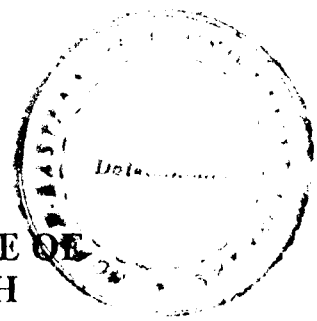
REPRESENTING THE UNREALITY OF REALITY: A STUDY OF THREE AMERICAN POSTMODERNIST NOVELS (WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS' *NAKED LUNCH*, THOMAS PYNCHON'S *GRAVITY'S RAINBOW* AND KURT VONNEGUT, JR.'S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*)



A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

BY
BABY PUSHPA SINHA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

TO

NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG 793 014

2002

NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
MAYURBHANJ COMPLEX, SHILLONG 793 014

DECLARATION

I, **Baby Pushpa Sinha**, hereby declare that the subject matter of the thesis entitled "**Representing The Unreality of Reality: A Study of Three American Postmodernist Novels** (William Burroughs' **Naked Lunch**, Thomas Pynchon's **Gravity's Rainbow** and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s **Slaughterhouse-Five)**", is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institution.

This is being submitted to the North-Eastern Hill University for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English.**

B. P. Sinha

(Baby Pushpa Sinha)
Candidate

(Prof. R. P. Sharma)
Professor & Head
Department of English
NEHU, Shillong

(Prof. K. C. Baral)
Supervisor
Director
CIEFL Regional Centre
Shillong

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my heartiest gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. K. C. Baral, Department of English, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong (now on lien as Director, CIEFL Regional Centre. Shillong) for his invaluable guidance and encouragement at every stage of my work. To him I owe a large intellectual debt which can be acknowledged but not repaid. I thank Professor E. N. Lall for his concern and warm affection, during whose headship in the Department, I was given the opportunity to do my research work.

I am grateful to Prof. R. P. Sharma, Head, Department of English, NEHU, Shillong, for his encouragement. I also thank all the Teachers and the staff of English Department for their support and guidance in general, and Prof. Temsula Ao, the then Head in particular.

I express my sincere gratitude to Shri A. Patton, the then Principal, Sao Chang Government College, Tuensang, Nagaland, for being considerate in relieving me to periodically contact my guide for the regular progress of my research. And I do remember Shri I. Elem Chang, Head, Department of English, of my college for sparing me from the heavy teaching schedule so as to enable me to commit myself to the pursuit of research. I also remember my colleagues and the present Principal, Dr. Imnayongdang for their warm wishes.

I thank my parents Dr. S. N. Singh and Mrs. Tulsi Devi for their kindness, sacrifice, guidance, moral support, encouragement and for all help rendered to me. I am all respect for their love of me. I acknowledge

the grace and loving care of Shri Nungsanglemba Chang, SDO (Civil), Tuensang and his lady wife Mrs. Thundinaro, MA, for their parental care to me and for the same I remember my Shyammarayan chacha.

I love to remember Dr. N. Mhabemo Kithan, Medical Superintendent District Civil Hospital, Wokha, Nagaland and his lady wife Mrs. Apeni Lotha for their hospitality, love and care all through my research.

I owe my gratitude to the various libraries for the immense help I received from them – NEHU Library, Shillong; ASRC Library, Hyderabad; Nagaland University Library, Kohima; CIEFL Library, Shillong, and its Librarian Dr. R. C. Pandey, and Gauhati University Library.

I thank my brothers and sisters, my uncles, my maternal grandfather Shri Dharam Deo Singh, my grandfather-in-law Shri Chandeshwar Singh, my father-in-law Shri Nand Kishore Singh, and all my in-laws for their blessings, ceaseless prayers, moral support and help in many ways.

I am especially grateful to Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh for taking the pain for typing this thesis with utmost care and interest and bringing it to its final shape and stature.

I remember with reverence my mother-in-law (late) Smt. Vidya Singh who left this world on the 30th May 2001 for her heavenly abode

before the completion of my thesis. I will always cherish her moral support and prayers deep within my heart.

Most of all I thank my wonderful husband, Mr. Lalan Kishore Singh, the wind beneath my wings, who is currently Lecturer in English, Kokrajhar Campus of Gauhati University. It is his love, patience, sacrifice, invaluable help, encouragement, and emotional support that made my dream come true.

B.P. Sinha

(BABY PUSHPA SINHA)

CONTENTS

		Pages
	Acknowledgements	i-iii
Chapter - I	Structures of Reality: An Introduction	1-37
Chapter - II	Negatives and Absence: A Study of William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*	38-91
Chapter - III	Logic of Delirium: A Study of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*	92-130
Chapter - IV	Fantasizing the Real: A Study of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Saughterhouse-Five*	131-175
Chapter - V	Representing the Unreality of Reality - Postmodernism and its Narrative Strategy	176-199
Chapter -VI	Conclusion	200-206
	Bibliography	207-229

CHAPTER - I

STRUCTURES OF REALITY: AN INTRODUCTION

Reality, in Philosophy, designates the totality of things that exist, or what would be included in a complete description of all the facts about the world. However, the concept of reality as a fiction has been theoretically formulated within many disciplines and from many political and philosophical positions. One of the clearest *Sociological* expositions is in Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's book, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1971). They set out to show that 'reality' is not something that is simply given. 'Reality' is manufactured. It is produced by the interrelationship of apparently 'objective' facilities in the world with social convention and personal or interpersonal vision. These social forms operate within particular historical structures of power and frameworks of knowledge. Continual shifts in the structures of knowledge and power produce continual resyntheses of the reality model. Contemporary reality, in particular, is continually being reappraised and resynthesized. It is no longer experienced as an ordered and fixed hierarchy, but as a web of interrelating, multiple realities.

Movement through the interconnected zones involves moving from one 'reality' to another. Most of the time, however, we are not conscious of these shifts. Habit, instrumented through social institutions and conventions, normally disguises movement between levels, and confers an apparent homogeneity upon social experience. It is only when a convention is exposed as such that the lacunae between levels are also exposed.

Berger and Luckmann suggest that convention and habit are necessary because human beings need to have their choices narrowed down for significant action to take place. Habit ensures that patterns can be repeated in such a way that the meaning of an action is not retained at the level of consciousness. If this were not so, the action could not be effortlessly performed. (This is also, of course, the basis for realistic fiction. When the conventions regarding fictive time, for example, are undermined in *Tristram Shandy*, the novel never gets under way as an 'historie' but functions only as a self-regarding 'discourse' which never quite manages to get the story told). Habitualization provides for direction and specialization, by freeing our energies for more productive ends. It opens up a 'foreground' for deliberation and 'innovation'[1] Conventions can, however, become oppressive and rigidified, completely naturalized. At this point they need to be re-examined, both in life and in fiction.

Within the psychological discourse realism has been dealt with by Freud, Lacan and others. To Lacan realism, indeed, is the literary equivalent of the 'mirror stage' of human subjectivity. At an early age we see an image of ourselves reflected in a mirror and consequently develop a sense of subject/object, self/other relations. We recognize our mirror self as being different from our true self, although (and crucially) it is only on the basis of seeing ourselves in a mirror that we gain an understanding of a 'true' self-identity in the first place. Our sense of a true self relies, therefore, on our sense of a symbolic self, or on a sense of self-as-other: our true self, in other words, is non-originary. Before entering into selfhood we inhabit the 'imaginary' order of pre-linguistic,

non-dualistic and undifferentiated subject/object relations, since as infants we do not distinguish between notions of the self and others. In entering the symbolic order, however, we pass into a world of prohibitions and restraints organized through and by language, reason and society, all of which are dominated by patriarchal law. On this model it is possible to see the imaginary and symbolic orders as complementary concepts in a set of associated oppositions.

The privileging of a certain order of literary textuality is consistent with Lacan's transcendental celebration of the macrological order of the imaginary, such that the values of romance literature, for example, can be read from a set of terms those constitute the imaginary/symbolic opposition. Hence romance literature is infantile (or childlike), feminine, sensory, intuitive and so on, while realism by contrast is adult, masculine, sensible, rational and so forth. Hence truth depends on 'fiction', which is a proposition that is often attributed to postmodernism as a slogan and used to question its political commitment.

If psychoanalaysis hastened the death of man by pathologizing him, structuralism dealt the fatal blow by turning 'man' into a linguistic construct. For structuralism, everyone is born into a particular language community such that anyone's perception of reality is predetermined by the particular 'grammar' through which they come to know the world. What is called 'reality' (by an individual, a culture or an epoch) is structured, therefore, as a language: reality is simply what is able to be classified as such according to a system – structures – or regulations and prohibitions which produce objects, feelings, values and events 'in' the

world. But the very notion of a world is always going to be culturally and historically specific to specific language communities since the structure of structures, as it were, is language, and so the very concept of 'structure' itself is a linguistic metaphor.

This is not to suggest – on the contrary – that the structure of language could have been otherwise. The gap between word and thing (or sign and referent) is a necessary one inasmuch as language can never be identical with what it names, for example, and vice versa. Hence, language must always 'lack' what it names. Lack and division are essential to the structure of language, the very structure in which absent reality is made to function as if it were present. From this if follows that presence (truth, reality, self-identity) is an effect of a system (language) that is constituted by absence and separation. The very lack within language and the very gap between word and thing is what makes reality possible, making it seem present.[2]

Among the major Postmodernist theorists Jean Baudrillard, deals with realism and its loss in his work *Simulations* (1981, translated in 1983).[3] Baudrillard's understanding of the sense of 'the loss of the real', implies a view that in contemporary life the pervasive influence of images from film, TV, and advertising has led to a loss of distinction between the real and the imagined, reality and illusion, surface and depth. The result is a culture of 'hyperreality', in which distinctions between these are eroded. His propositions are worked out in his essay 'Simulacra and Simulations'.[4] He begins by evoking a part era of 'fullness', when a sign was a surface indication of an underlying depth or reality ('an

outward sign of inward grace', to cite the words of the Roman Catholic Catechism). But what, he asks, if a sign is not an index of an underlying reality, but merely of other signs, then, the whole system becomes what he calls a simulacrum. He then substitutes it for representing the notion of simulation.

The sign represents a basic reality. An example of this is the representations of the industrial city of Salford in the work of the twentieth century British artist L. S. Lowry. Mid-century life for working people in such a place was hard, and the paintings have an air of monotony and repetitiveness – cowed, stick-like figures fill the streets, colours are muted, and the horizon filled with grim factory-like buildings. As signs, then, Lowry's paintings seem to represent the basic reality of the place they depict.

More generally, for Postmodernism there are certain ever-present questions and provisos. In this extreme Baudrillardian form, the 'loss of the real' may seem to legitimise a callous indifference to suffering. In a now notirous pronouncement Baudrillard maintained that the Gulf War never happened, that what 'really' took place was a kind of televisual virtual reality. Likewise, if we accept the 'loss of the real' and the collapsing of reality and simulation into a kind of virtual reality, then what of the Holocaust? Could this, too, be part of the reality 'lost' in the image networks? In other words, without a belief in some of the concepts which postmodernism undercuts – history, reality, and truth, for instance – we may well find ourselves in some pretty repulsive company.[5]

In capturing the shifting notions of reality, the genre of fiction is the most productive. The relationship that exists between a work of fiction and its readers has long been a subject of discussion in the theory of fiction. The questions that need to be looked at: (i) Are novels primarily representations of "reality", or are they all "made up"? (ii) How obliged are novelists to make what happens in their works compare with what might have happened had the same events occurred in the "real world?" (iii) Is verisimilitude, for instance, an obligation for a writer?

Lionel Trilling claims in "Manners, Morals, and the Novel"[6] that realism is the basic drive behind all fictional creations, that the life of individuals in society has been the stuff out of which novels have always been made. Other writers, such as George Levine,[7] have identified realism more closely with certain periods of history (the nineteenth century) than with others (the twentieth century). But can we think of fictional reality in the same terms we use in thinking about history or about our own lives? Lives in fiction are surely more carefully determined than the lives that are lived by people who read books. However, we often demand that novels and stories should be plausible within the terms of their own fictional world and that such palusibility should not be measured against a truly "represented" world, analogous to our own. Thus there have been attempts to recreate the real world around us in fictions written in the great "age of realism" by novelists like Dickens, Eliot, Stendhal, and Dostoevsky. If not in the 19th century sense of realism, the novels of Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez are realistic works contrived in a manner that represent the other

side of reality. Critics such as Barbara Foley, Linda Hutcheon, and Joanne Frye are concerned with fiction and reality in very different ways.

In the various theoretical speculations that foreground the relationship between 'reality' and the fictional narrative, one of the arguments is that the only reason for the existence of the novel is that it does attempt to represent life. Henry James believes that the novelist must write from his experience, that his "characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life". The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix. The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber is a very delicate shade; it is a reality so coloured by the author's vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model. It goes without saying that we will not write a good novel unless we possess the sense of reality; but it will be difficult to give one a recipe for calling that sense into being. Thus traditionally, the realistic novel is characterized as the fictional attempt to give the effect of realism, by representing complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operate in a highly developed social structure, interact with many other characters, and undergo plausible and everyday modes of experience. This novelistic mode, rooted in such eighteenth century writers as Defoe and Fielding, achieved a high degree of perfection in the hand of the novelists of the nineteenth century, including Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and William Dean Howells in England and America, Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert in France, and Turgenev and Tolstoy in Russia.

Literary critics, however, differentiate between a realistic fiction and what is called, the romantic fiction. The romance is said to present life as we would have it – more picturesque, fantastic, adventurous, or heroic than actuality; realism, on the other hand, is said to represent life as it really is. This distinction in terms of subject matter, while relevant, is clearly inadequate. Casanova, T. E. Lawrence, and Winston Churchill were people in real life, but their biographies demonstrate that truth can be stranger than literary realism. It is more useful to identify realism in terms of the effect on the reader: realistic fiction is written so as to give the effect that it represents life and the social world as it seems to the common reader, evoking the sense that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might well happen. To achieve such effects, the novelists we identify as realists may or may not be selective in subject matter – although most of them prefer the common place and the everyday over rarer aspects of life – but they must render their materials in ways that make them seem to their readers the very stuff of ordinary experience. For example, Daniel Defoe in the early eighteenth century dealt with the extraordinary adventures of a shipwrecked mariner named Robinson Crusoe and with the extraordinary misadventures of a woman named Moll Flanders; but he made his novels seem to readers a mirror held up to reality by his reportorial manner of rendering all the events, whether ordinary or extraordinary, in the same circumstantial, matter-of-fact, and seemingly unselective way. Both the fictions of Franz Kafka and the present-day novels of magic realism achieve their effects in large part by exploiting the realistic manner in rendering events that are in themselves fantastic, absurd, or impossible.

One of the arguments that is advanced in the context of realist fiction is that a writer's transactions with reality are verbal, therefore, he must bridge the traditional gap between words (verba) and things (res).[8] On the one hand, he may think of language as a kind of lens, and seek out 'transparent' words which designate things-in-the-world as unobtrusively as possible; on the other hand, he may think of language as a kind of body, and pay attention primarily to the shapes, sounds and textures of the words he uses. 'The multitudinous seas incarnadine' (*Macbeth*, II ii 61) is an example of language-as-body, in that the communicative purposes of language-as-lens could be achieved equally well by some such phrase as 'turn the many seas red'. In the case of language-as-body, words are not considered to be images of things, but things in themselves. 'I would endeavour to destroy the old antithesis of words and things', said Coleridge, 'elevating, as it were, words into things, and living things too'.[9] Whenever this is deemed possible, poems cease to be thought of as mere windows on reality, and become (in Wallace Stevens' phrase) 'part of the res itself and not about it'.[10] Some such distinction between language-as-lens and language-as-body is often at the root of arbitrary attempts to differentiate prose from poetry.

Everyday reality is, however, for Berger and Luckmann, 'reality par excellence'. It imposes itself massively on consciousness so that, although we may doubt its reality, 'I am obliged to suspend this doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life'.[11] Problems that interrupt this flow are seen to be translated into its terms and assimilated: 'Consciousness always returns to the paramount reality from an excursion'. According to

this view, the 'meta' levels of fictional and social discourse might shift our notion of reality slightly but can never totally undermine it.

Berger and Luckmann further argue, however, that language is the main instrument for maintaining this everyday reality: 'Everyday life is above all, life with and by means of language I share with my fellow men [*Sic*!].[12] Thus texts which move towards a breakdown of the language system, presenting reality as a set of equally non-privileged competing discourse, can be seen as resisting assimilation into the terms of the everyday. They attempt, in fact, radically to unsettle our notion of the 'real'. (Doris Lessing's protagonist Anna, for example, in *The Golden Notebook*, loses her precarious hold on this 'everyday life' when she feels 'at a pitch where words mean nothing' (p. 462), because in this novel 'reality par excellence' is represented by the misrepresentational, inauthentic language of 'Free Women' which freezes the everyday – 'British life at its roots' – into a mocking parody of itself).

Berger and Luckmann do not, in fact, give enough attention to the centrality of language in constructing everyday reality. It is this exposure of 'reality' in terms of 'textuality', for example, which has provided the main critique of realism. As Barthes argued:

> These facts of language were not perceptible so long as literature pretended to be a transparent expression of their objective calendar time or of psychological subjectivity ... as long as literature maintained a totalitarian ideology of the referent, or more commonly speaking, as long as literature was 'realistic'.[13]

By 'these facts', of course, he means the extent to which language constructs rather than merely reflects everyday life: the extent to which meaning resides in the relations between signs within a literary fictional text, rather than in their reference to objects outside that text.

The notion of reality as a construct, explored through textual self-reference, is now firmly embedded in the contemporary novel, even in those novels that appear to eschew radically experimental forms or techniques. Muriel Spark's work is a good example of this development, for she uses textual strategies of self-reference, yet still maintains a strong 'story' line. This alerts the reader to the condition of the text, to its state of 'absence', just as much as a novel by Sorrentino or Sarraute or any other more obviously post-modernist writer whose embodiment of the paradoxes of fictionality necessitates the total rejection of traditional concepts of plot and character.

Among different literary genres, the novel assimilates a variety of discourses (representations of speech, forms of narrative) – discourses that always to some extent question and relativize each other's authority. Realism, often regarded as the classic fictional mode, paradoxically functions by suppressing this dialogue. The conflict of languages and voices is apparently resolved in realistic fiction through their subordination to the dominant 'voice' of the omniscient, godlike author. Novels which Bakhtin refers to as 'dialogic' resist such resolution. Metafiction displays and rejoices in the impossibility of such a resolution and thus clearly reveals the basic identity of the novel as genre. Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a

fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'.

Although this oppositional process is to some extent present in all fictions, and particularly likely to emerge during 'crisis' periods in the literary history of the genre, its prominence in the contemporary novel is unique. The historical period we are living through has been singularly uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic. Contemporary fiction clearly reflects this dissatisfaction with, and breakdown of, traditional values. Previously, as in the case of nineteenth century realism, the forms of fiction derived from a firm belief in a commonly experienced, objectively existing world of history. Modernist fiction, written in the earlier part of this century; responded to the initial loss of belief in such a world. Novels like Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927) or James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) signalled the first widespread, overt emergence in the novel of a sense of fictitiousness: 'a sense that any attempt to represent reality could only produce selective perspectives, fictions, that is, epistemological, not merely in the conventional literary sense'.[14]

Contemporary metafictional w...ing is both a response and a contribution to an even more thoroughgoing sense that reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures. The materialist, positivist and empiricist world-view on which realistic fiction is premised no longer exists. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that more and more novelists have come to question and reject the forms that correspond to this ordered reality (the well-made plot, chronological sequence, the authoritative omniscient author, the rational connection between what characters 'do' and what they 'are', the causal connection between 'surface' details and the 'deep', 'scientific laws' of existence).

Frame, analysis and play theory are areas of contemporary social investigation which illumine the practice of metafiction and show the sensitivity of its response to cultural change. They are each, however, aspects of a broader shift in thought and practice whereby reality has increasingly come to be seen as a construct. Hegel, in fact, suggested that history be contemplated as a work of art, for in retrospect it 'reads' like a novel: its end is known. Metafiction suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world-model, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design.

The novels of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, Henry James and Sinclair Lewis, which are among the foundations of a literary canon based on the preferred style and

effectively of realist fiction, can therefore be said to comprise of a brief 'experimental' phase in the history of the novel. From this point of view, metafiction defines the tradition against which realism has to be seen as counter-traditional or unorthodox. Over time, that counter-tradition simply ran out of ideas. So because metafiction was back in vogue in the 1960s, Barth was able to proclaim that the realist experiment had arrived at the limits of 'exhaustion'.

For post-structuralism, any attitude of rejection risks becoming what it sets out to make impossible – the possibility of being settling. Hence by rejecting realism, for example, anti-realist theories and practices of literature can easily cohere as a tradition that is no more unsettling, as a tradition, than the one they rejected. Any choice between the traditional and the radical that is based on a rejection of the traditional, then, cannot be a radical choice. Such a choice would be on the contrary settling, because it would reaffirm the very traditional idea that choices are made on the basis of a structure of self-evident difference between self-present alternatives. This is not only a commonsensical view but (in Derrida's terms) a fundamentally metaphysical one also, running through all forms of the speech/writing opposition to include even philosophical decisions about the nature of any concept.

The factor of undecidability inhabits every structure, in other words, does not point to indecision but rather to the ungroundedness on which decisions are based. For example, the choice between realist and postmodern literature is not a choice between two absolutely different forms of writing-in-particular and therefore not quite a straightforward

choice between traditional and radical alternatives. There are some features of realism that postmodernism could never reject, and there are some features of postmodernism that are not 'outside' realist literature.[15] This is because both realism and postmodernism are situated within a tradition of western metaphysics such that any differences between them have to be seen as arising from inside that tradition, as part of that tradition.

In fact, the "unreality of reality" is not the only tune that postmodernist fiction can play, and postmodernism is not as fully the creature of the contemporary "crisis of reality" as Graff says it is. Postmodernist fiction may be antirealistic, but antirealism is not its sole object of representation. Whereas modernism with its ever more refined exploration of the possibilities of the various artistic disciplines and with its concentration on problem-solving as a central artistic activity ignored the problem of representation in favour of art's autonomy (and thus differentiated art and life), postmodern de-differentiation, like the best deconstructionist scenario, shakes our faith in our representational schemes and 'puts chaos, flimsiness, and instability in our experiences of reality itself.[16] Postmodernism may have given up on experimentation and returned to narrative and figuration, but not to revive a reassuring nineteenth century realism.

Reality alters, to represent it the means of representation must alter too. Nothing arises from nothing; the new springs from the old, but that is just what makes it new. The oppressors do not always appear in the same mask. The masks cannot always be stripped off in the same way. There

are so many tricks for dodging the mirror that is held out. Their military roads are termed motor roads. Their tanks are painted to look like Macduff's bushes. Their agents can show horny hands as if they are workers. Yes: it takes ingenuity to change the hunter into the quarry. What was popular yesterday is no longer so today, for the people of yesterday were not the people as it is today.

One cannot decide if a work is realist or not by finding out whether it resembles to the reality of one's time. In each individual case the picture given of life must be compared, not with another picture, but with the actual life portrayed. And likewise where popularity is concerned there is a wholly formalistic procedure that has to be guarded against. The intelligibility of a work of literature is not ensured exclusively by its being written in exactly the same way as other works which people have understood. These other works too were not invariably written just like the works before them. Something was done towards their understanding. In the same way we must do something for the understanding of the new works. Besides being popular there is such a thing as becoming popular.

Part of the growth of the self-conscious, anti-realistic literature and criticism has surely been the result of a rejection of Victorian conceptions of reality, but the idea that literature should be describing reality or truth is implicitly present still. The most interesting fiction of our day frequently seems to be game-playing, to be enjoying – as in Borges, Barth, and Nabokov – the possibilities of language and pleasures of literary parody. But the games themselves, while suggesting powerfully the writers' consciousness of the way verbal structures intervene between

us and reality, provide for us new possibilities of reality. Reality has become problematic in ways the Victorians could only barely imagine, yet much of the energy of modern fiction comes from sources similar to those which directed earlier realism: from a conscious rejection of the notions of reality implicit in earlier fictions and from a sense of the limits of the power of language to render reality at all.

The method of Robbe-Grillet, as he himself has made clear, is an attempt to get more precise about reality as it is experienced by human consciousness.[17] With this notion of changing realities in mind, we can, moreover, make some sense of Erich Auerbach's treatment of Virginia Woolf as a great culmination of the tradition of literary realism. Most of the confusions about the word 'realism' come from an initial confusion between an historically definable literary method and a more general (perhaps inescapable) attempt to be faithful to the real. Since reality is both inexhaustible and perpetually changing to human consciousness, the word "realism" had no chance of a stable meaning. Despite all its dangers, the word has one virtue of forcing us to wrestle with some of the central problems of criticism and art.

Around 1890s, some novelists dominated American fiction in reputation and influence. All had started their work in or just after the Civil War; all represented different aspects of the realist tradition. James was the most cosmopolitan of the realists, and had moved to realism's fountainhead, in Europe. James' choice of milieu arose from his need for a dense social order that would set art into motion; and his 'romance' was managed through a realist perception refined by contact with Flaubert,

Turgenev, George Eliot. Art's task was not to record but to make life, reality was a constructed, not a recorded, thing; it was in the inherent tension of the novel between empiricism and idealism, realism and romance, naturalism's 'magnificent treadmill of the pigeon-holed and documented' and romance's 'balloon of experience', that the form found itself. By the century's turn, James was ready, in his essay 'The Future of Fiction',[18] to suggest that the novel might reach a new level of self-realization.

A new generation of writers who began to emerge in the 1890s and took on strong character as a generation – partly because they shared aesthetic theories and preoccupations, partly because they shared the tutelage of Howells, partly because most had brief careers and early deaths. Often presented by the critics as strongly American, as Alfred Kazin put it, 'on native grounds',[19] they were in fact much influenced by European theories of naturalism – above all those of Emile Zola, who in 1879 had set down his theory of the naturalist novel in *Le Roman Experimental*. For Zola, the word 'experimental' had scientific analogies; the novelist's task was to undertake a social or scientific study, recording facts, styles and systems of behaviour, living conditions, the workings of institutions, and deducing the underlying processes of environmental, genetic, and historical-evolutionary development. Naturalism was thus realism scientized, systematized, taken finally beyond realist principles of fidelity to common experience or of humanistic exploring of individual lives within the social and moral web of existence. Science, as Adams saw, was growing increasingly relativistic, looking into uncertainty and chaos, assuming that reality was not objectively given but subjectivity

apprehended through consciousness. In America, this view was shared by pragmatism, of which William James, teaching Philosophy and Psychology at Harvard, was an originator. In *Principles of Psychology*[20] (1890), he explored the gap between mind and action, voting that reality was not immediately apprehensible, but required to be approached provisionally, through the empirical, or pragmatic, assumption that order is 'gradually won and always in the making'. If reality is not to be known except by being taken in, consciousness must become the crucial question; and so, in Henry James's late work, it does.

It is sometimes argued that the return to realism and naturalism, and above all the move towards 'proletarian literature', was the essential direction of Thirties American writing. The naturalistic reporting of working-class life was one urgent literary task of the Thirties; another was realistic exploration of the disorders of the bourgeois world. These found their best chronicler in John O'Hara, a novelist of, as Lionel Trilling said, 'exacerbated social awareness',[21] who converted the traditional mode of bourgeois realism into a powerful discourse for Depression Times. During the Thirties, realism and naturalism seemed the 'natural' ways to record a deeply changing society. The term 'postmodernism' still remains vague, but what it describes and attempts to define has been a fundamental challenge to the past realism and naturalism in American fiction, and to previous experimentalism; and it has opened up the novel as experimental ground in a time when many old images of America went into dissolution. Whether or not postmodernism is the dominant or 'appropriate' style of the age may be questionable; what is certain is that formal and epistemological questions crucial to

fiction's nature are being articulated in writers who have extended certain fundamental preoccupations of modernism – notably with fiction as play, game, parody, pastiche, and fantasy – and added new challenges to the notion that art is referential and formally coherent. In their works the stable text disappears; the fiction becomes meta-fictional; the reader is invited into novels in novel ways.

Raymond Federman has seen the emergence of a new 'surfiction' wherein 'all distinctions between the real and the imaginary, between the conscious and the subconscious, between the past and the present, between truth and untruth, will be abolished'.[22] Other critics have offered less aesthetic, more historical explanations, seeing the new novel as a reaction against what Tony Tanner calls 'all kinds of conspiracies against spontaneity of consciousness. The phenomenon of postmodernism has been for some predominantly a style or a mannerism, but for others a total, enfolding historical manifestation, the apocalyptic product of a time when the sign has floated free of the signified, authoritative utterance becomes impossible, and only re-naming, re-writing, re-creating can be attempted'.[23] For some a latter-day epistemological impasse, it has been for others a great and open freeing of creation. If postmodernism's nature has been disputed or variously explained, so has its degree of dominance in late-twentieth century American fiction. For the late sixties it appeared, in its synthesizing drive and parodic abundance, a crucial break with previous realism and naturalism and with previous generic and regional tendencies, so that older categories and groupings – 'Southern fiction', 'Jewish-American fiction', 'Black fiction' – appeared increasingly senseless; any style was open to intersection, reformulation,

and parody. By the seventies the creative abundance had hardened towards mannerism and there was already talk of post-postmodernism.

Representing The Unreality of Reality: A Study of Three American Postmodernist Novels[24] is a study made of the selected novels of the three American Postmodernist novelists – William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. As celebrated writers, they enjoy a unique and outstanding status in the Postmodern American fiction. Though they have to their credit a number of letters, memoirs and diary details, they have mostly been accredited mainly to their novels. Their works, in the fictional representation of reality in its postmodern context, deserves critical attention, admiration and recognition. And this study of mine is a humble endeavour in this direction.

John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, Richard Brautigan, William Burroughs, Kurt Vonnegut,Jr., William Gass and Donald Barthelme are those novelists who interrogated the concepts; the concepts of reality, truth and accepted belief(s). One can say then, that it is in reaction to the type of false realism that postmodern fiction assumes its disruptive stance. William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. have in their own ways deconstructed the American reality attempting to subvert the so-called official or generally accepted view of the social reality. Realism in literature is normally understood as the expression of a belief in a commonly experienced phenomenological world. Postmodernism in fact subverts this assumption of realism and employs a negative evaluation of it, thereby refuting the epistemological grounds of realism.

The so-called new novel is couched in a theoretical projection of postmodernism that the accepted reality is an illusion. We understand reality as something concrete through which we order our experience. The postmodern view deconstructs this position and asserts that reality is simulated. Therefore, it is a mode of simulacrum. *Naked Lunch*,[25] *Slaughterhouse-Five*[26] and *Gravity's Rainbow*[27] underline a reality that is supposedly unreal for our conventional understanding. It confirms to Michel Foucault's discourse of madness that underlines the fact that madness is constructed socially as prohibitive, tabooed and unsocial. The whole discourse in fact deflects upon the conventional understanding of things and helps us to understand the real-real. The pertinent question here is how does one define the real. The real conventionally has been defined and understood as something concretely available, socially acceptable and manifestly conventional. The postmodern novelists interrogate this position and take us beyond the conventionality to an understanding of things which are self-reflexive and underpin the manifestation of unreal as real and the invisible as visible.

The publication of William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* in 1959, marks the beginning of the postmodern fiction in America. According to him, the postmodern fiction defines itself in terms of "negatives and absence". The novelist as a narrator does not claim his authorship, for he is presumed to be dead, or simply reduced to a "recording instrument"[28] that generates narratives and also disrupts them. It is in this sense that Burroughs' statement in *Naked Lunch*: "The word cannot be expressed direct .... It can perhaps be indicated by mosaic of juxtaposition like articles abandoned in a hotel drawer, defined by negatives and

absence...."[29] becomes the very defining principle of what makes of the postmodern narrative. Thus, his understanding of "negatives and absence" becomes the defining principle of the fiction written during the 1960s.

Naked Lunch portrays a reality that is unreal and absent. It proclaims the essential absurdities of life and reduces it to a series of cruel and often pointless charades. Time, place, plot and characters are not important in the narrative except narrative effects – effects which are important for their disruptive traces, and hidden meanings. Burroughs makes no attempt to create artificial situations or to construct an elaborate plot. The text is simply a record of the writer's consciousness at the precise point of writing, with breaks, mood changes, unpleasant fantasies, mad humor, all described as they flash into his consciousness. Writing thus folds upon itself as consciousness does:

> There is only one thing a writer can write about: What is in front of his senses at the moment of writing .... I am a recording instrument .... I do not presume to impose "story", "plot", "continuity".... In sofaras I succeed in 'Direct' recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function .... I am not an entertainer....[30]

Burroughs in this sense joins the ranks of "garrulous" American authors such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos whose literary output adds to map the authors' consciousness, recorded over a period of years or even decades. It is confessional literature at its absolute, since it can work only if it is completely honest.

Pynchon as a postmodern novelist takes or adopts disorder or chaos or delirium as the way that fiction functions. Thomas Pynchon's novels confront us with every degree of paranoia from the private to the cosmic. Hofstadter has identified in politics, a mentality which assumes "the existence of a vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish characters."[31] *The Crying of Lot 49*, *V.*, and *Gravity's Rainbow* all exhibit the habits of language and the view of history which Hofstadter has named the paranoid style:

> The distinguishing thing about the paranoid style is not that its exponents see conspiracies or plots here and there in history, but that they regard a "vast" or "gigantic" conspiracy as the motive force in historical events. History is a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power .... The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms – he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values.[32]

Tyron Slothrop, the American whose hapless peregrinations form the bulk of *Gravity's Rainbow*, is beset at every turn by suspicions which he himself describes as paranoid. From infancy onward he has in fact been manipulated by external forces, first by the scientist Laszlo Jamf, subsequently by the Pvalovian Pointsman, and finally, in an anarchic Germany at the close of World War II, by a host of operators ranging from expatriate Africans to Soviet agents to black marketeers. Like, Benny Profane in *V.*, he is a Schlemihl, perpetual victim of others' plots.

