Parody in Kurt Vonnegut’s Novels, Breakfast of Champions and Slaughterhouse-Five

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TEZ ONAYI

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This dissertation aims to analyze the use of parody in Kurt Vonnegut’s novels, *Breakfast of Champions* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* in reference to critics and theorists who have covered the status and function of parody in their works. In postmodern fiction, parody has undoubtedly assumed a greater significance and has become an indispensable element in narration. This dissertation also maps the historical terrain of postmodernism in American fiction and attempts to illustrate Kurt Vonnegut as a parodist in a brief reference of his most notable works. Although disregarded by the critics as the voice of “pop”, “cult” and “anti-art”, Vonnegut gained significance as a self-reflexive writer in American fiction in the 1960s with the rise of postmodernism. He is regarded as a unique and experimental writer who employs parody extensively in his fiction. In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut magnificently alludes to parody to signal consumer culture in his critique of American culture. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, whereas, he subverts the voice of dominant through parody which makes him sabotage the power of official history.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BC  Breakfast of Champions
SF  Slaughterhouse-Five
INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine the use of parody and how it is employed in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. It also traces the definition and etymology of parody from Aristotle until today in order to reveal how parody is problematic. Parody is derived from the ancient Greek word 'parodia', from the word for 'ode' and the prefix 'para'. It is used to depict an 'imitating singer' or 'singing in imitation'. The earliest formal example of parody, the mock-epic, uses Homer as the basis to ridicule texts or subjects regarded as inferior, as in the *Batrachomyomachia*. It should also be noted that although the ancient Greeks employed several different words in their descriptions of parody, modern commentators have limited vocabulary while defining parody. They have lessened parody to the more modern concept of the burlesque and mockery as something trivial due to its ridiculing nature. Although parody, irony, satire, burlesque and pastiche do overlap in their concerns and approaches, distinctions between parody and such forms also exist. In order not to confuse the term, these distinctions have been made while defining irony, satire, burlesque and pastiche.

For the purpose of this study, parody will be examined as intertextual, metafictional, double-coded, blank and destructive which has been critiqued by many theorists like Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, Gerard Genette, Patricia Waugh, Malcom Bradbury, Leslie Fiedler and Linda Hutcheon who believe that parody is best suited to portray this postmodern world and provide a new perspective on the issues it raises for the cultural phenomena. This study will also show why parody has been the most appropriate strategy for Kurt Vonnegut. It is claimed that the continued popularity of Vonnegut is derived from his being a postmodern writer who employs parody in his works by subverting realist notions of plot and character and taking a considerable liberty in style and narration in his critique of American culture.

The second chapter maps the terrain of postmodernism in American fiction in the historical contexts of postwar America and attempts to illustrate Kurt Vonnegut...
as a parodist in a brief reference to his most notable works. In American fiction, the years 1960 and 1968 marked the beginning of self-reflexiveness. The modes of American fiction in the 1960s can also be summarized as the mixing of official history with the picaresque and burlesque. American history is “remade” self-reflexively which has been extensively examined by the parody novels of Kurt Vonnegut. This innovative fiction in the 1960s was a systematic challenge against conventional practices. Kurt Vonnegut has experimentally devised strategies to generate narratives from his background and past. By the intense use of autobiography and self-reflexivity, Vonnegut achieves to employ different stylistics, which is named as parody, play, black humour and intertextuality. Vonnegut has further begun to elaborate on the absence of meaning with the rise of new fiction. By exposing the absurd and deforming the reality into some grotesque manner, Vonnegut has focused on the inadequacy of sense and meaning. In his works, language and temporal disorder, paranoia, looseness of association and creation of vicious circles have become evident. In American fiction, the authors between 1960 and 1990 had no faith that the old cultural values were recoverable after the Holocaust and they delighted in delirium. The post-war American scene has for sure provided materials for writers to experiment their techniques. The McCarthy era in the 1950s, the rise of neo-imperialism, Vietnam War, the political marginalization of the blacks, the standardization of America through technology and the power of huge corporations all yielded to a sense of disillusionment. In the seventies, the assassination of Kennedy and Martin Luther King was followed by the Nixon administration, and the Watergate scandal. Mass media failed to reflect illusion and optimism in American society which led to distrust of the official discourse. Kurt Vonnegut, with the confrontation of the scandalous historical events, have brought forward a new idea of history. He has aspired to disrupt the official discourse in his self-reflexive novels. By nature, history has vanished into the past and cannot be studied at first hand. History, then, may not be the transparent record of any truth.

