposition of the fluctuances between fiction and the social reality (11). Such exposition is made possible through an opposition that is set by the novel against the language of the traditional novel, which is ideologically constructed and seemingly innocent. Metafiction in the novel reveals the opposition in the form of the novel itself, since the language cannot escape constructedness (11).

Apart from its statuts as a simple fiction that includes non-traditionalist forms of writing, merely, self-awareness, Metafiction is also considered by Patricia Waugh as the act of "exploring a theory of fiction" that is practiced by authors when experimenting with text. Metafiction came as an attempt at understanding, and thus solving, problems of fiction writing through the past century. The recourse to this practice in writing aimed at discovering a theory of writing through a conscious immersion of the author and their real world in the text. The practice blurred the boundary between fiction and real, and the act of writing fiction itself becomes a writing of theory through fiction.

Waugh stands for the view that language shapes culture and human understanding of life and thus considers that the study of a written text (or literature) leads to an understanding of real-life values. Written fiction reflects human

[16] Patricia Waugh argues that metafiction has always existed in literature since the novels of Sterne but it is most apparent in modernist and postmodern literatures (2-3, 11)

understanding of the universe and thus language is presented as a mediator of ideas (Waugh 3). Contemporary society is endowed with a certain knowledge of the different levels of discourse due to its "cultural self-consciousness" (3). Such apprehension unveiled the impact of language in building human understanding and "sense" of reality. Waugh, thus, indirectly concludes that language has a direct influence on cultural grasp and human experience of the world as it affects them and constructs them (3). In less complicated terms, Waugh puts it saying "The simple notion that language passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and 'objective' world is no longer tenable" (3). She creates this direct link between the real and the text through language to argue that the fictional world can be an image of the real and into understanding the real.

Waugh justifies the relationship between language, as an arbitrary system of signs, and the world that is reflected in it by the use of the "meta' terms" which she says are what controls how humans experience their world (3). 'Meta' thus, through this argument, refers to the self-consciousness of language of its constituents, and thus, the unveiling of their constituting parts. A metalanguage is a language that refers to another as its "signified" (4). In novel writing, this practice of referring to a language through a language (what can also be a discourse), is displayed in a fiction that is aware of its constructedness and thus unveils the overlap between real and fiction in literature (4). Metafiction thus is a form of writing that seeks to comment on the constructedness of the conventions of a novel and reveal their composing parts.

According to Waugh, "the metafictional novel.... situates its resistance within the form of the novel itself" (11). Through this argument, she does not wage for an experimental form of writing that is "aleatory", as she thinks that it can lead to dull fiction (12). She rather argues for a literature that "balance[s] between the unfamialiar... and the traditional" (12). The traditional sense as material to connect the text to a specific existing phenomenon, or what the critic here refers to as "memory" (12). The attempt of metafiction in representing chaos is what has actually led to the rise of new forms in the novem (12). Thus, metafiction is not an arbitrary

new form of writing but a reproduction of "familiar" traditions that also criticizes them through the use of creativity, or using Waugh's words, "innovation" (Waugh 12).

In metafiction, the "literary language" is opposed to cultural rules because they unveil a "sense of crisis, alienation and oppression in contemporary society" (11). It also exposes the inability of traditional writing, like realism, in representing this cricis. Metafiction is presented as an attack on traditional "outworn" writing styles which it presents as subjects of social criticism (12).

1.6.1 Techniques of Metafiction

Metafiction as a genre is a play of words. The entire process is played in the form of the text, which is why Jerome Klinkowitz thinks that the theme is in the form (Klinkowitz, *Kurt Vonnegut* 26). One aspect that Waugh considers basic for a metafiction text is the equity between the fictional world and the real world. A Total break with the real world in a text will easily discredit the text and declare its end. Yet, an attractive mix is composed of a "redundancy" of common things from the real world, and unfamiliarity of fiction (Waugh 12).

A metafiction text will include "parody self-consciously" (13) because it tries to break the centrality of authority and fixed endedness. Parody helps in the defamiliarizing process of the common concepts, although the reader is led from a language that is familiar in the first place. The idea is similar to that of language deterritorialization with Deleuze, the language of the majority is taken and is defamilizarized to ensure the mixture between the familiar and the creative. Unlike novels based entirely on estrangement without including anything realistic, a writing that presents both worlds has more chances of survival and of being remembered by readership because the audience participates in the building of meaning (13).

One more technique is what Patricia Waugh calls the "narratorial intrusion" in the text. This technique is used to shift the attention of the reader from the text to the structure or to the speaker. In so doing, the act of narration becomes a "Telling as

individual invention" (Waugh 14). Here, again, the reader is expected to interfere in the making of the meaning because the message of the text shifts to the structure. The reader is invited to consider the act of writing itself as an important "event" in the narrative (Hutcheon qtd. in Mouro 138). This technique is done in contrast of a rejection of the traditional role of the author. The disruption of the author/narrator shows that the real is "constructed" and thus is subject to fabulation (16).

Narration in the metafictional text also switches from one voice to another, often from subjective to objective narration (first and third person). Wassila Hamza Reguig Mouro indicates that these shifts in narration "raise the reader's consciousness of the artificiality of the text he is reading and the effect reached is his disorientation" (139). The main goal in this process is to change the reader's reaction to the text. There is a certain artificiality in the text that the reader should be able to decipher.

Metafiction includes many forms and techniques like parody, a breaking of the structure of the narrative, dehumanization of characters, self-reflexivity, and comments about the text inside the text itself (22). Through these techniques, the reader is led to the conclusion of the artificiality of the literary text, sometimes the reader's own world is put under question.

Waugh uses the term "frames" to refer to constructs that influence cultures and language (28). Frames exist both in the real life and in the world of the novel. They are principles that fashion the social life of men (Goffman qtd. in Waugh 30). The metafictional writer would put such frames in their literary work but in a way in which they are subjected to criticism. By staging a story within a story, the frames (or the social constructs) are unveiled to the reader, or using Waugh's words, they are "broken". Metafiction focuses on showing how such frames can be sources of problems and inequities (30-31).

The frame breaking uncovers the inconsistency between the world of the narrative and reality. It is done through the "authorial intimacy" (32-33). In this process, the author interferes in the text as a narrator, or sometimes, the narrator is

shifted into a character. Goffman explains this saying: "when a character comments on a whole episode of activity in frame terms, he acquires a peculiar reality through the same words by which he undermines the one that was just performed" (qtd. in Waugh 33). Such is a self-conscious text that attracts attention to its untruth.

Other techniques of metafiction are those of metalanguage, which is a language that connotes to another language, instead of taking objects as signifieds. It is a language that "functions as a signifier to *another language*" (Waugh 4). A text that includes a metalanguage is a playful one as it does not fix meaning but keeps it flowing (37). The metalanguage executes itself where the link between the real world and the world of the literary text is put to light. Metafiction considers the text as a game to be played. The playful text escapes the task of having to set a meaning and that turns out to be one of the metafictional author's goals (Waugh 38).

One way of breaking literary frames and showing what they truly do is through uncovering the claim of their truthfulness in a parodied style. Parody is considered as an effective "strateg[y]" to reach such aim (31). By doing a criticism of frames, parody uses a joke to substitute the narrative by its anti-thesis (78). Waugh considers the parodist as doing a work of metafiction (more precisely metafictionist) when it is related to criticism, and by "using an established mode of fiction, lays bare the conventions that individual works of the mode share (...) so that the relationship of form and content, as in the joke, is itself laid bare" (78). Thanks to parody, the text reaches more self-consciousness, and its frames become the subject of criticism.

1.6.2 Parody

Parody is approached as a strategy in Patricia Waugh's work on metafiction (31). Yet it is referred to as a composition in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a narrative poem in archaic literature (Hutcheon 32), and a literary technique in the *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Childs 167). It is impossible to catch a fixed and precise definition of parody as it has been changing through time

and interpretations. Its uses in the twentieth century show that it has evolved in time and there is always the need of going through its study again (Hutcheon 32).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the parody as a

> A composition in prose or verse in which the characteristic turns of thought [of an author] are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous ... an imitation of a work more or less closely modelled on the original, but so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect.

This definition relates parody to the act of imitation, that is; a writing that is very similar to an author's thoughts or sentences. It also uses as a second quality sarcasm, or the act of adding the "ridiculous effect" to the parodied style. It can be inferred that parody is a writing that is based on the imitation of somebody's style and which emphasises on ridiculing them or their thoughts through the second text (product of the parody).

In the *Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* parody is a literary technique, also based on imitation, more precisely mimicry, and intending to put to light any "weakness, pretension or lack of self-awareness" in the text being parodied. The latter can be the work or a person in particular or a group of authors. Texts that can be parodied are not only works of fiction, rhetorical writing, speeches, essays, and sermons may also be subject to parody as well (Childs 167). This definition relates the goal of parody to criticism, entailing that the targeted readership is one that is intellectual enough to understand the irony within the parody. Thus, the "parodist is often an ironist" which adds the idea of irony to parody (167).

J. A. Cuddon defines parody as an imitation that may affect "words, style, attitude, tone and ideas" and to put them in sarcastic style to achieve a sort of a "satirical mimicry" (Cuddon 514). These definitions agree on the use of irony, sarcasm, and satire in the parodied text, the point of which is to ridicule someone, or an idea, and is based on mimicry. Yet, parody is treated differently by Gérard Genette who classifies different styles based on their use of imitation, transformation of text,

and irony, to reach the conclusion that parody is a transformation of a text that does not necessarily include irony (qtd. in Dentith 11).

Simon Dentith defines parody as an activity in writing that leads to conflicting and "allusive imitation", often in cultural phenomena (9). He argues that parody includes both the actions of transformation and imitation of the text. Imitation is more related to an imitation of the style of a particular author while transformation includes a rewriting of the original text using paraphrasing.

Linda Hutcheon defines parody first as a rivalry of two texts, one opposing the other and attempting to ridicule it (Hutcheon 32). Yet, she argues that the journey of parody through time exposed it to other aspects that changed its goal and form of expression. Parody has become connected with irony which made it a "repetition with difference" (32). The practice of parody becomes enjoyable when the reader connects with the meaning and the text thus making him/her able to grasp the playfulness of the author in the second text.

Hutcheon denies the quality of constrasting in parody as a central one. She states that the work of the parodist does not consist simply of showing oppositions but engages "the entire enunciative context" in the making of a parody using irony as a main tool (34). Through the use of this tool parody touches both the "form and pragmatic effect" of a text. The fact that it brings to light both constituents of the text makes it an essential tool of self-reflexivity in writing (34).

While in the previous definitions parody may have different goals, for the Russian Formalists it is meant as an act of self-reflexivity since, just as posited by Patricia Waugh earlier, parody puts to light the cultural and writing conventions of the original text and shows their negative sides in its defamiliarizing aspect (35). The formalists believe that parody can truly participate in the development of literary writing as the creativity of reproduction opens the possibilities of new writing techniques (35).

Patricia Waugh considers that parody creates the self-consciousness of the text and leads to a reconsideration of discourse when it puts "creation with critique" (Hutcheon 68). The biggest victory of parody in this sense is that it dethrones form and content to allow their criticism. On this matter, Margaret Rose argues that "the parody text holds up a mirror to its own fictional practices, so that it is at once a fiction and a fiction about fictions." (qtd. in Dentith 14-15). Parody can thus reproduce a text, or a cultural system within a narrative, and still allow minor issues to get the attention of the reader and open up for new interpretations (13).

1.7 Conclusion

The elements of a dystopia, be it in literature or in a real-life situation, include many aspects related to despotism, dictatorship, and lack of freedom, but also the fear of destruction and the end of man because of science and anxiety about the future. In literature, it is often imaginary and happening in the future to push the reader to think about it seriously, a way of seeing the world differently and making that imagination possible. The representation of the future including the element of science is common with post-Nuclear age science fiction, both in style and themes (the depiction of a culture that is apocalyptic because of science. Thus, dystopian science fiction is merely characterized by the absence of hope in the narrated future, illustration of possible threats as consequences of the modern world's lust for progress, representation of the individual or a community living under the oppression of the people who detain power (Burford 33).

Representations of the individual in postmodern literature are no longer a matter of imitation or faithful recreation of the status quo. In fact, the more creative and original the narrative, the more subversive it is. The study of minor literature and its aspects, particularly the functions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in assemblage are revelations that permit man to think of himself differently, merely, outside the boundaries of the same, of the life that the mainstream imposes on him.

The analysis of the elements of a minor literature leads inevitably to a study of metafiction and parody as basic aspects. Two important aspects, Language deterritorialization and collective value requires the author to experiment with writing in a way as to break the writing tradition and allow creativity on the one side, as well as uncovering the constructs of language and cultural frames through a criticism and mockery of a text. Such is possible through metafiction, as a subversive writing technique. Parody works along with metafiction on laying bare the cultural constructs and so ensure an easy criticism of such *frames.*

Chapter Two: Free Will and Social Forces in Vonnegut's Dystopian Universes

Chapter Two: Free Will and Social Forces in Vonnegut's Dystopian Universes

2.1 Introduciton

Vonnegut is a writer of the mid-west who is concerned with the values of the love and compassion in his society. He was called the "genius of popular culture" because of his care about social problems and the way he solved them (Lundquist 2). The vision of life is best described by Lundquist when he says "we must learn to maintain happy illusions over the villainous ones, that the best truth is a comforting lie, and that if there is any purpose to human history, it is best understood as a joke—at our expense" (Lundquist 1).

One of his greatest concerns is the extent to which American character has been influenced by the wars and the economic depression. He thought that due to war, "people felt useless for so long. The machines fired everybody… [they] couldn't feed their families" (qtd. in Lundquist 2). He was addressing particularly individuals who felt helpless in front of the hardships that had controlled the early twentieth century and included himself within these sufferers, whom he depicted as characters. They are mostly inspired from the Midwest because it is the home of attitudes such as "individualism, self-reliance, a practical materialism, skepticism of custom and tradition unless rooted in common sense, political intransigence, and isolationism" (Flanagan qtd. in Lundquist 2).

Most of Vonnegut's characters have roots in Indianapolis, which is evidence that he identifies to a certain extent with some of them, or at least, feels that they represent something existent in his society that he wishes to speak about. As a matter of fact, Vonnegut often mentioned that his novels were attempts at writing his war memories and trauma to liberate himself from their atrocities. He was a prisoner of war in Dresden and witnessed a lot of destruction. He had to bury bodies of burnt humans, victims of the raids of the allies over the city of Dresden. The novel that best depicted this experience was *Slaughterhouse Five*, yet, other novels were also inspired and affected by this memory, like *Cat's Cradle*, and to a certain extent *Sirens of Titan*.

2.2 High and Low Cultures in Vonnegut's Forced Science Fiction Texts

Vonnegut's interest in society leads him to write about themes that are bound to popular culture, which through time surfaced to become the new mainstream (Lundquist 10). His style had to be different because his message was one of a kind. What he does is "moving collages of carefully selected junk. They must be experienced. They can't be purchased" (Vonnegut qtd. in Lundquist 10). Vonnegut somehow used some of the popular aspects, that he refers to as junk (to differentiate from what is usually considered high culture, that of the upper classes and elite). Yet, the way he presents this "junk" and adapts it to sordid situations makes it realistic even with the use of Science Fiction.

Science fiction becomes a means for Vonnegut to express his ideas about life in the modern world. Yet, he rejected classification within this genre because it was treated as "urinal" by critics for a while (Vonnegut, *Wampeters* 1). What he refers to as the "carefully selected junk" should be "experienced" rather than "paraphrased" because representations in literature are closer, and easier, to be felt rather than when they are translated in simple and straightforward talks about social problems. The content of his novels includes much of this "collage" of "junk" material, usually represented in grotesque images and events, unfortunate characters who have to struggle because of their poverty or lack of love, and sad, often chaotic endings.

In each of the three novels, he chooses popular settings and simple individuals. In *Sirens*, Constant is presented as a spoiled young man who inherits a great wealth. He had never cared about manners, nor about hard work or the consequences of his behaviours because he thought his wealth could replace everything else. Malachi Constant is contrasted with his father during the narrative, which leads the reader to focus on the evil side of this character.

Constant was the "richest American", and known as a famous "rakehell" who often bragged about the women he could attract (*Sirens* 11). His name meant "faithful messenger" (17), and later becomes partly his job in the novel, although he was not

aware of it. He considers himself lucky when he is asked about his wealth. He responds using the symbolic expression "I guess somebody up there likes me" (20). This expression is later used against him and he is led to apologize for it and to think he was sinner for thinking about it.

Constant learns from Winston Niles Rumfoord, who travelled in space and time through a process referred to as materialization and de-materialization, that he will be traveling to Mars, then Mercury and then settle on a moon called Titan. He is also told that he will be coupled with Beatrice, Rumfoord's wife, and that she will give birth to his son. Constant rejects the scenario and decides to become less attractive, "too ill to travel" and worth nothing by squandering his entire—inherited—wealth (*Sirens* 61).

He organizes a party that lasts fifty-six days during which he was never sober. During the party, he marries an unknown woman, he throws a piano in a pool then he cries about it, he tells strangers about his childhood difficulties with his father and his pride of his mother, he gives them oil wells, then sends everybody away. Constant finds himself bankrupt when he wakes up, not only for the way he spent his money, but also because a cigarette company he owns faces legal problems. After a while Constant learns that he was facing serious charge that could put him in prison, having no money to help himself nor any solution to avoid the charge, he accepts the invitation of two strangers to go on a mission to Mars, and becomes a soldier on Mars.

The details of Constant's life and the way in which he lost his wealth represent the junk pieces Vonnegut referred to, in order to write something with a strong message. The novel also includes awful images of low culture. Before Constant is taken to Mars, he writes offensive letters on purpose to Beatrice, telling her how eager he was to mate with her, in the sake of making himself repugnant in her eyes. As it happened, Rumfoord had also told his wife that she and Constant would couple on Mars ''like farm animals'' (Vonneugt, *Sirens* 26), and that they would have a child named Chrono. Both Constant and Beatrice rejected the idea and thought it was unbearable. Yet, once on Mars Constant's memory is erased. Before this happens, he

is challenged by other soldiers to rape a woman that was captured in their base without falling in love with her. Constant goes into a dark room where Beatrice was kept and rapes her before he sees her face. He discovers her face at the end and realizes that she was the woman he was trying to repel.

Leslie Fiedler described the work of Vonnegut as belonging to a mainstream that is not of a "high Art" but of "entertainment" (qtd. in Lundquist 10). He adds that it is a writing that started as a marginal style that very soon escalated to mainstream writing. By taking examples from popular culture and from environments that are not so sophisticated, he managed to reflect issues that America suffered from but were hardly ever represented. Yet, such representations needed a style that was as unheeded and hybrid as they were. Vonnegut had to experiment with style for such a purpose. Raymond M. Olderman argues, "Vonnegut is a master of getting inside a cliché and tilting it enough off center to reveal both the horror and the misery that lies beneath the surface of the most placidly dull and ordinary human response" (qtd. in Lundquist 11). His particularity is made by the simplicity of the elements of his texts. His discourses and dialogues are simple; they include street language, and morals in each of his tales (Lundquist 10-11).

Vonnegut shows this contrast of high and low art in *Cat's Cradle* too. He exposes the discourses that build the high culture to show the inconsistencies that lie beneath. The most prevalent discourse in this novel is that of science, which is meant to make a utopia, yet it leads to destruction. This overlap of utopia and dystopia happens in the fictional island of San Lorenzo. It is a peaceful island composed of only one city, having had only one president in its history, and the president is known to be a dictator. The island is described by the president as very peaceful and its people as very happy. Yet, all the elements that are described as utopian in this island also make it into a dystopia.

The loving president of the island bans the main religion of his people (Bokononism), and promises torture to anyone who converts to this religion, while in fact he is one of its followers. Upon the arrival of Frank Hoenikker, the middle son

of the scientist who made the Atomic bomb and Ice-nine in the novel, the president tells him that he wants science in his island and that it is the most important thing there is (157). Yet, he built a country whose people had no education at all, and who believed in a religion they knew was made of lies.

When the president is offered Ice nine[17], the last invention of Dr. Felix Hoenikker, he uses it to commit suicide, and causes the end life on earth. After his death, a plane crushes into his castle during a show in the celebration of the memory of the Hundred Martyrs of Freedom, his body falls in the ocean, and everything becomes Ice-nine.

Throughout the novel, every person that the protagonist had met, claimed they admired science and considered it as the most important thing there is. Yet, science was the reason life on earth came to an end in the novel. The novel depicts a dystopia which was meant to be a utopia based on strict rules and science as the most important element, yet, the same factors made it into a dystopia which predicted the end of the world

2.3 Vonnegut's Dystopian Universes

The Atomic annihilation age, or what was previously referred to as Post-nuclear Age science fiction[18] was a time in which authors had started to realize the dangers that could be brought to the human race due to unquestioned science, and Vonnegut was one of the most ardent writers to speak about this issue. Atomic annihilation both as a theme and as an inevitable threat was a recurrent theme in his works. *Cat's Cradle* addressed it directly in the image of an end-of-the-world tale that includes the Atomic bomb and Ice-nine. *Slapstick* was set in chaos and anarchy due to a virus that destroyed the United States of America, and *Sirens* included inter-planetary wars and a messiah figure in a despotic universe. These novels, thus, in

[17] Ice-nine is a crystal that freezes water in room temperature, invented by Felix Hoenikker, the scientist who made the Atomic Bomb in *Cat's Cradle*. Ice-nine killed Felix and was shared by his three children who demonstrated serious lack of love and attention in their lives and who used it to get people to like them.

[18] Chapter One page 29

their attempt of reflecting Vonnegut's feelings about society and his fears about the future of the universe, also stage different sorts of dystopias, many of which are inspired from the Vonnegut's life experiences.

Representations of the future in the post-annihilation science fiction present stories of destruction and chaos as a direct result of the war. Themes of a nuclear war and anarchy became most popular as predictions of what the future might be like, this was a dystopian science fiction (Burford 28). The main focal points of such fiction are representations of hopeless futures, warnings about possible threats, and particular light shed on the struggle of the individual against higher forces that are subversive (33).

2.3.1 The Discourses of Reason in *Cat's Cradle*

The novels under analysis, *Cat's Cradle, Sirens,* and *Slapstick* depict universes that are bizarre and chaotic, characterized by feelings of loss and despair. As Vonnegut wrote these novels in the second half of the twentieth century, he tried to represent a certain hopelessness that was prevalent because of the war. He particularly sought to criticize life in the modern age which was led by a rational discourse full of oppositions, merely in claims and ruling voices.

In undermining such discourses, Vonnegut stood against the legitimating narratives of the enlightenment, science, and capitalism. One of his most common themes was the unfair distribution of wealth and the impact of capitalism on the alienation of man (and his characters in particular) (Marvin 19). He starts from the perspective that "truth is an illusion" and that the perception of the world is always subjective (qtd. in Marvin 16). This comes in oppositions with the discourse of the Enlightenment truth is ultimate and as existing only where rationalism (as a philosophy) is. It is a discourse of double standards as it claims on the one side that it stands for the comfort of man, yet, the impact is abrasive on him in reality.

Vonnegut started considering such discourses as carrying double standards when he worked as Public Relations Spokesman at *General* Electric. This position

made him reflect on the activity of the company and its scientists and their impact on society (21). His main concern was the scientists carelessness about how harmful their inventions can sometimes be (considering the atomic bomb) and he "condemns their failure" in showing humanism (21). The entire experience inspired him the novel *Cat's Cradle* which is built on aspects of humour and satire to show that human irresponsibility leads to destruction and chaos.

The novel represents people who force themselves to live lives they do not believe in, and who pretend they trust values they can hardly understand. The most prominent figure in the novel, the scientist Felix Hoenikker, has a double representation. On the one hand, he is the ideal image of a scientist who has no sense of emotions nor any human relationships because of his deep belief in science. He is described in the novel as amoral, having no sense of sin, nor of God, or of love. He was never interested in leading a normal conversation with any person from his environment, not even his own children, whom he scared and unconsciously destroyed.

On the other hand, Dr Hoenikker does not seem to have a good understanding of science neither. It is true that he makes science for science's sake, but he invents a crystal that is able to freeze in room temperature (Ice-nine), and dies mysteriously after a while. The novel never tells how Dr Hoenikker truly died but gives hints that it was Ice-nine that killed him as he describes his condition when his body is discovered by his children

> We found him in the chair." She shook her head. "I don't think he suffered any. He just looked asleep. ... She left out an interesting part of the story. ... it was on that same Christmas Eve that she and Frank and little Newt had divided up the old man's *Ice-nine* (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 82-83)

Yet, in another conversation, Newt, the youngest of the Hoenikker children adds one more detail about how Ice-nine killed their dog, saying:

> What happened to the dishrag that felt like a reticule, at any rate, was that Newt held it out to the dog, and the dog licked it. And the dog froze stiff. Newt went to tell his father about the stiff dog and found out that his father was stiff, too (179).

The similarity between the bodies of the dog and Dr Hoenikker shows that they died in the same way, leaving the children with chunks of Ice-nine they had no idea about how to use or how dangerous it could be.

Other characters also have contradicting personalities and values, which shows a certain imbalance in the lives of the group that is represented by the author. Newton Hoenikker, (referred to in the novel as Newt) is the most intelligent of his siblings. He is a medical student at Cornell but is kicked from his major because he fails. Newton receives a letter from Jonah, the protagonist and main narrator in the novel, about conducting an interview with him for a book he was writing about Dr Felix Hoenikker's achievements. Jonah describes the Hoenikker family as "illustrious" in his letter and this term is rejected by Newt, although his father is a Nobel Prize winner (13). As a matter of fact, the first contradiction in Newt's life regards his relationship with his family.

Newt responds to Jonah's letter then comments on the term illustrious, which he thought was not the right word to refer to his family in an ironic style

> P.P.S. You call our family 'illustrious,' and I think you would maybe be making a mistake if you called it that in your book. I am a midget, for instance--four feet tall. And the last we heard of my brother Frank, he was wanted by the Florida police, the F.B.I., and the Treasury Department for running stolen cars to Cuba on war-surplus L.S.T.'s. So I'm pretty sure 'illustrious' isn't quite the word you're after (13).

The description that Newt is advancing of himself and of his brother reinforces the contradictions about the Hoenikker family. Yet, these children do not adopt the discourse of the enlightenment, they are rather victims of such ideology.

Newt proves the inadequacy of the word illustrious each time he speaks of his family. He reports that his father could not be emotionally hurt because he was "one of the best-protected human beings who ever lived. People couldn't get at him because he just wasn't interested in people" (10), to the extent that he is unable to remember anything about his wife when Newt asks him to tell him about her (considering that she died when Newt was born).

Newt also reports a story about his parents on the day his father was receiving the Nobel Prize, he says; "Mother cooked a big breakfast. And then, when she cleared off the table, she found a quarter and a dime and three pennies by Father's coffee cup. He'd tipped her" (10). By these incidents, Newt distances the description used by Jonah to refer to his family, showing physical malformations and behavioural inconsistencies not to be considered *illustrious*.

One more contradiction concerns Bokonon and Papa Monzano. Bokonon is originally Lionel Boyd Johnson whose name has changed in the island of San Lorenzo as the people could not pronounce it correctly (73). Papa Monzano is the president of the island of San Lorenzo. These two characters themselves form an opposition in their roles in the novel, then in what they represent for each other. Papa Monzano is a dictator who rejects all forms of democracy in his Island and shows faithfulness to the United States of America.

Papa Monzano tries to live by the standards of America and claims himself as a Christian. He bans Bokonon from spreading his religion in the island and forbids his people from practicing "Bokononism". Yet, when Papa Monzano is dying he calls for a minister to administer the last rites before his death, he rejects the Christian minister and even calls him "stinking", then reveals that he was himself a Bokononist, however; on his death bed, he assigns his successor the mission of killing Bokonon (156- 157). By the end of the novel, even though it is not clearly revealed, it is understood that the ban on Bokonon and the threats about his death were only strategies used to entertain the people of San Lorenzo and give them something to believe in, because they had nothing else to give meaning to their lives.

Bokonon is a contradiction himself because he creates a fake religion, based on lies, he attracts hundreds of people to the religion, even the ones who mocked it in the beginning, as is the case of Jonah. At the end of the novel Bokonon leads his followers to kill themselves, considering that they do everything he says in *The Books of Bokonon*. He decides to add a final sentence to the book that says:

> If I were a younger man, I would write a history of human stupidity; and I would climb to the top of Mount McCabe and lie down on my back with my history for a pillow; and I would take from the ground some of the blue-white poison that makes statues of men; and I would make a statue of myself, lying on my back, grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who (206)

These lines come up as the final lines not only for *The Books of Bokonon* but for *Cat's Cradle* too. It is unclear whether Bokonon ends his life or not. Yet, a closer look at the statement shows that it is addressed to younger followers, it also entails that he does not include himself.

Julian Castle, presented as the "sugar millionaire" (60), is the character that reflects the common American individual the most. Julian is introduced as the "humanitarian and philanthropist" (163), owner of the only hospital in San Lorenzo which was also free. However, Julian's behaviours show a very pessimist person, sometimes even offensive. Julian's melancholy stems from his traumatizing experiences at the hospital in San Lorenzo, where he had to watch people dying without being able to heal them. In the midst of all that anarchy of dying corpses, Julian promises his son, Philip Castle, that he was inheriting all that in a very ironic tone: "'Son,' ... 'someday this will all be yours." (116). The expression shows pessimism, hopelessness and mockery as the son is supposed to inherit wealth from a rich father. Julian's pessimism was a result of the catastrophic situation of the San Lorenzans, and anger against the person who made him believe in the possibility of humanism.

One more contradiction about Julian Castle, owner of the *House of Hope and Mercy*, is that he stems from a family that has participated in the misery of the San Lorenzans. Jonah discovers a Bokononist Calypso in a book about the history of San Lorenzo that says:

> Oh, a very sorry people,
> yes, Did I find here.
> Oh, they had no music,
> And they had no beer.
> And, oh, everywhere
> Where they tried to perch
> Belonged to Castle Sugar, Incorporated,
> Or the Catholic church. (88)

Through the calypso and the book, Jonah discovers that the Castle family had been exploiting San Lorenzans (despite their poverty) in sugar plantation and production but made very little profit and could not pay them. The family dominated "every piece of arable land on the island" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 88). In more objective terms, the San Lorenzans found only a capitalist corporation around them that exploited them with no profit, and a catholic church, both being symbols of control that facilitate control in Western Culture.

Julian's most shocking performance is his reaction to Newt's painting, which he considers as non-sense, then throws it in the river "And then the saint marched to Newt's painting and took it from its easel. He beamed at us all. 'Garbage--like everything else.' And he threw the painting off the cantilevered terrace." (120). The narrator uses the term "saint" to refer to Julian here in order to emphasise the dualism between the person he is supposed to be according to the media and the harsh man that was standing before him.

The only character whose contradictions are not covered by an internal versus external veil is the protagonist, who also happens to be the main narrator. He is not presented as someone doing the opposite of what he feels or truly wants, because his

thoughts are heard. Yet, he goes through a transformation during the novel which explains the other characters' transformations too. Jonah begins the novel as a young journalist who meets the Hoenikker children to write a story about their father, then travels to San Lorenzo to write a story about Julian Castle. He is sarcastic in the beginning, even amused by the *Book of Bokonon* which he only reads out of curiosity, and by the different ways in which people give themselves meaning for their lives, then believe it. After he sees the consequences of Ice-nine as it is dropped in the ocean, he converts to Bokononism, even though he is aware of its artificiality.

2.3.2 The God of Science in *Cat's Cradle*

"The God of science" was an expression used by Martin Luther King to refer to the ideology that has made science unquestionable in the modern world and justified its unending power (qtd. in Boon 17). The idea that science must not be questioned had started since the beginning of the Enlightenment age, when scholars and philosophers glorified the scientific spirit as opposed to the superstitious primitive beliefs of the pre-modernity ages.

The Enlightenment scholars considered science as the highest form of "cognitive authority" due to its exactness. It was starting from the eighteenth century that the ideals of the Western world started to change and become science-oriented (Henry 10). Very soon, it became a general rule in England that the only valuable way to gain truth and knowledge is through empiricism (15).

In *Cat's Cradle,* Vonnegut seeks to discenter the myth of science and empiricism as the only source of knowledge. Very often in the novel, Jonah comes across this principle either embodied in human figures, or blindly repeated by characters who hardly understand it. To begin with, it is the main philosophy of the scientist figure, Felix Hoenikker, which makes him the loner.

Felix believed in science only. Nothing else ever managed to get his attention except his curiosity about it. He created Ice-nine after the idea was suggested by a military man who visited his office and asked for something that could solidify mud

to facilitate operations for soldiers (30). Dr Hoenikker never told his supervisor, Dr Breed, about his invention. This latter always thought that the idea of Ice-nine was never made true and that the request of the Marine General was rejected. Yet, Ice-nine is also obtained by Angela's husband, who was a military man and only seduced her to get the substance. This means that this substance was not only created secretly but it was also given to the government, like the Atomic bomb.

Science is considered as the "most valuable commodity on earth" (29). Dr Breed presents science to Jonah with great fascination and depicts the other scientists at General Forge and Foundry Company (the research laboratory where Dr Hoenikker conducted his experiments) as innocents only seeking scientific progress. When he delivers the talk to high school students during their commencement address he incites them to work for careers in science and considers that science was the key to discover the secret of life (18).

The message that Vonnegut is trying to transmit through these representations of science is that human beings have trusted it so much that they do not even notice how harmful it can be. He shows the analogy between Dr Breed and his son who worked at General Forge for a very short time. Dr Breed never mentioned the Atomic bomb as destructive or negative but only defended scientific inventions and insisted that they were entirely independent from government. When Jonah insinuated that scientists might be responsible for war crimes Dr Breed was very angry and scorned him on the basis that he was assuming that scientists were heartless (28).

Dr Breed's son abandons his job at the research laboratory on the day the bomb was dropped on Japan. He goes into a bar and asks for a drink because the "world was coming to an end" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 19). The next thing he said was that he did not want to take part in any government project because it helped their wars. The two characters stem from the same family, yet their ideologies are different and make their reactions to events around them different.

Dr Breed (the father) is not amoral like Dr Hoenikker, yet, his fascination with science prevents him from acknowledging the truth. In a conversation with Jonah, he

mentions a man who was hang in public because he killed twenty six people and felt no regret about them. Dr Breed spoke sadly about the victims saying "twenty-six people he had on his conscience!" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 21), but did not think that the large number of victims in Japan was also on his conscience or that of Dr Hoenikker.

Science as an untouchable field, or the metaphorical "God of Science" is revealed even further in the cases of the characters whose knowledge of science is very shallow, yet they still defend it. During Jonah's investigation, he gets the chance of meeting a few people in a bar who turn out to be Frank's former classmates and who know a few things about the Hoenikkers and Dr Breed. Sandra, a prostitute, tells Jonah about Dr Breed's commencement address in high school and recalls that she had taken Dr Breed's talk about science very seriously. She was convinced that science was sure to find the secret of life and then says someone said once at the radio it was "Protein" (17). Sandra did not know much about science, yet, the position of science as God leads her to believe anything she is told about it, careless of how immature or inconcrete it is.

Other characters view science as a huge mystery, which again reinforces its status as a metaphorical god. Miss Francine Pefko, a secretary at the laboratory, shows total ignorance of the simplest scientific notions. She could only describe scientists as a people who "think too much" (24). Miss Pefko's declaration about scientists coincides with the look of a woman who grins at Dr Breed as representative of people who think too much (24).

The idea of the God of science becomes a serious problem in the post-annihilation plot when it becomes a source of destruction rather than progress. The function of science as danger becomes more obvious in San Lorenzo. First, Papa Monzano insists that Jonah and Frank teach the people science before he dies. He also chooses Frank as President for the island because he had science (104). His glorification to science is excessive because he knew about Ice-nine and about its power. As Papa Monzano dies and his body falls in the ocean, all the seas of the

universe become Ice-nine and life on earth starts to end. The so venerated science becomes man's enemy at this stage of the novel. The plot reaches the climax when science becomes powerful, unstoppable and harmful.

Moreover, science is associated to forms of dictatorship along the novel. The first one is the use of the Atomic bomb at war. This turns science into an ally to governmental wars and a weapon that hurts human beings instead of a means to serve them. Papa Monzano, who was one of the fiercest advocates of science, was a dictator who had forbidden his people from practicing the religion of their choices and who threatened a popular icon—Bokonon—of killing him, although, he secretly believed in him.

Both San Lorenzo and Rumfoord's republic on planet Mars in *Sirens* depict despotic government, destruction, and the invention of a fake religion. They both stage narratives that show environments in which technology controls man's life. The plot in *Sirens* also shows a discourse of a utopia but the consequances on the lives of the characters are more dystopian than utopian.

2.3.3 Despotism in *Sirens*

The novel *Sirens of Titan* includes many aspects of dystopian fiction, among which despotism and totalitarian government. The universe of this novel is imaginative but is inspired from the Second World War. It includes two main archetypes. In addition to the previously mentioned archetype of totalitarianism, a second one is the chaos of war.

The novel shows three different stages of the life of Constant. In the first stage he is a spoiled young man who is very rich and rejects the prophesy about him traveling to another planet. In the second stage, he is led to Mars as a soldier. He is supposed to participate in a raid over the earth but escapes before it happens. In the third stage, he is living on Titan with Beatrice and his son, but he hardly recognizes

any of them because all his life memories are erased. In this stage, his name is no longer Constant, he does not even remember that person, he becomes Unk.[19]

The manipulation of the thoughts of Constant begins on planet Mars. As he arrives to the military base, he is challenged by the other soldiers to filth Beatrice on the account that he would not resist her beauty. This latter is locked in a dark room, so Constant had no idea of her identity. After the rape, Constant feels awful about himself and what he did, but also starts to gain the appreciation of his superiors.

More direct violations on the lives of Constant and Beatrice are performed in space as both of them have their memories erased. A key is dropped in the bottom of his glass when he is drinking to encourage him to rape her, being someone who would often "[brag] of his heartless lewdnesses on Earth" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 161). The choice of going into the room was further reinforced by someone, probably Rumfoord himself, who dropped the key inside his glass. Constant was led by pride inside the room which fuelled his excitement, his mind is said to have been "illuminated by liquor and by the triumphant words of the announcement he would make at breakfast the next morning (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 161). Through the narrative, Rumfoord attempts to teach Constant to show less pride in hurting people by wiping his memory then introducing him as a sinner "because he used the fantastic fruits of his fantastic good luck to finance an unending demonstration that man is a pig" (251), as part of Rumfoord's new religion on earth[20].

After the rape, Constant feels that he is an awful person. He realizes "that he was not only a victim of outrageous fortune, but one of outrageous fortune's cruelest agents as well… He had now proved beyond question that he was a pig" (162). This incident becomes a turning point in his life. Constant starts to rebel against the system and decides to provide love to the woman he has hurt, instead of the immoral careless man he used to be on earth. He learns about the plan to erase his memory which leads

[19] The main character will be referred to as Constant in the parts of the analysis that discuss his life before his trip to Mars, the parts discussing his life after his memory is erased on Mars will refer to him as Unk.

[20] More information on page 149-150 in chapter 3

him to do the first anti-conformist action on Mars, which is writing himself a letter that includes all the things he needs to remember.

The violation of free will becomes even more serious and straight on planet Mars where Rumfoord imposes a totalitarian mode of living on the *subjects* whom he kidnapped from earth. As a matter of fact, critics like Gary Wolfe (and at times Rumfoord himself in the novel) state that his plan was to give a chance for humanity to act better (Wolfe 967). Yet it was a plan he made possible by causing much pain and destruction elsewhere. He built a weak population whose memory has been entirely wiped out, then placed antennas in their heads that would whisper sentences in their brains to tell them what to do, and to punish them when they disobey. This form of government was referred to as "democratic" (102).

Chapter four opens with the soldiers marching and singing "rented a tent a tent a tent / rented a tent! / rented a tent!" in a sort of a drum sound (97). The general atmosphere is rigid and very serious. Constant is found in this army but his name is no longer Constant, it is Unk. In the beginning of the chapter, the readers are informed that Unk's memory has been erased at hospital for what they called "mental illness" (101). He was sent directly to the military base after he was told that he was a soldier. He could show no affection to anybody since he had no memory of his past. At his arrival at the infantry, he was told to kill a red-head man, which he did. This man was his best friend but Unk could not remember such a detail. He received orders to execute what looked to him as a stanger.

Constant had no right to develop his own understanding, nor his ideas about anything. Whenever he, or any other soldier, developed any ideas that were different from those of their masters, they would erase their memories again, then teach them the basics they have to retain

> At the hospital they told him again and again and again that he was the best soldier in the best squad in the best platoon in the best company in the best battalion in the best regiment in the best division in the best army. Unk guessed that was something to be proud of.

> At the hospital they told him ... what his sergeant's name was, and what a sergeant was, and what all the symbols of ranks and grades and specialties were. … They had blanked out so much of Unk's memory that they even had to teach him the foot movements and the manual of arms all over again. (102)

It was a colony that was entirely based on human control. Unk had to think of himself what they instructed him. They erased the identities of their soldiers to the extent that they had to teach them basic technique of survival after they left the hospital.

The Martian masters had planted antennas under the crowns of their soldiers' skulls to ensure their control and surveillance. Whenever a soldier did something wrong he would be punished directly by the antenna which causes him pain. It was also used to whisper orders in the soldiers' brains and the music drum they sing while marching (97).