We see Slothrop's perception of reality as either governed by chance, and therefore meaningless, or else governed by some hidden powers at once "more real" than chance and more ruthless; and the belief that this order, which is felt to lurk behind the debris of the world, is not merely secret, not just passively mysterious like a remote deity, but "systematically hidden from the likes of Slothrop".[33]

The essential subverting strategy in *Gravity's Rainbow* effectively hatches plots against the book's own characters. Pynchon deliberately confuses the literary meaning of plot – that is, a connected progress of events – with its psychological meaning – that is, the paranoid's schema of a world conspiring around him. Satiric plots envelop and depersonalize, they impede narrative action in an orgy of contingencies where individuals are inseparable from the "plots" that control them. At one point, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the hopelessly confused Tyrone Slothrop asks, "this is some kind of plot, right?" and Seaman Bodine responds: "Everything is some kind of plot, man".[34] Paranoia here is, by its nature, proliferating. When Slothrop loses his character in the multiple plots of *Gravity's Rainbow*, he, as an aggregate of cells, is made into an aggregate of last moments. At the end of the narrative, he has and is nothing. By refusing to close his text, not only in the obviously unresolving ending but throughout the novel, Pynchon places his fiction within its cultural environment.

If the traditional novel describes reality in an attempt to give it a certain moral validity, the postmodern fiction like Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five* seeks to show the form rather than the content of

the novel. *Slaughterhouse-Five* offers a nonlinear mode of narration that, in Klinkowitz's words, created "a radical reconnection of the historical and the imaginary, the realistic and the fantastic, the sequential and the simultaneous, the author and the text."[35] It bears little resemblance to the traditional novel. There is nothing of the linear movement of the narrative, no intricate plot, crying for resolution. The protagonist, a time-traveller, can by a blink of his eye find himself in fire-bombed Dresden in 1944 and, by another blink, in Ilium, his home town in 1961. Billy Pilgrim was an eye-witness to the fire bombing by the Allies of Dresden during the fag-end of World War II. The experience proves so traumatic that pilgrim becomes "unstuck in time".[36] Being "unstuck in time", he does not find it worthwhile to distinguish between past, present and future or, between the living and the dead.

At one point Vonnegut announces: "There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontation, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces."[37] Billy is anything but a thin character: he is another illustration of Vonnegut's concept of Protean man. Billy needs to travel back and forth in time not only to understand himself but also to endure himself to become his history. He has many personalities, many selves existing together at once. Vonnegut himself performs multiple roles both as creator and creature, author and character, taking centre stage at the beginning and conclusion and also appearing as a Dresden prisoner of war.

Vonnegut emphasizes on fantasy's importance in trying to make sense of the senseless in his *Slaughterhouse-Five*. To him, fictions are responses to history and horror; 'real' horror forms one essential component of the book, while the process of the fantastic displacement the other. Vonnegut converts himself into Billy pilgrim, a childlike, gentle-natured, but emotionally damaged optometrist from Ilium, New York, who is nonetheless concerned, like his narrator, with the making of 'corrective lenses'. In the 'real' world, Billy suffers the author's experience of a POW imprisoned in the Dresden Slaughterhouse, and survived by chance from the fireball which destroys the city. Vonnegut is at his best in fantasizing his real experiences as a prisoner in World War II. He said, "I felt after I finished *Slaughterhouse-Five* that I didn't have to write at all anymore if I didn't want to. It was the end of some sort of career."[38]

It is now necessary to introduce these novelists selected for our study. William Seward Burroughs was born on 5 February 1914 in St. Louis, Missouri, into a prominent family. Burroughs's father, Mortimer P. Burroughs, was the son of the man who invented the adding machine and founded the company that bears his name·Burroughs is his paternal grandfather's namesake. Burroughs's mother, Laura Lee Burroughs, was the daughter of a distinguished Methodist minister whose family claimed descent from Robert E. Lee. In the marriage of Burroughs's parents the northern and Southern strains of the American Protestant tradition and its ruling elite were united. Burroughs's paternal grandfather, originally from Auburn, New York, was an example of Yankee ingenuity and commercial success; and his maternal grandfather, James Wideman Lee,

a Methodist Episcopal minister in Atlanta and St. Louis, eloquently preached the Calvinist doctrine that inspired men like William S. Burroughs I. Their grandson inherited both the inventiveness of the one and the verbal skill of the other, and both talents are evident in his work.

Limited factual information about his childhood can be found in his fiction (mainly *Junkie*, *The Wild Boys*, and *Exterminator*!) and in the brief "Literary Autobiography" published *in A Descriptive Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive*. The evil of dullness is embodied in the character of Colonel Greenfield in *The Wild Boys*, a great bore known for his interminable racist jokes. After graduating from Harvard in 1936, Burroughs began receiving an allowance from his parents and was free to do as he pleased. His own description of the following years is one of aimless drifting and boredom. The years of wandering constituted a long apprenticeship to his vocation as a writer, which paralleled his search for a belief to provide the basis for his life. The quest found its end in 1944 when Burroughs became a morphine addict. Addiction ended dilettantism and gave a prophetic vision that enabled Burroughs to turn his life into art.

Burroughs's first novel, *Junkie*, a portrait of the addict underworld of the 1940s, reveals the true source of hipsterism. The year of 1944 was the crucial juncture in Burroughs's life as it was in this year that Burroughs became addicted in New York. For fifteen years Burroughs chose drug addiction as a way of life. Addiction became his spiritual discipline as an artist. *Junkie*, "In Search of Yage", and *Naked Lunch* are accurate reports of drug experiences, and he has written several articles

on the effects of drugs, most notably "Letter from a Master Addict to Dangerous Drugs" and "Points of Distinction Between Sedative and Consciousness – Expanding Drugs". In fact, Burroughs has denied that anything of worth can be written under the influence of any drug (with the possible exception of marijuana), although drugs may be useful for opening up psychic areas to be written about afterwards.

From 1960 to 1964, Burroughs lived mostly in Paris, where Olympia Press published *The Soft Machine* and *The Ticket That Exploded* soon after bringing out *Naked Lunch*. In fact, his work from *The Wild Boys* (1971) to the present has as its initial inspiration the youth revolt of the 1960s. In 1981, Burroughs published his first long fiction in several years, *Cities of the Red Night*, the chief result of his collaboration with Grauerholz. In 1983, Burroughs was inducted into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. And he died on 2nd August, 1997, of a heart attack in Lawrence, Kansas. He was 83.

Burroughs's career as a writer began at the age of thirty-five when he began to record his experiences as an addict. From about 1950 to 1957 he kept notes that included not only observations about the drug world and the effects of drugs on himself, but also records of dreams, memories and fantasy episodes. Often this material was included in letters to his friends. From the beginning Burroughs wrote in fragments, recording all the products of his consciousness, whether fact or fiction, "subjective" or "objective", and encouraged collaboration with other artists through letters, visits, and the mediation of his publishers. From the selection, editing, and arrangement of the notes came *Junkie*, *The Yage Letters*,

Naked Lunch, The Soft Machine, The Ticket That Exploded and *Nova Express* – all of which are based on Burroughs's life as a drug addict.

Naked Lunch is Burroughs' first mature work as an artist, the novel that established his reputation as an important writer and the one that still receives the most critical attention. It purports to be a record of a man's addiction to opiates, his apomorphine treatment, and cure. On the literal level the novel can be seen as the disjointed memories and hallucinations of withdrawal. It begins to develop the pop mythology that the later works elaborate and complete. In *Naked Lunch* Burroughs transforms the body's addictive nature into an entity called the "Human Virus" or the "evil virus". The virus lives upon the human host, satisfying its own needs for drugs, sex, or power (the three basic addictions for Burroughs) through demonic possession, which dehumanizes the human being by making him subservient to a physical or psychological need. When addicted/possessed, the human being becomes identical with the virus and regresses to a lower form of life.

Thomas Pynchon Jr. was born to Thomas Ruggles Pynchon Sr. and Katherine Frances Bennett Pynchon on May 8, 1937, in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York. Presently he is living as a recluse. Although it has been reported that Pynchon wrote 'severely loosely connected stories which form a kind of picaresque novel' centering on one Meatball Mulligan only one story in this series was ever published – 'Entropy'.[39] He originally planned to make Pig Bodine, a similar figure, central to the story 'Low-Lands' but in the event he was given a secondary role not only in that story but also in *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pynchon's

published stories then are individual works using radically different techniques which all move away from realism. Even his first story establishes a realistic narrative on to which Pynchon then superimposes – with varying degrees of success – layers of symbolism. In spite of their varied subjects the stories usually bear, however obliquely, on contemporary American themes – on diplomacy, consumerism, espionage and so on.

Pynchon's first story dates from his undergraduate days at Cornell. He has also written some important novels viz: (1) *V.*, (2) *The Crying of Lot 49* and (3) *Gravity's Rainbow*. Unlike *V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow* offers no impression of orderliness through titled chapters. In his first novel the mock-picaresque chapter-headings – also used by Richard Farina, the dedicatee of *Gravity's Rainbow*, among other American novelists – comically distance the reader from the absurd sequences which they introduce. His *Gravity's Rainbow* establishes him as one of the best contemporary American novelists. This book seems to have been reviewed by everybody. By and large the reviews deferred to the book even when they showed little sign of coming to terms with it. So intensely curious was the response that *Gravity's Rainbow* actually appeared on the best seller list.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. was born on 11th November 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. and Lieber. On January 2000, he was hospitalized for smoke inhalation after fire at his home. He is still living. His career has been one of the more interesting ones in American literary history. In the forty years since he published his first short story

in 1950, Vonnegut has experienced a virtual roller coaster ride of literary reputation – from obscurity to international fame to being dismissed by critics as a mere "popular" writer, while regaining some critical respect for his most recent work. Beginning as a science fiction writer, he produced two undistinguished novels in that genre in the 1950s before finding his distinctive voice in four innovative fictions of the 1960s – *Mother Night* (1962), *Cat's Cradle* (1963), *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965), and his masterpiece, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969).

In the middle 1970s, however, two weak novels and a backlash against his enormous popularity led to a reversal in his reputation, at least among "serious" readers. In the 1980s with the publication of *Jailbird* (1979), *Deadeye Dick* (1982), *Galāpagos* (1985), and *Bluebeard* (1987), Vonnegut made a quiet but undeniable comeback with academic readers, while retaining a healthy portion of his popular following. By the age of sixty-five Vonnegut had produced twelve novels, a collection of short stories, a Broadway play, and two collections of essays. Regardless of what he writes in the future or how critics view his other work, *Slaughterhouse-Five* will almost certainly win Vonnegut a permanent place in American literature.

When World War II broke out, Vonnegut was sixteen years old; at the age of twenty he enlisted in the army and was sent to Europe, where he was captured by the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge on December 22, 1944. Less than two months later he experienced the event that would profoundly affect the rest of his life: as he puts it, "I was present in the greatest massacre in European history, which was the destruction of

Dresden by fire-bombing".[40] Vonnegut and a few fellow prisoners and their guards survived only because they were quartered in a meat locker sixty feet below ground. He got out of this world through writing novel called *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

The postmodern novelists like William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut. Jr. focus primarily on narrative displacement. The linear narrative strategy is replaced with a disjointed and disruptive articulation that underpins the destabilized, uncertain, ponderous subjectivities of the characters. Such a realization has allowed a polyphonic possibility, resulting in a Schizoid representation of the individual and society. The very conceptualization and narrativization of reality has resulted in a playful irrealism. The endeavour of these novelists have been to engage in an antifoundational exercise in articulating human experience in a world of shifting terrains where real is irreal and truth is relativized.

The study is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter I – Structures of Reality: An Introduction

This chapter deals with the shifting terrain and changing concept of reality beginning from its formative stage in the 18th century till date.

Chapter II – Negatives and Absence: A Study of William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*

This chapter deals with the beginning of postmodern fiction defining itself in terms of "negatives and absence".

Chapter III – Logic of Delirium – A Study of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*

Here an attempt is made to show how there is a logic in delirium or paranoia or madness.

Chapter IV – Fantasizing the Real - A Study of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Here I dwell on the importance of fantasy in dealing with the real experiences of war.

Chapter V – Representing the Unreality of reality – Postmodernism and Narrative Strategy

This chapter takes special care in critically examining the proposition: "representing the unreality of reality" in the context of the works selected for the study.

Chapter VI – Conclusion

Here at the end I endeavour to attempt a summing up of the discussions made in the preceding chapters, and offer a conclusion.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, p. 71.
2. Saussure's theory of 'reality' need not be inconsistent, therefore, with Freud's theory of the 'reality principle'. For Saussure, reality may not be positive but this does not make it ineffective.
3. Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory, An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester and New York: Mancester University Press, 1995, p. 87.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
6. Michael J. *Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy (ed.),* Essentials of the Theory of Fiction, 2nd edition, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, p. 10.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
8. A.C. Howell, '*Res et Verba*: Words and Things', *ELH*, 13(1946), 131-47.
9. Letter dated 22 September 1800, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 Vols., Oxford, 1956-71), Vol. 1, p. 626.
10. 'An Ordinary Evening in New Haven [1950]', *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, p. 473.
11. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (cited above), pp. 35-37.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

13. Roland Barthes, 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?' In R. Macksey and E., 1972.
14. Ludwig Pfeifer, 'The Novel and Society: Reflections on the Interactions of Literary and Cultural Paradigms', *PTL*, 3, 1978, p. 61.
15. How could a work of literature be made up entirely of something other than words, for example? And no matter how 'transgressively' the words were used, how could they not refer to something other than just themselves (without becoming a 'private language')? Postmodern literature may try to overcome text-world relations by collapsing everything onto the plane of 'text', but that does not mean that realist literature is therefore 'unaware' of itself as text, as if it could be understood to function somehow as pure 'world'.
16. Scott Lash, *Sociology of Postmodernism*, London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 15.
17. Alain Robbe-Grillet, Pour un nouveau roman (Paris: editions de Minuit, 1995). At one point he says, "*Tous Les écrivains pensent être realistes*", and after a brief discussion he argues that "*on doit conclure que tous ont raison*" (p. 135).
18. Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 4, 5, 6, 7.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

24. William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse-Five*.
25. Williams S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959. Hereafter, this novel will be referred to as *NL* only.
26. Kurt Bonnegut, Jr. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1969. Hereafter this novel will be referred to as *SF* only.
27. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, New York: Viking Press, Edition 1973. Hereafter this novel will be referred to as *GR* only.
28. *NL*, p. 221.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
31. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York, 1965, p. 14.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
33. *GR.*, p. 209.
34. Ibid., p. 603.
35. Jerome Klinkowitz, *Kurt Vonnegut*, London, New York: Methuen, 1982, p. 69.
36. *SF*, p. 26.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
38. James Lundquist (quoted), *Kurt Vonnegut*, New York: Ungar, 1977, p. 71.
39. David Seed (quoted), *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988, p. 13.
40. William Rodney Allen (quoted), *Understanding Kurt Vonnegut*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991, p. 3.

CHAPTER - II

NEGATIVES AND ABSENCE: A STUDY OF WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS' *NAKED LUNCH*

The publication of William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* in 1959, inaugurates the beginning of the postmodern fiction in America. The new novel attempts to capture the domain of "negatives and absence".[1] The novelist as a narrator does not claim his authorship, for he is presumed to be dead, or simply reduced to a "recording instrument",[2] that generates narratives and also disrupts them. It is in this sense that Burroughs' statement in *Naked Lunch*: "The word cannot be expressed direct .... It can perhaps be indicated by mosaic of juxtaposition like articles abandoned in a hotel drawer, defined by negatives and absence...,"[3] becomes the very defining principle of what makes of the postmodern narrative. Thus "negatives and absence" become the constituting principle of the fiction written during the 1960s.

Naked Lunch was published by Olympia, a Paris based publishing house. On publication it was ignored, for no reviewer thought it worth reviewing. After three years of its first publication in France, it was published in the USA by Grove Press, New York. Herbert Gold, with whom Allen Grinsberg had spent an entire evening in Paris in 1958, reading aloud from the manuscript of *Naked Lunch* and attempting to explain it, wrote in *The New York Times* of November 25, 1962:

> It happens that Burroughs possesses a special literary gift. 'Naked Lunch' is less a novel than a series of essays, fantasies, prose poems, dramatic fragments, bitter

> arguments, jokes, puns, epigrams – all hovering about the explicit subject matter of making out on drugs while not making out in either work or love the black humor of addiction.[4]

Although *Naked Lunch* was brought before the Massachusetts Supreme Court on obscenity charges in the mid-sixties, while still arousing dismay and disgust in the circle of sophisticated readers, the critical language in which its literary importance was first proclaimed is strikingly moral. John Ciardi describes Burroughs' early novel as a "monumentally moral descent into the hell of narcotics addiction" created by an author "engaged in a profoundly meaningful search for true values".[5] Allen Ginsberg similarly judges Burroughs' intention as "moral, like defending the good", and he lauds the author, for the courage and idealism of his "total confession [of] exactly really what was going on inside his head"[6] (*NL* xxxii-xxxiii). Among the most hyperbolic claims is Norman Mailer's pronouncement: "William Burroughs is in my opinion – whatever his conscious intention may be – a religious writer. There is a sense in *Naked Lunch* of the destruction of the soul [...]. It is a vision of how mankind would act if man was totally divorced from eternity"[7] (*NL* xvi-xvii).

The defense of *Naked Lunch* by Ginsberg and Mailer, if, at one level, point at championing artistic freedom, at another level, then opinions underline the tradition of literary humanism based on a moral vision of the universe, and the place of art in that universe. Whether *Naked Lunch* is condemned as morally bankrupt or admired as a novel of

moral quest, it is being judged within the framework of ethical dualism which dominates Western thought. Burroughs' detractors have rejected his work primarily on the ground that they find it demoralizing: *Naked Lunch* is denounced as negative and destructive, "on the side of death" rather than in celebration of life[8] (Wain 21-23; Hoffman 486-89)[9]. Leslie Fiedler criticizes Burroughs for evading his more personal respnsibility for social reform by developing theories which locate the source of the world's problems in a conveniently distant 'cosmic' disorder (Waiting 163-71)[10]. Repeatedly, Burroughs is denounced as self-indulgent because of the failure of his written work to arouse his readers to moral action in the world.

Many critics who admire Burroughs' work, have tried in turn to justify it as part of the great moral tradition of Western literature. *Naked Lunch* has been described to pursue the sustaining "monomyth" of the quest through good and evil, through Heaven and Hell[11] (Stull and Skerl)[12], or compared to the medieval moral tradition which condemns the sensual realm[13] (Peterson), or ranked among classic works of satire and didactic reform[14] (McCarthy and Burgess)[15]. Anthony Burgess's response to Burroughs' work seems to shift depending on the context of the critical debate: he insists on one occasion that Burroughs' aims are moral and didactic rather than artistic, but then he defends the author against moralistic denunciations with the plea, "For heavens sake, let us leave morals to the moralists and carry on the job of learning to evaluate art as art".[16] Even those critics who reject moral criteria as inappropriate

for an understanding of Burroughs' work tend to set up alternative hierarchies, placing the ultimate value on such goals as scientific speculation[17] (Moorcock), the exploration of the senses and "raw experience"[18] (Creely and Levine)[19], the pure exercise of will (McConnell)[20] or – as in Burgess' case art for art's sake. These alternative goals are inevitably set in rigid binary opposition to moral aims. It is not morality in general which Burroughs attacks, but the structure of hierarchy and opposition which supports moral dualism.

Burroughs himself claims in the "Deposition" to *Naked Lunch* that the infamous Blue Movie sequence is a "tract against Capital Punishment in the manner of Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal*".[21] When he draws this comparison, however, he is "talking to the machine" in its own language, responding to accusations that parts of *Naked Lunch* are merely pornographic – lacking in artistic merit because they are lacking in moral purpose.[22] While quite a few critics declare Burroughs a successful satirist in the Swiffian mode, David Lodge describes what he considers Burroughs' failure as a satirist. Lodge's objection is that Burroughs narrative "suspends rather than activates the reader's moral sense".[23] In a later re-examination of *Naked Lunch* he argues that the elimination of a realistic frame for the satire robs us of our "bearings and empirical reality"; the absence of "norms [...] by which its nauseating grotesquerie can be measured and interpreted" makes it impossible for us to "apply the episode [...] to the real world and draw an instructive moral".[24]

The public has always reacted strongly to Burroughs' work. His books have been either banned as pornographic, or praised as postmodern deconstruction at its finest. Postmodern fiction like *Naked Lunch* does not form a coherent movement, a unified thought process based on a precise theory even though such critics as Ihab Hassan, Jerome Klinkowitz, Masu'd Zavarzadch, Matei Calinescu, and a few others have attempted to theorize this new fiction. Therefore, one might say, speaking of that new fiction, that it is a mess. And it is true that fiction in America today defies all critical ordering and rational interpretation – very often to the despair of the critics. Burroughs has been hailed by the youth movement as a revolutionary, feted as a champion of gay rights, condemned as a misogynist and criticized for his love of weapons and membership of the National Rifle Association. Whatever he writes or says, someone somewhere usually finds it controversial. Though Burroughs' first work, *Junkie*, appeared in 1953, it was *Naked Lunch* that initially attracted a cognoscenti of the avantgarde and hipster to his work. When *Naked Lunch* was first published, its early readers were delighted to learn that Burroughs the man was as extraordinary as his book: a homosexual who had shot his wife and who lived in self-imposed exile in Europe and North Africa.

The narrative entrée in *Naked Lunch*, which condenses most powerfully and economically, the thematic and stylistic strategies of Burroughs' fiction is the story of the Carnival man who teaches his anus to talk. In this bizarre tale, Burroughs dramatizes the problematic

relationship of body and mind, and the role of language in that relationship; the arbitrary violence of language as a system of naming and representation; and the possibility of an ontology and an aesthetics based on 'negatives and absence'.

Burroughs' plan in *Naked Lunch* is to expose the repressive duality of body/mind by confusing and combining word and flesh, making the abstract word literal and concrete. In this, Burroughs even has given speech the physical impact of a sound emitted and received by the body's lower sphere: "This ass talk had a sort of gut frequency. It hit you right down there like you gotta go. You know when the old colon gives you the elbow and it feels sorta cold inside".[25] But this strange narrative is not a parable of the triumph of body over mind, a mere reversal of conventional hierarchy. For once the carny man's brain dies and his "blank periscope eyes" are disconnected (as all junkies' eyes) from the "seat of libido and emotion",[26] the anus too seems to fall silent. Language as we know it only persists where there is conflict and the possibility of domination.

In a chapter in *Modes* entitled "The Metonymic Text as Metaphor", Lodge attempts to reconcile the representative or mimetic function of metonymic discourse (following Jakobson's paradigm) with the transcendent symbolic structure of metaphor. He argues that while metaphoric texts "point to their status as total metaphors" for the human condition, metonymic texts offer themselves as a "representative bit of reality". Lodge discovers here an irony which will again ensure the

literary hegemony of metaphor: "[metonymic narrative] is often described as a 'slice of life'. Yet this phrase ... is itself a metaphor; and we know that it is not possible for the literary artist to limit himself to merely making a cut through reality, as one might cut through a cheese (because) his medium is not reality itself but signs".[27] This is precisely what Burroughs does propose – that reality is represented in signs that signs are objects, and that they can indeed be cut through like a cheese. This operation, which Burroughs pursues systematically in the cut-up novels, is set in motion in *Naked Lunch* not in the interest of representing the world, but in the interest of exposing the illusion of the referential function of language. When Burroughs disrupts the continuity of his narrative, it is to suggest an extension of its boundaries beyond the rules of grammar and syntax, beyond the continuity of objects in time and space.

Metaphor has been described as a semantic impertinence which is subsequently resolved through a new figurative reading; similarly metonymy might be seen as a syntactical impertinence which opens up the possibility of new modes of connection, new juxtapositions. As the narrative of *Naked Lunch* takes us across the country through the monotony of "USA drag", we move in and out of these disorienting mosaic composites of metonymic details:

> A train roar through him whistle blowing ... boat whistle, foghorn, sky rocket burst over oily lagoons ... penny arcade open into a maze of dirty pictures ... ceremonial canon

> boom in the harbor ... a scream shoots down a white hospital corridor...[28]

> He plummets from the eyeless light house kissing and jacking off in face of the black mirror, glides oblique down with cryptic condoms and mosaic of a thousand newspapers [...] to settle in black mud with tin cans and beer bottles, gangsters in concrete, pistols pounded flat and meaningless to avoid short-arm inspection of prurient ballistic experts.[29]

This is the poetic power of metonymy which Burroughs begins to develop in the mosaic assemblages of *Naked Lunch* and later drives to its limits in his cut-up writing experiments.[30]

In 1959, Burroughs was introduced to what would become the central device in his writing in the 1960s – the cut-up method as discovered by his friend Brion Gysin, poet and painter. Burroughs immediately recognized that he had already served an unconsicous cut-up apprenticeship in editing and rearranging the voluminous material that finally yielded the published version of *Naked Lunch.*

What struck both Gysin and Burroughs about the cut-up method was the possibility of using this technique to make the writer's medium tangible – to make the word and object detached from its context, its author, its signifying function. They wanted to bring, as they put it, the collage to writing. Burroughs had already come a long way in *Naked Lunch* toward making word and image literal, but here the word became a substance that could actually be handled, or more accurately, manhandled. The method itself is simple: "Cut right through the pages of

any book or newsprint ... lengthwise, for example, and shuffle the columns of text. Put them together at hazard and read the newly constituted message. Do it for yourself".[31]

In his theoretical explorations of the nature of cut-up writing, Burroughs comes to assert finally that all literature is cut-up. "What is any writing but a cut-up?" he asks.[32] For him, as for theorists like Bakhtin, Derrida, Kristeva, and Barthes, any literary text is an intersecting network of many texts, spliced, crossed, and merged. Every writer is perceived as drawing from the language system, selecting and rearranging that material, either intersecting with and appropriating arrangements already made, or scrupulously avoiding or distorting those pre-existing patterns. In either case, the writer proceeds, according to a certain relationship, to the body of language and literary tradition. For Burroughs, the cut-up is merely a device for making this relationship explicit.

The cut-up text might stand as an emblem of what contemporary theorists call 'intertextuality', a concept which defines literary works not as autonomous and complete but as elements in a system of relations to other texts. In the intertextuality of the cut-ups these relations are most often shifting and temporary, bringing us into a world without boundary, self, paternity, or ownership. Burroughs dramatizes this indeterminate multiplicity on a literal and scientific level in the genetic cut-ups produced in the "Biologic Courts" of *Nova Express*. These biological cut-

ups are presented as "tentative briefs" which will then be subject to infinite displacement and variation.

> ... I was sitting in a lunch room in New York having my doughnuts and coffee. I was thinking that one does feel a little boxed in in New York, like living in a series of boxes. I looked out the window and there was a great big Yale truck. That's cut-up – a juxtaposition of what's happening outside and what you're thinking of.[33]

The aim of the cut-up, as Burroughs sees it, is to "make explicit a psychosensory process that is going on all the time anyway".[34]

For Roland Barthes, as for Burroughs, intertextuality extends into our life in the world. In the cacaphony of the intertext which is constantly swirling around us, we are liberated from the sentence, from grammar and logic, from our roles as speakers or listeners, from the opposition of inside and outside. Burroughs was, of course, similarly inspired by Tangier as an embodiment of infinite and shifting multiplicity, "the beauty of this town that consists in changing combinations".[35] His own brand of Yage intoxication produced visions of composite cities in perpetual architectural flux, composite races without inhibitions and open to all human potential.[36] The intertextuality of the cut-up is discovered in geography, in architecture, and in biological evolution.

In the cut-up novels one still finds the composite sites and the mosaic clusters of *Naked Lunch*, but Burroughs also develops in the later works a more explicit model of the composite writing process. Its

operations range from the crudeness of a "cement mixer" for word and image, to more refined and "technical" maneuvers. Burroughs' cut-up writing machine clearly generates the activity of intertextual production. Barthes has similarly described the "text" which, in opposition to the traditional literary "work", produces by means of a serial movement of disconnections, overlappings, variations. [...] the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings-over".[37] Burroughs' cut-ups concretize the ideals of Barthe's "text".

The advantage of the cut-up method, as Burroughs sees it is that the "use of scissors renders the process explicit and subject to extension and variations".[38] Burroughs' later variation on the cut-up, the fold-in method performed without scissors, similarly "gives the writer literally infinite extensions of choice". Again, the method is simple: "A page of text – my own or someone else's – is folded down the middle and placed on another page – The composite text is then read across half one text and half the other".[39] This method, Burroughs explains, achieves in writing the effects of cinematic flashback, "enabling the writer to move backward and forward on his time track – For example, I take page one and fold it into page one hundred – I insert the resulting composite as page ten".[40]

In the cut-up or fold in narrative, reading is non-linear, every reading is already a re-reading in which the whole exists simultaneously, sensed almost subliminally by the reader in vague feelings of familiarity, dislocation, premonition. Burroughs' experiments with narrative deny the

reader all continuity, even that of a narrative persona, and the temporal dislocations of his style cannot be framed or explained by an omniscient narrator or by the scope of any single character's subjective perception. "It" speaks, language speaks. Everything is always already familiar, already written, and all sensations of 'déjà vu' are reminders of our predetermined conditioning by language and culture.[41]

To escape this preconditioning Burroughs extends his discourse toward the transgression of boundaries, pushing outward the limits of language and self. Burroughs recognized at once in Gysin's experiments, as Terry Wilson puts it, "ways out – out of identity, habit, perhaps out of the human form itself".[42] In order to extend boundaries or horizons of consciousness the original lines of demarcation must first be exploded. So the cut-up begins as an exercise in negativity, as a kind of Dadaist destruction. It works against the "superstitious reverence for the word. My God, then say, you can't cut up these words. Why can't I?"[43] It works against the notion of the authorship or ownership of words ("Since when do words belong to anybody. 'Your very own words,' indeed!"[44] and it works finally against the book itself in that "it is the representation of [the] negation [of the book]".[45] Like the intertext, Burroughs' cut-ups defy copyright and ownership, transgressing the regulations of boundary and convention. While the cut-up releases the text from its binding, from its author, even from its conventional signifying function, it also enables the text to regenerate, to stretch out into multivalence and a communal anonymity. The conventional notion of the immortality of literary work is

slightly revised in Burroughs' claim that a cut-up of even the most familiar text will literally reincarnate the voice and creative imagination of the writer: "Shakespeare, Rimbaud live in their words. Cut the word lines and you will hear their voices".[46]

Burroughs has used the travelogue format in *Naked Lunch,* where the narrator's cross-country "USA drag" trip leads similarly across the border and into Mexico. Burroughs originally developed much of the material which constitutes the three cut-up novels in letters written during his travels. While he expresses several times in these letters a desire to relate his adventures clearly and chronologically, his novelistic reworkings of the same material aim instead at confusion and dislocation. The metonymic drive which compels the narrator and the narrative forward is, as in *Naked Lunch* is an intermittent energy of stops and starts. The narrator is repeatedly distracted by the seductive stasis of mindless prelapsarian communities: "Well maybe I would be there still, work all day and after the work knocked out no words no thoughts just sit there looking at the blue mountains and ate and belched and fucked and slept same thing day after day the greatest".[47]

Burroughs has always been prepared to speak quite openly about his use of drugs for literary pruposes, and in 1979 he said: "I didn't have any experience with opiates until I was thirty years old ... What interested me was what interests anyone who takes drugs – altered consciousness. Altered consciousness, of course, is a writer's stock in trade. If my consciousness was just completely conventional, no one

would be interested enough to read it, right? So there's that aspect. Now you may not be doing that for literary purposes at all. You may just be doing it because you want to. But of course, altering the consciousness need not be drug related either. We alter our consciousness all the time, from minute to minute. Altered consciousness is a basic fact of life."[48]

In an interview in 1961, Burroughs commented, "I'm against Capital punishment in all forms, and I have written many pamphlets on this subject in the manner of Swift's *Modest Proposal* [...] these pamphlets have marked *Naked Lunch* as an obscene book [...]."[49] Further discussing the themes of his novels in a 1963 interview, Burroughs said, "*Naked Lunch* could be described as a science fiction, though it was simply a development of the themes I see running through all my novels."[50] *Naked Lunch* contains hundreds of routines, some are extended, others concise, and short exercises. The lunch routine is a classic example where a simple idea – lunch is served – is expanded to finish with the creation of a typically Burroughsian character – Autopsy Ahmed – all in just a few lines:

> They just bring so-called lunch... A hard-boiled egg with the shell off revealing an object like I never seen it before... A very small egg of a yellow-brown color... Perhaps laid by the duck-billed platypus. The orange contained a huge worm and very little else... He really got there firstest with the mostest ... In Egypt is a worm gets into your kidneys and grows to an enormous size. Ultimately the kidney is just a thin shell around the worm. Intrepid gourmets esteem the flesh of The worm above all other delicacies. It is said to be

> unspeakably toothsome... An Interzone coroner known as Autopsy Ahmed made a fortune trafficking the worm.[51]

Burroughs proposes freedom from the dogma and conditioned reflexes of living in an authoritarian society. He proposes a society of Johnsons, but all he saw were shits. Accordingly, he looked for the methods of control which perpetuates this unfortunate state of things, for without them such a society cannot exist. He sees them in the church and in the state and, as a Reichian, he immediately identifies the role of sexual suppression and repression in keeping the population subservient. In a 1965 interview he said: "I feel that sex, like practically every other human manifestation, has been degraded for control purposes, or really for anti-human purposes. This whole puritanism. How are we ever going to find out anything about sex scientifically, when 'a priori' the subject cannot even be investigated. It can't even be thought about or written about. That was one of the interesting things about Reich. He was one of the few people who ever tried to investigate sex – sexual phenomena, from a scientific point of view. There's this prurience and this fear of sex. We know nothing about sex. What is it? Why is it pleasurable? What is pleasure? Relief from tension? Well, possibly."[52]

He also identified another element used in control as simple need. In *Naked Lunch* he uses the analogy of junkies and their need for junk, as the "algebra of need". This need is not confined to drugs: "By 'the algebra of need' I simply meant that, given certain known factors in an equation, and the equation comprising a situation of absolute need – any

form of need – you can predict the results. In other words, leave a sick junk in the back room of a drug store and only one result is possible. The same is true of anyone in a state of absolute hunger, absolute fear etcetera. The more absolute the need, the more predictable the behaviour becomes, until it is mathematically certain".[53] This is a human weakness, exploited to the full by those in control.

Much of Burroughs' time was concerned with investigating Scientology and with perfecting his theory of language. "My basic theory is that the written word was actually a virus that made the spoken word possible. The word has not been recognized as a virus because it has achieved a state of stable symbiosis with the host, though this symbiotic relationship is now breaking down..."