In this discussion, the postmodern parody is exemplified, as I have indicated, by the fiction of Kurt Vonnegut. Vonnegut is most significantly noted for his use of parody in his novels. He utilizes parody as a thematic and structural basis for his
novels by mixing historical documentary with fantasy and comic absurdity. In his futuristic novel, *Player Piano*, Vonnegut makes a parody of technology and automation. His second book, *The Sirens of Titan* was regarded as the first self-reflexive novel. It is the *Cat’s Cradle* who made Vonnegut a postmodern writer. The book is a mixture of playlets, mini-stories, poems, calypsos, songs, drawings, the refrains and repeated exclamations. The parody of religion and language is at the heart of the novel. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* is a study of the aristocracy of wealth in American society. In the novel, Vonnegut introduces his most interesting creature, a parody of a science fiction writer, Kilgore Trout. With the publication of anti-war novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut achieved the peak of his fame. *Breakfast of Champions* carried the metafictional impulse in Vonnegut’s writing to the point of author’s appearing in the novel, as himself, and even talking to his fictional alter ego, Kilgore Trout, and finally setting him free. In the novel, Kurt Vonnegut meticulously deals with parody and diagnoses the dissolution of consumer culture. Vonnegut’s appeal to films and comedies, especially “pop culture” revealed itself in *Slapstick*. In *Jailbird*, Vonnegut deals with one of his favourite subjects, the parody of American Dream and he turns the rags-to-riches motif into a failure by referring to a series of major historical accounts in American culture. In *Galapagos*, the narrator is the decapitated spirit of Leon Trout (the son of Kilgore Trout), a Vietnam era deserter who lost his head in a sheet metal accident in the lowest part of the cruise ship Bahia de Darwin during its construction. His story tells of the end of humanity, but the race continues through the offspring of a genetically mutated Hiroshima victim cunningly impregnated with the sperm of a German American sea captain. Vonnegut refers to biological history and makes his readers realize that within the seeds of our destruction, there is a promise of salvation. *Bluebeard* is presented as the autobiography of Rabo Karabekian, -one of his paintings also appears in Midland City’s Art Festival in *Breakfast of Champions*-, a minor Abstract Expressionist artist. Almost all of the novel’s major characters are artists, and Vonnegut reflects on the importance of art to society and to the individuals who create it. He also shows his readers that even art can be parodied.
The third chapter examines the use of parody in *Breakfast of Champions*. All through the book, Vonnegut constructs the parodies of religion, technology, art, language and American way of life to critique American social contradictions. The novel is like a parade of America with its symbols and referents. Vonnegut amusingly portrays America by the help of his childish drawings and doodles. The novel is full of symbols, ordinary objects and advertisements which parody America through false images. By drawing his sources from every day objects, myths, popular arts and even from the banalities of American life, Vonnegut feeds on American society’s passion for images. Even the name of the book denotes parody and takes its name from a cereal product. Vonnegut’s main intention is to startle the reader with the peculiar proximity of objects and distortion of symbols. He deliberately forces incongruities on the reader which yield to parody. In a capitalist society, Vonnegut wants the individuals to see themselves as consumers who can only achieve happiness and the realization of dreams by the purchase of commodities. In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut recounts the history or rather the tragedy of America. As a postmodern writer, Vonnegut demonstrates cultural logic of late capital which has been viewed by Jameson. Throughout the book, he elaborately parodies the “suicidal” and “schizophrenic” American middle class life.

In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut’s favourite science fiction writer, Kilgore Trout’s subplots aid to transmit Vonnegut’s vision about all sorts of issues, from art to environment. These bizarre texts become the authentic texts that Vonnegut wants to write. Trout is actually a parody of Vonnegut himself who turns the author into an artless storyteller. The novel is surely an attempt to overthrow the myth of author. The practice of metafictional writing has surely changed the traditional understanding of the author and challenged the author’s authority over the text. Parody limits the romantic notion of the author as the sole source of meaning in the text, but it also modifies the poststructuralist claim that the text can exist independently from Authority, because parody depends upon the reader’s recognition of the intent to parody—an intent which therefore implies an author.
The last chapter outlines Vonnegut’s treatment of history by giving war as a backdrop in relation to Billy Pilgrim’s time-travels. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a story of Billy Pilgrim, a young infantry scout captured by the Germans and is taken to Dresden where he survives the firebombing of the city in 1945. Billy copes with his war trauma through time travels to the planet Tralfamadore, whose inhabitants have the ability to see all of time, past, present and the future simultaneously. The novel parodies the traditional war novels. The numerous incorporations of historical sources enable the author to present his past experience from his vantage point. Through the presentation of the historical event of the Dresden bombing, Vonnegut calls attention to historiographic metafiction. He rejects projecting present beliefs and standards onto the past by asserting the specificity and particularity of his individual past. Vonnegut deconstructs the realist version of history. As he criticizes the realist version of history, he disagrees with the idea that history as a text surely enjoys a special status in relation to reality. The sense of history is ironic since we perceive history by means of pop images and simulacra.

