



MANSOURA UNIVERSITY
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**A PRAGMA-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF KURT
VONNEGUT'S CAT'S CRADLE A RESEARCH
SUBMITTED**

BY

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Abstract

The present research analyzes Kurt Vonnegut's style from a pragmatic perspective. It discusses his use of symbols, imagery, satire and narrative style in *Cat's Cradle*. It asserts on Vonnegut's manipulation of writing tools to present his motifs. It discusses to how extent Vonnegut's style succeeded to deliver his themes. It points out the power of language in presenting Vonnegut's perspectives. Firstly, it presents literature review for some terms used in this research. Then, it reveals Vonnegut's symbolism and imagery in *Cat's Cradle*. After that, it presents Vonnegut's Humor and Satire. Also, it discusses Vonnegut's narrative style in *Cat's Cradle*. As a conclusion Kurt Vonnegut's own style of writing tends to be simple, employing short sentences. Simplicity in language is something highly regarded by Vonnegut. He believed that we could convey every sentiment in human language in only a few words. His novels' titles are symbolic and implicature supports his main idea.

Keywords: stylistic; Kurt Vonnegut; *Cat's Cradle*; narrative; symbolism; satire; imagery.

ملخص البحث:

يحلل البحث الحالي أسلوب كورت فونيجت من منظور تداولي. يظهر البحث تمكن فونيجت من أدواته في الكتابة لتقديم افكاره. ويناقش إلى أي مدى نجح أسلوب فونيجت في تقديم موضوعاته. ويشير إلى قوة اللغة في تقديم وجهات نظر فونيجت. يقدم البحث في البداية مراجعة الأدبيات لبعض المصطلحات المستخدمة في هذا البحث. بعد ذلك، يكشف عن استخدام فونيجت للرمزية والتصوير في رواية مهد القطة. ويناقش أيضا استخدام فونيجت لأسلوب الفكاهة والهزاء. كما يعرض كيف استخدم فونيجت أسلوب السرد من خلال روايته مهد القطة. وفي الختام، نجد ان أسلوب كورت فونيجت في الكتابة يميل إلى أن يكون بسيطاً، حيث يستخدم جمل قصيرة. ويعتقد أنه يمكننا نقل كل المشاعر بلغة البشر في بضع كلمات فقط. غير ان عناوين رواياته رمزية وتدعم ضمنياً فكرته الرئيسية. الكلمات الرئيسية: الأسلوب، كورت فونيجت، رواية مهد القطة، أسلوب السرد، الرمزية، الهزاء، التصوير.

1. Introduction

The present research analyzes Kurt Vonnegut's style from a pragmatic perspective. It discusses his use of symbols, imagery, satire and narrative style in *Cat's Cradle*. It asserts on Vonnegut's manipulation of writing tools to presents his motifs. It discusses to how extent Vonnegut's style succeeded to deliver his themes. It points out the power of language in presenting Vonnegut's perspectives. *Cat's Cradle* is Vonnegut's fourth novel. It is a satirical postmodern novel, with science fiction elements. It was first published in 1963, exploring and satirizing issues of science, technology, the purpose of religion, and the arms race, often through the use of black humor. Vonnegut attempts to show that humans' temptation to control life, death, and nature has led to advances like the atomic bomb and other novel ways of bringing death in exchange for power. Vonnegut emphasizes using the imagination as a method of survival.

1. Objectives of the research

This research aims to shed light on Vonnegut's style in writing in his novel *Cat's Cradle*. It also tries to present the significance of using language tools to present his themes.

2. Research questions

What are the characteristics of Kurt Vonnegut's writing style?

To how extent Vonnegut succeeded in using language to present his themes?

Did Vonnegut use new writing styles in his novel *Cat's Cradle*?