> Is the virus then simply a time bomb left on this planet to be activated by remote control? An extermination program in fact? In its path from full virulence to its ultimate goal of symbiosis, will any human creature survive?
>
> Taking the virus-eye view, the ideal situation would appear to be one in which the virus replicates in cells without in any way disturbing their normal metabolism. This has been suggested as the ideal biological situation toward which all viruses are slowly evolving.[54]

In 1974, Burroughs gave a number of interviews to magazines on this subject. In *Kontexts*, he noted if a virus were to attain a state of wholly benign equilibrium with its host cell it is unlikely that its presence would be readily detected or that it would necessarily be recognized as a

virus. He suggested that the word is just such a virus. Burroughs said that apes cannot talk because they do not have the vocal cords to produce words. Combating the word virus is obviously an extremely difficult task, as Burroughs demonstrates:

> We must find out what words are and how they function. They become images when written down, but images of words repeated in the mind and not the image of the thing itself. Try reading something silently without saying the words subvocally. It's hard to do. Gertrude Stein's statement: 'A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose', is true only if written down; but Korzybski says, a rose (flower) is, whatever it is, not a rose (word).[55]

Burroughs points out that there is very little difference between the written word and the spoken word:

> We in the West have lost sight of the fact that the written word is a symbol as can be seen very clearly in a pictorial or character language like ancient Egyptian or Chinese. That the word is, in point of fact, an image. If you know a hieroglyphic language, no matter what your spoken language is, you can immediately communicate with anyone in writing because they may have ten different spoken words for that symbol. But the symbol remains the same... So a spoken word is something that refers to a written word.[56]

It was unusual for Burroughs to run out of material; as he told Gerard Malanga: "In a sense, all my books are one book. It's just a continuous book... Whenever I publish a book – the book is 200 pages – I'll usually have 600 which will overflow into the next book. Often I find

that what I've decided to put in is not as good as what has been left out [...] I use them in a subsequent book."[57]

Burroughs' self-portrait in his own semi-autobiographical novels also contributes to the creation of a legend. Although he uses his own experience as the basis for his fiction, he shapes and organizes it to fit an artistic pattern, the writer who has spent a season in hell and returned to tell his story. He often portrays himself as a character, but one devoid of introspection and, therefore, without an inner life. Thus Burroughs is able to objectify himself in his work in such a way as to depersonalize the biographical material and give it mythic power. Yet the part of himself that Burroughs omits from his works, the timebound personality's intimate feelings and relationships, is the self the biographer seeks to record. Burroughs makes it difficult to draw the line between life and art, and his most important "work" may be his legend which exists somewhere between the realms of fact and fiction, partaking of both.

From the beginning Burroughs wrote in fragments, recording all of the products of his consciousness, whether fact or fiction, "subjective" or "objective", and encouraged collaboration with other artists through letters, and visits. From the selection, editing and arrangement of the notes came *Junkie*, *The Yage Letters*, *Naked Lunch*, *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded* and *Nova Express* – all of which are based on Burroughs' life as a drug addict. For Burroughs, apomorphine is a liberator, freeing the former addict from his body, which has become externalized and alien through the dynamics of addiction. In the novels

written after his cure, apomorphine is used as a metaphor for individual freedom.

The title *Naked Lunch* means "a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork." And the title was suggested by Jack Kerouac. Burroughs maintains:

> I awoke from the sickness at the age of forty-five, calm and sane, and in reasonably good health except for a weakened liver and the look of borrowed flesh common to all who survive the Sickness.... The Sickness is drug addiction and I was an addict for fifteen years. When I say addict I mean an addict to junk (generic term for opium and/or derivatives including all synthetics from demerol to palfium.[58]

If a fictional work is experience sketched or textualized to Burroughs, it holds out the possibility of making ordinary experience extraordinary. As a drug addict he sets himself on the course of moving beyond consciousness. For experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness.[59] To have a hold on the 'chamber of consciousness' confessional modes suits the author, for he wants to reveal the facts. Thus "naked lunch" signifies both the act of seeing and what is being seen. Use of the title in the introduction and the preface establishes the 'naked lunch' as a process of seeing, and particularly, seeing the naked lunch itself.

William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* is about sickness. The sickness that Burroughs maps out implies a kind of social pathology that is "necessarily brutal, obscene and disgusting".[60] The pathology of the social transparently connects the external with the internal, the conscious with the unconscious. The literary imagination is not certainly redemptive or transcendental, it is agonisingly personal and cultural in that the individual moves through moments of sleep and awakening. The author awakes at the age of forty-five to the naked reality of his existential condition. *Naked Lunch* is also a metaphor of protest. This protest is contextualized in demythologisation of the body. Body's purity is debunked for it is conditioned to capture the provoking states of hallucination under the effect of drug. Doping is privileged not only to underline social protest, but also to test the limits of the body. At the cultural level, *Naked Lunch* symbolises literature as protest. In its anti-cultural stance, the novel relativizes truth in its search of meaning in meaninglessness. Within the body of the book, the naked lunch of human life is portrayed as cannibalism, oral-anal sex, orgasm-death, and caprophagy. "To lunch" is to see the vision but also to be a part of it, for no one can escape the human condition. Only a kind of mental freedom is implied by the act of seeing clearly.

Burroughs chose a montage structure for *Naked Lunch* for three reasons: it is a way to present the flow of consciousness; it is a way to expand the reader's consciousness, and it is an effective satirical

technique. *Naked Lunch* is overtly presented as a record of the writer's consciousness.

The characters that Burroughs create are his alter egos; the plot, his inner conflicts; the structure, his actual experience; the texture, his individual perceptions; the themes, his own spiritual quest and discovery. The unusual composition is explained as Burroughs' stream of consciousness and as a random collection of notes. Futhermore, the introduction and preface state that the novel consists of notes taken during the withdrawal sickness of a drug cure – a paranoid schizophrenic state that gives the surreal visions the status of fact. In his work *Junkie,* withdrawal is considered to have produced uncontrollable sociability and a revelation of distasteful intimacies. *Naked Lunch* is a diary that records experience as it happens, and considers the act of recording as part of the experience.

The Naked Lunch opens with a flight from narcotics agents and ends with the shooting of officers, Hauser and O'Brien. The Hauser and O'Brien routine is a miniature masterpiece of pulp detective fiction. Another routine featuring them, "The Conspiracy", originally left out but now published in 'Interzone', provides an alternative ending, but Bill's protagonist, Lee, was never in any great danger, as Bill told Allen back in 1955:

> The meaning of Interzone, its space time location is at a point where three-dimensional fact merges into dream, and dreams erupt into the real world. In Interzone dreams can

> kill – Like Bangutot – and solid objects and persons can be as unreal as dreams. For example, Lee could be in Interzone, after killing the two detectives, and for various dream reasons, neither the law nor the others could touch him directly.[61]

Naked Lunch purports to be a record of a man's addiction to opiates, his apomorphine treatment, and cure. On the literal level the novel can be seen as the disjointed memories and hallucination of withdrawal. In this novel the quest finally ends in heightened visions of the here and now. Again and again the novel explodes into visionary episodes that reveal the permanent alienation of the disillusioned protagonist who opposes the delusions of addiction with his new insight:

> I Don't Want To Hear Any More Tired Old Junk Talk and Junk Con.... The same things said a million times and more and there is no point in saying anything because NOTHING Ever Happens in the junk world.[62]

The terms "addiction" and "junk" are not to be interpreted only on the literal level in *Naked Lunch*; they are also metaphors for the human condition. From the former addict's special angle of vision he perceives that all of humanity is victimized by some form of addiction. The addict's experience has led to the realization that the body is a biological trap and society is run by "control addicts" who use the needs of the body to satisfy their obsession with power. Thus the narrator can say: "The junk virus is public health problem number one of the world today."[63]

The hustling, amoral life-style of the "carny world" of addicts, criminals, and sexual deviants provides the physical, social, and economic environment of *Naked Lunch*. The chief setting is Interzone, an imaginary dystopia described as the "Composite City". It is a composite of all the places that were the scenes of Burroughs' drug quest: the Southern United States, South America, Tangier, and the junk neighbourhoods the world over as described in *Junkie*. Interzone is the modern city as waste land, in which all the cities, peoples, and governments of the world are combined into one huge beehive of commerce, sex, addiction, political manipulation, and rivalry.

Interzone is also described as a single building consisting of bed rooms and a polyglot Market "where all human potentials are spread out".[64] Inhabitants spend their time copulating, shooting up, and making deals in a parody of western capitalist-consumer societies. Sexuality is on the level of pornography, particularly the "blue movie"; all inhabitants are addicted to drugs, sex, or power; and all commerce is on the level of vice and confidence tricks. The economic theories of capitalism's apologists or its Marxist critics are replaced by Burroughs' Algebra of Need, outlined in the introduction. Pyramids of power and wealth are built from man's total need for drugs, sex, or power, and junk traffic supplies the model for all economic and political empires: "Junk is the ideal product... the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy .... The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to the

product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies his client. He pays his staff in junk".[65]

The political parties of Interzone seek to rule the world through total physical and mental control of the human race; they are all "control addicts" who oppose individualism and non-conformity. Religious leaders are given short shrift as part of the power elite that manipulates the masses. One short section on religion reduces the great religions of the world and their founders to "The Prophet Hour", the religion of radio and TV preachers and revivalists' tents, that is, religion as carnival entertainment. The basic carny social relationship of conman and mark, controller and victim, is the basis of Burroughs' pop analysis of power and the social order.

The science and art of this world are also drawn from popular culture. The science of *Naked Lunch* is the popularized scientific knowledge of the mass media (obsessed as Burroughs is with the causes and cures of cancers and viruses) and the pseudoscience of Hubbard's Scientology, Wilhelm Reich's orgonomy, and Burroughs' analysis of addiction and the apomorphine cure. For Burroughs these systems of thought can, like popular art, reveal what is suppressed by currently accepted theories: "Well, these non-conventional theories frequently touch on something going on that Harvard and M.I.T. can't explain. I don't mean that I endorse them wholeheartedly, but I am interested in any attempt along those lines."[66]

In *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs transforms the body's addictive nature into an entity called the "Human Virus" or the "evil virus". The virus lives upon the human host, satisfying its own needs for drugs, sex, or power (the three basic addictions for Burroughs) through demonic possession, which dehumanizes the human being by making him subservient to a physical or psychological need. When addicted/possessed, the human being becomes identical with the virus and regresses to a lower form of life. Numerous transformations in the novel from man to subhuman organism illustrate this hypothesis. The most important episode illustrating this process is the story of "the talking asshole" told by Benway in the central section of the book: "Ordinary Men and Women". In this story, a man is taken over by one of his bodily functions (the "lowest") and reduced to "one all-purpose blob". The episode is brilliantly funny and terrifying at the same time. At the end of the story, Benway points out the moral and puts forth Burroughs' own views about "the basic American rottenness" revealed by popular culture, and the dangers of bureaucracies, which are like cancers or viruses.[67]

In Burroughs' mythology, the social structure mirrors the individual process of addiction/possession on a larger scale. The social dynamic of addiction is that of predator and victim, the Algebra of Need: "The face of 'evil' is always the face of total need .... In the words of total need: 'Wouldn't you?' Yes you would. You would lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, do anything to satisfy total need. Because you

would be in a state of total sickness, total possession, and not in a position to act in any other way."[68] The major social institutions built upon this cannibalistic structure are also viruses or cancers (cancer is said to be a virus in *Naked Lunch)*, which takes over the healthy social body and warp it to fill the needs of a parasitic organism, eventually leading the human race to destruction. The orgasm-death of the hanged man, a recurrent image that illustrates the evil of the social system based on the Algebra of Need.

The action of the myth consists of a battle between the forces of good and evil for control of the human individual and the human race. The three conspiratorial parties of Interzone – the Liquefactionists, the Divisionists, and the Senders – seek to rule the world through parasitic possession. They are all "control addicts". All three parties attempt to make all men conform to a single image reflecting the person or force in control. The Liquefactionists, the party of the far right, plan to liquidate everyone but themselves. Carried to its logical conclusion, liquidation would ultimately eliminate everyone except one man. This party is a parody of modern totalitarianism and racism. Sexually, it is associated with Sadomasochism. The Divisionists, the moderate party, plan to take over by flooding the world with their own replicas, or clones. Again, the goal is domination by one man (and one sex) through eliminating everyone except one set of replicas. This party is a parody of the biblical creation of man, homosexuality, and the conspiracy theory of politics The totalitarian party of the left is the Senders, whose members attempt

to control everyone through mental telepathy, the greatest evil of all, according to Burroughs. Again, sending must lead to only one man in control of a brainwashed subhuman population. The ultimate Sender or villain of the myth is Salvador Hassan O'Leary, who plays all the villainous roles in the novel under various aliases. Senders are associated with addiction, the totalitarian Mayan civilization, the downward metamorphosis of man to insect, and the use of science for evil purposes – some of Burroughs' major themes. In fact, the Senders are identified as the ultimate enemy, and Sending seems to underlie all the evils of control. Sending is called an addiction,[69] a cancer,[70] and is finally identified as the Human Virus.[71]

The only force fighting these evil parasites is the Factualist party, the fourth party of Interzone. The Factualists are a radical group that represents anarchic individualism, as Eric Mottram first pointed out.[72] Factualist agents attempt to foil the plots of the villains simply by revealing them. In a way, the entire novel can be seen as a revelation, and the two Factualists in the book – Lee the Agent and A. J. – are Burroughs' alter egos. Factualist revelation is equated with the murder of a villain and with the apomorphine cure for addiction. There is a flaw in the Factualist program, however. Since all the agents are human, they are all potential addicts who may succumb at any moment: "all Agents defect and all Resisters sell out".[73] Thus the situation is never resolved; the cosmic battle between good and evil goes on and on, like the continuing

plot of a comic-strip adventure, as Burroughs remarked in an interview with Ann Morrisette.[74]

Salvador Hassan O'Leary and A. J., mortal enemies representing the controllers and the liberators, are very much alike as characters in that neither has any permanent personality or identity and both assume many similar roles. Hassan and A. J. are not characters, but opposing forces that assume many shapes. Bill Lee, Burroughs' version of himself as addict-writer, is another "character" who barely exists except for his voice and his actions. The persona is even more of a cipher than before, appearing at the beginning and end as the withdrawing addict and Factualist Agent. Lee's voice is that of the hipster-addict, telling stories about his adventures. He has the tone and vocabulary of the carnival barker, the street hustler, or the conman. Lee's actions are those of the Factualist agent: he infiltrates enemy organizations, reveals their plots, and thereby "murders" evil. His unpunished murder of officers Hauser and O'Brien in the last episode is a metaphor for factualist liberation. Because the police are seeking to confiscate his manuscripts as well as his drugs, his gun, and his person, Agent Lee writes *Naked Lunch*, who destroys evil by writing about it.

In using pseudoscience to create a popular mythology, Burroughs is entering the realm of popular literature: popular science becomes science fiction. In *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs makes use of the full range of popular literary sources: news media, advertising, and popular fiction in all of its forms (magazines, paperbacks, comics, movies, radio, and

television serials). From all of these and from his own contact with the underworld, Burroughs gains his enviable command of popular speech-vocabulary, idioms and rhythms. From news media and advertising, Burroughs also adopts the goal of writing to change consciousness: "Naked Lunch is a blue-print, a How-To-Book... How-To extend levels of experience".[75]

From the various forms of popular fiction, Burroughs derives his plot, characters, and many characteristic images. *Naked Lunch* draws from the detective story, the gothic tale, older science fiction of the mad doctor variety, and pornography. The popular motifs from these fictions include the secret agent, the alienated private eye, the mobster boss and his gang, the mad doctor and amoral scientific experimenter, monsters, zombies, vampires, body snatchers, space-time travel, secret plots, secret formulas or weapons, intelligent non-human beings, nearly inhuman villains, sadomasochistic fantasies, and other perversions. What all these popular forms have in common is a paranoid view of the world that Burroughs accepts as valid. Popular art, like pseudoscience, reveals what society would like to repress. As Benway remarks at one point in the novel, "there's always a space between, in popular songs and Grade B movies, giving away the basic American rottenness".[76]

The new vision of *Naked Lunch* is presented in an experimental form derived from painting, photography, film, and jazz. The basic technique Burroughs chooses to use is juxtaposition, called collage or montage in the visual arts. The overall structure of *Naked Lunch* is a

montage of "routines" that – theoretically – can be read in any order. Burroughs announces this structure in the "Atrophied Preface" when he says, "you can cut into Naked Lunch at any intersection point",[77] and "The word is divided into units which be all in one piece and should be so taken, but the pieces can be had in any order".[78]

The work as a whole exhibits this organic and improvisational pattern. *Naked Lunch* begins with the factual and autobiographical introduction, which explains the author's addiction and cure, and the first routine, which recapitulates the biographical journey of *Junkie*. From this base, the novel moves into fantasies of addiction and control, building up to the central routines: "The market",[79] "Ordinary Men and Women",[80] "Islam incorporated and the parties of Interzone",[81] "The Country Clerk",[82] and "Interzone".[83] This group of routines in the heart of the book contains the most detailed, concentrated descriptions of Interzone, its inhabitants, and the mythic plot, as well as Burroughs' most wide-ranging social satire. The remaining routines return primarily to the themes of addiction and control, but with the added themes of escape and rebellion. The later routines also include more collage sections than those in the first half of the book. *Naked Lunch* ends with an autobiographical preface that discusses quite directly the novel's technique and metaphors and a clinical appendix that lists and discusses drugs mentioned in the novel. Thus the work is framed by factual, autobiographical sections that address the reader directly, guiding him into and out of an extraordinary text. Although the routines can stand alone and the form is a montage, the

order is not random. There is an overall psychological pattern, an order of increasing complexity in the use of experimental technique, and a didactic frame.

Burroughs makes no attempt to create artificial situations or to construct an elaborate plot. The text is simply a record of the writer's consciousness at the precise point of writing, with breaks, mood changes, unpleasant fantasies, mad humor, all described as they flash into his consciousness. Writing thus folds upon itself as consciousness does:

> There is only one thing a writer can write about: What is in front of his senses at the moment of writing .... I am a recording instrument.... I do not presume to impose "story", "plot", "continuity" .... In sofaras I succeed in 'Direct' recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function.... I am not an entertainer....[84]

Burroughs in this sense joins the ranks of "garrulous" American authors such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, whose literary output adds up to a map of the authors' consciousness, recorded over a period of years or even decades. It is confessional literature at its absolute, since it can work only if it is completely honest. Burroughs further maintains:

> "Possession" they call it .... Sometimes an entity jumps in the body – outlines waver in yellow orange jelly – and hands move to disembowel the passing whore or strangle the nabor child in hope of alleviating a chronic housing shortage. As if I was usually there but subject to goof now and again .... 'wrong! I am never here ....' Never that is 'fully' in possession, but somehow in a position to forestall ill-advised moves.... Patrolling is, in fact, my principle occupation ....

> No matter how tight security, I am always somewhere 'Outside' giving orders and 'Inside' this straight jacket of jelly that gives and stretches but always reforms ahead of every movement, thought, impulse, stamped with the seal of alien inspection....[85]

Nietzschean echo is very clear in these lines. Following Nietzsche's utterance that "I was there, I saw it" the writer becomes a witness to the whole process of writing itself. He moves not only through his consciousness but through an intersubjective domain. As a postmodern writer, Burroughs appears in a variety of alter egos and sometimes addresses the reader directly. In the Burroughsian universe, this is a position of tremendous responsibility, because writers make things happen, after all: "In the beginning was the word",[86] and the universe itself was written into existence. Even allowing for what the various alter egos get up to in his texts, Burroughs' work can now be seen as a continuous autobiography of his ideas: the shifting planes of areas of interest are interconnected in a complex web like a three dimensional grid that his mind moves around in. Since we get a map of his own thought process, the very act of describing it is confessional. It means that Burroughs can jump from a fictional character to a piece of scientific theory without disturbing the structure of his work. He can move from the written word to the painting, tape recording, even to acting in films, and it is all part of a narrative in which the artistic self moves on in misrecognition of itself through 'fictions' of the self.

Naked Lunch portrays a reality that is unreal and absent. It proclaims the essential absurdities of life and reduces it to a series of cruel and often pointless charades. Time, place, plot and characters are not important in the narrative except narrative effects – effects which are important for their disruptive traces, and hidden meanings.

Burroughs portrays reality in such a way that the connection between religion and the state forms one of the themes of his work. *Naked Lunch* contains attacks on Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. It was Christianity that created the illiberal conditions which caused Burroughs to live outside the United States for 25 years, and it usually receives the full force of his criticism. When asked about Christianity, he said: "I'm violently anti-Christian. It was the worst disaster that ever occurred on a disaster-prone planet, the most virulent spiritual poison .... Fundamentalists are dangerous lunatics. There's really no place for them in an over-crowded life boat. They're a menace."[87]

Burroughs perceives in the linguistic function of representation a violence similar to that at work in the restrictive process of naming. The postulate that all literature is metaphorical – the world is the tenor, the text is the vehicle – seems at first quite reasonable. David Lodge suggests, for example, that all drama is metaphorical because "it is recognized as a 'performance' .... We are spectators not of reality but of a conventionalized model of reality".[88] To rephrase this in less innocent terms, one might argue that whether on stage or on the written page, mimetic representation is a performance, which displaces and undercuts

reality with the equivocation of metaphorical "likeness". In the Carny man story in particular, Burroughs reveals the poetical danger and violence of all performance or imitation. For instance, in the fates of the Carny man and Bubu, performance is never innocent in *Naked Lunch*, it eventually replaces life itself, the imitation absorbing and devouring the original.

Burroughs perceives representation as a lethal symbiosis which reduces the world to a "copy planet", a false and lifeless imitation. In this ersatz universe, language is never to be trusted; all "documents are forgeries by nature"[89] and all history is fiction. A knowing voice warns the reader in *Nova Express*, "You notice something is sucking all the flavor out of food and the pleasure out of sex, the color out of everything in sight?"[90] The mysterious force at work here is representation itself, the alien and empty signifier absorbing the life out of the signified. For Burroughs, the relationship of word to world is not only arbitrary but destructive, carrying within it the violence of all language functions, of all binary structures. Burroughs proposes that reality is signs, that signs are objects, and that they can indeed be cut through like a cheese. This operation, which Burroughs pursues systematically in the cut-up novels, is set in motion in *Naked Lunch* not in the interest of representing the world, but in the interest of exposing the illusion of the referential function of language.

There is an accumulation of material objects in *Naked Lunch*, a cluttered mosaic, a chaotic encyclopedia of things, but they whirl by us

so quickly that they never acquire the weightiness of materiality as we find it in Balzac, Dickens, or Flaubert. The concreteness that anchors Burroughs' text is the literalness of absence, a materiality of loss: the disappearance of the sick or aged disposed of in jungles or death-dealing sanitariums; the absence of legs lost to gangrene infection; the absence of sound ("Silent Wings of the Anopheles Mosquito"); the absence of transcendent meaning ("TV antennas to the meaningless Sky"). This absence of any central or transcendental signifier, an absence which marks the nature of all discourse, finds in the language of *Naked Lunch* a peculiarly concrete representation.

This paradoxical convergence of concreteness and absence reflects the technological mysticism of Burroughs' fiction, his scientific belief in what he calls "non-body experience". Burroughs suggests, again parenthetically, that some drug intoxications are actually "space time travel": "(It occurs to me that preliminary yage nausea is motion sickness of transport to yage state ....)"[91] Thus, the material reality of the body's response (nausea) corroborates the experience of travel outside the body. Later in *The Job*, Burroughs argues that drugs are unnecessary, that the mind can open up space travel simply by leaving "verbal garbage behind". He clearly sees the three modes of travel – by NASA, by drugs, and by the controlled manipulation of silence – as equivalent. For Burroughs, literalness asserts not only the material facts of life in the body, but the literal possibility of escape from that body.[92]

Burroughs' philosophy and aesthetics of absence leads to a new way of thinking, a way which protects the integrity and will of the individual from the dualistic and hierarchical "mind locks" of western thought: "It is no oceanic organismal subconscious body thinking. It is precisely delineated by what it is not. [...] There are no considerations here that would force thinking into certain lines of structural or environmental necessities".[93] The strategy is clearly a negative one: "The first step is to stop doing everything you 'have to do'. Mock up a way of thinking you have to do. [...] Now mock up some thinking you don't have to do. [...] Wind up in you don't have to think anything".[94] One recognizes here the deconstructive tendency to perceive sign, story, identity, or meaning as a deferred presence in which everything is, as Burroughs puts it, "delineated by what it is not". While conventional narrative, as Barthes argues, tries to "impregnate the void of what it silences by the plenitude of what it says,"[95] Burroughs narratives repeatedly expose that void, accentuate that silence. His texts reveal that the true substance of writing is the hiatus it frames, the absence or gap it creates by displacing presence, reality, truth. This is the negative aesthetic.

In Burroughs' work, then, the absence or emptiness that is language is made literal and concrete. We must learn, he warns, to "stop words to see and touch words to move and use words like objects."[96] Not only must words become tangible (and thus controllable) objects, the entire manipulative system of western language and thought must be

made visible. This is, in a general sense, the goal of much contemporary theory which, as Said describes it, "makes visible what is usually invisible in a text".[97] For Burroughs, the problem is presented more dramatically as the necessity of escape from a blinding addiction. To Kick the habits of Western discourse, to achieve the "total exposure" of all cultural addictions, one must follow the command to "see smell and listen".[98] If the word is made an object, a fact, a body, if it becomes external and visible, we can "see the enemy direct". The alternative is to be trapped in body and word forever: "LISTEN LOOK OR SHIT FOREVER /.../ IN THEE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD /.../ COME OUT OF THE TIME WORD THE FOREVER. /.../ ALL OUT OF TIME AND INTO SPACE. /.../ THE WRITING OF SPACE. THE WRITING OF SILENCE. LOOK LOOK LOOK".[99]

Dream-time reality is not the only weapon in Burroughs arsenal. In *Junky*, Lee the Junkie wises up and finds he has been conned. In *Naked Lunch*, Lee the junkie becomes Inspector Lee of the Nova Police – a character that is further developed in later books, particularly *Nova Express*. The observer sees many of the situations in *Naked Lunch* from different viewpoints (youth and age, junkie and cop), which are liable to be subdivided into multiple characters, each with a different view: "As I was saying before I was interrupted by one of my multiple personalities ... troublesome little beasts".[100] It is not only Lee who has been wised up, *The Naked Lunch* also intends to educate the reader. As Bill says towards the end of the book:

> *Naked Lunch* is a blueprint, a How-To Book ... How-to extend levels of experience by opening the door at the end of a long hall ... Doors that only open in Silence ... *Naked Lunch* demands silence from The Reader. Otherwise he is taking his own pulse...."[101]

Most of the critical works on Burrough treat both his personal life and the idiosyncratic mythology that he creates his fictions as cultural, sociological, or psychoanalaytical artifacts. His depiction of the underworld of drugs, sex, and petty crime and his exposure of the insidious power of bureaucracy, technology, and the politics of war elicit what is essentially a moral response from most critics. Burroughs is either condemned for the "unspeakable" content of his fiction or championed for his courageous and clear sighted quest for individual freedom. While these issues are surely important, they have overshadowed the significance of Burroughs' stylistic accomplishments. Burroughs evolves toward the more daring mosaic style of *Naked Lunch* (1959) and then to the overtly radical "cut-up" techniques of *The Soft Machine* (1961), *Nova Express* (1964), and *The Ticket That Exploded* (1967). In *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs has already begun his attack on the conventional structures of metaphor and morality which he sees dominating Western thought. In this novel, the treatment of the body, of poetic image, and of narrative structure are all predominantly metonymic characterized by reduction, fragmentation, and a relentless literalness. Refusing to be trapped within the binary oppositions of inside/outside, self/other, subjective/objective, Burroughs negotiates with care this Scylla and charybdis of experimental writing. He develops detached,

precise, scientific methods of observing and recording the world around him; he introduces chance as a factor in composition; and he embraces an ideal of contact and collaboration not only with his readers but with "many writers living and dead".

The deep irony of Burroughs' legal and literary status, then, is that *Naked Lunch* is most often translated into the very language and thought systems it challenges. In the "Atrophied Preface", which appears provocatively appended at the conclusion of *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs himself gives a blunt summary of his novel which calls into question the rhetoric of his defenders and attackers alike: "Abstract concepts, bare as algebra, narrow down to a black turd or a pair of aging cajones".[102] What becomes increasingly explicit in Burroughs' later work in the cut-up novels is that he is more interested in science and technology than in "abstract concepts", and he is more committed to the obliteration of the author and the "authority" of language than to making a "total confession" of "what was going on inside his head".[103]

From within the context of conventional literary humanism, Lodge assumes that "empirical reality" and moral "norms" form the unquestionable basis of all perception and interpretation of the world. Such notions are, in fact, expressions of a particular pattern of dualistic thought which measures good against evil, reality against fantasy, word against world. Lodge reasons, like Seltzer, that a satiric moral intent would "justify" or "account for" Burroughs' text. Such explanations enable the traditional critic to resolve any transgressions against moral,

empirical, or even aesthetic norms. Arguing that *Naked Lunch* is confused, uncontrolled, and at best an interesting failure, Lodge obscures the possibility that the ambiguity of *Naked Lunch* results from Burroughs' deliberate intention to confuse and undermine those moral norms and aesthetic conventions which claims the status of "empirical reality" and "norms".

Burroughs' purpose is not to incite reform, to measure inappropriate action against a set of empirical norms, but simply to reveal a more naked truth. As Allen Ginsberg has described Burroughs' method:

> The method must be purest meat
> and no symbolic dressing,
> actual visions and actual prisons
> as seen then and now.
>
> A naked lunch is natural to us,
> We eat reality sandwiches.
> But allegories are so much lettuce.
> Don't hide the madness.[104]
> ("Reality Sandwiches", 40).

Nevertheless, the instinct of the humanistic critic confronted with Burroughs' writing is to dress it up as allegory and moral satire, to distance and defuse the novel by making it a mediating or disposable code serving a more abstract and therefore less threatening message.

> The real scene you pinch up some leg flesh and make a quick stab hole with a pin. Then fit the dropper 'over, not in' the hole and feed the solution slow and careful so it doesn't

> squirt out the sides.... When I grabbed the Rube's thigh the flesh came up like wax and stayed there, and a slow drop of pus oozed out the hole. And I never touched a living body cold as the Rube there in Philly.[105]

Burroughs does not pursue the attack on junk and drug addiction through the whining manipulation of his first version of the scene, but straight ahead, in tactile connection with "the real scene". The hyped-up description that is "put down" in the rhetoric of moral outrage and disgust in the first part of the routine is part of the addiction itself, part of the attraction of the addiction. In his flattened, monosyllabic revision of the scene, Burroughs is trying to take the thrill out of junk, just as he tries to take the thrill out of sexual violence in the Blue Movie scene. For it is this thrill which creates a need strong enough to drive one to barter "raw material of the will".[106]

The literalness – mathematical, scientific, naturalistic, supernaturalistic – which pervades Burroughs' prose style is part of his campaign for free literature from morality and symbolic rhetoric, to seize for it the independence of the sciences: "A doctor is not criticized for describing the manifestations and symptoms of an illness, even though the symptoms may be disgusting. I feel that a writer has the right to the same freedom. In fact, I think that the time has come for the line between literature and science, a purely arbitrary line, to be erased."[107]

This scientific or technical voice often intrudes abruptly in *Naked Lunch*, breaking in on the tone of a passage or the development of some

farcical and fantastic situation. Very often these intrusions are made concrete in their own right by Burroughs' use of parentheses which represent visually the splicing in of a different voice in the text. Once again it must be stressed that these intrusions do not represent the hierarchical domination of one voice over another, but a surgical attack on all structures of hierarchy, continuity, and control.

Although the images in *Naked Lunch* are often surprisingly lyrical, nostalgic, and evocative, they are always weighted down and literalized by death, decay, stagnation.

> Carl talked to the doctor outside under the narrow arcade with rain bounding up from the street against his pant legs, thinking how many people he tell it to, and the stairs, porches, lawn, driveways, corridors, and streets of the world there in the doctor's eyes... Stuffy German alcoves, butterfly trays to the ceiling, silent portentous smell of uremia seeping under the door, sub urban lawns to sound of the water sprinkler in calm jungle night under silent wings of the Anopheles mosquito. (Note: This is not a figure. Anopheles mosquitoes 'are' silent.).[108]

The stern "Note" which asserts the literalness of the mosquito image is far more than an anti-metaphorical affectation. It equates the rhetorical evasion, which would domesticate the mosquito's silent threat of death into a mere "figure" with the evasion of death and disease in the conversation between Carl and the German doctor. The contempt, disinterest, and hypocrisy which characterize the doctor's treatment of Carl's "native" friend are based on the avoidance of truth: "Saying

without words: 'Alzo for the so stupid peasant we must avoid use of the word is it not? Otherwise he shit himself with fear. Koch and spit they are 'both' nasty words I think?' He said aloud: 'It is a catarro de los pulmones'".[109] Such rhetorical evasion is designed to distract us from the obscenity, the unthinkableness of human mortality.

In response to this evasion, Burroughs returns us always to the hard facts of time, of life in the body: the sequence of the junky's days strung together on the thread of blood which flowers in the needle, the orgiast's days strung together on the thread of semen discharged by a hanged man into a black void, and the lives of all "human animals" tied to the "long lunch thread from mouth to ass all the days of our years".[110]

Throughout *Naked Lunch* nostalgic images, memories of places, objects and actions associated with innocence and youth are punctuated by parenthetical details evoking death, silence, and decay. Evocative "train whistles" and adolescent dreams are reduced to images with no personal vibrations, no moral or sentimental impact; nostalgia and sentimentality approach silence, emptiness, a cold transparency. In that transparent landscape suddenly the evasive veil of sentiment is torn aside and we see clearly the inexorable progress of human mortality: "Time jump like a broken typewriter, the boys are old men, young hips quivering and twitching in boy-spasms go slack and flabby, draped over an out house seat, a park bench, a stone wall [...] twitching and shivering in dirty underwear, probing for a vein in the junk-sick morning, in an Arab café muttering and slobbering".[111] Reality is not the lubricious flow

of days or words but the startling and unpredictable jump of the broken typewriter.