Among the signs of a dystopia in this text is the way the people who detain power legitimate themselves. In the present situation, the Martian army is described as a "very democratic" army by its masters (102). The thing that mattered the most for this army, and which was the first rule they put into Constant's mind before leaving the hospital was to "Always obey a direct order without a moment's hesitation" (102). Constant was not even aware that he was no longer on earth, he noticed a fast moon crossing the sky, and a bizarre violet colour instead of a blue sky but had no answers to his confusion.

Constant was commanded by one of his officials to strangle a man who was to be punished by the army. Constant had to apply the order, and killed the man. While he was executing the order, the sound of the snare drum was activated in his brain and he was the only one able to hear the "rented a tent a tent a tent" chanting at that moment (103). For a moment Unk hesitated before killing the red-headed man, so a little pain started in the back of his head to remind him of the necessity of obeying. What he did not know is that the man he was murdering was his best friend in the infantry. Before he dies, the red-headed man whispered Unk's name and the words

"Blue stone" and "Barrak twelve… letter" (104). This was a sign for Unk that he was manipulated and had to search for the truth.

Truth did not exist on Mars. It was something Unk had to find on his own. He was puzzled by the behaviours of the soldiers around him, whom he felt were not real human beings. They were mechanical and only reacted to the sounds that were whispered in the backs of their heads through the antennas (112). He met a soldier named Boaz. He introduced himself as a good friend of Unk that he could not remember. Boaz seemed to Unk like the only normal human being around, although Unk's memory about the universe was almost entirely erased (112). Yet, Boaz was not as real as Unk had imagined. He was in fact the person who controlled the pain and the messages in his head. Boaz amuzed himself by starting the pain in the heads of Unk and other soldiers, even commanders and generals.

Remembering things was forbidden on planet Mars. Whenever anybody tried to remember anything they were punished by the pain of the antenna. While Unk was re-discovering the system on the planet, he was not aware of this rule and was invited by Boaz to remember things from the past. Consequently, he started the pain in his head to the point of almost killing him (112).

Remembering the past, or searching for truthful things was considered as something "militarily supid" (113), classified with mistakes like cleaning a loaded arm, rejecting orders, or sleeping after waking hour. Yet, this is not the only activity considered as a wrong thing for a soldier. Other legitimate actions are made illegal on Mars like owning a book or asking questions about who created the army (113).

In a dystopia, the characters resist the imposed system. The work of Beatrice Battaglia shows that the protagonist in the dystopian universe feel helpless as they lose control yet do regain it once more to resist back power (53). The dystopian universe is characterized by anti-conformism and a rejection of imposed systems. It includes rebellion or different forms of experiencing life that break with the imposed rules. In *Sirens* Unk is unable to remember his past and the number of ways in which he tried to rebel, yet he starts resisting after he feels untruthful things about Boaz.

Boaz was able to control even the officials. He managed to get away from sanction twice by causing pain to officials who wanted to punish him for disobeying the rules. Unk develops a rebellious attitude while discovering the world around. Unk had to follow the red-headed man's instruction. He found Barrak twelve and inside he discovered a letter he wrote and signed for himself in case he is taken to hospital to have his memory cleaned.

The first *forbidden* idea that was included in that letter was basic information about himself, "*I am a thing called alive*[21]" (124). Although it might seem obvious, considering oneself as a living being was considered as illegitimate. It can be easily understood from this point, in addition to the soldiers' behaviour, that they were controlled in a way as to think of themselves as mere objects, without souls nor the characteristic of being alive.

The next point was a piece of information for Unk that he was on Mars. He had wondered for a while why the moon was fast and why the sky was violet, but nobody told him it was a different planet from earth. The remaining points in the letter told him secrets of the army he belonged to, the man who controlled it, and the fact that it was planning to start a war against earth. The letter also told him that Boaz was not trustworthy but that Stony Stevenson was his best friend, yet, he never found out that the latter was the man he killed.

The letter was a call for rebellion, it encouraged him to search more truth. It told him that the moments he feels the pain are the times in which he is thinking about something right. That it was meant to prevent him from seeing the truth. It also taught him to play with the people who represented power and to investigate the truth indirectly to avoid sanction. It also told him that he had to get stronger when it comes to pain, saying:

> The more pain I train myself to stand, the more I learn. You are afraid of the pain now, Unk, but you won't learn anything if you don't invite

[21] Author's italics.

> the pain. And the more you learn, the gladder you will be to stand the pain (124).

For a while, Unk felt like he betrayed the speaker in the letter as he started sobbing while reading and discovering these truths about himself. He thought that he was not good enough to please the speaker in the letter, he "laid the letter aside for a moment. He had an urge to cry, for the heroic writer's faith in Unk was misplaced. Unk knew he couldn't stand a fraction of the pain the writer had stood" (125). He thought that the speaker expected much bravery from him, which he did not have. Yet, he read the signature at the end of the letter and realized the author was him.

The encouragement in the letter led Unk to gain more self-confidence to break the rules and resist the power. The first heroic thing he did was to escape the army on the day he was supposed to fly to earth. He travels to the city of Phoebe, the only city on Mars, to meet Beatrice (known on Mars as Bee), referred to in the letter as his "mate" (131), and his son Chrono.

Literature was considered as a threat on Mars along with the idea of truth. Beatrice had her memory erased too because she wrote a poem for which she was considered very sick. She was told that she had to let other people do the thinking if she wanted to recover. Beatrice was thus sent to hospital because she was thinking. Her poem was a form of a pun that visibly referred to the nature of her job, which is teaching people to breathe without using their lungs. She described the method of breathing in her poem yet the words were rather subversive and included other metaphorical meanings.

The poem begins with the lines "Break every link with air and mist, / Seal every open vent; / Make throat as tight as miser's fist" (152). The breathing method she was teaching consisted of swallowing a pill that transformed inside the person's intestins. The latter does the function of breathing when the person who swallows it blocks air from getting into their lungs through their mouths, nostrils, and ears, so they were all sealed using an adhesive plaster (150). The acts described in the three lines (Breaking with air, sealing open vents, tightening the throat) refer to the

operation of preventing oxygen from entering the human body, but can also be a reference to cutting somebody's freedom by breaking "every link with air" and tightening the throat (152). The meaning here can be that of limitating all forms of freedom of expression.

The poem goes on "Keep life within you pent" that is, unable to be expressed (152). Literally, the line means that the body should remain alive while training on this form of breathing, yet, metaphorically, it means keeping life confined and under control. Then she says "breathing's for the meek", this line is both metaphorical and ironic, as she imitates the language of power used in Mars to keep people from trying to be free. The act of breathing here (meaning to be free), is assigned to the « meek », that is the weak and the submissive. She is thus mocking the government's way of teaching the people to give up their freedom.

2.3.4 The Dystopian Bourgeois Society in *Sirens of Titan*

American critic Keith Booker speaks of a Bourgeois society that controls individuals in dystopian literature and which leads to certain inequalities. These Bourgeois societies were attempts at achieving utopia through a special focus on science at the rise of the Enlightenment age. These societies are capitalist forces that represent power. Yet, by the beginning of the twentieth century it has been realized that science and the enlightenment are not as utopian as humanity imagined them to be, Theodore Adorno and Horkheimer plainly stated that abusive power is but the result of the enlightenment and that "reason is enslaving" (*The Dystopian Impulse* 3-7)

On this basis, the study of Vonnegut's plots will reveal that they all include this Bourgeois society which intimidates the individual and practices fascist pressure over him/her. By shedding light on the individual concerns of his protagonists, Vonnegut politicizes their issues and so, the matters of anybody who may identify with them from his readership.

In *Sirens* the Bourgeois society is represented in the power that is exercised over the people by Winston Rumfoord, the president of the colony on planet Mars. Rumfoord claims that his plans were meant to make a better society, and so do some critics who have attempted to interpret this work like Gary Wolfe. Yet, Rumfoord does the complete opposite of a utopian plan.

First Rumfoord creates a despotic republic that erases the memories of its citizens then gives them instructions through chips that are placed in the backs of their heads, while these people had never chosen to be in this country, they were taken there by force. He also lies to his wife about how she was going to meet Constant who later raped her, instead of truly warning her about him considering that it was how things were meant to be. Rumfoord sent his men to kidnap Beatrice and leave her near Constant then facilitated his access to her cell when his friends challenged him to have sexual intercourse with her. Rumfoord, thus, provoked the rape of his wife by Constant. Later, her memory is erased too and she is turned into an agent that is there only to serve the community with no feelings, nor any motivations.

Beatrtice becomes rich on earth right before she is taken to Mars, but after her memory is erased in space, she starts selling statues (Malachis[22]) with her son for the living when she is sent back to earth. She is informed that she was Rumfoord's wife a few moments before she is sent to space again, as a seeming punishment by him, to settle on Titan forever.

Technological development is presented as an important agent in the novel as it does a great part of the work. It is through technological development and the power of money (that is capitalism), that Rumfoord becomes so powerful. Rumfoord plans a visit to Mars which was financed by the government because of a financial crisis it was going through. He presents himself in a very capitalist manner, interferes with his wealth and takes part in the political affairs of the country, then starts to rule them

[22] See page 177 in Chapter 3

because he paid for it. The result is a very devastated society who have no sense of their true selves, their identities, and their past.

The power of money is also depicted in the contrasted situation of Constant. He was a famous rich man who had to wear a disguise in order not to be recognized during his first visit to Rumfoord's house based on his invitation. As a rich man, Constant is a very bad person. He brags about the beauty of the women he could attract, which even led him to rape. He threw parties deliberately, the last one having lasted fifty-one days, and could buy anything he wanted, including a wife.

When he lost his wealth, Constant did not have this power anymore. He faced charges that could throw him in prison for many years because of harmful cigarettes he was selling. He accepted a mission on Mars easily because of his bankruptcy, so after being a free man, he gave up his freedom because of his poverty. Once on Mars, he lost the freedom to choose even his own family, he was introduced to a woman and a boy who turned out to be his mate and his son, then was sent to Titan to live in isolation as a punishment for a life he led before the invention of a religion that banned him.

The influence of the Bourgeois Society in the novel leads the characters to a delusion and feelings of loss. The novel clearly opposes free will and determinism to show that human beings have very little free will in their lives even if they try to convince themselves of the opposite. The post-war period in the United States was particularly affected by this general feeling which Vonnegut translated in his works. His plots are devastating and bizarre, yet almost all of them agree on the common points of the lack of freedom in society, free will, and the need for humanism.

2.4 Free Will in Vonnegut's Dystopian Novels

Vonnegut is the kind of author who loves to experiment with plot and stages events that are shocking, deceiving, and impressive. His themes are often about war, the impossibility of controlling fate, the illusion of free will, love, and hope in the human race. He has been often referred to as a humanist for his themes (Johnson 105).

Among the problems that he sought to reflect in his works, and which he thought his society struggled with, was the lack of free will and the inability to control one's own life. He depicts these difficulties in a set of characters that are in constant search for meaning for their lives, but also, who try to understand the accidents that happen to them. In *Sirens*, he uses the utterance "a series of accidents" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 140) to refer to the impossibility of controlling life incidents. He finally used "somebody up there likes me" to explain the protagonist's good luck (215).

The lack of free will shows an inconsistency in the common man's ability to understand his environment, especially as he loses trust in values and culture. This leads Vonnegut to question Americanness during his age and to relate the problems of the common American individual to his identity and the politics of the country. One more problem that is uncovered through his novels is the dystopian drives in the modern world and the idea that the problems of American society are best represented in a dystopian context. Political despotism adds to the pressure that is experienced by Americans, who though they live in a democratic country, often feel their basic rights violated.

2.4.1 Free Will as a Violated Right in *Sirens*

One of the ways in which Vonnegut represented the struggle of the individual in future societies against the forms of power is the struggle for free will (or its loss). Free will as a basic human right is often violated in his works. The point is to show the weakness of his protagonists in their fast growing environments.

Gary Wolfe thinks that knowledge of the future makes the protagonists nihilistic as they lose interest of what they do with their lives, giving as example the case of Constant who squandered his entire wealth in a short time (966). Free will is a central theme in *Sirens* that is depicted in the two characters of Malachi Constant and Winston Rumfoord as villain and protagonist respectively. In both characters, it seems to engender nihilism. Yet, as Constant's memory is erased, he learns a few things about his past life and starts to behave differently. He attempts to give more

love to the people who have been in his life before and tries to find them (in his search for Beatrice, Chrono, and his friend Stony). Constant leads back to the assumption that the ignorance of one's future is a source of hope.

Free will is violated in the novel because the main characters are constantly led to believe that they control their decisions and lives, even when their memories are erased. Rumfoord, the altruist figure (who somehow causes more pain than joy while trying to build a failed utopia on Mars) only realizes that he had no free will at the end. Rumfoord was the main leader on Mars. He was responsible on the kidnapping of many human beings from earth, on their memory loss, the war they started against earth, and then their deaths. He was amused seeing his wife agonizing for her lost fortune without telling her that her life was going to change. He also played games on Unk (Constant's name in space after losing his memory) and Boaz in Mercury, by sending them coded messages during three years instead of telling them exactly how to get back on their ship again (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 199).

Beatrice's life is violated first when she is told that she will mate with Constant on Mars by her own husband. She is then exposed to different forms of humiliations in letters from Constant who does it on purpose to make her hate him. Beatrice's choices and free will are violated by her husband, who not only travelled in time and could see her rape, but he was the origin of these incidents, being himself the main president on Mars. Vonnegut uses Tralfamadorian intrusion in his plots to argue for that it is foolish to think that human beings can change their future. In *Slaughterhouse Five,* Billy is treated as an idiot for wishing to change his fate, while in *Sirens* Rumfoord simply tells his wife that it is impossible to change the course of things if he sees the future telling her

> All kinds of things are going to happen to you! Sure," he said, I can see the whole roller coaster you're on. And sure — I could give you a piece of paper that would tell you about every dip and turn, warn you about every bogeyman that was going to pop out at you in the tunnels. But that wouldn't help you any." ..."Because you'd still have to take the

> roller-coaster ride," ... "I didn't design the roller coaster, I don't own it, and I don't say who rides and who doesn't. I just know what it's shaped like (58).

The metaphorical control of the Tralfamadorians refers to social and cultural forces and the extent to which they control man's life. In the Tralfamadorian Chrono-synclastic Infundibulum[23] "everything that ever has been always will be, and everything that ever will be always has been" (26), things cannot be changed or controlled by human beings, not even by Rumfoord who sees them happening in real time and travels back and forth in time. The lack of freedom in the dystopian universe is presented both as an incentive to rebel and as an indicator that things need to be changed.

Malachi's life and free will are also violated from the beginning of the novel. In the beginning he says "I guess somebody up there likes me" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 20), about a wealth he inherited without effort. Constant's reference to God denotes that his wealth was not his choice nor his own success, but it was God's choice.

Later, Constant is bankrupt because of the news he received from Rumfoord about his life on Mars then on Titan. Rumfoord knew what would happen in the future and knew about Constant's loss. The wealth was squandered because of the news delivered by Rumfoord. If, however, Constant had not met Rumfoord and did not learn about the future events, he would not have faced the financial trouble, and thus never accept to be recruited by the aliens. His fate was interrupted by Rumfoord who fashioned everything in his life to push him to despair then to surrender to the aliens' proposition.

In *Sirens,* Unk (the protagonist) and other soldiers on Mars lose entire control over their lives to become technologically oriented and controlled. Technology in

[23] The Tralfamadorian technology that allows Rumfoord to travel in time and in space. It is a tunnel in which he dematerializes with his dog and gets into through a ship, the tunnel transfers him to another planet in a different time period, once he arrived he materializes to his normal human condition again. Rumfoord does not control the destinations as the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum is controlled by the Tralfamadorians who live on the fictional planet Tralfamadore.

Sirens is a main character that is subversive and powerful. Not only Unk is a victim of technological domination, his *master*, Rumfoord, turns out to be unconsciously serving the Tralfamadorians through a robot named Salo (who was not aware of his mission). The discovery of Rumfoord's lack of free will also lead to the discovery that all human history was a result of Tralfamadorian control on earth.

In *Sirens,* man is altered from his original environment and context to switch to an entirely different world due to technology (it is worth to mention that technology is a tool in this context, not the main agent that has caused man's delocation). Hollinger argues that "technoscience" transforms into a conflicting nature to the human self in narratives that contrast man to such power. It challenges man's perception of his "first-[human]-nature" (53). Rumfoord in this context realizes that he was an agent that has served another mission to be fulfilled while he thought he was in control of others. He is both "plotter' and 'plotted'... enjoying a global view of time" (Tanner qtd. in Pascual 55). On the one side, he controls lives but being himself "plotted" he becomes a player in the Tralfamadorian control of human lives.

When he is confronted to his status as a subject in Salo's mission, he attempts to regain control by ending his friendship with the robot (Salo), considering it as representative of the people who exploited him. Rumfoord's discontent is a reaction to the fact that that everything he always thought of as a spontaneous human invention (like the great wall of China, England's Stonehenge, The Golden house of Roman Emperor Nero) turned out to be Tralfamadorian messages.

These messages were sent to the Tralfamadorian robot messenger Salo, who was stranded on planet Titan because of a technical problem he needed to fix in his ship, and who carried a secret message to an unknown destination. Salo watched human life from Titan through a viewer, from which he learnt about their behaviours and manners. The Tralfamadorians used the view to send him messages through architectural monuments like the Stonehenge of England and the Great Wall of China. The Tralfamadorians used human life (earthlings as referred to in the novel) to sustain

Salo during his solitude on Titan. The lacking piece for his ship was also something the earthlings had to invent for him, and it was actually in Chrono's pocket all the time, a piece which he used for luck.

Chrono's piece, and the power of the Tralfamadorians are related to an extraordinary extent. The tralfamadorians possessed the Universal Will to Become, a power that allowed them to control anyone and push them to serve the tralfamadorians very easily. Tralfamadorians were able to make human beings on earth execute their commands

> through the vaulted architecture of the Universe with about three times the speed of light. And they were able to focus and modulate these impulses so as to influence creatures far, far away, and inspire them to serve Tralfamadorian ends. It was a marvelous way to get things done in places far, far away from Tralfamadore. it was easily the fastest way (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 272)

The Universal Will to Become was used on earthlings to send messages to Salo. For example, the Great Wall of China was a message to Salo that said "Be patient. We haven't forgotten about you", the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva, meant "Pack up your things and be ready to leave on short notice" (272). Rumfoord was also used by the Tralfamadorians to bring Chrono to Titan for Salo's ship. The Universal Will to Become is actually the anti-thesis of free will. Throughout the novel, it is discovered that many historical events were a result of Tralfamadorian control, "Civilizations would start to bloom on Earth, and the participants would start to build tremendous structures that were obviously to be messages in Tralfamadorian" (273), and that they "had so much to do with gumming up the history of Earth" (273). It deprived human beings from being responsible on their decisions for such a long time.

The intrusion within the human free will did not stop at this level. The Tralfamadorians inspired Rumfoord the religion of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent to make them believe there was no such thing as luck in life and that it

was not what God gave to human beings. The minister was more satisfied with Constant referring his experience to a series of accidents rather than luck from God (or what they implicitly interpret as a certain preferance from God to Constant) (140).

The idea of luck in the novel *Sirens* is mocked on the basis that human beings will justify to themselves the different events that happen in their lives based on the fact that they are either a result of luck or an accident. Yet, they blind themselves on the truth that some social forces may interfere in manipulating their lives. This idea is further emphasized in the novel *Slapstick* where Vonnegut projects his relationship with his sister in the lives of Wilbur and Eliza Rockefeller Swain. The two are victims of social constructs as they are subjected to harsh social judgement when they reveal the truth about themselves.

2.4.2 Free Will in Dystopian *Slapstick*

The novel *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!* tackles the issue of love in American society. In the beginning of the novel, Vonnegut speaks of the lack of love around him in a prologue that is partly auto-biographical. He makes it clear that his aim in writing such novel is to show other forms of love that can also be possible. He displaces love from an expression of good will or sentiments from one person to another and puts in other different forms of solidarity and help-providing, rather than a verbal expression of love. It is a novel about artificial families assigned to people arbitrarily to limit their loneliness and anxiety when they are away from their original homes.

The novel is narrated by Dr. Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain (christened Wilbur Rockefeller Swain), former president of the United States. He inhabits the Empire State Building with his grand-daughter Melody Oriole-2 von Peterswald, and her lover, Isadore Raspberry-19 Cohen. The setting features a dystopian future America which is bankrupt and everyone becomes poor in it. People become slaves in the houses of the few surviving rich families. Wilbur's neighbor, Vera Chipmunk-5 Zappa was described as the best slave owner in the area and everyone wanted to be

her slave because she treated them well. Young people can neither read nor write in this America. They feel offended when they are asked to use their brains or say something intelligent.

Wilbur reveals that he had a twin sister named Eliza Mellon Swaine. The two characters are born very ugly and are described as "monsters" by Wilbur, he says: "We were monsters, and we were not expected to live very long. We had six fingers on each little hand, and six toes on each little footsie. We had supernumerary nipples as well—two of them apiece" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 26). They were neanderthaloids, born with adult features. The twins had very limited intelligence when separated from each other, yet, when they put their heads together, they become very intelligent. They are somehow the representation of freedom in American society, because they look nothing like what the mainstream expects them to be.

Wilbur and Eliza were victims of rejection, isolation and loneliness. They were raised away from their parents who rejected them due to their ugliness. They furnished and repaired an old mansion for them, hired servants and doctors to take care of them, then put them there and visited them only once a year, on their birthday. They had to create their own comfort in their isolated world. They were auto-didactic as they learnt to read and write without the help or knowledge of any of the servants. They drafted a new form of the American constitution during their childhood because they believed that it would be a "good scheme for misery" (52), because it was a plan to keep people happy. In fact, despite their loneliness, Wilbur and Eliza thought they were born happy and that their entire childhood was happy, until they were separated.

Their plan was to compose new families for each individual around the country. These were called the extended artificial families. They thought that the people who wrote the American constitution failed in recognizing the power of individuals who were not financially lucky. As a matter of fact, Vonnegut proposes the same scheme in his prologue when he suggests that he and his brother Bernard (having careers in different fields) can belong to other families based on their activities. Thus, Vonnegut would himself belong to a large family of writers and his

brother would have his own large family of scientists. The twins had put this in their constitution then decided that it should be amended to ensure its application.

Years later, Wilbur and Eliza are parted because they revealed their true selves to their parents. A psychologist is brought to test them and decide if they were ready to immerse in society. She considers Wilbur as a normal child of medium intelligence, but Eliza as mentally defect because she was unable to read and write. Consequently, Eliza is sent to a centre for people with special needs where she is totally abandoned. Wilbur is sent to a private school and is granted the chance of living with his parents. He then becomes doctor then President of the United States.

Wilbur and Eliza represent to a certain extent a social group that is mis-judged and is stigmatized because of their look. They learn very little about society and report that during their childhood they thought that ugliness was a good thing and that human beings were amused by stupidity. Their idea of society's response to ugliness was limited to the story of the ugly duck, so they thought they were simply different. The point in making such representations is to shed light on categories of individuals in society who feel marginal and who can identify with such plots.

They came up with the idea of the extended family to end loneliness. They defined it as follows:

> An ideal extended family ... should give proportional representation to all sorts of Americans, according to their numbers. The creation of ten thousand such families, say, would provide America with ten thousand parliaments, so to speak, which would discuss sincerely and expertly what only a few hypocrites now discuss with passion, which is the welfare of all mankind. (*Slapstick* 157)

It is thus simply the attempt at giving back Americans their feeling of security and good company. They reject the limitation on job titles or professional fields in the extended family but *extended* it to other, under-privileged, groups.

The idea of the extended family attracted many Americans in the novel and led them to choose Wilbur as president. In his campaign, he only spoke of loneliness and of his plan to overcome it.

> I spoke of American loneliness ... It was the only subject I had. It was a shame, I said, that I had not come along earlier in American history with my simple and workable anti-loneliness plan. I said that all the damaging excesses of Americans in the past were motivated by loneliness rather than a fondness for sin (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 160).

Overlaps between the real America and the novel's America can be sensed in his speech. After he became president the plan was executed and Americans were assigned additional middle names and numbers. People with the same name and number became brothers and cousins.

Wilbur reports that during his term nobody needed to go to prison anymore for punishment. The government used extended families to gather around anybody who has legal problems to help them overcome them. During Wilbur's term, life became all chaotic in Manhattan. The country went bankrupt, and a disease spread over Manhattan and killed large numbers of people which led to its isolation from the rest of the world. Although Wilbur failed as a president in all fields, yet, the people were happy because they could find relatives everywhere.

The problem of Americans' feelings of isolation, loneliness and loss is very recurrent in Vonnegut's works because he felt those were the main problems his society struggled with, especially in front of stronger forces they could not control. In *Slaughterhouse Five*, the US soldiers are reported to have an awful look. In *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, Rosewater walks in the country to make everyone happy and spread love. Lundquist's interpretation of Vonnegut's concern with the status of Americans in his novels is that he wants people to return to a simplistic lifestyle. He would suggest a life where humans would have small access to technology and more care devoted from the ones towards the others.

Vonnegut is particularly concerned by the unequal distribution of wealth in America and refers the origin of the problem to the power of capitalism. He thinks that greed should be aborted in order to avoid creating poor families and that the reason why there is social inequality in the United States is that rich families become aristocratic while the less fortunate occupy a lower position (Marvin 19)

The two main characters in the novel suffer from a lack of freedom in their society. They are introduced as a twin that are very different from the other human beings. They are born with physical deformation, and are expected at age fourteen. The two siblings are thought to be stupid and mentally ill. They are thus placed in an isolated mansion with all the human facilities needed for a human being to live with dignity. They have servants who are secured lodgings and good salaries, and a doctor to watch them during their upbringing.

Wilbur and Eliza discover a secret library in the mansion in which they were kept and start reading at a young age. In fact, Wilbur is the one who did most of the reading, Eliza did most of the thinking. The two siblings became geniuses when they put their brains together, by touching each other. When they were away from each other, their intelligence was rather medium. After they hear their mother speaking of her wish to have intelligent children, they reveal their true selves to their parents, their doctor, and their servants; in the hope of obtaining their love, a feeling they had never received from their parents.

The two siblings trigger their parents' curiosity and shock who decide to test them by different doctors to explain the phenomenon. During their psychological tests they are separated by Dr Cordiner, their psychologist, and become partly stupid again. The doctor decides that Wilbur had enough intelligence to be put in a special school because of his ability to read. Years later he managed to study in Harvard and became pediatrician, then president of the United States. Eliza was judged mentally ill because of her inability to read and was sent to an institution for the feebleminded, or what the narrator referred to as "people of her sort" (79).

When Wilbur and Eliza are separated from each other, their life decisions and fates become the subject of their surroundings and their doctors. Wilbur is influenced by the school then by his life as a medicine student that he entirely forgets that he had a sister at all (79). Eliza on the other hand, becomes very toxic and angry. She is fueled by her wish to take her revenge from her brother who forgot her, and from her parents, by claiming that she was locked in the special institution against her will (79).

The imposed separation has an impact so strong on the two siblings that they become two entirely different people without each other. Eliza, being the one who undergoes most of the oppression, traces a line between the personalities that she and Wilbur represent together, as opposed to who they are when separated. They become "forever" Betty and Bobby Brown (64). When Eliza is buried after her death, the name that is inscribed on her tombstone is Betty Brown, instead of Eliza Mellon Swain. The separation was very serious for her, and the lack of determination in choosing who she wanted to be was subversive.

Wilbur's life was more successful for a considerable time. He was the child who made his parents proud because he went to Harvard. Wilbur went through a series of influences and *happy* accidents that led him to become President of the United Sates. His environment offered everything needed for anyone to achieve such a good position. Wilbur did not feel the lack of determinism in his life but it more or less happened indirectly.

2.4.3 Denaturalization in *Slapstick*

Representations of the hopeless future include forms of totalitarian systems, bankruptcy, cosmic destruction, and denaturalization in Vonnegut's works. Canadian editor Veronica Hollinger considers that science fiction plots highlight a certain "denaturalization" that man is exposed to, which makes him a sort of a "subject-in-technoculture" (53). Since science fiction is a literature that is built on estrangement, it proceeds through a denaturalization of humans from their original contexts to place

them within new environments in the science fiction universe. Hollinger argues that this process is what makes humans feel "strange to [them]selves" and makes them think of a new nature they acquire in the science fiction text, rather than the original, human, nature (53).

Denaturalization comes as a bliss and a misery in *Slapstick* for Wilbur and Eliza, then later for the Americans who had to live in Wilbur's America. The twin find suitable environments for their malformation. Their ugliness provided them a beautiful shelter within which they could be free from judgement and from the external intrusions of the norms of society, from the system, and from the obligations of rationality. They could even escape their roles as responsible adults in their isolation.

They had cultivated a very intimate relationship which the narrator refers to as incestuous when describing the novel in the beginning (18), then gets clearer in their interactions in which they disconnect from the outside world: "I could no longer tell where I stopped and Eliza began, or where Eliza and I stopped and the Universe began. It was gorgeous and it was horrible. Yes, and let this be a measure of the quantity of energy involved: The orgy went on for five whole nights and days" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 128). The two siblings found much pleasure in putting their heads together and touching each other. The energy they could get from their union was a reflection of their difference and unnatural genius. When they started touching heads as children then as teenagers, their relationship was very innocent because it happened before Wilbur started developing any sexual drives (which only started when he was 23 at college, away from his sister). However, when Eliza returns to the family and obliges Wilbur to do it one more time, they are adults. At this level it is referred to as an orgy by the narrator.

The result of the five-day orgy is tremendous. Wilbur and Eliza tie their mother; the servants, and Mushari, Eliza's lawyer, to chairs around the dining table, and finally transgress rules and liberate their lust for each other. After Eliza's lawyer is released, he is terrified of her and decides "to put her away again—... for good

cause this time." (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 159). Knowing that Mushari was arguing for Eliza's sanity, he admits that he was a "bounty-hunter" and sends her the farthest away from her family house (159).

The mad relationship of Eliza and Wilbur is a sign of strong relationships that transgress social structures and boundaries. Vonnegut is not waging for an incestuous relationship through this plot, but to highlight the shades between spontaneous love and structured common decency as he often referred to it in the same novel. One more important point is the results of isolation and victimization from society.

Denaturalization happened to Wilbur and Eliza as a result of the behaviour of their parents towards them, and their queerness is just a consequence of abandonment. The two siblings grow up in lust for love from their parents, and because of its lack they substitute it for each other. Eliza translates all expressions of love into hate when she is abandoned by her brother. She is asked by a reporter how she spent her time in the psychiatric hospital, to whom she responds: "Singing ... Some Day My Prince Will Come" as a reference to her sibling (116). Yet, Wilbur never came back for her after their separation, so she transforms her love to him into anger calling him "a swine, [because] He never came." (116).

Moreover, when Eliza was liberated from hospital she raised a huge mediatic fuss about her case and granted interviews to attract attention to her very rich family because "It was always a big story when multimillionaires mistreated their own relatives." (114). Wilbur and his mother felt obliged to write her a telegram saying that they love her, to which Eliza responded "I LOVE YOU TOO. ELIZA" [24] (115). Although the utterance sounds harmless, yet, Eliza was teaching Wilbur that it was "just a way of getting somebody to say something they probably don't mean" (108). Wilbur could easily feel her hate from her sarcastic responses to their expressions of sympathy.

[24] Capital letters used by the original author

Through the novel, Vonnegut attempts to show how social forces impact human lives and how harsh they can be to peole that are different. He most precisely seeks to show that the capitalist systems reinforce loneliness and break the notion of family (Marvin 19). He merely argues that industrialization and life in the modern world have left people in want of family reconnection which they seem to lose. Most of his characters are "alienated" and "strive to create artificial families" (Marvin 19). They are loners, sufferers in quest for meaning, they often find themselves lonely and helpless facing the terrors of the twentieth century post-war era.

2.5 Helpless Post-War Fiction Characters

Vonnegut's American character is influenced by his sentimentality and humanism (Lundquist 13). Each of his novels includes at least one character who feels pity for the people around them and for humanity in general. He thinks that the main problem with being American is that it includes the obligation of living "without a culture" (Lundquist 13). He thinks that Americans suffer from some sort of loneliness which he highlights in *Cat's Cradle*, *Sirens of Titan*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, S*lapstick, or Lonesome No More!* and *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*.

Lundquist refers this loneliness to the economic system which forced families to move to different places for financial survival (13). In each of the cited novels, Vonnegut centres the role of family as a basic element in the survival of the community. In *Cat's Cradle*, Ambassador Horlick Minton is fired from his job in government because of a letter his wife, Claire, had written. They are called "communist sympathizers" as a qualification as traitors because Claire's letter said truthful things about being American. Her letter said: "'Americans,' ... 'are forever searching for love in forms it never takes, in places it can never be. It must have something to do with the vanished frontier" (69). Her letter emphasized the idea that American Foreign policy was showing a bad image of Americans abroad and that it had to be revised. For her, the American government needed to "recognize hate rather than imagine love" (70). For this reason, both Claire and her husband were accused of treason (70).

Jerome Klinkowitz explains the vanished frontier as the cultural frontier between the blacks and the whites and the economic crisis. According to him, the old values of America represented a country in which the whites are superior and rich while the coloured were lower. Since the abolition of slavery then the economic crisis, many Americans had to live equally with their former servants and were obliged to change their approach to American culture. Klinkowitz went to suggest the necessity of a new American Dream with a new definition, which would drive the people to think of each other as equals and would teach the rich people who had lost their wealths that life could be experienced differently (Klikowitz, *Kurt Vonnegut* 62).

David Simmons describes the 1960s novel as "strongly humanist and politically engaged" in form (1), and must be read with regard to that. It is considered as a different type of novel as it is said to have the task of representing "the disconnection or alienation that has occurred between the individual and society" (2). He comments on the character of the 1960s novel as helpless individuals who cannot stand in the face of the forces that control them and who manifest man's weakness in such situations. They are "pitiable victims whom the reader is able to empathize with, but not admire" (2). Such characters are fashioned in an absurdist tendency, similar to Kafka's, in which they show "arrest, guilt, self-victimization, alienation, and the inability to use freedom positively and creatively." (Weinberg qtd. in Simmons 2).

When Ihab Hassan speaks of the post-war fiction, he contends that it tends to act against the rational thinking, which cherishes diversity, the latter is considered by the rational thinking as a form of disorder (Hassan 3). The attempt to regain order in the literary text of the post-war fiction is better conducted by the anti-hero figure. Such character is presented as a failure. They are "incompetent, unlucky, tactless, clumsy" cack handed, stupid, buffoonish" (Cuddon 41). Ihab Hassan gives a little more consideration to the anti-hero, not depicting them in all the previous terms of failure as Cuddon does. They are a character who would find themselves in dualism here they have to choose between being the good or the bad person. This character has to situate themselves between different psychopathic extremes. It can vary from

a certain Nihilism to self-sacrifice (Hassan 3). The Anti-hero seeks to re-instigate values that they think will restore good faith in society (Hassan 4).

Vonnegut's dystopian novel fits perfectly Simmons' description of the 1960s post-war novel. Simmons himself uses Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* to illustrate his approach to such fiction. The novels in hand, *Cat's Cradle¸Sirens,* and *Slapstick* embody the function of the 1960s novel as a text that highlight man's struggle against higher forces and his failure in regaining control. All his protagonists might not cover the characteristics of Cuddon's approach to the anti-hero, although they do show many of them. Wilbur and Eliza in *Slapstick* for example are limited and stupid when they are separated but become geniuses when they are together. Just like the description of Ihab Hassan, they naively seek to find the right way of behaving, one that would make people around them happy, yet they are faced by repression.

The two characters choose different paths after they are separated but remain within the anti-hero classification. Wilbur becomes president of America and attempts to restore the values of humanism and mutual love in society to reduce loneliness (*Lonesome no More!*). In doing so, he gives value to his society just like Hassan explained in the function of the anti-hero previously stated, which is to re-instigate good values in his environment. Throughout the narrative Wilbur remains a clumsy character who would still take bad decisions and ridicule himself. As a president, he is confronted by Chinese experiments with gravity which make him and other people around crawl on four rather than walk, Manhattan is hit by a deadly virus which turns out to be microscopic chinese that humanbeings were breathing, and finally faces bankruptcy because of the isolation of the island of Manhattan. Wilbur is unwillingly ridiculed and reduced to a clumsy president, a character who in the midst of chaos attempts to give meaning to his life through his will to spread happiness in society using the extended family concept.

Eliza chooses a different path as an anti-hero. She lives in her anger against her brother and parents and develops a violent attitude. She chooses the psychopathic extreme of the character. She somehow tends to self-sacrifice yet not for her society.

Eliza leads her own life, independently from her family, trying to live her life to the utmost. She uses her money to buy a football team then appears in public wearing their shirt to show her support to the team. She also shares important theories about gravity with the Chinese and is granted a trip to planet Mars where she dies.

After her death, Eliza reconnects with Wilbur through a machine that allows the living to speak to the dead. After her death, Eliza sounds more Nihilist. She seems to carry less hate and anger towards her brother and less care about life in general, saying that she felt "like being dead" and comments on the afterlife stating: "this is Eternity here. This is forever! Where you are now is just nothing in terms of time! It's a joke! Blow your brains out as quick as you can" (235). The two poles of Eliza first as an angry character then as a Nihilist reflect her human, savage side. Eliza has not been affected by social norms and has not learnt to live like the society she was supposed to belong to. She was isolated by the same society and built her own character and approach to life. The latter was an approach where she was an idealist, only wishing to be honest and to improve life quality for human beings.

Other forms of anti-heros are manifested in loner/sufferer characters in *Cat's Cradle*, being unanimously victims and subjects of modern thought, more precisely, the rational thinking. These are the scientist figure, Felix Hoenikker as loner, then his children, particularly Newt Hoenikker as well as Jonah the narrator sufferers.

2.5.1 The Loner and the Sufferer's Quest for Meaning in *Cat's Cradle*

In *Cat's Cradle*, all the characters are in an unending loop that takes them nowhere. They are in a constant search for the meaning of life and try to place it in different things that seem to make meaning. Their hopeless attempts at finding alternatives stem from the need to find something to stick to. At the end, most of the characters are aware that they are lying to themselves, yet, without these lies, they are lost. The title of the novel itself is a reference to this meaningless, and endless, loop they are stuck into. The cat's cradle is a game with strings that are tightened around the player's fingers in an arbitrary way, and which includes no cat, nor any cradle.

The cat's cradle[25] refers to "the meaninglessness of it all" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 120) using Newt's words in the novel. Though the novel refers to different themes including war, government control of scientific inventions, but most importantly, the inability to control fate. The loner and sufferer are cases in the novel that make up its plot. Most characters split between these two archetypes.

2.5.1.1 Felix Hoenikker, the Loner

In *Cat's Cradle*, Felix Hoenikker, the scientist figure, father of the atomic bomb and inventor of Ice-nine which brought the end of the world, is described as a loner by Kevin Alexander Boon. Boon argues that the hero in the post-nuclear age is often a loner and their life is not better, nor improved, due to science. He describes the heroes of the post-nuclear science fiction as personification of Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism. Indeed, the post-war science fiction reflects existentialist thoughts very often, in the heroes' reactions to the world, their behaviours, and their resolutions. Boon describes these characters as follows:

> They possess no innate goodness. They serve no larger purpose. They have nothing but their own subjective judgement to guide them through a seemingly malicious and indeterminate universe… they are the sole determinant of the value of their own actions because whatever value their actions hold is only valuable as an assertion of self (Boon 19)

Such characters in a post-nuclear science fiction narrative can be represented in different personalities. They can be identified in Vonnegut's works as victims of their own world.

Boon considers Dr Hoenikker in *Cat's Cradle* as someone that responds to the characteristics of the post-nuclear hero in the sense that he is a loner, he has no sense of religion or morals (Boon 20). He does not seem to have any particular purpose in life nor any belief by which he gives meaning to life around him. He does not care

[25] The game

about what happens to his own children, nor about the consequences of his inventions, which fulfills the first criteria, that he has no inner goodness.

Felix is a loner because of science. He is influenced by the indifference of the "laws of physics" (Booker 20), and fails to see that human lives are also an important matter. He is the origin of the confusion of the game in his son's mind, who turns out to be devastated by his father. Dr Hoenikker was a torture to his children, mostly because he was emotionally distantiated from them. Indeed, neither his children, nor his wife ever experienced the least expression of love or sentiment from him. His description in the novel leads to the conclusion that he is amoral, not able to think in terms of morality, sin, nor love.

Dr Hoenikker responds to the expression "God is love" saying "What is God? What is Love?" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 39) considering that none of the two is true enough to be touchable or scientifically proven. Likewise, after testing the Atomic bomb the first time, one of his colleagues says "Science has now known sin", to which Dr Hoenikker responds "what is sin?" (13). One might think these are metaphorical questions but considering this scientists limited thinking and centeredness on science, one realises that he only believes in things that are touchable and never had any understanding of abstract feelings and concepts, nor had any knowledge about their existence. His children's behavior in the novel becomes evidence of his absence in their lives.