3. Literature Review

4.1 Stylistics

According to Lehtsalu, Liiv and Mutt (1973) "The term 'style' is a polysemantic one. In Classical Latin the meaning of the word was extended by the process of metonymy to denote the manner of expressing one's ideas in written or oral form. The word later acquired a

further meaning.” (p.11) Ronald Carter (2014) adds, “stylistics is a field within the broad parameters of applied linguistics and the applied linguists are concerned with the study of human communication and the main focus of stylistics research, literary communication, is one of the most considerable and highly valued forms of human communication.” (p.77)

4.2 Stylistic analysis

Katie Wales (2014, p.33) argues that stylistics is basically practical, like a set of tools and that stylisticians as artisans can ‘un-lock’ the meaning or function of texts as verbal artefacts by using particular models of analysis; or by concentrating on specific (linguistic) features, their observed patterns and their possible effects. Norgaard et al (2010, p.1) add stylistic approaches mainly display an interest in the producer of the text, examining the style of a specific author, for example, other stylisticians emphasis more on the text itself and still others consecrate their attention to the reader and the role readers play in meaning creation.

Lehtsalu et al (1973) remark that in linguistic and literary writings the term ‘style’ is used to “denote: (1) The characteristic manner in which a writer expresses his ideas, e.g., the style of Pushkin, Goethe and Dickens. (2) The manner of expressing ideas in writing characteristic of a literary movement or period, e.g., the style of sentimentalism, symbolism, critical realism or of the Renaissance. (3) The selection and use of the resources of linguistic. Distinctive of a literary genre, e.g., the style of a comedy, an ode, a novel. (4) The selective use of resources of linguistic. Confined to spheres of human activity, e.g., the style of scientific prose, newspapers, business correspondence. In this case the term ‘style’ is frequently identified with the technique of using the resources of linguistic. In a given situation with the maximum possible efficiency.” (pp.11-12)

Wales (2014, p.34) adds that there are two main methods of analysis: the deductive and the inductive. Stylisticians can work deductively from the form of a hypothesis or ideological perspective to the linguistic and textual evidence and analysis; or inductively from textual analysis to the form of hypotheses. These are popularly referred to as the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches.

4.3 Pragmatics

As regards Literary Pragmatics, Mey (2001, pp. 236-37) has confirmed that readers are regarded as users. The reader, as an collaborator, is a main player in the literary game. His or her effect extends beyond the acquisition of a text and its following assimilation through the visual and psychological processes that we usually associate with reading. The reader’s involvement consists in entering the universe that the author has created, and by doing so, becoming an actor, rather than a mere observer. What the reader reads is, in the final analysis, his or her own co-production along with the author. And he called this interaction a dialectic process.

According to Stephen C. Levinson (1983), “understanding an utterance involves a great deal more than knowing the meanings of the words uttered and the grammatical relations between them. Above all, understanding an utterance involves the making of inferences that will connect what is said to what is mutually assumed or what has been said before.” (p.21) In a similar vein, Mey (2001) maintains that the “‘pragmatic turn’ in linguistics can thus be described as a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar (in particular, syntax) to the paradigm of the language user”. (p.4) It is in this sense that Mey (2001, pp. 4-5) has drawn the dividing line between structure description (dealt with by the traditional methods of grammars) and actual use (the focus of pragmatics).

4.4 Symbolism

Symbolism is the use of a symbol, which can be a word or an image, to communicate a different idea. It is the representation of one thing for another using a person, object, or idea. Authors use symbolism to tie certain things that may initially seem unimportant to more

universal themes. The symbols then represent these grander ideas or qualities. For instance, an author may use a particular color that on its own is nothing more than a color, but hints at a deeper meaning. (Literary Devices, n.d.) It is one of the many literary tools which writers use to make their work rich. Symbolism illustrates a piece of writing by creating pictures in the reader's mind. In fact, some other literary devices, like metaphor and allegory, are often considered to be types of symbolism. Literary devices are the techniques writers use to communicate ideas and themes beyond what they can express literally.

Bevier (2019) argues that symbolism can improve the quality of writing through the following points. It suggests a sense of mystery in the writer's conception and findings. It gives a sense of universality to characters and themes, increasing the probability that the text will be widely read and well received. It increases the possibility that the reader will comprehend the themes and ideas a writer presents. Also, it provides rich clues that aid in strong characterization. Moreover, it enhances the overarching mood or tone the writer tries to create. It enhances the reader's visualization of feelings and conflicts in a piece of literature.