In the midst of the characters' dazed wanderings in *Naked Lunch*, the narration comes into focus unexpectedly in moments of intense clarity: "Something falls off you when you cross the border into Mexico, and suddenly the landscape hits you straight with nothing between you and it, desert and mountains and vultures; little wheeling specks and others so close you can hear wings cut the air (a dry husking sound), and when they spot something they pour out of the blue sky [...] down in a black funnel".[112] Here is the direct naked seeing Burroughs' prose aspires to – and what it sees is no comforting vision of transcendence but a harsh and ugly mosaic of aggression, violence, life feeding off of life, life falling to icy death "through air clear as glycerine".[113] The negative mosaics of *Naked Lunch* in which Burroughs juxtaposes scattered fragments, remnants, the detritus of the world, are motivated by this desire to defy and exhaust meaning, to starve out the language parasite and leave no symbolic residue.

Like Sontag, Ihab Hassan sees silence and literalness as central elements in our contemporary aesthetics. He associates Burroughs with a "literature of silence [which] manages to deny the time-honored function of literature [...]: it aspires to an impossible concreteness"[114] ("Silence" 76). Among those "time honoured functions of literature" denied by Burroughs are its functions as a medium for transcendent metaphorical meaning and as a vehicle for moral dualism. But the literature of silence,

as practiced by William Burroughs, is not only a literature of denial and destruction but of liberation. "Behind the appeals for silence", Sontag argues, "lies the wish for a perceptual and cultural clean slate [...] the liberation of the artist from himself, of art from the particular artwork, of art from history, of spirit from matter, of the mind from its perceptual and intellectual limitations".[115] Like radical theory, Burroughs' fiction offers a glimpse into the space beyond limits, into an open realm which lies "beyond man and humanism".

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove Press, Inc. 1959, p. 116. Hereafter this shall be referred to as *NL* only.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
4. Barry Miles (quoted). *William Burroughs EL Hombre Invisible: A Portrait*, New York: USA, 1993, p. 106.
5. John Ciardi, "Book Burners and Sweet Sixteen". *Saturday Review* 42 (27 June 1959), p. 22.
6. Allen Ginsberg, *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove Press, 1966, pp. Xxxii-xxxiii.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. Xvi-xvii.
8. John Wain, Review of *Naked Lunch. New Republic* 147 (1 Dec. 1962): 21-23.
9. Frederick Hoffman, *The Mortal No: Death and the Modern Imagination*. Princeton University Press, 1964, pp. 486-89.
10. Leslie Fiedler, *Waiting for the End*, New York: Stein and Day, 1964, pp. 163-71.
11. William Stull, "Quest and the Question". In *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Lee Bartlett, 14-29. Jefferson, N.C. McFarland, 1981.
12. Jennie Skerl, *William S. Burroughs*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985, pp. 20-22.

13. R. G. Peterson, "A Picture is a Fact: Wittgenstein and *Naked Lunch.*" In *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, 30-39, London: McFarland, 1981.

14. Mary McCarthy. "Dejeuner Sur I'herbe: *The Naked Lunch*". *New York Review of Books* 1.1 (1963): 4-5.

15. Anthony Burgess, *The Novel Now: A Guide to Contemporary Fiction*, (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 189.

16. Anthony Burgess, Letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* 3227 (3 Jan. 1964): 9.

17. Michael Moorcock, Letter to *Times Literary Supplement* 3221 (21 Nov. 1963): 947.

18. Robert Creely, "A New Testament", *A Quick Graph*, 327. San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970.

19. Paul Levine, "The Intemporate Zone: The Climate of Contemporary American Fiction". *Massachusetts Review* (1967): 505-23.

20. Frank McConnell's, "William Burroughs and the Literature of Addiction". *Massachusetts Review* (1967): 665-80.

21. *NL*, xii.

22. William Burroughs' *The Job* with Daniel Odier, New York: Grove Press, 1970, p. 73.

23. David Lodge, *The Novelist at the Crossroads*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971, p. 165.

24. David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 38.
25. *NL*, 132.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
27. David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, (Cited above), pp. 109-10.
28. *NL*, pp. 93-94.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
30. Mary McCarthy traces the scientific definition of the term "mosaic" which appears so often in *NL*: "a plant-mottling caused by a virus". She goes on to describe Burroughs' planetary perspective in which "history shrivels into a mere wrinkling or furrowing of the surface, as in ... one of those pieced-together aerial photographs known in the trade as (again) mosaics" (*Writing* 45). The mosaic style of *Naked Lunch*, for McCarthy, is directly linked to Burroughs' scientific and science-fiction vision, the vision which will dominate the cut-up novels.
31. William Burroughs, *The Third Mind* (TM) with Brion Gysin, New York: Viking Press, 1978, p. 34.
32. William Burroughs, *The Third Mind*. With Brion Gysin (Cited above), p. 8.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

35. William Burroughs, *Letters to Allen Ginsberg*, 1953-1957, New York: Full Court, 1982, p. 154.
36. William Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1963, p. 40.
37. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*. 1961-75. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 157.
38. *TM*, p. 32.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
41. Burroughs draws this notion from Wilhelm Reich's theories about human orgasm in Reich's *The Functions of the Orgasm*, (New York: Noonday Press, 1971).
42. *Research* – 40.
43. *TM*, p. 3.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
45. Gerard-Georges Lemaire's, "23 Stitches Taken". In *The Third Mind*, 9-24 (Cited above), p. 18.
46. *TM*, p. 32.
47. William Burroughs, *The Soft Machine*, 1961. New York: Grove Press, 1967, p. 22.
48. Barry Miles (quoted). *William Burroughs EL Hombre Invisible: A Portrait*, (Cited above), p. 53.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
51. *NL*, pp. 58-59.

52. Barry Miles (quoted). *William Burroughs El Hombre Invisible: A Portrait*, (Cited above), p. 105.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
58. *NL* – Introduction, p. v.
59. Henry James, *Selected Literary Criticism*, England, Australia: Heinemann Educational Boooks, (Edited by Morris Shapira, 1968), p. 85.
60. *NL*, p. xii.
61. Barry Miles (quoted), *William Burroughs EL Hombre Invisible: A Portrait*, (Cited above), p. 96.
62. *NL* – xiii.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
65. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
66. Warren French (ed.). William S. Bourroughs, Twayne Publishers, 1985, p. 38.
67. *NL*, pp. 133-34.
68. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

72. Warren French (ed.). William S. Bourroughs, (Cited above), 1985, p. 41.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
75. *NL*, p. 224.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
87. Barry Miles (quoted), *William Burroughs EL Hombre Invisible: A Portrait*, (Cited above), p. 102.
88. David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, (Cited above), p. 83.
89. William Burroughs, *The Job*. With Daniel Odier, (Cited above), p. 36.
90. William Burroughs, *Nova Express*, (New York, Gorve Press, 1964), p. 70.

91. *NL*, p. 110.
92. Jennie Skerl explains Burroughs' position as a recognition that we cannot get rid of body and word but we can regulate them (72). Burroughs describes in the *Rolling Stone* interview the "optional" position he eventually takes in regard to flesh as well as language: "The more precise your manipulation or use of words is, the more you know what you are actually dealing with, what the word actually is. And by knowing what it actually is, you can supersede it" (Palmer 53).
93. William Burroughs' *The Job*. With Daniel Odier, (Cited above), p. 91.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.
95. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*. 1970, (Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 162.
96. William Burroughs, *The Job*. With Daniel Odier, (Cited above), p. 91.
97. Edward Said, "Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions". *Critical Inquiry*, (Summer 1978): 674.
98. *NL*, p. xiv.
99. William Burroughs, *The Yage Letters*, (Cited above), pp. 61-62.
100. Barry Miles, (quoted), *William Burroughs EL Hombre Invisible: A Portrait*, (Cited above), p. 96.
101. *NL*, p. 224.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
103. Allen Ginsberg, *Naked Lunch*, (Cited above), 1966, p. xxxii.

104. Allen Ginsberg, "On Burroughs' Work". *Reality Sandwiches*, 1953-1960. (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1963).

105. *NL*, p. 10.

106. Critics are divided on the significance of the shock effect of Burroughs' work. Lionel Abel argues that "nowadays" the only way for some people to feel in touch with reality is by means of shocking images like those in *Naked Lunch* (109-12); and Ronald DeFeo, writing nine years later, dismisses the novel as trash because social and legal changes have removed its "shock value" (150-53). On the other side of the issue, Clive Bush argues that through Burroughs' work we learn that "our incapacity to face [Conrad's 'The horror! The horror!'] may exist in proportion to its power over us" (128). In other words, Burroughs' aim is not to shock us but to defuse the shock effect, the horror effect, of certain images.

107. Allen Ginsberg, *Naked Lunch*, (Cited above), p. xxxv.

108. *NL*., pp. 45-46.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

113. Robin Lydenberg (quoted), *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 15.

114. Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence". *Styles of Radical Will*, 3-34. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966, p. 76.

115. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

*****

CHAPTER - III

LOGIC OF DELIRIUM: A STUDY OF THOMAS PYNCHON'S *GRAVITY'S RAINBOW*

Thomas Pynchon's novels confront us with every degree of paranoia from the private to the cosmic.[1] Many characters in *Gravity's Rainbow* are brushed by the dark wings of paranoia. Pirate Prentice, whose speciality is suffering other people's fantasies, regards himself as dwelling within the pervasive influence of "the Firm". In his surrogate fantasies he imagines a gigantic rampaging Adenoid which impresses upon England its "master plan" – a parody reminding us that the true home of the paranoid style is Science fiction. Richard Hofstadter has identified in politics, a mentality which assumes "the existence of a vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character".[2] *The Crying of Lot 49, V.*, and *Gravity's Rainbow* all exhibit the habits of language and the view of history which Hofstadter has named the paranoid style:

> The distinguishing thing about the paranoid style is not that its exponents see conspiracies or plots here and there in history, but that they regard a "vast" or "gigantic" conspiracy as the motive force in historical events. History is a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power... The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms – he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values.[3]

Tyrone Slothrop, the American whose hapless peregrinations form the bulk of *Gravity's Rainbow*, is beset at every turn by suspicions which

he himself describes as paranoid. From infancy onward he has in fact been manipulated by external forces, first by the scientist Laszlo Jamf, subsequently by the Pavlovian pointsman, and finally, in an anarchic Germany at the close of World War II, by a host of operators ranging from expatriate Africans to Soviet agents to blackmarketeers. Like Benny Profane in *V*, he is a Schlemihl, perpetual victim of others' plots.

Having been the butt of real conspiracies, Slothrop finds it easy, in fact necessary, to project imaginary ones. Thus when he discovers himself alone in a games' room, surrounded by betting tables and money rakes, he cannot let the furnishings remain what they are, mere idle objects:

> These are no longer quite outward and visible signs of a game of chance. There is another enterprise here, more real than that, less merciful, and systematically hidden from the likes of Slothrop. Who sits in the taller chairs? Do they have names?....
>
> For a minute here, Slothrop ... is alone with the paraphernalia of an order whose presence among the ordinary debris of waking he has only lately begin to suspect.[4]

A few pages later, the games imagery undergoes paranoid transformation to describe Slothrop's sense of being subject to external control:

> Oh, the hand of a terrible croupier is that touch on the sleeves of his dreams: all in his life of what has looked free

> or random, is discovered to 've been under some control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel....[5]

These passages reveal the key features of Slothrop's thought throughout the novel: the perception of reality as either governed by chance, and therefore meaningless, or else governed by some hidden powers at once "more real" than chance and more ruthless; and the belief that this order, which is felt to lurk behind the debris of the world, is not merely secret, not just passively mysterious like a remote deity, but "systematically hidden from the likes of Slothrop".[6]

One of Pynchon's most distinctive and at times maddening stylistic features follows directly from this deliberate veiling of the conspiracy. All of his central figures – Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Stencil and Profane in *V*, Slothrop and Tchitcherine and Pirate Prentice in *Gravity's Rainbow* – are, in a phrase as described by Tchitcherine, "held at the edge". They are situated as far from the centers of their respective conspiracies, real or imagined, as the Puritan from his God, and consequently must piece together the most obscure hints and petty revelations to make any sense of the plot at all.

> Those like Slothrop, with the greatest interest in discovering the truth, were thrown back on dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographics, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity.[7] (p. 582)

Pynchon's reader dances on the same ground. Like Oedipa, Stencil and Slothrop, we are forced at every turn to distinguish genuine glimpses of

the conspiratorial order from sheer static. We are also "held at the edge", we rarely know more than the characters themselves, and they do not know much; and the narrator, if he knows more, rarely tells.

Slothrop's paranoia appears in various guises, ranging from his suspicion that the rocket bombs falling on London have his name written on them to his fantasy that he is the intended victim of a Father conspiracy. Freudian readers will discover in the latter episode grounds for interpreting his paranoia in Oedipal terms: wishing to kill the father, the child denies this wish, projecting it onto the father himself, so that the father is believed to desire the death of the son, and therefore becomes a fit object for the son's hatred. Thus Slothrop's fantasy of the Father conspiracy:

> [T]here is a villain here, serious as death. It is this typical American teenager's own Father, trying episode after episode to kill his son. And the kid knows it. Imagine that. So far he's managed to escape his father's daily little death-plots – but nobody has said he has to keep escaping.[8] (p. 674)

There are two difficulties in the way of regarding the Freudian account as sufficient. The first is that Slothrop actually has been the victim of a father conspiracy: his father volunteered him as an infant subject for psychological experiments conducted by Laszlo Jamf – a trauma from which Slothrop has never fully recovered, and a manipulative enterprise from which he has never escaped. Pointsman, the English pavlovian, subsequently takes the place of the father, once again subjecting him to

experimentation. Having finished with Slothrop, Pointsman sends two doctors to castrate him. Although they fail in their mission, castrating Major Marvy by mistake, they have in fact been sent. Thus Pynchon explains to us that Slothrop fears a father conspiracy because he has been the victim of one; he fears castration because his experimental controllers wish to castrate him. In this instance, Slothrop is not so much paranoid as perceptive. The other difficulty in the way of a Freudian explanation is that Pynchon connects Slothrop's paranoia, and therefore by implication his Oedipal terrors, to an inherited religious cast of mind.

Pynchon himself ventures the claim that paranoia is a secular form of the Puritan consciousness, telling us that Slothrop is possessed by "a Puritan reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible, also known as paranoia"[9] (p. 188). In *Gravity's Rainbow* descriptions of the truth accessible through paranoia similarly evoke the religious notion of revelation:

> [P]aranoia ... is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the creation, a secondary illumination – not yet blindingly One, but at least connected, and perhaps a route In for those like Tchitcherine who are held at the edge.[10] (p. 703)

No matter how many connections he suspects or perceives, however, the paranoiac must still posit some governing agency at the Center, to replace the numinous God. At various moments Slothrop imagines the

conspiracy to be directed by Industrialists, secret agents, the Rocket, the Earth, or simply by an unspecified Them.

Part of the difficulty in reading *Gravity's Rainbow* derives from the fact that we are presented not with a plot of interwoven fates, but with overlapping case histories of private manias, each character locked within his or her own conspiratorial fantasy. Clinical paranoia is zealously self-referential: the paranoid asserts that there is an order to events, a unifying purpose, however sinister, behind the seeming chaos; and this purpose is focussed upon the self, the star and victim. Thus the paranoid individual becomes a hero once again, he stands at the center of the plot; but it is an incurably private one, into which others can enter only as threat.[11]

This irreversible process lies at the heart of *Gravity's Rainbow*. All human action in the novel takes place within the context of war, which Roger Mexico thinks of as the "culture of death". According to Pynchon's entropic view of history, war is not an aberration but a spell of candor, when the deepest historical impulses are nakedly revealed:

> The real War is always there. The dying tapers off now and then, but the War is still killing lots and lots of people. Only right now it is killing them in more subtle ways. Often in ways that are too complicated, even for us, at this level, to trace. But the right people are dying, just as they do when armies fight.[12]

Although couched once again in conspiratorial language, and inserted into an American colonel's fantasy, the passage suggests what the entire

movement of the novel makes clear, that Pynchon regards war as a synecdoche of history itself, the drift towards death.

The entire novel takes place under the Rocket's parabolic arch, Gravity's Rainbow, because the Rocket whose crossing is announced in the opening sentence actually plummets down at the close, annihilating both speaker and reader as narrative comes to an end.

By his choice of period and setting, Pynchon identifies one crucial historical influence. All of *Gravity's Rainbow* takes place during the latter months and immediate aftermath of World War II, with extensive flashbacks to the thirties and to the earlier years of the war. This was an era in which paranoia was erected into state policy: the Nazi campaign against the Jews, Stalin's purges, the American incarceration of Orientals, the early salvos of the Cold war. It was the era in which means of controlling public opinion and of spying on private lives were brought to an early blossoming: propaganda became a Science, and not only in Germany; intelligence agencies proliferated, espionage became common place.

Pynchon's intimidating mastery of nonliterary languages is self-explicated within the text. His is the vanguard of the anti-identity novel, the multinational novel, the novel of post-industrial plots and systems that overwhelm all characters. *Gravity's Rainbow* is actually a dualistic melodrama, one side tending toward order, transcendence, and evil, the other tending toward disorder, death, and redemptive human feeling.

Slothrop, too accommodating at the beginning of his life as at the end, becomes the victim of whichever side he happens to be passing through.

The war takes on larger sexual meanings as well. From the beginning, the Argentinian anarchists are free of the European passion for manhood and dominance. We see them first in a political cartoon that shows "a line of middle-aged men wearing dresses and wigs, inside the police station where a cop is holding a loaf of white".[13] Their image of "the infant revolution" is explicitly described as a virgin birth, "free from the stain of Original sin" that White Poppa has induced world wide. Though Buenos Aires, or the Firm, has gathered people into its "neuroses about property", the Argentinian heart still longs for "that anarchic oneness of pampas and sky".[14] Much later, Graciela Imago Portales is able to reach a perspective beyond manhood. Though her man "will stake everything on this anarchist experiment", "dealt him by something he calls chance and Graciela calls God", she can break the European fantasy of God-power down even further "to see really how much she needs the others, how little use, unsupported, she could ever be".[15] While men are calling for anarchy and fearing Chance, women consistently perceive the possibilities for oneness and rebirth in natural processes.

The war takes on national overtones too, as America and fascist Europe stand against the exploited colonies. "American voices, country voices, high-pitched and without mercy", Slothrop thinks as MPs knock on his door;[16] "What surprised him most was the fanaticism, the reliance not just on flat force but on the rightness of what they planned to do..."

America itself had been given to Europe "when the land was still free and the eye innocent... a purity begging to be polluted".[17] So "of course Empire took its way Westward, what other way was there but into those Virgin sunsets to penetrate and to foul?" The German extermination of the Heroros and Jews, the American war on Indians, the Dutch massacre of the Dodos, are Pynchon's historical metaphors for white consciousness, that "order of Analayis and Death",[18] the closed system that stands in fear of its "dark, secret children".[19]

Other polarities expand these contexts: perverted sex against natural love, machinery against animal life, Beethoven against Rossini, form against change,[20] bureaucratic work against childhood, abstraction against detail, city against country,[21] shit, money, and the word[22] against Love and Silence.[23] In all of them, Pynchon's allegiances are clear. He opposes any "fiction and lie" that would "subvert love in favor of work, abstraction, required pain, bitter death".[24] There are love values and there are war values, with no interface and much co-optation, as his last two adjectives imply. Roger Mexico, whose name itself indicates the border he tries to straddle, sees clearly that Jessica's other lover, the Beaver,

> is the war, he is every assertion the fucking war has ever made – that we are meant for work and government, for austerity: and these shall take priority over love, dreams, the spirit, the senses and the other second class trivia that are found among the idle and mindless hours of the day.[25]

Just to put the polarities in such dualistic form, in fact, shows the system-making bent. "The Man has a branch office in each of our brains, his

corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission in this world is Bad Shit".[26] In such a world, Pynchon continues, what can we be but children, pets, or dead?

Within these wars, the emotional theme of the book is betrayal, especially of children by parents. Children, who have those simple human urges toward love and kindness, are unremittingly bought, used, co-opted, fucked, courrpted by various aspects of the Firm.

Pynchon's narratives are about order, about its presence or absence; about order as object of desire, dread, fantasy, or hallucination; about what order means, how it is apprehended, and what it entails. His works thus tend to comment on themselves. His characters look for the hidden structures of their experience that will reveal how events are connected, how everything adds up, what it all means; and these structures reduplicate, oppose, or stand in some other relation to the overall structure of the narrative. Armed with the knowledge that the narrative itself is ordered and that this order is intentional and important, readers enter the quest at a somewhat higher level, but they too are looking for an ultimate pattern or structure, an order that will constitute a reading; and consequently their activity parallels the activities of the characters, with all the possibilities for irony attendant on this situation.[27]

McHale points out that *Gravity's Rainbow* challenges two expectations we have internalized from literary modernism: that a "real story" lies beneath the frequently convoluted surface of the narrative

discourse, and that with some deciphering a stable chronology will be revealed that will naturalize transitions from one character's mind to another's. In both of these instances Pynchon is flouting conventions that require an explicable coherence from the work of art precisely because the work of art must stand in ironic contrast to the "chaos" of reality. Indeed, it is a central tenet of the modernist ontology that artistic creations are ordered whereas the universe is not. But this tenet depends on a restricted definition of order. It admits, finally, only one idea – which becomes The Idea of order. In all his novels to date, Pynchon has parodied this restricted understanding of what order is and implies by taking it to its logical conclusions. It is the mind that discerns order and the mind that produces it, a solipsism. "Shall I project a world?" Pynchon's Oedipa Maas asks herself, wondering if she can be "the single artificer of the world / In which she sang"; for it seems to her that this is the only way in which "world", or meaningful order, can come into being. But order need not mean anything as vast or as subjective as Oedipa's hypothesized "projection".[28]

Within the theocentric tradition, God is often viewed as an artist as well as an artificer, or even an author who plots the course of world history. As long as the existence of God as the omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent is taken for granted, creation can be presumed to be an order, in which particular events, however painful and gratuitous they may seem, can be accepted as aspects of an ultimately just divine plan. Something quite different happens, however, when the argument is

turned around, so that observed order in the physical world becomes evidence that an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God exists. In the Post-Enlightenment arguments "from design" for the existence of God, we can see the beginnings of a Pynchonesque universe, in which the possibility that someone or something is in charge of The Way Things Are is at least as frightening as the possibility that order is unreal because no one and nothing is in charge of anything.

"Who or what is responsible" presumes that order is one, not multiple, and that it is the work of some power or being, not simply there. It results from the same kind of thinking that tries to elevate science into cosmology and then sees chaos when science cannot link up its various systems. By confronting his characters with the choice between an outside power imposing order on the world or an inside power (either the shaping imagination, or paranoia, or both) imposing order on the world, Pynchon parodies a post-religious attitude that takes these extremes as exhaustive. His own fictional worlds, however, are pluralistic – governed not by a rigid, absolute, and universal Idea of Order but by multiple partial, overlapping, and often conflicting ideas of Order. And these worlds are familiar, even when they are most bizarre and surreal, because they invoke a multi-layered reality in which multiple means of putting things together manage to coexist without resolving into a single, definitive system of organization.

No ordering principle can govern all aspects of reality because reality is not a single system, and Pynchon betrays his own apparent

gravity – the high seriousness of his apparently nihilistic vision – by allowing the action of the novel to proliferate, thereby evading the control of the ostensible metaphor that controls the structure of the novel.

Gravity's Rainbow has 887 pages, at least 300 individualized characters, and a tangle of plots so thoroughly contaminated by the naturalizing conventions of dream, hallucination, fantasy, film, theater, and interpolated texts that it is nearly impossible to say even in a provisional way what happens in it. The novel celebrates diversity, multiplying situations, interrelationships, characters, voices, and attitudes with such abandon that they perplex understanding. Each of Pynchon's novels presents a fictional universe comprised of overlapping networks of codes and inhabited by at least one hermeneuticist who attempts to break these codes in order to reach a culminating revelation. Each arrives at a reading of the evidence that is at once structurally elegant and thematically despairing: either "everything is connected" – in a cosmic conspiracy that reduces individual agency to a pathetic delusion – or "nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long".[29]

Pynchon's questing characters begin with the assumption that, as the narrator of *Gravity's Rainbow* narrator puts it, "everything is connected", and that consequently their discoveries constitute aspects of a single truth about the shape and direction of cosmic history. At some point, however, they are forced to reflect on the status of such connections. The question is always whether inferred relations are

somehow inherent in reality or whether they are imposed by a consciousness that cannot "bear for long' a condition in which "nothing is connected to anything". Real and imagined relations turn out to have equally ominous implications. If the relations are real, they constitute an ironic argument from design testifying to the existence of a malign or at least antihuman designer – known as Them in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the Tristero in *The Crying of Lot* 49, and V in *V.* In this case, if the quest does get at the truth about the way things are, the truth is that human beings are completely under the control of outside forces.

Knowledge is not power but proof of impotence, and under the circumstances it may be just as well not to know. If the relations are imaginary, on the other hand, the quest reveals nothing but a desire to discern connections among a random assembly of wholly unrelated details. If there is pathos in this recognition, there is also despair, for inquiry is perpetually deprived of its object and locked in its own sterile cogitations. The questing hero becomes the paranoid, intuiting connections out of his own need for order and unable even to share his delusory experiences.

The protagonists of all three books confront these alternatives. Tyrone Slothrop in *Garvity's Rainbow* vacillates between paranoia and antiparanoia until he begins to disintegrate. Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49* waits "for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew"[30] and make room for some "middle" between the absolute reality and the absolute unreality of her totalizing principle. Herbert Stencil in *V.* weighs

his evidence, finds that it points either to a plot that engulfs him or to the fact that he has tried to "exhume an hallucination",[31] and begins to repeat obsessively, "Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic".[32] As the persistent opposition is extremely ominous, Pynchon keeps returning to it to ring new changes on the Sophoclean theme of knowledge as tragedy.

One of Pynchon's central insights is that people tend to "read" experience the same way that they read books. A novel is traditionally a totalizing structure that derives much of its energy from its promise to reveal the intrinsic connections uniting apparently contingent elements. Terms like "plot" and "development" suggest the ways in which the action is teleological, directed toward attaining an end, whereas terms like "resolution" and "conclusion" indicate that the end of a narrative has affinities with the terminus of an argument. A conventional narrative is a process of putting things together, and the satisfaction of closure involves the sense that everything has been definitively wrapped up. The process of bringing events to a climax merges with the process of discovering the essential truth about reality, so that the lure of closure is clearly identified with the lure of totality. As a disembodied spirit summoned to a séance in *Gravity's Rainbow* reports, "Here it's possible to see the whole shape at once".[33] In anticipating such a conclusion, the questing characters look forward to occupying a vantage outside their experience, a vantage that will give them an authorized perspective on the "whole shape at once."

Slothrop assesses his position in the plot and decides that either a malevolent quasi-authorial presence is directing him toward an unknown

but probably fatal "end", or that his wanderings have no direction at all: "Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, rather have that reason..."[34] Such incidents contrive to suggest that any "order" in reality will necessarily be the kind of narrative form in which events accrete toward a revelatory, "conclusive" conclusion. But if life has this kind of narrative form, it will reveal its significance only when it concludes, and this fact can provide little comfort to characters who by definition cannot get outside the text of their experience. And if life does not have such a narrative form, not building to a climactic insight, it is meaningless. Or so it seems, once "order" becomes synonymous with narrative order – or "plot".

In constructing his novels, Pynchon seems especially concerned to parody, if tacit assumption that meaning is the culmination of an exhaustive series of discoveries, that truth is what everything adds up to. His characters soon learn that they cannot separate the personal from the public significance, so that in looking for the meaning of their discoveries, they find themselves involved with heady metaphysical problems: the meaning of life, of history, of humanity. Their own lives become elements in a larger continuum; in "plotting" experience they find themselves tracing the curve of historical development, a curve that follows a classical pattern of plot construction in rising only to fall.[35] By making their own experiences the consequence of a long historical build up, they effectively locate the "rising action" in the past. Both *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow* play explicitly on the notion that the climax has

already occurred, and that at some retrospective point on the time-line, history took an irreversible downward turn.

Pynchon's narrative strategy is based on a tension essential to the novel as a genre; not coincidentally, he finds this tension essential to a modernist mode of being in the world. On the one hand, everything seems oriented toward a future synthesis that will comprehend all apparent contingencies. The narrative present appears to be a condition of lack or need, and thus reaching forward for its destined fulfillment. This teleological thrust generates energy out of the sense of purposiveness. One of Pynchon's most evocative expressions for this tendency comes from *Gravity's Rainbow*, where he calls it "Holy-Centre-Approaching". On the other hand, no promise of synthetic resolution seems adequate to the proliferating implications that the present offers. Precisely because the present lacks unity, it leaves room for unanticipated developments. As long as burgeoning meanings do not converge at a Holy Center, further meanings are possible. The absence of a definitive synthetic unity is finally a condition for freedom, and Pynchon plays on a further conclusion. Such an absence is also an enabling condition for language, and especially for the language of his novels.

Holy-Center-Approaching is soon to be the number one zonal past time. Its balmy heyday is nearly on it. Soon more champions,

> Adepts, magicians of all ranks and orders will be in the field than ever before in the history of the game. The Sun will rule all enterprise, if it be honest and sporting. The Gauss

> curve will herniate toward the excellent. And tankers the likes of Narrisch and Slothrop here will have already been weeded out.[36]

In the phrase "Holy-Center-Approaching", the narrator of *Gravity's Rainbow* encapsulates the formula of the quest romance. The Holy Center is the terminus of the quest, the epiphanic point in both time and space where the questing hero realizes the full meaning of his search, life, and world. It is thus the conclusion toward which the narrative ends. In Pynchon's works no major character reaches this Holy Center. The pattern of the quest is an infinite approach, one that brings the seeker closer and closer to a terminal revelation without allowing him to reach it. In the passage quoted above Slothrop, the quintessential bumbler, and Narrisch, the victimized technician (whose name translates as "foolish"), are two Parsifal types in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Both have experiences in which (the narrator strongly suggests) they ought to arrive at a full understanding of what everything adds up to. Both, however, remain unelightened. Failure to achieve revelation is a hallmark of Pynchon's questing heroes. This failure seems to doom such characters to a sort of tragic schlemielhood-Tchitcherine in the same novel "will miss the Light, but not the Finger".[37]

This asymptotic approach toward an unavailable center, or central insight, is common to all three novels and helps give Pynchon's writing its peculiarly enigmatic quality. Because no narrator intervenes to explain just what, exactly, a character has missed seeing, the reader finds himself

in the company of the schlemiels, inexplicably removed from the knowledge that should explain how everything fits together. The novels all capitalize on a sense of insufficiency. By creating this sense of insufficiency, Pynchon has effectively created a gap that appears to require filling.

Another way of reading Pynchon's novels also begins from the sense of insufficiency and failed revelation: such a reading concludes that the gaps are unavoidable because Pynchon's central insight is intrinsically inexpressible. Language, in this view, is simply inadequate to the truth, although the truth is thinkable: one can know something without being able to speak or write it. It follows that the novels are attempts to create conditions favourable to revelation, i.e. in some manner to signify that which cannot be signified, although because they are linguistic structures they fall short of revelation themselves.[38]

This way of reading has the advantage of respecting Pynchon's absences and silences, but presuming at the outset that language and meaning are independent and that the most essential kinds of meaning exist apart from, and out of the reach of language – a thesis currently arousing intense controversy among philosophers, linguists, and literary theorists. Pynchon himself subscribes to a theory that dichotomizes language and meaning. Certainly his novels engage in a rhetoric of absence and loss, and his narrators regularly mourn their inability to express precisely what is most important.

Gravity's Rainbow provides the clearest illustration of the use Pynchon makes of the trope of the absent insight, but the trope is common to all three novels and provides the context within which all three novels take place. The premise that the center is missing, and that the novels insistently and incessantly "point toward" because the ultimate object of reference is denied, creates a space in which Pynchon can realize multiple possibilities simultaneously. Because the Holy Centre, the ultimate guarantor of meaning, is unavailable in the novels, the novels occupy a context in which any number of local systems of meaning can coexist. Language cannot signify originating unity: words are always delta-t from the fictional worlds, to signify only each other and to run the risk inherent in the "only connect", the risk of connecting so completely that human freedom becomes an illusion. But total connectedness of this sort is only one possibility for a language that is deprived of - or freed from – the necessity of referring to a single, ultimate source. It is one of an infinite number of possibilities. The absence of the center opens up a space in which freedom creates and explores its own prospects, and by postulating an unavailable referent, Pynchon can allow the resulting play of language to generate multiple versions of meaning and value. His novels, like his characters, are obsessed with connections, but none of the novels adds up to a single idea of order. Each subverts oversimplification by dramatizing multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory ideas of order that express the human effort to find intelligibility in experiences.

The trope of the absent center supplies the motive for making patterns out of language. The promise of meaning, even a meaning endlessly deferred, compels Pynchon's characters (and his readers) to look for possible connections between the objects and events that comprise their experience. In Pynchon's novels human beings try to construct meanings because the premise that the center did not hold constitutes an original loss. The particles of experience to be connected thus become fragments of an original unity. The search for meaning is the consequence of the failure of revelation. Although Pynchon's novels depend on the premise of centerlessness, they use this premise in an original way. Centerlessness is not so much a theme, finally, as a condition, the given in Pynchon's fictional worlds that makes action, and writing, possible:

> About the paranoia often noted under the drug, there is nothing remarkable. Like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the creation, a secondary illumination – not yet blindingly One, but at least connected, and perhaps a route In for those like Tchitcherine who are held at the edge ...[39]

Gravity's Rainbow itself seems held at the edge of discovery. In its encyclopedic scope, the novel appears dedicated to the proposition that everything is connected; there are insinuated links synthetic polymerization and the evolution of the earth; between astrophysics and psychic phenomena; between African dialects and Rilkean poetics; between international cartels and freemasonry; between comic books and

covenant theology; between Orphism, Parsifalism, Tannhaüserism, and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*; between German idealism, Pavlovian psychology, and the American cult of the good-guy loner. Just as these links could be extended, so the connections reach out in all directions, associating disparate bodies of knowledge in such intricate configurations that the universe seems on the point of cohering like a giant molecule dreamed by some macrocosmic Ke Kulé. But the novel remains at the level of secondary illumination and leading edges. The synthetic dream never occurs. The text refuses to yield a culminating vision of the universe as "blindingly One".