One of the most striking memories of Newt about his father concerns the game and the only time Dr Hoenikker ever played with his son and showed any joy at all. It was the day on which the Atomic bomb was dropped on Japan (7). Dr Hoenikker was close to Newt's face, waved the strings in his face, uttering the words "cat's cradle" (9). Newt describes his face as monstrous during the game:

> 'His pores looked as big as craters on the moon. His ears and nostrils were stuffed with hair. Cigar smoke made him smell like the mouth of Hell. So close up, my father was the ugliest thing I had ever seen. I dream about it all the time.'. 'And then he sang. 'Rockabye catsy, in the

> tree top'; he sang, 'when the wind blows, the cray-dull will rock. If the bough breaks, the cray-dull will fall. Down will come craydull, catsy and all.'
>
> 'I burst into tears. I jumped up and I ran out of the house as fast as I could go (9)

The shock prevented Newt from enjoying the play-time with his father because all he could think about was his ugliness. In the midst of all this, the father was asking his son to see the cat "'See? See? See?' he asked. 'Cat's cradle. See the cat's cradle? See where the nice pussycat sleeps?" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 9), and amusingly muttering a cat's noise "Meow. Meow" (9), while there was not any. Newt's confusion turned into trauma, which led him to run away from his father in tears.

Dr Hoenikker and Newt are the loner and the sufferer in this novel. The first being source of pain for the other. The description of Dr Hoenikker leads to the conclusion that he is an absent-minded scientist. He had never felt the least regret about the victims his bomb might have caused, while other characters in the novel who were not directly related to the creation of the bomb felt embittered about taking part in government projects. He considered the bomb as a new revelation for science that had to be celebrated and could not even relate to the word "sin" (13).

Dr Hoenikker was not an evil scientist, nor is he a direct antagonist in the novel, a least not voluntarily. Although he is responsible on the destruction of the world and deaths of many innocents, his intention has never been an evil one. As an anti-hero in a postmodern novel, he is a loner rather than an antagonist. Unlike traditional literature which considers the existence of an evil-doer in the narrative, the loner is self-centred and often an introvert who is very short-sighted and unable to see the consequences of their deeds (PAGE).

Dr Hoenikker's absent-mindedness affected his behaviour with his surroundings too. He was considered as a symbolic figure for scientific progress so he was invited to deliver a school year opening speech in the local high school of his hometown (17). He simply did not appear on the day he was supposed to deliver his

speech, probably because he did not think it was an important thing to care about, being only interested in science. He was then replaced by his supervisor, Dr Breed, who actually did most of the humane tasks instead of him (17).

Dr Breed can be read as Dr Hoenikker's alter-ego. He was not able to master science as Dr Hoenikker did, yet, he completed the tasks that the latter was unsuccessful at. One of these was loving his wife. According to the inhabitants of Ilium, the city where Dr Hoenikker lived and worked, Dr Breed was in love with Emily, Dr Hoenikker's wife. Emily was Dr Breed's fiancée before Dr Hoenikker arrived in town. While Jonah was conducting an investigation about Dr Hoenikker in Ilium for his book, he learnt about gossips doubting Dr Breed to be the real father of the Hoenikker children (20).

In another incident, Hoenikker abandoned his car in the middle of a traffic jam in the city during a rainy day, engine running, and cigar lighted. He refused to go back and move away the car when he was called by the police, telling them to keep it. The police then asked his wife to come for the car, and she did. Yet, she was not used to driving it so she had an accident that hurt her pelvis, which led to her death after the birth of her youngest child, Newt (23). In this situation, Dr Hoenikker's status as a loner led to his wife's death. After this tragic event, he drew his daughter from school because he needed someone to cook for him at home.

Dr Hoenikker's amorality and irresponsibility led to a series of wrong decision and consequences. First his wife's death, then drawing his daughter from school and causing her failed social life, the murdering of thousands of innocents in Japan, and finally the invention of Ice-nine which ended life on earth. Boon's suggestion that death comes up as an inevitable end in the post-nuclear age science fiction is best represented in this character. Dr Hoenikker is not only short-sighted as to the consequences of his inventions, but seems to accept death as a logical and inescapable result.

2.5.1.2 Newt as the Sufferer

Newt is his father's victim. He is unable to understand life since the day he was exposed to the string game and asked to find the—inexistent—cat in it. As an adult, he attempted to project the dilemma into art. He makes a black painting that included meaningless scratches. He introduces the latter as the cat's cradle, the game that he could never understand (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 118). Yet, he is struck by the reaction of Julian Castle to his painting who considers it "garbage" (120).

Newt is the most emotionally intelligent of the Hoenikker children. Yet, he is physically deformed as he turns out to be a midget. Japanese critic Fumika Nagano considers Newt's body as a representation of the atrocities of the bomb and the irresponsible irrationality of his father;

> Newton's deformed body may appear to be the biological result of some nuclear irradiation, of the kind caused by the 1986 explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, but it is rather the product of his father's preoccupation with inventing atomic weapons and carelessness with regards to his children. (Nagano 127).

He is a victim of forces around him that control his life. He consequently grew up into a child who is in constant search for love in his letter to Jonah then in the way he lost his share of Ice-nine. Newt was easily seduced by a Russian spy who was also a midget like him, she stole Ice-nine from him and run away. Thus, because of him, the USSR (in addition to the United States as will be explained further) also had possession of Ice-nine.

The ending of the novel reveals that he is not the only sufferer. With a number of survivors including Mrs. Crosby, Frank Hooenikker, and Jonah the narrator, they are obliged to wait for their deaths. Jonah goes through a series of developments that shift him from a believer in fate to a disbeliever. He converts to a religion that is entirely based on lies but only does it when he is fully convinced that he cannot have control on things around him.

2.5.1.3 Jonah as a Sufferer

In the earliest parts of the novel, Jonah is shown as someone who is influenced by the glorification of science and is blinded to the consequences of its mindlessness. Later, as he matures, he shifts his interest to the opposing figure in the novel, Bokonon, who represents an alternative to civilization where it led to chaotis.

During the investigation about Dr Hoenikker, this latter is called "son of a bitch" by Marvin Breed, Dr Breed's brother (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle,* 48). Jonah interferes to defend Dr Hoenikker but unconsciously shows the degree of his fascination with scientists while saying:

> I suppose it's high treason and ungrateful and ignorant and backward and anti-intellectual to call a dead man as famous as Felix Hoenikker son of a bitch. I know all about how harmless and gentle and dreamy he was supposed to be, how he'd never hurt a fly, how he didn't care about money and power and fancy clothes and automobiles and things, how he wasn't like the rest of us, how he was better than the rest of us, how he was so innocent he was practically a Jesus (48)

When Jonah defended Dr Hoenikker describing him as "innocent" and "a Jesus" (48), he was already aware of the chaos of the Atomic bomb and of this man's carelessness about his children. Using such terms to refer to him shows that he is deeply influenced by the principle of modernity and the glorification of science which was so prevailing in the twentieth century.

When Jonah first read about San Lorenzo, he viewed it as a "banana republic" (56), with a poster showing a beautiful woman, bulldozers and buildings under construction to give the impression that this was a developing country and a great opportunity for investments. He was thinking sarcastically about San Lorenzo and its affairs in the beginning until he travels there for his interview with Julian Castle.

During the trip, he met most of the characters who would later become part of his life. He learnt about the history of the island he was visiting and about Crosby's

plans to manufacture bicycles. Mr and Mrs Crosby are what he referred to as Granfalloons using Bokononist terms, which is a term for fake and ridiculous people. Mrs Crosby is always happy to meet other Hoosiers[26] on the plane and wants them to call her mother. Her husband, Mr Crosby, was seeking to manufacture bicycles in San Lorenzo using a cheap labor because the talks about human rights in America started to annoy him.

Everything Jonah was told on that plane was either funny or ironic for him, except for the Mintons, whom he respected a lot. The Mintons were the U.S Ambassador and his wife. They were referred to as a duprass, a karass of two people. They are a group of people who share common goals and who cross paths to help each other achieve them. On the same flight Jonah met Newt and Angela Hoenikker, who were travelling to San Lorenzo to attend their brother's wedding with Mona, the beautiful woman on the magazine cover.

After his arrival to San Lorenzo, Jonah meets Frank and Papa Monzano, the president, then is proposed as president of the country instead of Frank, who admits his inability to communicate adequately with people. At this moment, Jonah's vision of San Lorenzo, Mona, and the Crosbies starts to be different. Although he takes it as a joke when he receives the proposition, the idea seems to mature in his mind. He is suddenly interested in Crosby's project and thinks to himself: "As chief executive of the island I wanted a bicycle factory very much. I developed sudden respect for what H. Lowe Crosby was and could do" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 167). Jonah becomes less amused by what he considered funny plans for San Lorenzo the moment he starts thinking about himself as president.

Jonah is most ambitious about becoming president because he is motivated by the idea of having Mona as wife. In San Lorenzo he learns that Mona is promised to the next president of the Island (145). She is the most beautiful woman in the island and adopted daughter of Papa Monzano. His character starts to show little difference

[26] Inhabitants or natives of Indianapolis

at this level, even if he was not aware of it. He starts learning about Bokononism as he learns two contradicting facts about it. The first one is that Bokonon was an outlaw in San Lorenzo and had to be captured by the president, the second is that he had a great popularity among the locals and Bokononism was the main religion in the country, although it was forbidden.

Jonah later learns that even Papa Monzano was a Bokononist. The status of Bokonon as an outlaw was just a scenario meant to keep people busy in the country and give them something to believe in because it was poor and life was empty.

> people didn't have to pay as much attention to the awful truth. As the living legend of the cruel tyrant in the city and the gentle holy man in the jungle grew, so, too, did the happiness of the people grow. They were all employed full time as actors in a play they understood, that any human being anywhere could understand and applaud." "So life became a work of art" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 124)

The same thing happens with Mona who turns out to be the reward for whoever accepts to be president. Both Mona and Bokonon are baits in San Lorenzo, what is philosophically referred to as bad faith in existentialist thought, or what comes in Bokononist language as Foma: harmless lies.

These foma, including Mona and Bokononism, become the shove that takes Jonah from his early character as someone who believes in civilization and in fate, to someone who seeks hope in a lie he is aware of. He discovers the *Books of Bokonon* which first tell him about their content that is untrue. Yet, despite the warning, their content is seductive enough for people to believe in. At this level, he starts to believe in the lies as a bad faith that he is aware of.

The lies in the *Books of Bokonon* are presented as "harmless untruths" (1). Unlike the modern life and civilization which seems to give them the illusion that they were living for something, Bokononism is a direct invitation to believe in lies, but in a soberer form. Jonah's development is also a reflection of the post-nuclear science fiction hero described earlier by Boon. They are a character who chooses

existentialist thought. Jonah chooses to treat a lie as a new principle for life and starts to believe in it because it provides comforts, merely, it avoids him to think of the meaninglessness of life.

2.5.2 Oedipal and Parent Issues in Vonnegut's Characters

The father-and-son conflicting relationship occurs very often in Vonnegut's works. At least one of his characters speaks of problems of distance and bad relationship with their fathers, yet very close relationships with mothers. Vonnegut the author never had the least conflict with his father. His relationship with him was very healthy and he even recalls good memories of him. He mentioned that his father lived as a sad man although he was funny (qtd. in Lundquist 6). This claim shows that his relationship with his father was rather good. Yet, his characters seem to have another experience in this regard.

The first character who struggles with his father is Newton Hoenikker (Newt) in *Cat's Cradle*. The analysis of loner-sufferer above has shown that not only Newt but all the Hoenikker children never received the least compassion, nor any care from their father. Newt was traumatized by his father's face that he judged as ugly, and in his letter he rejects the use of the term "illustrious" by Jonah to describe the Hoenikkers, because they were not. Frank, the middle child, seemed to have more serious problems with his father as well.

Unlike Newt, Frank does not master the art of talking. He has to ask someone else to be president of San Lorenzo instead of him because of his inability to communicate easily with people. As a young teenager, Frank was learning to carve wooden statues with different people in the city. He worked in their stores and learnt skills from them because he never had a family life and not the least contact with his father, the scientist. Frank went looking for idols in other people around the city to provide him the skills he could have learnt from a father. In San Lorenzo Frank is given an important position because he had science and because his father was a great scientist. He only accepted the position for his personal benefit, as he did not inherit

any of the qualities he was valued for. Angela was also affected by her father's yet was rather loving to him. She had to a certain extent known her father a little more than the others and had more affection for him.

The conflict can be read as a metaphor for the struggle of the individual in society against power. The three novels under discussion reflect problems with authority and chaos. Vonnegut represents the common American's struggle against the system and the rules he cannot control in the father figure, since this is the highest role of authority in a household.

In *Slapstick* the issue of the father is shared by both protagonists. In fact, they suffer abandonment by both parents and not just from the father. Abandonment is well reflected on their lives as adults. Eliza takes a revengeful attitude towards her family members because she was isolated and considered mentally ill then totally forgotten. Wilbur was rather lucky compared to her, as his ability to write and read secured him a safe place with his parents. The thing with Wilbur and Eliza is that they function as one genius when their heads are put together. So regardless of their independent personalities when they are separate, these two have another personality when they are close.

The character that Wilbur and Eliza build when they are together is grotesque and surreal. They become endowed with a huge power both physical and intellectual. This genius is a reaction to their abandonment and their devaluation by their surroundings. If the parents represented power in the novel and the siblings represented the common individual, then the person they become when they are together is the embodiment of their rebellion against an oppressive system that marginalized them in an Oedipal conflict.

Deleuze and Guattari relate the conflict between individual and state to the Oedipus mechanism in a family. They explain Oedipus as the "figure of the daddy-mommy-me triangle" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 51). They refer the submission of the individual to social forces and power to the submissiveness of the

parent to such forces and thus blame the parent for not trying to rebel or figure another mode of living to avoid the child an automatic docility[27].

Oedipus is the "figurehead of imperialism, 'colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony'" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* xx). The Oedipus becomes a tool of power that obliges the individual to live within a set of boundaries in a closed system. When Wilbur and Eliza are voluntarily abandoned in the mansion by their parents they experience both the result of a mind controlled by the system (in this case the parents whose conception of life will only tolerate handsome babies), and their freedom in which they can, using Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "scramble the codes" (xxi).

Wilbur and Eliza turn into anti-oedipal subjects that are able to stand against the system and build their own, sometimes queer, universe. Deleuze and Guattari content:

> The first task of the revolutionary, ... is to learn from the psychotic how to shake off the Oedipal yoke and the effects of power, in order to initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs. Such a politics dissolves the mystifications of power through the kindling, on all levels, of anti-oedipal forces—the schizzes-flows—forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions: *orphans* (no daddy-mommy-me), *atheists* (no beliefs), and *nomads* (no habits, no territories). (xxi)

The siblings live a life of nomads and orphans for having no territory to identify with through their childhood nor a family triangle to keep them under control. The convistion of their surroundings of their inability to understand language throws them in a territory of their own making where they are rebellious and are free to break the codes both of language and behaviour. Deleuze and Guattari say that the revolutionary can dismiss the pressure of the Oedipal control and thus "initiate a

[27] See 1.6.2 Politicization in Chapter 1

radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs", in this case desire refers to the course of nature as opposed to structured systems.

Wilbur and Eliza form a single genius when they put their heads together and create their own system, a territory of their own. They defy the common beliefs of their society when they develop a secret life. Indeed, they were victims of a society that judged them upon appearances. Their parents were handsome young people who were first encouraged to get rid of the children. The twins were even compared to crocodiles in an attempt to convince the parents to give them up. The parents' yearly visits to the mansion were a burden on both parents who never tried to hide it. Later when Wilbur and Eliza reveal their truth to their parents and show their intelligence, they are again judged according to social norms they had never learnt nor understood. Their private world was underestimated and devalued though regardless of the fact that they had to teach themselves everything they discovered about life on their own.

The twins initiate a new approach to life in America. It starts as an idea then develops to become the product of an anti-oedipal system where the triangular authority has not been exercised. When Wilbur is taken home by his parents while Eliza is isolated, he becomes subject to the triangular control and submits to the system. Eliza, being still treated as an orphan, is very different from him. She remains in her unstructured thinking and engages in scientific experiments and discoveries that make China the most powerful country in the world, besides, Eliza gets to travel to Mars, although she dies there. Wilbur's submission to the system does not do him any good. He becomes rich, enjoying his parents' wealth, and leads a traditionally successful life. Apart from the extended family project which was the object of a reflection of Wilbur and Eliza before his oedipalization[28], all his other plans for America lead it to failure.

Wilbur is visited by a small Chinese representative who takes pictures of Wilbur and Eliza's theories on Gravity, which Wilbur did not believe in. After the

[28] Term used by Deleuze and Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus* xx)

visit, Eliza dies on Mars and bizarre jolts start to hit the island of Manhattan where gravity becomes heavy and people are obliged to crawl on four to move because they cannot stand on their feet anymore. Wilbur doubts that these jolts are caused by Chinese experiments with gravity but he is never able to find out the truth. However, plans that he recognizes as his sisters during their isolation years, were applied in China and led to its prosperity. Deleuze and Guattari argue "this internalization of man by man, this 'oedipization' creates a new meaning for suffesring... and new tone for life; the depressive tone" (xx).

The twins were evaluated by Dr Cordiner, a psychologist who approaches them with pre-conceived ideas about rich children and a particular dislike for them. She tries by all means to prove that the twins were imposters rather than attempting to study their mental development. She finally decides that Wilbur was sane but with limited intelligence, while Eliza was mentally retarded because of her inability to write. Her only criterion in taking such a decision was their ability to read and write. During their isolation Wilbur had the task of reading to Eliza while she took the task of thinking and understanding. She was considerably more intelligent than him but the psychologist failed to notice her abilities. The struggle of the sublings is not merely against a totalitarian system but against a society that is built on appearances.

2.5.3 Anti-Oedipus and Anti-Hero Figures in *Sirens of Titan*

In *Sirens* Constant leads an extravagant life in which women and liquor are the centre of his interest. He assigns the affairs of his companies to lawyers and managers who run everything for him. He inherits the wealth from his father with whom he had almost no interaction. The issue of the father's absence is reflected when Constant is drunk and speaks of his unhappy childhood. He complains that his father never threw a ball to him and that there has never been there any (*Sirens* 61). This latter was the origin of Constant's large wealth, yet he had more love and respect to his mother, who was a prostitute, rather than the father.

When Constant's life turns to Unk and his memory is erased, he discovers that he has a child, Chrono, albeit having no memory of how he was conceived. Unk tries by all means to be a good and loving father even though he does not remember his fatherless childhood. He is told that he was a bad person in his earlier life, after his memories are erased, so he tries to provide the necessary care to his family.

In his will to rebel against the oppressive anonymous government that controlled him on Mars, Unk tries to meet his son to provide the love and care he thought his child needed. Yet, he is surprised by a rebellious young boy who never cared about knowing his father and was not interested in making the least activity with him. Chrono found it awkward that his father revealed himself and wanted to take him away and "live" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 146), while he was absent for so long. The absence had taught Chrono to live without even expecting a father to come. He ends up telling him to "go to hell" (147), which makes Unk feel heart-broken. If the father figure represented an oedipal force between the characters and the representatives of power in their environments, then Chrono was the anti-oedipus.

Chrono was careless about such power be it from the father or from the government, as if the absence of the first also meant the absence of the fear of the second. Chrono had never "received any instructions, had never seen an example in life, that would make him think a father was of any importance. On Mars, the word was emotionally meaningless (146). Unk felt sad at this moment because he felt a double rejection that was inexplicable to him:

> 'You'd tell your own father to go to hell?' murmured Unk. The question echoed back through Unk's emptied memory to an untouched corner where bits of his own strange childhood still lived. His own strange childhood had been spent in daydreams of at last seeing and loving a father who did not want to see him (147).

The first rejection was mysterious due to his erased memory, and the rejection by his son gave him a low self-esteem for himself. Unk is confronted to resist the system

that he thought was enslaving him and still felt a moral responsiblity towards his child whom he had no knowledge of.

Both Chrono and Constant have a great valorization of their mothers, as the female figure the Oedipus builds a special bond with. Constant tells his audience in his fifty-two-day party that he loves his mother the way she was, and that "if she was a whore, then [he was] proud to be a son of a whore, if that's what a whore was" (61). Constant seemed to lead a spoiled life, spending his father's money carelessly as an implicit revenge for the father who had never tried to connect with him. He develops a rebellious attitude against anything disciplined while his father built his wealth because he was well disciplined and had a very simple and calculated lifestyle.

Later in the narration as Unk, he shows both rebellion against the imposed system and a wish to do things right. When his memory is erased he is unable to remember life on earth, his only reference for life is the military system he lives within in the infantry on Mars and the few things he is instructed when he wakes up in the hospital. These instructions depicted in the voice in the back of his head, the pain that strikes him whenever he tries to remember his past, and the military officials stand for a higher force that controls him, an oedipus form of authority. In the sense of Deleuzian rejection of the oedipus force, Unk decides to break the rule of that system and to lead his own life, away from the military base. He thus rebels not only against the system but also against those who accept to remain within such structured world, considering them as his only guides into figuring out how to behave.

He is also an anti-hero because through his life as Unk he feels helpless and unable to stand in face of the forces that control him, although he tries. The novel shows a dualism between him as individual and the forces military system as the only environment he has experienced. Whenever he starts to understand his environment he is sent to a new confusing setting where he feels lost again. Each time, Unk attempts to find the rational path in the midst of chaos. Even when he has his entire memory erased and is asked to strangle the red-head who was standing in front of him, he hesitates for a second and attempts to think about what he was asked to do,

at this moment Boaz provokes the pain in the back of Unk's head to prevent him from thinking and only applying rules.

Unk is thus an anti-hero. He is not stupid nor foolish like the definition of Cuddon indicates. He is more a self-martyr in the sense of Ihab Hassan who tries to restore values and recover the wellness of the lives of human beings. On Mars he cares about providing love to a son he had never met, then on earth, when treated like a messiah then as a sinner[29], he responds naively to every question he is asked and attempts to provide protection to Beatrice and Chrono. At the end of the novel Unk is still trying to find his friend Stony (the red-haired man he murdered after his return from hospital) which gives him some of the attitude of a mythical hero, who fights for a sacred mission until the end. Unk goes back to earth as Malachi Constant again, old, waits for a bus while it snows down to meet his friend Stony Stevenson whose death he is still unaware of. He is hypnotized by Salo in order not to feel the cold killing him, he thinks that he sees Beatrice, and Stony in a spaceship that has come to take him to paradise.

2.6 Conclusion

In Vonnegut's works, the post-nuclear science fiction character is often a victim of forces that affect them in one of two ways. They either become a short-sighted loner whose vision is limited and actions are irresponsible like Felix Honenikker. Or, a sufferer, or victim of the loner, who have to experience the consequences of somebody else's irresponsibility and deal with the threats of the end of life on earth. Such character can also be Malachi Constant who starts in life as a nihilist, often careless about how their life will end, but soon learns to take care of their surroundings and seek to provide love as the most important thing a human being can give. Vonnegut's characters share the dilemma of the lack of love in their lives, they often struggle with loneliness and abandonment as major problems.

[29] See chapter 3 page 150

He exposes all these issues in his novels as different issues of American individual and character. The introduction of dystopian aspects in his works such as chaos, political despotism, violated free will, and the return of the Messiah are metaphorical ways of depicting a dangerous future on the one hand but an attempt at showing how devastated the modern individual can be in the twentieth century. Vonnegut himself often considered that the writer should play the role of the "canary in the coal mine", who should sound the alarm bell when things go wrong. His dystopian metaphors and aspects of science fiction are but a trope to attract the attention of the readers, and politicians, to the dangers of the earth.

His works thus address a certain minority who feels marginalized and lonely in America. Using Deleuze and Guattari's model of minority literature including deterritorialization, defamiliarization, and experimentation in the postmodern text, Vonnegut's writings fulfill the function of a resistance literature written for, and by, a minority.

Chapter Three: Deterritorializations and Transgressions in *Sirens*, *Slapstick*, and *Cat's Cradle*

Chapter Three: Deterritorializations and Transgressions in *Sirens, Slapstick,* and *Cat's Cradle*

3.1 Introduction

Vonnegut is classified as a social scientist, the genius of "popular culture", and a "self acknowledged poisoner of the minds of youth" (Lundquist 2). He is popular for his non-conformist views regarding war and power as well as his good will towards human beings. He uses a very comic style that includes violence and even grotesque figures to represent themes of humanism (or its lack) in the modern world. He is described as that author who directed his energy to concentrate on problems that are "central to Americans in the last half of the twentieth-century" (Morse, "Bringing Chaos to Order" 395).

The novels under discussion include different forms of becoming that come up as reactions to human life and particularly, to chaos. *Slapstick* presents a new philosophy of family known as the extended artificial family, a form of transgression from the traditional conception of family to recover the true meaning of this word. *Sirens* on the other hand introduces a grotesque form of living in space then a religion that seeks to teach human beings to care about themselves. In the third novel, *Cat' Cradle*, Bokononism is the religion that provides hope and answers to people where chaos has become prevalent.

Deterritorialization and defamiliarization are transgressive acts that shift human relations and definition of the self from the closed systems in which they live to other becomings, made possible thanks to the collective assemblage of enunciation and the rhizomatic flow of multiplicities. The aforementioned concepts are all inter-related. Transgression is the act which marks the liberation of the self, the rhizome, assemblage, and the becoming are the tools that permit such a liberation. Science fiction as an estrangement is an ideal genre within which these concepts become possible and easy. Dystopian science fiction includes the political aspect of the text, it depicts possible future totalitarian systems. They are rhizomes because they are different and form an outer universe. They are acts of transgression by the authors that include both deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization of

the common human understanding of life on earth as well as subversive representations of actual systems, and a relocation of what the future could be like.

The works of Kurt Vonnegut include more or less most of the concepts that have been discussed previously. They are science fiction that is written not for the sake of entertainment but to voice human needs and affects that are often silenced. His plots feature characters who feel lost and who need love and care going through bizarre scientific and technological experiences. These characters are white middle class individuals who often struggle with issues of free will and assertion in a modern world that develops at a higher pace than the one they can afford to live in.

3.2 Vonnegut's Minorities and War in *Sirens and Cat's Cradle*

One important issue that is reflected in Vonnegut's major novels, and which relates to a society that is lacking care and good will, is war. The representation of war in this situation does not refer only to its pervasiveness on the human race in general, but it is also related to Vonnegut's life and the obligation of fighting against his will. Vonnegut's works are anti-war novels and they might have contributed in making this a distinguished literary genre. While explaining the motives driving him to write, he often said that he concerned himself with anti-war novels and that he wrote for the politicians, but since these people did not read him, he preferred to catch them while still young at college and, using his own words, "poison their minds with humanity" (Vonnegut qtd in Allen 123).

Vonnegut described the people who fought in the Second World War as children. All war characters are depicted as helpless, anxious, depressed, and feeling under-represented in their cultures, which makes them minorities. He took his own experience as a prisoner of war as well as other American soldiers' in making such a claim, he thought "The ones who hated war the most were the ones who had really fought" (Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five* 13). Vonnegut made his view very clear about the war which he plainly and directly criticized in a number of works. He often referred to war as an act of madness, like the case of the amoral scientist and military

men in *Cat's Cradle*. He often warned his own children against taking part in wars insisting that there is nothing good about it. He often attacked governments for their social irresponsibility in their race for armament, power, and oil (*The Connecticut Forum*).

In *Cat's Cradle,* Vonnegut revisits the bombing of Japan which is aligned with the destruction of the entire world in the novel. Dr. Hoenikker is presented as the father of the atomic bomb which destroyed Japan. He also invents an ice that freezes in room temperature, which is captured by government and military men and causes the end of life on earth. The novel is a denunciation of politicians who seek to use science for war and who lead science to commit "sin" as expressed in *Cat's Cradle* (13).

The novel *Slaughterhouse Five* explores the destruction of Dresden which Vonnegut witnessed as prisoner of war. He revisited these memories with anxiety, stating that he could never rewrite the firebombing of the city. These tragic events were put in a humouristic style that highlighted the hopelessness of the situation. He referred to the execution of a soldier for having stolen a teapot in the midst of destruction. He sheds light on the detail that this soldier was trialed and executed for his theft while the city was filled with dead bodies after the firebombing, as if the teapot had more value than all these souls (Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five* 7). Vonnegut ironically and desperately laughed about human insignificance in the modern age. What he actually mocked was in fact human worth which turned out to be equal to nothing during this war.

In *Slaughterhouse Five* Mary O'hare[30] attacks the author on the basis that he was trying to write a war-glorifying novel which would not tell the truth about it. Vonnegut made the title of the novel *The Children's Crusade* (16), for Mary who considered the soldiers who fought in war babies.

[30] The wife of Bernard V. O'hare, Vonnegut's friend in war.

This was not Mary's view alone, as in *Cat's Cradle* the same idea that the war was fought by children occurred again in the voice of Ambassador Minton (181). In his speech during a fictional celebration in the memory of war martyrs he speaks about the men who were sent to war and calls them children. In fact, in *Cat's Cradle* Vonnegut tells his opinion about war in the voice of ambassador Minton, who says: "when we remember wars, we should take off our clothes and paint ourselves blue and go on all four all day long and grunt like pigs, that would surely be more appropriate than noble oratory and shows of flags and well oiled guns" (*Cat's Cradle* 182).

In *Sirens* Vonnegut's war experience is parodied in the experience of Constant. Both Vonnegut and Constant are sent to war against their wills and both suffer the pains of fighting in a war they refuse (Wolfe 968). It was a war that ironically unified the inhabitants of the earth, which was the goal of Rumfoord. Yet in doing so, it destroyed the people who led the war and fought in total sincerity. The soldiers had their minds erased and were entirely submissive to the rules they were receiving. It was described by historians in the novel as a "society whose whole purpose was to destroy itself in uniting the peoples of Earth" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 125). The main message in this statement is that wars are lit and financed by people who would not fight in them (like Rumfoord), but would be fought by people who do not know why they are in them or what purposes they are serving (as the cases of Unk and Billy Pilgrim).

In the midst of the apocalypse of war, Unk has only one goal, which is to find his child Chrono and Beatrice. The information about the existence of Chrono and Beatrice was a hidden secret that Unk had saved for himself in a letter. The moment he starts his journey to find them he makes his first act of transgression away from the war-limited environment he was obliged to stay within. In this situation, the letter, the search for Chrono, and his wish to provide love to him are transgressions and de-territorializations of a system that is oppressive.

Vonnegut's characters often behave as if they are "prisoners" who are subjected to "incomprehensible forces in general, and to a social and economic structure which appears overbearing and unresponsive, also contributes to their sense of imprisonment" (Reeds qtd. in Lundquist 25). Their status in their social environments leads them to feel enchained all the time. He also depicts this emprisonment in oubliettes and narrow places that the protagonists often find themselves in to highlight this sense of incarceration.

The loneliness of the American individual is further emphasized by Vonnegut in his interviews, where he states that America is a "lonesome society that's been fragmented by the factory system" (qtd. in Freese, *The Clown of Armageddon* 407). James Lundquist posits that for Vonnegut, "American society is a lonesome one. He senses that longing for community, a longing that is frustrated by the shifting from house to house... that the economic system requires of so many americans" (13). His characters are thus searching for a sense of belonging and care; not merely for the absence of love in their lives but because of a sense of imprisonment. They are in constant search of identification because they belong to a marginalized social group.

3.3 The Quest for Love in the Modern World

The three novels *Cat's Cradle, Sirens,* and *Slapstick* display a certain lack of love that most of the characters suffer from, both protagonists and antagonists. It is realized that the lack of care and attention towards Vonnegut's characters is what leads them to their sad lives but also to their transgressions. In doing so, they learn how to create their own universes. The lack of love is a common issue among his characters and it is a theme he goes back to often.

Love is the general theme in *Slapstick,* but Vonnegut makes it a common theme in his other novels too. In *Sirens* the transformation of Constant from the totally indifferent, spoiled person he used to be, to the anxious man who struggles to give himself an identity teaches him that "a purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved" (313).

3.3.1 Unk's Quest for Love in Sirens

The lives of Beatrice and Constant in *Sirens* can be viewed from two perspectives. During their lives on earth they had never liked each other because of Rumfoord's prophesy. When they were sent to Titan on the other hand, they knew nothing about each other except for the few things that Rumfoord told them about their past lives on earth, yet they could love each other. Chrono never loved his father because his memory was not erased and he grew up to find no father around him. This means that love and hate are subject of exterior influence and that human beings tend to see things with more neutrality, maybe even love them, when they know little about them. Yet, the moment the least influence slips in, feelings are different. Seen from a different angle, life on earth is representative of evils and hate while life on Titan is rather quiet and peaceful. This can only mean that the true human self is innately good (as represented in the wilderness in Titan), but it is evil in society as it undergoes social influences.

Forms of love vary in the novel. Salo is a machine that is supposed to be senseless, yet he carries much love for Rumfoord and feels heartbroken at the end of the novel when Rumfoord ends their friendship. When he realized he was not going to see Rumfoord again as he disappeared in space, Salo dissembles itself to end its life as a consequence to Rumfoord's rejection. The purpose of the representation of love in the case of Salo is to argue for the idea that love must not be conditional and that it is something to give to anyone around because all human beings deserve it.

In *Slapstick*, Vonnegut depicts different forms of marginalization that his characters are subjected to, for the lack of love. The full title of the novel is *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More*! to denote the main problem with the society he depicts. He thus comes up with his own conception of love, in a defamiliarization of this word, because he thinks that the problem with it is how humans think it should be given and expressed.

3.3.2 Defamiliarization of Love in *Slapstick*

Defamiliarization is presented as an estrangement in the work of art, which makes it different from the real world. Vonnegut defamiliarizes his entire life experience by aesthecizing it into a "grotesque, situational poetry" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 1). He thus admits writing a sort of "film comed[y]", which expresses what life "feels like" for him (1). By making such a claim in his prologue to the novel, he created a direct link between his real life and the content of the novel, still, highlighting its artificiality. The defamiliarizing effect falls in the fact that the depicted universe of the novel is artificial and fictional, but also reflects the author's aspirations and hopes about the life he wished he had.

Vonnegut compared *Slapstick, or Lonesome No More* to Laurel and Hardy's films in their lack of love but emphasis on comedy (2). Thus, although this is a novel about love, which is depicted in forms that are unconventional, merely as a joke. Yet, he ends his prologue stating that what is truly important to speak about is actually "bargaining in good faith with destiny" (2), the purpose of which is to highlight that human life is not always a matter of choices and that man is trapped in his fate.

Vonnegut often reflected his sad feelings about love and the lack of love in America as well as the lack of good faith and humanism. He was a philanthropist, a humourist who loved human beings and who felt sad and anxious about them through their unconsciousness. He could be viewed as a postmodern Prometheus, just like Frankenstein being Shelley's Modern Prometheus. In his works he often tried to depict love in its different shapes and places where it could be.

Through his different works, he often shed light on the status of Americans during and after the Second World War as having trouble finding love around them. In his Americas, individuals are in constant search for identity and for happiness. Through Ambassador Minton and his wife, Vonnegut creates a link between Americans' emotional dissatisfaction and America's policy, showing that it might be the reason why they are rejected everywhere. They have a deep longing for love. Not

only romantic love seems to be lacking in their lives but humanist love too, which he says, they are in constant search for. His deterritorialization of the forms of love is made possible by the use of irony and the absurd, ridiculous images of self-deluded heroes, protagonists who attempt to give (and sometimes take) love in foolish ways.

Still within the prologue of the novel *Slapstick*, Vonnegut describes his love of dogs and his love of humans as equal. By making this analogy, he not only shows the insignificance of human relationships and their lack of love in the modern age on the one side, but also oversimplifies and minimizes this feeling, taking it thus out of its common affectionate context. In most of his works, he tends to simplify and make insignificant feelings, affects, and incidents that are usually pervasive for the human life.

Vonnegut's minimization of these affects is purposeful. One might think that he has no value or respect for human affects by ridiculing them in his fiction as such. He is a philanthropist whose love for human beings pushes him to depict such affects as wane and dull in the modern world, as a result of the deterioration of the status of man in the twentieth century.

The point in depicting important affects as such is to de-contenxtualize them from the common understanding, but this de-contextualization is only possible in the literary work, having two main objectives. On the one side, the author seeks to show the risk of normalizing banality and ridicule as a result of human carelessness. On the other side, he seeks to attract attention to the novel's artificiality by staging comic depictions of such affects. Humour participates in the production of the work of art which is different from the habitual or using Sheklovskij's word, the "automatized" real (qtd in Crawford 214). Through humour, death and love are taken out of their automatized real contexts, and are depicted as ridiculous and mundane.

Vonnegut defines love as "common decency" and "treat[ing] somebody well for a while" in describing his love to other people around him (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 2). Though he is known for his love of human beings and his anxiety about them, his

plain descriptions of love are devoid of attachment. He uses words that are small and trivial, through which he displaces the pervasiveness of the feeling. He closes the paragraphs by a childish utterance "hi ho" (23), having no meaning, or probably signifying the dog's bark. This adds to the absurdity of the situation.

Vonnegut often uses utterances signifying absurdity as in *Slaughterhouse Five,* where a genocide is described. The entire city of Dresden is burnt and human bodies are dragged by the surviving soldiers. In the midst of destruction and chaos, a soldier is sued then murdered for stealing a teapot (Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five* 6). Death is ridiculed in the novel and becomes a habitual thing to do, he signified (and emphasized) the absurdity of the situation using animal responses saying: "And what do the birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like 'Poo-tee-weet?'" (24), which is another meaningless utterance to highlight the absurdity of the situation.

The meaning conveyed is "the meaninglessness of it all" (words that have been put directly and clearly in *Cat's Cradle* (120), that is, of what modern life has become. These are common defamiliarizations of the most important affects and incidents of life from Vonnegut, rendered unimportant and trivial, thus losing their meanings, yet still transmitting a different perception about them to the reader, the idea that human life and relations are witnessing loss and breakdown.

The novel includes some autobiographical instances which refer to the author's life outside the literary work. Vonnegut referred to his relationship with his brother in the novel and considered them both as belonging to "artificial extended families" '(Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 5), composed of people who were similar to each of them in brains and function, rather than personality. It is somehow awkward that Vonnegut would consider himself as belonging to an extended family based on similarities of job (or brain functioning), even before he begins the narration of his novel. The idea of the extended family based on brain and function is very similar to that of the Granfalloon which he criticizes harshly in *Cat's Cradle* (Vonnegut, *Cat's*

Cradle 66). Both gather people and consider them as belonging to the same group, not based on interest or common intentions, but based on what they do in their daily lives. The Granfalloon is almost the same concept but it concerns ridiculous people who give meaning to things like belonging, the extended family in Vonnegut's real life is more concerned with what he does, or his position in life.

3.3.2.1 Grotesque Assemblages as Social Transgression in *Slapstick*

Robert Scholes refers to science fiction writing as "Structural Fabulation", in a book under the same title (qtd. in Roberts 10). He argues that the particularity of the SF text is in its metaphorical strains. What the earlier definitions referred to as estrangement and cognition, or the depiction of different worlds, is referred to by Scholes as a Fabulation. The Fabulation is a fiction that illustrates a world that is entirely different and "discontinuous" from the usual but which challenges the real world "in a cognitive way", as defined by Scholes (qtd. in Roberts 10). Yet, just like the estrangement, the fabulation includes all the forms of fantasy without sticking to science fiction.

The disruption of the writing tradition is a sign of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari called minor literature. The first characteristic is that of language deterritorializaion. Minor literature does not refer to pre-established literature of a recognized minority but concerns the act of writing against the grain within a context controlled by a great literature that is also subversive. Writing in the language of great literature reveals itself as an inevitable, but also logical, step to voice new experiences based on difference, if it is written in the language of the oppressor (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 18).

The author in a minority group embraces their status as a nomad by "stealing the baby from its crib" (17), as a reference to the language, and raise it as a nomad, away from the influence of power, yielding into its deterritorialization independently from its ideologically fashioned content. Language deterritorialization allows the reappropriation of language from the control of the oppressor to the side of the

subject, who marks their existence through difference. The factor of language marks the territoriality of the speaker even if the topic is not political.

The story line of *Slapstick* follows more or less the same rule. Just like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic book, it can be read from any part and in any order. A book is an Assemblage of *plateaus*, composed of different territories that escape closure and that continue to spring into new ones. The two authors argue "in a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification." (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 3). The book opens up the possibility to create different environments, contexts, and *lines of flight*[31] that escape sameness.

Slapstick begins with a prologue from Vonnegut's life in which he mentions that it is the closest he gets to writing an auto-biography. The novel, according to its prologue, is a representation of Vonnegut and his sister, depicted in the characters of Wilbur Rockefeller and Eliza Mellon Swain. Vonnegut interferes in the prologue to describe the novel saying "It depicts myself and my beautiful sister as monsters, and so on" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 18). He speaks of his experience with love, showing that it has never taken a great part of his life, as he argues;

> I find it natural to discuss life without ever mentioning love. It does not seem important to me. What does seem important? Bargaining in good faith with destiny. I have had some experiences with love, or think I have, anyway, although the ones I have liked best could easily be described as "common decency." I treated somebody well for a little while, or maybe even for a tremendously long time, and that person treated me well in turn. Love need not have had anything to do with it (18)

He sees it more accurate to speak of a common decency as it includes more care and good will expressed from a person to another, what he rather refers to as "bargaining in good faith with destiny", this motto is his philosophy of good will. Love in its

[31] Italics for emphasis

universal sense is presented in the novel as a hypocrisy. The novel is about loneliness and ironically proposes a plan to end it in America.

The plot begins to unfold into different lines of flight that become hard to catch as the events develop. It is far from a conventional plot, or a combination of plots, that can be read at any level and would still make sense. Vonnegut starts by mourning his dead sister and interferes at the end to finish the story of his speaker, whom he identifies with raising the question "Who is he really? I guess he is myself—experimenting with being old" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 20). The intrusion of the author as narrator at the end adds to the complexity of the narration as it becomes conscious of its artificiality. From the very beginning the reader is aware that the work they have in hand is a product of imagination, a work of fiction.