"According to Eco Symbolism is thus seen as an example of textual implicature, which invites the reader to explore possible meanings (and the motivation for encoding them allusively) in the usual way. He stresses that a symbolic interpretation is an optional extension of meaning." (Black, 2006, p.125)

Black (2006) summarizes Eco's definition of symbol that "a symbol has value only in its context: anything else is only an emblem, or the quotation of a previously existing symbol. Thus, many items that are commonly described as symbols are, for him, emblems, or quotations of a symbol." (p.125) Black (2006, pp.134-135) adds that symbolism, like irony and some other pragmatic strategies, presents difficult interpretative problems. Irony may, quite simply, fail to be recognized: it does not announce itself in the way that, say, metaphor does. In this it is like symbolism. Despite the confidence with which Eco approaches symbol via the Gricean maxims, the fact that symbol relies to such a large extent on the encyclopedic knowledge of readers, is embedded in a cultural matrix which readers may share to a greater or lesser extent, and the sheer idiosyncrasy of readers approaching texts – even the same text at different times may attract a different reading – we cannot hope to secure total agreement on this kind of textual interpretation. The same applies to the need for the reader to decide that something in the text has been 'over-encoded' and so draws attention to itself in such a way as to trigger a possible symbolic interpretation. All of this argues that symbolism is a complex phenomenon, which is not easily can be explained.

4.5 Narrative

According to Michael Toolan (2013, pp.136-137) a narrative is a text in which something humanly interesting has happened, or a significant change in the situation has occurred. It is distinguishable from description. Also, it is a text in which the reader or addressee perceives a significant change. In a narrative, something happens, such that we sense a 'before' and an 'after': one state of affairs is displaced by a different state of affairs, and this latter state is, ideally, not merely temporally but causally related to the former state.

Jessica Mason (2014, p.180) argues that the early classical narratology was an attempt to discover the homogenizing features, the common laws and structures, which would enable us to incorporate readers into our understanding and analysis of texts by flattening them out into a collective entity which was definable and therefore manageable. The problem with this approach is not the desire to incorporate a consideration of real readers into narrative analysis; it is the attempt to do this while clinging furiously to the idea of establishing universals. The result is an inevitably unrepresentative and inauthentic, often highly idealized, vision of 'readers'; in trying to pin down 'all readers', the result was often simply a dislocated version of the analyst themselves. This approach proves problematic.

Lehtsalu et al (1973, p.138) stat that there are three principal modes of narration in fiction: the author's narration, the speech of the characters and reported speech. Relating to reported speech, it is a special stylistic category, consisting in the mode of narration in prose fiction in which the story is being told simultaneously by the author and one of the characters. Reported speech can be presented as semi-indirect speech and interior monologue. If reported speech presents the real speech of the characters, it is linguistically expressed by semi-indirect speech. Semi-indirect speech has some characteristic features common with indirect speech, such as the sequence of tenses and the third person instead of the first. Moreover, semi-indirect speech has some features of direct speech, such as words and expressions characteristic of the personality.

Lehtsalu et al (1973) adds that there is "another stylistic category close to semi-indirect speech is inner monologue. Inner monologue is a mode of narration in which the thoughts of a character are presented in the form of an unuttered monologue. Inner monologue serves the author to portray a person's feelings not actually uttered." (p.139)

Relating to the tense which is used in narrative "the present tense is frequent in oral narratives, apparently for the sake of added emphasis; it certainly seems designed to increase interest and involvement by the audience." (Black,2006, p.7) He adds that within narratives in the past tense, the present is used for a number of purposes. It is often used at the beginning of narratives to set the scene, or indicate that the narrative has not yet begun. It seems usually to be the case that a shift into the present tense marks a departure from the narrative proper. When a narrator momentarily quit his narratorial role to generalize, comment, or otherwise depart from his storytelling role, the tense often marks this departure, by a shift from the past to the simple present. The narrator may engage in generalizations, state conclusions which are only loosely relevant to the purpose at hand, or call the reader to consider various alternatives. With generalizations, we are invited to perceive the general applicability of a comment. The move into the present tense suspends the narrative, however briefly. The effect of the present tense in these instances is to alter the scope of authority claimed by the narrator, and it creates an interpersonal bond with the reader. The fact that the present tense is more immediate perhaps also has the effect of drawing the reader's attention both to what is being said, and also to the fact that its relationship with the narrative is problematic: it thus invites thought and attention. (Black, 2006, p.p.10-11)