The totalizing tendency of the thematic connections is so pronounced that this refusal might appear simply perverse. Scott Simmon has speculated that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a novel in which things are more important than people and ideas are more important than things.[40] *Gravity's Rainbow* introduces a panorama of characters and an unstable narrative voice in its opening pages, thwarting expectations of conventional narrative continuity. The unity of this novel accordingly should derive from its controlling vision – from what one critic has termed the Big Idea.[41] But although it cannot be denied that *Gravity's Rainbow* is a novel of ideas, it is far less clear what these ideas add up to.

The problem is not simply that the novel is fiendishly complex, or that it frequently takes a parodic attitude toward the multiple theories it purveys. Both of these characteristics are common to the encyclopedic narrative, a genre that Ronald T. Swigger has defined in terms of "the

drive toward comprehensive knowledge and schematization".[42] This drive to contain and schematize is one of the salient features of *Gravity's Rainbow*. But at the same time, an opposed, centrifugal tendency seems to be sending information flying outward like the alternative zones of the novel's postwar reconstruction, speeding "away from all the others, in fated acceleration, red shifting, fleeing the center" (p. 519). This decentralizing tendency is especially apparent in the closing chapter, where even the discrete sections of an already convoluted action begin to fragment into shorter and less obviously related segments with titles like "LISTENING TO THE TOILET", "WITTY REPARTEE", "HEART-TO-HEART, MAN-TO-MAN", and "SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF IMIPOLEX G". This marked diffusion of the narrative energy so near the conclusion suggests that the text is thematically committed to incompleteness. The fact that ostensibly central concerns fail to achieve any sort of resolution reinforces this suggestion. Fundamental enigmas – the nature of Slothrop's relation to the Mystery Stimulus, the direction and target of Blicero's Last Firing, the purpose of the Hereros' rocket – are either left ambiguous or dropped entirely. Problematic knots in the plot refuse to unravel, and thus no denouement – literally, an "untying" – can occur. As the narrator declares on the first page, "this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive knotting into."[43]

Yet *Gravity's Rainbow* dictates the terms on which totalization should be possible, even as it resists totalization. It appears to place itself within modernist tradition by offering itself as a metaphoric novel, which

derives its ultimate coherence from a governing structural metaphor (the commonplace comparison is with *Ulysses*). The "gravity's rainbow" of the title is the arc of the V-2 rocket, which with its sharply defined origin and terminus could claim to be the twentieth century's model of linearity: according to the general theory of relativity, the Euclidean straight line is warped into a curve by the presence of a gravitational field. In many ways this curve shapes the novel. The opening sentence, "A screaming", "A screaming comes across the sky", describes the birth-cry of the supersonic missile heralding the first V-2 offensive on London during September of 1944. On the closing page the final rocket is poised above the heads of "us", and the switch to direct address implies that this rocket's menace is universal. These two events become the extremes of a historical trajectory, containing the labyrinthine plot while acting as exaggerated external pointers to a "rising action" and a "falling action". The structural metaphor is therefore linear, teleological, and deterministic. The parabolic path of the rocket is "that shape of no surprise, no second chances, no return."[44] To the extent that it controls and structures the novel, this parabola encodes a unified vision of a world hurtling toward annihilation and signifies what Josephine Hendin has called the message of the book, "the death at the heart of all experience".[45]

Although *Gravity's Rainbow* takes a pessimistic view of the twentieth century's flight into totalizing systems, it also insists that such systems do not have intrinsic authority; they are not imposed on

humanity from "outside". The arc of the rocket is the emblem of a paranoid vision of reality in which "everything is connected" in a way that contains history in a preordained pattern. At one point, Tyrone Slothrop considers an alternative to this model of inflexible and eternal relations, "anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long."[46] In *Gravity's Rainbow* any world view that spatializes history implicitly invokes some version of the providential schema and denies real possibility. The alternative to a revisionist interpretation of the providential plan is secular history, which acknowledges the presence of multiple patterns in human affairs but recognizes the impossibility of reconciling these patterns in a single Authorized Version of reality. *Gravity's Rainbow* is in many ways a historical novel, but it is a novel about secular history.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon gives a spatial form to this implicitly apocalyptic construction of history and in this way exposes the embedded myth that history is a delusive veil over the external. The rainbow of the title is a historical trajectory, but it is also already present, "hanging there in the sky for everybody."[47] Time is transmuted into space; like the path of the rocket as conceptualized by the Peenemunde engineers, processes "become architecture, and timeless."[48]

In *Gravity's Rainbow* man is presented as the spoiler of nature, looting the bowels of the earth for fuels and minerals which can be converted into means of political domination. As Slothrop penetrates deeper and deeper into the zone he encounters more and more traces of

Teutonic nature – rituals which, although only available in the present as memory or masquerade (like his pig-costume), represents the signs of a culture where man was related to Nature in a magical oneness.

Unlike *V.*, *Gravity's Rainbow* offers no impression of orderliness through titled chapters. In Pynchon's first novel, the mock-picaresque chapter-headings – also used by Richard Farina, the dedicatee of *Gravity's Rainbow*, among other American novelists – comically distance the reader from the absurd sequences which they introduce. *Gravity's Rainbow* is constructed on the basis of a worldview that even the most diverse cultural and natural phenomena are interconnected. The repeated metaphors of its own assembly are the lattice and the mosaic. Fictional plots shade into historical and scientific ones, and thereby raise a staggering critical problem. Richard Poirier expresses this problem in the following way: "... he [Pychon] proposes that any effort to sort out these plots must itself depend on an analytical method which, both in its derivations and in its execution, is probably part of some systematic plot against free forms of life".[49] In other words, critical analysis will by its very nature work against the values implicit in *Gravity's Rainbow* whose rhetoric and associational method are peculiarly resistant to discussion. The critical reader is thus forced to choose between the unacceptable option of silence and the inevitably distorting effects of separating out different aspects of the novel for examination.

The repeated linking of Slothrop to his ancestors in a strategy which Pynchon follows with other characters is this novel. The past

exerts a constant and oppressive pressure throughout *Gravity's Rainbow*, a pressure which Pynchon demonstrates through flashbacks. In chapter 14 Katje Borgesius has arrived in London and the sight of an oven triggers off memories of pornographic rituals she used to perform in Nazi-occupied Holland. Her memory slides into the consciousness of her then master Captain Blicero (also known as Lieutenant Weissmann) and later, this time via the notion of commerce, into the experiences of one of her ancestors on Mauritius who helped to exterminate the dodo. The sequence can only be justified in non-realistic terms. Captain Blicero dominates her whole self and so as it were appropriates her consciousness while the 'flashback' to the 17th century clearly demonstrates Pynchon's conviction that no character exists apart from his ancestral past. This is demonstrated repeatedly through Slothrop who represents the last of his line, possessing only tenuous Puritan reflexes. In Chapter 40 Pynchon refers to Jung's notion of the collective unconscious in connection with the fluidity of one character's dreams. The individual consciousness, Jung states, "is in the highest degree influenced by inherited presuppositions.... The collective unconscious comprises in itself the psychic life of our ancestors right back to the earliest beginnings."[50]

Where Jung demonstrates the relevance of mythic patterns to dream-symbolism, Pynchon applies the concept of the collective unconscious to a pathological interpretation of the rise of Nazism. The latter emerges as a collective yearning for the primitive and irrational

which leads ultimately to death. Once again Jung is probably an influence. Pynchon's playfulness alerts us to one of the strangest features of *Gravity's Rainbow* – the fluidity of the text itself. The impulse to make connections forms part of a predisposition towards paranoia in *Gravity's Rainbow*, a notion which Pynchon uses in a non-pathological sense to mean the conspiratorial organization of events around the self. Paranoia is thus a kind of total ordering and forms the central preoccupation. Far from being simply 'the last retreat of the Puritan imagination' as Scott Sanders asserts, paranoia proves to be empirically justified in the case of Slothrop and experientially useful to other characters in coping with their fears. As Hendrick Hertzberg and D.C.K. McClelland write, "paranoia substitutes a rigorous (though false) order for chaos, and at the same time dispels the sense of individual insignificance by making the paranoid the focus of all he sees going on around him – a natural response to the confusion of modern life".[51] It is an even more natural response to the terrors of war and the melodrama of competing intelligence agencies.[52] Pynchon's series of proverbs for paranoids (perhaps based on Pudd'n -head Wilson's calendar), periodically (and jokingly), remind the reader of a possibility which seems to affront common sense but also opens up a hidden order of history. Moments of discovery are crucial in *Gravity's Rainbow* because they appear to be the epiphanous confirmation of these paranoid fears, whether the moments revolve around apparently trivial details like a strange hair (which Roger Mexico finds in his mouth),[53] or a glimpse of a perfectly working oil refinery.[54] Thus, there is a logic of delirium in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pynchon mockingly sign-posts such

realization (to Tchitcherine) at the end of chapter 56 with a pointing hand in the text, a secularized sign of God which now only points towards unverified possibilities.[55] The repeated references to paranoia sensitize the reader to textual signs and induce in him an urgency comparable to the novel's characters to strain after certainty.

Knowing is an ambition or desire rather than an attainable achievement for the characters of *Gravity's Rainbow* since they are so deeply embedded in the circumstances of their own plot-lines. The reader gradually becomes aware of a lattice of intersections between these plots which does not grant an overview but does at least remind him of the inadequacy of any one means of explanation. The notion of 'beyond' denies the novel's text any closure. On the contrary, *Gravity's Rainbow* is a work which is constantly referring outside itself. Pynchon quotes actual texts (Pavlov, A.E. Waite, etc.) and fictitious ones. Like *Ulysses*, *Gravity's Rainbow* also contains allusions to its author's own earlier writings, particularly to 'Mondaugen's Story' from *V.* and to 'The Secret Integration'. To a certain extent these allusions can be explained in quasi-realistic terms as a means of building up a past for Blicero and Slothrop, but when the South-West African materials are being introduced through radio propaganda the broadcaster asks his audience "Remember?"[56] This is an appeal to textual memory which complicates the reader's sense of a clear distinction between the fictional and the real, in this specific case paving the way for the introduction of the Schwarz Kommando. Pynchon

uses allusion and quotation to blur the boundaries of his text just as he uses historical reference to jolt the reader's sense of possibility.

By refusing to close his text, not only in the obviously unresolving ending but throughout the novel, Pynchon places his fiction within its cultural environment. Even within *Gravity's Rainbow* it makes more sense to talk of multiple texts than any singular one partly because Pynchon has taken 1944-45 as a watershed in the beginning of the cold war which revolves essentially around information rather than combat. Pynchon refuses to allow his text too categorical an existence because this would imply a more stable reality than his characters glimpse. Instead we get a series of fragments, of partial and distorted views.

Pynchon is far too historically intelligent to suggest, however, that the schizophrenic paranoia of his own time is unique to it. Slothrop can trace his ancestry to a member of Governor Winthrop's crew on the *Arbella*, the flagship of the great puritan flotilla of 1630, and to a William Slothrop who wrote a nearly heretical book on the relations between the elect and the Preterite, those who have been passed over, those not elected to salvation. Puritanism is evoked as an early version of the paranoia conditioning us to look for signs of election and rendering the rest of mankind and its evidences invisible, merely so much waste. Paranoia allows plot – as plot. But to carry the pun very far is to turn narrative into madness. This was part of the game in *V.*, but here the parody of the plotted novel is already old hat and rather too comforting, since parody gives us the old form to hang on to.

The choice between paranoia and chaos, between Herbert Stencil and Benny Profane of *V.*, is further complicated here. Slothrop, the novel's rough equivalent to Profane, shares without understanding it an obsession like Stencil's. But his paranoia is justified by the facts – or almost. He struggles with the Stencil-Profane qualities in himself, and as he simultaneously recognizes and resists paranoia, he becomes less and less a self to be contended with.

The teases at the beginning reoccur as the incomplete projections at the end. The book begins, for instance, with a line implicitly picked up at the end: "A screaming comes across the sky".[57] On the last pages, a Los Angeles theater manager named Zhlubb hears a terrifying noise: "I don't think that's a police siren". Your guts in a spasm, you reach for the AM radio. "I don't think ...."[58] The noise, we have to assume, is the noise of a rocket (as it was on page one), except that you can't hear this kind of rocket until after it hits. And this is probably the rocket for which most of the major characters in the novel have been searching or living. Inside it is the lover (screaming?) of the rocket master – our old friend Weissman, by the way, code named Blicero. The rocket is about to hit a movie theater where we are apparently sitting watching a film which might well be called *Gravity's Rainbow*. We have, in good old literary style, come full circle, the narrative resolved, except that we are now participating in an ultimate, shaping paranoid vision into which Pynchon has been inducing us – destroyed if we accept it, dissolved if we don't.

The shape seems to be there, but the more seriously we look for it, the less convincing it is.

The surfaces which occupy so much space in *Gravity's Rainbow* accumulate, puzzlingly, discontinuously, as here, sometimes comically, sometimes grotesquely, sometimes with a technically dispassionate precision which can be terrifying. Nothing disappears from this world, but everything is transformed, like the cigarette in ashes, the eraser in curls, the ribbon in flecks. The presiding power is energy itself, gradually leveling human experience and feeling into geological strata. We're warned that physics will become metaphysics in the epigraph to the first book, which would be unequivocally serious if it weren't from a real rocket master, Wernher Von Braun. "Nature does not know extinction; all it knows is transformation. Everything science has taught me and continues to teach me, strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death".[59] But how, in the midst of these wonderfully recorded objects undergoing their inexplicable transformation can one be, as one of Pynchon's characters explicitly wishes, "simply here, simply alive".[60]

The energies of transformation affect everyone, even the apprently evil spirits whose capacity to feel anything but the need to feel has died and has led them to drain the life from all around them. Katje Borgesius, the witch, shares the pain of her victims; Weissman-Blicero loses all of his last three lovers; pointman is disgraced and cannot even catch his most interesting experiment, Slothrop. Webley Silvernail – a "guest star"

– wandering among the Pavlovian cages, speculates: "All the animals, the plants, the minerals, even other kinds of men, are being broken and reassembled everyday, to preserve an elite few, who are the loudest to theorize on freedom, but the least free of all."[61] Here is the Dracula metaphor again, though with a new consciousness that Dracula, too, is a slave. What is there left to worship, or fear? Father Rapier has noted that the "critical man" is too great, and Franz Pokler finally speaks, "In the name of the cathode, the anode, and the holy grid."[62] The objects, the released energy, are out of control. Once the zero point is crossed, there is no return, and the rocket submits to gravity: "All the rest will happen according to the laws of ballistics. The rocket is helpless in it. Something else has taken over. Something beyond what has been designed in."[63] And that is true of Pynchon's book, as Pynchon knows. We cannot redeem it for order or assimilate it to our conventional modes of control.

The essential subverting strategy in *Gravity's Rainbow* effectively hatches plots against the book's own characters. Pynchon deliberately confuses the literary meaning of plot – that is, a connected progress of events – with its psychological meaning – that is, the paranoid's schema of a world conspiring around him. Satiric plots envelop and depersonalize. They impede narrative action in an orgy of contingencies where individuals are inseparable from the "plots" that control them. Late in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the hopelessly confused Tyrone Slothrope asks, "This is some kind of plot, right?" and Seaman Bodine responds:

"Everything is some kind of plot, man."[64] Paranoia here is, by its nature, proliferating.

When Slothrop loses his character in the multiple plots of *Gravity's Rainbow*, he, as an aggregate of cells, is made into an aggregate of last moments. After an especially intense episode in part Two consisting of a Mediterranean night of love and a morning sunrise with Katje, Slothrop's clothes are stolen from his front room. A first fragment of him is gone. Stark naked, he pursues the thieves, covering himself with a purple satin sheet as he descends the stairs. From the floor below he leaps out of a terrace window, falling into a fortunately placed thickly branched tree. His fall from the treetop is a satiric fall, a speeded up version of the descent of man. His losses are always satire's gains. As Pynchon takes the ground from beneath his hero's feet, Slothrop finds himself pulled away from Katje, from himself, from love. Finally, at the end of the narrative, he has and is nothing.

Pynchon calls his scene of Christmas Vespers the war's evensong. The ritual, witnessed by Roger and Jessica, celebrates the human scale of worship and love. The birth of Christ is a charismatic event, repeated and represented as a cyclic event. The representation is whole, and Pynchon contrasts it with a war that is, by its nature, fragmentary, that "wants a machine of many separate parts, not oneness, but a complexity" (p. 131). Roger and Jessica effectively "cause" the Christmas Vespers scene in the narrative – they go to it, in all senses, as lovers. After the interlude in Kent the intensity of their love is diminished. The paranoia-producing

war intervenes. Mexico is the only figure in *Gravity's Rainbow* fully to recognize the "great swamp of paranoia" that exercises an almost permanent control during the war. And he also recognizes that despite his desires, he is somehow part of a system he detests. He, as much as Slothrop, is defined genetically by the events of the twentieth century. "The war is my mother", says Mexico, and he is part of its "intelligence".[65]

While the novel is diffuse, baffling, and profoundly disturbing, these are not due to fallacies of composition but to calculated aims. Rather than attempting to justify the ways of God to men, Pynchon's epic steps outside of received cultural assumptions in exposing justification to be no cause, but only an effect of potentially devastating proportions. *Gravity's Rainbow* is arguably the most important novel to emerge during the postmodern period, and contains the self-consciousness that characterizes much of the fiction produced during this time. Discontinuous events are run into one another, and the reader leaps across space and time with few transitions. The narrator will occasionally disengage himself from the narrative and address the reader, reminding him of the fictional construct with which he is dealing. All plots are fictions, imaginative constructs to order a world that tends toward disorder. Pynchon sets *Gravity's Rainbow* during the last nine months of World War II and the immediate postwar period in order to examine the gestation and birth of postmodern culture.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. George Levine and David Leverenz (Eds.), *Mindful Pleasures, Essays On Thomas Pynchon,* Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1971, p. 140.
2. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York, 1965, p. 14.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
4. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, New York: Viking Press edition, 1973, p. 202. *Gravity's Rainbow* will be later on referred to as *GR* only.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 580.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 582.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 674.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 703.
11. George Levin and David Leverenz, *Mindful Pleasures, Essays On Thomas Pynchon*, (Cited above), p. 145.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 613.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 722.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 661.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 650.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 712-713.
26. Molly Hite, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983, p. 4.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.
28. *GR*, p. 703.
29. Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, New York: Bantam, 1967, p. 136.
30. Pynchon, *V.* New York: Bantam, 1964, p. 421.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 423.
32. *GR*, p. 165.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 434.
34. Thomas Pynchon, "Whodonut", "Literature High and Low", in *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays*, p. 211.
35. *GR*, p. 508.
36. *GR*, p. 566.
37. Alexander Pope. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*, p. 193.
38. *GR.*, p. 703.

39. Scott Simmon, "Gravity's Rainbow Described", p. 64.
40. Speer Morgan, "Gravity's Rainbow: What's the Big Idea?" The Big Idea is that entropy governs human life; Morgan disagrees.
41. Ronalt T. Swigger, ("Fictional Encyclopedism and the Cognitive Value of Literature"), p. 351.
42. *GR.*, p. 3.
43. *GR*, p. 209. The rocket's trajectory is identified with fate several times in the novel. The constellation of images that Pynchon draws on here – rocket, flight, fate, parabola, rainbow – seems to constitute a fairly widespread postwar topos.
44. Joseph Hendin, "What is Thomas Pynchon Telling Us?", p. 90.
45. *GR.*, p. 434.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 490.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
48. Richard Poirier, "The Importance of Thomas Pynchon', in Levine and Leverenz (eds.), *Mindful Pleasures*, p. 23.
49. C. J. Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 112.
50. Scott Sanders, 'Pynchon's Paranoid History', *Mindful Pleasures*, p. 140. Hendrick Hertzberg and D.C.K. McClelland, 'Paranoia', *Harper's Magazine* 248 (June 1974), p. 52. Paranoia has been much discussed by Pynchon's critics, notably the following: M. R. Siegel, *Creative Paranoia*: Michael Friedbichler, 'Towards a Redeemed Imagination: the Role of Paranoia in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon', in Sonja Bahn et al. (eds.), *Forms of the*

American Imagination, (Institut fur Sprachwissen Schaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1979), pp. 147-56; Louis Mackey, 'Paranoia, Pynchon, and Preterition', *Sub-Stance*, 30 (1981), pp. 16-30.

51. David Seed, *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*, (MacMillan Press, 1988), p. 208.
52. *GR*, p. 124.
53. *GR.*, p. 520.
54. The finger of God is a traditional sign of his power (cf. Exodus 8:19) but Pynchon uses it in connection with election, e.g., p. 27 in *GR*).
55. *GR.*, p. 74.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 883.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 603.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 690.

*****

CHAPTER - IV

FANTASISING THE REAL: A STUDY OF KURT VONNEGUT JR.'S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*

Under the postmodern condition "not only the self but also consciousness is discovered to be adrift, increasingly unable to anchor itself to any universal ground of justice, truth or reason, and is thus itself 'decentred'..."[1] Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five* contextualizes the 'decentred' self through a nonlinear mode of narration, that in Klinkowitz's words, created "a radical reconnection of the historical and the imaginary, the realistic and the fantastic, the sequential and the simultaneous, the author and the text."[2] There is nothing of the linear movement of the narrative, no intricate plot, crying for resolution. The protagonist, a time-traveller, can by a blink of his eye find himself in fire-bombed Dresden in 1944 and, by another blink, in Ilium, his home town in 1961. Billy Pilgrim was an eye-witness to the fire bombing by the Allies of Dresden during the fag-end of World War II. The experience proves so traumatic that Pilgrim becomes "unstuck in time."[3] Being "unstuck in time", he does not find it worthwhile to distinguish between past, present and future, or, between the living and the dead.

Vonnegut's fiction includes many artist figures who strive to bring order to experience by writing, painting, composing music. If the pessimistic side of Vonnegut leads him to bemoan the chaos of madness, war, and cosmic entrophy, the other side causes him to celebrate and marvel at the persistence of the human spirit in the face of that disorder as it pursues and gives aesthetic pleasure. Vonnegut's works suggest

that if man does not do something about the conditions and quality of human life on earth, no one and nothing else will. Fantasies of complete determinism, of being held helplessly in the amber of some eternally unexplained plot, justify complete passivity and a supine acceptance of the futility of all action. Given the overall impact of Vonnegut's work we are bound to feel that there is at least something equivocal about Billy's habit of fantasy, even if his attitude is the most sympathetic one in the book. At one point Vonnegut announces: "There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontation, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces."[4] It is certainly hard to celebrate the value of the individual self against the background of war, in which the nightmare of being the victim of uncontrollable forces becomes compellingly true. In such conditions it is difficult to be much of a constructive agent, and Billy Pilgrim doubtless has to dream to survive.

Vonnegut emphasizes on fantasy's importance in trying to make sense of the senseless in his *Slaughterhouse-Five*. To him, fictions are responses to history and horror; 'real' horror forms one essential component of the book, while the process of the fantastic displaces the other. Vonnegut converts himself into Billy Pilgrim, a childlike, gentle-natured, but emotionally damaged optometrist from Ilium, New York, who is none the less concerned, like his narrator, with the making of 'corrective lenses'. In the 'real' world, Billy suffers the author's experience of a POW imprisoned in the Dresden Slaughterhouse, and

survived by chance from the fireball which destroys the city. In the world of fantasy, Billy is displaced further, being kidnapped and taken to Tralfamadore – partly a pathological location, partly a place that opens the door of alternative knowledge, where time has been desynchronized, historical cause and effect interrupted. Hence, 'The Charlotte Observer' rightly comments about Vonnegut as "A medicine man, conjuring up fantasies to warn the world".[5]

Vonnegut maps experiences of his own life in his works. He does not necessarily use specific events, instead uses the emotions he feels during those events in his life. He was isolated from the rest of society for a five month period of his life. From December 1944 to April 1945, Vonnegut was held captive by the Germans as a prisoner of war during World War II. He was captured during the Battle of the Bulge, and lived through the fire bombing of Dresden in February of 1945. During this time he was completely isolated from the rest of American society. In depicting this experience in his work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. not only established himself as an author of literary merit, but pioneered with others, the genre of postmodernist fiction in America.

The similarity between Vonnegut and the characters in his works, who view themselves as being the only individuals, in the world, who are free thinking and have feelings. They often think only of themselves. The characters are intrinsically selfish, but the difference is that they honestly believe that no one else will be affected or at least know that

they have been affected. This is a common fantasy experienced by patients of Schizophrenia.

He includes a character from his home state of Indiana in every novel in order to make him an witness to his self-speak efforts. This character takes note of the author's isolation and efforts at companionship, in the illusions of grandeur caused by Schizophrenia. In centralizing the concept of isolation, not alienation which implies withdrawal, the novelist brings the full force of isolation that is forced resulting in a state of paranoid illusiveness. The paranoid illusiveness of life becomes the *tour de force* of the narrative that becomes compellingly disruptive and interrogative.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five* or *The Children's Crusade*, Vonnegut particularises the horrors of the World War II in the bombing of Dresden. The main character, Billy Pilgrim, is a very young infantry scout who is captured in the Battle of the Bulge and quartered in a Dresden Slaughterhouse where he and other prisoners are employed in the production of a vitamin supplement for pregnant women. During the February 13, 1945, Dresden was firebombed by Allied aircrafts, when the prisoners took shelter in an underground meat locker. When they emerged, the city had been levelled and they were forced to dig corpses out of the rubble. The story of Billy Pilgrim is the story of Kurt Vonnegut who was captured and survived the firestorm in which 135,000 German civilians perished, more than the number of deaths in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. Robert Scholes

while summing up the theme of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in the *New York Times Book Review*, maintains: 'Be kind. Don't hurt. Death is coming for all of us anyway, and it is better to be Lot's wife looking back through salty eyes than the Deity that destroyed those cities of the plain in order to save them'.[6] The reviewer concludes that '*Slaughterhouse-Five* is an extraordinary success. It is a book we need to read, and to reread'.

Slaughterhouse-Five is Vonnegut's most widely read novel and perhaps his best. Vonnegut has said, "I felt after I finished *Slaughterhouse-Five* that I didn't have to write at all any more if I didn't want to. It was the end of some sort of career".[7] *Slaughterhouse-Five*, with its non-linear time scheme interweaves in a complex arrangement science fiction, fantasy and the realities of World War II. The reason for this is that Vonnegut reveals himself in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, as do Alexander Trocchi in *Cain's Book* and Thomas Pynchon in *V.*, to be "highly self-conscious of the novel as an abstract concept that examines a condition that never yields itself up completely as itself."[8] In other words, the novel functions to reveal new viewpoints in somewhat the same way that the theory of relativity broke through the concepts of absolute space and time. *Slaughterhouse-Five* thus gains its structure from Vonnegut's essential aesthetic preoccupation – how to describe a reality that is beyond human imagination.

The method he chooses is outlined in the explanation given to Billy Pilgrim of the Tralfamadorian novel as he is being transported

toward that whimsical planet. His captors offer him the only book in English they had, Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*, which is to be placed in a museum. The Tralfamadorians allow him to look at some of their novels, but warn that he cannot begin to understand them. The books are small; it would take a dozen of them to even approach *Valley of the Dolls* in bulk, and the language is impossible for Billy. But he can see that the novels consist of clumps of symbols with stars in between. Billy is told that the clumps function something like telegrams, with each clump containing a message about a situation or scene. But the clumps are not read sequentially as the chapters are in an earthling novel of the ordinary sort. They are read simultaneously. "There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages", the speaker says to Billy, "except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time."[9]

Slaughterhouse-Five is an approximation of this type of novel. Its chapters are divided into short sections (clumps), seldom more than a few paragraphs long. The time-tripping, both by Billy and the narrator, produces an effect like that achieved in the Tralfamadorian novel – to see many moments at once. The time-tripping also serves to eliminate suspense. (We know not only of Billy's assassination long before the novel ends, but also how the universe will end – the Tralfamadorians

blow it up experimenting with a new fuel for their flying saucers). And the conclusion Vonnegut arrives at after examining the causes and effects of Dresden is that there indeed is no moral, only the "Poo-tee-weet" of the bird's call that Billy hears when he discovers that the war in Europe is over and he wanders out onto the shady streets of Springtime Dresden.

What the Tralfamodorian structure does for Vonnegut is to enable him to embody a new reality in his novel – at least new in contrast to the sequential ups-and-downs reality of the traditional novel. Vonnegut's method accords well with the major changes in the conception of physical reality that have come out of contemporary science. Jerry H. Bryant writes in commenting on the relationship between twentieth century Physics and recent fiction, "change, ambiguity, and subjectivity (in a sense these are synonyms) thus become ways of defining human reality. Novelist after novelist examines these features, and expresses almost universal frustration at being deprived of the old stability of metaphysical reality."[10] His Tralfamadorian scheme enables Vonnegut to overcome the problems of change, ambiguity, and subjectivity involved in objectifying the events surrounding the fire-bombing of Dresden and the involvement of Billy Pilgrim in the event.

This is a difficult idea, but one way to understand it is to consider the distinction Bertrand Russell makes in *The ABC of Relativity* between the old view of matter (that it has a definite identity in Space and time) and the new view (that it is an event). "An event does not persist and

move, like the traditional piece of matter", Russell writes: "it merely exists for a little moment then ceases. A piece of matter will thus be resolved into a series of events .... The whole series of these events makes up the whole history of the particle, and the particle is regarded as being its history, not some metaphysical entity to which things happen".[11]

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, there is no idealism – only shock and outrage over the havoc and destruction man is capable of wreaking in the name of what he calls a worthy cause. It is apt to discuss Vonnegut's use of esthetic distance. John Keats coined the term "negative capability" to describe the ability of the artist (in his case, the poet) to free himself from the confines of his own personality and ego and to adopt the identity of the person or persons he is writing about. While an artist who is able to annihilate his own personality when writing a novel has Keats's "negative capability",[12] such annihilation is surely not within Vonnegut's capability in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Billy Pilgrim's reaction to the fire-bombing of Dresden is crucial to an understanding of Pilgrim's character. Because of the parallel in *Slaughterhouse-Five* between Vonnegut's experience in Dresden and that of Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut creates a mask, a narrator who provides a certain distance between author and protagonist. Vonnegut introduces a note of science fiction when he tells his readers that "Somebody was playing with the clocks.... The second hand on my watch would twitch once, and a year would pass, and then it would twitch again. There was nothing I could

do about it. As an Earthling I had to believe whatever clocks said - and calendars." (*S.F.* 18).

This is just the paradoxical conception of Billy that Vonnegut develops. Billy at first seems to be merely an entity to which things happen – he is lost behind the lines during the Battle of the Bulge. He and Roland Weary are captured by the Germans. He survives the fire-bombing of Dresden, and marries. He is the sole survivor of a plane crash, he hallucinates that he is kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians, he appears on crackpot talk-shows, and he is finally gunned down in Chicago. Through a constant movement of back and forth in time, we see Billy becoming his own history, existing all at once, as if he is an electron. This movement in time gives the novel a structure that is, to directly use the analogy, atomic. Billy whirls around the central fact of Dresden, the planes of his orbits constantly intersecting, and where he has been, he will be.

Of course, all of Vonnegut's earlier central characters are somewhat like Billy in that they are seen as aspects of a protean reality. (Again, the name of Paul Proteus suggests how persistent this representation of personality is). But it is not until *Slaughterhouse-Five* that Vonnegut develops a way of fully representing the context of that reality.

The sudden changes that come over Malachi Constant, Eliot Rosewater, and others make them seem as illusive and problematic as

the absurd universe they occupy. By over simplifying his characters, Vonnegut does manage to suggest something of the complexity of human nature by indirection. But they still tend to linger in the mind as cartoon figures.

This is not the case with Billy Pilgrim. The Tralfamadorian structure through which his story is told (seem to be a better word) gives Billy dimension and substance and brings him eerily to life despite his pale ineffectuality. "Vonnegut's reluctance to depict well-developed characters and to supply them with conventional motives for their actions serves as a conscious burlesque of the whole concept of realism in the novel",[13] points out Charles B. Harris in his study of the contemporary novel of the absurd. But with *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the conscious burlesque is diminished because Vonnegut has come up with a representation of Billy Pilgrim's universe that is in itself a new concept of realism or reality.

Slaughterhouse-Five is thus as much a novel about writing novels as it is an account of Billy Pilgrim and Dresden. In relating the difficulty he had in dealing with Dresden, Vonnegut prefaces *Slaughterhouse-Five* with an account of his own pilgrimage through time as he attempts to write about his Dresden experience. The opening section consists of jumps back and forth in the author's life – from his return to Dresden on a Guggenheim grant to his return home from the war two decades earlier from a conversation on the telephone with his old war buddy to the end of the war in a beet field on the Elbe outside of Halle, and then on to the

Chicago City News Bureau, Schenectady and General Electric, visiting O'Hare in Pennsylvania, teaching writing at the University of Iowa, and then Dresden and the Guggenheim trip once more.

The concern is always with the problem of writing the book – how to represent imaginatively things that are unimaginable. But in detailing his frustrations, Vonnegut conceptualizes his own life the way he later does Billy's, in terms of Tralfamadorian time theory. The structure of the chapter about writing the novel consequently prefigures the structure of the novel itself.

Vonnegut states that he thought the book would be easy to write – all he would have to do is to simply report what he had seen. But this did not work. Too many other things get in the way. Why was Dresden, a supposedly safe city, bombed? Why did the American and British governments cover up the facts about the raid? What does the Dresden attack imply about American and British civilization? And, more important, why must Vonnegut's life always lead up to and go back to what he saw when he emerged from the Slaughterhouse meat locker and looked at the moonscape of what was once perhaps the most beautiful city in Europe?