The connections between postmodern fiction and parody have been covered in Kurt Vonnegut’s two notable novels, *Breakfast of Champions* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Kurt Vonnegut appeals parody and employs it to reveal postmodern condition. The postmodern is defined, in accordance with Jean-François Lyotard, as a radical skepticism toward foundational meta-narratives, and by Fredric Jameson’s notion of the postmodern as the cultural expression of late capitalism. Although postmodernism blur the distinctions between types by stressing instead the instability of the distinctions themselves, parody stands out the most suitable device for the postmodern writer to point to the ideology and social critique of the era. Parody assumes an ideological norm that allows Vonnegut to demonstrate the follies of a culture and it is viewed as the cultural dominant.
1. The Paradox of Parody

1.1. Parody

1.1.1. The Definition and Etymology of Parody: Ancient and Modern

Parody is derived from the ancient Greek word ‘parodia’, from the word for ‘ode’ and the prefix ‘para’. The definition of parody has become the subject of argument owing to the ambiguity of its prefix ‘para’. ‘Para’ as a preposition is defined ‘by the side of’, ‘beside’, ‘whence alongside of, by, past, beyond etc’. In her book, *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon refers to the etymology of the Greek word, parodia which suggests a wider meaning that of “counter” or “against” and “beside” (Hutcheon, 32); therefore, it renders an accord or intimacy rather than contrast. In ancient Greek literature, parody was a type of poem that imitated another poem’s style. Marcus Fabius Quintilian, the great rhetorician, lawyer and teacher, in his *Institutio Oratorio* (“Guide to Rhetoric”) had described the word ‘parode’ as “a name drawn from songs sung in imitation of others, but employed by an abuse of language to designate imitation in verse or prose”(Quintilian, 395). Fred W. Householder Jr. draws a parallel between ‘parodia’ and an earlier use of the term ‘parodos’ (plural parodoi) to depict an ‘imitating singer’ or ‘singing in imitation’ which was derived from ‘parode’, or ‘ode’ ‘sung in imitation of another’ (cited Rose, 7-8). He further defines Aristotle’s term ‘parodia’ as “a narrative poem of moderate length, in epic meter, using epic vocabulary, and treating a light, satirical, or mock heroic subject” (cited Rose, 7). The use of the term in relation to these mock epics implies that ‘parodia’:

could imitate both the form and subject-matter of the heroic epics, and create humour by then rewriting, the plot or the characters so that there was some comic contrast with the more ‘serious’ epic form of the work, and/or create comedy
by mixing references to the more serious aspects and characters of the epic with comically lowly and inappropriate figures from everyday or animal world (Rose, 15).

*The Webster Dictionary* describes parody as:

[A] literary composition in which the form and expression of serious writings are closely imitated but adapted to a ridiculous subject or a humorous method of treatment; a burlesque imitation of a serious poem.

Although in dictionary meaning, parody is depicted as burlesque and ridicule, the term ‘parodia’ has subsequently had a long and complicated history, acquiring various connotations as far as artistic practices are concerned. Joseph A. Dane points out that the lexicons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries recognize many words related to what we consider parody: “parody”, “travesty”, “lampoon”, “burlesque”, “cento”, “pastiche”, but each has its own history and many are related to particular works which are not always literary (Dane, 122-123). The word ‘pastiche’ for instance developed from painting. The earliest medieval ‘centos’ used lines from Virgil’s *Aeneid* to generate comic epic. The word ‘travesty’ was first used as a noun only after it had appeared as an adjective in the titles of particular literary works. Thus, parody is to be distinguished from travesty because the textual transformation which it performs is done in a playful rather than a satirical manner. Joseph A. Dane claims that the lexicographers are aware of this unsystematic and accidental history of the vocabulary of parody; however, they fail to systematize the word synchronically by undermining the history of it. Thus, “a conservative twentieth-century critic” who attempts “to retain this vocabulary with all its classical associations is clearly engaged in something other than literary criticism” (Dane, 134). Dane further claims that such definitions are cultural and social:

What definitions of the lexicographers imply is a critical system under which most of the controlling axioms and definitions are binary…The critical utility of a word is
measured by the degree to which it can organize [binary] pairs. Parody implies ancient, good, Greek and possibly aristocratic. Burlesque is foreign, modern, popular, and usually bad. Travesty is a modern adaptation of an ancient text; aristocrats are debased by speaking a popular language, and that too is clearly unacceptable (Dane, 133-134).