"Labov's (1972) theory of naturally occurring narratives was developed to handle oral narratives told by young Black Americans. It is, however, also useful for the analysis of written narratives. Pratt (1977) was the first to consider its relevance to literary texts. ...Labov defines a narrative as consisting minimally of two temporally ordered clauses, such that reversing the order of the clauses would change the story." (Black, 2006, p.39)

Narrative style is a good tool for the writer to deliver his ideas and assert them. Narrators can be divided into two types: first-person who may or may not participate in the story they present and the third-person narrator. Black (2006, p.41) asserts that when a first-person narrator draws attention to his storytelling role, so reminding the audience of all the possibilities of forgetting, rehandling the material and generally cooking the books characteristic of telling a story. These devices often function as a kind of macro-punctuation of the narrative; they can be noticeable markers; and often signal the emotional state of the narrator. The effects of such references are considered more fully in the context of first-person narratives.

Toolan (2009, p.2) remarks that Readers' judgements of the interest in a narrative can be expressed in different ways and elicited by a series of procedures. But often, readers will comment on how they felt that a specific place in the narrative delivered a surprise, or that the

narration was unforthcoming to the point of being secretive, or slow, or confusing, or seemingly unconnected with previous text.

4.6 Irony and Satire

Irony according to Lehtsalu (1973, pp.27-29) is a figure of speech in which the literal meaning of a lexical unit is the opposite of that intended. Irony is based on the association of two opposite meanings – the denotational and the contextual meaning. The stylistic effect of irony lives in the fact that the contextual meaning does not oust the denotational one but merges into the latter, thus revealing the inner contradiction of a phenomenon. Irony is the use of a positive estimation instead of a negative one Irony in the wider sense may be understood only from the whole utterance, the positive or neutral attitude of the speaker including a negative estimation. Because of its function of representing the speaker's or author's subjective estimation, irony is a frequent stylistic tool in publicistic style and in works of fiction.

Raj K. Singh (2012, p.65) remarks that the major feature of irony is the indirect presentation of a contradiction between an action or expression and the context in which it occurs. In the figure of speech, emphasis is placed on the opposition between the literal and intended meaning of a statement. One thing is said and its opposite is implied. Ironic literature monopolizes such devices as character development, situation, and plot to stress the paradoxical nature of reality or the contrast between an ideal and actual condition, set of circumstances, frequently in such a way as to stress the absurdity present in the contradiction between substance and form.

Sonia S'hiri (1992) adds that "indirectness that characterizes irony but wrongly and indiscriminately includes other forms which require indirectness as well like allegory, metaphor, synecdoche, indirect speech acts". (p.18) Singh (2012, p.66) argues that irony differs from sarcasm in greater subtlety and wit. In sarcasm, ridicule or mockery is used harshly for destructive purposes. Moreover, the distinctive quality of sarcasm is present in the spoken word and manifested chiefly by vocal inflection, whereas satire and irony arising originally as literary and rhetorical forms, are exhibited in the organization or structuring of either language or literary material.

Singh (2012, p.67) illustrates that irony is widely used in psychological literary works. Irony is a disagreement or incongruity between what is said and what is understood, or what is expected and what actually occurs. It can be used intentionally or can happen unintentionally. Audience's role is very important. Authors can use irony to make their audience stop and think about what has just been said, or to emphasize a central idea. The audience's role in realizing the difference between what is said and what is normal or expected is essential to the successful use of irony . There are several types of irony in literature. Three main types are verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony .

Firstly, 'Verbal Irony' which is the contrast between what is said and what is meant; e.g., Satire. Secondly, 'Dramatic Irony' which is the contrast between what the character thinks to be true and what we know to be true. Sometimes as we read, we are placed in the position of knowing more than what one character knows. Because we know something the character does not, we read to discover how the character will react when he or she learns the truth of the situation . Finally, 'Situational Irony' which is the most common in literature. It is the contrast between what happens and what was expected (or what would seem appropriate). Because it emerges from the events and circumstances of a story, it is often more subtle and effective than verbal or dramatic irony. So, we can say, Satire is to say the opposite of what you intend.