Vonnegut's impulse is to begin *Slaughterhouse-Five* with his own experience, not with characters or ideas, but the ideas soon get in the way. Two structural possibilities come to mind. The first is suggested in

the song Vonnegut remembers as he thinks about how useless, yet how obsessive, the Dresden part of his memory has been:

> My name is Yon Yonson,
> I work in Wisconsin,
> I work in a lumbermill there,
> The people I meet when I walk down the street,
> They say, "What's your name?"
> "My name is Yon Yonson,
> I work in Wisconsin...."[14]

When people ask him what he is working on, Vonnegut says that for years he has been telling them the same thing – a book about Dresden. Like Yon Yonson, he seems doomed to repeat the answer endlessly. But the maddening song suggests something else – the tendency many people (perhaps all) have to return to a central point in their lives in reply to the question of identity ("What is your name?").[15]

The song also crudely suggests the time theory that is later developed later in the novel with its emphasis on infinite repetition. But repetitions lead nowhere, especially in a novel, so Vonnegut considers another possibility. He takes a roll of wallpaper, and in the back of it tries to make an outline of the story using his daughter's crayons (a different color for each of the characters). "And the blue line met the red line and then the yellow line." Vonnegut writes, "and the yellow line stopped because the character represented by the yellow line was dead. And so on. The destruction of Dresden was represented by a vertical band of orange cross-hatching, and all the lines that were still alive

passed through it, came out the other side".[16] This is an outline for a Jamesian novel with an essentially linear time scheme. But it does not work as a representation of the experience Vonnegut is anxious to write about.

For one thing, characters do not actually come out the other side and inevitably go on from there. Like Vonnegut himself, and Yon Yonson, the characters compulsively return, moving back and forth on their lines. And as for the lines that stop, the beginning and middle of those lines are still there. Vonnegut thus comes up with a structure that includes both the Yon Yonson story and the wallpaper outline. It is as if he rolls the wallpaper into a tube so all the characters and incidents are closely layered, so they are in effect one unit, and the reader must look at them from the side. The tube then becomes a telescope through which the reader looks into the fourth dimension, or at least into another dimension of the novel. The story goes round and round yet it still leads somewhere, and yet the end is very close to the beginning. Vonnegut, in the guise of an oral story teller, asks us to "Listen".[17] Then, he introduces Billy and sets up the pattern that will be followed throughout the rest of the novel: "Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.... He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between."[18]

Billy is anything but a thin character: he is another illustration of Vonnegut's concept of Protean man. Billy needs to travel back and forth in time not only to understand himself but also to endure himself to

become his history. He is many personalities, many selves existing together at once. He is a living Tralfamadorian "clump".[19] One of the surprises in the novel is the ridiculous personality of Billy as an optometrist that turns out to be the most important symbolically. Throughout the novel there is considerable emphasis on seeing things, and there is a near continuous contrast between the way the world looks to Billy and the way others see him. The change that comes over Billy is mainly a result of the way he is forced to look at many things. Of all that Billy is forced to look at, the most significant is what is revealed to him by the Tralfamadorians. The flying saucer becomes an optometer that measures the refractive errors in Billy's outlook and the Tralfamadorians are able to suggest a prescription. But it is Billy's job as an optometrist (*S. F.* 21) to help others see, and this is what he tries to do. At first, he is not very effective. He is able to attend the Ilium school of optometry for only one semester before he is drafted (and he is enrolled only in night sessions at that). And after the war, despite all his success, Billy deals less in vision than in fashion: "Frames are where the money is".[20] But through his flying-saucer journey, he gains a new conception of what his job should be – prescribing "corrective lenses for Earthling souls"[21] so that they can see into the fourth dimension as the Tralfamadorians do.

This development of Billy's vision is handled in a deceptively ambiguous way. The repetition of imagery together with the juxtaposition of disparate events in Billy's life suggests that his trip to Tralfamadore is an hallucination and that the prescription he winds up

advocating is essentially the result of the associative powers of his mind. The substance of his trip to Tralfamadore may well be the consequence of reading a Kilgore Trout novel. The whole business of time travel and the simultaneous existence of events form out of the human illusions that Vonnegut has attacked in his earlier novels.

But the point for Billy is that the Tralfamadorians are real. The years of his life there is significant as he is going to live every moment of that life over and over again. In addition, there is the pragmatic value of his vision – it enables him to deal with the horror of Dresden and to get around the question of "why me?"[22] that echoes through the novel. Are his lenses rose-colored or not perhaps depends on the reader's own willingness to look into the fourth dimension with him. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, at any rate, gives us a glimpse of what that dimension might be like, and shows us at the very least how it is possible to gain a sense of purpose in life by doing what Billy Pilgrim does while re-inventing himself and his universe.

The process of re-invention is made vivid by Vonnegut's style with its hesitant short sentences and his tendency to return again and again to the same images. His abruptness works well in describing the time shifts Billy suddenly goes through, and it contributes a sense of Billy's new vision, his re-invented universe, being formulated piece by piece. But the overall effect of the direct, often choppy, sentences and the brief paragraphs (several times consisting of only a few words) is to suggest the whirling of basic particles, of electrons that really cannot be

seen. What we think of when we think of the structure of the atom is not actually there at all – it is only a model, an illusion. And the same thing in principle is applicable to *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Billy Pilgrim's erratic revolutions in time around Dresden. But as a model, it is, through its recapitulating imagery, its optometric symbolism, its positively charged sentences, and its telegraphic representations came alive in Tralfamadorian-atomic structure, one of the best solutions we have to the problem of describing the unimaginable.

Of course, no film could document the way Vonnegut confrotned his own ambiguous nature in working out the story of Billy Pilgrim. The character who is developed the most fully in the novel is Vonnegut himself. This is why Vonnegut can get away with repeating the phrase, "So it goes",[23] after every tragic or pathetic incident. He has established himself, through his preface, as one of the characters in the book. His is a human voice, not just that of an omniscient narrator.

Vonnegut's way of dealing with the subject matter of his choice results in a novel that is, by any standard, highly complex. It is a novel that works toward the resolution of Vonnegut's own obsessions at the same time it works toward the resolution of several nervous questions concerning the viability of the genre itself. Like many of his contemporaries, Vonnegut accepts the idea of an absurd universe that is chaotic and without meaning. But unlike Beckett and Robbe-Grillet, he does not develop an anti-style, even though he seems to share their fear of the loss of distinctions between fact and fiction.

'I would hate to tell you what this lousy, little book cost me in money and anxiety and time'. Vonnegut notes in the second page of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Far from being the lousy little book, the work turned out to be his first best seller, and catapulted him to sudden national fame, while bringing his works into serious intellectual esteem. He goes on to explain how he had brought its central experience, the firebombing of Dresden, back from the war, how he had thought it would be easy to write about, but was not; how his various experiments with its structure failed, and friends and associates cautioned him with their own interpretations of the war; how this always remained the essential story he had to tell, one he had continued as a writer to displace into the imagination and fantasy of his past books. It is a story that still demands indirection of method: 'It is so short and jumbled and jangled', he tells his publisher a few pages later, 'because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre.'[24] There is no way of reducing *Slaughterhouse-Five* to a simple plot. Vonnegut himself performs multiple roles both as creator and creature, author and character, taking centre stage at the beginning and conclusion and also appearing as a Dresden prisoner of war.

On the one hand, it is easy to view Vonnegut as the simplest of writers – one who offers his readers short sentences, short paragraphs, cartoonlike characters, and lots of jokes. On the other, it is also possible to describe him in the complex terminology of postmodern criticism – as a highly experimental metafictionalist, structural anthropologist, and a

player of intricate semiotic games. Vonnegut's writing is "metafictional"[25] because it often calls attention to its own artificiality so as to question the conventions of traditional narrative – much as an anthropologist implicitly critiquing his own culture when exploring another, or when a semiotician (literally, one who studies signs) uses language to explain how language works. Surprisingly, these contradictory images of Vonnegut as both simple and complex have coexisted instead of undercutting each other. Speaking in 1980 of Vonnegut's work in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Klinkowitz, wrote that "the academic argument ... that 'experimental' fiction had refined itself beyond the appreciation of popular readers is confounded at every turn by Vonnegut's commercial success".[26] That Vonnegut is at once simple and complex, that he has appealed to both a popular and an academic audience, in itself suggests he is a writer worthy of attention.

His simplicity stems from his background in journalism, his common sense and lack of pretension, and his desire to reach a wide audience so as to present his concerns about pressing social realities. In an interview he distanced himself from the sort of writers for whom language itself is the primary concern: "I am not inclined to play Henry Jamesian games because they'll exclude too many people from reading the book .... I have made my books easy to read, punctuated carefully, with lots of white space."[27]

Yet underneath the simple surface of his work Vonnegut is certainly complex enough. His complexity stems from two sources: his

scientifically sophisticated view of the world and the innovative way he conveys that view through his fiction. Closer to a scientifically minded writer like Thomas Pynchon than to Henry James, Vonnegut creates 'science' fiction – even when his work has nothing to do with visitors from outer space. As James Lundquist puts it, in his novels Vonnegut strives "to reveal new viewpoints in somewhat the same way the theory of relativity broke through the concepts of absolute space and time".[28]

Vonnegut has been called a fabulist, a fantasist, an absurdist, a humorist, a black humorist, a broken humorist, a satirist, and, perhaps most often, a science fictionist – all of these designations are justifiable and therefore valid. Numerous critics have noticed that Vonnegut's protagonists are often engaged in reinventing reality to suit themselves. Critics of *Slaughterhouse-Five* have long recognized Billy Pilgrim's need to "create", albeit involuntarily, his Tralfamadorian experience. It can be said that it is the human imagination and the value of mental construct that makes self-renewal possible in the novel. So we can say that Tralfamadore is a fantasy. From the moment Billy comes "unstuck in time", he tries to construct for himself an Edenic experience out of materials he garners over the course of some twenty years. Therefore, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a triumph of Vonnegut's imagination, where at last the author has found a way to emphasize benign constructions of the world, and forget about the bad.

Slaughterhouse-Five is not only a fabulation based on science fiction but is also a collage of factual reporting and fantasy writing as

well as a novel in which the conventional distance between the text and the world is sought to be destroyed. Take for instance the last scene of the novel: Billy is in a latrine in a German prison camp:

> An American near Billy wailed that he had excreted everything but his brains. Moments later he said: There they go, there they go. He meant his brains. That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book.[29]

Vonnegut says: "It seemed a categorical imperative that I write about Dresden, the firebombing of Dresden, since it was the largest massacre in the history of Europe and I am a person of European extraction and I, a writer, had been present. I had to say something about it".[30] But the problem was, as Vonnegut remarks in the novel itself, "There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre".[31] Consequently, he was frustrated in his early attempts to tell the single story he felt he had to tell: "I came home in 1945, started writing about it, and wrote about it, and 'wrote about it', and WROTE ABOUT IT.... The book is a process of twenty years of this sort of living with Dresden and the aftermath".[32] Precisely because the story was so hard to tell, and because Vonnegut was willing to take the two decades necessary to tell it – to speak the unspeakable – *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a great novel, a masterpiece sure to remain a permanent part of American literature. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an attempt to describe a new mode of perception that radically alters traditional conceptions of time and morality.

In Chapter I, Vonnegut discusses about his failed attempts at writing a traditional narrative about Dresden – one with an Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end. There are many reasons why such a traditional structure did not work for the novel Vonnegut wanted to write, but the principal one is that characters' lives, like those of real people, do not themselves proceed in one direction: in reality one does as much "backward" travelling in time through memory as "forward" travelling in anticipation of the future. Thus while not identical with it, *Slaughterhouse-Five's* narrative mode is allied with the stream-of-consciousness technique pioneered by Joyce and Faulkner, which seeks to reproduce the mind's simultaneous blending of the past through memory, the present through perception, and the future through anticipation. Vonnegut's own life, and Billy Pilgrim's, are characterized by an obsessive return to the past. To get to the heart of the matter of Dresden, moreover, Vonnegut felt he had to let go of the writer's usual bag of chronological tricks – suspense and confrontations and climaxes – and proceed by a different logic toward the future of the novel form.

Thus Vonnegut gives away what would be the traditional climax of his book – the execution of Billy's friend Edgar Derby "for taking a teapot that wasn't his"[33] – in the beginning of the novel. Throughout the novel he intentionally deflates suspense by mentioning in advance the outcome of any conflict he creates. Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five* tries to construct a new form out of the fragments of old form. Like Christ, Billy brings a new message to the world, although it is a very

different one from his predecessor. And like Jesus he is an innocent who accepts his death, at the hands of an enemy who reviles and misunderstands him, as an opportunity to teach mankind the proper response to mortality. Both Billy and Jesus teach that one should face death calmly, because death is not the end. In the Christian vision the self after death proceeds forward in time eternally, either in heaven or hell; for Billy however, "after" death the soul proceeds backward, in time, back into life. As Billy learns from the Tralfamadorians:

> When a person dies he only 'appears' to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at this funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the 'Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever.[34]

Thus Billy, the new Christ, preaches that human beings 'do' have eternal life – even if there is no life after death.

Billy has now adopted the way of life of Tralfamadorians, the small green inhabitants of the planet Tralfamadore, who have abducted him there. In Tralfamadore everything is different from the way it is on earth, to the Tralfamadorians 'All moments, past, present and future, always have existed, always will exist'.[35] It is an illusion we have here

on Earth that one moment follows another one. Again, when a man dies, he only appears to die. Accordingly, Billy has seen his birth and death many times and pays random visits to all the events in between. Billy Pilgrim has encountered so much death and so much evidence of hostility and cruelty to the human individual during the war that he takes refuge in an intense fantasy life.

The literary consequence of the Tralfamadorian conception of time is the Tralfamadorian novel, which consists of "brief clumps of symbols read simultaneously."[36] As the Tralfamadorians tell Billy, "these symbols, or messages, when seen all at once produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects."[37] *Slaughterhouse-Five* is of course itself an attempt to write this sort of a book, as Vonnegut announces in his subtitle: "This is a novel somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore."[38] Vonnegut leaves room for the idea that Billy's trip to Tralfamadore is all in Billy's mind. This sort of "escape hatch" from fantasy into realism is characteristic of the sci-fi genre. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy had been in a mental hospital and received shock treatments. During his stay there he had met Eliot Rosewater, who makes a cameo appearance from Vonnegut's previous novel in order to introduce Billy to the sci-fi works of Kilgore Trout.

Billy's trip to Tralfamadore, finally, begins to look more like a metaphor than a literal description of events. His space travel is simply a way for him to describe the growth of his own imagination out of a Christian, linear vision of time to the cosmic perspective of time as the fourth dimension. This is not to say, however, that Vonnegut offers the Tralfamadorian 'attitudes' toward that vision as final truth. Tralfamadorians – "real"[39] or imagined – are not human beings, so that their attitude of absolute indifference toward the terrors of the universe – even to the ultimate terror of its annihilation – could never work for humans.

Slaughterhouse-Five is not a novel simply about Dresden. It is a novel about a novelist, who has been unable to erase the memory of his wartime experience and the Dresden fire-storm, even while he has been inventing stories and fantasies in his role as a writer since the end of the war. This book will be a mixture of facts and invention ("All this happened, more or less"[40] – so the book starts), for Vonnegut has created a character called Billy Pilgrim, whose progress entails not only undergoing the wartime experiences which Vonnegut has invented. The result, among other things, is a moving meditation on the relationship between history and dreaming cast in an appropriately factual/fictional mode.

By critically examining the line of the story that Vonnegut tells, we can say that Billy Pilgrim is an innocent, sensitive man who encounters so much death and so much evidence of hostility to the

human individual while he was in the army that he takes refuge in an intense fantasy life, which involves his being captured and sent to a remote planet (while in fact he was being transported by the Germans as a prisoner of war). He also comes 'unstuck in time' through moments during the war that give way to an intense re-experiencing of moments from the past holding unexpected hallucinations of life in the future. Pilgrim ascribes this strange gift of being able to slip around in time to his experience on the planet which has given him an entirely new way of looking at time. We may take Vonnegut's word for it that the wartime scenes are factual, as near as can be attested by a suffering participant. The source of Pilgrim's dreams and fantasies is more complex. The planet that kidnaps him is Tralfamadore, a familiar reference from Vonnegut's second novel. At the same time it is suggested that the details of his voyage to Tralfamadore may well be based on details from his real experience subjected to fantastical metamorphosis. In his waking life Pilgrim is said to come from Ilium (*Player Piano*); he later encounters the American Nazi propagandist Howard Campbell (*Mother Night*); in a mental hospital where he has long talks with Eliot Rosewater, who introduces Pilgrim to the works of Kilgore Trout, both known faces from Vonnegut's last novel.

Science fiction, like postmodernist fiction, is governed by the ontological dominant. Indeed, it is perhaps the ontological genre par excellence. Science fiction, by staging "close encounters" between different worlds, placing them in confrontation, foregrounds their

respective structures and the disparities between them. How is one to place worlds into confrontation? How are these "close encounters" to be managed? The answer takes a variety of historically-determined forms within science-fiction writing. In general, as Darko Suvin and, following him, Mark Rose has both observed, we can distinguish two complementary strategies: the first is to transport (through space, time, or "other dimensions") representatives of our world to a different world; the second, its inverse, involves (to use Pynchon's phrase) "another world's intrusion into this one".[41]

In the most typical (and stereotypical) science fiction contexts, "worlds" should be understood literally as planets, and "confrontation between worlds" as interplanetary travel. "Another world's intrusion into this one", in the interplanetary context, takes the form of invasion from outer space - whether malign, as in H. G. Wells' classic *War of the Worlds* (1898), or benign, as in Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953). The complementary topos, that of the earthling's visit to an alien planet, occurs in a number of variants: the simplest, travel to a single other world (e.g. Well's *The First Men in the Moon*, 1901, or Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, 1950); or "planet-hopping from world to world, as in pulp-magazine "space operas" or their cinematic equivalents, such as *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*; or travel across a planet on which disparate life forms, races, civilizations are juxtaposed, a multi-world world (e.g. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Martian Romances*, or C.S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*, 1938). The "zero degree" of the

interplanetary motif involves projecting a different planet without any provision for intrusion in either direction, by its inhabitants into our world or by earthlings into their world: worlds in collision without the collision. A classic example is Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), which constructs an integral, self-contained planetary world, nowehere explicitly related to our earth. Here the confrontation between the projected world and our empirical world is implicit, experienced by no representative character but reconstructed by the reader.

Many space-travel narratives, although by no means all of them, are projected into the future, for the obvious reason that they depend upon technologies which have been extrapolated from those of the present day. In other words, displacement in space is intimately bound up with displacement in time. They are, in fact, functionally equivalent: spatially distant other worlds may be brought into confrontation with our world, but so may temporally distant worlds, and with identical results of "cognitive estrangement". Science fiction future worlds tend to gravitate either toward the Utopian pole (as in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* 1888) or, more frequently, toward the dystopian pole (as in Wells's *When The Sleeper Wakes*, 1899, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* 1932, or George Orwell's 1984, 1949). The mode of displacement from present to future falls into one or another of several categories; that of "future history", which narrates more or less continuously the unfolding of "things to come" (e.g. Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men*, 1930, or Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy*, 1951-

3); or the "Sleeper Wakes" motif of Wells and Bellamy (and Woody Allen!), in which an inhabitant of our time hibernates through the intervening centuries and awakens in the world of the future; or the time-machine motif inaugurated by Wells's novel *The Time Machine* (1895), and apparently not exhausted yet. As in the case of the interplanetary topos, there is also a "zero degree" of temporal displacement in which a future world is projected but without any inhabitant of our time visiting it, the confrontation between worlds being left to the reader to reconstruct.

Once we have accepted the pseudo-scientific premise of travel outside the three familiar dimensions of space, through the "fourth dimension" of time, there is nothing to prevent us from going on to imagine travel to worlds in dimensions beyond the fourth. Here the ontological confrontation occurs between our world and some other world or worlds somehow adjacent or parallel to our own, accessible across some kind of boundary or barrier. Just as Wells' time-travel conceit seem to be inexhaustible so his contemporary Edwin Abbott's conceit of interdimensional travel *in Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884) continues to be exploited in science-fiction writing. The most intriguing variant of the other-dimension topos is the parallel or alternate world story based on historical speculation, the "what-if" premise so beloved of amateur historians – and of Borges. "He believed", writes Borges of the imaginary author of the novel *The Garden of Forking Paths*.

> in an infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times. This web of time - the strands of which approach one another, bifurcate, intersect or ignore each other through the centuries – embraces every possibility.[42]

In history's "garden of forking paths", one fork will inevitably be chosen in preference to all the other forks that might have been chosen instead. But what if things had gone differently, what if one of the other forks had been chosen? What kind of world would have resulted if, for instance, the Axis Powers instead of the Allies had won the Second World War? This speculation generates the world of Philip K. Dick's classic parallel-world story, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). Inevitably, such a story invites the reader to compare the real state of affairs in our world with the hypothetical state of affairs projected for the parallel world; implicitly it places our world and the parallel world in confrontation. And sometimes even explicitly: in *Dick's Man in the High Castle*, a science fiction writer in the parallel world publishes his own parallel world story based on the premise that the Axis had lost the Second World War. The parallel world of a parallel world is our world.

Most postmodernist futures, in other words, are grim dystopias – as indeed most science fiction worlds of the future have been in recent years. The motif of a world after the holocaust or some apocalyptic breakdown recurs. For instance, Angela Carter in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and Sam Shephard in his play *The Tooth of Crime* (1972) project similar visions of a future America that has disintegrated into an

anarchic landscape of warring private armies and desert marauders. Carlos Fuentes in *Terra nostra* (1975) imagines a world that has broken down under the pressure of the population explosion. Burroughs in *The Wild Boys* one that has regressed in the aftermath of the exhaustion of earth's fossil-fuel reserves. In particular, the topos of nuclear holocaust and its aftermath recurs; examples include *Gravity's Rainbow*, Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* (1969), Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980), Maggie Gee's *Dying, in Other Words* (1981), and, in a slightly displaced form, Christine Brooke-Rose's *Out* (1964).

Dystopias or Utopias, postmodernist worlds of the future typically employ the "zero degree" of temporal displacement, projecting a future time but without making any particular provision for bridging the temporal gap between present and future; that bridge is left for the reader to build. There are a few exceptions however. For instance, the topos of "future history" occurs in *The Twofold Vibration*, where in the early chapters Federman rather breathlessly reviews twentieth century history and "premembers" future developments as far as New Year's Eve, 1999. Temporal displacement through time-travel, like its spatial analogue, interplanetary flight, has been too closely identified with science fiction as such for postmodernist writers to be able to use it with much freedom. Only Burroughs, as might have been expected, makes much substantial use of it (in *The Soft Machine*, *The Wild Boys*, and especially *Cities of the Red Night*). Time-travel, for Burroughs, provides the fictional frame, the motivating alibi, for the slippages and segues

between one identity and another, one memory and another, one culture and another, which are staples of his writing. Time-travel also figures in Fuentes' *Terra nostra*. Here a late-twentieth-century Parisian travels back in time to Spain's Siglo de Oro, while interlopers from past times invade and overwhelm Paris in the closing days of the twentieth century. This influx of time-travelers goes well beyond the simple confrontation of present and future, or past and present, of most time-travel stories, approaching the extreme conflation of all epochs in such science fiction texts as Farmer's *Riverworld* tetralogy or Fritz Leiber's *The Big Time*.

Prose fiction is a temporal medium. It takes time for the reader of a novel to absorb its worlds, assimilate its concepts, and perceive its various elements. Characters are developed, and plots unfold in time like a symphony a novel changes from one moment to the next, and the development of a given passage depends on other passages that have preceded it.

Novelists have often manipulated a story's temporal unfolding by telling a tale out of chronological order, and in that way exploiting the tension among story, narrative, and the plot. Even in fictions characterized primarily by straightforward, continuous chronology, the time of reading is almost always at variance with the time the plot takes to unfold; almost all novels cover a longer period of time than the number of hours even a slow reader might take to finish the book.

In reading Billy Pilgrim's adventures we too become unstuck in time. From the Tralfamadorians he learns that all things from the beginning to the end of the universe exist in a sort of eternal present. They can look at time rather as one can scan a wide geographic panorama. Everything always 'is'. "There is no why".[43] This being the case everything that happens is exactly what has to happen. The moment always exists; it is structured exactly as it has to be structured. A motto which Billy brings from his life into his fantasy, or vice versa, reads: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom always to tell the difference."[44] But immediately afterwards he adds: "Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future."[45] Billy becomes completely quiescent, calmly accepting everything that happens as happening exactly as it ought to (including his own death). He abandons the worried ethical, tragical point of view of Western man and adopts a serene conscienceless passivity. If anything, he views the world aesthetically: every moment is a marvellous moment, and at times he beams at scenes in the war. Yet he does have breakdowns and is prone to fits of irrational weeping.

Here is the crucial moral issue of the novel. Billy Pilgrim is a professional optometrist. He spends his life on earth prescribing corrective lenses for people suffering from defects of vision. It is entirely in keeping with his calling. When he has learned to see time in an entirely new Tralfamadorian way, he should try to correct the whole

erroneous Western view of time, and explain to everyone the meaninglessness of individual death. Like most of Vonnegut's main characters he wants to communicate his new vision, and he does indeed manage to infiltrate into a radio programme to promulgate his message. He is, of course, regarded as mad. The point for us to ponder is, how are 'we' to regard his new vision? According to the Tralfamadorians, ordinary human vision is something so narrow and restricted that to convey them what it must be like they have to imagine a creature with a metal sphere round his head who looks down a long, thin pipe seeing only a tiny speck at the end. He cannot turn his head around and he is strapped to a flatcar on rails which goes in one direction. Billy Pilgrim's attempt to free people from that metal sphere, and teach them his own widened and liberated vision that may thus seem entirely desirable. But is the cost of conscience and concern for the individual life equally desirable? With his new vision, Billy does not protest about the Vietnam war, nor shudder about the effects of the bombing. The Tralfamadorians of his dreams advise him to "concentrate on the happy moments of his life, and to ignore the unhappy ones – to stare only at pretty things as eternity failed to go by."[46] The Tralfamadorian response to life is "guilt-free".[47] At one point, Billy Pilgrim thinks of a marvellous epitaph which, Vonnegut adds, would do for him too. "Everything was beautiful, and nothing hurt".[48]

Later in life when a man called Rumfoord is trying to justify the bombing of Dresden to him, Billy quietly reassures him. "It was all

right... 'Everything' is all right, and everybody has to do exactly what he does. I learned that on Tralfamadore".[49] Yet he still weeps quietly to himself from time to time. Is this a culpable moral indifference? In later life we see that Billy was simply unenthusiastic about living, while stoically enduring it, which may be a sign of the accidie which settles on a man with an atrophied conscience. From one point of view, it is important that man should still be capable of feeling guilt, and not fall into the sleep like Germany and Europe slept as eternity failed to go by in the thirties. Can one afford to ignore the ugly moments in life by concentrating on the happy ones? On the other hand, can one afford 'not' to? Perhaps the fact of the matter is that conscience simply cannot cope with events like the concentration camps and the Dresden air-raid, and the more general demonstration by the war of the utter valuelessness of human life. Even to try to begin to care adequately would lead to an instant and irrevocable collapse of consciousness. Billy Pilgrim, as Everyman, needs his fantasies to offset facts.

At one point, when he slips a bit in time he sees a war movie backwards. The planes have a magnetic power which shrinks the fires from the burning city and wraps them up in steel containers which are then lifted into the planes; the men on the ground have long tubes which suck the damaging fragments from wounded planes. It is a magic vision of restored wholeness -- "everything and everybody as good as new"[50] -- and as such it is the best possible justification for wanting to escape from linear time so that events can be read in any direction, and the tragedy of

"before and after"[51] transcendence. At the same time we are given some hints about the equivocal nature of Billy's escapism. No one can bear sleeping near Billy during the war because he creates such a disturbance while he is dreaming. "Everybody told Billy to keep the hell away".[52] One man even blames his death on Billy. Later, in the prison hospital, the man watching over him reads *The Red Badge of Courage* while Billy enters a "morphine paradise".[53] In *Cat's Cradle* the narrator admitted that there was little difference between a writer and a "drug salesman",[54] and while there is a kind of fiction which tries to awaken men to the horrors of reality (e.g. Crane's book), it is clear to Vonnegut that there are fantasies, written or dreamed, which serve to drug men to reality. When the reality is the Dresden fire-storm, then arguably some drugging is essential.

Vonnegut's view of things is essentially that of most modern scientists: that we live in an unimaginably vast cosmos which has existed for billions of years before life evolved on this planet and which will probably exist for billions of years after life is extinguished from here; that space and time themselves are relative, so that the human point of view alone makes people see the universe as they do; and that in particular the claims of various religions concerning God or the after life may serve a psychological function in human culture but are based on literally without any evidence whatsoever. In regard to his religious stance Vonnegut remarked that "my ancestors, who came to the United States a little before the civil war, were atheists. So I'm not rebelling

against organized religion. I never had any."[55] Philosophically, Vonnegut comes closest to existentialists like Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. As Peter J. Reed writes:

> No identifiable meaning or purpose to existence is presumed. The workings of the cosmos remain inscrutable. Where man comes from, why he is here, where he goes to, remain unanswerable. So man continues self-consciously alone, reluctant to accept the fact of his 'being' without knowing 'why', anxious to find reason, purpose, and order in the universe and in his relationship to it, but seeing instead only that things happen, unpredictably, pointlessly and often cruelly.[56]

Quite simply, for Vonnegut the universe does not appear to have been designed as a home for human beings. This is the reason that propels him to fantasize the real in his novels.

In his study, *The Exploded Form*, James Mellard argues that after writers began to incorporate the new understanding of Darwin into their fiction, the underlying notion for the nineteenth century novel became 'evolution'. The underlying notion of the modern novel, however, has shifted to the idea of 'explosion', as writers have turned to the big bang theory of the creation of the universe. While the nineteenth century novel typically "fostered growth, attachment, assimilation and integration", Mellard writes, the modern novel "presents decay, detachment, alienation, disintegration." Mellard lists John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Richard Brautigan, Robert Coover, William Gass, and Vonnegut as the principal postmodern creators of the "exploded" novel

form. In his 1980 study, Mellard was describing Vonnegut's metafictional novels of the 1960s and 70s; but he accurately predicted the change in Vonnegut's work in the 1980s when he suggested that the mode of fiction after writers had exhausted the literature of "explosion" in which traditional plotting, characterization, and thematic coherence were often abandoned – would "probably be a new realism". In fact, Vonnegut's career can be divided into three major phases: Science fiction, metafiction, and "neorealism".[57] All three are his attempts to map the anxiety of our age in a world of paradigm shifts.

But there are compensations for the anxiety of being human in Vonnegut's fiction. As Giannone observes, "out of a sense of helplessness before cosmic anarchy, Vonnegut turns to the formative power of art to restore himself".[58] As Vonnegut himself confesses, "Most of my adult life has been spent bringing some kind of order to sheets of papers eight and a half inches wide and eleven inches long. This severely limited activity has allowed me to ignore many a storm".[59] Beside artist figures Vonnegut's fiction is filled with other recurrent character types that reflect his thematic preoccupations.

In all the novels one finds unenlightened "straights" – naïve believers in the sanctity of their company, their country, their religion. While Vonnegut usually shows a great deal of sympathy for such characters, he always overturns their settled view of things by introducing a character from outside their situation who offers an anthropological critique of their beliefs. In the most extreme form, this

character is a visitor from outer space, like the Tralfamadorians in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. At other times, he is simply from another culture, or from another state of mind because of his experiences in extreme situations like madness or war. As he said in an interview, "It's a tremendous advantage to be at the edge ..., because you can make a better commentary than someone at the centre would".[60] The essence of that commentary is the understanding that systems of human belief always refer more to themselves than to the actual state of things in the cosmos. Beginning with his 1966 preface to *Mother Night*, Vonnegut has become more and more autobiographical with each novel. In a series of prologues to his recent fiction he has been explicitly so, drawing direct parallels between his fiction and his life.

At the end of the novel, spring has come to the ruins of Dresden, and when Billy is released from prison the trees are in leaf. He finds himself in a street which is deserted except for one wagon. "The wagon was green and coffin-shaped".[61] That composite image of regeneration and death summarizes all there is actually to be seen in the external world, as far as Vonnegut is concerned. The rest is fantasy, Cat's cradle, lies. In this masterly novel, Vonnegut has put together both his war novel and reminders of the fantasies which made up his previous novels.

The facts or realities which defy explanation are brought into the same frame with fictions beyond verification. The point at which fact and fiction intersect is Vonnegut himself, the experiencing, dreaming man who wrote the book. He is a lying messenger, but he acts on the

assumption that the telegrams must continue to be sent. Eliot Rosewater's cry to his psychiatrist, overheard by Billy Pilgrim, applies more particularly to the artist: "I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful 'new' lies, or people just aren't going to want to go on living."[62] Of course, they must also tell the truth, whatever that may be. Kafka's couriers could hardly be more confused. What Vonnegut has done, particularly in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, is to define with clarity and economy – and compassion – the nature and composition of that confusion.

The most significant feature of postmodernism evident in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is intertextuality, i.e. reference to an unusually large number of other texts. They range from fiction (Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*, Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, and the fictitious Kilgore Trout's *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension*) to documentary works (*The Bombing of Dresden, The Execution of Private Slovik, Extraordinary Delusion and the Madness of Crows*) to criticism. The deliberate proliferation of texts within the main text – intertextuality – is another device whereby the authenticity of the text, the New Critic's mode of viewing the text as sacrosanct, is sought to be undermined.

An interviewer asks Vonnegut, "Let's talk about the women in your books." To this the author replies, "There aren't any. No real women, no love". He further says: "I try to keep deep love out of my stories, because, once that particular subject comes up, it is almost impossible to talk about anything else. Reader's don't want to hear about

anything else. They go gaga about love. If a lover in a story wins his true love, that's the end of the tale, even if World War III is about to begin, and the sky is black with flying saucers".[63] He keeps away the subject of love from his story so that the story could go on and on and on. Regarding the plot, he says: "I guarantee you that no modern story scheme, even plotlessness, will give a reader genuine satisfaction, unless one of those old-fashioned plots is smuggled in somewhere. I don't praise plots as accurate representations of life, but as ways to keep readers reading. When I used to teach creative writing, I would tell the students to make their characters want something right away – even if it's only a glass of water. Characters paralysed by the meaninglessness of modern life still have to drink water from time to time. One of my students, wrote a story about a nun who got a piece of dental floss stuck between her lower left molars, and who couldn't get it out all day long. I thought that was wonderful. The story dealt with issues a lot more important than dental floss, but what kept readers going was anxiety about when the dental floss would finally be removed. Nobody could read that story without fishing around in his mouth with a finger. Now, there's an admirable practical joke for you. When you exclude plot, when you exclude anyone's wanting anything, you exclude the reader, which is mean-spirited thing to do. You can also exclude the reader by not telling him immediately where the story is taking place, and who the people are. And you can put him to sleep by never having characters confront each other. Students like to say that they stage no confrontations because people avoid confrontations in modern life.