Besides, there is also a great danger of translating the ancient Greek words and their connotations into other languages. For instance, the words of songs sung by a set of strollers called “buffoons”, who followed Homeric rhapsodists to entertain the audience by burlesque as the bards recited poems of Homer, were later on changed and turned into something ridiculous. The word “buffoonery” began to be used as people who provide amusement by their appearance or behaviour. Vicki K. Janik notes that buffoons “offer society skeptical, encumbered viewpoints that scorn pride and challenge such concepts as logic, cause, reward and solution” (Janik, xiv).

Among the critics, however, it was the Renaissance critic, J.C. Scaliger who first associated parody with ridicule. His definition of parodia was “an inverted rhapsody taking on a ridiculous sense through word changes” (cited Dane, 123). This definition later on “may be said to have led some English critics at least to view …[parody] in a more negative light than was necessary…” (Rose, 9) because of the word’s associations with mockery in English, parody has begun to be regarded as burlesque, from the Italian “burla”, meaning a joke or trick much easier. As William Hazlitt suggests “It is a common mistake to suppose that parodies degrade, or imply a stigma on the subject: on the contrary, they in general imply something serious or sacred in the original” (Hazlitt, 41).

A history of parody shows that parody is problematic in the sense that the ancient Greeks used several different words while defining parody; however, modern commentators have limited vocabulary in their descriptions of parody. Another factor which may need to be noted is that the records concerning earliest uses and meanings of parody have been either lost in time or considered unimportant by ancient scholars. Aristotle writes in chapter 5 of his Poetics that “Now tragedy’s stages of
development, and those responsible for them, have been remembered, but comedy’s early history was forgotten because no serious interest was taken in it” (Aristotle, 6). Aristotle had applied the word parodia to Hegemon of Thasos, who was the first writer of parodies. Hegemon was known to be the author of mock-epics, such as the Gigantomachia or ‘Battle of the Giants’. Mock-heroic, a form related to parody, applies the idiom of epic poetry to everyday or ‘low’ subjects, to comic effect. In Aristotle’s description, parodia is a narrative poem, of moderate length, in the meter and vocabulary of epic poems, but treating a light, satirical, or mock-heroic subject. These epic poems familiar to the Greeks were those of Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey. A parodia is a specific literary form for which prizes were awarded at poetic contests; only one of these poems, the Batrachomyomachia, or Battle of the Frogs and Mice which was attributed by some to Homer, has survived. The whole story is based on one-day war which is broken up by an invasion of miniature monsters and which rages so violently that the gods themselves are forced to intervene. The main difference between The Battle of Frogs and Mice and the Iliad is that the heroes of The Battle are vermin whereas the heroes of the Iliad are mighty men. Another difference is that the Olympian gods, who are treated disrespectfully in Homer, are mocked far boldly in Frogs. In the poem, the champions slay their opponents with courage and boldness. They address one another in noble and chivalrous speeches, like the Archaeans and the Trojans and the poet narrates their deeds and achievements in the same manner as Homer does in Iliad:

So there came suddenly warriors with mailed back sand curving claws, crooked beasts that walked sideways, nut-cracker-jawed, shell-hided: bony they were, flat-backed, with glistening shoulders and bandy legs and stretching arms and eyes that looked behind them. They had also eight legs and two feelers -- persistent creatures who are called crabs (Battle of Frogs).

In ancient Greece, the majority of works to which words for parody are referred; parody was understood as being humorous in the sense of comic. The Aristophanic scholiasts, for instance, used parody to describe a device for comic discourse. Margaret A. Rose claims that the Aristophanic scholiasts use both
‘parodia’ and ‘parodeo’ as something serious and humorous and the terms cover “all sorts of comic quotation and textual rearrangement” (Rose, 19). Aristophanes by parodying the dramatic style of Aeschylus and Euripides in The Frogs had successfully shown how the use of parody might both aim at a comic effect and at the transmission of serious messages. Aristophanes was both able to parody and admire Euripides with laughter and insight, criticism and ridicule without any malicious intentions.

Modern scholars, however, have lessened parody to the more modern concept of the burlesque and mockery and regarded it as trivial due to its ridiculing nature. Late-modern writers nevertheless have disregarded the comic effect of parody to secure it from denigration. In her book, A Theory of Parody, Linda Hutcheon, for instance, suggests that there is nothing in parodia that requires the presence of ridicule and what is significant in parody apart from its imitative aspect is in fact its “ironic inversion” (Hutcheon, 6). She furthermore regards parody as a form of imitation, formulation or repetition which is characterized by difference rather than similarity. Hutcheon continues that:

Parody is one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance (Hutcheon, 85).