This way of writing is the third characteristic of Deleuze and Guattari called Minor literature in *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature* (17). The disruption of the traditional writing system is a transgression in itself which they refer to as the collective value. It is the shift to a more creative, and different, writing tradition to de-centre the grand narratives and shed light on new experiences of commonly silenced groups (18). In the collective value, the author's concerns or stories represent a common concern for the group the author belongs to, and are "necessarily political" for their status as marginal (17).

Vonnegut defamiliarizes the ideas of love and conspiracy through the characters of Wilbur and Eliza. They are two humans who have been raised as mental retards and thus never received anything about human relations. They developed their own understanding of human relations based on how they were treated by their surroundings (unaware that they were treated like retards) or from the books they have been reading.

The two siblings grow up together as one. Their union, *as one*, is not a simple simile but a fact. When Wilbur and Eliza touch and bring their heads close to each other, they think as one. They become highly intelligent and powerful. They "used bodily contact only in order to increase the intimacy of [their] brains. Thus did [they]

give birth to a single genius, which died as quickly as [they] were parted, which was reborn the moment [they] got together again" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 50). Wilbur goes on to describe this phenomenon "...Were Eliza and I really a genius, when we thought as one? I have to say yes, especially in view of the fact that we had no instructors. And I am not boasting when I say so, for I am only half of that fine mind" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 50). The miraculous intelligence of the two siblings when they touch is a result of their isolation during their entire childhood. The two children started to share secrets at a young age and were amused by the complicity of sharing these secrets and playing games on their doctor and servants.

By cultivating their own idea of what the social life should be like, Wilbur and Eliza created a new line of difference. They transgressed the usual lines of stratification that are built by society by creating their own definitions of what society wants. Their own understanding led them to extract their own conclusions, they concluded: "All the information we received about the planet we were on indicated that idiots were lovely things to be. So we cultivated idiocy" (31). Vonnegut made lines of multiplicity and destratifications in this novel that continue to develop through the narrative and interpretations.

Wilbur and Eliza build their own world in which they reterritorialize their rejection from the outside world into an innocent yet incestuous universe of their own. As a matter of fact, even the single genius they form together is a new territory formed as a result of their experimentation with freedom. Wilbur considers that they were "halves of that genius, which was the most important individual in [their] lives, but which [they] never named" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 50). They replaced words with meaningless babbling; they rolled on the floor, always making the others believe they were unaware of the world around them.

The two siblings made their own system of thought, their own territory, or *Plateau* in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, in which they shared tasks. They often hid in the library where Wilbur used to read to Eliza;

> I did all the reading. And it seems to me now that there is not a single book published in an Indo-European language before the First World War that I have not read aloud. But it was Eliza who did the memorizing, and who told me what we had to learn next. And it was Eliza who could put seemingly unrelated ideas together in order to get a new one. It was Eliza who juxtaposed (50).

He did the reading while she did most of the thinking. Together they wrote a critique of the American constitution in which they consider that all human beings equally deserve family love without any restrictions and elaborate the concept of the artificial extended family.

3.3.2.2 Lines of Flights and Reterritorializations in *Slapstick*

The question of love and family relations occurs in many works by Vonnegut depicted in white American individuals or groups struggling to find love around them. His protagonists are often helpless and lonely, often searching for love or trying to give it. They reject the social structures they belong to and live by their own philosophies; like Eliot Rosewater in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five*, and Wilbur and Eliza, among many others. These protagonists create their own alternate universes, through their transgressive lines of flight.

In *Slapstick* Vonnegut grieved the tenuity of human relations, and how easily humans are replaced when they are lost, he calls them "interchangeable parts in the American machine" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 7). Family in the concept of the American machine is not centered on biological relations only but also on the basis of field of activity. Thus, in the prologue, Vonnegut feels that he belongs to artificial extended families of people who share the same interests. He can find brothers everywhere in America (other writers), while his biological brother Bernard is the brother of all American scientists.

The idea of the "interchangeable parts of the American machine" begins in the extension of the Artificial family based on activity in society. This machine has the

function of providing love, or at least "common decency" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 11). The more—artificial—relatives a human being can get, the more love they can receive. The dislocation of love in the prologue reduces it to "common decency", which Vonnegut thinks is the closest he has ever been to anything like love. This displacement is an aesthecizing of the author's life experience into "grotesque situational poetry" (11). Through this displacement, he creates a direct link between his life and the novel and puts to light the fictionalization of the real world.

Assemblages make literature a machine that produces a world yet-to-come. It is a machine that deterritorializes, then reterritorializes meaning, into worlds which marginal groups can identify through acts of transgression which allow them to become a minor literature. *Slapstick* presents acts of transgression when it rejects the traditional plot for a more complex and non-linear one.

When Wilbur and Eliza instigate their own values due to their loneliness they emphasize their status as minoritarian. In re-writing their own draft of the constitution they suggest the idea of the artificial families, which ensures the right of family for each individual, even if they are insane (40). They deterritorialize the traditional sense of family because they felt insecure with it. The traditional family abandoned them and provided them no love, nor any sense of care. The idea of the new middle names was inspired from their doctor, Dr Mott, who was a mysterious man, often lonesome too, and who had changed his name. Through the artificial family they established a new stratum which later becomes a nation-wide system. Their reterritorialization of the sense of family resulted into much happiness spread around the country.

The fact that so many people loved the idea of the extended family, and identified with it, shows that there was indeed a group in America in this era (and probably today too) who feel marginal. Such group, just like Wilbur, Eliza, and the Americans who loved the idea of the Extended family, need more people like them to be around, without being judged based on their wealth or physical appearance.

> 'An ideal extended family', Eliza and I had written so long ago, 'should give proportional representation to all sorts of Americans, according to

> their numbers. The creation of ten thousand such families, say, would provide America with ten thousand parliaments, so to speak, which would discuss sincerely and expertly what only a few hypocrites now discuss with passion, which is the welfare of all mankind (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 159)

By the spread of the artificial families in America a series of displacements and new lines of flight spreads around the country too and goes out of control. Family clubs are created, family newspapers, and even new sub-families based on the numbers assigned to everyone.

Just like Deleuze and Guattari's theory of reterritorialization indicates that the assemblages lead towards new territories that are born out of no specific system. They meet arbitrarily and lead to each other in a new body without precusor, Wilbur's extended families evolve spontaneously to led to new definitions of family, then to new territories he did not think of. The people with the same—artificial—middle names formed the casual families that Wilbur's policy had aimed for. But such families have also led to the birth of restricted clubs for people having the same numbers in their middle names. Such was a new territory that Wilbur (as a form of power in the second part of the novel) did not control. He reports having tried to access one of these clubs to which he did not belong to;

> And I certainly got a taste of my own medicine when I asked a guard on the door of the Manhattan Thirteen Club if I could come in ... 'All due respect, Mr. President,'...'but are you a Thirteen, sir?', 'No,' I said. 'You know I'm not.', 'Then I must say to you, sir,' ... 'what I have to say to you. With all possible respect, sir:' ... 'Why don't you take a flying fuck at a rolling doughnut? Why don't you take a flying fuck at the moooooooooooon?', I was in ecstasy (185)

Wilbur created a sense of chaos in his society by granting the freedom of flow to his arbitrarily-made families. Such chaos led to the birth of territories that made their own order. However chaotic they may seem, these territories were transgressions.

The kind of universe created by Wilbur and Eliza and later in Wilbur's America testifies the presence of an American society or at least a group who feel marginalized and barely able to find their true places in their society. Vonnegut identifies with the main character and his sister, and says "THIS IS THE CLOSEST I will ever come to writing an autobiography" (1). Although it is ironically a biography, the things he says about love, and family relations are more truthful. He uses Assemblages which allow the creation of new affects and new conceptions of family and care. Family is artificial but is extended. Wilbur travels to Indiana with his cook to leave him with his artificial family and they all seem to care about him even if they had never met him before. In terms of acts of presence and absence, it is the absence of good will and care that led to the rise of this new trend.

Presence and absence in the conception of Jacques Derrida denote the centralizing and and marginalization of concepts in favour of others. The absence denotes an always yet-to-come entity that presence ignores and deliberately alienates. Presence is thus the imposed system, or that what had been agreed upon. Absence is that which is possible to appear.

Unconditional love and care are presented as absences because they are alienated by social dogmas and appearances. Wilbur and Eliza's parents trade their love for a social obsession with beauty. Forms of love in the novel are replaced by what the author in the beginning expresses as common decency. The absence of a truthful will to do good pushes Wilbur and Eliza to spread a notion of care that is more than the general view of love, which represents a presence, but different froms of care which vary from one territory to another, thus keeping it as a goal always yet-to-come.

One more form of re-territorialization in the novel is the invention of a new religion as part of the dystopian universe. As previously stated, one of the elements of the dystopian universe is the presence of a religion that often prophesies doom and the end of the world. Vonnegut's novels often include this reference to religion, albeit not always referring to doom, it is presented as an escape when human beings no

longer understand, nor control, their universe. In *Slapstick*, Wilbur makes a small reference to a religion that was invented by an artificial family. It is the "The Church of Jesus Christ the Kidnapped" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 185). It is a free territory that has sprang from the territories of the artificial families. It is a line of flight leading to a new understanding of religion and of man's role. This latter gives meaning to human life by making them search for the Christ who is believed to have returned to earth but is kidnapped by the sources of evil (185).

Compared to Vonnegut's other novel, *Slapstick* does not focus on religion that much. His other works *Sirens* and *Cat's Cradle* take it as a focal point to mock human dependance on discourses and their willingness to be guided in life rather than falling in the obligation of making their own choices. He somehow "sets religion in its organized and institutionalized form as his main target of criticism" (Salehi 68). In Vonnegut's dystopian universes, religion is a tool to create a fake order in the midst of chaos.

3.4 Religion in the Dystopian Universes of *Sirens* and *Cat's Cradle*

One of the elements of dystopian universe is the existence of a religious system that is conflicting or that raises suspicion. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche considers that religion, just like science, has a "confining" effect on man because they both serve to limit personal freedoms of human beings (qtd. in Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 8). This entails that religion is an element of despotic control in the dystopian text that contributes in controlling, and thus prohibitting, personal freedoms of individuals. Booker cites psychologist Sigmund Freud to emphasize the role of religion in the dystopian universe to show that it may stand for the "most oppressive force in civilization" as it serves governments in their projects (11).

In Vonnegut's works religion is used in different contexts. It does not always stand as a tool of the government to control the masses, it also serves as an escape to the people from the terrors of their leaders in some situations (as is the case of

Bokononism). Critic Robert T. Tally relates the function of religion in a text to a necessity to understand the human self, he says:

> 'Mankind, ignorant of the truths that lie within every human being, looked outward... What mankind hoped to learn in its outward push was who was actually in charge of all creation, and what all creation was all about.' With it understood that the search for utopia in the outer reaches of space is futile, the explorations turn back. 'Outwardness lost, at last, its imagined attractions. Only inwardness remained to be explored. Only the human soul remained terra incognita. (29)

In *Cat's Cradle* religion is presented as the last solution to have recourse to when everything becomes meaningless and hopeless. It is introduced to provide meaning to man when it is certain that life no longer has any meaning and where it is useless to have one. The religion of Bokononism is itself based on lies that it admits. The first line in the *Books of Bokonon* which also serves as the first line of *Cat's Cradle* says "nothing in this book is true" (1), then it warns the reader again to "Close this book at once! It is nothing but foma!" to mean harmless lies (190). Bokononism asserts its role as a fake religion from the very beginning and thus chooses to be an entertainment, or a refuge, to turn to when man no longer has any other choice.

In *Sirens* a religion is also presented by Rumfoord named the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent. This one has a different role in the novel. It somewhere provides answers that some people are looking for, but its main role is to serve Rumfoord's plan to send Unk and Beatrice back to space when they return to earth. Religion in this case is also fake but it is not made for the sake of man's satisfaction but to serve particular goals of someone who detains power.

3.4.1 Fake Religion and the Messiah Figure

Both *Cat's Cradle* and *Sirens of Titan* include the arrival of a messiah figure as a carrier of a revelation to the people. Their role is to provide hope to the group they target. None of these messiahs are actually real messengers. They represent fake religions that provide answers that characters are happy to hear. In *Cat's Cradle*,

Bokonon, father of the fake religion of Bokononism, appears after the world is destroyed by Ice-nine and ends his life, describing his anger against God.

In *Sirens,* Constant is also placed as a Messiah whose arrival to earth is prophesied by Rumfoord due to his time-traveling. This latter creates a religion of his own that leads people to reject Constant and send him back to space. Rumfoord manipulates Constant's life as such as well as the lives of different people on earth because he wishes to change human beings to give them value.

> As he says in his *Pocket History of Mars*: 'Any man who would change the World in a significant way must have showmanship, a genial willingness to shed other people's blood, and a plausible new religion to introduce during the brief period of repentance and horror that usually follows bloodshed (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 175)

Yet, he often sounds more like someone who is bored with life and seeks ways to amuse himself. Rumfood was never loved by his wife before he started his colony on Mars. When she was raped by Constant she was still a virgin. Although Rumfoord controlled everything on Mars and later on earth by gaining large numbers of believers, he often admitted that Constant was still luckier than he was because he managed to touch Beatrice and make a child with her.

Rumfoord's obsession with Constant's belief that he was lucky led him to consider the idea of being lucky as an immoral thing to think about, and pushed the people to think of Constant as a sinner, and of anyone who thinks they have been favoured by God and made lucky. His religious faith is called the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent to argue that God is indifferent to all human beings and treats them equally with no preference to anybody over another, as a response to Constant's belief that God liked him whenever he said "somebody up there likes me!" (215).

Rumfoord thinks that it is his task to change the world and that although he could do it peacefully, he still thought that there was the need for blood to be shed to make it convincing (175). In his opinion, it is a process that needs "showmanship"

and a "plausible religion" for the period of repentance (*Sirens* 174). Rumfoord amuses himself playing with human and social constructs, careless of the innocent lives that are lost in the process. He makes people die simply because in his general understanding of life change must be caused by violence and humans will get ready to die because they are affected by the horror, thus it becomes easy to control their thoughts through a fake religion.

Somehow, coming up with a religion at this moment presents itself like the most accurate consequence to complete the scenario. For him, every human plan to making earth a better place failed either because of a lack of "showmanship" (175), that is the ability to attract attention, a lack of blood and victims, or the lack of a religion to give something new to the people to believe in while they are puzzled. Rumfoord considered that killing too many people in a war was a waste and that only a few selected people had to die to achieve a good change. These few are he people whom he turned into recruits on Mars and whose death he had planned.

Inside Rumfoord's philosophy there is a message that Vonnegut attempted to transmit, and which he often depicts through his works. This message is that "Earth's glorious victory over Mars had been a tawdry butchery of virtually unarmed saints, saints who had waged feeble war on Earth in order to weld the peoples of that planet into a monolithic Brotherhood of Man" (175). The victory over Mars is a metaphorical reference to human wars and the violence they cause. Vonnegut often argued that wars were fought by innocents who died for other people's goals and that it was a criminal act. In *Slaughterhouse Five*, he compares the soldiers to children who were dragged to a mission then were murdered making a reference to the *Children's Crusade*, more precisely the soldiers who fought and died in WWII.

Rumfoord in fact used different kinds of legitimizing discourses to justify his project on Mars. He spoke in the name of his victims as wishing for "brotherhood of mankind" to last forever (179), knowing that these soldiers fought for a war they knew nothing about since their memories were erased.

Rumfoord used Unk as a miracle Messiah to arrive on earth in an orchestrated period, to enhance the believers' faith in his religion. Unk could not resist his role as a Messiah because his life in space was no longer his choice (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 176). Rumfoord claims his religion as that which will unite the "saints" who had died at war, he thought "Their wish, when they died,'... 'was not for paradise for themselves, but that the brotherhood of mankind on Earth might be enduring" (179). He wages for his religion as that which will make borders, wars, fear, hate, and envy disappear (179). Through the name of the religion he asserts that all human beings are treated equally. Yet, it calls for a certain indifference when describing God as indifferent, then inscribing the terms " *Take Care of the People, and God Almighty Will Take Care of Himself* [32]"on the flag (185).

In existentialist terms, Rumfoord wished to make the people think about their lives and become responsible on what happens to them, rather than ascribing everything to the wish of God and His preferences. He made Constant's belief that God likes him sound sinful, because it would mean that God cares about Constant more than he does about other people.

The beliefs of this religion are built on the idea that God does not use Luck in his ruling of the lives of men, expressed in the utterance "luck is not the hand of God" (181). He managed to attract the people to his religion using the illusion that he could predict the future and presenting that as a miracle. To make himself credible, he predicted fifty events that indeed happened later, thus proving him right (181). Rumfoord was able to predict such events because of his dematerialization and transportation in the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum.

Rumfoord manipulates the human psyche in a way as to make the people believe in him blindly. He exploits the human need for the existentialist bad faith to offer them the kind of security they look for in time of crisis, or as he termed it "the

[32] Author's original italics

period of repentance and horror" (174). As a matter of fact, Vonnegut believes that humans in general are in constant need for this security, which they assign to a religious belief, or to the thought that a certain philosophy could give them answers. In *Wampeters, Foma, and Granfalloons*, he speaks of a guru who pretended he could teach people transcendental meditations inspired from India, while he only spoke of the things that white man wanted to hear. Yet, he had to pay for these motivational sentences (38).

Rumfoord uses Constant's life story, plus the events he caused in his life, as a religious parable to his followers. He depicts him as the "richest child on earth" (181), and as an accident caused by luck. He also mentions a series of accidents that also occurred on the same day which have nothing to do with Constant's life, except the fact that he was luckier than the others on that particular day (181). After assigning all these incidents to luck, Rumfoord in a confusing gesture, asks his audience "is luck the hand of God?" which they all neglected (181). Rumfood made everyone hate Constant through a direct inquisition saying "we are disgusted by Malachi Constant" (251). He grows an unjustified hate in the minds of his believers and deprives Constant from living on earth. This latter is shunned on the basis that he misused his luck, and instead of using his fortunate fate in a good way, he rather exploited it in what Rumfoord called "unending demonstration that man is a pig" (251).

Constant's former life, which he has no recollection of, becomes the reason for which he is punished. Although he led a life of an indifferent shallow young man who explored all his possibilities and never missed a chance to entertain himself, Constant as a space-wanderer had no knowledge of what wrong things he did. He was yet deprived of the happiness he had been waiting for, for so long, that of living on earth again. Constant, as a simple American individual, was manipulated, had his freedom violated, controlled, then judged for a lifestyle he had chosen for himself in his former life. Although he is presented as a villain in the first part of the novel (before he was sent to Mars), he still represents the conflict of the individual against the system. His

life choices are judged, and he is denied the freedom of building his own character even after his memory is erased.

Critics like Gary Wolfe consider Rumfoord as a protagonist who wanted to serve humanity (Wolfe 967). After all, in his plan to start a war against earth, he emphasized the values of human solidarity and the necessity of taking care of each other. Rumfoord was more harmful as he killed innocents and tortured others. He might be looked at as a representation of life and the different powers that control human beings. This is a recurrent theme in Vonnegut's works. He keeps going back to the impossibility of controlling life and symbolizes this impossibility in ridiculous events that make man feel helpless and absurd. Rumfoord is this uncontrollable power which fashions human life and which happens against their wills.

This idea is well developed in *Slaughterhouse Five* when Billy Pilgrim asks the Tralfamadorians why they never change events since they are able to travel in the past and the future. The Tralfamadorians respond that anybody who would raise such a question is someone who never understood life. For them, being able to see the past and the future is not enough to change human life, because only human beings are responsible on the chaos they seem to cause around them. Rumfoord, just like the Tralfamadorians in *SLF* manipulates and leads human beings towards certain scenarios which he thinks are necessary, albeit the damage they may include, to lead humans to understand the value of man.

In religious terms, Rumfoord attempts to play the role of God when attempting to fashion Constant's life, then in judging him. He thinks that Constant was supposed to make good use of his money and his fortune, especially for a wealth he inherited without making the least effort for it. He is blamed for not being "unselfish" in his previous life (251), and not showing any generosity in giving. He is used as an example of an individual whose life was built on selfishness and indifference and whose habits and lifestyle should be avoided. Constant is also hated because he accepted his good luck "as though [it] were the hand of God" (251). Such belief for

the members of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, is considered "cruel", "dangerous", and "blasphemous" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 251). For Rumfoord, God being indifferent means that God does not choose to make some people luckier than others because of preferance, and that luck is not how God wants people to live. Luck for Rumfoord is "is the way the wind swirls and the dust settles eons after God has passed by" (251).

3.4.2 Bokononism in *Cat's Cradle*

Just like Rumfoord's religion in *Sirens*, Bokononism is presented as a counternarrative to provide meaning to people when there is no more hope around them. Vonnegut represents an America that loves its values and traditions. It is an America that believes in God's power, so he brings religion as a savior when the characters can no longer control their world. Vonnegut also does this in his short essay "Yes, We Have no Nirvanas" published in *Wampeters, Foma, and Granfalloons*. He speaks of a transcendental meditator named Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who claims having the ability to teach people meditation using very exotic methods. The wife and daughter of the speaker in the essay decide to pay for Maharishi's classes and claim having started to do things better.

When the speaker decided to attend the guru's classes he realized that his talks had nothing to do with India and that his perspective was as Western as any American. He thus came to the conclusion that human beings are in constant search of the lies that comfort them. They are seeking for narratives that tell them the things they like to hear and they stick to them. In *Cat's Cradle* he refers to these lies as foma, or harmless untruths.

The religion of Bokononism in *Cat's Cradle* is presented in the novel before the beginning of the chaos, yet, it becomes more influencive and meaningful when most of the characters realize that there was no more hope for life on earth. Jonah, as well as the other Americans whom he meets in San Lorenzo, turn to Bokononism when life becomes more deceiving than they expected. Bokononism is a religion

invented by Lyonel Boyd Johnson, pronounced Bokonon by the inhabitants of San Lorenzo. He is outlawed by Papa Monzano and starts attracting people to his religion by teaching them what is known as the Books of Bokonon.There are in fact fourteen books that tell everything about the Bokononist beliefs.

The people in San Lorenzo have nothing to give them hope for a better living. Bokonon and McCabbe stage a play in which one of them is the protagonist who wants goodness and the other is the bad representative of power who bans him. Although the conflict might not necessarily exist, the play between the oppressor and the brave outlaw gives something to the people to build meaning in their lives.

Bokononism is built on lies that the believers are aware of. It makes people indifferent to their status as miserable and seek only to practice Buku-maru, the bokononist erotic prayer. This religion is more like a philosophy of life. It has categories for different kinds of people like the karass and the Granfalloon which oppose each other. While the first refers to a group who has a mission to accomplish God's will, the Granfalloons only think they have a mission or a bond that unites them, while their bond is mundane.

Moreover, the Bokononist faith says logical things that are already agreed upon in the general understanding of religion. Yet, the presenting of these beliefs in a new language and method makes them look attractive. One of the first teachings of the religion of Bokononism as presented in the novel asserts that the presence of different people in each others' circles with no particular explanation is due to the fact that they belong to the same Karass. This idea is similar to the idea of fate, that people are put in each other's paths because they have a mission to fulfill in religious terms. It also includes conceptions related to multiculturalism as it "ignores national, institutional, occupational, familial, and class boundaries" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 2). The Karass as a Bokononist concept is based on the importance of human values and their embodiment in life without the limitations that are imposed by human thought.

The Karass also shows the shade of difference with the Granfalloon which is based on institutional beliefs and venerates them. On this basis, while the Karass is presented as a sacred circle which has a good mission, the granfalloon is defined, ironically, as empty when the author says "if you wish to study a granfalloon, just remove the skin of a toy balloon" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 65). One more belief in the Bokononist faith is that no human being can understand how God rules human life and that anybody claiming they do should be doiong "folly" (3). The religion thus gets appreciation when most of the people are aware that they can no longer control their lives and hat they still need something to believe in. The conviction that life cannot be controlled and the fact that it is presented in a frame of a religion represents a justification strong enough to serve as something to believe in proudly and still be able to admit man's helplessness in front of the power of the universe.

The basic principles and role of this religion in the novel are presented in two warnings that the narrator presents in the book. The first warning is presented in the beginning of what the narrator refers to as "The day the world ended" (1), in which he says "Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either" (4). He also opens the book with the sentence "Nothing in this book is true" (1), then an invitation to his readers to believe in the lies, or "foma" as referred to in the narration, that makes them "brave and kind and healthy and happy" (1). Vonnegut uses words that lead the reader into this religion and particularly into the choice of making it such an important agent in the novel. It is a religion based on lies that the believer is aware of. The books of Bokonon themselves begin with Bokonon's warning which says "All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies." (4)

The words are very indicative of the meaning and goal of this religion. It is presented as a lie that is useful and that is able to make humans feel "brave", "kind", "healthy", and "happy" (1). These qualifications are coupled by the warning of the narrator that someone who cannot understand how a religion can be based on lies and still be useful will not understand the book. This means that the religious aspect of

Bokononism, being a human invention, is built on illusions that will tell the people the things they wish to hear to give meaning to their lives. This becomes "useful" when it gives answers and provides meaning in the lives of people where there is no more hope for meaning to be. In the *Cat's Cradle* the characters start to find the bokononist faith "useful" although they are aware of its untruth. In this novel, it is meant as the bad faith which provides answers for individuals to survive.

3.4.3 Religion as Bad Faith in *Cat's Cradle*

Cat's Cradle shows man's dependence on the bad faith, or the lie to live by that makes him "brave and kind and healthy and happy" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1). It is presented as a lie humans decide to believe in although they are aware of its untruth, in order to find meaning in what they do. The novel *Cat's Cradle* is itself a request for meaning that never achieves an answer. The puzzle of the title is exposed by Newt who wonders why there is never a cat nor a cradle in the game cat's cradle.

Likewise, the novel is about a meaning that human beings would often place in science as the best thing there is, while it actually hurts. The novel is actually built on a certain binarism to highlight inconsistencies in human behaviours towards life. It shows a "paradoxical interrelation between destruction and construction, between catastrophe and revelation, [as] the structural principle articulating the narrative world of *Cat's Cradle*" (De Castro 25). Just like the cat's cradle, in the claim about the perfection of science, no perfection is found starting from the moment it turns into a tool to kill. The fake religion is presented as an escape in search for meaning, even if untrue.

Booker cites Freud one more time to explain man's psychological need for religion and what it represents for him. He argues that "the need for religious belief arises from the infant's sense of helplessness and longing for a strong and protective father figure" (qtd. in Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 11). This means that the need for religion in the lives of some individuals is due to their *longing* to be submissive. He goes on that this need is not related to the father figure only, but also to a want for the

totalitarian rule. Religion here is presented as the need of the simple human beings to feel an authority over them to submit to, be it a father, a leader, or God.

Vonnegut's fiction takes place in the post Second World War era. His characters suffer from anxiety and distrust. They often have difficulty in conforming to their societies. In *Cat's Cradle*, Jonah the protagonist faces a crisis of identity when he encounters the religion of Bokononism. Through the novel, Jonah is exposed to a number of deceptions and surprises, which as he explains "Conveyances and motives, both conventional and bizarre, have been provided. And, according to plan, at each appointed second, at each appointed place this Jonah was there" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1). Jonah later in the novel feels that everything around him tries to push him into a certain direction and feels insecure with his inability to control his life. The more he tries the least successful he is.

Two events let him know he was unable to control his life, the first when he went to visit Illium, Indiana to collect data about Dr.Felix Hoenikker and found his grandfather's traces in that city in tombstone, the second one was after he returned to his house which he lent to a poet who killed his cat, burnt his couch and wrote a poem in excrement (76). After those events, Jonah feels that nihilism was not for him, that Mr Krebbs, the poet, was his "wrang-wrang", the Bokononist term to design a person whose mission is to drive someone from a certain direction by showing them that such a line is an "absurdity" (73).

These events served Jonah to leave nihilism and think seriously about each incident in his life as a sign and as having a meaning. By the end of the novel Jonah is unable to find out what these signs were meant for, and finally Bokonon's last sentence provides the answer, that life has become meaningless, and that all these signs were meant to let him know that humanity was writing its own history of stupidity (206). Indeed, the events of the novel are meant to lead every reader to think that human life was heading towards its own destruction.

Bokononism started in San Lorenzo by Lionel Boyd Johnson (Bokonon) and Corporal McCabe, who found themselves stranded on the island by accident. They

report having found the island in a desolate situation "a very sorry people" (88) in the *Books of Bokonon*. They learn about the history of the island and realize that it has always been poor and nobody ever found any interest in it because "God, in his infinite wisdom, had made the island worthless" (89). They then decide to make a utopia in the island so they split tasks. While McCabe took in charge the economy and politics of the island, Johnson designed a religion (91).

The religion of Bokononism was fashioned to make believe that there was meaning in the lives of the people who followed it. Bokonon wrote a calypso in which he described it saying:

> I wanted all things To seem to make some sense,
> So we all could be happy, yes,
> Instead of tense.
> And I made up lies
> So that they all fit nice,
> And I made this sad world
> A par-a-dise (91)

This religion came as a saviour to restore meaning and faith in life where there was none. With the impossibility of ensuring a decent living to the people due to the worthless condition of the island, both Bokonon and McCabe made a play to entertain the people, in which Bokononism became forbidden.

The role of religion as a bad faith in the novel fulfills the questions often asked by existentialist thinkers regarding the meaning of life, most precisely "what shall we do?" and "it doesn't matter what we do, for what difference could it make?" (Engel 370). Bokononism raises questions about the meaning of life for human beings, making man wonder "What is the purpose of all this?" when he is created by God, then takes the mission of finding meaning in God's answer "Then I leave it to you to think of one for all this" (190).

The bad faith in Existentialist philosophy is a term that refers to a belief that a human being sticks to in order to escape freedom and thus, the responsibility of taking

decisions. Jean Paul Sartre defines the Bad Faith as "a paradoxical, confusing perplexing and therefore ultimately a schizophrenic attempt at self-deception, although the fact it may even be the normal aspect of life for many people." (Sartre qtd. in Tirsahar 1). This concept is contrasted with Good Faith, which is man's craving for authenticity. The bad faith is presented in *Cat's Cradle* as a response to what Sartre calls the "Nausea", the meaninglessness of the world (Engel 370).

In *Cat's Cradle*, Bokonon raises the question: "'What Can a Thoughtful Man Hope for Mankind on Earth, Given the Experience of the Past Million Years?' and the answer is 'Nothing"' (175). The main argument that is presesnted in the novel through this statement is that nothing can be done about humanity because the same mistakes will be made again. Bokonon informs his followers that all he says is a lie but they believe in it anyway because of their conviction that nothing can be done about their lives. They submit to the Bokononist faith when they are convinced that nothing more can be done anymore. As a matter of fact, Vonnegut thinks that it is the task of the men of religion to make other people feel happy when, he says, "there are all these neat lies [to] tell" (Allen 77). The author turns to Bokononism in this novel to give his characters some relief from the confusing world they had to live in by telling them lies they could feel comfortable with.

Jerome Klinkowitz attributes Vonnegut's obsession with the meaning of life to his training as anthropologist, thinking that in Vonnegut's perception: "men and women [...] are the only creatures in nature whose lives seemed bedeviled by having to find a purpose for things, a meaning for existence that in natural terms would rather follow its own rhythms of being" (Klinkowitz, *Vonnegut in Fact* 8). As a consequence, he stages narratives in which characters are in constant search for meaning however forms it takes. In the present situation, meaning is unfound but the characters find consolation in a messiah figure who appears with prophecies they want to hear.

Bokonon as the messiah in *Cat's Cradle* seeks to create the illusion of a utopia within a dystopia. His original plan was to make a utopia but with the impossiblity of

making one, he decided to make people in the country happy, despite their desperate fate. The messiah figure in this sort of dystopia appears to provide an alternative to the status quo, although the individuals are aware of their status being stuck in that dystopia. The messiah figure also appears in *Sirens* but acts differently. Both *Cat's Cradle* and *Sirens* are dystopian texts where science and religion are confronted, yet in two different ways.

Jean Paul Sartre uses the term Nausea to describe the feeling after realizing that the world is made in an arbitrary system. This philosophy argues for the principle that everything in the universe is the product of chance. The universe becomes meaningless in the Existentialist understanding as it is thought that it is only ruled by Man himself, and has no moderator. Sartre introduces thus the idea of the emptiness of the universe. Man attempts to find meaning in the determinacy of the world but the assumption of the absence of a determinate plan throws him into the trap of meaninglessness and lousiness of fate. The inescapability of an undetermined and thus unknown fate creates the feeling of dizziness, or Sartre's Nausea (Engel 365) .

Jonah's Nausea begins as he starts to unconver the truths hidden behind the celebrated success of the Atomic bomb. He is most convinced of the hopelessness of humanity when he dicovers Ice-nine and the sort of people who actually owned it. The Nausea strikes him again when Papa's body slips into the ocean and the transformation of the earth occurs. Jonah is unable to understand the functioning of the universe as he concludes that it simply cannot be controlled. The existentialist belief of the stillness of the universe interferes in Julian Castle's statement that " man makes nothing worth making, knows nothing worth knowing" (*Cat's Cradle* 120).

The existentialists think that it is man's responsibility to give meaning to his life and that man is alone in the universe. Jean Paul Sartre does not deny God's existence but argues for a more individualist view when it comes to human choices. Man has the freedom to choose his life decisions without God's interference (Engel 397). So when in the parables of the *Books of Bokonon* man addresses God after his

creation, he first asks wh he was created. God's response in the parable is both existentialist and nihilist as he says "does anything need a reason?" then "I leave it to you to think of one for all this" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 190).

3.5 The Discovery of the True Self in *Sirens*

The journey through the discovery of the self is necessary in re-building the territory of the characters that are lost. In getting rid of the territories that marginalized them they seek a new way of being, or a becoming. Thus, while Wilbur, Constant, Eliza, Jonah, and even Newt Hoenikker develop through the different crises they go through, they find new ways of being that are different from the old territories. The new territories are not always the best they can come up with, but they are their own. They are assemblages that lead to new forms of being. The discovery of the self is thus part of the process of transgression that leads towards the new territory.

Constant is led into space after his bankruptcy. His character goes through three different parts. He carries three different names during his journey. He is first Malachi Constant, the rich young man who is lucky enough to be the richest man on earth, due to a wealth he never worked for. He is then named Unk after spending some years in the Martian army. He is assigned this title which stands for;

> a man in a modern army [that] is broken from field grade to private, it is likely that he will be old for a private, and that his comrades in arms, once they get used to the fact that he isn't an officer any more, will, out of respect for his failing legs, eyes, and wind, call him something like Pops, or Gramps, or Unk (*Sirens* 98)

He carries the name Unk all through his stay in the army on Mars after his memory is erased.

Unk loses much energy and becomes somehow weak when he wakes up. Yet, at this level, he tries to realize who he is and why things around him happen the way they do. First he is troubled by the blue colour of the sky and tries to find the blue—

natural—colour of the sky. He is then unable to understand the pain that he feels in the back of his head sometimes, until he reads his own letter to himself and which explains that it is a strike that is caused by a button in Boaz's pocket, his comrade. The third name that he carries is Space Wanderer, which is assigned to him by Rumfoord for his return on earth to represent the period of his judgement for his—unknown to him—past.

Constant's journey towards the different stages of personality on Mars—as Unk—begins not when he wakes up in the hospital but after he reads the letter he wrote to himself. At this very level, Constant as Unk goes through two different kinds of persons. As he starts to gain knowledge about his environment he is terrified of the pain that is provoked at the back of his head. The pain is further intensified when his comrade Boaz amusingly invites him to remember things from his past to then torture him using the little machine in his pocket. The first thing that Constant as Unk learns is that he should be constantly scared of the pain so he must not attempt to remember things from his past nor try to disobey orders, as the pain also begins when he hesitates in killing a man he is instructed to strangle.

His discovery of his real self begins after his earthly behaviours are erased. Constant reads his letter before knowing who the author is and thinks that the person who wrote it was brave. The letter told him the truth about the people in the army he was part of, about the officials and privates he should be aware of, and things about himself, including the fact that he had a mate and a child on Mars. He becomes more confident and more adventurous as he learns the truth about the pain in his head and that it becomes bearable if he trains himself on supporting it. He also decides to desert to go find Beatrice and Chrono in an attempt of doing good to his family.

Unk is given the chance to discover his deep self and build his own character on planet Mercury, but this time, Boaz is sent with him too. The two men are given a chance of discovering their true selves in the wilderness. They are dropped in Mercury by Rumfoord's decision, while thinking they were landing on earth. Luckily for them they find enough food in their spaceship. They are the only human beings in

the planet, this raises the anger of Unk, who was wishing to go to earth. Boaz on the other hand is not as annoyed as Unk is. Although Boaz was wishing to go on earth and learn how to have fun from the earthly Constant in California, he finds a certain peace on Mercury that makes him bizarrely comfortable. The two fight and then part. They live in two different places on the planet and meet only when they need food from the spaceship.

Boaz builds a friendly relationship with the Harmoniums, the creatures that live on Mercury. These creatures feed on music and often come to Boaz to listen to his heartbeat. He becomes friends with them, probably because he never had any friends before, or because his life on earth was quite unfortunate. He thought they were the only thing he needed in life anymore. When Unk was ready to go back on earth Boaz refused to go with him because he found a place where he could be good;

> I found me a place where I can do good without doing any harm,... and they love me, Unk, as best they can. I found me a home. "And when I die down here some day," ... "I'm going to be able to say to myself, 'Boaz — you made millions of lives worth living. Ain't nobody ever spread more joy. You ain't got an enemy in the Universe.'" Boaz became for himself the affectionate Mama and Papa he'd never had (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 214)

Boaz claims that he stayed on Mercury because the Harmoniums needed him. Yet, his experience with human beings, to whom he had never been useful and who have never been significant in his life shows that he needs the Harmoniums more. His decision to remain on Mercury was a self-gratification and satisfactory feeling of love he started experiencing for the first time. This replaced his social distancing and the absence of parents in his life. With the Harmoniums he played the role of the "Mama and Papa he'd never had" (214), in a gesture to feel the affects he never had the chance to experience before. He thus built himself a new territory where he could be loved without judgement and without expectations.

Boaz developed a character that is loving and gentle, unlike the person he was on Mars. On Mercury he was attacked by Unk and had the chance of killing him, yet he never did. He "decided that he needed a buddy far more than he needed a means of making people do exactly what he wanted them to" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 182). He had started to discover his real self while away from all the means and power to control others. In doing so, Boaz realized tha his deep self was more emotional than he was on earth and on Mars. Knowing he had nothing more to win, nor to lose, he discovered the truth about himself. With the Harmoniums, Boaz finally had the chance to give love and feel loved, so he preferred to live on that planet rather than going back to human beings. It mattered more for him to have a friend than to feel scared or lonesome, which he considered as the "important things in life" (182).

Boaz's transformation begins when he realizes that he was not truly in control of everything, unlike his army position. This made him laugh about himself, and about his conviction that he could always be aware of everything. It was in fact the way he was manipulated himself, without being aware of it, "He was laughing at the dumb way he had let himself be used — by God knows who for God knows what" (183). Boaz chooses an attitude that is based on denial of the negative side of his situation with Unk. He rejects all truth about it and lives in his own fashioned universe. When Unk tries to force him to see the truth, Boaz responds by a total rejection of saying "Don't truth me, Unk,'...'and I won't truth you." (212). Boaz was actually threatening Unk of telling him harmful truths about himself, if this latter would not stop reminding him of how bad their condition was.

By experiencing life away from human beings, and thus away from outer influence, Boaz built his own definition of happiness. It was a happiness he had felt rather than simply learnt from people around him. When he was asked by Constant to get ready to go back to earth, or to be set free, Boaz rejected the freedom that had been proposed to him. Boaz has had a very sad life on earth, having had no parents to care for him, thus being set free was not such an attractive idea for him because it matched the common human belief of being free but it did not include anything he

wished to be or do in his life. The period he had spent on Mercury was a meditation period that made him think of what he truly wanted in life.

Boaz thought he would be faithless to the only creatures that ever loved him, the Harmoniums. The idea of being set free had absolutely no value for him because it meant going back to life among human beings, whom he had never managed to please. He thinks that being all "excited" about going back to earth was not exactly the right thing to think about. He deconstructs the social constructs of being free and the importance of living on earth as a casual human being. He thinks he does not belong there, Boaz made his own territory where he truly felt free. When he tries to think about freedom on earth, all he is able to see is "people" he comments, "they push me this way… and nothing pleases 'em, and they get madder and madder" he says (213). He complains about human expectations and the impossibility of meeting them. Life on earth with human beings is a burden to him, because it includes the unending quest of making them happy.

On Mercury Boaz was giving a concert to the Harmoniums because they loved the music he played for them, yet, too much music could kill them as an overdose. When Unk asked Boaz to go back on earth, the conversation had taken a long time and Boaz forgot to stop the music, which killed a large number of the small creatures.

Boaz had become so attached to the universe he had created around himself on Mercury, that he felt heartbroken for the little Harmoniums who died when left them. He felt guilty about their murder and decided never to leave them again because he thought "ever' one of them lost lives [he] could have saved, if [he]'d have just kept [his] mind on what [he] was doing" (213). Yet, while on Mars, Boaz had never felt the least pity nor regret about any human being he had ever tortured, he even amused himself giving pain to the soldiers for entertainment. This shift in character denotes the differences between life among humans, under social constructs, and life in the wilderness, where Boaz discovers the deep self and builds his own character. Boaz's evil character was a result of human life and human influence.