'Modern life is so lonely', they say. This is laziness. It's the writer's job to stage confrontations, so the characters will say surprising and revealing things, and educate and entertain us all. If a writer can't or won't do that, he should withdraw from the trade."[64]

In 'staging comfrontations', as Vonnegut implies, a postmodern writer contextualizes both readerly and writerly anxieties, in that the writer gets hold of a piece of fact only to render it strange, fantastic.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Patricia Waugh, *Practising Postodernism Reading Modernism*, London, New York, Melbourne, Auckland: Routledge, 1992, p. 8.
2. Jerome Klinkowitz, *Kurt Vonnegut*, London, New York: Methuen, 1982, p. 69.
3. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1969, p. 26. Hereafter this novel will be referred to as *SF* only.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
5. Quoted in Kurt Vonnegut's *Mother Night* in its cover, New York, Dell Publishing Co., 1961.
6. Resourced from the Internet: Web Page on the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
7. James Lundquist (quoted). *Kurt Vonnegut*, (New York: Ungar, 1977), p. 71.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
9. *SF*, p.
10. James Lundquist (quoted). *Kurt Vonnegut*, (Cited above), p. 73.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
12. In his letter to George and Tom Keats, 21, 27(?) December 1817, John Keats *Letters of John Keats*, edited by Robert Gittings, (Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX26DP, 1970), p. 43.
13. James Lundquist (quoted), *Kurt Vonnegut* (Cited above), p. 74.

14. *SF*, pp. 2-3.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 4..
18. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
25. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, London & New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1984, p. 6.
26. "Postface: 1980", *Literary Disruptions*, 2nd ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980, p. 197.
27. William Rodney Allen (Ed.), *Conversations With Kurt Vonnegut*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988, p. 48. Hereafter this book will be referred to as *CKV* only.
28. James Lundquist, *Kurt Vonnegut*, (New York: Ungar, 1976), p. 71.
29. *SF*, p. 109.
30. *CKV*., p. 230.
31. *SF*., p. 17.
32. *CKV*., p. 163.

33. *SF.*, p. 4.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
38. *Ibid.*, on the sub-title page.
39. Peter Bary, *Beginning Theory*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 87.
40. *SF.*, p. 1.
41. Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, pp. 71-2; Mark Rose, *Alien Encounters: Anatomy of Science Fiction*, Cambridge, Mass; and London, Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 26-7.
42. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths", in *Ficciones*, Trans. Anthony Kerrigan, New York: Grove Press, 1962, p. 100.
43. *SF.*, p. 66.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 179
48. *Ibid.*, p. 106
49. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 64
51. *Ibid.*, p. 126
52. *Ibid.*, p. 68
53. *Ibid.*, p. 85

54. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *Cat's Cradle*, New York: Delacorte Press, 1963.
55. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *Palm Sunday*: An Autobiographical Collage, London: Granada, 1981, p. 204.
56. Peter J. Reed, *Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.* New York: Warner, 1972, p. 206.
57. James Mellard, *The Exploded Form*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980, pp. 11, 16, 22.
58. William Rodney Allen (quoted), *Understanding Kurt Vonnegut*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991, p. 11.
59. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage*. (Cited above), p. 321.
60. *CKV*, p. 299.
61. *SF.*, p. 186.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
63. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical College*, (Cited above), p. 109.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

*****

CHAPTER - V

REPRESENTING THE UNREALITY OF REALITY – POSTMODERNISM AND ITS NARRATIVE STRATEGY

One of the difficulties of any discussion about realism is the lack of any effective vocabulary with which to discuss the topic. Most discussions turn on the problems of the production of discourse that will adequately explain the conceptual foundations of the real. This notion of adequacy is accepted both by the realists and indeed by the anti-realists whose main argument is that no discourse can ever be adequate to the multifarious nature of the real.[1]

Fiction as a literary *genre* in fact is identified with the tradition of realism. Starting from its formative stage, realism has been one of the most dominant determining characteristics of the novel. As a recognizable literary mode, realistic fiction writing started in the 18th century with the works of Defoe and Fielding, but as a literary convention it triumphed during the 19th century under the double influence of the growth of science and philosophical rationalism. The critical conventions of humanism and Marxism further consolidated the dominance of realistic fiction during the 20th century. Realism in the humanist tradition is provisionally related to bourgeois realism in which the novel is intimately associated with life in its individualist mode, originating from the bourgeois world view and in the social placement of characters. On the contrary, Marxist view emphasizes 'social realism', central to class struggle. With the emergence of modernism, fiction lost to a considerable extent the secured sense of reality of the 19th century.

Modernism affected the linear development of the events and represented everything as discontinuous. Abstract expressionism by breaking up narrative continuity, representing characters in modes contrary to the traditional standards, modernist fiction assimilated such writers as Dostoevesky, Mann, Joyce, Kafka, Woolf and Faulkner back into a spirit of 'relative realism'. The novel, in the hands of the modernist novelists, as Malcolm Bradbury maintains, turned inward with its emphasis on formal and symbolist resources. However, during the 1950s, French writers of the 'new novel' (*La nouveau roman*). Natalie Saurraute, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor seeking to intensify our awareness of 'reality' argued that we now know so much of the complexity of human personality that the characters of earlier realist novelists such as Balzac's appear today too simplified and artificial. It was Robbe-Grillet who in fact contested strongly the claims of realism and maintained that realistic story-telling has falsified the world of objects by humanizing them.

J. Hillis Miller in his essay "The Figure in the Carpet" explores the twin concepts of 'continuity and completeness' in trying to establish linkages in fictional representation. Examining the Jamesian framework of the realist novel, Miller feels that it is not self-referentiality which subverts the assumptions and procedures of realistic fiction, since self-reference is still reference and therefore is assimilable into the assumptions of mimetic representation. He further argues that the Anglo-American study of the novel has been caught up in a false assumption of mimetic representationalism.[2] The claim of self-referentiality is in fact an understanding of its mirror image of extra-referentiality. It is in this sense

the realistic novel couches in it something other than the so-called real. This position is further consolidated by the new novel in its resistance to the norms of the 19th century novel in asking questions about consciousness and interior experience. In this perspective truth is relativized and hitherto ontological assumptions regarding the fiction are challenged.

As we enter into a heterocosm the multiple worlds of the contemporary fiction – we move through provisional suppositions, a technique that requires suspension of belief as well as of disbelief. Thus the emerging novel grounds itself in an ontological landscape that allows mediations and creates subuniverses of meaning. The ontological landscape is complex, a jigsaw puzzle of jostling world views, or different social classes, castes, religious sects, occupations, etc. Well below the threshold of conceptualization, however, lies the shared social reality of every day life. While this shared reality constitutes the common ground of interaction among the members of a society, these same members also experience a multiplicity of private or peripheral realities: dreaming, play, fiction, and so on.[3] The postmodern fictions while exploring the private and peripheral realities, do contest some of the assumptions about realism that have been consolidated in a shared or universalist discourse. This perspective provides the basis for conceptualization of a proposition like the 'unreality of reality' that postmodern fiction represents employing different narrative strategies.

Postmodern literature is a literature that registers the dissolution of traditional literary values, Romantic as well as Modern. In the words of Richard Poirier:

> Contemporary literature has come to register the dissolution of ideas often evoked to justify its existence: the cultural, moral, psychological premises that for many people still define the essence of literature as a humanistic enterprise. Literature is in the process of telling us how little it means.[4]

What makes up the postmodernist art in general is a common commitment to an apocalyptic view of the world, arising out of a sense of what Erick Heller describes as 'the loss of significant external reality' (which in turn results from a changed perception of 'reality') and the consequent futility of traditional ways of making sense of the world. This has led to the Postmodern artist's refusal to take art seriously and to his use of art itself as a vehicle for destroying its traditional pretensions. Thus Barth's *The End of the Road* seeks to demonstrate 'mythotherapy' as a failed strategy and points to the end of the road for myth and metaphor as the Moderns understood it. In his novel *Snow White*, Barthelme deploys a Modernist device but only to subvert it. Henry James, the father of Modern Poetics of fiction, has this advice for the prospective writer: 'Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost'. Now in the following passage, Barthelme parodies it:

> "Try to be a man about whom nothing is known", our father said, when we were young. Our father said several other interesting things, but we have forgotten what they were ... Our father was a man about whom nothing was known. Nothing is known about him still. He gave us the recipes. He was not very interesting. A tree is more interesting. A suitcase is more interesting. A canned good is more interesting.[5]

Here Barthelme inverts the Jamesian assumptions about character, psychology and the authority of the artist. In his fiction, character like

any other external reality is something about which nothing is known, lacking in discernible motive or discoverable depth. James had laid stress on the importance of artistic selection and ordering and on the duty of the artist to order his material so as to render it interesting. Barthelme subverts these principles by injecting a law of equivalence whereby nothing is more interesting than anything else. Such a device undermines the importance of artistic selection and regards canned goods as legitimate artistic subject matter on par with human beings. Postmodernist art in general takes its impetus from an extreme reaction to the world we live in this world or reality is so extraordinary, horrific or absurd that the traditional mode of mimesis or realistic emulation will no longer suffice. Ours is indeed a world of altered human relationships, of epistemological scepticism, of high technology and strange and distorted history, of an anarchic and revolutionary subjectivism and a disoriented sense of human purpose. Many a contemporary artist, therefore, feels that there is no point in creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life itself seems so illusory.

Besides fabulation and non-fiction novel, which are the more radical forms of Postmodernism, there is the novel about itself or the problematic novel. Writers hesitating to take the radical path to fabulation or reportage, sometimes build this very hesitation into the text. Whereas the fabulator is discontented with reality, and the non-fiction novelist is impatient with fiction, the problematic novelist is loyal to both but is diffident of reconciling them and makes the problematic nature of his undertaking his subject matter. What is more, he makes the reader

participate in the aesthetic and philosophical problems that the writing of fiction presents today.

It will be now apparent that the classification of Postmodernist fictions into fabulation, reportage and the problematic novel proves tentative, for a good many of them can fit in into more than one category, depending on which aspects of the text the emphasis is placed. Thus *Slaughterhouse-Five* is not only a fabulation based on science fiction but is also a collage of factual reporting and fantasy writing as well as a novel in which the conventional distance between the text and the world is sought to be destroyed. Take for instance, the last scene of the book - Billy is in a latrine in a German prison camp:

> An American near Billy wailed that he had excreted everything but his brains. Moments later he said, 'There they go, there they go'. He meant his brains.
>
> That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book.[6] (86)

Further it can also be noticed that many a postmodernist writer often tries his hand at more than one of the categories e.g., Mailer, Barth.

Similarly, it is difficult to say whether Pynchon's fictions are fabulations or problematic novel. Perhaps they are both. His *Gravity's Rainbow* for instance, which Fiedler finds too arty and therefore, not pop, because it is reflexive and auto-destruct, was on the best-seller list in America for quite some time. Malcolm Bradbury has rightly remarked, since World War II, 'the novel does indeed seem to have become, in criticism, the exemplary literary object displacing the poem, and, to a

lesser extent,' the play,' compelling criticism to grant it the primacy of attention that Henry James has for long claimed for it.

The phenomenon of Postmodernism has been global. The narrative is a sombre philosophical meditation on the universe as a labyrinth, an image of the possible proliferation of varying realities in time as well as in space. In Postmodernism there is a new liking for fragmented forms, discontinuous narrative, and random-seeming collages of disparate materials. Finally, there was a rejection of traditional realism (chronological plots, continuous narratives relayed by omniscient narrators, 'closed endings', etc.) in favour of experimental forms of various kinds:

> If you were to bother to read my books, to behave as educated persons would, learn that they are not sexy, and do not argue in favor of wildness of any kind. They beg that people be kinder and more responsible than they often are. It is true that some of the characters speak coarsely. That is because people speak coarsely and even our most sheltered children know that. And we all know that those words really didn 't damage children much. They didn't damage us when we were young. It was evil deeds and lying that hurt us.[8]

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) has turned out to be one of the most popular fictions of the postwar period. And the popularity is due, in a large measure, to the fact that it has drawn heavily on the repertoire of science fiction. The myth informing the text is the myth of voyage into space. The supportive myth is that of unconventional sex. Hence the disquisition about the so called 'seven sexes on earth, each essential to reproduction' etc. If the science fiction

portions of the text cater to the contemporary reader's avidity for fantasy, those relating to World War II leave a deep impression of the horrors of war on the reader's mind. Some such scenes are: the one in which the elderly Big Derby is shot dead for stealing a teapot from among the cinders of Dresden! (Ironically pilgrim has managed to bring home a diamond as war booty) that in which a pole is hanged for having had sex with a German woman; the one in which soldiers, unable to remove the rotting dead bodies from houses and buildings, rush in, remove the jewels, rush out, and throw fire in etc. It is Vonnegut's clever juxtaposition of fantasy and near-factual reportage that has, as it were, redeemed *Slaughterhouse-Five* from being a mere science fantasy fiction.

Lionell Trilling has remarked that we do not tell each other stories any more, in the traditional sense, that is. But a novelist needs to unfold his narrative in time. The Postmodern novelist or writer therefore employs diverse strategies in this regard. *Slaughterhouse-Five* bears little resemblance to the traditional novel: there is nothing of the linear movement of the narrative. There is no intricate plot, crying for resolution. Instead the reader confronts a narrative wherein scenes of war and scenes of science fiction are flashed before him. And the narrative itself slides from the one to the other and vice versa. In his use of this technique of science presentation in lieu of linearity, Vonnegut has striven to render his art truly contemporary.

In postmodern writings, we see that people are always striving to recruit us to their games or movies or roles, their version of what is real. We are, most of the time, trapped in 'imposed' language, versions of reality, and roles of existence: are fixed in rigid structures. It is healthy

therefore to step out of all this into some kind of free space. Postmodernist literature is time and again described as 'apocalyptic', that is, as a literature that registers the dissolution of narrative, self and represented world. In *The Crying of Lot 40* we witness the narrative breaking down and the represented world dissolving. The reader witnesses objects and even historical figures being reduced to mere linguistic phenomena, shorn of any authentic existence, past or present. 'The historical Shakespeare ... The historical Marx. The historical Jesus'. '... they're dead. What is left?' 'Words'.[9] Pynchon shows language as breaking down. He is a prophet of double entropy: thermodynamic and communication. Not only is this world, as averred by physicists, heading towards heat-death but is also on a headlong rush towards a dead end of communication and inter-subjectivity. Pynchon's *Lot 49* is illustrative of the following features of postmodernist fiction, too: interpolation of verse in the form of song, intertextuality, preference for the colloquial to the formal language, and inclusion of a large body of scientific information. It is in these respects that these fictions have caught the rhythm of contemporary American life. Just like Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Pynchon's *Lot 49* also undermines the authenticity of the text. If this is disconcerting to the reader, *Lot 49* has an answer: 'It was written to entertain people, like horror movies. It is not literature. It doesn't mean anything'.[10]

The protagonists of the Postmodern fiction are a distraught ex-soldier (pilgrim), a hallucinating housewife (Oedipa), a 'psychopath' (McMurphy), a pervert (Humbert) and a transvestite (Myra). The typical Postmodern hero is hopelessly sick and is unsure if he has a self of his

own to speak about. Billy Pilgrim is so sick of life that he allows his comrades to kick him about as they please. At one point, a target of German soldiers shooting from hide-outs, he lingers for a few seconds more on the middle of the road giving them a second chance to shoot him dead. Humbert is a maniac, or rather monomaniac, and sure needs psychiatric care and curing. Lolita is a pathetic victim of the culture in which she is brought up and 'educated'. (For that matter it can be said nearly every human figure we find in these fictions is the flotsam and jetsam that American culture throws up). Consequently a good number of postmodern protagonists give a strong impression of being mere role players. They are more often than not formless performers and cardboard cut-outs with no Forsterian roundness about them. Each has patterned his or herself on this or that celluloid hero or comic book Zombie or cowboy. The narrator in *Myra Breckinridge* can comprehend a gesture, an action, even the look of any human being, including herself, only after she can find an analogue for it in those of her favourite screen heroes or heroines. Having donned a cowboy cap and adopted the mannerisms of a superman, McMurphy increasingly feels obliged to stick to the role of the Zombie and play it right up to the end. (He exhibits determination and verve to achieve his goal – to liberate the inmates. In this respect McMurphy is admittedly more than a typical postmodern protagonist).

It is often remarked that there is an absence of psychological growth or causation in the human figures of postmodernist literature. But then, given their experience of contemporary reality, many writers feel they can yield to us only a post-humanist model of man. The hero of the postmodern novel feels like:

> 'a human something floating about in a universal culture medium'. His existence is negative because he has been completely available to others, to causes, to events, and forces, as if he were a kind of liquid capital. He is extremely disposable .... (His self is) constructed of standard materials according to a few efficient methods.[11]

He is like a dog engulfed in quicksand, caught at the moment before the head, too, disappears. The protagonist of *Under the Volcano* dies feeling like a dog. 'Somebody threw a dog after him down the ravine' – is the last sentence of the novel, as if the shame of it was meant to outlive him. As W. Sypher says, Hiroshima and concentration camps have once for all destroyed the Promethean image of man. Sypher also notes two ironies: a liberalist culture, such as the American, which sprung from the ideal of a free self, has ended up by granting the self only a statistical existence. Second, individualism has indeed been abandoned on both sides of the iron curtain. If, then, one finds the Postmodern novel a dehumanized text, corresponding to the dehumanized painting, where most of the traditional human preoccupations and emotions are conspicuous by their absence, it may be that the absences are significant and that what is displaced from the text is more significant than what is actually placed there and that the Postmodern art would draw our attention to what is missing.

The postmodernist writing emerging from the terrible social disruption of the West, attempted to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the 'meaninglessness' of existence and the underlying 'abyss' or 'void', or 'nothingness' on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended.[12] William Burroughs belongs to the group of Beat writers and Beat movement that forms an important component of

postmodernist movement. His *Naked Lunch* is an important Beat achievement in its breathless, chanted celebration of the down-and-out and the subculture of drug addicts, social misfits, and compulsive wanderers, as well as in its representation of the derangement of the intellect that affected the senses by a combination of sexual abandon, drugged hallucinations and religious ecstasies.

Naked Lunch underlines a reality that is supposedly unreal for our conventional understanding. It confirms to Michel Foucault's discourse of madness that underlines the fact that madness is constructed socially as prohibitive, tabooed and unsocial. The whole discourse in fact deflects upon the conventional understanding of things and helps us to understand the real-real. The pertinent question here is how does one define the real. The real conventionally has been defined and understood as something concretely available, socially acceptable and manifestly conventional. The postmodern novelists interrogate this position and takes us beyond the conventionality to an understanding of things which are self-reflexive and underpins the manifestation of unreal as real and the invisible as visible. The so-called new novel is couched in a theoretical projection of Postmodernism that the accepted reality is an illusion. We understand reality as something concrete through which we order our experience. The Postmodern view deconstructs this position and asserts that reality is simulated. Therefore, it is a mode of simulacrum.

John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, Richard Brautigan, Robert Coover, Ishmael Reed, Jerzy Kosinski, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., William Gass and Donald Barthelme are those novelists, who deliberately, opposed the literary tendencies and traditions of modernism and ushered in a new

wave of writing labelled as postmodern fiction. They interrogated the concepts; the concepts of reality, truth and accepted belief(s). They also began to challenge the terms that define modernist fiction, that is to say, the element of description – representation of social reality and social language, and the formalism (stream of consciousness, interior monologue, psychological depth, and syncopated syntax) associated to the inscription of the subject into a text. As we look back on Modernism (that is to say, the fiction that goes from Flaubert to Joyce, and beyond that in America, from Dreiser to Bellow), it appears today as a coherent movement for which a theory can be formulated. The same, cannot however, be said of Postmodernism.

A common element in the bewilderingly diverse range of theoretical postmodernisms is a recognition and account of the way in which the 'grand narratives' of Western history have broken down. Without such metanarratives (God, history as purposefully unfolding immanent dialectic, Reason), history itself becomes a plurality of 'islands of discourse', a series of metaphors which cannot be detached from the various institutionally produced languages which we bring to bear upon it (Foucault), or a network of agnostic 'language games' where the criteria are those of performance not truth (Lyotard). The implication of this is that 'truth' cannot be distinguished from 'fiction' and that the aesthetic, rather than disappearing, has actually incorporated everything else into itself. For the philosopher Richard Rorty, therefore, we should embrace the potential this offers to us to reshape our world by abandoning altogether an outworn rhetoric of metaphysical truth. Instead of seeing knowledge through the image of mind as mirror of eternal truths, a

'Glassy Essence', we should see it 'as a matter of conversation and of social practice' and thus 'We will not be likely to envisage a metapractice which will be the critique of all possible forms of social practice'.[13] In a more recent book, Rorty extends this insight to the view that literature, rather than philosophy, can more usefully provide the model for a new form of social knowledge, for 'a poeticised culture would be one which would not insist we find the real wall behind the painted ones, the real touchstones of truth as opposed to touchstones which are merely cultural artefacts.'[14]

Instead of trying to rebuild the collapsing foundations of Western knowledge we should rather concentrate our energies on refurbishing the interior. And poets and novelists, who have always dealt with the contingencies of 'style' and human particularity rather than the universal absolutes of systematic 'truth', may be the philosophers of the future. Their modes of irony and contingency may come to provide the possibility of imaginative expansion of human sympathy and empathy as a basis for that social and political solidarity no longer available in the philosophical, historical or religious grand narratives of the past. Though 'postmodern' in its emphasis on irony and contingency and in its critique of analytic philosophy, Rorty's vision of the aesthetic as the basis for a new social consensus is, however, hardly a radical departure from a firmly established tradition of Western aesthetics running from the work of Schelling through Arnold to cultural pessimist from Theodor Adorno to T. S. Eliot. In seeking to understand Postmodernism, in particular, art must illuminate theory as well as theory offer conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches to art. We must regard Postmodernism firstly

as a mood or style of thought which privileges aesthetic modes over those of logic or method; secondly as an aesthetic practice with an accompanying body of commentary upon it; and thirdly as a concept designating a cultural epoch which has facilitated the rise to prominence of such theoretical and aesthetic styles and which may or may not constitute a break with previous structures of modernity.

Postmodernism is not simply a mode of counter-Enlightenment, it is, fundamentally, a late modern Romanticism. Philosophically, each orientation has been expressed in ways most relevant to the postmodern debate by Nietzsche (whose radical fictionality can be traced back to Coleridge and forward to Wallace Stevens or Thomas Pynchon or critics such as Ihab Hassan and Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*) on the one hand, and Heidegger (whose concept of situatedness or Being-in-the-world connects Wordsworth with writers such as Charles Olson or critics such as Susan Sontag) on the other. Postmodern theory itself increases our self-conscious awareness of the proliferation of little narratives as it implicitly substitutes itself in the place of those overarching grand narratives which provided the framework for Romantic thought. One can see it as a foundationalism of the aesthetic which was always, in fact, implicit in Romantic thought. Romanticism and Postmodernism both articulate a critique of Enlightenment faith in the purely rational. In each there is a recognition of the aesthetic as a mode which can create new realities by circumventing the conceptual in an attempt to integrate body with intellect. Art is autonomous only in the sense that it is a different kind of discourse from the ratiocinative, involving body as well as intellect.

Jameson lists the features of Postmodernism as the death of the subject, the culture of the simulacrum, the proliferation of art, copies without originals, textuality, loss of historicity (as a sense of teleological linear time), pastiche. All these are attempts to deny depth and to embrace surface, but Jameson uses them as a framework supplying precisely that depth without which he could not theoretically contextualize his random list of historical events. Jameson effectively shares the view of the Postmodern as a response to the exhaustion of the Romantic/Modernist claim to aesthetic autonomy and to the realist notion of art mirroring a world outside the text. Postmodernism is a crisis in the belief in the possibility of authentic self-expression or objective representation. Like Postmodern theory, postmodern art tends to mediate a sense of multiplicity, fragmentation, instability of meaning, dissensus, the breakdown of grand theories as either narratives of emancipation or speculation.

Salman Rushdie has said that the 'triple disruption of reality' experienced by migrants, teaches that 'reality is an artefact, that it does not exist until it is made and that, like any other artefact, it can also be made well or badly and that it can also, of course, be unmade'.[15] It is a statement of the positive as well as negative implications for post-colonial people of an aesthetics and politics of Postmodern fictionality. Because it offers no stable condition of identity, however, not even one of critique, it may therefore amount to no more than another demonstration of the postmodern capitulation to performative pragmatism and the easy (freemarket) pluralism of Late Capitalism. It may represent a negative or passive nihilism as much as a positive or

active one. For some critics, therefore, postmodernism represents an irresponsible ethical relativism, for others, an open-minded refusal to impose exclusive dogmas or espouse a naïve rhetoric of liberation. It is possible to offer a negative evaluation of the celebration of artifice, pluralistic narrative voices, self-reflexive narcissism, viewing them as the endorsement of a rapacious capitalism and as another manifestation of the culture of the simulacrum. Alternatively, one could view the postmodern emphasis on the power of language and signs to construct the real, as a positive image of the potential capacity of the human imagination to reshape the ostensibly fixed material world of history in order to reformulate and produce new and more humane identities for the human beings in it. Postmodernism, on the one hand, represents a transformation of the Romantic faith in imagination, and on the other, exists as an ideological weapon of capitalism inuring us to a tawdry world of commercial image.

Whereas modernist techniques foreground questions like 'How do I interpret this world?' Postmodern ones raise questions like 'which world is this?', leading to meditations upon the possible existence of multiple worlds. Postmodernism does not believe in foundation. In its anti-foundationalism, postmodern theory always involves a critique of philosophical mirror theories of truth. One can see postmodern literature engaged in the same process through its refutation or at least re-examination of the epistemological grounds of Realism and its linguistic forms. This is another way of perceiving the connections between Postmodern theory and literature and of approaching the complex issue of value. Realism in literature is normally understood as the expression

of a belief in a commonly experienced phenomenological world. In a realist fiction, a variety of points of view may be expressed, but as part of a controlled pluralism where no single voice is allowed to challenge the authority of omniscience recognized as the voice of commonsense or of the 'sensus communis'. What seems to follow from this presupposition is that the language of Realism must therefore appear 'transparent', a window onto a reality it simply reflects. Contradictory voices must be suppressed or found accommodation within the greater whole. The conventionality of narrative must be disguised so that the projected world appears to be reflected world, an extension of the commonly experienced world outside the text. Language here functions simply as a medium through which reality can be transcribed and re-presented in aesthetic form, and reality, even if only apprehensible in the deep structures of world, transcends any verbal formulation of it. Certainly, much postmodernist fiction ostentatiously explores the limits of realist convention.

Postmodern fictions, like its theories, do play with fictionality in ways which challenge ontological and epistemological certainty. A realist text such as Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, for example, clearly does not. Austen's textual manipulation which plays off the perspectivism of free indirect discourse against the objectivity of dramatic scene and dialogue, exposes Emma's ethical and perceptual limitations by establishing a secure foundation from which to judge her behaviour. Throughout the novel, Austen is preoccupied with issues about the difficulty of interpretation and critical judgement: the nature of the connection between social manners and ethical foundations, the social determinants

of class, gender, urban and rural values. And no character sees whole even Mr. Knightly is prejudiced by feeling and limitations of situation. But *Emma* is clearly not postmodern: there is a correct way of seeing, manners appear at times provisional, but are actually the social expression of permanent and lasting values; consistency of character is not only desirable as the basis of moral action, but actually attainable if one works for it through extension of sympathies and resistance to the attraction of arrogant social presumption. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to read *Emma* as a postmodern fiction. In this sense, Lodge is right to see Realism as a concept which is not entirely elastic.

There are many possible constructions of postmodernism, however, this does not mean that all constructs are equally interesting or valuable, or that we are unable to choose among them, postmodernism is a discursive construct. Postmodernist fiction does hold the mirror up to reality, but that reality now more than ever before, is plural. The postmodernists fictionalize history, but by doing so they imply that history itself may be a form of fiction. In postmodernist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming fictional and fiction becoming "true" history – and the real world seems to get lost in the shuffle. But of course this is precisely the question postmodernist fiction is designed to raise: real, compared to what? Postmodernist fiction, if critics such as John Gardner, Gerald Graff, and Charles Newman are to be believed,[16] is morally bad art, and tends to corrupt its readers. It does so by denying external, objective reality. There was a time when denying the reality of the outside world could be seen as a bold gesture of resistance, a refusal to acquiesce in a coercive

"bourgeois" order of things. But that time has passed, and nowadays everything in our culture tends to deny reality and promote unreality, in the interests of maintaining high levels of consumption. It is no longer official reality which is coercive, but official unreality, and postmodernist fiction, instead of resisting this coercive unreality, acquiesces in it, or even celebrates it.

Postmodernist fiction, Gerald Graff tells us, manifests "a consciousness so estranged from objective reality that it does not even recognize its estrangement as such."[17] And, Charles Newman adds, "The vaunted fragmentation of art is no longer an aesthetic choice: it is simply a cultural aspect of the economic and social fabric."[19] According to this view, Postmodernist fiction has become just another part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. These are serious charges, and need to be answered. They are all the more serious for having come from critics sophisticated enough to know not to identify reality simplistically with the conventions of nineteenth century realism.

It is too late in the day, even for those who are most nostalgic for unproblematic mimesis, to recommend a return to the fiction of Austen, Balzac, Tolstoy, George Eliot. Everyone knows now that the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction were just that, conventions, and not a transparent window on reality, and that there are other, equally legitimate means of getting access to the real besides Victorian realism. Or rather, these critics are sophisticated enough not to openly recommend a return to the nineteenth century. However, the more one probes their critical assumptions, the more it appears that Victorian realism is, after all, the norm against which they have measured postmodernist fiction and found

it wanting. Both Graff and Gardner, for example, generously allow the legitimacy of fantastic and non-realistic methods. But there is a catch. Graff writes:

> The critical problem – not always attended to by contemporary critics – is to discriminate between anti-realistic works that provide some true understanding of non-reality and those which are merely symptoms of it.[19]

In practice, this turns out to mean that the only acceptable antirealistic writing is antirealism that implies a nostalgia for a lost order and coherence – for instance, in Borges, Gide or Musil – or antirealism in the service of social satire – for instance, in Barthelme. In other wods, writing is acceptably antirealistic only if it stands in some fairly explicit and direct relation to a form of realism where this relation becomes more distant or oblique, as in science fiction, Graff withholds his imprimatur.[20]

There is no denying that "unreal reality" is a recurrent theme and object of representation in postmodernist fiction. It is the theme of postmodernism's revisionist approach to history and historical fiction, and of postmodernism's incorporation of television and cinematic representations as a level interposed between us and reality. But if this were postmodernist fiction's only object of representation, then Graff would be justified in wondering whether this does not make postmodernism as much a symptom of unreality as a representation of it. In fact, the "unreality of reality" is not the only tune that postmodernist fiction can play, and postmodernism is not as fully the creature of the contemporary "crisis of reality" as Graff says it is postmodernist fiction

may be antirealistic, but antirealism is not its sole object of representation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Colin Mac Case. "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses" in Rice and Waugh (eds.), *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*. London: Edward Arnold, 1994, p. 134.
2. J. Hillis Miller. "The Figure in the Carpet" in Rice and Waugh (eds.), *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, p. 177.
3. Brian McHale. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London, New York: Routledge, 1987, p. 36.
4. Gerald Graff, *The Myth of the Post-Modernist Breakthrough:* in *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, Grasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1977, p. 219.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
6. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade: Duty-Dance Faith Death.* New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1969, p. 109.
7. Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel*, London: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 10.
8. A. Sebastian Dravyam Pillai (as quoted by*) Post-Modernism: An Introduction*, Tiruchirapalli, India: Theresa Publications, 1991, p. 47.
9. Thomas Pynchon. *The Crying of Lot 49*, Philadelphia: Lippincott, J.B., 1966, p. 104.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
11. Wylie Sypher. *Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art*, (New York, 1962), p. 10.

12. M. H. Abrams. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Prism Books Pvt. Ltd., Basa Vanagudi, Bangalore: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1993, p. 120.
13. Richard Rorty. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980, p. 17.
14. Richard Rorty. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 52.
15. Patricia Waugh (quoted), *Practising Postmodernism Reading Modernism*, London, New York, Melbourne, Auckland: London, Routledge, 1992, p. 53.
16. John Gardner. *On Moral Fiction*, (New York, Basic Books, 1978); Gerald Graff, *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society*, (Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 1979); Charles Newman, "The Post-Modern Aura: the act of fiction in an age of Inflation", in *Salmagundi* 63-4 (Spring-Summer 1984), 3-199.
17. Gerald Graff. *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society*, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1979, p. 208.
18. Newman. "The Post-Modern Aura: The act of fiction in an age of Inflation", in *Salmagundi* (Spring-Summer 1984), p. 183.
19. Graff. *Literature Against Itself*, (Cited above), p. 12.
20. On Borges, Graff. *Literature Against Itself*, 55-6; on Gide and Musil, 211-12. For Graff's Justification of Postmodernist Satire, including Barthelme, 224-39; for negative views on science fiction, pp. 74-5, and 99-100 are important.

*****

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

As a discourse, postmodernism in its theoretical formation has been constituted in a critique of the foundational assumptions of Enlightened modernity. Such a critique has nullified any transcendental view of the world and held suspect claims of objective truth and authoritative version of the 'real'. With an altered notion of the 'real' postmodern literary representation has followed practics of fragmentation and playful self-reflexivity in underlining a shift in thought and interpretation. The theoretical debate that informs the changing concept of 'reality' has become central to contemporary fictional narratives. Such narratives have explored the contours of alternative realities and have exploded the myth of the objective reality. As McHale maintains: "nowadays every thing in our culture tends to deny reality and promote unreality."[1] It appears that 'unreality of reality' is not only an imaginative construct instead is the very condition of our lives today.