Rather than defining parody as a mode of self-referentiality, however, Hutcheon argues that incongruity, discrepancy and discontinuity are the major features to refer to a text as parody. Rose describes parody and its application in its broadest sense as functioning as first imitating and then changing either, and sometimes both, the “form” and the “content”, or “style” and “subject-matter”, or “syntax” and most simply its vocabulary. Rose claims that: “In its most sophisticated forms, the parody, moreover is both synthetic and analytic and diachronic and synchronic in its analysis of the work it quotes” (Rose, 90). She continues that a good parody should “[evoke] a past work and its reception and link it with other analyses and audiences” (Rose, 90). Furthermore, she argues that most successful parodies
result from the incongruity between the original and its parody together with the changes made by the parodist to the original by the rewriting of the old text. As a whole, in her terms, either by quoting or imitating, the parody should also have something new to say to survive independently as a parody.

Gerard Genette omits the comic and ridiculing effect of parody in his description and just like Hutcheon, his major concern is on “transtextuality”, that is, the “textual transcendence of the text” or “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (Genette, 1). He further terms “hypertextuality” that is, “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext, upon which is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (Genette, 5). He suggests two types of hypertextual relation, transformation and imitation. Each of these has a playful, a satirical, and a serious mode. Playful transformation is parody, satirical transformation is travesty, and serious transformation is transposition. Playful imitation is pastiche, satirical imitation is caricature, and serious imitation is forgery (Genette, 28).

Genette focuses on how the original text (hypotext) can be altered by the author while applying parody. He cites Lewis Carroll’s poem “You are old, Father William”, as an example of parody since it transforms Robert Southey’s poem in such a playful way. Here is Southey’s poem, “The old man’s complaints. And how he gained them.”

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,  
The few locks which are left you are grey;  
You are hale, Father William, a hearty old man,  
Now tell me the reason I pray.  
In the days of my youth, Father William replied,  
I remember'd that youth would fly fast,  
And abused not my health and my vigour at first  
That I never might need them at last

He further illustrates how Lewis Carroll’s parody subdues the didacticism of the parodied text (Genette, 213):
"Repeat You are old, Father William," said the Caterpillar.
Alice folded her hands, and began: --
"You are old, father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white; 
And yet you incessantly stand on your head --
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"
"In my youth," father William replied to his son, 
"I feared it would injure the brain; 
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none, 
Why, I do it again and again."

On the other hand, in American tradition, parody is generally disguised in the use of humour and ridicule. Robert P. Falk claims that of all the American classic writers probably Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allen Poe and Walt Whitman have been the target of the greatest number of parodies, but only “a few bright passages have survived from a vast desert of verses” (Falk, 12) until today. Perhaps, the best example of all is James Russell Lowell’s parody of Poe in his poem “A Fable for Critics”.

There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,  
Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge,  
Who talks like a book of iambics and pentameters,  
In a way to make people of common-sense damn metres,  
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,

Falk further asserts that Ralph Waldo Emerson’s transcendental style has also been parodied several times and “his most frequently imitated poem, ‘Brahma’ provoked a few fairly good burlesque versions of the mistiness of the Emersonian style” (Falk, 13). He illustrates many good examples of parody which can be seen in American tradition.

Parody found a highly congenial atmosphere in the twenties during which many of the best American components of the art did their work. Corey Ford, Louis Untermeyer, Frank Sullivan, Donald Ogden Stewart, and Robert Bencley managed to take off most of the popular writers of that era from Fitzgerald to O’Neill. In the thirties the New Yorker carried on the tradition with many fine parodies by Thurber, Walcott Gibbs, Clifton Fadiman, Corneila Otis Skinner and
Thus, Bayard Taylor attempted a parody of Emerson in his “Diversions of the Echo Club” (Falk, 13). Another writer, James Fenimore Cooper gained one form of immortality through the efforts of Mark Twain, Francis Bret Harte, and William Makepeace Thackeray. In their parodies and burlesques of the Leatherstocking tales, “Cooper’s heavy, periphrastic language, his noble savages and nobler scouts, his fainting females and miracles of woodcraft” (Falk, 14) are caricatured. Nevertheless, it was Henry James, who was compared to a hippopotamus striving to pick up a pea in the corner of his den by H. G. Wells. James throughout his career was the target of antagonism and parody due to “the ambiguities of his method” (Falk, 14). He was poked fun at by J. K. Bangs, editor of Puck and other humorous magazines in the eighties and nineties because of his endless sentences in The Return of the Screw.

1.2. Other Forms: Irony, Satire, Burlesque and Pastiche

1.2.1. Irony

Irony is a literary technique in which characters and situations are treated in such a way as to show the incongruities between appearance and reality, intention and achievement etc., the writer’s personal view being unmistakably implied though not always openly stated. In simple words, irony is ‘saying what one does not mean’, or ‘meaning something different from what one says.’