There is another classification for irony which is 'Verbal Irony' and 'Situational Irony'. S'hiri (1992, p.16) states that 'Verbal Irony' is described as "the figure of speech

irony” alone, but also includes other manifestations of irony . But ‘Situational Irony’ occurs within the ironist’s description of situations seen under an ironic light where the role of Fate or God is assumed by the writer or narrator of a literary work.

Singh (2012, p.68) adds that irony is effective because it prevents the author’s work from becoming instructive. Since most works of fiction that employ irony tend to deal with serious issues, such as the hypocrisy in religion, society, or government, a more serious or realistic approach risks becoming pretentious. Irony, particularly satire, can be an effective way to not only approach such topics but do so in way that is humorous or entertaining.

“Irony’s capacity to mitigate or exacerbate negative evaluation is another bone of contention. Several research findings testify that irony mitigates the harshness of a negative remark, “diluting” the condemnation it carries.” (Dynel, 2014, p.541) Regarding to the reader Wayne Booth (1961, p.88) argues that a writer must have his eyes forever on his Reader. That alone constitutes Technique. Booth (1974, p.1) asserts that every good reader must be, among other things, sensitive in detecting and reconstructing ironic meanings.

4.7 Kurt Vonnegut

Vonnegut was born on November 11, 1922 to a child of a German-American family. His father was an architect and his mother was a famous beauty. Both spoke German fluently but failed to teach Kurt the language in light of widespread anti-German sentiment following World War I. Vonnegut describes his childhood growing up in Indianapolis as a fairly happy one. He was the youngest child in the family and the only way he could get anyone to listen to him was by telling jokes. To produce his humor, he listened to radio comedians popular, studying and copying their styles of delivery.

During the Great Depression years, Vonnegut’s mother began writing short stories, hoping to make money selling them to magazines. Although Vonnegut asserts that his mother was a good writer, she was never able to sell her stories. According to him, this was because she had no talent for the vulgarity which the magazines required. She committed suicide the night before Vonnegut returned home on leave for Mother’s Day weekend. His mother’s death is an event that shapes much of Vonnegut’s later fiction. He will compare her mother to fictional character Celia Hoover in *Breakfast of Champions*, a woman who kills herself by swallowing Drano.

After his graduation from University of Chicago, worked as a reporter for the Chicago City News Bureau, a job at which he was not happy. Leaving Chicago in 1947, Vonnegut moved to Schenectady, New York, to take a job in the public relations department at General Electric. At General Electric Vonnegut began his career as a fiction writer. He best known for a three of novels published in the 1960s and early 1970s -*Cat’s Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and *Breakfast of Champions*- Vonnegut is the author of 11 other novels and 50 short stories, as well as numerous essays, plays, and autobiographical pieces.

4. Vonnegut’s Symbolism and Imagery in *Cat’s Cradle*

In this section we will present Vonnegut’s use of symbolism and imagery in *Cat’s Cradle* from a pragmatic perspective to show how he employed that to convey his themes.

5.1 Cat’s Cradle

The ‘cat’s cradle’ is a complicated symbol that is clearly front and center to the novel. It is also a representation of illusion. As the story progresses in *Cat’s Cradle*, Newt refers to the cat’s cradle when confronted with the lies people tell themselves to help themselves feel better. John discovers Angela hides her marital problems by pretending to be happy, and Newt answers, "See the cat? See the cradle?" (*Cat’s Cradle*, Chapter 80, p.166). It’s the exact same response he has to Bokonomism.

The cat's cradle is an important symbol for the novel's exploration of truth and lies. Some characters lie to themselves for happiness, like a child pretending to see the cat and the cradle because they enjoy the game. Others can only see the Xs made of string because that's the truth of the matter. When considered with the epigraph the title creates a parallel between the book and the children's game. Just like the cat's cradle, this story is not a true thing. It is a bunch words put together pretending to be something else.