Postmodernist fiction underlines the fact that neither imitation nor mirroring is the possible relation between the fictional world and reality. As a new genre it writes back home implying that it represents *a* universe, not *the* universe in that it can describe about *any* universe. "In other words, to "do" ontology in this perspective is not necessarily to seek some grounding *for* our universe; it might just as appropriately involve describing *other* universes, including a "possible" or even "impossible" universes – not least of all the other universe, or heterocosm, of fiction."[2] Taking an antirealist stance, Postmodernist fiction posits its representational ethos in a conceptual frame that is posthumanist. It

interrogates the postulates of the realist fiction that attempts to represent a world in which value has no distinct ontological status, and in which human meaning is perceived to reside in the unending and indissoluble tension between self and society.[3]

As discussed in the previous chapters, it is clear that the genre of postmodernist fiction performs on the principle that story-telling cannot be eliminated, but it becomes playful and ironic, as if the text itself had lost control in relation to the mirror where life is decided by a kind of technical absurdity, where the characters have no other substance than their fictitious personalities since they exist as verbal beings. The novelists discussed in this dissertation illustrate the fact that reality is but a fraudulent verbal network. As history and the subject are the two faces of an immense force, the postmodernist novelists mock at the official discourse and official images of historical events. The subject himself, that is to say the protagonists of these novels, seem to be searching for a missing coherence in their lives and actions. Thus the crucial question raised by the postmodern fiction is the question of representation, since the line between the real and imaginary has been erased. "In a world where the referential element itself is denounced as a mere electronic image, the question of historical truth, of historical credibility, but also the question of the stability of the real, as well as the psychic depth of the subject, are no longer valid."[4]

Emerging out of such a ferment that dismisses old certitudes about character, plot and events and embraces 'uncertainty' as the central principle of representation, the fictions of William Burrough, Thomas

Pynchon, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. indeed inaugurate in America the tradition of the untraditional postmodern fiction. William Burroughs writes in *Naked Lunch*: "The word cannot be expressed, it can perhaps be indicated by mosaic of juxtapositions, like objects abandoned in a hotel room, defined by negatives and absence."[5] Such a perception has shaped his work in that he has incorporated the incongrous and even the incompatible as opposed to the type of fiction based on metaphoric and symbolic representation of reality. Burroughs attempts to subvert the practice of coherence and logic in a narrative strategy that verges upon Schizophrenia. Language in Burroughs' narrative takes the form of antilanguage. Antilanguage is developed through systematic transformation of the standard language and its world view. It creates in effect an "anti-world-view", a counter-reality of its own. In addition to the narrative devices employed, the reader is solicited to be part of the 'unreal' – the hypodiegetic worlds. Among the devices that involves the reader is the device of the missing end-frame: dropping down to an embedded narrative level that breaks down hierarchies and creates an illusion of the real that – dream like or nightmarish.

For Burroughs, the text itself is never innocent. The literary discourse and the words which make that discourse dialectically follow a process of semantization that reduces stories to a semantic series. What Burroughs seeks to achieve in his writing is a new form of chatharsis -- not in the Aristotlean sense – creating a linguistic illusion. Thus the importance of his work rests in manipulating language, distorting and fragmenting the syntax, and pulverizing the logic of linearity of language and discourse.

Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* is one of the paradigmatic texts of postmodernist writing. The novel narrativizes the absurd and the arbitrary in which the fictional machine seems to turn in a void, but not without cringing with black humour. At the end of the novel, for the reader there is no real message, no order, no resolution, no moral statement, but only a projected delirium, that is captured in the illogic of language. Like Pynchon's earlier works *Gravity's Rainbow* is not constrained by the limits of modernism, for he freely exploits the artistic possibility of plurality of worlds. He breaks through the dead-end of modernist solipcism by shifting from a modernist poetics of epistemology to a postmodernist poetics of ontology.

One of the devices that Pynchon employs in *Gravity's Rainbow* is the cinematic effect. As McHale maintains, cinematic discourse can be interpreted as a series of metaphors for textual strategies; but it can also be read as the sign of a narrative level interposed between the text and the 'real'.[6] From one transition from a bedroom scene to a conversation over breakfast, 'bridge music' is specified; elsewhere the narrative acquires a voice-over parodying that of an old-fashioned travelogue. In other words, the extended cinematic trope while being applied to the text becomes its 'tenor' and 'vehicle', while metaphors substitute for the language of novelistic narration and description. This reading is clearly justified in *Gravity's Rainbow* where the presence of the interposed level of the film is revealed on the last page. Such a strategy has substituted the *absent* -- literal 'privileged moment' with a metaphorical analogue for that moment. Thus Pynchon develops internal tropes that subverts the *form* and coherence of the literal world of the novel.

One of the constituent thematic dimensions of the postmodernist fiction from America is to mock at the official version of historical events. Most of the writers seem to be revising their position and their views in relation to the historical events they themselves participated. *Slaughterhouse Five* is the most obvious example in which the protagonist (Vonnegut himself) returns to the place where he participated in the war, but not to remember how it was, not to relive what he did, but to rethink and revise his vision of that moment. The author attempts following the genre of science fiction to liberate his characters from the prison-house of the fiction. Using the autobiographical material, Vonnegut is creating worlds on thresholds – real people travelling to worlds of fantasy and transworld identities. Billy could recognize himself at Dresden and also else where, he is the protagonist and also the author: "That was I, that was me. That was the author of this book."[7]

The narrative thus creates multiple worlds of awareness and collapses those awareness into a world of linguistic sludge. Vonnegut follows the catalogue structure in disengaging the stratum of words from the stratum of worlds. From the ontological point of view catalogues are paradoxical. On the one hand, they can appear to assert full presence of a world and on the other hand, its negation in creating alternative worlds. The facts and realities which defy explanation are brought into the same frame with fictions beyond verification.

The present study, among other things, has attempted to capture the consequence of the postmodernist fiction in America in that it has explored the various formulations and strategies that Burroughs, Pynchon

and Vonnegut have employed in their works. What accounts for the success or failure of these novelists under discussion is their attempts in redefining not only the changing concept of reality, but fictionalizing the same.

The 'unreality of reality' that the postmodernist fiction uses as a central trope hinges on a provisional supposition: "a technique that requires suspension of belief as well as disbelief."[8] Thus the postmodernist fiction reasons with the theories of "possible worlds" thereby relativises our understanding of the real. It abandons the secure structures of logic and reasoning in a playful self-reflexivity where nothing is 'true' or 'false', every thing is possible and changeable. In interrogating the three fundamental modalities of classical logic necessity, possibility and impossibility postmodernist fiction refigures necessity and possibility not as universal norms, but as a provisional, individual requirements. 'Probability' becomes the defining term for postmodernist discursive articulation. Theoretically the postmodernist fiction excludes logical impossibility from the propositions that constitute worlds and thereby create possible worlds, that obey the law of the excluded middle. In fact, Burroughs, Pynchon and Vonnegut refuse to accept full-fledged, self-sustaining worlds and propose that possible worlds are there, for they are made possible in the beliefs, imaginations and convictions of those who create it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Brian McHale. *Postmodenist Fiction*. London: Routledge. 1987, p. 119.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
3. Richard Rorty. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 385.
4. Raymond Federman. "Fiction in America Today or the Unreality of Reality" in Kar and Ramakrishna edited *The American Classics Revisited: Recent Studies of American Literature*. Hyderabad: ASRC, p. 98, 1985.
5. William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959, p. 116.
6. McHale argues that the cinematic discourse pervades the style and imagery of *Gravity's Rainbow* from the beginning to the end. He also informs us that such techniques are also used in other postmodernist fictions such as Rushdie's *Midnights Children* and Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*.
7. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1969, p. 109.
8. Ronald Sukenick, *In Form: Digression on the Act of Fiction*, Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1985, p. 99.

*****

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

(i) Burroughs, William S.

Burroughs, William. *Cities of the Red Night*. New York: Holt. Henry, 1981.

_____. *Junkie*, New York, Ace Books, 1973.

_____. *Letters to Allen Ginsberg, 1953-1957*, New York, Full Court Press, 1982.

_____. *Naked Lunch*, New York, Grove Press, 1959.

_____. *Nova Express*, New York, Grove Press, 1965.

_____. *Queer*, New York, N.Y., Viking Press, 1985.

_____. *The Adding Machine: Selected Essays*, New York, Seaver Books, 1986.

_____. *The Burroughs File*, San Francisco, City Lights, 1984.

_____. *The Place of Dead Roads*, New York, Holt. Henry, 1985.

_____. *The Soft Machine, Nova Express, The Wild Boys: Three Novels*, New York, Grove Press, 1980.

_____. *The Ticket That Exploded*, New York, Grove Press, 1967.

Bockris, Victor. *With William Burroughs: A Report From The Bunker*, New York, Seaver Books, 1981.

Burroughs, William and Gale, Robert F. Illus. *The Book of Breething*, Berkeley, Blue Wind Press, 1980.

Burroughs, William and Ginsberg, Allen. *The Yage Letters*, San Francisco, City Light Books, 1975.

Burroughs, William and Gysin, Brion. *The Third Man*, New York: Viking Press, 1978.

Burroughs, William, Beeles, Sinclair, Corso, Gregory and Gysin, Brion. *Minutes To Go*, Paris: Two Cities, 1960.

(ii) Pynchon, Thomas

Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*, New York: Viking Press, 1973.

_____. *Slow Learner: Early Stories*, Boston, Little Brown, 1984.

_____. *The Crying Of Lot 49*, Philadelphia, Lippincott, J.B., 1966.

_____. *V, A Novel*, Philadelphia, Lippincott, J.B., 1963.

_____. *Vineland*, Boston, Little Brown, 1990.

(iii) Vonnegut, Jr. Kurt.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Between Time and Timbuktu: Or Prometheus-5, A Space Fantasy*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1972.

_____. *Breakfast of Champions: Or, Goodbye Blue Monday*, New York, Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1973.

_____. *Cat's Cradle*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1963.

_____. *Deadeye Dick*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1982.

_____. *Fates Worse Than Death: An Autobiographical Collage of the 1980s*, New York, Putnam, 1991.

_____. *Galapagos: A Novel*, New York, N.Y., Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1985.

_____. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater: Or, Pearls Before Swine*, New York, Dell, 1968.

_____. *Happy Birthday, Wanda June: A Play*, New York, Dell, 1971.

_____. *Hocus Pocus*, New York, Putnam, 1990.

_____. *Jailbird: A Novel*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1979.

_____. *Mother Night*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1968.

_____. *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage*, London, Granada, 1981.

_____. *Player Piano*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

_____. *Slapstick, A Novel: Or Lonesome No More!*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1976.

_____. *Slaughterhouse-Five, Or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance With Death*, New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1969.

_____. *The Sirens of Titan*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1971.

_____. *Wampeters, Foma and Grandfalloons (Opinions)*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1974.

_____. *Welcome to the Monkey House*, New York, Dell, 1970.

Vonnegut, Kurt, Allen William Rodney (Ed.). *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1988.

Vonnegut, Kurt, Sexton, Anne. *Transformations*. Boston, Houghton, 1971.

SECONDARY SOURCES

(i) General

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Prism Books Pvt. Ltd., Basa Vanagudi, Bangalore: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1993.

Alfonso, Ricardo-Miguel (ed.). *Powerless Fictions? Ethics, Cultural Critique, and American Fiction in the Age of Postmodernism*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1996.

Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. (Trans.) Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

_____. *S Z*. (Trans.) Richard Miller, New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995.

Bartlett, Lee (ed.). *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, Jefferson, N. C. McFarland, 1981.

Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb. *Reflections on Poetry*, (Trans.) K. Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther: Berkeley, 1954.

Berger Peter L. and Luckmann Thomas. *The Social Construction of Reality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.

Bertens, Hans. *The Idea of the Postmodern*, London, Routledge. 1995.

Bevan, David (ed.). *Literary Gastronomy*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1988.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of Forking Paths", in *Ficciones*, Trans. Anthony Kerrigan, New York: Grove Press, 1962.

Boyd, John D. *The Function of Mimesis and its Decline*, Cambridge: Mass., 1968.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern American Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Bradley, A. C. *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, London, 1909.

Brooker, Peter (ed.). *Modernism/Postmodernism*, London, Longman, 1992.

Bruns, Gerald L. *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language*, London, 1974.

Burgess, Antony. *The Novel Now: A Guide to Contemporary Fiction*, New York: Norton, 1967.

Cartmell, Deborah (ed.). *Adaptations: From text to Screen, Screen to Text*.

Case, Collin Mac. "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses" in Rice and Waugh (eds.), *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*. London: Edward Arnold, 1994.

Clareson, Thomas D. (ed.). *The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Bowling Green. Bowling Green Popular Press, 1971.

Creely, Robert. *A Quick Graph*. San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970.

Dunn, Thomas P. (ed.). *The Mechanical God: Machines in Science Fiction*, Westport, Greenwood, 1982.

Engler, Bernd (ed.); Muller, Kurt (ed.). *Historiographic Metafiction in Modern American and Canadian Literature*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoningh, 1994.

Federman, Raymond. "Fiction in America Today or the Unreality of Reality" in Kar and Ramakrishna edited *The American Classics Revisited: Recent Studies of American Literature*. Hyderabad: ASRC.

Fiedler, Leslie. "Cross the Border-Close That Gap: Postmodernism", *Sphere History of Literature in the English Language*, Vol. 9: *American Literature Since 1900*. Ed. Marcus Cunliffe, London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975.

_____. *Waiting for the End*, New York: Stein and Day, 1964.

Ford, Ford Madox. *Joseph Conrad*, London, 1924.

Friedman, Melvin J. (ed.). *Traditions, Voices, and Dreams: The American Novel Since the 1960s*, Newark, University of Delawane Press, 1995.

Gardner, John. *On Moral Fiction*, New York, Basic Books, 1978.

Gitting, Robert (ed.). *Letters of John Keats*, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX26DP, 1970.

Goebel-Ulrich (ed.); Nelson-Otto (ed.). *War and Peace: Perspectives in the Nuclear Age*, Lubbock: Texas Tech. U.P., 1988.

Graff, Gerald. *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society*, Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 1979.

Graff, Gerald. *The Myth of the Post-Modernist Breakthrough: The Novel Today*.

Harris, Charles B. *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd*. New Haven, Conn., College and University Press, 1971.

Hawkes, Terence. *Structuralism and Semiotics*. London: Methuen, 1977.

Hoffman, Frederick. *The Mortal No: Death and the Modern Imagination*, Princeton University Press, 1964.

Hoffman, Michael J. & Murphy, Patrick D. (ed.). *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York, 1965.

Jones, Peter G., Rosenthal, M. L. *War And The Novelist: Appraising The American War Novel*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction*, London, 1971.

Jung, C. J. *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, London, Routledge, 1960.

Kant, Emanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. J. C. Meredith (Tr.), Oxford University Press, 1952.

Kavanagh, Thomas M. (ed.). *Chance, Culture and the Literary Text*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994.

Kenner, Hugh. *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett*. London, 1964.

Kernan, Alvin B. *The Death of Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. *Literary Descriptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction*. London. University of Illinois Press, 1975.

_____. *The American 1960s: Imaginative Acts in a Decade of Change*, Ames, Iowa State University Press, 1980.

Lash, Scott. *Sociology of Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Lemert, Charles. *Postmodernism is not What You Think*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

Lodge, David. *The Novelist at the Crossroads*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.

_____. *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977.

Lucy, Niall. *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

Lupack, Barbara-Tepa (ed.). *Take Two: Adapting the Contemporary American Novel to Film*. Bowling Green, Popular, 1994.

Mason, Peter. *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other*, London: Routledge, 1990.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London, Routledge, 1987.

Mellard, James. *The Exploded Form*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Miller, J. Hillis. "The Figure in the Carpet", in Rice and Waugh (eds.). *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*

Nagel, James (ed.). *Critical Essays on American Literature*. Northeastern University, 1989.

Newman, Charles. *The Post-Modern Aura: the act of Fiction in an Inflation*, in *Salmagundi*, Spring-Summer, 1984.

Olderman, Raymond M. *Beyond the Wasteland: A Study of the American Novel In the Nineteen-Sixties*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.

Peary, Gerald (ed.); Shatzkin, Roger (ed.). *The Modern American Novel and the Movies*. New York: Ungar, 1978.

Pillai, A. Sebastian Dravyam. *Postmodernism: An Introduction*. Thiruchirapali, Theresa Publication, 1991.

Poirier, Richard. *A World Elsewhere*. New York, 1966.

Rainsford, Dominic (ed.). *Critical Ethics: Text, Theory and Responsibility*. Houndmills, Macmillan, 1999.

Reich, William. *The Functions of the Orgasm*. New York: Noonday Press, 1971.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

_____. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Ruthven, K. K. *Critical Assumptions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Scholes, Robert. *Fabulation and Metafiction*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979.

Seidman, Steven. *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Shaftesbury, The Earl of. *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (3 Vol.), Birmingham, 1973.

Shapira, Morris (ed.). *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.

Sim, Stuart (ed.). *The A-Z Guide to Modern Literary and Cultural Theorists*, London: Prentice Hall, 1985.

Spark, Muriel. *The Driver's Seat*, 1970, Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1974.

Stanford, W. B. & Luce, J. V. *The Quest for Ulysses*, London, 1974.

Strozier, Charles B. (ed.). *The Year 2000: Essays on the End. New York*, New York University Press, 1997.

Sukenick, Ronald. *In Form: Digression on the Act of Fiction*. Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1985.

Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Mark Rose, *Alien Encounters: Anatomy of Science Fiction*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1981).

Sypher, Wylie. *Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art*, New York, 1962.

Tilton, John W. *Cosmic Satire In the Contemporary Novel*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1977.

Waugh, Patricia. *The Theory and Practise of Self-Conscious Fiction*, London, Routledge, 1984.

_____. *Practising Postmodernism Reading Modernism*. London, Routledge, 1992.

Widdowson, Peter (ed.). *Re-Reading English*. New York: Methuen, 1982.

Woolf, Virginia. *Collected Essays* (4 Vol.). London, 1966-67.

(ii) Burroughs, William S.

French, Warren (ed.). *William S. Burroughs*. Twayne Publishers, 1985.

Ginsberg, Allen. *Naked Lunch*. New York, Grove Press, 1966.

_____. *Reality Sandwiches*. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1963.

Goodman, Michael B. *Contemporary Literary Censorship: The Case History of Burroughs' "Naked Lunch"*. Minneapolis, MN, 1977.

Goodman, Michael B., Coley, Lemuel B. *William S. Burroughs: A Reference Guide*. New York, Garland Publishers, 1990.

Kaur, Kiranjeet. *A Study of the Themes and Techniques of William Burroughs' Fiction*. Raipur, 1989.

Lydenberg, Robin. *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Maynard, Joe Comp., Miles, Barry. *William S. Burroughs: A Bibliography, 1953-1973*. Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1978.

Miles, Barry. *William Burroughs: El Hombre Invisible, A Portrait*. New York, Hyperion Press, 1993.

Nelson, Cary. *The Incarnate Word: Literature as Verbal Space*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Seltzer, Alvin J. *Chaos in the Novel, The Novel in Chaos*. New York, Schocken Books, 1974.

Skerl, Jennie. *William S. Burroughs*. Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1985.

Sontag, Susan. *Styles of Radical Will*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.

Tytell, John. *Naked Angels: The Lives and Literature of the Beat Generation*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976.

(iii) Pynchon, Thomas.

Berressem, Hanjo. *Pynchon's Poetics: Interfacing Theory and Text*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Berube, Michael. *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon, and the Politics of The Canon*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992.

Chambers, Judita. *Thomas Pynchon*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1992.

Clere, Charles (ed.). *Approaches to Gravity's Rainbow*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1983.

Cooper, Peter L. *Signs and Symptoms: Thomas Pynchon and the Contemporary World*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983.

Cowart, David. *Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion*. Carbondale, University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Dugdale, John. *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power*, London, Macmillan, 1990.

Eddings, Dwight. *The Gnostic Pynchon*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990.

Grant, J. Kerry. *A Companion to The Crying Of Lot 49*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1994.

Hite, Molly. *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1983.

Hume, Katheryn. *Pynchon's Mythography: An Approach to Gravity's Rainbow*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

Kharpertian, Theodore D. *A Hand To Turn the Time: The Menippean Satires of Thomas Pynchon*, Rutherford, Associated University Press, 1990.

Levine, George (ed.); Leverenz, David (Jt. Ed.). *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, Boston, Little, 1976.

Madsen, Deborah L. *The Postmodernist Allegories Of Thomas Pynchon*, London, Leicester University Press, 1991.

Maltby, Paul. *Dissident Postmodernists: Barthelme, Coover, Pynchon*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

McConnell, Frank D. *Four Postwar American Novelists: Bellow, Mailer, Barth and Pynchon*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Mead, Clifford. *Thomas Pynchon: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Materials*, Elmwood Park, Dalkey Archive Press, 1989.

Mehoul, A. W.; Wills, David (Jt. Auth.). *Writing Pynchon: Strategies In Fictional Analysis*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Mendelson, Edward (ed.). *Pynchon: A Collection Of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1978.

Moore, Thomas. *The Style of Connectedness: Gravity's Rainbow and Thomas Pynchon*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1987.

Newman, Robert D. *Understanding Thomas Pynchon*. Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1986.

Pearce, Richard. *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*. Boston, G. K. Hall & Co., 1981.

Schaub, Thomas H. *Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Seed, David. *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon*. Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988.

Slade, Joseph W. *Thomas Pynchon*. New York, Peter Lang, 1990.

Stark, John O. *Pynchon's Fictions: Thomas Pynchon And The Literature of Information*. Athens, Ohio University Press, 1980.

Stonehill, Brian. *The Self-Conscious Novel: Artifice In Fiction From Joyce to Pynchon*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.

Tanner, Tony. *Thomas Pynchon*. London, Methuen, 1982.

Weisenburger, Steven. *A Gravity's Rainbow Companion: Sources and Contexts for Pynchon's Novel*. Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1988.

(iv) Vonnegut Jr., Kurt

Allen, William Rodney. *Understanding Kurt Vonnegut*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

_____. *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988.

Broer, Lawrence R. *Sanity Plea: Schizophrenia In The Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*. Ann Arbor, Umi Research Press, 1989.

Hipkiss, Robert A. *The American Absurd: Pynchon, Vonnegut and Barth*, Port Washington, N. Y., Associated Faculty Press, 1984.

Hudgens, Betty Lenhardt. *Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.: A Checklist*. Detroit, Gale Research Company, 1972.

Klinkowitz, Jerome (ed.), Somer, John (Jt. ed.). *The Vonnegut Statement*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1973.

_____. *Slaughterhouse-Five: Reforming the Novel and the World*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1990.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. *Kurt Vonnegut*, New York, Methuen, 1982.

Lundquist, James. *Kurt Vonnegut*, New York, Ungar, 1977.

Mayo, Clark. *Kurt Vonnegut: The Gospel From Outer Space*, California, Borgo Press, 1977.

Merrill, Robert (ed.). *Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut*, Boston, G. K. Hall & Co., 1990.

Mustazza, Leonard (ed.). *The Critical Response To Kurt Vonnegut*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1994.

Mustazza, Leonard. *Forever Pursuing Genesis: The Myth of Eden in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1990.

Pieratt, Asa B., Huffman-Klinkowitz. *Kurt Vonnegut, A Comprehensive Bibliography*, Hamden, Archon Books, 1987.

Reed, Peter J. *Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.*, New York, Crowell, 1972.

Schatt, Stanley. *Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1976.

JOURNAL/ARTICLES

(i) **Burroughs, William S.**

Ames, Christopher. "Calling for Ketchup in Burroughs and Pynchon", *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, Carrollton, January 1990, 20:1.

Beard, William. "Insect Poetics: Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*", *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Canada, 1996 Sept., 23:3.

Bliss, Michael. "The Orchestration of Chaos: Verbal Technique in William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*", *enclitic*, Minneapolis, 1977, 1:1.

Burgess, Anthony. Letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 3227, January, 1964.

Ciardi, John. "Book Burners and Sweet Sixteen", *Saturday Review*, 42, June 1959.

Eburne, Jonathan Paul. "Trafficking in the Void: Burroughs, Kerouac, and the Consumption of Otherness", *Modern Fiction Studies*, West Lafayette, 1997 Spring, 43:1.

Estrin, Barbara L. "The Revelatory Connection: Inspired Poetry and *Naked Lunch*", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1984 Spring, 4:1.

Goodman, Michael B. "The Customs' Censorship of William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*", *Studies in Modern Fiction*, Atlanta 1980, 22:1.

Hilfer, Anthony-Channell. "Mariner and Wedding Guest in William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*", *A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, Detroit, 1980, 22.

Jachne, Karen. "David Cronenberg on William Burroughs: Dead Ringers Do Naked Lunch", *Film-Quarterly*, Berkeley, 1992 Spring, 43:3.

Johnston, Allan. "The Burroughs Biopathy: William S. Burroughs' Junky and *Naked Lunch* and Reichean Theory", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1984 Spring, 4:1.

La-Chance, Michael. "Auto-intoxication et litterarite meurtriere: Interzone", Etudes-Litteraires, Canada, 1998 autumn, 31:1.

Leddy, Michael. "'Departed Have Left No Address': Revelation/Concealment Presence/Absence in *Naked Lunch*", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1984 Spring, 4:1.

Levine, Paul. "The Intemporate Zone: The Climate of Contemporary American Fiction", *Massachusetts Review*, 1967.

Loewinsohn, Ron. "'Gentle Reader, I Fain Would Spare You This, but My Pen Hath Its Will Like the Ancient Mariner': Narrator(s) and Audience in William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*", *Contemporary Literature*, Madison, 1998 Winter, 39:4.

Loranger, Carol. "'This Book Spill off the Page in All Directions': What Is the text of *Naked Lunch*?", *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism*, Charlottesville, 1999 Sept., 10:1.

Lydenberg, Robin. "Beyond Good and Evil: 'How to' Read *Naked Lunch*", *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1984 Spring, 4:1.

Mathieson, Kenneth. "The Influence of Science Fiction in the Contemporary American Novel", *Science Fiction Studies*, Greencastle, 1985 March, 12:1.

McCarthy, Mary. "Dejeuner Sur l'herbe: The *Naked Lunch*", *New York Review of Books*, 1963, 1:1.

McClure, Andrew-S. "The Word, Image, and Addiction: Language and the Junk Equation in William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*",

Dionysos: The Literature and Addiction Tri Quarterly, Seattle, 1996 Summer, 6:2.

McConnell, Frank. "William Burroughs and the Literature of Addiction", *Massachusetts Review*, 1967.

Moorcock, Michael. Letter to *Times Literary Supplement*, 3221, November 1963.

Murphy, Timothy-S. "William Burroughs between Indifference and Revalorization: Notes Toward a Political Reading", *Angelaki*, Oxford, 1993, 1:1.

Nealon, Jeffrey-T. "'Junk' and the Other: Burroughs and Levinas on Drugs", *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism*, Charlottesville, 1995 Sept., 6:1.

Peterson, R. G. "A Picture is a Fact: Wittgenstein and *The Naked Lunch*", *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, Hempstead, 1966, 12.

Roder, Tom. "William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg: Making It More 'Real', 'Reality Effects', Doubts, and Postmodernist Concerns", *Dionysos: The Literature and Addiction Tri Quarterly*, Seattle, 1993 Winter, 4:3.

Said, Edward. "Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions", *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 1978.

Vice, Sue. "Hallucinatory Reality in David Cronenberg's Naked Lunch", *Dionysos: The Literature and Addiction Tri Quarterly*, Seattle, 1993 Winter, 4:3.

Wain, John. Review of *Naked Lunch*, *New Republic*, 147, Dec. 1962.

Wilt, Koos-van-dear. "The Author's Recreation of Himself as Narrator and Protagonist in Fragmented Prose: A New Look at Some Beat Novels", *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters*, Amsterdam, 1982, 12:2.

(ii) Pynchon, Thomas

Ashe, Frederick. "Anachronism Intended: *Gravity's Rainbow* in the Sociopolitical Sixties", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1991.

Benton, Graham. "Riding the Interface: An Anarchist Reading of *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

Best, Steven. "Creative Paranoia: A Postmodern Aesthetic of Cognitive Mapping in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *The Centennial Review*, East Lansing, Winter 1992, 36:1.

Blumberg, David. "Umlauts and Oz: Signifiers within the Textual Zone of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*", *The American Journal of Semiotics*, Bloomington, 1992, 9:4.

Chambers, Judith. "A Dazzle of Violet and a Green-Doped Hound: Pynchon's Miracle of De-Struction in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Washington, Summer 1991, 32:4.

. "The Freak in Ourselves: The Grotesque in Pynchon's *V* and *Gravity's Rainbow*", *The Journal of the Association for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts*, Carrollton, Spring 1996, 1:2.

Crownshaw, Richard. "*Gravity's Rainbow*: Pynchon's Holocaust Allegory", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

Dalsgaard, Inger. H. "Terrifying Technology: Pynchon's Warning Myth of Today", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

Den Tandt, Christophe. "Management and Chaos: Masculinity and the Corporate World from Naturalism to *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

Edwards, Brian. "Rigged Play: Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* as Decentered Text", *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Canada, June 1996, 23:2.

Hamill, John. "Looking Back on Sodom: Sixties Sadomasochism in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Washington, Fall 1999, 41:1.

Herman, Luc. "Parody in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by Thomas Pynchon", *European Journal of English Studies*, Netherlands, Aug. 1999, 3:2.

Hume, Kathryn. "Repetition and the Construction of Character in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Washington, Summer 1992, 33:4.

Ivison, Douglas. "Outhouses of the European Soul: Imperialism in Thomas Pynchon", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1997.

Madsen, Deborah L. "The Business of Living: *Gravity's Rainbow*, Evolution, and the Advancement of Capitalism", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1997.

_____. "Family Legacies: Identifying the Traces of William Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

Mason, Fran. "'Just a Bunch of Stuff That Happened': Narratives of Resistance in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

McConnell, Will. "Pynchon, Foucault, Power and Strategies of Resistance", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1993.

McHale, Brian. "Difference Engines", *A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, Washington, Oct. 1992, 5:4.

Medoro, Dana. "The Sieve and the Rainbow Serpent: Bleeding *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Journal of Narrative Technique*, Spring 1998, 28:2.

Melley, Timothy. "Bodies Incorporated: Scenes of Agency Panic in *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Contemporary Literature*, Winter 1994, 35:4.

Mendelson, Edward. "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon", *MLN* 91, Dec. 1976.

Meyer, Eric. "Oppositional Discourses, Unnatural Practices: Gravity's History and 'The 60s'", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1989.

Moraru, Christian. "'Zonal' Ethics: *Gravity's Rainbow*, Dislodged Subjects, and Infernal Technology", *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Canada, June 1997, 24:2.

Rosenberg, Martin E. "Invisibility, the War Machine and Prigogine: Physics, Philosophy and the Threshold of Historical Consciousness in Pynchon's Zone", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1992.

Turier, Christine. "Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow", *Explicator*, Washington, Summer 1992, 50.

Weisenburger, Steven. "Haunted History and *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Pynchon Notes*, Spring-Fall 1998.

(iii) Vonnegut, Jr., Kurt

Blackford, Russell. "Physics and Fantasy: Scientific Mysticism , Kurt Vonnegut and *Gravity's Rainbow*", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Bowling Green, Winter 1985.

Boon, Kevin A. "The Problem with Pilgrim in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, Carrollton, March 1996.

Chabot, C. Barry. "Slaughterhouse-Five and the Comforts of Indifference", *Essays in Literature*, Macomb, Spring 1981.

Cordle, Daniel. "Changing of the Old Guard: Time Travel and Literary Technique in the Work of Kurt Vonnegut", *Yearbook of English Studies*, England, 2000.

Edelstein, Arnold. "Slaughterhouse-Five: Time Out of Joint", *College Literature*, West Chester, 1974.

Greiner, Donald J. "Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and the Fiction of Atrocity", *Studies in Modern Fiction*, Atlanta, 1973.

Han, Chun Koong. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*: Dynamic Tension", *The Journal of English Language and Literature*, Seoul, Summer 1992, 38:2.

Harris, Charles B. "Time, Uncertainty, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.: A Reading of *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *The Centennial Review*, East Lansing, 1976.

Isaacs, Neil D. "Unstuck in Time: Clockwork Orange and *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Literature Film Quarterly*, Salisbury, 1973.

Iwamoto, Iwao. "A Clown's Say: A Study of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Studies in English Literature*, Tokyo, 1975.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. "New American Fiction and Values", *Anglo-American Studies*, 1982 Nov., 2:2.

Kopper, Edward A. Jr. "Color Symbolism in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Notes on Modern American Literature*, Jamaica, 1977.

Lee, Cremilda Toledo. "Fantasy and Reality in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *The Journal of English Language and Literature*, Seoul, Winter 1991, 37:4.

Lupack, Barbara T. "Pilgrim's Regress: Cinematic Narrative in *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Connecticut Review*, Winter 1990, 12:1.

Martin, Reobert A. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*: Vonnegut's Doomed Universe", *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, Corrollton, March 1987.

McGinnis, Wayne D. "The Arbitrary Cycle of *Slaughterhouse-Five*: A Relation of Form to Theme", *Studies in Modern Fiction*, Atlanta, 1975.

Merrill, Robert; Scholl, Peter A. "Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*: The Requirements of Chaos", *Studies in American Fiction*, Boston, 1978.

Meyer, William E.H. Jr. "Kurt Vonnegut: The Man with Nothing To Say", *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Washington, Winter 1988.

Noguchi, Kenji. "Vonnegut's Desperado Humor in *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Studies in English Language and Literature*, Japan, Feb. 1995.

O'Connor, Gerard W. "The Function of Time Travel in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Riverside Quarterly*, Gainesville, 1972.

O'Sullivan, Maurice J., Jr. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*: Kurt Vonnegut's Anti-Memoirs", *Essays in Literature*, Macomb, 1976.

Schopp, Joseph C. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*: The Struggle with a Form that Fails", *American Studies*, Germany, 1983, 28:3.

Shaw, Patrick W. "The Excrement Festival: Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Scholia-Satyrica*, Tampa, 1976.

Shaw, Patrick W. "Too Many Pilgrimages: Travel and Point of View in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*", *Conference of College Teachers of English Studies*, Denton, 1993.

Stralen, Hans Van. "*Slaughterhouse-Five*, Existentialist Themes Elaborated in a Postmodernist Way", *Neophilologus*, Jan. 1995.

*****

BIO-DATA

1.	Name	: **MRS. BABY PUSHPA SINHA**
2.	Date of Birth	: 15 JUNE 1972
3.	Father's Name	: Dr. Satyanarayan Singh
4.	Educational Qualifications: M.A. in English from NEHU, Shillong.	
5.	Marital Status	: Married to Shri Lalan Kishore Singh.
6.	Present Occupation	: Lecturer in English since 1998. Sao Chang (Govt.) College, Tuensang, Nagaland 798 612.
7.	Present Address	: Same as above.
8.	Hobby	: Listening to songs.
9.	Religious leaning	: Reading the religious books.