Norman Knox pursues the origins of irony in Greek and Latin literature in which the first significant instances of the Greek word eironëia are found in the dialogues of Plato, with reference to Socrates. He claims that:

The central fact about the history of irony in Greek use is its inseparability from Socrates’ personality and influence. But it is essential to remember that neither Socrates nor his friends ever used the word in a serious way to describe the Socratic method, and the idealizations of Socratic dialect
which modern writers have embodied “Socratic irony” were never attached to the word irony in classical Greek and Latin (Knox, 3).

Knox claims that Plato defines eironeia not as straightforward lying, but a deliberate simulation which the audience or hearer was meant to recognize: thus, Aristotle also referred to irony in his Ethics and Rhetoric, but it was the Platonic and Socratic use that became definitive for later thought. Aristotle recommended irony as a rhetorical weapon far from being a virtue. A good citizen would be neither boastful, nor ironic, but sincere in his self-presentation. Although many nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers regard Socrates as the originator of irony, Socratic irony was actually absent from medieval and Renaissance works on irony and rhetoric. Even in the Renaissance, when the Socratic dialogues and the fuller works of Cicero became available, ironia was not considered to be the full-scale mode of Socratic existence; the term was rather a figure of speech, an artful way of using language. Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian all defined irony in reference to Socrates, but they did not regard irony as a radically transformative political position; in fact, Socrates’ irony constituted a mode of argument. Quintillian considers the term as trope and as figure. Irony as a trope, he claims, is “franker in its meaning, and, despite the fact it implies something other than it says, makes no pretence about it” (Quintillian, IX. ii.45). He states that “But in the figurative form of irony, the speaker disguises his entire meaning, the disguise being apparent rather than confessed” and he further continues that:

For in the trope the conflict is purely verbal, while in the figure the meaning, and sometimes the whole aspect of our case, conflicts with the language and the tone of the voice adopted; nay, a man’s whole life may be coloured with irony as was the case with Socrates, who was called an ironist because he assumed the role of an ignorant man lost in wonder at the wisdom of others (Quintillian, IX.ii.46).

Claire Colebrook raises the question of application of irony in a historical context and discusses the validity of irony:
If there has always been irony both in practice and in name, it has not always taken the same form. This historical problem places us in an ironic predicament: how justified are we in reading past texts as ironic; do they mean what they seem to be saying? (Colebrook, 8).

Linda Hutcheon also sees irony as a problematic mode of expression and calls it “a risky business” since there is no guarantee that the interpreter will understand the irony in the same way as it was intended. In her book, *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, she symbolically compares irony to “IRON” because of its “transgressive”, “provocative” and “subversive” (Hutcheon, 36) potentialities into women’s domains. David Lehman shares the same view with Hutcheon by claiming that “Postmodernism is the triumph of irony. More than anything else, postmodernism is an attitude and that attitude is definitely ironic” (Lehman, 5). On the contrary, Slavoj Zizek disregards irony’s subversive potential. He states that “in contemporary societies, democratic or totalitarian…cynical distance, laughter, irony, are, so to speak, part of the game” (Zizek, 28). Such cynicism, he declares “leaves untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy, the level on which ideology structures the social reality itself” (Zizek, 30). Rather than stressing irony’s provocative nature, Alvin B. Kernan calls it “the master trope of satire which sums up all the other major figures used to construct a satiric world” (Kernan, 90). It is again in Swift that irony finds its true voice:

Arbuthnot is no more my friend,  
Who dares to irony pretend,  
Which I was born to introduce,  
Refin’d it first, and show’d its use.  
(“Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,” lines 55-58)

Irony’s participation in parody is its strategy. The difference between irony and parody can be summarized as irony’s complex strategy in offering more than one message to be decoded. In her *Theory of Parody*, according to Hutcheon, “irony and
parody operate on two levels- a primary, surface, or foreground; and a secondary, implied, or backgrounded one” (Hutcheon, 34). For the ironist, there are at least two messages contained: the concealed message of the ironist to an initiated audience and ironically intended message of the code. However, the parodist, by contrast, combines and then comically contrasts a quoted text with a new context, contrasting Code B of the parodied text with Code A of the parody text with the aim of producing laughter from the recognition of their incongruity. The author of parody assumes the reader to be the decoder of the parodied text as the object of satire. Parody is more specific and satiric in its criticism than irony. Briefly, parody may be said to differ from both satire and irony (as well as from other devices) in its comic juxtaposition of specific preformed linguistic and artistic materials.