Boaz's conclusion is that life on earth was of no good to him. He simply thinks "'I ain't never been nothing good to people, and people never been nothing good to me. So what I want to be free in crowds of people for?" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 213). His self-made territory is built on providing love to the only creatures that could feel it and appreciate it. The territory he assembled on Mercury was a place where he could benefit others without causing any pains. He decided that it was the place where he had to be.

3.6 Alternate Universes as Re-territorializations in *Sirens*

Alternate universes as forms of re-territorialization are abundant in Vonnegut's works, particularly in *Sirens*. The novel features time and space traveling, and every new universe changes drastically the lives of the characters. The novel's exposition of events is somehow confusing as it depicts the protagonists' traveling in real-time and thus the reader needs a considerable degree of attention to concentrate with all the universes and events they travel to.

The novel begins with Rumfoord's materialization as a concept that is new and mysterious to the reader. The reader then becomes familiar with the concept as it is explained gradually through the narration. Materializaion and dematerialization are parts of a process that Rumfoord and his dog Kazak go through during inter-planetary travel. They travel between the planets earth, Mars, and Mercury, as well as the moon Titan. Rumfoord cannot control his materialization and dematerialization, yet he knows that it happens every fifty-nine days. Dematerialization is the fact of disappearing in what is referred to as the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum to travel in the solar system. Once Rumfoord and his dog arrive on earth, or on any other planet, they materialize into their original shapes. Before they dematerialize or moments after their materialization, they become transluscent, they are visible only as images of light, or particles.

Rumfoord's time traveling allows him to know many things about the future, and thus to manipulate the people around him to serve his plans. He fashioned things

in a way as to lead humanity into a planetary war, and then to follow a new religion of his own making. He was stuck in the Chrono-synclastic Infundibulum, which is one more alternate universe of Vonnegut's making. It is defined in *A Child's Cyclopedia of Wonders and Things*, which is a fictional book cited in the novel, as follows:

> Chrono (kroh-no) means time. Synclastic (sin-class-tick) means curved toward the same side in all directions, like the skin of an orange. Infundibulum (in-fun-dib-u-lum) is what the ancient Romans like Julius Caesar and Nero called a funnel. If you don't know what a funnel is, get Mommy to show you one. (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 15)

It is a place where people who carry different truths may co-exist without creating a conflict. In the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum everyone can be right. They exist in the solar system, linking Mars and earth and it is a place "where all the different kinds of truths fit together" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 14). In this system, many people can be right and still approve what the other, right, people think.

The speaker in *A Child's Cyclopedia of Wonders and Things* considers that the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibula are a dangerous place to go to, providing the example of Rumfoord and his dog Kazak who are always "scattered" in time and space without the least control of their condition (15). The Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum is thus an alternate universe that serves as a means of transgression and deterritorialization in the novel. It is the power that de-thrones the casual definitions from their fixed contexts to new territories where they can be free.

Rumfoord enters the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum thanks to his friend Salo, a Tralfamadorian robot, who gives him the Universal Will to Become, because he loves him. Yet, Rumfoord realizes that this gift was meant to use him in his plan, to help him find the lacking piece for his spaceship. Tralfamadore is a fictional planet that Vonnegut refers to often in his novels. It is in *Slaughterhouse Five* that Vonnegut depicts this planet in detail. The common aspect between the appearance of

Tralfamadore between the two novels is the ability of its inhabitants to travel back and forth in time and to have a thorough knowledge of the future of the earth.

Tralfamadore is Vonnegut's other alternate universe that is presented as a form of reterritorialization of concepts. Salo travels in space to deliver a message but he is stuck on Titan where his spaceship is wrecked and needs a piece to fix it. He stays on Titan for millions of years and receives messages from his fellow Tralfamadrians in form of monuments on earth that the human civilization always thought of as eartly contructions, like England's Stonehenge, The Great Wall of China, The Golden House of the Roman Emperor Nero, the Moscow Kremlin, and the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva.

Through the UWTB Vonnegut creates his own new territory. In the novel the UWTB is defined as "what makes universes out of nothingness — that makes nothingness insist on becoming somethingness." (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 84). Reterritorialization here is made not by the characters but by the author through his staging of strange universes. The UWTB is a metaphor for God's power and the way things happen in life, while humans think they are the ones who make them happen. This includes the Tralfamadorian messages on earth as a main example. By the Tralfamadorian power to control time and fate on earth, Vonnegut decontextualizes the common understanding of life in a way as to make it clearer to see when it is performed by a different doer, in this case, Salo instead of God.

The army on Mars is also a territory that is double edged. On the one side, it is the author's way of depicting an alternate universe that is different from that of earth. On the other side, it represents one of the different stages of moving from the casual territory to the reterritorialization. It is a line of articulation that escapes the old territory and leads to a new one. It does not necessarily include liberation. It is the total opposite of that, it in fact includes a more direct repression that urges the characters towards their transition. The more subversive power is exercised over

them, the more rebellious they become in creating their own universes, even when put under the obligation to move towards new ones.

The universe that is created on Mercury with the Harmoniums also represents a reterritorialization for Boaz. Though it was a necessary territory for Unk, it did not have the same impact on him as it did on Boaz. The same universe represented two different territories for each of the characters which proves the impossibility to fix territory and meaning.

On Titan a new territory is assembled with the different escapes that were made by the several characters. Unk and Beatrice are banned from earth by Rumfoord who turns the people around them, but Unk is eager to travel away from them as he is bothered by their annoying accusations. Thus, once on Titan, Unk is not trying to go back to earth but seeks to settle comfortably and create his own habitat.

Titan is also the last station for Rumfoord on the recognized solar system. After his last visit to Titan, upon the arrival of Unk and Beatrice, Rumfoord is sent to another galaxy by the chrono-synclastic infundibulum and does not appear anymore. But Titan represents the station of truth for him, where he loses his confidence about the world he had thought he controlled. He discovers on Titan that he was part of the Tralfamadorian plan to send the good-luck piece to Salo. He also realizes that everything he did while thinking he was teaching human beings to care for each other, was part of the Tralfamadorian plan. This includes his plan for Beatrice and Unk keeping them from remaining on earth when he imagines he is giving them a better life.

Titan is a final stage on which each of Unk, Beatrice, and their son Chrono get the chance to reconstruct their selves and live differently than the human customs would have imposed. Unk keeps visiting Beatrice whenever she calls for his help on Titan. Chrono nurtures unending anger and rejects his father, on the basis that he and his mother had managed to live peacefully and perfectly well before they met him and never needed his help. Beatrice lives in Rumfoord's palace on Titan and receives visits from her son much often.

In this novel, the characters who had abandoned human life made a decent living in their isolation. Their territories were useful escapes and new forms of exploring the self. Chrono had developed a living style that was very different from that of his parents. He went into what Deleuze and Guattari called a Becoming. He no longer experienced life from the point of view of a casual earthling, first because his mother had almost her entire memory erased and thus had lost many of her human and earthly habits, but also because he never lived on earth. His becoming might not be a classy way of experiencing life around him but it is a reterritorialization of his own.

3.6.1 Constant as a Sufferer

Constant goes through a thrilling transformation from the spoiled, lucky, and rich young man to a totally devastated alien who does not even have an identity. Depravation happens on two levels in this novel. Constant not only loves his possessions but also his memories and his definition of life. The ending of the novel tells best its main theme, the purpose of life is "to love whoever is around to be loved" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 313). It is one more novel about love, or the lack of it in man's life, and the consequences of such depravation.

Constant is a symbol of human being's definition of luck and of free will at two different forms of expression. At the end he is turned into a Messiah, although he is referred to using the terms "space wanderer" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 253). He has the characteristics of a Messiah, he is used by Rumfoord to inspire the people who follow his fake religion. The prophet figure in Constant is very similar to that of Foma in *Cat's Cradle*.

The different journeys that the character of Unk went through included different stations;

> The man who had been Malachi Constant, who had been Unk, who had been the Space Wanderer, the man who was Malachi Constant again — that man felt very little upon being declared Malachi Constant again.

> He might, possibly, have felt some interesting things, had Rumfoord's timing been different. But Rumfoord told him what his ordeal was to be only seconds after telling him he was Malachi Constant — and the ordeal was sufficiently ghastly to command Constant's full attention (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 256).

These stations included his status as Constant, the spoiled man, as Unk, the army veteran, as a messiah named Space Wanderer, and as Constant again. Of all these roles, his status as the messiah figure was the most confusing to him.

3.6.2 The Messiah Figure in *Sirens*

In *Sirens*, the messiah figure comes to earth with answers that disturb his followers. The messiah as Space Wanderer is obliged to go to earth not knowing of his religious mission. He stands for the messiah figure who arrives at the times of doom to spread a new religion that the people stick to in search of hope. In *Cat's Cradle*, Bokonon is the messiah who restores faith and hope in people as they expect the end. In *Sirens* there are no signs of an end of the world scenario but Unk is presented as the messiah who unwillingly provokes anger.

Rumfoord sends Constant to space, transforms him into Unk and erases every memory of his past life as Constant. Beatrice also goes through the same process, her memory is erased to find herself mother of a child named Chrono and teacher of the breathing method on Mars without any knowledge of her past. Meanwhile on earth, Rumfoord spreads a religion names the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent and invites people to believe in it, which receives a large number of followers.

The motto of Rumfoord's religion is: "Take Care of the People, God Almighty Will Take Care of Himself" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 110). Through this teaching the followers of this religion are not allowed to believe in the existence of luck but rather believe in accidents. However, luck is collected from earth by the Tralfamadorians, first by discrediting this belief on earth, then by collecting the good-luck piece of Chrono as the lacking piece for Salo's ship (86). Sharon Lynn Seiber argues

"Vonnegut through the religion of the "Church of God the Utterly Indifferent" is the lens through which postmodern authors have been shaping the world and undermining linearity." (Seiber 130). While Rumfoord is unconsciously controlled by the Tralfamadorians he teaches people that it is wrong to believe that they can be lucky. His lack of determinism leads him to rebel against the idea that things can be set by a higher force and thus he attempts to change this belief (Schatt qtd. in Pascual 56).

Religion is again presented as an alternative to the dystopian form of government in *Sirens*. Keith Booker argues "it is clear that one reason why religion has been banned in these dystopias is that it competes for the same space as the dystopian governments themselves" (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 32). Indeed, in this context, Rumfoord's new religion becomes the new tendency that keeps everyone under his control. It occupies their minds just as much as a political system would have done, and it keeps them submissive to his will, to the extent that they ban Unk when he arrived on earth as Space Wanderer following Rumfoord's will.

Rumfoord claims that it is a religion that aimed at uniting people around the globe, fulfilling the wish of earthlings who represented Mars in a war against earth, and died. Their wish, according to him, was that "the brotherhood of mankind on Earth might be enduring" (179), leaving aside the detail that these people were led to death by him. He also teaches that through his religion "National borders," ... "will disappear.'. 'The lust for war,' said Rumfoord, "will die'. 'All envy, all fear, all hate will die" (179). He keeps repeating to his followers that "Luck is not the hand of God" (180) and that instead of caring about what God does, humans should rather care about how to improve their lives. This religion stands for a parody of Christian faith, more precisely the often satirized idea of Vonnegut about how everything in human life is always referred to God and destiny instead of being given a real explanation (like wars and different forms of killing).

Rumfoord used his status as time traveller to attract people to his religion. His trips in the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum allow him to see things that would

happen in the future, so he predicted fifty incidents that would happen in real life and that made people follow him. Rumfoord knew exactly well that Unk/Constant (introduced Space Wanderer to his audience back on earth) had no recollection of his past as all his memories were erased. He would still ask him to tell at least one good deed he had done in his life, while making a large audience listen to their conversation through a microphone.

Within the same audience there were booths selling souvenirs, among which an effigy named the Malachi, after Malachi Constant, to symbolize sin. In Rumfoord's religion, Malachi was an example of a sinner, the sort of person the believers had to hate and reject. Rumfoord runs a sermon in which he reminds his followers how much they hate Malachi:

> We are disgusted by Malachi Constant...because he used the fantastic fruits of his fantastic good luck to finance an unending demonstration that man is a pig. He wallowed in sycophants. He wallowed in worthless women. He wallowed in lascivious entertainments and alcohol and drugs. He wallowed in every known form of voluptuous turpitude (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 251)

Through the sermon Unk is led to listen to the legend of Malachi, whom he is pushed to hate based on the invitation of Rumfoord. One of the teachings of this religion is that the followers are angered by Malachi "because he did nothing to deserve his billions, and because he did nothing unselfish or imaginative with his billions." (251).

Rumfoord used his followers to express personal hate he had towards Constant as well as his abhorrance to some human behaviours and habits, merely those of selfishness and greed, that Constant had lived by before his transformation. Constant as Unk could not have understood why he would be shunned by the people around him. Yet, due to Rumfoord's sermon, he was asked to leave earth with Beatrice and Chrono, which he did.

Religion in this novel shows that human beings are easily controlled by people who detain power. Rumfoord was not a leader but was a very rich man who became

famous because of his colony on Mars (which he built to help the government during its financial crisis) and for his travels in the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum. His fame allowed him to control the minds of his followers without having them exposed to the kind of torture he imposed on his soldiers on Mars. Through the events of the novel it can be inferred that in the dystopian environment, what Keith Booker called the Modern Bourgeois society controls individuals especially those that are pre-disposed for submissiveness.

3.7 Chaos as Re-territorialization in *Cat's Cradle*

The representation of chaos in literature tends to be an effective form of tackling annoying issues, previously considered "experimental noise" (Boon, *Chaos Theory and the Interpretation of Literary Texts* 38). It permits the study and exploration of complex systems, such as social environments. The role of chaos as metaphor is explained by Kevin Alexander Boon as "a theoretical approach that is compatible with indeterminacy and multiplicity. Thus, it opens up new ways of examining these complex systems and the mediums (such as literature) through which they are mediated" (38). Chaos thus allows the representation of important issues with the possibility of multiplicity. Representation is free to explore plots that might not have been popular before.

Boon defines chaos as the disorder that occurs between structured systems. He says it is a "complex space where 'non-chaotic systems are as scarce as hen's teeth' [in which] … determinism and continuum become meaningless on an impressively short human time scale" (Ford qtd in Boon 53). He relates chaos to the common human understanding of law as something absolute and truthful. Chaos stems from the margins of a system that is ruled by law. The law is imposed in the centre of a system (like the mainstream of a culture) but the margin will always display a certain disorder that is not controlled by the law, that disorder shows the "artificiality" of the law, as it becomes meaningless (42).

Chaos is what proves the artificiality of law. In the midst of stable systems, chaos is the unnoticed, unstable, system which opens the wide range of unpredictable universes, where determinism is meaningless and law is mere artifact. It stems in-between structured systems, and is thus that void which is not controlled and is exposed to indeterminacy. Chaos reveals itself in many of Vonnegut's novels, if not all of them, and just like Boon's definition, it is more a metaphor than an expression of mere disorder.

In *Cat's Cradle,* chaos begins to reveal itself whenever order fails to control things. It first begins in Ilium within the Hoenikker family. The structure of the family seems like a happy one, the father as a popular scientist, a loving beautiful mother, and three children. The father spends all his time in the lab and even when at home, his mind is only thinking of science. He is considered as a saint by the narrator because he never cared about anything else but science, yet when it is looked at more thoroughly, the father's fascination with science leads to other leaks where order was lacking and things were left to indeterminacy.

Every member in the Hoenikker family represents a territory of disorder not likely to be controlled by the father or his ideology. The science-venerating philosophy turned Dr Hoenikker into a passive man whose brain only responds to science. This in itself is a determinacy that includes indeterminacy. The presence of structured thinking in the scientific field entailed its absence in other sides of his personality. As a consequence, none of the Hoenikker family members ever felt their father's presence in their life. The indeterminacy of his brain did not affect only his children but society as well. The absence of humane and sensitive thinking included the absence of morality. Dr Hoenikker made scientific inventions that were products of pure scientific knowledge and highly structured order, yet, due to the absence of humanist thinking, such inventions led to endless indeterminate possibilities as consequences.

His first invention in the novel, the Atomic bomb, gets him the reputation of a great genius and the Nobel prize. Yet, the unthought side of the bomb, or the

territory that Dr Hoenikker did not care about, led to the death of hundreds of innocents in Japan, which he never felt responsible for. The absence of humanist thinking is also revealed in his invention of Ice-nine. This invention is itself an order that is created within disorder, since it is created secretly after the suggestion was made lousily by a military man. Ice-nine develops into a multiplicity of indeterminacies and leads to the destruction of the universe, a total chaos.

Order and disorder go through a play of absence and presence through most of the novel. Dr Hoenikker's success as a scientist leads him to fail in fulfilling his role as a father. Thus everything that surrounds the order that is created by science in his life is doomed to become chaotic. He chose a system that only serves one territory, which is his job as scientist. All the territories around him and which he is supposed to be part of, are lousy.

The closest territory to Dr Hoenikker is his children's upbringing. The three Hoenikker children suffer abandonment after the loss of their mother. Unlike what is expected of the children of a Nobel prize winner, the Hoenikker children's education was limited. Only Newton managed to join a medicine school, because of his name, but he was soon fired from it. Newton was the most intelligent of the children. His brain also manifested a sort of a metaphorical chaos that represented to a considerable extent Vonnegut's interests and choices in life. Being a descendant of a family of scientists, Vonnegut was the only one to choose a career in letters, although he was sent to a school of sciences (Allen 34).

Newt abandoned the medicine school without regret, he had more interest in painting, a passion which he nurtured and exposed through the novel. This disruption of the prescribed career and shove towards a more passionate activity represents the indeterminacy that occurs when Newt abandoned the scientific path that was chosen for him, opening thus endless range of possibilities of what he was to become.

The other Hoenikker children were less educated. Angela was withdrawn from school to take care of her father and brothers and thus never had the chance to live like a normal teenage girl in her age

> That man, who's so famous for having a great mind, he pulled that girl out of high school in her sophomore year so he could go on having some woman take care of him ... After she left school ... nobody ever asked her out. She didn't have any friends, and the old man never even thought to give her any money to go anywhere (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 50).

She was not allowed to go to high school and had no friends at all. She was physically unattractive and thought that her father was a saint that had to be venerated by his children. Compared to her father's achievements, Angela represents one of his failures in coping with a healthy social system. She never managed to lead a normal social life and married only when she traded her share of Ice-nine to a handsome military man. Critic Kathryn Hume writes: "The three Hoenikker children with Cat's Holds drift without having friends or maybe real job, so they make an effort to control their very own lives by buying love as well as jobs using slivers connected with Ice 9" ("Vonnegut's Melancholy" 224), showing their desperate dependence on material things to obtain love. Through Angela, the American army had access to this dangerous substance. Dr Hoenikker unwillingly became responsible for the forms of destrucion of the world, not only by inventing the substance after the request of the marines, but also through his irresponsibility towards his children whose behaviours are unpredictable and far from being wise.

Frank, the middle son, also led a bizarre life in which he acts both as loner and as a mysterious "secret agent X-9" as referred to by his classmates. Frank, too, did not go to college and spent his school days looking for other people to provide him the fatherly care he never received. He rarely went home and spent most of his time in Jack's Hobby Shop, a wood-carving workshop where he learnt to build a beautiful miniature city made of wood. He was a secret only Jack had knon about. He was then wanted by the police for running stolen cars to Cuba, then escaped to San Lorenzo (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 52).

Frank escapes to his personal little universe which he created with Jack. Through this universe, he creates his own territory. It is an assemblage that he builds

by escaping the common lifestyle which is based on a structured order. Frank is described as very intelligent. He could easily enjoy the same popularity as his father by following a scientific career like Dr Hoenikker. Yet, Frank does a sort of decoding of his condition, as the son who inherited his father's genius, and builds a territory where he leads his own life.

Before Jack's Hobby Shop, Frank had his own secret place where he started experimentation at home. It was a little space under a bush in the yard of the house where he gre up. Frank often had bizarre things to play with under that bush and on the day the bomb was dropped on Japan, he had collected bugs and ants in a bottle and made them fight. Frank had called this experimenting.

In San Lorenzo, just like his siblings, Frank uses his share of Ice-nine to gain power. He is given the position of Minister of Science and Progress in the island, as well as the command of the army. Dr Hoenikker is again responsible of the chaos that has occurred in San Lorenzo, although, initially, referred to as a Banana Republic ruled by a dictator.

The culture that is satirized and criticised in the novel is revealed to be the main and direct responsible of the chaos that occurs in the narrative. Using a cause-effect relationship, the events of the novel happen as follows: Science is glorified in the twentieth century. The glorification of science is itself a result of the eighteenth century enlightenment and the rational thinking which has led humans to become materialistic and objective in all the fields of life.

Dr Hoenikker, as a flat character representing the power of the enlightenment and the glorification of science also shows that other fields of life are negatively affected when everything is materialized. He creates a scientific invention but is careless about the moral consequences of his invention, as a matter of fact, he never thought that there should be a link between scientific invention and morality. His children share his invention, they use it selfishly to obtain pleasures and social positions. The children are not happy, neither in their lives with their father, nor after having traded Ice-nine for their temporary happiness. The very same spirit that led

Dr. Hoenikker to think only science matters in life, has also led to the rise of capitalism as an economic system. San Lorenzo displays a territory of chaos that is different and unrecognizable compared to the civilized world of the west and of America.

The chaos of San Lorenzo can be read in two different ways. The first one is a chaos that is unknown to the mainstream culture of the Modern world. The second is a chaos that comes up as the result of this mindset. The ideology of rationalism and capitalism has led the richest countries to become richer and more powerful, yet small countries like San Lorenzo to become fully dependent on western countries both for their culture and their economy. San Lorenzo reflects the chaos that is created by this philosophy in colonized countries and countries that have been affected by this philosophy. It is a place that has no financial independence, a fake history, and a fake religion. In simple terms, Dr Hoenikker, and the ideology of rationalism of the modern world, or Western Culture, have the same methods and same consequences.

Dr Hoenikker is prosperous and successful in his field but his children are entirely abandoned, emotionally dependent, and behave in very irresponsible ways. Western Culture only serves itself and the communities it is concerned with directly, but its impact on these countries is pervasive. Both San Lorenzo and the Hoenikker children are victims of the same philosophy.

In the mid of its chaos, San Lorenzo deterritorializes the concept of peace and places it in a position where it is regulated by religion. The concept of the relationship of peace and religion is not a new territory as it has often existed before. Yet, in the novel, the religion of Bokononism is a territory special to San Lorenzo in which these people find peace and satisfaction, in which they find a source of meaning in their lives. Bokononism is the territory they escape to in Chaos for spiritual fulfillment. It is also a play between Bokonon and Papa Monzano, to keep the San Lorenzans occupied and less anxious about their poverty.

The philosophy of rationalism and western culture also created a centred order inside General Forge and Foundry at Ilium where Dr Hoenikker worked. The

scientists seemed to know exactly well what to do in the company and so did their officials. Yet very small communication took place between the different groups who shared this workplace. As the scientists only spoke the language of science, the secretaries lived in a totally separate world. None of the secretaries could understand a thing that was done or discussed in the factory. When Dr Breed attempted to start a conversation with Miss Pefko, she lost control over herself and laughed hysterically because she could not understand any science. Whenever she was asked about her day at work "Miss Pefko shook her head and let her crimson lips flap slackly-- "I dunno, I dunno, I dunno" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 25)

The binarism between the carefully structured universe of science and the other fields that surround it shows itself again in the absent communication between the scientists and the secretaries who typed their works. The office of the secretaries was referred to as the Girl Pool (26). For Dr Breed, "They serve science, too,' Dr. Breed testified, 'even though they may not understand a word of it. God bless them, every one!" (28). They celebrated Christmas, exchanged smiles and happy wishes in their own private world. Their universe was not shared with that of the scientist and whenever there was an attempt it ended rapidly because neither of them could understand the other.

Apart from Miss Pefko losing her self-confidence in front of to Dr Breed, a conversation between Dr Hoenikker and Miss Faust also highlighted this cleavage. When Miss Faust was challenged by Dr Hoenikker to tell him something that was entirely true she said "God is love" (39), as a consequence Dr Hoenikker responds "what is God?" and "what is Love?" (39). The little conversation shows that the two parties think very differently from each other to the extent that none of them is able to understand the language of the other.

A wider form of chaos surrounding the structured order of scientific rationalism is the city of Ilium. Just like the factory and the Hoenikker family, the people who live in Ilium are very simple-minded and of a very small culture. Their lives have no sense of the scientific progress and discoveries that are made at General

Forge and Foundary and they instead occupy their brains with small scientific truths that they consider central. Jonah discovers their intellectual limitations when he visits the city for his story on Dr Hoenikker and meets a bartender and a prostitute at the bar. They let him know that they listened to Dr. Breed speaking about science and that it was "going to discover the basic secret of life someday" (18). The bartender shows immaturity of thought as he naively relates Dr. Breed's claim to a story he read once on a newspaper;

> Didn't I read in the paper the other day where they'd finally found out what it was?" "I missed that," I murmured. "I saw that," said Sandra. "About two days ago." "That's right," said the bartender. "What *is* the secret of life?" I asked ... "Protein," the bartender declared. "They found out something about protein. (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 18)

The absurdity of the situation is not revealed in considering Protein as an important molecule for human survival but in the fact of considering a materialistic object as the secret of life. This conversation also shows the limited minds of Dr. Breed's audience whom he tried to convince to practice science. The situation shows a gap between the scientist's aspirations and the primitiveness of the minds of the people they try to influence, thus they are never understood and never try to simplify their thoughts to others. The well-structured system of scientific rationalism ignores the simple minds of Ilium.

Indeterminacy is proof of the artificiality of law. The status quo is thus a fake system. Outside the rationalist atmosphere of science, everything reveals that belief as being fake and mundane for its inability to control their lives. Scientific rationalism would not rule Marvin Breed's[33] life, neither that of the prostitute, of Miss Pefko and Miss faust, of Ilium in general, nor of the Hoenikker children. In the lives of all these

[33] Dr Asa Breed's brother. He is not influenced by science. He is a tombstone salesman and tells Jonah about the Hoenikker family, precisely the lack of care and attention by Felix towards his wife and children. Marvin is described in the novel as "sleek and vulgar, a smart and sentimental man" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 46)

characters, the ideology of rationalism is put to light and shown to be pervasive. It is an ideology that covers so little with the illusion that its power is so vast.

While the previous forms of chaos were results of a pervasive system and territories where characters created their own comforts. The same novel shows other forms of chaos that are more direct and which fulfill the goal of a metaphor. The novel is basically about death and destruction. From the very beginning, it refers to hints of chaos that it considers as bokononist sinookas, the intertwining tendrils of people's lives, as well as the vin-dits, the shoves towards Bokononism that Vonnegut depicted in blurred signs and symbols.

They are first the numbers of cigarettes and gallons of alcohol that the narrator says he had taken and which shows his depressed condition in the beginning of the narration. At the end it is discovered that this seeming depression is due to the Ice-nine freezing catastrophe, and that he was waiting for his death because there was no longer anything to live for. The second hint was the pessimist letter he had received from Newt Hoenikker, and which depicted the family as a very awkward one, including Frank as the "bug tormentor" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 16).

Jonah had other signs that led him in a way or another to his converting to Bokononism, like the poet Krebbs, to whom he had lent his apartment. When Jonah goes back to his apartment he finds it dirty and almost destroyed;

> before leaving, he had run up three-hundred-dollars' worth of long-distance calls, set my couch on fire in five places, killed my cat and my avocado tree, and torn the door off my medicine cabinet. He wrote [a] poem, in what proved to be excrement, on the yellow linoleum floor of my kitchen (55-56)

The chaos of his apartment, which Krebbs is responsible for, leads Jonah to drop the idea of nihilism, although he thought he could be one. He considers Krebbs as someone who had the mission of changing his mind about nihilism by showing him how bad it was to be one.

The impact of this decision only becomes clearer when Jonah travels to San Lorenzo. In this island he discovers a people that are poor and whose situation is hopeless. His anti-nihilistic tendency leads him to care about every detail in the island, the political situation, the Julian Castle legacy and his anger, and finally, Bokononist beliefs.

Cat's Cradle does not include alternate universes to create its Reterritorialization. All the events happen in realistic settings, without the least occurrence of anything related to time or space traveling. Yet, the scientific invention is there and it leads to the world's destruction, giving thus the dystopian aspect to the novel. The grotesque events happen in San Lorenzo, as a setting where things are meant to happen differently. The island is ruled by a despotic president whose people are ignorants and hungry. The religion of Bokononism is presented as the reterritorialization that man is looking for.

Chaos is also a metaphor when it assembles the impossibility of order which is its core, with the impossibility of giving meaning to life in the novel. He speaks of the power that connects a number of people in a certain karass as their private territory, and its goal as the Wampeter, any object around which the members "revolve… in the majestic chaos of a spiral nebula" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 37). The relationship between the members and the object of their Karass is not intentionally identified. The Karass itself as an independent territory is not identified. It is the object of an unknown order which makes sense and offers satisfaction to only its members.

The chaos of the karass is a reterritorialization that is presented in the form of a disorder as long as it has not been discovered as a system. Boon argues that "Chaos only appears chaotic because we have not yet unveiled the stable laws controlling it" (*Chaos Theory* 42). The moment that new territory becomes a centre, it becomes itself a structured system, that is ruled by its own law. Like the artificial family in *Slapstick,* it stems from the margin, from the lives of Wilbur and Eliza whose lives are characterized by an absence of common order. It is popularized as a form of new

territory that then pops into new indeterminate number of territories, each having its own system. They only become a system after they are widespread, like the Harmoniums on planet Mercury in *Sirens*.

Bringing this to Deleuzian terms, the Assemblage theory can be looked at as a chaos that grants indeterminacy, and thus endless possibilities of being, as long as it has not been territorialized. Each reterritorialization is a new chaos that only becomes determined and systematized after it is canonized. The systems in the three novels under discussion attempt to break with the systems that govern them and shift toward new multiplicities using chaos. The new territories ensure a certain freedom that conforms to no order and the consequences remain yet to come like the example of the small new families that keep appearing with new systems in Wilbur's Artificial family project. Once the latter has become a system of order in itself, new-chaotic-forms spring from the margin to escape to new territories.

The idea that indeterminacy shows how fake the general order can be also applied in *Slapstick* where different forms of survival are exposed where the mainstream is proven to be artifact. Chaos is described by Boon as simply another order one is not aware of (Boon, *Chaos Theory* 42). Multiplicity, indeterminacy, and the endless possibilities of representation fit within the aspects of assemblage and reterritorialization proposed by Deleuze. Chaos is thus presented as a tool to create assemblage. Both of them are related to multiplicity. While the first is a source of multiplicity, the latter is a result.

Dr Hoenikker was absent-minded to the extent of not caring about his children even when it was obvious that they were having a hard time. When his son Newt was scared of him, Dr Hoenikker did not attempt to ease him or regain his trust. On the same day, Angela was punched in the stomach by her brother Frank, and her cry did not tempt Dr Hoenikker to ask what happened to her nor to try to interfere to help her. Newt also tells a story of the car not starting and instead of trying to find a solution for it, Angela had the task of pushing the car while Dr Hoenikker wondered

what happens to the spines of the turtles when they pull in their heads (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 12).

Faced to death Mona becomes a careless entity. When Papa Monzano is dying of cancer and tries to deliver his final words Mona is the least concerned about his condition. Frank Hoenikker is thrown in a hysterical state hile Mona secretly practices Boku_maru with a pilot, described by Jonah as obscene "kneading" using the feet, a form of erotic and spiritual ritual practised by the Bokononists (*Cat's Cradle* 104). After the total destruction of the world, when it becomes obvious that there is no more hope for humanity to survive Mona is again idle to death and chaos. She reacts to chaos by isolating herself in her own territory of indifference and peace.

American critic Ihab Hassan describes the pre-Second World War hero as "a grotesque effigy to the rule of chaos,' someone isolated, violent, defeated, tortured, and warped" (qtd in Broer 2). Mona normalizes violence and refuses to surrender to the shock of destruction. The horror of the world wars is represented in the novel in a trauma that affects most of the characters both directly and indirectly. They escape to philosophical resolutions to cope with the catastrophe and attempt to give meaning to their lives. Boon argues that Vonnegut's characters are inevitably dehumanized by the powers that control them, including culture and technology. They are also accustomed to catastrophe and destruction. Fear turns them into cold creaturres. John Alridge argues that an effective literature in the contemporary world is a literature that happens in a context of suicide and madness (qtd in Broer 3).

Thus the dystopian aspects of Vonnegut's science fiction contribute in the effective writing of contemporary and post-war literature. He comments on the coldness of characters saying: “We all respond with a sort of shriek to the ghastliness of news today… It is typical of people who have gruesome history, who have seen many invasions, a large number of people, and many executions” (qtd. in Broer 2). The territory that is created by Mona is thus a territory of fear, that pushes her to become senseless to bad turns of events. It is also a territory of escape, a form of protection that prevents her feelings from being hurt, by not caring at all.

Mona is depicted as very beautiful but somehow cold in different situations of the novel. The only thing she responded to was actually Bokononism, which serves as a source of "spiritual comfort" when destruction begins (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 189). Mona was also senseless during her first sexual intercourse with her husband, which looked more like a rape than love making to him;

> I will not go into the sordid sex episode that followed. Suffice it to say that I was both repulsive and repulsed. The girl was not interested in reproduction--hated the idea. Before the tussle was over, I was given full credit by her, and by myself, too, for having invented the whole bizarre, grunting, sweating enterprise by which new human beings were made (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 191).

then at the end of the novel, she walks on a hill with Jonah to find hundreds of dead corpses.

Mona shows no sadness about the large number of dead people in front of her. She reads Bokonon's note which said:

> To whom it may concern: These people around you are almost all of the survivors on San Lorenzo of the winds that followed the freezing of the sea. These people made a captive of the spurious holy man named Bokonon. They ... commanded him to tell them exactly what God Almighty was up to and what they should now do. The mountebank told them that God was surely trying to kill them, possible because He was through with them, and that they should have the good manners to die. This, as you can see, they did (195).

he was the man who commanded these people to kill themselves because they were trying to find meaning. Although these people were aware of Bokonism's first teaching, that it is built on lies, they believed him, and Mona was no exception. She quickly took from the white-blue frost that was everywhere on the ground, mocked Jonah then touched her mouth and died (195-196).

Vonnegut finds in Science Fiction the necessary madness with which he creates his free universes. In the alternate universe he finds a certain freedom to depict any plot however illogical or grotesque it may be. He playfully uses cosmic irony, space opera, and parody to stage his bizarre universes. Meaninglessness is also presented as a medium to stage chaos in the alternate universe. As a form of disorder, meaninglessness contributed in deterritorializing the system and highlighting the territories of anarchy. He adopts the absurdist form of writing to depict a world in which things are different from what they seem to be. The absurd is a writing about a world in which things are different from what they seem to be. The Absurd is a writing about a world that is aware of its absence of meaning and of purpose (Michelman 27).

The forms of meaninglessness deterritorialize representations of power to uncover the suggestions of probable territories that can be established as a response to defectuous primary ones. As the author refers to the USA as a Granfalloon (*Cat's Cradle* 197), he disrupts its position as a powerful country, and puts to light its narratives of greatness based on power, war; and materialism.

3.8 Conclusion

Descriptions of transgressions and reterritorializations in the three novels contribute to the making of the estrangement of the text. Estrangement begins in the new concepts that Vonnegut makes for his characters to fulfill their needs. They are substitutes for feelings they could not obtain in the normal life because they were misjudged. While Wilbur and Eliza look for common decency instead of love, Constant tries to find it in his lost identity and the Hoenikker children look for it in power. The lack of love is translated into other needs the characters know they can obtain more easily. Each of these represents a marginal life that is in deep need of love for self-fulfillment.

Estrangement in the novel is also depicted through a defamiliarization that blurs the universe of the novel and that of the author, yet, it aesthecises personal

experience in a grotesque fantasy. The novels go through a series of deterritorializations which classifies them as minority literature. Materialization and dematerialization in the novel *Sirens* are forms of displacement that are put forward by the author to match his alternative-universe writing. Through this process, he is inventing a new form of existence.

Through the motivations that have led the characters to favour their own estrangement (even when imposed by external forces), they have immersed chaos in their lives as a form of transgression. Chaos is referred to in the analysis because it sheds light on important issues and on possible endings that are not popular, nor expected. Chaos in the three novels is present as the normal order of things, yet, this order is a result of a well-structured system that fails due to its elitist basis.

Meaninglessness in the novel is presented as a trauma. Newt never manages to overcome his traumatic experience with his father when he first waved the strings in his face and made him search for the cat and the cradle. The confusion is depicted in the meaningless Xs of the game which make him angry each time he thinks about them. The Xs are represented as scratches in blackness that are interpreted as "the sticky nets of human futility" by Jonah (117). Critic Stanley Trachtenberg would even go to relating the game to Dr. Hoenikker as an expression of madness in the midst of the meaninglessness in the mind of Newt when his father waved the strings in front of his face, Trachtenberg refers to Newt's description of his father as diabolical (67). The confusion of the game and its irrationality is all put within one statement made by Newt about his painting, saying: "No wonder kids grow up crazy. A cat's cradle is nothing but a bunch of X's between somebody's hands, and little kids look and look and look at all those X's . . .", "And?", "_No damn cat, and no damn cradle_." (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 117)

Newt's painting raised reactions both of confusion and of anger (as Julian Castle's reaction who throws it in the river), to represent the main theme of the novel, in addition to scientific abuse and the value of humanity. Bokonon raises the question in his books of Bokononism in the novel about about what can a "Thoughtful Man

Hope for Mankind… Given the Experience of the Past Million Years" then responds saying "Nothing" (*Cat's Cradle*). His answer is based on Jean Paul Sartre's idea of the nothingness of the universe. As a matter of fact, the novel under discussion includes many existentialist strains, like the role of religion as a tool to entertain the people and give them something to believe in, and the author's perception of the meaninglessness of the universe, or at least, his characters' conviction of this.

Chapter Four: Literary Transgressions and Metafiction in *Slapstick*, *Sirens*, and *Cat's Cradle*

Chapter Four: Literary Transgressions and Metafiction in *Slapstick*, *Sirens*, and *Cat's Cradle*

4.1 Introduction

Vonnegut has been classified as the representative of post-World War II American authors by Donald E. Morse, and dubbed as the man that has "extended popular literary forms" ("Bringing Chaos to Order" 395). He is thus an author of experimentation in writing. In his lectures about writing with style he advises authors to put the reader as a priority and to avoid the traditional, triangular plot, in favour of a more complicated and open-ended one (Vonnegut, "Kurt Vonnegut Lecture Severance Hall" 37:50-50:12).

Vonnegut breaks the common forms of writing by giving the text a self-reflexive ability. The text is aware of its untruthfulness and attracts the reader's attention to this artificiality from the earliest pages. This method includes authorial intrusion in some cases, as Vonnegut identifies with his characters and relates their experience to his own life in the prologue of *Slapstick*. Other methods are the story within the story and the re-writing of human history as in *Cat's Cradle* and in *Sirens.* Finally, parody comes as a key element to emphasize social criticism in his work to allow defamiliarizations of common concepts and the transition from the social constructions to transgressions.

In his conversation with Robert Scholes, Vonnegut made it clear that he not only wanted to entertain but also to instruct his readers when he observed that he had been worrying about why people are taught "to write books when presidents and senators do not read them, and generals do not read them" (123), and continued that he had come up with "a very good reason...[to] catch people before they become generals and presidents and so forth and... poison their minds with... humanity" (123). Thus, through his experimental, quite often confusing writing, he seeks to affect readers and to push them to identify with humanist values which he thinks people who detain power have lost the ability to think of.

4.2 Self-Aware Science Fiction for Social Satire

The novels of Kurt Vonnegut are a self-conscious science fiction that rejects its classification as such. Although the author had denied his wish to be classified within this "file drawer" that is science fiction and which he thinks critics consider a "urinal" (Vonnegut, *Wampeters* 1), his works acquired the charactristics of this genre through time. In fact, he resisted this classification because of the wrong—or rather negative—perception of the genre as a literature of mere entertainement, often placed with pornographic and non-serious literature on the shelves. The rejection of this classification is not due to the author's hatered of the genre; Vonnegut did not hate Science Fiction itself, but the critics' reception of this form of writing during the 1950s to the 60s. He says that he was thinking he was simply writing about "life", and about things he "could not avoid seeing and hearing" around him (1).

Based on the above statements it can be inferred that the author's use of Science Fiction is a form of expression that is meant for satire, or at least to represent "life" around him. He emphasizes the idea that science and technology are basic aspects of human life and that the fact that he writes such a genre is due to his will to represent things the way he viewed them to be in the real life (Klein).

Self-reflexivity in Vonnegut's works is revealed as an essential component as it appears in most of his works. The novel that manifests this technique the most is his *Slaughterhouse Five*, which he begins with the claim that the content of the book "more or less" happened. The first part of the novel tells Vonnegut's experience in Dresden as a war prisoner and the anger of Mary O'Hare, who thought he was writing a war glorifying novel, and to whom he dedicates the novel. The dedication of the novel in the beginning, plus the claim of its truthfulness in the first lines, attract the reader's attention to its artificiality. Later in the earliest pages of the novel, the author also reports his conversation with Mary O'Hare who inspired him the second part of his title, *The Children's Crusade* when she called the soldiers who fought in the war children (20).

The tendency to attract the readers' attention to the novel's artificiality does not occur in *Slaughterhouse Five* alone, it also occurs in *Slapstick, Cat's Cradle,* and *Sirens of Titan* with varying degrees. In *Slapstick*, the novel begins with a prologue that plays the most important part of the narrative. The prologue leads the reader to understand the author's intentions. It blurs the link between the work of fiction and the real life of the author, thus showing the extent to which the latter is reflected in the narrative.