5.2 Ice Nine

Dr. Felix's final invention is a unique variation of the ice crystal called 'Ice-nine'. The crystal has a melting point of 114 degrees Fahrenheit, meaning it is solid at room temperature. Even more, Ice-nine is solid at body temperature, instantly freezing all the water in a person's tissues and killing them on contact. It is an incredibly destructive secret weapon. So, Ice-nine symbolizes the destructive power of the nuclear bomb. It is the substance that destroyed the world. Rather than bombs or a plague, it ended the world not in violence or pain, but in sudden. It is a symbol of the new war, or the new weapons which will destroy the world. Nobody meant to end the world, it just happened out of circumstance and stupidity.

While John and Newt are driving, Newt mentions that maybe John could "find some neat way to die" (*Cat's Cradle*, Chapter 126, p.260). John mentions his dream about climbing Mount McCabe but does not realize what he should bring with him.

We can argue that this novel is a "history of human stupidity", as Bokonon suggested. And if John took that much of Bokonon's advice, a reasonable chance exists that he followed the rest of it, too. He is probably a statue on Mount McCabe. John's committing suicide by becoming a "statue" act as a type of monument. John literally turns himself into a symbol of human stupidity. Mrs. Crosby wanted to place the American flag on top of Mount McCabe, so this is clearly the place where monuments or in other word symbols should go.

5.3 The Epigraph

Farrell (2008, p.84) discusses that the theme of illusion versus reality is evident from Cut's Cradle's title and epigraph. Prefaced by the warning that "Nothing in this book is true," and asks the readers to "Live by the *foma* that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy". The novel asks us to consider what truth is. While readers recognize that they are reading a work of fiction, and thus an invented or "untrue" story, at the same time, we expect literature to deliver another, deeper kind of truth through the fictional stories it presents.

"*Foma*" is the Bokononist word for lies; so, Bokonon's argument is that certain lies will "make you brave and kind and healthy and happy". The epigraph is asking the readers to look for value in the lies that bring those qualities to life—whether those lies are religion, love or any other things. The opposite might be true. The truth actually makes us cowardly, mean-spirited, weak, and unhappy. If such *foma* as religion and art help us be braver and kinder, better human beings, surely these are useful lies.

5. Vonnegut's Humor and Satire in *Cat's Cradle*

Vonnegut's humor is demonstrated primarily through the black humor, a literary technique that makes us laugh so that we don't cry. *Cat's Cradle* is a satirical story of a man's quest to write a book about the day the world ended referring to the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. It is full of irony and satire, but it is necessary to recognize the underlying implications of Vonnegut's humor. Although Vonnegut clearly intends for his readers to laugh while reading his book, *Cat's Cradle* is not merely a cheerful humor through human foibles. Vonnegut employs humor as a means to make his reader assume a critical attitude toward their fixed culture, of which science, religion, nation, and family are only a few. Underlying Vonnegut's cheerful humor is a wisdom exploration of the dangers inherent in the combination of human stupidity and indifference with mankind's technological capacity for mass destruction. "the main concern of Vonnegut's novels is to attack a set of beliefs that

men surrender themselves to, thereby, causing misery to themselves. ...express the way in which the common man's life had been disrupted by radical social changes of the postwar era". (Hanuman, April 2011, p.1)

He shows irony in the fact that so many are focused on the creation of the destructive and devastating weapon; the atom bomb, when in fact, the more serious threat to humanity is the creation of Ice-9. Moreover, *Cat's Cradle* has drawn serious critical attention. This apocalyptic satire on philosophy, religion, and technologic progress centers on a chip of Ice-Nine capable of solidifying all water on earth. The novel exemplifies Vonnegut's blend of scornful and humorous satire and his use of narrative deflections to examine contemporary life by showcasing the state of the world and humanity. Through crude black humor Vonnegut displays science as a detrimental factor to safety and real progress.