1.2.2. Satire

The term satire is said to derive from Latin ‘satira’ meaning ‘poetic medley’. On the history of the genre, Quintilian claims “the poetic genre of satire, defined by both its hexametric form and by the variety of its aggressive, as a Roman invention” (x.i.93) and the man who deserved the title of “inventor” was Lucilius. However, it was Horace (born in 65) who gave the rather amorphous poetry left by Lucilius an entirely new form and used the Latin word in the generic sense although some scholars would date the literary use of the word earlier. W.S. Anderson claims that without Horace, who revolutionized the whole field of satire with his remarkable choice of subjects, it is difficult to imagine how Roman satire would ever have developed a tradition and survived antiquity to exercise its influence on Renaissance literature. He states that:

Horatian satire is compact. The poet chooses his words carefully, so that one word, skillfully selected and emphatically placed in the verse, does the work of a whole Lucilian line. He tends to avoid synonyms, especially in a merely repetitive or emphatic function. When he uses pronouns, they count…Reading Horatian satire, then, is work (Anderson, 6-7).
Satire receives its modern definition in John Dryden’s “Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire” his preface to a 1693 translation of Persius and Juvenal. The preface outlines the satyros/satura confusion and the ancient theories of the genre. The mistaken notion was that the satire was derived from the mythical satyrs, perhaps even from the Greek satyr play. Dryden refers to the origin of the word satire and translates satura as “a dish plentifully stored with all variety of fruit and grains” (Dryden, 103). He further claims that “variety be of absolute necessity” for satires, and “may arise naturally from one subject, as it is diversely treated, in the several subordinate branches of it, all relating to the chief” (Dryden, 103-104). The poet’s task is, then, “to give his reader some precept of moral virtue, and to caution him against some one particular vice or folly” (Dryden, 104). Basing his definition upon one aspect of the work of a single Roman poet, Persius, Dryden calls satire “sharp, well-mannered way of laughing a folly out of countenance” (Dryden, 22).

Northrop Frye’s defines satire as “militant irony”: “its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured” (Frye, 223). Another critic, Steven Weisenburger outlines the purpose of satire as “to construct consensus, and to deploy irony in the work of stabilizing various cultural hierarchies” (Weisenburger, 1). Weisenburger further states that “[satire] functions to subvert hierarchies of value and to reflect suspiciously on all ways of making meaning, including its own (Weisenburger, 3). He also finds satire skeptical and “degenerative” in the sense that it “do[es] not mean simply the ridicule of human failings as against some identifiable, universal codes…[it] means the intent to ridicule and disfigure the codes themselves” (Weisenburger, 12). Dustin Griffin, whereas, criticizes that the writer has ceased to focus on the moral in satire. The ridicule of folly and wrong should be regarded as “the satirist’s point of departure rather than destination” (Griffin, 37).

Although other forms of literature are presumed to be more formal and distant, satire is direct in capturing the subtleties of comic elements with vivacity and sheer criticism by using laughter as a weapon. The main concern of satire is said to be political, social, or moral but not always comic. Fredric V. Bogel states:
Satire is a full-fledged artistic mode ("literary"), not merely a symptom of ill humor or personal spite or something else. Though it is often, undeniably, an intervention in personal or literary or political quarrels, as a literary mode it cannot simply be reduced to those quarrels or their motives (Bogel, i).

The voice of the satirist in the text is often irritable or condemnatory as she or he often seems to take pleasure in attacking or finding fault. Satire exposes the foolish and reveals the nakedness of mankind; it thus disturbs the tranquil complacency of most readers who regard themselves as the object of satire. However, in his “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,” for example, Swift denies any malicious intent in his works, and affirms his purpose was correction.

As with a moral View design’d
To cure the Vices of Mankind:
His vein, ironically grave,
Expos’d the Fool, and lash’d he Knave.
...
Yet, Malice never was his Aim;
He lash’d the Vice but spar’d the Name.
No Individual could resent,
Where Thousands equally were meant.
His Satyr points at no Defect,
But what all Mortals may correct. . . .
(313-16, 459-64)

Satire frequently involves the imaginative creation of absurd and even grotesque worlds, such as the country of the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos in Swift's Gulliver's Travels, or of "Manor Farm" in Orwell’s Animal Farm, that allow the satirist to ridicule humankind by exaggerating its pretensions and frailties. Satire holds a mirror to the mankind. In “The Preface of the Author” to The Battle of the Books, Swift says:

Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.
Although satire’s main claim is said to be the restoration of positive values, Gilbert Highet enlarges the list of motives that a satirist strives to attain. These are namely “condescending amusement” (Highet, 238), stigmatization of crime and folly (Highet, 241), “aesthetic” (Highet, 242) and denunciation of the ideal (Highet, 243). Highet regards Alexander Pope’s “The Dunciad”, one of the remarkable examples of satire, in which he predicts the coming of a Dark Age not by war but by the human pride, selfishness, and stupidity. By personifying all these vices, these two empires, Rome and Britain become the target of attack.