His science fiction works are self-conscious because they seek to attract the reader's attention to structures of the society he seeks to criticize. The use of this technique highlights the discourses that make culture and shed light on their subversive impact on the lives of men. Waugh states that metafiction writing "converts what it sees as the negative values of outworn literary conventions into the basis of a potentially constructive social criticism" (Waugh 11-12). This form of social criticism is very important for Vonnegut who thinks that it is his role to "expose the various forms of societal madness [through]... encouraging reflectiveness and the will to positive social change" (Broer 4). He drives his readers to reflect on the ways in which language manipulates the text and the affects that lay beneath. He attracts the reader's attention to the fictionality of the text by setting warnings in the beginning of the books as in *Cat's Cradle*, or prepares the reader to draw the relationship between the characters and the author's life by referring to his life experiences in the prologue as in *Slapstick.*

4.3 Self-Reflexivity in *Cat's Cradle*

When Vonnegut approaches the question of science in *Cat's Cradle* he shows a facet that is often unrevealed. More precisely, he seeks to raise questions about the practise of science in the Modern world and its implications. He does so by staging a fiction in which the boundary between the fictional and the realistic is broken as he takes real-life events and makes an end-of-the-world scenario out of them. He begins by attracting the attention of the reader to the artificiality of his text to emphasize its fictionality and the untruthfulness of its content. The first warning about its

fictionality regards the religion of Bokononism which he exposes as a religion of lies. Yet, through the narrative, the reader discovers that the untruthfulness that is put to light is not only that of the text but also of the discourses of culture it belongs to, which is the goal of metafiction.

Cat's Cradle begins with a warning against the religion of Bokononism in which the narrator says "Nothing in this book is true. Live by the foma that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1). This warning is directly followed by the source of the line which is "*The Books of Bokonon* 1:5" (1). The warning is double edged; on the one side, it attracts the reader to the untruthfulness of the book that is between their hands and which is *Cat's Cradle*. On the other side, as it follows up with the title of the book in which the line appeared, it informs the reader of the fictional *Books of Bokonon* that it is a book made of lies. Both the real reader and the fictional reader are subjected to the warning of the artificiality of the books they are reading. The reader also discovers within the same lines the existence of a book inside a book. From the very beginning, the reader is prepared to resist the text and to read with caution with special focus on the constructedness of religioin and of the reference of the Cat's Cradle as a game.

The warning includes different implications with the reader. The untruthfulness of the *Cat's Cradle* and the indication that even though the content of the book is untrue, man must still choose the harmless untruths to live by because they provide happiness. Vonnegut builds a "belief system with its own rituals and language" to draw attention to how close fiction and reality can be in their functioning (Clare 72). The point in such depiction is to uncover the different structures of reality.

Through the narrative, Jonah unveils more fictions in the same book, just as it is thought that there are only two books under discussion. On the first page of the novel Jonah reveals his initial plan in the book saying "when I was a much younger man, I began to collect material for a book to be called *The Day the World Ended*. The book was to be factual" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1). Although this book is unfinished as the author speaks of a plan to write it, which indicates that it was not

written (or so the reader is led to think), the narrator switches in narration from the beliefs he has learnt from *The Books of Bokonon* on the one side, and his journey to collect information to write *The Day the World Ended*.

At the end of the novel, the narrator sits again to write about the entire journey, and the actual end of the world. He does not name the book he writes but makes an allusion to the *Cat's Cradle* when he says "A curious six months followed—the six months in which I wrote this book" (198). His tone suggests that both books (*Cat's Cradle* and *The Day the Wolrd Ended*) are represented in his book as he does not separate the one from the other. Yet, he makes more than one reference to *Cat's Cradle* as Hazel Crosby demands what kind of books it is. She foolishly asks "Is it a funny book? ... I like a good laugh" (199), in the midst of destruction, death, and the threat of the end of life on earth getting closer.

Cat's Cradle is indeed a book that includes comedy and laughter, but not the entertaining type, yet, the absurdist style of laughter. The irony of human foolishness and Hazel's ridiculous search for laughter meet in this statement to suggest that the book Jonah writes at the end of the novel is *Cat's Cradle*, a book about "the meaninglessness of it all" (120).

A few pages after the epigraph about the untruthfulness of Bokononism, and the story about the novel, the narrator presents another warning about the importance of lies in *The Books of Bokonon*, "All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies. 'My Bokononist warning is this: Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either. So be it" (4). The author switches the narrative voice from a line to another, and the context within, as he quotes from the *Books of Bokonon* to emphasize their artificiality on the one side, and to explain how they affect the narration of his actual book on another. His second warning as to the "true things" he intends to say is rather a message to the reader who should avoid "extracting the one 'true' meaning" from the Bokononist text (Clare 73). Seen from this angle, it can be inferred that this warning also concerns

Vonnegut's fantasy about the end of the world, which is in great part about the meaninglessness of human life.

Other instances related to *The Books of Bokonon* keep referring to its artificiality in different parts of the novel. At the end of the novel, Jonah meets Bokonon in the streets of San Lorenzo and this latter mentions his last book "I am thinking, young man, about the final sentence for *The Books of Bokonon*. The time for the final sentence has come" (205). He decides to write the last book of Bokononism to adapt it to the end of the world that he was witnessing. The meaning is thus, as explained by Ralph Clare before, cannot be centred to one "true" interpretation, as the re-writing of this book is always yet-to-come.

Vonnegut also uses some indirect references to the work's artificiality using the voice of an author. There is no authorial intrusion in this book, but he uses one of the characters to speak his view about novelists and men of letters in general. First, Jonah the narrator is also an author, so it is felt in his tone that he is an alter ego to Vonnegut in the novel. As a matter of fact, he revealed that the narrator in the first draft of the novel was named Vonnegut, but before the publication the editors suggested to change the narrator's name on the basis that it could be distracting (Allen 204). Also, considering Vonnegut's experience as a prisoner of war, he had been trying to write about it in different attempts, until he wrote *Slaughterhouse Five* that finally liberated him from this task. The references to war in *Cat's Cradle* do refer to such experience.

In the novel Jonah meets Philip Castle, son of Julian Castle, hotel manager and author. They sympathize and speak of different things, among which, writing;

> I'm thinking of calling a general strike of all writers until mankind finally comes to its senses. Would you support it?' 'Do writers have a right to strike? That would be like the police or the firemen walking out'. 'Or the college professors.' 'Or the college professors,' I agreed. I shook my head. 'No, I don't think my conscience would let me support a strike like that. When a man becomes a writer, I think he takes on a

> sacred obligation to produce beauty and enlightenment and comfort at top speed (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 166).

The author makes a self-conscious gesture in this conversation by which he speaks in the name of writers in general. He raises an issue that he himself targets in his writing, that is to make human beings think about their deeds, but shows opposing views of what authors should be doing about it. While Philip Castle suggest to quit writing (going on strike), Jonah, as Vonnegut's alter-ego in this case, rejects the idea on the basis that writing is a moral responsibility by which he should be producing beauty and enlightenment. This latter can be related to his instruction in the epigraph, to belive in the foma that make man happy and healthy. An author's fantasy about beauty, enlightenment, and comfort may also stand for such comforting *foma*[34].

The novel's artificality invites the reader to emphasize the structures that build the text and reflect on the extent to which they also relate to the real life. The harmless untruths of the novel first regard religion and human dependence on it to give meaning to their lives. Although; ironically, the characters in the novel find a certain refuge and comfort in the lives of this religion, especially as the novel reaches the end, its interpretation in relation to the idea of the bad faith shows that what is criticized is acctually human understanding of, and behaviour towards, religion in general.

Human beings will often turn to religion to soothe themselves and to find answers to things they do not understand in life. Bokonon, having the intention to start a religion of lies and showing anger to God in his last book, deliberately mocks the idea that humans can find meaning in spirituality when he writes different lines that have nothing in common; "Man got to sit and wonder, "Why, why, why?"/Tiger got to sleep, /Bird got to land; /Man got to tell himself he understand" to mean that human beings hardly ever understand what their lives are made for but they pretend that they do have answers (130).

[34] Italics for emphasis

The most important narrative that is uncovered through the artificiality of the text is that of the lie of the modern world as an age of prosperity and development. The novel presents a summary of the main events of the twentieth century, their implications, and their consequences. The self-conscious reader is exposed to a narrative in which human beings discover science, science leads to beautiful inventions, it is valued to the extent of taking a God-like position in culture and becomes unquestionable. Science later makes the most powerful weapon on earth, it kills hundreds of people to end a war, yet science is still glorified by the people who detain power. Finally, the threats of a powerful scientific invention and of the post-war era become realistic in the novel, a simple scientific invention that is not considered as harmful by the scientist who made it causes the end of life on earth. The novel attracts attention to its purpose by making references to real life events like the end of the Second World War and the Hiroshima and Nagazaki Massacre.

The second form of borrowing that is done by *Cat's Cradle* is the reference to the atomic bomb in Japan as a historical event. It is a historiographic metafiction as the historical period and incident are being romanticized and turned to a narrative text. Historiographic metafiction is defined by Critic Peter Freese who also relates it to Vonnegut's works in the following terms;

> historiographical metafiction, a self-reflexive and transgeneric narrative that openly asserts its status as an artifact and not only calls into question the traditional distinction between fact and fiction, history and story, but also plays with established genre conventions and the standard rules of narration. Moreover, it dares to combine a mass destruction that really happened with what Vonnegut called 'science fiction of an obviously kidding sort' (Freese, "Instruction for Use" 96).

The novel *Cat's Cradle* re-writes the catastrophe of the Atomic bomb in addition to generic transgressions in a way that both attract attention to the historical fact and its absurdity on the one side, then to the fragmentation of the text on another. As far as the absurdity of the historical event is concerned, the scenario of the atomic bomb is pushed to an extreme, to the extent that the danger of the bomb turns into a danger of

an ice that kills all human beings at once. The fragmentation of the text on the other hand is displayed in the transgressions of genre as the author switches from prose to poetry within the same pages, and the plot linearity that is entirely disrupted.

The self-conscious aspects of the text also include other books. *Cat's Cradle* is indeed a book about a book. It is about Bokononism and about *The Day the World Ended*. Yet, other books also appear in the novel, like Philip Castle's book on the history of San Lorenzo. The different *Books of Bokonon* are also quoted in *Cat's Cradle* and carry different affects that help in channeling the author's intended meaning.

4.3.1 The Fiction within a Fiction of *Cat's Cradle*

Cat's Cradle is a novel that presents three different books, one within another. Vonnegut has the tendency of introducing alternative worlds that are often aware of their artificiality as he puts them in a fictional frame. Most of his works include authors or books that are produced within the novels. His readers thus are constantly aware that everything they read is a work of fiction or man-made. The alternative universe that occurs in his blended fictions clearly introduces itself as a means of social criticism. In *Cat's Cradle,* the reader is introduced to two books in the beginning of the novel. In this novel, too, the reader achieves full understanding of the narrative only when they read the beginning of the novel again.

When the reader of *Cat's Cradle* is mentally prepared for the artificiality of this novel, they are told that what they are reading is a tale about an investigation that was meant to be published in a book about "what important Americans had done" on the day the Atomic bomb was dropped on Japan (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1). As Jonah narrates the novel, the reader is led to believe that he had abandoned the idea of writing *The Day the World Ended,* yet as the end of the novel is reached, he again informs the reader that he is writing a book about the catastrophe of Ice-nine. The reader is thus reading the book that Jonah is still writing, about the number of people who have survived Ice-nine (198).

The third book that is discovered within the two books is a series of the *Books of Bokonon* written by the religious figure Bokonon, and cited by Jonah throughout the entire novel as it becomes his main religion. By this, Vonnegut contributes in the experimentation with the novel using a technique that was new when the novel was published, this technique of self-reflexivity became a marker of the post-war twentieth century novel.

The novel presents other forms of metafiction as it refers to different literary texts and historical events that are parodied in a more or less humourist style. The re-writing of these texts includes the iconic *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, which speaks of a man that is swallowed by a white whale. This latter introduces himself saying "Call me Abraham!". *Cat's Cradle* re-stages some of these aspects as Jonah introduces himself using the utterance "call me Jonah", like Melville's character. The name Jonah seems to be chosen on purpose, as *Moby Dick* is a re-writing of a biblical story of Jonas and the whale. The whale is not mentioned in the novel but most of the important incidents happen at the sea. The dead corpse of Papa Monzano falls in the ocean and freezes the water. This incident leads to a total catastrophe that ends life on earth. At some instances, the water formed walls and doors because it was frozen, especially the waterfalls.

Both the expression "call me Jonah" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1), and the choice of the name itself, Jonah, are references to Jonas in the biblical parable who is swallowed by a whale. Just as Jonas lives inside a whale in the bible, and Abraham who also is swallowed by a whale in *Moby Dick*, the two are parodied in Jonah who, instead of the white whale, faces the dangers of living under the control of the white-blue frost of Ice-nine.

One more book that also occurs in *Cat's Cradle* is Philip castle's guide to san lorenzan language in his history of San Lorenzo entitled *San Lorenzo: The Land, the History, the People*. This latter also focuses on Bokononism and serves as the first encounter of the narrator with this religion. It quotes Bokononist Calypsos and lines to explain this philosophy. The one that attracted Jonah the most was the Bokononist

approach to the definitions of good and evil in society and how to reach goodness according to his understanding. He calls this relationship the "Dynamic Tension" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 73), and claims "good societies could be built only by putting good against evil, and by keeping the tension between the two high at all times" (73), then follows up with Calypso where Bokonon simplifies his belief saying;

> 'Papa' Monzano, he's so very bad,
> But without bad "Papa" I would be so sad;
> Because without "Papa's" badness,
> Tell me, if you would,
> How could wicked old Bokonon
> Ever, ever look good? (73)

Aside from the structure of the text within the text under discussion, Bokonon's approach to good and evil stems from concept related to body-building but is also borrowed to serve in religious thinking. Bokonon deterritorializes the traditional understanding of religious concepts, and moralistic ones as good and evil, and leads them towards entirely new territories of a new understanding, although it is often ironic and seeks to mock a common belief in Western culture.

Philip Castle's book also serves as a guide to Bokononist and San Lorenzan's language. Vonnegut creates an entirely new language in this novel and creates definitions and references to each of his fictional San Lorenzan words. He quotes San Lorenzan poems that are inspired from English, and that go as follows:

> *Tsvent-kiul, tsvent-kiul, lett-pool store,*
> *Ko jy tsvantoor bat voo yore.*
> *Put-shinik on lo shee zo brath,*
> *Kam oon teetron on lo nath,*
> *Tsvent-kiul, tsvent-kiul,*
> *lett-poll store,*

Ko jy tsvantoor bat voo yore[35] (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 78)

The original words in the American English translate as

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Shining in the sky so bright,
Like a tea tray in the night,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are. (78)

The San Lorenzan language is part of the childish and playful language that Vonnegut tends to put in his works much often. His use of this language is an escape from the common language of the culture that gives his characters the sense of imprisonment and loneliness. In these novels, he creates territories of escape in which language is defalimiarized, then leads to an entirely new body of language operating in a setting where life is different and the forces of authority are less significant.

Different instances in the narration of *Cat's Cradle* are affected by the intrusion of *The Books of Bokonon*. Sometimes, even the incidents that happened in the narrator's life before he discovered Bokononism are interpreted in Bokononist terms. First, when he speaks of his initial plan to write the book *The Day the World Ended* he mentions that it was supposed to be "a Christian book. I was a Christian then. I am a Bokononist now. I would have been a Bokononist then, if there had been anyone to teach me the bittersweet lies of Bokonon" (1). By making this analogy, he is showing the differences in perspectives between Chritianity as a traditional religion, and Bokononism, the religion of escape. The escapist aspect in Bokononism leads the believer to always approach things for a positive point of view because they only want to enjoy "the bittersweet lies" although they are aware of their untruthfulness. Unlike his status as a Christian which made him focus on the negative

[35] Author's italics

aspect of the day the Atomic bomb was dropped on Japan and to refer to it as the day the world ended.

The perspective of the narration of the book is also Bokononist in the novel. The narrator speaks of his journey collecting material for his book on the day the bomb was dropped on Japan but still uses Bokononist references. He says, "I intend in this book to include as many members of my *Karass* as possible, and I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on Earth we, collectively, have been up to" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 4). In doing so, he gets in touch with the Hoenikker children who he later admits are part of his Karass. They are related to him through the "sinookas, the tendrils of ... life [that] tangle" with those of the members of a Karass (4), the latter being one of the purely Bokononist words that the novel under discussion presents and serves as a guide to understand.

4.3.2 The Language of Bokononism as a Metalanguage

Waugh quotes linguist Louis Hjelmslev in defining Metalanguage. He considers it as a language that refers to another language rather than referring to simple signifieds. Metalanguage is a "language that takes another language as its object" (Waugh 4). On this basis, different languages and discourses in Vonengut's three novels (and many others) are presented as a metalanguages. The language of Bokononism is entirely made by the author. This language is not simple gibberish, or childish creativity that the author chooses to put in his work for the comedy, but refers to meanings and practices that he sought to satirize in society, and which have no linguistic equivalences in common American English.

The novel *Cat's Cradle* includes different levels of language and of narration. The book within a book technique that is adapted in the novel leads to a language of implicit transgression. Bokononism as a language occurs in the island of San Lorenzo which itself symbolizes both the order that the system seeks to impose but also the void that leads to chaos. The beginning of chaos in *Cat's Cradle* signifies the act of transgression. It is presented in different steps, the first one shows the San Lorenzans

as a poor people who starve. From the very beginning, the narrator is aware that it is hopeless place.

The republic of San Lorenzo has no industry nor any form of economy, no hospitals or health system, but the president lives on the hope that he will seduce American businessmen to invest in the Island using the magazine cover[36] that was delivered to Jonah on the plane (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 56). Jonah learns about the number of people who died in the island during a plague because of the inability of the only existing hospital to save them, then of the representation of Bokonon as a symbol of rebellion and the only form of relief. Bokonon is the void that leads to chaos in the order of the Island. He is the figure that is chased by the president and whose ideas are forbidden in the country. Yet, the few minutes before the death of Papa Monzano show that he purposefully created this chaos as a necessary transgression.

Papa Monzano allows transgression in his republic because of his awareness that it was the only escape for the San Lorenzans because they would otherwise be aware of their misery and probably end their lives. Both Bokononism as a religion and as a language occur in the void of chaos that leads to a new plateau of creativity in San Lorenzo. Thus, Bokononism as a metalanguage refers to the seeming chaos of language, which in fact is the opening of a new plateau.

The first transgressive plateau that is created through this transfer of languages is that of the *foma,* which is translated as harmless untruths (1). Foma is in fact a set of lies that the people in San Lorenzo would tell themselves and believe in for the sake of giving meaning to their lives. The truth of their world is revealed too harsh to be lived and sustained. The cases of individuals who no longer believed in foma ended committing suicide for their conviction that there was no more hope in their lives (like Mona). Thus, foma create a plateau that breaks from the life that is traced

[36] Before Jonah's arrival in San Lorenzo, he is offered a guide to the Island which shows Mona and a bulldozer on the cover page to give the illusion of a technological country (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 56).

by Papa Monzano in San Lorenzo, who attempts to convince his people that they are disciples of the United States and that they live in a developed country.

Due to foma, the San Lorenzans find hope in the religion of Bokononism itself. The game that is played by Bokononon (the religious figure) and Papa Monzano (The despotic president) outlaws the religion and thus creates the illusion that the San Lorenzans do exercise some sort of adventurous belief without the consent of their governor. The Cat's cradle, the game, is revealed partly when Papa Monzano announces that he is a Bokononist on his death bed, and thus the pursuit of Bokonon and the talks about the Hookah (a hook that is placed for Bokonon to be executed when he is caught) are all exposed as parts of a loop game.

Outside the fantasy of *Cat's Cradle*, the idea of the foma has existed for quite a while in human thinking. Existentialism as a philosophy presents the idea of the Bad Faith which is quite close to the harmless untruth[37]. Just like the myth of Sisyphus who keeps rolling the rock up the mountain, loses it to the bottom, to then roll it up again. The Bad faith is Sisyphus' conviction that the loop of the rock that is pushed upwards over and over is meaningful. In the foma, Vonnegut is indeed proposing a void of chaos that leads outside the organized world of fake capitalism that is imposed by Papa Monzano, yet by leading to a new plateau, it is not a world of truth that is evoked but another world of constructed, creative tranquility that is made up.

In *Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut treats language like a machine that produces new meanings. He invents an entirely new register with vocabulary including new senses. Language in this case becomes powerful because of its ability to extend its territory. Vonnegut uses nonsense to give language the power to create meaning. He invents utterances that have never existed before in *Cat's Cradle*. They are words that have no antecedent in the world, like the "Granfalloon", the "Karass" (which are discussed below), "Boko-maru" (a Bokononist ritual that is practiced by touching other people's feet for spiritual love), "foma" (shameless lies), "Duprass" (A "Karass"

[37] Refer to 3.4.3 on page 158

made of two people only), "Vin-dit" (a shove in the direction of Bokononism) and many other words including, "Wampeter" (A pivot of a "Karass").

Through this language, Bokononism provides comforts and peace to the believers of this religion. It classifies them into Karass and Granfalloons and puts the people with a goal in life in the Karass, then the ridiculous ones in the Granfalloon. This latter is an absurdist concept of humans who believe in material things as meaningful. Vonnegut defines the "Granfalloon" in a Bokononist calypso saying: "if you wish to study a ganfalloon / just remove the skin of a toy balloon" (104). He refers by it to people who work together toward no particular end, and give importance to shallow things. Examples of behaviours of Granfalloons in the novels are a group of people celebrating their common origin (Indiana) like Hazel Crosby;

> I don't know what it is about Hoosiers," said Hazel, "but they've sure got something. If somebody was to make a list, they'd be amazed."... She grasped me firmly by the arm. "We Hoosiers got to stick together."... "You call me 'Mom.'" "What?" "Whenever I meet a young Hoosier, I tell them, 'You call me *Mom*'" "Uh huh." "Let me hear you say it," she urged. "Mom?" She smiled and let go of my arm. Some piece of clockwork had completed its cycle. My calling Hazel "Mom" had shut it off, and now Hazel was rewinding it for the next Hoosier to come along. (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 65)

Hazel and H. Lowe Crosby (Ms Crosby) represent the voices in American culture who believe in the discourses of the mainstream blindly and give meanings to their lives based on materialistic objects.

Hazel's Hoosier-celebration show is described as "a textbook example of a false *Karass,* of a seeming team that was meaningless in terms of the ways God gets things done, a textbook example of what Bokonon calls a *Granfalloon*" to show the triviality of her interests (65). He then identifies other types of Granfalloons which are "Communist party, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Electric Company, the International Order of Odd Fellows--and any nation, anytime,

anywhere" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 65) as well as the United States of America (197).

The Karass on the other hand, is a reference to a group of people connected unconsciously to "do God's will" (2). They are connected by kan-kan, a reference to the object that attracts a person towards their Karass. It is the opposite of "Granfalloon," and is presented as an opposite to the absurdist beliefs of Western tradition. Unlike the Granfalloon, the Karass "ignores national, institutional, occupational, familial, and class boundaries. It is as free-form as an amoeba" (2). The Karass is thus free of constructs, it is formed based on good values rather than socially fashioned norms.

The two words, Karass and Granfalloon represent the most important binarism in the novel. They are metaphors for human interests and their ridiculous references, as opposed to the will to serve humanity and to do good. Through these concepts, Vonnegut criticizes human understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. As the Granfalloons relate the purpose of life to materialistic goals, often limited to national boundaries and to political instructions, the Karass is rather free and works towards a noble end. In this case, the Karass is a free territory, an amoeba, using Vonnegut's words that is formed spontaneously, without the interference of social and cultural constructs to serve only the wellness of man, freely.

Some terms are quite comic and naive, like "Borasisi" (the sun) and "Pabu" (the moon) (136), appearing in a chapter entitled "A Pack of Foma" (136). Finally, the "Stuppa" (which in *Cat's Cradle* refers to Frank in particular) is a "fogbound" child (208). The author also creates concepts for common behaviours and forces that lead human life, like his idea of the wampeter and the wrang-wrang. The wampeter is defined as "the pivot of a *Karass*. No *Karass* is without a wampeter, Bokonon tells us, just as no wheel is without a hub. Anything can be a *wampeter*: a tree, a rock, an animal, an idea, a book, a melody, the Holy Grail" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 56). The wampeter can be a representative of a fate that humans are not aware of, or what directs human beings towards their missions in life.

The idea of the wampeter is also juxtaposed with its opposite meaning, the wrang-wrang, which is defined as "a person who steers people away from a line of speculation by reducing that line, with the example of the *wrang-wrang's* own life, to an absurdity" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 56). While the wampeter pushes people towards their mission, the wrang-wrang pushes them away from specific directions in life, merely, an absurdity.

During the narration, Jonah mentions the different people who compose his Karass and they are the people who have pushed him towards Bokononism in one way or another. Through his journey, he meets the Mintons who seem to belong to a Karass too. The Mintons are diplomats who are sent to San Lorenzo to serve as Ambassador and his wife. Through the trip, they mention that Minton was fired from his former job as a diplomat because of a letter his wife had written, in which she unveils the seeming popularity and glory of the American citizen abroad to argue that "Americans couldn't imagine what it was like to be something else, to be something else and proud of it" (69). She goes on "[they] are forever searching for love in forms it never takes, in places it can never be. It must have something to do with the vanished frontier" (69). The latter seemed to be the most upsetting sentence to the government.

According to Jerome Klinkowitz, the vanished frontier is a reference to the cultural frontier which had separated American culture during the civil war, thus making up the American Dream. He argues that one of the author's intentions was an incentive to redefine the American Dream in a sense that would enhance acceptance of cultural differences (*Kurt Vonnegut* 62). The Mintons were described as "lovebirds" by the narrator, because they amused each other and took care of each other without including anyone in their bond (Vonnegut, *Cat's* Cradle 61).

Jonah considers the Mintons as members of a Duprass, which is slightly different from a Karass. Bokonon defines it as a Karass for two people only, that allows the development of "insights that are queer but true" in the total privacy of an intimate relationship (87). Jonah makes the link between this function of a Duprass

and the Mintons' intimacy when he discovers Claire Minton's job as indexer. He learns about her ability to read human traits and character based on the way an author indexes their own work. Both Claire and Ambassador Minton share a common passion and trust in each other's perceptions and intuitions. When Ice-nine spreads over the island, the couple die together within the same second.

One of the ways in which metafiction occurs in a text is through the repetition of the same utterances but in new contexts. Katherine Hayles describes this saying "the permeation of any text by an indefinite and potentially infinite number of intertexts implies that meaning is always already indeterminate". The creation of meaning becomes possible the moment the system of a text is disrupted when it is transformed into an intertext. Alexander Boon quotes this view by Hayles in arguing that decontextualizing a term from its original context is a way to lead towards endless possibilities of new meaning, that are indeterminate, thus reaching the process of action of chaos. The creation of meaning, through iteration using Derrida's words as cited by Hayles, or through the introduction of intertexts, is a literary transgression. This transgression is of a chaotic style but it allows the author and reader to create new assemblages and territories of meaning. The recontextalization of words in metafiction is thus a freedom, referred to as indeterminacy by Hayles, that resides "in writing's essence" (qtd. in Boon, *Chaos Theory* 71).

The theory of chaos seems to back up that of Deleuze and Guattari's on Assemblage when it comes to transgression and creation of new meaning. Boon compares texts to "webs" that are built out of "multiple iterations'" that never "duplicate meaning, but, … contstruct isomorphisms from indeterminacy" and then he quotes Hayles who refers to books as "reservoirs of chaos" (*Chaos Theory* 71). These descriptions of books and their functioning are very similar to the definition of book as a set of assemblages and multiplicities by Deleuze and Guattari. The chaotic relationships between the multiplicities are indeterminate paths that lead to endless new territories.

The books of Bokonon as a book inside a book tell many things about human history and can themselves serve as the object of a study. They discuss existientialist themes like the idea of the bad faith in the bokononist Foma, good will in the Karass, and the ridiculous in human life in what they call the Granfalloonery. They discuss the history of human beings as a deceiving institution, saying "history… Read it and weep!" (180). The book thus introduces a parody of modern history, in which humanity starts to lose value in favour of scientific discovery.

4.3.3 The Parody of Modernity in *Cat's Cradle*

The novel includes a set of parodies to add to its metafictional aspect. It switches from a narrative to another, constantly making references to other texts and making straight attacks on the ideologies of the mocked texts. Patricia Waugh argues that the metafictional text will use parody as part of its self-awareness to decentralize authority (Waugh 13). Some critics attack his references to Hiroshima as a "false historical awareness" for the link it creates between the chaos of destruction in Japan and the trauma of the firebombing of Dresden (Rigney 11). Yet, the text reaches the goal of breaking the structures of a social norm by staging parodies in which such structures cause more harm than goodness (29). In a parody, an object is displaced from its common environment to be then reproduced with more humour and with more focus on its structures. Vonnegut as a satirist uses parodies to uncover the myths that control modern human life.

The first parody he makes is the reference to the biblical story Jonas and the Whale and *Moby Dick*'s presentation of the main character when he uses the same utterance "call me Jonah" (1), as the one which occurs in *Moby Dick* "Call me Ishmael" (Melville 21). Hobby thinks that this reference is made precisely to reveal "the mystery of God" (60). In his opinion, this reference explains that justice is beyond the reach of man and that Jonah, author of the book on the end of the world, has a prophetic role, just like that of Vonnegut in *Cat's Cradle*, of Bokonon, and of the original Jonas in the biblical story (60). The reference to Herman Melville's novel

can be read as an attempt to create a link between the end of the world, the fact that all the seas froze, and the danger of being swallowed by the whale.

Other parodies are made for criticism and for the sake of writing irony. The *Books of Bokonon* include different parodies and references to the bible. Vonnegut takes stories, utterances, and texts from the bible and re-writes them in a rather comic and challenging form. He uses the words "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" and transforms them to "Pay no attention to Caesar. Caesar doesn't have the slightest idea what's *really* going on" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 72). By doing so, Bokonon challenges the assumptions of the bible, asserting that nobody ever understands anything about life, destiny, and about how God rules human lives. He infers that any good Bokononist should be able to admit their inability to understand life and religion. Kathryn Hume calls this method creating "new tools of expression" because "the traditional ones have failed him". (Hume, "Kurt Vonnegut and the Myths" 431).

Bokonon's calypso imitates in style T. S. Eliot's poem "A Game of Chess" as well as in meaning as in structure. Both speak of different people but having no particuliar meaning to reflect meaninglessness. Bokonon's Calypso says:

> Tiger got to hunt,
> Bird got to fly,
> Man got to sit and wonder, "why, why, why?"
> Tiger got to sleep,
> Bird got to land;
> Man got to tell himself he understand (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 130)

Through this calypso the author seeks to ironically highlight the absurdity of life in the modern age and man's inability to understand his environment, man in his calypso (considered here as a piece of wisdom that is valid to serve as a general truth) is lost and constantly wondering why things happen the way they do, never getting convincing answers. Vonnegut tends to use such irony to depict absurdism and the

sense of loss very often in his works and in *Cat's Cradle* it becomes his trademark along with the use of black humour.

4.3.4 Irony in *Cat's Cradle*

As linguistic and cultural transgressions are made in the novel *Cat's Cradle*, more defamiliarizations occur in its humourist aspect. The novel is based in a great portion on the use of irony, and more precisely on black humour, a technique that Vonnegut uses to represent the massacre in his writing. The novel begins with ironies from its first pages. As a matter of fact, the first irony that is made in the novel is the bokononist and self-conscious warning that appears in the epigraph. The cat's cradle as a game is also presented as a metaphor that "produces manifold paradoxes, cognitive conundra, and self-reflexive, irresolvable ironies" (Easterbrook 75)

Vonnegut turns to irony because he tries to depict the absurdity of the universe. His main objective is to shed light on humanitarian values, especially "uncritical love and a sense of family" (Lundquist 5), as he expresses in his books and in his characters the search of the feeling of belonging. James Lundquist refers to Vonnegut's humour as a "cosmic irony"; which he defines as "the laughable prospect of man's attempts to give order to the disorder of the universe through philosophies, theologies, or even scientific systems In one way or another, each of Vonnegut's novels is an extended cosmically ironic joke" (18). He argues that the works of Vonnegut channel his wish to "believe in the most ridiculous superstition of all: that humanity is at the center of the universe, the fulfiller or the frustrator of the grandest dreams of God Almighty" (5). Sometimes he shows an uncertainty where he attacks and ridicules superstitious values and innocent beliefs while in others he expresses the need of such beliefs to give sense to life, as in the case of the foma which he warns the readers about in the epigraph.

The epigraph attracts the attention of the reader to the falsehood of the content of the book and that of the religion. The reference to the lies is a joke on the human being and on the reader himself/herself, to indicate that however conscious they are

before readong the book, they will still be affected by the lies. The joke is on the reader because he/she will identify with the lies, although they belong to a fictional religion, as common beliefs in their own lives.

The first lines of the novel also show mockery and sadness in the speaker's tone as he says, "Conveyances and motives, both conventional and bizarre, have been provided. And, according to plan, at each appointed second, at each appointed place this Jonah was there" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 1). Through this statement, he highlights the impossiblity of controlling one's life and his possible regret of being in such places at particular times to be exposed to the series of incidents to be narrated in the following pages. His sadness and regret are further pointed at when he describes precisely when the incidents had started in an ironical way, "When I was a younger man--two wives ago, 250,000 cigarettes ago, 3,000 quarts of booze ago. When I was a much younger man" (1). The dim agony that is presented in such lines, by insisting precisely on the negative descriptions rather than the positive ones, are part of the black humour writing which is his "trademark" (Lunquist 6). These claims are followed by the mention of his book about the end of the world and its relationship with the bombing of Japan to accentuate the depth of the irony.

Black humour is defined as "a kind of comedy that juxtaposes pain with laughter, fantastic fact with calmly indequate reactions, and cruelty with tenderness" (Olderman qtd. in Lundquist 20). In this sort of humour, Vonnegut opposes particularly the supernatural fantasies with "calmly inadequate reactions" to highlight human inappropriate indifference to what might become of the earth.

At the end of the novel, Hazel Crosby makes a performance of an entirely careless and awkwardly happy witness of the end of the world catastrophe. She adapts to the new situation of having to live surrounded by Ice-nine. She uses the reference "The Swiss Family Robinson" to describe the kind of life she and the survivors (Mr Crosby, Jonah, Frank, and Newt) had in the cave where they were living. Her good mood becomes more inappropriate when she addresses Jonah while he agonizes after

his wife's death. While Jonah is writing, Hazel wonders if it is going to be a funny book because she loves laughter;

> 'How's the writing going?' Hazel asked me. 'Fine, Mom, just fine.' 'When you going to show us some of it?' 'When it's ready, Mom, when it's ready.' 'A lot of famous writers were Hoosiers.' 'I know.' 'You'll be one of a long, long line.' She smiled hopefully. 'Is it a funny book?' 'I hope so, Mom.' 'I like a good laugh.' 'I know you do.' 'Each person here had some specialty, something to give the rest. You write books that make us laugh, and Frank goes science things, and little Newt--he paints pictures for us all, and I sew, and Lowie cooks' (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 199).

The conversation between the two characters is both absurdist and ripe with expressions of futility as Hazel feels comfortably satisfied with Jonah calling her "Mom" and her wish to read something funny while her home is surrounded by dead corpses. She does not even seem to be aware of how serious their situation was and wishes to Jonah to become a famous writer, while knowing that there were no more living people on earth except them.

Blake Hobby argues that in *Cat's Cradle* "Kurt Vonnegut responds to the frailty of our lives, the futility of our utopian dreams, and the absurdities of science and religion with his classic hope and dark humor" (57). The futility of the utopian dream is depicted in the scientist's discovery of Ice-nine (and before that, the invension of the Atomic bomb). The claim of the possiblity of the existence of a utopia through science becomes an absurdity the moment science starts killing innocents.

Vonnegut seeks to uncover the structures leading human life by mocking their basics and the narratives that cover them. He laughs about a huge phallic tombstone that he sees at the cemetary then is told that it was the tombstone the Hoenikker children bought for their mother, and that however ridiculous it looked, it represented their love to their mother. The tombstone was bought with the Nobel Prize money

that their father had won. Jonah sarcastically calls it dynamite money "thinking of the violence of dynamite and the absolute repose of a tombstone" (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 46). The reference to the Nobel Prize and its violence is made to attract attention to one of the most glorious and prestigious narratives in the world, then to the story that lies beneath to show the level of untruthfulness the human race has engaged itself to under the name of Modern civilization.

Black humour includes "negations, absurdities, and dark truths about our lives, including our inability to defeat death and the conflicted way we cope with this darkest of all dark realities" (Hobby 57). More of such absurdities about the human life are exposed in the case of Hazel Crosby listing the numbers of Hoosiers who have important positions. She starts what he refers to as a "clockwork" whenever she meets someone from Indiana. She becomes more absurd as the clockwork reaches the end of its cycle when the listener calls her "Mom" then she quits the conversation and moves to someone else to restart the performance one more time (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 65).

The modern world ideologies are also mocked and ridiculed in this novel in the characters of H. Lowe Crosby and Papa Monzano. Crosby travels to San Lorenzo in order to manufacture bicycles at low cost and escape taxes. He thinks that his business will be successful in San Lorenzo because "The people down there are poor enough and scared enough and ignorant enough to have some common sense!" (63-64). While unaware of his materialism, Crosby tries to exploit people in a third world country (referred to as a Banana Republic), he speaks about them very harshly and imagines that it is the logical order of things. Crosby represents the capitalist and colonist mindset that most of the modern Western civilization is built upon starting from the enlightenment and the rise of Capitalism which had led to exploitation of third world countries.

In *Cat's Cradle,* there are many symbols that refer to the presence of capitalism in a way or another. The references to capitalism are meant to show the ridiculous and the absurd particularly in San Lorenzo. The country is poor but is totally

controlled by capitalism although it claims its financial and economic independence. One example is the name "pro-patria" (182), which was printed on the wreath that was supposed to be cast in the sea for the Hundred Martyrs Memorium. The wreath was most likely going to be collected from the river by the village poor inhabitants as Julian Castle suggested would happen to Newt's painting. The American words on the wrath and the condition of San Lorenzans highlight to a certain extent the results of capitalist control and colonial exploitation on poor countries, yet also the influence and impact of capitalism in general. Others signs of capitalism were the only taxi that existed in San Lorenzo and which carried the letters USA on it after the storm, and the repeated references to communism by Crosby.

Vonnegut speaks in the voice of Claire Minton who says that the Americans are in constant search for love in forms it never takes and in places it never goes to (109). Yet, the novel *Cat's Cradle* shows more unconditional love than Claire would have imagined. Ambassador Minton mentioned to Jonah that he had been sent to San Lorenzo as a punishment for his wife's letter about Americans and their search for love due to America's foreign policy. He had never complained in front of her of the real reason for which they were sent to that island. Jonah takes them as a perfect Karass (a group of people that are connected by God to do his will (12). It is felt in Vonnegut's tone that he has a high valorization for what he calls a Karass (or the people who represent it), as he seems.

4.4 Self-Referentiality and Experimental Writing as Frame-Breaks in *Sirens*

Patricia Waugh argued that metafiction shows that life is constructed through "frames" (Goffman qtd. in Waugh *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice* 29). By targeting the content of the text, it transforms negative traditions that are considered as conventions into material of constructive social criticism (12). Waugh and Goffman refer to social structures and traditions as frames that individuals have to live within. In such understanding, "life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames" (29). Both in life and in literature, these social constructs, represented as frames, control things and introduce individuals into life situations easily in a way as

to make them feel totally involved. The frames are principles that control human life (30).

In *Sirens of Titan*, such frames are put to light. As a matter of fact, they are exposed in the three novels under discussion but most particularly in *Sirens*. Metafiction, according to Patricia Waugh, reveals such frames and their implicit constructs by staging stories within stories, showing characters who learn about themselves in the novel, self-destructive universes (as is the case of the earth in *Cat's Cradle* and Mercury as well as the population of Mars in *Sirens*)

The analysis of the novel *Sirens* in the previous chapters has shown how social life is *framed* by some agents that vary from general culture to specific people who want to control the world (like Mr Rumfoord). These frames are broken by the author first as he points their artificiality. They can attract the reader's attention to the frames that actually structure the real world and to the fact that human beings are induced into conforming to them. On this matter, Wolfgang Ister explains,

> the fact that completely different readers can be differently affected by the 'reality' of a particular text is ample evidence of the degree to which literary texts transform reading into a creative process that is far above mere perceptions of what is written. (qtd in Levine 65)

The argument entails that the literary text can act as an agent that pushes the reader to reflection and that it serves an objective far more important than simple representation for entertainment.

The novel *Sirens* is regarded as a "run-of-the-mill science fiction novel" (Klein). It includes aspects of low science fiction (or cheap science fiction, which often is confused with Pulp fiction) such as the cover page which depicts three naked women and a man (who is also naked) as a reference to Constant and the promised Sirens whom he never meets but appear from a distance on Titan, yet remain unreachable. The setting of the novel is also war-related and happens in the solar system, which is part of the science fiction.

Different archetypes of science fiction and dystopian novel occur in the narrative. The interplanetary travel that is surrounded by war, the war on earth, the creation of a new religion, brain washing, in addition to some erotic pulp fiction like the rape of Beatrice. The novel is described as:

> naïve literature in every way possible, since it is a formulaic type (science fiction), employs formulaic characters, episodes, themes, properties, and settings, and is written in a remarkably simple style that, though not particularly formulaic, nevertheless includes evidence of formulaic epithets and phrase-tag (Mellard qtd. in Klein).