THIS IS A CHRISTIAN NATION! ALL FOOT PLAY WILL BE PUNISHED BY THE HOOK, said another sign. The sign was meaningless to me, since I had not yet learned that Bokononists mingled their souls by pressing the bottoms of their feet together. (*Cat's Cradle*, chapter 61, p.126)

In case we forgot that this is a satirical novel, here's a ridiculous sign to make us laugh and remind us of Vonnegut's concept of granfalloon: the separating of people in groups based on silly differences.

Vonnegut introduces a religion called "Bokononism," which parodies all religions and to propagate the belief that well-meaning lies are more helpful to humanity than absolute truths. The novel begins on a typical carnivalesque note: "Nothing in this book is true. Live by the *foma* (harmless untruths) that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy." (*Cat's Cradle*, p. 5)

Vonnegut juxtaposes science and religion and characterizes the institutions constructed around them as destructive and dehumanizing. The novel exhibits a realistic world where the lies of religion serve a better purpose than the truth of science. This juxtaposition of truth and lies and their inversion serve the topsy-turvy nature of this carnivalesque world.

According to Vonnegut faith is not rooted in religion, but in man himself. Vonnegut believes that writers can influence people's ideas profoundly. Vonnegut also parallels religion's attempts to explain the origin of the earth with his Creation story. "In the beginning," he writes (referencing the book of Genesis) "God created the earth and looked upon it with his cosmic loneliness" (*Cat's Cradle*, p. 243). God then "created every living creature that now moveth" (*Cat's Cradle*, p. 243). out of mud. One of these creatures was Man. Man then inquired what the purpose of this creation was. God's answer is "I leave it to you to think of one for all this" (*Cat's Cradle*, p. 243). Vonnegut is playing with the human belief that there must be a purpose for everything. This is what leads people to espouse religious beliefs in the first place. Religious people have tried for centuries to determine "the reason for all this" and have developed elaborate answers. Yet, if we are to believe Bokonon, all of it is "*foma*" and life doesn't require a purpose.

As a direct witness to the bombing of Dresden as a soldier during World War II, Vonnegut was left with haunting memories of the senseless misery and mass destruction of war which get clearly reflected in *Cat's Cradle*. Right at the beginning, the reader is warned: "Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either" (*Cat's Cradle*, p. 14). Rightly so, Bokononism, the religion Vonnegut introduces in the novel is based on lies which in the carnival lens is unmasking of truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks. Like art, religion might not be real—but that doesn't mean it's not valuable. Here, the narrator seems to be saying the same thing about religion.

Satire openly mocks people, communities, or even entire societies. The point is to make the targeted group shape up. When presented with its own follies in a comical fashion, the target group might just realize its shortcomings and decide to change its ways. *Cat's Cradle* has its sights set on religion, science, America, the middle class, the upper class, capitalists, communists, conservatives, liberals, dictators, colonialism, altruism, among others. Vonnegut wants to show us how ridiculous these groupings and ideologies really are. He satirizes the very notion of constructing people in an "us" and "them" mentality.

Cat's Cradle presents both tragedy and comedy simultaneously—a tragicomedy. The ice-nine apocalypse is pretty tragic—what with civilization shattered and humankind near extinction and all that noise. It is pretty hilarious how the survivors deal with their reconstructed world. Mrs. Crosby knits an American flag to put on Mount McCabe, even though there is no America left for the flag to represent. John tries to have a honeymoon with Mona, even though their bridal suite is a bomb shelter. And, while the ending is not exactly happy, it could also be argued that the characters aren't any worse off than before.

6. Vonnegut's Narrative style in *Cat's Cradle*

Cat's Cradle employs a standard first-person narrative style. It employs a first-person central narrative style to shape the heterodiegetic. All detail we get in *Cat's Cradle* we receive through John who is our main character and narrator. This is clear because the story is presented with the "I" pronoun. For example: "Go get your clarinet," urged Newt. "That always helps." (*Cat's Cradle*, p.163) Here we notice how Newt isn't really speaking. John hears Newt and then reports back to us what was said. In fact, no character other than John can technically speak for him or herself in *Cat's Cradle*.

Gareth Langdon (2014, p.9) argues that *Cat's Cradle* is Vonnegut's first novel which employs this narrative point of view. By writing from the perspective of John, Vonnegut chooses one single point of view of the events in the story and is able to delve deeply into the mind of his lead character, but is limited in his capacity to explore the thoughts and feelings of more minor characters.