The characters in the novel are simple. They do not show complexity and are to a certain extent iconic until they start discovering their new selves. They are set in such a playful manner that inspires the feeling that the novel is not written for a serious purpose.

The novel *Sirens* is also a collection of stories within stories that also includes some parts of fictional books that only exist in the novel. Yet, one of the things that the novel does is laying out all the structures that control human life and somehow unveiling the truth about them. Patricia Waugh argues that one of the main problems of contemporary literature is the "framing" that occurs both in structuring a society and building a novel (28). *Sirens* does not really use the author's intrusion or self-referentiality to highlight the book's artificiality, but it brings to light the constituting frames of society by imitating them. It also highlights them by plotting a story within a story, both being the invention of Mr Rumfoord who foolishly believes he controls everybody's fate in the novel, until he realizes in the end that his own life was controlled by the Tralfamadorians and that everything he was doing is part of the Tralfamadorian mission.

Waugh also posits that postmodern writing considers that both history and fiction are "perceived" through the social structures that control the reader's mind, or what she refers to as "frames" (28). In metafiction, the social conventions are dismantled when the text goes through different processes like writing a story within

a story (the present case of *Sirens* is an example, but also *Slapstick*), personages reading about themselves in the narration, and "self-consuming worlds" (28), like cases of *Cat's Cradle* and *Sirens*.

The novel *Sirens* includes some metafictional aspects that disrupt the traditional form of the text like writing within writing, and re-productions of canonical narratives. The first of these is the multiple texts that the novel refers to through the narrative. It makes references to different poems and history books that contribute by providing important information about the narrative, reason for which it is referred to as a "metafictional parody" by Ralph Clare (68). First, the novel shows a number of citations in the prologue, each followed by a –fictional– book title, like;

> In the beginning, God became the Heaven and the Earth.... And God said, 'Let Me be light,' and He was light. — *The Winston N/les Rumfoord Authorized Revised Bible*... "In terms of their souls, the martyrs of Mars died not when they attacked Earth but when they were recruited for the Martian war Machine." — *The Winston Niles Rumfoord Pocket History of Mars*. "I found me a place where I can do good without doing any harm." — Boaz in Sarah Home Canby's *Unk and Boaz in the Caves of Mercury* (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 4).

All these lines occurred more or less in different places in the novel. They became citations in the fictional books of the novel because it was a world entirely controlled by Rumfoord, who thought he was writing the history of humanity, unaware of how he was himself controlled.

One example of such works is *Rumfoord's Pocket History of Mars* which provides information about fictional planets and their populations. It speaks of Phoebe, the only city on Mars, estimates its population of about eighty-seven thousand people, all of them controlled by the same antennas as the ones placed in the bodies of the soldiers (137). The *Pocket History* also told the details of the war of Mars against earth with "glorious perfection" (165).

Rumfoord's Pocket History of Mars is symbollic in different ways. First, it is the object of a policy based on dictatoriship and mind-control that Rumfoord had imposed on his population. Moreover, it serves as an example of how history is produced, fashioned, and manipulated by the people who detain power, as the policy maker is the one who is writing the only history book available in the colony. This *historian*[38] is the only one whose memory has not been erased and his writing of this history is subject of his personal opinion. Rumfoord's history does a double edged function as it shapes and is shaped by culture when it comes as an influence to its readers, and product of the ruling system. The third symbol in this book is its role as an artefact. Vonnegut uses a self-conscious writing of a book inside a book to attract attention to the structures within which this history was made and to ring the bell to real-life histories and the implications they include during their making. As a self-conscious text, this history is an example of the social structures that lie beneath the bases of human civilization.

Rumfoord goes on to consider himself as the only leader and the most legitimate to run a colony by writing pieces of wisdom in his *Pocket History*, through which he explains his vision and philosophy in life, and by which he controlled the masses on mars. On the topic of good and evil he writes "There is no reason why good cannot triumph as often as evil. The triumph of anything is a matter of organization. If there are such things as angels, I hope that they are organized, along the lines of the Mafia" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 165). His philosophical musings sound like imitations of philosophical texts written through the past history of humanity.

In a way, Rumfoord tries not only to write the history of a people but also to build his own civilization. His philosophical texts show that he believed in the fake universe he had built for himself and for the people he had kidnapped and took to Mars;

[38] Italics for emphasis

> Any man who would change the World in a significant way must have showmanship, a genial willingness to shed other people's blood, and a plausible new religion to introduce during the brief period of repentance and horror that usually follows bloodshed (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 176)

He lists the qualities of a leader that he later lists to Unk to point his failure in life, and to justify his methods in his war against earth. Rumfoord finishes his piece of wisdom saying "Every failure of Earthling leadership has been traceable to a lack on the part of the leader" to implicitly argue that he will correct other leaders' mistakes, or maybe rule without making their mistakes because his method is flawless.

Chapter nine in the novel shows a list of the best-selling books of the period, all of the books in the list are fictional of course. The third best-selling book (after Rumfoord's guide to his religion), is his *Pocket History of Mars*. The lines that are cited from the book are those of Boaz telling Unk on Mercury that he liked being there because he had found a place where he could be good. What is triggering in this book is that the line was published in this history while Boaz and Unk were still in Mercury. With Rumfoord's ability to travel back and forth in time, he could foresee the events, even the conversations, and put them in his book before they happened. The people on Mars and on Earth could read about Boaz and Unk on Mercury while these two were still there. Even though the novel shows no direct act of self-consciousness, this shift from one book to another and their additions to the narrative fulfill the job of the self-reflexivity of the text. Readers see the text from the perspective of Rumfoord as he travels in time.

The novel also includes references to other books like the *The Winston Niles Rumfoord's Authorized Revised Bible,* which is quoted only once as it presents a parody of the myth of creation, "In the beginning, God became the Heaven and the Earth . . .[39] And God said, 'Let Me be light,' and He was light. — The Winston Niles Rumfoord Authorized Revised Bible" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 196), as a parody to the

[39] Author's ellipsis

biblical line "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....* And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (*BibleGateway*). The parodies of the bible are made evident and including modifications that still keep the original text but switch meaning to emphasize the comic side of the re-writings of the biblical texts. Such texts are made ridiculous on purpose to highlight the absurdity of their untruthfulness, yet, people's eagerness to convert to them.

Rumfoord is not the only recognized author in the novel. In an unexpected gesture, the novel refers to its artificiality to comment on the narration in the voice of the unknown narrator. As a matter of fact, the narrator does not introduce himself/ herself in the beginning nor in any part of the novel. The reader is often led to believe that the narration is done by Rumfoord himself, yet, comments are made about his own behaviours which clarifies that there is another voice in the novel. This latter reports a conversation between Rumfoord and his wife Beatrice, then interrupts the narrative to note "It is worth stopping the narrative at this point to say that this cock-and-bull story told to Beatrice is one of the few known instances of Winston Niles Rumfoord's having told a lie" (58). By this comment, the narrator can be considered as the author of the book since the reader's attention is attracted to the fact that there is an act of writing in this text. Rumfoord is not the master of the narration, just like his case with the Tralfamadorians who use him without his knowledge.

Unk's letter to himself is also considered as an important piece of writing. Vonnegut makes an act of categorization while commenting on the letter in the voice of the narrator. He creates a direct link between literature and rebellion when he describes the letter as "literature in its finest sense" (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 133). Through this comment, Vonnegut specifies one of the roles of literature and of writers as creators of change. He argues that the letter made Unk "courageous, watchful, and secretly free" (133), as a transgressive gesture in the role of literature.

In fact, Vonnegut often argued that the writer occupies the role of an agent who changes society. A writer's motivations should be political because they are "a means of introducing new ideas into society" (qtd. in Klinkowitz 14). Vonnegut

sought to apply this principle both in his fiction among his characters and in his own function as an author. He made several of his characters affected by writers who surrounded them in his novels. The most famous one is Kilgore Trout, often referred to as Vonnegut's alter-ego (Tally, *Postmodern Iconography* 10-11), who appears in different novels to inspire the protagonists (as in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater!*)

4.5 Language Defamiliarizations in *Sirens* and *Slapstick*

Sirens, as a novel about a totalitarian government, mind-control, and despotism, uses the discourse of subversion, and the counter-discourse of rebellion and resistance. The use of language changes as the plot develops and adapts to each situation in a way as to reflect the characteristics of each narrated sequence. In this novel it splits in two categories. On the one side, there is the language of power represented in Winston Niles Rumfoord and the soldiers applying his rules in the infantries. On the other side, there is the language of resistance, represented in Unk and Beatrice, who though ignorant of their status as subjects, rejected such position intuitively.

First, Winston Niles Rumfoord uses his status as a user of the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum, where nobody is wrong, to assert that he has the right to speak for others. As the narration begins, he judges Constant's lifestyle, he informs his wife about misfortunes that will happen to her but refuses to tell her how good her life will be after the accidents. He provokes the accidents in his wife's life and in that of Unk in order to lead them to Mars, but tells them the story as if such things were meant to happen anyway.

Rumfoord's conviction that he is never wrong gives him a certain tone of pride and confidence, not only when he tells events to happen, but also when he addresses Unk, Beatrice, and his followers. His confidence made him so self-centred in his universes, that he even put his name in the seas of the moon Titan, "Titan is the only moon in the Solar System that has an atmosphere... There are three seas on Titan... The names of the three are the Winston Sea, the Niles Sea, and the Rumfoord Sea"

(265), where he established a life for him, in a palace similar to that of the Taj Mahal, and for Beatrice, Constant, Salo[40], and Chrono.

Rumfoord's tone only reduces to confusion and deceit when he discovers that his life was controlled by a Tralfamadorian plan. He loses confidence in his knowledge and becomes angry as he feels that he was a subject, rather than a manipulator. His tone turns to harshness, and somehow offense, as he addresses Salo after discovering the truth. When Salo asks if he can help him, he responds to him;

> 'Will people never stop asking that dreadful question?'... 'Sorry,' said Salo. His feet were so completely deflated... [and] made sucking sounds on the polished pavement. 'Do you have to make those noises?' said Rumfoord peevishly. Old Salo wanted to die. It was the first time his friend Winston Niles Rumfoord had spoken a harsh word to him. (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 281)

Rumfoord's discovery has shown that he hates being treated the way he treated others. His insensitivity towards his crying wife whom he had informed about her rape and about her life on Mars, his carelessness about Constant who went squandering his wealth voluntarily to become less attractive to the Martians, as well as his control of life on Mars, were all reflected in his realization that none of that was his plan, but belonged to a force higher than him.

His anger raises as he is unable to find answers for the first time while his life in the Chono-Synclastic Infundibulum gave him access to all truths,

> 'I should still like to know just what the main point of this Solar System episode has been.' 'You — you've summed it up far better than anyone else could — in your Pocket History of Mars,' said Salo. 'The Pocket History of Mars,' said Rumfoord, 'makes no mention of the fact that I

[40] A Tralfamadorian robot aged eleven million earthling years, who has been living on Titan for centuries, he gave Rumfoord the power to travel in time through the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum and has been receiving messages from his masters in Tralfamadore in archiectural structures and monuments existing on earth and built by humans to serve Tralfamadorian purposes unknowingly. Salo has been a close friend to Rumfoord since his childhood.

> have been powerfully influenced by forces emanating from the planet Tralfamadore.' He gritted his teeth (289).

The shift in the perspective and tone of Rumfoord from strength to weakness denotes his power and his helplessness. The uncertainty in his voice reveals a feeling of distrust and loss to be juxtaposed with his status as master and almost God-like figure in the largest part of the novel. The binarism that is reflected in this analogy shows the oppressor shifting to an oppressed. The language is the same but is transferred from one side to another when the status of the oppressor changes.

The case of Rumfoord's language being dislocated shows a small defamiliarization, though not very obvious. The shift concerns the character more than the language, in his case the language is a simple medium that reflects the fluctuations in his status. Yet, the language defamiliarization is more pervasive when it is used by Beatrice and Unk on Mars.

On Mars, Beatrice Rumfoord also has her memory erased by Rumfoord. Just like Unk, she begins a new life on Mars named as Bee, not knowing anything of her past life as Rumfoord's wife, nor her rape. Yet, she only knows about her son Chrono. She works in a school where she teaches future soldiers how to breathe on Mars. She is subjected to the general order on Mars and starts to feel that her life is limited there.

She writes a poem in which she teaches the method of breathing on Mars. Beatrice shows the poem to her supervisor and is directly sent to the hospital to have her memory erased again. She does not make the least direct reference to resistance in her words yet they are considered as such by the authority around her. Her poem starts by describing the lifestyle on Mars in the line

> Break every link with air and mist,
> Seal every open vent;
> Make throat as tight as miser's fist,
> Keep life within you pent (152).

The words tell the listener to keep their breath in but they seem to speak in the voice of the oppressor when they instruct individuals to keep their thoughts for themselves

in keeping their throats "tight" and their lives "pent" (152). Such are not the thoughts of Bee but in a Free Indirect Style, the voice of the government who only wants them to be submissive and silent.

The poem goes on "Breathe out, breathe in, no more, no more", this line can be read in two perspectives. In the first one it means to let the breath out, then in, and to stop the breath to keep it inside, for anyone learning to breathe on Mars. But the second meaning can be a prohibition from breathing, with emphasis on "no more, no more" which occurs twice. The meaning here is a limitation of freedom represented in the freedom of breathing. By controlling personal freedoms, the government metaphorically prevents human breathing, both in and out. It switches then to the voice of the ideologies that the system uses to control their subjects when it says "For breathing's for the meek;" to infer that strong people will not breathe, and will thus conform to the rules. The next lines "And when in deathly space we soar, / Be careful not to speak" (152), hit harder to prevent individuals from speaking even if threatened by death.

The remaining lines of the poem incite the individual to keep their thoughts and feelings for themselves if they feel imprisoned,

> If you with grief or joy are rapt,
> Just signal with a tear;
> To soul and heart within you trapped
> Add speech and atmosphere (152).

These lines warn the listener about speaking while in joy. Literally, speaking would be harmful for the person who is practising this sort of breathing because air would cause the substance they swallowed to explode inside them, so it can kill them. Yet, the hidden meaning is a warning against speaking in a moment of extreme sensitivity, be it in joy or in sadness. She ends her poem saying:

> Every man's an island as in
> lifeless space we roam
> Yes, every man's an island

island fortress, island home (152).

By these lines, she is reproducing John Donne's lines "No Man is an Island" which actually means that all humans are dependent on each other. Yet, by assuming that a man is an island indeed, she means that each is independent in this "lifeless space" and "fortress" (153), yet each human being is a home to their own self. Their ideas and views cannot be shared with others for the lack of tolerance and absence of the freedom to express them.

Bee's use of language puts her in a situation of resistance. She becomes a symbol of resistance and of rejection of the oppressor's rule through language, which is the same language of Rumfoord and his policy. She is thus using language out of its context, it becomes the property of the oppressed rather than the oppressor.What actually contributes in shifting the language to the side of the oppressed is the reaction of the oppressor. Bee, seemingly, by showing the poem to her supervisor had no explicit intention to start a resistance. Yet, the reaction reinforces the inferred meanings in the poem and asserts the language as that of a resistance against the system.

The novel includes more language defamiliarizations, not as representations of despotism and resistance but as transgressions committed by the author himself, in his experimentation with writing, and in his wish to represent the perversity of the universe. In doing so, he creates a new universe as a new territory of possible meanings. The fantastic universe that he creates may not be the most idealistic nor does it lead to a utopian life, yet, he ensures writing with difference. His universe is a possible way of experiencing life that is not necessarily the one humans are already used to, but one that is free, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, an assemblage. Their comparison of the book and the assemblage responds perfectly to the structure of *Sirens*, "As an assemblage, a book has only itself, ... in relation to other bodies without organs" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 4). Different concepts in *Sirens* are made as independent assemblages that span from no specific Body, but are themselves

connected without original structures to serve as source. They take their own lines of flight to build their own meanings.

Vonnegut creates his first assemblage in the novel when he defines the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum. It is a system that has no equivalent in the physical world but is made possible through Vonnegut's Alternate universe. The Chrono-Sunclastic Infundibulum is described in the fictional Dr Cyril's *A Child's Cyclopedia of Wonders and Things to Do* as a universe where "an awful lot of people [can] be right about things and still not agree" (14). The use of this sentence is meant as an irony as the author implicitly targets the human wars and conflicts that occurred through the years because people –politicians most often– disagree in their perceptions of things. The Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum is a metaphor on the one side for the different ways human beings can be different and still accept each other's views and on the other side for the ability of seeing the future and the impossiblity of changing anything about it.

Vonnegut also defamiliarizes the common understanding of life on earth when he makes life on Mars possible for normal human beings. The novel speaks of a war led by the Martians against earthlings but then through the narrative it is discovered that these Martians are simple human beings who have been transferred to Mars then used as soldiers in a war they knew nothing about. Here he mocks two main ideologies that were (and somewhere still are) prevalent in the United States. The first one is the idea of sending soldiers to fight in a war they know nothing about and which they never agreed on. This theme is recurrent in his works, most precisely in *Slaughterhouse Five* and in *Cat's Cradle* where the soldiers are referred to as children. In *Slaughterhouse Five* the author depicts this idea in the case of Billy who tries to die in the war because he never wanted to be in it.

The second idea that is mocked in this universe is that of origin and belonging. In *Sirens*, the fighters are human beings invading earth as Martians, and fighting other human beings as enemies. These humans are brainwashed and express their full allegiance to Mars to the extent of being ready to fight their own relatives. This idea

is also tackled in *Slaughterhouse Five* but in more straightforward terms. The author explains that he was born German but never learnt, "since there had been such bitterness in America against all things German during the First World War" (172). Moreover, he mockingly describes Billy meeting his own cousin at war because one of them was American and the other was in the German front, thus an enemy (both finding themselves in a war they knew nothing about and never chose to fight) (Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five* 205).

The defamiliarization of the common understanding of the universe also reaches the solar system. The Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum as a channel belongs to the Solar system and "likes to stay between Earth and Mars." (15), yet, it is not as amusing as it sounds to be as Rumfoord and his dog Kazak do not control their materializations and dematerializations in this system and are shifted from one place to another at precise periods. At the end of the novel, the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum sends them to another galaxy and they become scattered in space forever.

The materialization and dematerialization of man in the novel *Sirens* is also new to human understanding. In this concept, man becomes transluscent then disappears into particles to travel in the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum, then materializes (to become physical again) once he arrives to his destination. Such is fueled by The Universal Will to Become, the main source of energy in the novel, which ironically is defined as "what makes universes out of nothingness—what makes nothingness insist on becoming somethingness" (138). By considering the idea of pre-destination as absurdist and even sinful in the life of Constant, Rumfoord's life is entirely controlled by the same process—Will-to-become—that also controls what happens in his own life. This displacement of meaning and of the conception of man's relationship with fate and destiny is a satire of man's obsession with his illusion of his ability to control life and the unending attempt at challenging God to control one's fate.

However shocking the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum is, it represents a territory that is different from the common territories of the lives of men. Life inside it is also a dislocation of the common understanding of human life, it opens the possibility of a new form of living, in space, and a disruption of the notion of time, in a way as to make the person who travels inside *unstick in time*[41].

The linguistic defamiliarizations that are made by the author in their different forms including dislocation of meaning in *Sirens,* the creation of new concepts in *Slapstcik*¸ and the invention of an entirely new language in *Cat's Cradle*, are meant as a to break the traditional form of writing and thus stand against the structured systems. Deleuze and Guattari deny the importance of meaning in favour of form in the book when they say "We will never ask what a book means... We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed" (4). In relation to Waugh's argument about the significance of structures in a text, they are considered as frames that define the importance of the text and the limitations between the real and fictional worlds (29-30). The structure of the text reflects the feeling and purpose of the author which often is shedding light on the chaos of life through a fragmented plot, time disruption, the self-awareness of the text, or simply chaos.

4.6 The Self-Referentiality of *Slapstick*

Slapstick's prologue presents a mirror into the life of Vonnegut. He first begins by introducing his conception of love, which he replaces by common decency. By this statement, Vonnegut is preparing his audience for the kind of love they will be reading about in the novel. The love that is manifested in the novel is different from

[41] Italics for emphasis. Iconic expression used to refer to Vonnegut's novels and later to himself. Vonnegut used it the first time in his novel *Slaughterhouse Five* to describe Billy's time-traveling "Listen; Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time" (28). The notion of time is philosophical in the novel and has human-related interpretations which made the expression quite common among critics. It is now used as title of different papers and books about the author, and recently as title of a documentary made by Robert D Weide, the production of which lasted 39 years.

the conditional love that human beings usually express for each other. It is expressed first between Wilbur and Eliza in a bond they make towards each other to dwell until their death in their secret world (a vow that is later broken by Wilbur). In the novel, Eliza considers that common expressions of love, like "I love you", include too much engagement and the obligation of responding with similar words that are not necessarily felt by the second part (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 108). The same form of love is expressed when Vonnegut says that human beings should express less love and more common decency towards each other.

Love also takes other forms in the novel which Vonnegut refers to indirectly in his non-fictional prologue. Like most of Vonnegut's novels, *Slapstick* is one of the narratives that show the goal of the novel in the earliest pages. He shows a form of love in what he calls both in the novel and in the prologue the artificial extended family. The artificial family is presented in the beginning in Vonnegut's relationship with his brother, then their belonging to different circles in society due to their jobs. He reports that his relationship with his siblings was a very strong one, and it contributed in building his character as a humourist (Farrell 5). He assigns his brother Bernard to an extended family of scientists while himself to another family of authors. Both are later fictionalized in the novel in what he calls the artificial families based on an arbitrary relationship drawn by middle names that are deliberately assigned to individuals.

Through these representations of love, Vonnegut draws attention to his initial intentions in the prologue, thus letting the reader know that all the work that is presented to them is but a mere fictional representation. By this, the text resists ideological interpretations that might be product of cultural constructs carried by the novel, and reinforces its position as an experimental novel both in form and in content, with a message of resistance.

The resistance occurs at the level of the form of the novel not only in its self-reflexivity but also in the intrusion of the author and his projection in the characters.

The way the plot is staged is also part of his resistance of traditional writing, or what Deleuze and Guattari called, writing against the grain.

Patricia Waugh states that metafiction allows the author to show their intentions through the writing and thus avoid the trap of misinterpretation that may be caused by language. It escapes the power of representation since it may always have something more to say. Vonnegut thus in *Slapstick* interferes to show his objectives of the novel when he compares it to Laurel and Hardy "I have called it "Slapstick" because it is grotesque, situational poetry—like the slapstick film comedies, especially those of Laurel and Hardy, of long ago" (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 1).

The prologue also tells the story of Vonnegut's relationship with his sister. He calls the book part of an autobiography, "this is the closest I will ever get to writing an autobiography" (1). Thus the reader automatically connects with Wilbur and Eliza as alter-egos of Vonnegut and his sister, rather than a world to immerse into. The novel is dedicated to his sister after her death. He identifies himself and his sister in the narration as Eliza and Wilbur, depicted as "monsters... This is only natural, since I dreamed it on the way to a funeral" (19).

It is presented as a mourning to her memory. Just like Vonnegut's sister, Eliza in *Slapstick* dies after she is separated from her brother. Vonnegut's sister in real life dies of cancer. Both Vonnegut and Wilbur live with the memories of their dead sisters and anxieties of their losses. Yet, the death of Eliza is presented in a deeper sorrow that Wilbur feels due to his sense of guilt after abandoning her.

The authorial intrusion is further exposed as Wilbur continues to narrate the novel. Although the speaker is presented as Wilbur after the prologue, the fact that the novel begins with Vonnegut's first person voice speaking of his personal life creates a sort of blurring of voices with that of Wilbur who also narrates the tale in the first person. Vonnegut himself identifies with Wilbur as alter-ego in the novel. The novel is about "this terribly old man in the ruins of Manhattan, ... where almost everyone has been killed by a mysterious disease called "The Green Death."... Who

is he really? I guess he is myself—experimenting with being old (19). He refers the characters Wilbur and Eliza to Vonnegut and his sister Alice, and also Wilbur as being Vonnegut's experimentation in writing about his future self.

The prologue plays a tricky game in the reader's mind as although they are aware that the narrator is fictional, they would still identify him as the author of the novel. The conceptions of love, the relationship with the sister and the extended family project are themes that the author introduces as part of his intentions in writing the book; so through the first person narrative the two personalities of Wilbur and Kurt are blurred and become one.

The impact of Vonnegut as author appears during the narrative in the personality and choices of Wilbur. Just like Vonnegut, Wilbur was married and divorced. Multiple sources mention Vonnegut's life with his first wife, Jane, who remained a friend of him even after their divorce (Strand). Stories about his other wives report that they communicated less with each other. Vonnegut invited his first wife to attend his prize winning ceremony rather than his third wife to whom he was married when he received it. The instability of marraige is depicted in Wilbur's marriage, as his wife hates him and chooses to treat him as non-existent in her life.

As the narration begins, the speaker introduces himself as Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain, old man, former and last president of the United States who lives with his granddaughter Melody and her boyfriend Isadore. After his introduction, he announces "I write this book on the stationery of the Continental Driving School, three boxes of which Melody and Isadore found in a closet on the sixty-fourth floor of our home" (23). By this detail, he creates different levels of the narration. The prologue first is strongly related to the content of the novel due to Vonnegut's identification with the main character. The information that Wilbur is also writing a book directly allows Vonnegut to enter and to dwell inside the narrative. The two become inseparable. Moreover, the two introductions denote the existence of a book inside a book, both of which aware of their artificiality.

The text includes other metafictional techniques, like the existence of multiple texts within the original text. Wilbur and Eliza build their own universe in which they take pleasure in reading and learning about their country and about the world. Their level of awareness leads them to write a critique of the American constitution, because

> since its success in keeping the common people reasonably happy and proud depended on the strength of the people themselves—and yet it described no practical machinery which would tend to make the people, as opposed to their elected representatives, strong (Vonnegut, *Slapstick* 53).

The latter is used by Wilbur in his program as president of the United States.

4.7 Defamilizarizations of Common Concepts in *Slapstick*

The novel defamilirizes the concepts of love and family by a great degree to introduce a different vision of how life could be like if these concepts included more empathy and what he calls common decency. He first gives a very awkward and grotesque body image to Wilbur and Eliza while their parents are described as very beautiful and handsome (65). The use of the grotesque in this situation dislocates the common belief that beautiful and rich parents will make beautiful children. Moreover, it is a dislocation meant for social criticism.

Through the physical malformations of the siblings, Vonnegut is directly targetting and attacking common concepts in society and their perversity. As a matter of fact, representations of the grotesque in literature are often meant as metaphors for social vices. Gerhard Hoffmann considers the grotesque, the comic, and satire as "meaning models" which occur in writing as a result of absurdism and come as an attempt at social criticism (Hoffmann 145). In such case, the grotesque is a tool that breaks social norms and with the help of the comic it reaches the satirical goal of the author, which is its starting point (146).

It is thus possible for the comic to become satirical when the social world loses its stability. Examples of Satirical grotesque in literature are Salman Rushdie's Sufiya

Zinobia in the novel *Shame,* Peccola Breedlove in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus,* and the Hoenikker Children in Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle.* All these characters meet in their physical malformations and ugliness which often comes as result of social carelessness or perversity. Such characters are presented by the authors as the culminations (or embodiments) of selfish habits and sick beliefs in their societies (despotism and religious hypocrisy in *Shame,* identity and racism in *The Bluest Eye*, the danger of science and the discourse of the enlightenment in *Frankenstein* and *Cat's Cradle*).

The deformation of the bodies of Wilbur and Eliza thus signifies defamiliarizations of the concepts of family relations and seeming unconditional love. The situation is best described by Eliza who thinks that the utterance "I love you" (108) is an obligation to express a love a person does not feel. The idea is further emphasized when Wilbur and her mother tell her that they love her after they abandon her. The utterance loses meaning and transforms into an obligation to be told from one person to another under special circumstances. Just like the love the parents never felt towards their children Wilbur and Eliza due to their physical appearance, the utterance denotes hypocrisy and insincerity. Eliza responds to Wilbur and their mother with the same hypocrisy saying "I love you too" (115).

Eliza responds with an expression of love while suing her brother and her mother for abandoning her. She considers that sentence as "pointing the fun at [her] head" and "just a way of getting somebody to say something they probably don't mean" (108). The expression carries a displaced meaning that is shifted from an expression of positive emotion to a negative one, an expression of hate in Eliza's case.

The common understanding of love is countered and thus extended to perceptions of care and attention, referred to as common decency. The siblings think that the American constitution did not represent all the social groups that exist in America; "we said it was impossible that the framers of the constitution were blind to the beauty of persons who were without great wealth or powerful friends or public

office, but who were nonetheless genuinely strong" (53). The idea is that the common understanding of love in society reinforces those who are strong, rich, and beautiful. Thus the system whithin which they have grwon up was exclusive and based on appearances. Yet, their correction of the constitution which included the extended family led them to propose a more rhizomatic plan, one that connects people to each other hazardly, like a rhizome, not based on power, nor strength, or physical appearance. Their plan granted the right of love and of care to every citizen, regradless of how sane or good they are.

Wilbur used this plan in his campaign to become president of the United States and it did lead him to victory. He was convinced that what Americans needed the most was family and care more than anything else; "I spoke of loneliness. It was the only subject I needed for victory... all the damaging excesses of America in the past were motivated by loneliness rather than fondness for sin" (160). He metaphorically displaces the human needs from usual political demands made by the people to basic needs than human beings think they already have.

The novel includes other displacements which though not very significant, are part of the author's attempt at defamiliarizing common definitions and inviting the readers to think about them differently. Although he does present alternatives for the common concepts in society, what he tries to do is to push the readers to think about their common lives outside of the limitations by showing them just one of the ways of being different.

Vonnegut also defamiliarizes perception, as the two children have access to the same values of the normal –daily– life in their society, yet, since they are deprived a social life, they make their own interpretations. Their view of the same social phenomena that happen in front of them is different from that of their surroundings. They are treated like retards and idiots from their birth, "all the information we received about the planet we were on indicated that idiots were lovely things to be. So we cultivated idiocy. We refused to speak coherently in public... we farted and laughed" (41). They are never told what society expects from them nor how normal

human beings are supposed to behave. Being thus treated as aliens, they make their own understanding of the only social standard they see around them. Misbehaving came out as the only standard they knew.

The concept of intelligence and genius is also defamiliarized in the novel. Wilbur and Eliza put their heads together in order to think, to "increase the intimacy of [their] brains" (50). The method is described as incestuous, yet they were not sexually involved. Wilbur only reached puberty at the age of twenty-three, at Harvard Medical School and was already separated from his sister Eliza. Their manifestation of intelligence differs from the usual way of thinking for normal people. This method expresses their love, the intimacy of their universe, and their difference.

The idea of the extended family is an assemblage that has led to the creation of multiple territories that the authors of the initial idea did not expect. Consequently, many concepts in the daily life have changed their definitions and functioning. Slavery became a good thing in Wilbur's America, which is bankrupt and hungry. It became a luxury to be a slave in the house of a rich person. Wilbur speaks of Vera's[42] slaves whom "she treats very well. And she and the slaves raise cattle and pigs and chickens and goats and corn and wheat and vegetables and fruits and grapes along the shores of the East River" (22). America is now agricultural instead of industrial and technological. He switches the norms of the modern world and takes America back to the agricultural and somehow feudalist past in which they live in an America of slaves. He reverses the lifestyle of the modern life as a direct consequence of rapid change and dependency on the technological inventions. Yet, instead of expecting doom, this time, Americans find comfort in this primitive lifestyle. Forms of government have also changed from republican to monarchy, yet each family had their own city and king.

This sort of defamiliarization in which the author reverses myths and traditions of order and culture in the modern world often occur in Vonnegut's experimentation

[42] Wilbur's neighbour in Manhattan

in writing. In the novel *Galápagos* he reverses the theory of evolution to end up with humans whose intelligence is limited due to their small brains, and thus they cannot hurt each other. To lead the joke a little more to the extreme, Vonnegut gives them flippers instead of arms as part of their backward evolution in nature (they turn to half fish called fisherfolks) and the earth is populated with coloured people instead of white men who almost become extinct on earth. The joke in this story is on the dominance of white ideologies and the idea that natural selection has favoured the white man over the man of colour. The reversal of myths and ideologies in Vonnegut's fiction always aims at criticizing the dominant ideology which often has negative consequences on the common man. One more goal is to show that other forms of being are also possible and that the white man should not always appear in the centre.

Vonnegut experiments with writing and with imagination in *Slapstick* as he presents different plots within the same book, starting with a prologue that calls the attention of the reader to the book's artificiality. The use of metafiction contributes in the making of Assemblages, which develop as escapes from the structured systems, to spring into new territories.

4.8 Plot Non-Linearity and Play of Narrators in the Three Novels

The three novels under discussion include multiple plots, the least that can be said about them is that they are complicated and require a certain attention to be followed. This experimental writing is meant to cherish the chaos of the postmodern world and to highlight the feeling of delusion and chaos that pervailed in society during the post-anihilation period. Each of the novels includes a plot inside a plot, or one leading to another, time disruption, variation of narrators and their non-reliability.

The novel *Slapstick* includes multiple plots, though they are told by the same narrator (who can be identified as Vonnegut himself through the work). The first plot is about a brother and sister who identify as "neanderthaloids"; children born with malformations and adult features;

> We were not mongolian idiots, although we had the coarse black hair typical of mongoloids. We were something new. We were neanderthaloids. We had the features of adult, fossil human beings even in infancy—massive brow-ridges, sloping foreheads, and steamshovel jaws. We were supposed to have no intelligence, and to die before we were fourteen (28).

They are placed in a mansion with servants away from their parents who reject them for their ugliness. In the second plot, Wilbur becomes president of the United States, but it is bankrupt. It shows a dystopia in which everyone is poor, ignorant, and starving, because of their isolation due to a virus that spread in Manhattan Island. The only project that worked during Wilbur's term was the extended artificial family-project, America ceases to be a nation in his age, it becomes only families (who call themselves kingdoms) (187). The third plot is the one that follows the period of Wilbur as president. In this one, total chaos takes over America and the president lives in ruins that were left and found in the city of Manhattan.

The exposition of such plots is quite confusing as the narratorial voice shifts from one territory to another without preparing the reader. The novel begins with a prologue that narrates the author's personal life and in which he mentions that the narrated story is a reflection of his own life and his day-dreaming. The narration then opens with the old Wilbur talking as ex-president of the United States living in the midst of the ruins of the city of Manhattan;

> My name is Dr. Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain. I am barefoot. I wear a purple toga made from draperies found in the ruins of the Americana Hotel. I am a former President of the United States of America. I was the final President, the tallest President, and the only one ever to have been divorced while occupying the White House. I inhabit the first floor of the Empire State Building with my sixteen-year-old granddaughter... (22)

The fact of starting the novel at this level (which is quite the end of the novel's plot) mentally prepares the reader for a dystopia. It is then followed with the exposition of the first conflict in the novel which is the birth of the two children as Neanderthaloids.

The exposition that was selected by the author was not arbitrary. It sheds light directly on contradictions in society that come up as results of previous incidents. The fact that America is a bankrupt country after Wilbur's term for example is related to his inability to control and use the scientific theories that were made by his sister Eliza during their confinement. This latter sells them to the Chinese who destroy American in their scientific experiments.

The chain of events will lead to the realization that it was the separation of the siblings that has led her to sell the theories, thus the origin of the problem is the shallowness of their parents who rejected them in the beginning. Wilbur reports "my parents came to me in their chauffeur driven Mercedes Limousine. I was their child with a future. I could read and write" (110). The children were judged based on appearances and separated after the decision of Dr Cordiner. The language that is used by the speaker when he says "child with a future" then the emphasis on his ability to read and write shows human dependence on limited abilities, then in the destruction of Manhattan and the spread of the virus that reading and writing were not enough for a person to have a *future*.

The novel *Sirens* also includes different plots that stream from one territory to another. The opening begins with a nearly traditional exposition of the conflict. the real conflict begins when Constant is born and raised poor by his mother, a prostitue, then inherits a wealth he had never done the least effort to obtain. Yet the conflict that is exposed in the beginning of the novel shows Constant as a spoiled man who arrives in a helicopter to the Rumfoord residence. "Winston Niles Rumfoord extended his soft hand, greeted Constant familiarly, almost singing his greeting in a glottal Groton tenor. "Delighted, delighted, delighted, Mr. Constant," said Rumfoord. "How nice of you to commmmmmmme." (Vonnegut, *Sirens* 20).The reader does not realize the symbolism of the opening scene because it opposes the rivals of the novel:

Constant, Rumfoord, and Beatrice. These become the pilots of the events of the novel whose positions and lives change entirely as the narration develops. They also symbolize the powers that rule society as they represent power, capitalism, and fertility.

The novel introduces social conventions as a pure human invention in three levels and shows how individuals react to (and are controlled by) them. The three parts of the novel will be referred to as stages for more clarity. The first stage highlights the power of money in society and the elegance it may give to anyone who has it. Malachi Constant in the beginning of the novel travels in a helicopter, gets an invitation to witness a very rare phenomenon (Mr Rumfoord and his dog's materialisation). An event that hundred of important people had asked to attend but whose requests were declined.

Constant's wealth was supposed to be unending and was referred to his good luck in life. His money also led him to enjoy luxuriances that very few people could have. During this stage Mr Rumfoord prepares Constant for a future scenario of his own making. This stage is also related to the third stage in which Mr Rumfoord plays the God-like figure and reveals the artificiality of Constant's entire voyage. The task that should be done by Vonnegut is actually performed by Mr Rumfoord when he tells Constant (as space wanderer), and Bee (Mrs Rumfoord) about their past and the truth about who they used to be.

Mr Rumfoord's attack on Constant as Space Wanderer at the third stage is an attempt at breaking the frames that constitute social life, merely those that had made Constant careless about morals because he was rich. The second stage in the life of Malachi Constant is also entirely fashioned by Mr Rumfoord and it is a stage through which Vonnegut parodies despotic systems. Malachi's life on Mars matches to a considerable extent the plot of George Orwell's *1984*.

The plot moves back and forth in time with Rumfoord and Constant's alterations in space. It begins on earth in Rumfoord's house raising a confusion about the materialization and dematerialization of Rumfoord and his dog Kazak. Then the

narration shifts to Constant's party that lasted fifty-two days, in which he spent his wealth. Before the reader gets the consequences of Constant's squandering of his wealth, the narration is sent back to the Rumfoord residency where Beatrice sits on the stairs crying because she learns that she will lose her money too and will be raped on Mars.

The shifts back and forth between the two settings become confusing to the reader, then raise the confusion when they move to planet Mars and without any introduction, the reader finds the military chant "rented a tent, a tent, a tent" (104). The confusion of plots is meant again in the experimentation with writing to avoid the traditional structure and to keep the act of reading streaming form a territory to another, conforming with Deleuze and Guattari's vision of the book, a set of assemblages that can be started at any moment and still make sense. *Sirens* can also be started at any part of the book and still make sense because it is made of chunks that are narrated in different parts, the ones separated from the others, thus need to be collected in order to make meaning.

The plot in *Cat's Cradle* is not less confusing. It includes different settings, and each of which represents one side of reality. Both are based on lies and both implicitly show truths that the human mind prefers to avoid. In this novel, the narrator is also victim of such confusions and decides to submit to the lies when his mind is unable to bear the truths that surround him.

> It was to be a Christian book. I was a Christian then. I am a Bokononist now. I would have been a Bokononist then, if there had been anyone to teach me the bittersweet lies of Bokonon. But Bokononism was unknown beyond the gravel beaches and coral knives that ring this little island in the Caribbean Sea (1).

The novel begins from the end, where the plot has reached its denouement and all human beings had died on earth with the exception of the few who remained with Jonah in their cave-like shelter. He then shifts in the narration between incidents that

happened in his life when he started collecting material about his book on the bomb and reactions he would have had later, after he became a Bokononist.

The narration is affected by multiple perspectives. On the one side, the reactions of the Christian American journalist who lives in America after the end of the Second World War and whose life is affected by city life. He writes a book, he visits a small city to collect information, he drinks, and he hires a prostitute for the night. Yet, his comments about each of the incidents are Bokononist because the events are affected by the narration time which is different from that of their happening. The narrator is doing a self-referentiality to the events of the novel which makes them aware of their untruthfulness without even the intrusion of the real author.

Almost every incident in the novel gets a Bokononist interpretation, which makes most of the novel a self-conscious piece of writing. Right after Jonah mentions that he travelled to Indiana to collect information for his story, he relates this incident to a Bokononist belief; "If you find your life tangled up with somebody else's life for no very logical reasons,' writes Bokonon, 'that person may be a member of your Karass." (Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* 2). Through this statement, Jonah only becomes aware of the goal of his trip when he becomes Bokononist, and is convinced that he had no apparent goal in his previous life.

The reference to Bokononist faith is made when the poet Krebbs leaves Jonah's apartment, after killing his cat and setting fire in his couch. He reports: "after I saw what Krebbs had done, in particular what he had done to my sweet cat, nihilism was not for me. Somebody or something did not wish me to be a nihilist. It was Krebbs's mission, whether he knew it or not, to disenchant me with that philosophy" (56). The reference to Bokononism is not made directly but through a Bokononist interpretation of Krebb's impact on Jonah. It goes in the same process through the narrative. The constant references to Bokononism in the novel serve the author to emphasize the artificiality of the text.