The narrator continuously asks us to question his "Truth". The first four chapters of *Cat's Cradle* outline some of the narrator's intentions. They stand as a kind of prologue, being most likely written after the book's completion and certainly after John's conversion to Bokononism. Here an example from Chapter 4:

BE THAT AS IT MAY, I intend in this book to include as many members of my karass as possible, and I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on Earth we, collectively, have been up to.

I do not intend that this book be a tract on behalf of Bokononism. I should like to offer a Bokononist warning about it, however. The first sentence in The Books of Bokonon is this:

"All of the true things I am about to tell you are shameless lies."

My Bokononist warning is this:

Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either.

So be it. (*Cat's Cradle*, chapter 4, p. 14)

By drawing our attention to the untruth of his own writing, John is reminding us to question always the claims of writing and to try to understand the layers involved in textual production. What is important is to deliver the idea of the usefulness of religion. Even those founded on lies are useful, according to John, and if we cannot understand that we should stop reading. This is the debate which evokes throughout the novel.

7. Conclusion

Kurt Vonnegut's own style of writing tends to be simple, employing short sentences. Simplicity in language is something highly regarded by Vonnegut. He believed that simplicity is a lost art, one that when applied correctly could convey every sentiment in human language in only a few words. Vonnegut's excellent technique and unique style are unbelievably powerful.

Cat's Cradle presents many of the institutions that we hold sacred, that give our lives structure, meaning and stability in a bold astonish way. According to Derek D. Miller (2011), There are several significantly strong postmodern concepts Vonnegut brings into view in this novel. First is the idea of truth, which he satirizes though the religion Bokononism. Second, is the idea of progress and how society views that progress only betters mankind, and brings it good fortune. The third concept is the concept of absolute knowledge and the idea of attaining it through science and experimentation, which relates to the themes of progress through his use parody.

Cat's Cradle is a highly postmodern text because it parodies the Grand Narrative of absolute truth and the modern ideas of progress. Vonnegut uses *Cat's Cradle* to satire the ideas society holds about progress and how it is achieved through the detection of truth; the detection of knowledge gained through science and experimentation. Society seems to believe that it can better itself through obtaining pragmatic, scientific data about the world around us. This is a belief of Modernism. This belief is that the more man knows about the nature of how things work or the more knowledge society obtains, the better off it is. A renowned example of postmodernism's questioning of this modern sham is the creation of the atom bomb (which appears in the novel).

Supposedly the progression of society into the realms of science, discovery, and knowledge, leads the world to the ever-nearing goal of a utopia. However, the only benefit one of society's greatest scientific discoveries, in this case the atomic bomb, was the capacity and ramifications of endings hundreds of thousands of lives. So, does this detection of science, of knowledge, of truth, really lead society to the bettering of mankind? Vonnegut uses this example in *Cat's Cradle*. This is one of the characteristics of the novel which makes it a postmodern work of art.

From a modern perspective it is assumed that gaining knowledge leads to good things, and that seeing beyond falseness brings mankind one step closer to a utopia. However, from a postmodern outlook, in example the outlook of Vonnegut's Bokonism, this truth really leads society no closer to a perfect society, it actually causes deviation from it. Vonnegut uses Bokonism to parallel with the postmodern idea of there not being a single all-knowing religious being.

Vonnegut's skillful use of implicatures represents an unrestricted use of technology where humanity is harmed rather than helped. So, the proliferation of nuclear weapons never acts as a deterrent to war. His novel is black comedy that is worthy of a laugh, despite the desperate, hopeless, and sometimes fatal situations it puts its characters through. All this is written in a style of short sentences and paragraphs with details that are sparse and telling.

We conclude Vonnegut's style by the following points. His language is simple and the sentences are short. His eloquence is serving his ideas and themes. He is always clever in selecting the most effective words, and relating the words to one another unambiguously, rigidly, like parts of a machine. He uses the narrative style skillfully to convey his thoughts from more than one side and perspective. His novels' titles are symbolic and implicature supports his main idea.

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