4.9 Conclusion

Self-aware science fiction as a form of experimental writing serves Vonnegut to lay bare social structures and frames that control human life. His use of the genre is a direct attempt to writing satire and showing anger with what he considers an ideology of emprisonment. His technique consists of attracting the reader's attention to the novel's artificiality to show the impact of untruthfulness. Self-awareness in the text is done through the author's reflexivity in the narrative. The latter happens through an interference in the text with additional comments as digressions from the general framework of the novel.

The author also uses authorial intrusion in direct and indirect ways. He interferes directly in the text in the prologue of *Slapstick*, or indirectly when he narrates a text within a text in *Cat's Cradle,* a technique by which he tells his own opinion of things by assigning them to fake beliefs and unreliable narrative voice, merely the same narrator having different, sometimes opposing, views about incidents in his life that are affected by his changing perspective. It also uses references to divergent texts and myths like the myth of creation and Jonas and the whale. Finally, irony comes as an efficient and direct means of criticism of fake social norms and beliefs. The irony is felt, not only in the events of the novel (in the form of absurdist incidents), but also in the author and characters' tones.

In *Sirens* there is no authorial intrusion but a God-like position allotted to Mr Rumfoord. In so doing, his position as the main narrator in the text places him as the master of the narrative and of the reflexivity of the text. Rumfoord's manipulation of the lives of his victims leads to the invention of several universes and plots. These include stories leading to stories, fictional books cited inside the narrated novel, re-productions of canonical narratives, and defamiliarizations of common concepts including the invention of a religion.

All the aforementioned narrative and metafictional techniques lead to a defamiliarization of language. The novels include different linguistic transgressions that are meant by the author to highlight two main aspects. The first is that of the literary estrangement as part of the author's creativity. This latter allows the author

to break with the traditional form of writing which represents the ideology of power, that which caused the feeling of emprisonment and marginalization for the individuals. The second is the author's wish to depict life differently, in a mould that is different from the general order of things, this validates Deleuze and Guattari's claims about reterritorialization and assemblages, that they evolve arbitrarily into new territories and allow for new meanings. Each linguistic and cultural defamiliarization made by Vonnegut, including common definitions of family and love, of self-worth, language, and of the system denote reterritorializations that are different.

General Conclusion

This dissertation investigates the existence of a minority literature within the white literary canon of the twentieth century. The author, Kurt Vonnegut, was chosen purposefully because he is a writer of controversy and of non-traditional literature. Through his works, he managed to shed light on a social group whose experience in the United States of America is quite difficult. His target community is composed of white, middle-class citizens who often feel that they are not represented by the system.

The genre is defined as a writing that narratives that are new, different, traveling. The work of Darko Suvin has shown that these narratives should include cognitive estrangement. They should not only be based on the element of the novum, but also a rational estrangement of common notions. Critic Robert Scholes refers the function of science fiction to a structural fabulation, which is a reference based on fictional writing about human interactions that are affected by scientific influences. Adam Roberts focuses in his definition on the idea that science fiction is different from realist writing and that its particularity falls in its break from verisimilitude bizarre, infleunced by science, often set in the future and may include interplanetary

The relationship between science fiction as a distinct genre that is based on the aspect of novum, or estrangement, and Deleuzeian theory of minor literature is embodied in a postmodern fiction in which novum is a transgression and a reterritorialization at the same time. The analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's three novels *Cat's Cradle, Sirens,* and *Slapstick*, is presented as a common ground where such hypotheses meet and are validated.

The study sought to analyse and reveal the aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's model of Minor literature in the workd of Kurt Vonnegut. The model includes three main aspects which are: first, politicization, in which the matter of a minority group are centred in a literary text instead of marginalized as in major literature. The second aspect is the language deterritorialization, which means that in a minor literature the language is stolen from the majority (or from the representatives of power) and is appropriated by the minority group. In such case, language changes side and

representation. The third aspect is that of the collective assemblage of enunciation. In this aspect, the literature that is produced by the minority author is different from that of the majority. The author breaks with the traditional writing and explores other methods.

Since one basic element in this model is the idea of deterritorialization and difference from the tradition of the writing canon, the analysis had to cover basic aspects and steps of the development of science fiction as a genre has shed light on the cognitive estrangement and a certain wish to depict alternate universes as the main drives into making a science fiction text. The perspective to this genre has not always been the same. The twentieth century events, more precisely the two world wars and the Atomic bomb, changed the approach to this genre especially by authors. The goal had become to depict a post-apocalyptic universe that is entirely controlled by massive weapons and in which science becomes a potential danger for man's life.

The post-annihilation science fiction sought to show that the modern world standards, politics, and science have led to man's destructions. In doing so, authors evoke alternate universes in which life is dystopian, in a way as to show that the human life had become hopeless even in alternative environments.

The depiction of alternative universes sheds light on individuals who often feel marginalized in their social groups due to their lack of understanding of the politics of their countries, or their mistrust in them. In *Cat's Cradle,* these individuals are victims of science of a political system that is careless about the well-being of society.

In *Cat's Cradle,* the protagonists are the children of Felix Hoenikker, the father of the Atomic Bomb in the novel. They experience the dualism of social hypocrisy of what the children of a brilliant Nobel Prize winner should be, and the dramatic life they had to live with an absent-minded scientist as father and no mother. The Hoenikker children struggle to find love in different shapes even though they can hardly express it. The author uses science fiction to refer to the absurdity of Hoenikker children's situation. He uses estrangement as Felix Hoenikker's invention of Ice-nine brings the end of the world. The novel shows signs of perversity when

Newton is presented as a grotesque figure, translated by some critics as the result or the representation of the Atomic bomb. The science fiction of the novel is thus a trope to show the pervasiveness of science.

Through science fiction, the author depicts grotesque themes about human life. The genre serves as a tool rather than a field he chooses for himself. Vonnegut rejected the classification within the science fiction genre as a personal choice due to its negative reception by critics, yet, falls into its usage as an inevitable consequence of an age of rapid change. He relates the obsession with science in the modern world to extreme scientific inventions, thus leading to the tragic end of life on earth in *Cat's Cradle.* In doing so, he directly puts to light the legitimating discourses of modern philosophy. The result is a dystopian universe in which science is powerful and man is helpless in front of its consequences.

Vonnegut's science fiction characters suffer of loneliness, lack of understanding, and a feeling of emprisonment in their environments due to the social forces that control them. The characters are first represented as grotesque in a few cases like Newt, Frank, Angela, and even Dr Hoenikker in *Cat's Cradle*, serving thus as metaphors for the violence of the discourses legitimating science in the twentieth century. Science is controlled by the people who detain power in the novel, merely, the U.S government, USSR, and the Republic of San Lorenzo, a third world island whose president wishes to attract the attention of the United States to gain power. It is thus a tool for despotic regimes to control the masses.

The characters are also grotesque in *Slapstick*. Their malformation is both a metaphor for the marginalizing social beliefs (which their parents practised on them), and as escapes from a social system that is corrupted and built upon appearances. Their ugliness is a deviation from the common values and a shove towards new territories, entailing a dislocation of the concept of beauty. Through the analysis of the narrative, their physical deformation is considered as a difference and a reterritorialization in which they are allowed to be free.

Vonnegut's staging of dystopian narratives is meant to attack the belief that glorifies science and to unveil its implications. His idea is that it has become so powerful that humans no longer see how harmful it can be, to the extent of, metaphorically, and somehow humourously, ending life on earth. Thus, the common individual is depicted in his works struggling to find a middle ground between the power of science and the inescapability of conforming to it on the one side, opposed to the powers that impose it on the other. The common individual is depicted as helpless and sometimes even lost in front of such forces. Using Keith Booker's description of the Bourgeois society, the research shows that there is a Bourgeois society in America that confronts the individual to such forces. Such power intimidates the individual by practising fascist power over him. The reflection of this individual in particular politicizes their situation by shedding light on their feeling of emprisonment and helplessness.

The politicization of the status of the common individual in the novels under discussion covers the study of free will as a major issue in their lives. Characters in Vonnegut's absurdist plots are led to believe by their social forces that they control their decisions and lives however powerful they are. The case of Mr Rumfoord as the master who turns out to be a servant clarifies the lack of free will as opposed to the illusion that it exists in humans lives.

In *Slapstick,* he represents this social group in the characters Wilbur and Eliza. They are made purposefully ugly to attract attention to their marginalization based on appearances and to social hypocrisy. These siblings represent the perception of social values from a quite objective perspective, one that has not been influenced by human values. Their separation from society gave them their own perceptions of life and their own understanding of common concepts. They are led to believe by their servants and parents that human beings love to watch idiots so they acted like idiots most of the time. The siblings prove that human conceptions look bizarre, odd, and seem to cherish madness and idiocy when approached from an entirely different perspective. This experience also shows that, just like Kafka's Gregor Samsa, life can

be experienced from a different perspective, one that is disconnected from the social values and norms.

Wilbur and Eliza's case is a denaturalization. By their uncommon physical appearance, they built themselves a private world of authenticity that is not influenced by social constraints and which does not have the least notion of how society acts or behaves. Their private world is their escape and also their difference. A territory of their own. They are liberated from external judgement and of the obligations of a man-made system, which is an institution Vonnegut stands against. In so doing, Wilbur and Eliza could even escape their roles as responsible adults in their isolation.

One of the findings about isolated life is the creation of an anti-hero figure. Both the isolated individual and anti-hero agree on their uncommon behaviours and non-conformity to social values often expected from a person/fictional character. They become an embodiment of a fictional utopian dream to overcome individual feelings of emprisonment and marginalization in society when Wilbur applies their theory of the extended family. The country under his rule fails in all fields in life but he is successful at making people happy.

The analysis in chapter aims at pointing marginalization in society and the fact that it can be pervasive for the common individual. In the present cases, marginalization and social forces have led the characters to either endorse an extremist form of self-expression, rebellion, and delusion, or to a struggle against power, often represented in society, to reach an idealist world. Such world is never reachable. Using the views of David Simmons in *The Anti-Hero in the American Literature, From Joseph Heller to Kurt Vonnegut*, the chapter shows that the novel of the 1960s is obliged to show characters that are lost, helpless, and in constant torment because they are the only ones that represent perfectly the post-war novel. Such characters are anti-heroes. They are not glamorous traditional heroes but protagonists who do not have control on their lives and have to choose between struggling to give meaning and value to their lives or surrendering to Nihilism and psychopathological extremities to survive.

Wilbur as president of America reinforces Vonnegut's wish to address politicians and convince them to be more humanist. He restores the values of humanism and mutual love in society by setting a plan that eradicates loneliness as a main problem American society Vonnegut thinks it suffers from. The anti-hero aspect of both Wilbur and Eliza in *Slapstick* gives them the function of recovering faith in the good values of society through the text.

The science fiction is added to the situation to highlight the theme of human immaturity and ego-centrism. It depicts Eliza's discovery as the key to the success of the Chinese and their prosperity, and also the reason of America's decay. The science fiction contributes in putting light on the absurdity of human thought. It is thus a tool of satire in this novel (and in most of Vonnegut's novels). Consequently, the anti-hero figure Wilbur, in the midst of chaos, rises and attempts to create meaning around him.

The other side of the coin is Eliza's anger against her family. Being another anti-hero in the novel, she stands for the figure who chooses self-sacrifice. Unlike her brother she grieves the loss of their intimate territory of freedom and chooses revenge, which destroys the entire system that first confined her and her brother as monsters away from human beings and then disrupted their happiness when they managed to build their private world. They are both a territory that was born out of chaos, yet when this territory is destroyed they projected its chaos on the total order of society, the result is the birth of hundreds of new territories that no system can control anymore, thus achieving freedom.

Cat's Cradle also highlights the feeling of loss and delusion in his characters as they are in continuous search for meaning and representation in their environment. The forms of representation around them seem to depict them wrongfully and they fall in the struggle of finding their true selves or submitting to the images that are waged for about them. Their special territories are created through the lies they convince themselves of. The Self-reflexivity of the novel allows the creation of territories of lies to serve as possible solutions for a world that abuses individual

freedom and choices. Just like metafiction is introduced in the literary text to highlight the truth and the satire, the territories of lies are self-reflexive assemblages that create meaning where it is the least expected.

The characters of the novel split into loner and sufferer as they embody the roles assigned to them by the author. Dr Hoenikker is categorized as the loner in the work of Kevin Alexander Boon by his awkward behaviour and absent-mindedness. Yet, he makes his children into sufferers and victims of his limited brain. Moreover, he stands for an ideology that just like him, hurts people deliberately. This ideology has led to the invention of mass destruction weapons like the atomic bomb, and ignores moral boundaries.

The loner and sufferer relationship is explained in terms of the anti-oedipal relationship not only of the father and son but also of individual and power as exemplified by Deleuze and Guattari. Some characters are shown to have closer relationships with their mothers as part of their feeling of rejection and subjection by their fathers, like the cases of the Hoenikker children, and the case of Constant in *Sirens*. Although Wilbur and Eliza were victims of both their parents, yet, Wilbur acquires the social norms and becomes closer to his mother. These oedipal relationships show a victim that is subjugated by the social conventions that were approved by their fathers and who stand helpless against power. The fathers in such cases representing a power they acknowledged and passed to the children rather than resisted. Constant as Unk in *Sirens* embodies the oedipal issue by standing against the system on Mars. The anti-oedipal relationships depicted in the three novels also highlight the existence of a social group who lives like a minority in a system that does not represent them or that marginalizes them because they are different.

Minorities exist in Vonnegut's novels as a social group that is seemingly the same to the majority. They are white middle class individuals, yet their interests and values seem to be violated by the system they find themselves unwillingly belonging to. They occur in his anti-war novels and are related to this theme in particular as their frustration in life is merely originated by wars they mostly had to fight in without

understanding nor siding. Through his depiction of this issue, Vonnegut might have pioneered in making the anti-war novel a distinguished genre with specific criteria including self-deluded characters, the use of metafiction, and experimental writing in addition to science fiction as a trope.

The main drive that has led the author to represent such individuals is the problem of loneliness which he thinks is a common issue in his society.The latter, for him, was caused by the modern system and technology. Thus, his fragmented characters are also in constant search for love and belonging. This quest also leads them to their transgressions while they build their territories where they can identify with each other (and with their needs).

Vonnegut goes through a de-contextualizing effect of the common notions and concepts to deconstruct them and show on the one side how life can be without the power assigned to them and on the other side what implications they hide beneath. He attracts attention to the novel's artificiality using humour, comic plots, absurdism, irony, parody, estrangement, and self-reflexivity. He abandons automatization in favour of defamiliarization.

Thus, Vonnegut uses what Deleuze and Guattari call the assemblage in disrupting social and ideological structures as part of minor literature. Vonnegut's writing reaches the status of a minor writing since it uses the language of the majority, in his case the forces that control the individual, and switches meanings, thus creating new assemblages and writing schemata that not only break with the traditional ones but also highlight their differences.

Just as in Deleuze and Guattari's model, the language of the system is stolen by the minority author from its crib to represent the concerns of the minority group. Language experiences a deterritorialization by its displacement from the side of the oppressor to the side of the oppressed. It is reappropriated then adapted to represent the reverse situation. Language marks the power of the user even if the topic is not political, and so does Vonnegut in his act of writing against the canon. The themes are not always political, sometimes they are fantasies about the universe or simple

cosmic jokes but the transgressive act of writing against the traditional order is always there, thus making a deterritorialization. He also deterritorializes language using defamiliarization on two levels. The first one is the one in which language becomes fluid and develops in meaning, the second one is the one in which he creates new words that carry meanings not often having utterances of their own.

In breaking with the traditional forms of writing, Vonnegut experiments with the form and the content. He builds plots that are chaotic and non-linear and that can be started at any level and still make sense. Deleuze and Guattari consider any book an assemblage, and a collection of *plateaus* fashioned in a rhizomatic schemata. Vonnegut's books are assemblages of plateaus that have no specific order and that go through no end but one that secures their freedom, avoiding by such any form closure. Their plots are lines of articulation that flow from one territory to another, each time exposing a new form of being that is not related to the previous.

The function of the assemblage is to make literature a machine to produce meanings, particularly, worlds that are yet-to-come. It is a body that deterritorializes then reterritorializes meaning, thus creating alternative worlds. Such are the author's acts of transgression. He uses Reterritorializations in alternative universes to suggest new meanings like the extended family concept in *Slapstick* which is his solution for loneliness in America. He stages a contrast between the traditional family values and those of the extended family to emphasize the issue. Then he uses mysterious and extra-ordinary details to represent his defamiliarized concepts. The case of the extended family is inspired in the novel from Dr Mott, a mysterious man who changes his name very often in the novel. Just like an assemblage, Vonnegut's territories have no structured pre-existing model, and they create themselves spontaneously to lead their own order. The artificial family is a new stratum that represents a reterritorialization of the sense of family.

The forms of reterritorialization often come in the form of a chaos. Boon considers chaos in literature as a way of addressing problematic issues. It lays bare the complex systems and opens up new possibilities of dealing with them. Through

chaos, representation is free in its exploration of plots that are bizarre and uncommon. Vonnegut uses chaos to challenge assumptions in a system in which culture or the general system of things is perceived as truth and natural. The depiction of chaos in his novels is highly related to meaninglessness and determinism. In his worlds, chaos becomes the status quo and the only form of survival wherein ordered systems have become obsolete.

On this basis, Vonnegut uses chaos in *Cat's Cradle* to deconstruct modern structures. In such case, every member of the Hoenikker family, the most problematic family in the novel, is a territory of chaos. The father who is supposed to be rational is rather irresponsible; his children on the other hand are born stupid instead of inheriting his scientific genius. The father proves the theory of chaos, that the presence of genius in one field entails its absence elsewhere, and chaos is born due to such absence. The indeterminacy of the sense of family and responsiblity in the Hoenikker family led to the rise of a particular behaviour, coming up both as reaction and result of the father's absent-mindedness. The children are a result of his carelessness, of the absences of emotion, love, care, caused by science, leading to lust and selfishness in his children. His children inherited his absence of morality, what was structured science in his world became a chaos of amorality in their world, thus leading humanity to its end.

In writing against the grain, the author uses techniques that facilitate his experimentation with writing. He makes use of metafiction in most of his novels both directly and indirectly. His works are a self-conscious science fiction that attracts attention to its untruth and thus to the untruth of the discourses that control society.

The self-reflexivity of *Cat's Cradle* leads to the conclusion that the discourses based on which modern science is built are fake. They are discourses of emancipation and success yet they create a feeling of emprisonment within the common individual. Most of the characters in the novel choose to change religion to forget the inability to control their world or hate the face that they have to belong to an institution that

legitimizes violence and killing. The fake religion is presented as another fake discourse, part of the novel's self-reflexivity, yet, it comes as a salvation.

Self-reflexivity in *Sirens* also highlights the same themes. It attracts attention to the untruthfulness of discourses, and above that, shows man's helplessness in front of the universe. The novel deals with uncertainty as a major problem with the twentieth century individual. Such is depicted in the case of Rumfoord who believes that he is the master of everything in his fake universe. Yet, he realizes that he is used in a Tralfamadorian plan and his tone becomes weak and helpless. His voice transforms from confidence and power to distrust. The latter is opposed in the novel to his status as a God-like figure.

The collective assemblage and experimentation with writing are embedded in the cosmic fantasies that are presented in the novel, as well as the disrupted linearity of the plot and the new definition of time in the Chrono-Synclastic Infundibulum.

More forms of experimentation include the invention of a new language as a marker of difference. This latter carries humanist concepts usually not existing in common language as a form of defamiliarization, like Bokononism. Language is thus given a power to invent new affects and thus new territories. This language also uncovers paradoxes in the real-life, which leads to pardoy, Vonnegut's next technique in experimental writing, as well as irony and mockery.

The alternate universe in *Cat's Cradle* shows double standards in discourses of science by characters who claim to care about human life but instead hurt the human race. The claim is backed by Dr Breed in the novel who speaks instead of Dr Hoenikker, in a way as to make the reader believe that Dr Hoenikker is presented as objective science, without any knowledge of human emotions and morals.

The post-war literature has become a fiction of violence and terror due to the spirit of the age. Chaos becomes part of a normal depiction but can also serve as a metaphor for a world that is free from hegemonic powers on the one hand, but also

the only form of imagining a world that is different, because peace cannot be recovered.

The representation of chaos in the novel is partly related to madness, which is a purposeful metaphor. Broer thinks that madness represents a certain irrationality in society. It represents the impact of powers that individuals struggle with; it is thus presented as a creative way of living otherwise. According to Broer, madness as a trope in Vonnegut's works represents mechanization, technological tyranny, and self-serving religions.

The margin is where the institutionalized structured system does not act. It rises to speak its uncommonness (translated as a chaos, disorder, or even madness by the system to justify itself when it is exposed). Uncommonness is the result of under-estimating territories and taking them for granted. The work of art creates a crack that pushes society to question its values and beliefs, particularly leading to such representations. The de-contextualizing of Constant's wealth for example and the power that is put in his hands is put to light and is dismantled when he is presented to the fool of people as a messiah for a fake religion that is often viewed as ridiculous by some characters. If in the madness of Rumfoord's religion wealth and power are dislocated then constant is approached as a sinner who had exploited life conditions and luxuriances in his favour, to lead a life of arrogance that is unjustified in the principles of humanism.

Finally, more analysis can be devoted to Vonnegut’s novels, in addition to his *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, to investigate the existence of a white minority within the white majority in America. The previous analysis has already shown that his works do represent a minority and they cover the aspects of such writing. The investigation of the existence of such social group also requires an analysis of the political and social situation in America, with particular attention to the problem of identity and the American Dream. The work of Aaron David Gresson (2015) argues for the existence of a white minority (middle aged and middle class) who feel

depressed and angry due to the political and economic system in America. The investigation can attempt to answer the question of the extent to which white American culture represents all its social groups.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Survey Analysis

For the sake of investigating the type of readers science fiction as a genre attracts, and the extent to which these readers identify with its plots, an online survey has been designed and filled by 241 respondents. 31 of the total number of respondents specified belonging to other countries apart from the United States. 210 Respondents are thus American readers. 12,82% of the respondents are not citizens of the united states. The survey sought to study the interests and personal views of the respondents, their ethnic groups, their motivations and reasons for which they read Science fiction, and finally their views of their political systems.

The question about the ethnic group was meant to investigate which social groups are most interested in reading this genre. One of the objectives of the study is to argue that there is a white minority within the white majority in the United States that feels marginal or to a certain extent, oppressed by the system. The question is also related to Vonnegut's themes and characters in general, since he writes about white middle class characters who feel violated in their society, and as argued earlier, they are marginal. The question is also inspired by his views against war and the idea that Americans, including himself, have been obliged to go to war against their will. Vonnegut has never precised his audience, yet, his novels address a certain social group that he belonged to.

The third question in the survey investigates the age at which the readers of this genre have started to be interested in it. The objective of this question was to study whether their interested to this genre was mere curiosity and entertainment, or whether the readers were led to this genre because they were looking for identification. The question becomes more significant when it is discussed in relation to the two following questions.

Questions number four and five address directly the reasons for which readers have chosen this genre. The fourth question is "Why do you read science fiction", while question number five is "Do you Still read science fiction for the same reason you used to do in the beginning? If not, what has changed ever since?". The purpose

of these questions is to study whether the readers who have started reading sceince fiction for entertainment at a young age, still read it for the same reason as adults.

The study investigated the motivations of readers in reading this genre to compare the hypotheses of this investigation, to both the theories of science fiction as a genre that reflects part of the future of the universe, particularly the dystopian representations, but also the suggestion that it is a literature of minority. The link is created through these questions and the novels of Kurt Vonnegut in the fact that the readership that is attracted to this genre dure to escapism or identification, is also a readership who feels the pressure and oppression that his characters feel in their common lives, knowing that many of them are inspirations of his own self.

Questions number 6 and 7 are Do you associate with the characters and protagonists in the Science Fiction you read? Do you feel they have something in common with you? and If your answer for the previous question was yes (or sometimes), then in what way? How close do you feel you are to these characters? Their purpose is to provide evidence (or negation) to the suggestion that science fiction readers do identify with its plots as part of their feeling of marginalization in their mainstream cultures.

The question number 8 in the survey (Have you ever felt that the Science Fiction novels you read reflect part of the reality?) was meant to reinforce the theory about the genre's ability to reflect realistic issues and problems of individuals, just as much as any other literary genre that is meant to represent society. Although scienc fiction is based on imaginary worlds and plots, the themes and characters that are represented are rather realistic and attract an audience that finds relief in them.

The question number 9 is about what the respondents think of their political system. By centering the survey only on American audiences, it seeks to understand their political views and the extent to which they agree or disagree with their political systems. The goal is to compare their responses to the works of Kurt Vonnegut and his views of the politicians of hi sage, knowing that the respondents

were not informed that the research was about this author. The respondents' answers were not influenced by the purpose of the research.

Survey Results

The results of the survey have confirmed the basic hypotheses of the research to an important extent. Although the target community was a comunity of random, mixed, and non-specified readers on social media groups. The groups that have been seleced were dedicated to science fiction readers in general with the exception of one group only dedicated to Kurt Vonnegut's readership. 92,1% of the respondents have specified their ethnic group as being white (222 out of 241). This confirms the first hypothesis which is the suggestion that this genre is consumed by a white audience, more than other ethnic groups. Other responses included 2,1% (5 respondents) identifying themselves as African American, 2,5% (6 respondents) as Asian (including one from South Korea), and 3,3% (8 respondents) identifying themselves as Other.

54,77% of the respondents (132) have specified their age between 8 and 10 when they first started reading science fiction. Other answers varied between very young age (5 to 7 years old), teenagehood (11 to 18), and very few have started after the age of nineteen to the thirties (14 respondents, or 5,8% of the total number of participants). These data prove that the readers of science fiction have started to be interested at an early age, before they could identify with the characters or the events as part of their experience. The readers at this age are interested in science fiction merely due to the fantasies it may present and their purpose is merely entertainment, as some of them have specified that their experience in reading science fiction was limited to comic books before the age of ten.

The answers to the following questions provide more clarity as to the interests of science fiction readership. The answers to the question why do you read science fiction vary between escapism (64 responses), entertainment and enjoyment (81 responses), discovery of alternate universes, alternate versions of reality, and the dreams of the future (56). The remaining respondents (40), have explained their

interests in more details and explained their fascination with the characters and worlds of science fiction. One of the respondents pointed out "I enjoy going along with the characters as they tackle the story. I love the escape from bad days. The fact that a sci-fi story (and stories in general) can be an analog that parallels real life is satisfying". This view, among others, alludes to the readers' tendency to see the real life in the science fiction text and to a certain extent, find a refuge (which entails their condition as a subject with limited abilities in their physical world).

Other participants argued that it addresses "socioecomic issues, race, sexuality, identity, mental health, religion, and various other aspects of human nature and culture in unique and startling ways" to reinforce the view that it is a literature that readers can identify with. Others believe in the ability of science fiction to predict life in the future, particularly technology, religion, and politics. Other responses described it as a "good allegory", "what it truly means to be human", an incentive to think philosophically "outside of our norms". Hope and humanism were also recurrent responses in this category.

190 respondents (78,83%) have answered that they are still reading science fiction for the same reason they did in the beginning, with a slight difference in the choice of the works. The remaining participants stated having changed interest from fascination with the alternate universes and technology to social criticism and commentary, themes of humanism, and their connection to the human condition.

The following question, about whether or not the readers identified with the Science fiction characters, 56,4% have answered sometimes, while 33,6% have answered yes. Only 10% answered No to the question. This proves that most of the readers feel like the characters represent them n at least one science fiction book they've read. The respondents claimed they struggle with the characters who struggle against forces that are much stronger than they are, because the real life feels the same, questions of morality and society, self-reliance, feeling relatively close, like good friends and siblings, same interests and concerns, the best science fiction is about what it means to be human, alike in aspirations and goals, identify

with loners, outsiders, and thinkers, identify with characters who stand against exploitation of people and resources, characters who fight the system, identify with their alienation, the struggle for survival,

In response to the question whether science fiction reflects reality, 92,4% have answered yes. The last question about the political system collected several answers, 82,57% of which were against their political systems, both in the Trump and Joe Byden's eras. The remaining responses (40) included 5 responses in favour of the system, and the others wishing it could be better but saying it could be worse. Only two respondents refused to answer.

The survey has proven that most of the readers of science fiction are white, they are very familiar with the genre because they started reading it very young. They mostly read it for fun, but also for escapism, for discovery, and for social criticism. Most of the readers identify with the characters, either for shared experience, struggle against power, or moral values. The respondents think that the political system in the United States is broken, and bad, with a few exceptions who think it can be better. These results show that the consumers of science fiction match to a certain extent with Vonnegut's characters and plots. They are not necessarily, but a to considerable extent, feeling marginalized in their societies, especially as opposed to their political views

Appendix 2

Summary of *Cat's Cradle*

Cat's Cradle was written in 1963 as the author Kurt Vonnegut was in his early career. He was public spokesman for General Electrics in this period and had to care for six children. He occupied a job he hated and which inspired him, to a considerable extent, the plot of this novel. The novel opens when it is the end of life on earth. The narration is done by the protagonist and main narrator of the novel, Jonah, a journalist and author. This latter starts the novel in a sarcastic tone, providing hints of what the novel is about. The first page includes a warning that everything in the book is made of lies, then that one must favour the lies that make them feel happy and comfortable. As the narration begins, he reflects his feelings of awe and pessimism, as he lists the numbers of cigarettes he had smoked and quantities of liquors he had drunk before.

Jonah introduces himself then informs the reader that he was writing a book on the day the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Japan and that ironically, the book was to be called *The Day the World Ended*, not knowing that the same person who made the object of his book actually caused the end of the world. After the introduction, the reader is taken to a previous time in the past where Jonah is a journalist who travels to Indianapolis, more precisely Ilium, to collect information about Felix Hoenikker, the man who made the Atomic Bomb. He starts by writing letters to Felix Hoenikker's children and gets a response from Newton Hoenikker, the youngest of his siblings and also a midget. He learns in his letter than Newton was fired from Medicine school and thus realizes that the children he was about to meet had none of their father's profile.

Jonah visits General Forge and Foundary, which is the company where Felix Hoenikker had is research laboratory. He meets Dr Breed, Dr Hoenikker's supervisor, then some locals, who tell him surprising details about the family, including the existence of a crystal that freezes water in room temperature called Ice-nine. Dr Breed claims that such crystal was never invented. Yet, it is discovered later

that is existed and that the three Hoenikker children had split it and used it to obtain love and important positions because they lacked the skills to gain them.

Jonah also learns about the Hoenikkers' family life. Dr Felix Hoenikker, whom Jonah is unable to classify neither as a saint nor as a sinner, had no feelings at all. He never knew what his wife's needs were and never had he shown the least emotions to his children. During the narrative, Jonah discovers that Dr Hoenikker could not even tell what a sin was because he was amoral. After a while, Jonah travels to the fictional island San Lorenzo to write a story about a millionnaire philanthropist who builds a hospital in the jungle to heal people for free. On the plane he meets a couple that he later identifies as Granfaloons (a bokononist term) and also meets the Hoenikker children, Angela and Newt who travel there to attend their brother's wedding.

On the islands of San Lorenzo Jonah discovers that Frank, the middle Hoenikker son had become minister of science while he had not even finished high school in his home country. On the island, people are very poor and almost starving. They have a fake religion that is entirely based on lies that is called Bokononism. The latter was developed as a play to keep the people entertained while they die of starvation. Bokononism is called after Bokonon, the man who has created it. He has words of his own making; like the granfalloon which denotes a number of people that are ridiculous, the Karass are a number of people who do something predestined by God, and Foma are harmless untruths.

During a celebration at the castle of the president Papa Monzano, an accident occurs and a plane falls on the balcony where the president's dead body was laid after he swallowed a chunk from ice-nine. The president's body falls in the ocrean and all the water on earth becomes ice-nine, bringing by this a storm that kills a large number of people and ends life on earth. Consequently, the characters remaining in the island start losing their lives one after another. The survivors switch to Bokononism as the only source of hope for its harmless lies. The novel ends when

the protagonist Jonah arrives to Mount McCabbe, the highest in the island, and meets Bokonon who prepares to end his life writing an angry note to God.

Summary of *Slapstick, Or Lonesome No More!*

The novel opens in a prologue wherein the author speaks of his definition of love in relation to his brother Bernard and sister Alice. In the prologue he rejects the word love and replaces it with the utterance Common Decency which he thinks expressed better good intentions of humans towards each other. He also mentions that the protagonists in the novel represent him and his sister Alice who had died at a young age and whose loss had affected him.

The narration begins in the voice of Wilbur Daffodil-11 Swain in the Empire State Building when Manhattan is entirely destroyed because of Chinese experiments on the gravity. It shows a dystopian America where people are uneducated and poor. Very few people are rich and they own slaves. Yet, in this setting, the slaves are happy to serve such masters as they get the chance to eat.

Wilbur then narrates his childhood with his sister Eliza when they are abandoned by their parents after their birth. Wilbur and Eliza are born ugly while their parents are handsome and rich. They put them in a mansion away from the city under the care of servants and doctors who watch them while they grow. They are expected to die at age fourteen. Yet, at fifteen, they reveal to their parents and surroundings that they are not retards as expected but are very intelligent when they put their heads together.

The children learn to read and write from the books they find in the mansion. They also write their own copy of the American constitution which they revise and modify to ensure family love for all American citizens. When they are discovered, they are parted by a psychologist who diagnoses Wilbur as having a medium intelligence but Eliza as mentally unstable. Wilbur and Eliza decide that if they are separated they will refer to themselves as Bobby and Betty Brown instead of their real names. Wilbur is sent to medical school and forgets everything about his sister. Eliza is put in a centre for the feebleminded and nurtures hate and anger against her

family. She returns to her family a few years later to ask for her part of the heritage and to take her revenge. She contributes in Chinese experiments and gives them the theories that she had developed with Wilbur on gravity during their childhood. The theories make China the strongest country in the world. Eliza accepts to participate in a trip to Mars where she dies.

Wilbur becomes president of the United States because he uses the idea of the extended family for his campaign. The idea was also a concept he had developed with his sister Eliza to spread love everywhere in the country. As he becomes president, he grants all people arbitrary middle names. The people with the same middle names and numbers become members of the same family. Others carrying the same names and different numbers are cousins. He travels across the country after he receives an invitation from a widow whose scientist husband invents a medium to call dead people. Through the device, Eliza talks ot Wilbur to ask him to rush and join her to the afterlife because that was the real life.

In the meanwhile the Chinese develop more theories to reduce their sizes. They become microscopic and start travelling in the air thanks to their developments on gravity. They arrive to America as dust and cause harm in people's lungs as they breathe them. The phenomenon is perceived as a virus they call the Black Death. Many people die and America's economy is destroyed. The only thing that survives in Wilbur's term is the extended family which citizens believe in.

Summary of *Sirens of Titan*

The novel tells the details of a Materialization in the beginning. It describes Malachi Constant's arrival at the Rumfoord Residency, undercover, and mocking every instruction he had received in his invitation as sign of his unconformity. He meets Mr Rumfoord and his dog Kazak who have just returned from space and materialized into human beings. During the meeting Mr Rumfoord tells Malachi that he will travel to Mars and become a soldier, that he would mate with Mrs Rumfoord and would become a father.

Malachi refuses Rumfoord's prophesy. He returns to his hotel and tries to make himself as worthless as possible in order to become useless in the eyes of Rumfoord. He squanders his entire wealth which was said to be endless in a 52-day party. He offers oil wells to his party attendants and loses the rest of the fortune in a law suit that is raised against his company. Malachi faces prison and is offered by two martians a job on planet Mars. He accepts the job in order to escape jail on earth. Once he arrives on the planet, he becomes a soldier in the Army of Mars. For his first mission, he is challenged to make love to an emprisoned woman without falling in love with her. He accepts the challenge and rapes the woman in the darkness. At the end he sees her face and realizes that she was Mrs Rumfoord from earth.

He is later taken to the military base on Mars and gets his memory erased multiple times. When he wakes up after the last time he loses his memory, he is told that his name is Unk, he is instructed to kill a man, which he does unquestionably. He never learns that this man was his best friend on Mars. Later, he finds a letter he wrote for himself where he tells himself truths about Mars, and about the fact that his memory was erased. He learns from the letter that he had a child so he leaves the infantry to meet him. He arrives to the school where Bee (previously Mrs Rumfoord) works, and introduces himself to her and his child, but only gets rejection.

Unk is sent to a mission on earth with Boaz, but instead, they find themselves on planet Mercury. They are provided enough food to survive for years and meet the Harmoniums, small creatures that feed on sound. Boaz seems to discover his true self on Mercury as he is provided love for the first time from the Harmoniums who lay on his chest to listen to his heartbeat. Unk manages to fix the ship to travel to earth but Boaz decides to stay on Mercury to the end of his life because he finds the love he had always needed.

Unk travels to earth where he is presented as a Messiah figure. Every step in his interplanetary travel, including his memory erasure, his stay on planet Mercury, and then his reception as a Messiah on earth. Rumfoord introduced himself on earth as a prophet who could tell the future and foresaw the arrival of Space Wanderer, the

religious figure to lead the religion of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent. Unk is presented as Space Wanderer in the beginning and is followed by the fool who believes in him until Rumfoord depicts him as a sinner. Rumfoord sends Bee, Unk , and their son Chrono back to space, to the moon Titan where they are obliged to stay for the rest of their lives.

Rumfoord joins them later using the Chronosynclastic Infundibulum, the channel through which he travels in time and space. It is a method of traveling that is granted to him by the robot Salo who arrives to Titan from planet Tralfamadore, carrying a message to a different galaxy. Rumfoord discovers through his last trip to Titan in the Chronosynclastic Infundibulum that Salo was using him to send messages to the Tralfamadorians through manipulating human civilization. He breaks his friendship with the robot and disapears in a different galaxy, never to come back again. Unk manages to travel back to earth after Bee dies. He lands on earth while it snows down, he dies of cold dreaming that he had met his best friend Stony and Bee and walked with them to heaven.

Abstract

The works of American author Kurt Vonnegut are a self-conscious science fiction that attract attention to the untruthful discourses building the modern world. His novels *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!, Cat's Cradle,* and *Sirens of Titan* are scientific dystopias that depict helpless individuals who feel subjugated by their cultures. They belong to discourses that do not represent them and suffer self-delusion and lack of love as they try to find meaning. His characters make his works into a minority literature, based on the model of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their book *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*. The model that is based on three main aspects which are: Language deterritorialization, politicization, and collective value, is embodied in Vonnegut's three works through techniques like estrangement and transgression in the dystopian science fiction text, social judgement, political despotism, the power of science, and finally experimental writing techniques like metafiction, language defamiliarization, the invention of a new language to highlight the language deterritorialization and transgression.

Keywords: Vonnegut, Deleuze and Guattari, Minor Lilterature, Science Fiction, Deterritorialization, Transgression.

الملخص

أعمال المؤلف الأمريكي Kurt Vonnegut هي خيال علمي واعي بذاته يجذب الانتباه إلى الخطابات الكاذبة التي تبني العالم الحديث. رواياته *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!*، *Cat's Cradle* ، و *Sirens of Titan* هي ديستوبيا علمية تصور الأفراد العاجزين الذين يشعرون بالقهر والتهميش من قبل ثقافاتهم. إنهم ينتمون إلى خطابات لا تمثلهم ويعانون من خداع الذات وقلة الحب ويقضون حياتهم في محاولة لإيجاد المعنى. جعلت شخصياته أعماله في أدب الأقلية ، بناءً على نموذج الفليلسوفين الفرنسيين جيل دولوز وفيليكس جوتاري ، في كتابهم كافكا ، نحو أدب ثانوي. يتجسد النموذج الذي يعتمد على ثلاثة جوانب رئيسية وهي: إضفاء الطابع الإقليمي على اللغة ، والتسييس ، والقيمة الجماعية ، في أعمال فونيغوت الثلاثة من خلال تقنيات مثل الانتهاك في نص الخيال العلمي ، والحكم الاجتماعي ، والاستبداد السياسي وقوة العلم لتسليط الضوء على قضية التسييس ، وأخيراً قنيات لكتابة التجريبية مثل ما وراء القص ، وإلغاء التآلف اللغوي ، واختراع لغة جديدة ، والمفارقة ، ومؤامرة اللاخطية لتسليط الضوء على إضفاء الطابع الإقليمي على اللغة وكذلك التجاوزات اللغوية.

Abstrait

Les œuvres de l'auteur américain Kurt Vonnegut sont une science-fiction qui attire l'attention a sa fictionalité, et aux discours mensongers qui construisent le monde moderne. Ses romans *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More!, Cat's Cradle* et *Sirens of Titan* sont des dystopies scientifiques qui dépeignent des individus sans défense qui se sentent subjugués par leurs cultures. Ils appartiennent à des discours qui ne les représentent pas et souffrent d'auto-illusion et de manque d'amour alors qu'ils essaient de trouver un sens. Ses personnages font de ses œuvres une littérature minoritaire, sur le modèle des philosophes français Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, dans leur livre *Kafka, vers une littérature mineure*. Le modèle qui repose sur trois aspects principaux qui sont : la déterritorialisation de la langue, la politisation et la valeur collective, est incarné dans les trois œuvres de Vonnegut à travers des techniques telles que l'éloignement et la transgression dans le texte de science-fiction dystopique, le jugement social, le despotisme politique, le pouvoir de la science. , et enfin des techniques d'écriture expérimentales comme la métafiction, la défamiliarisation du langage, l'invention d'un nouveau langage pour mettre en évidence la déterritorialisation et la transgression du langage.