Lo! Rome herself, proud mistress no more
Of arts, but thundering against heathen lore:
Her grey-haired synods damning books unread,
And Bacon trembling for his brazen head.
Pauda, with sighs, beholds her Livy burn,
...
Behold, yon isle, by palmers, pilgrims trod,
Men bearded, bald, cowled, uncowled, shod, unshod,
Peeled, patched, and piebald, linsey-woolsey brothers,
Grave mummers! sleeveless some, and shirtless others.
That was once Britain (cited Highet, 6)

Although parody has often been used for satiric purposes, there are significant differences between satire and parody. Rose mentions that one major factor which separates parody from satire is “parody’s use of the preformed material of its target as a constituent part of its own structure” (Rose, 81); whereas, satire does not limit itself to the “imitation”, “distortion” or “quotation of other literary texts or preformed materials” (Rose, 81). Whenever, satire deals with “such preformed material, need not make itself as dependent upon it for its own character as does the parody, but may simply make fun of it as a target external to itself” (Rose, 82). Satire’s main aim can be explained as reconstructing the positive values whereas parody’s goal is to destroy. The parodist may recreate or imitate certain norms or distortions in order to attack or defend them in the parody text. It can be said that parody aims to sharpen the reader’s awareness of the literary medium while employing its devices. It manipulates the reader to recognize the intended meaning in the text. Parody may
well be used by the satirist to attack an author or reader by means of evocation and mockery of a particular work. Owing to its history, satire stands out as one of the most challenging and memorable forms of literature, practiced by a wide canon of writers, ranging Voltaire, Rabelais, Swift, Pope, Aristophanes, Lucretius, Goethe, Shakespeare and many more.

1.2.3. Burlesque

Burlesque, derived from the Italian word ‘burla’, meaning a joke or a trick, has much of the time been confused by parody and it was often used interchangeably with “pastiche” and “parody” and, at the turn of the 18th century, “mock-heroic”. The word was imported from Italy, where it had been used in the sixteenth century, to France acquiring diverse meanings such as grotesque, rank or flat comicality, extravagance of imitation or style (especially using vulgar or extraordinary language), no matter to what literary genre the work belonged. Burlesque is defined in the *Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary* as “a literary or dramatic imitation mocking its model by going to comic extremes, for fun (not with the serious purposes of satire).” Burlesque was originally a form of art that mocked by imitation, referring to everything from comic sketches to dance routines and it usually lampooned the social attitudes of upper classes. It was often ridiculous in that it imitated several styles, and combined imitations of authors and artists with absurd descriptions. In his discussion in *Spectator* No.249, Joseph Addison regards burlesque as a branch of ridicule and categories it into two in which “the first represents mean Persons in the Accoutrements of Heroes, [however] the other describes great Persons acting and speaking, like the basest among the People” (Addison, 467). Addison then exemplifies Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* as a form of burlesque in which ‘mean persons’ are depicted in the ‘Accoutrements of Heroes’ and he cites Lucian’s *Dialogues of Gods* as exemplifying the latter. Rose argues that Addison’s definition “reduced both a type of ancient parody and an important example of modern parody…to its examples of the burlesque” (Rose, 59).
John D. Jump who reduces parody to one of the two sub-categories like Addison categorizes burlesque under low burlesque, (travesty and Hudibrastic which became popular during the Restoration Period) and high burlesque (parody and mock-poem which prevailed in the eighteen century). Jump defines parody as the “high burlesque of a particular work (or author), achieved by applying the style of that work (or author) to a less worthy subject” (Jump, 2). He further on exemplifies Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* as such parody and Alexander Pope’s “Rape of the Lock” as a mock-epic, a form of high burlesque which praises the style characteristic of the class upon a trifling subject. Travesty is then defined by Jump as the low burlesque of a particular work achieved by treating the subject of that work in an aggressively familiar style. Simon Dentith, unlike Jump, regards *Shamela* as travesty because of its satirical purpose which points to “ridicule the hypocrisy and prurience of Samuel Richardson’s text” (Dentith, 13). In Jump’s list, Lord Byron’s “Vision of Judgement”, a response to Robert Southey’s “Vision of Judgement” published in 1820, is given as an example of hudibrastic (such as is found in Samuel Butler’s poem “Hudibras”, which is about a greedy and dishonest colonel in the Cromwellian army, involving in various comic misadventures) which is the low burlesque of a less confined material.

Historically, the definition of burlesque whether ‘high’ or ‘low’ has been limited to parody and degraded as ridicule. Due to burlesque’s arousal in laughter, parody has been regarded as a trivial literary genre.

### 1.2.4. Pastiche

The term pastiche derives from the Italian word ‘pasticcio’ meaning (from the translation of the Italian pasticcio as a ‘pasty’ or ‘pie’ dish containing various ingredients, of which macaroni and some form of meat are the main constituents) the compilation of motives from several works. The word was mostly applied to certain paintings and operas. Ingeborg Hoesterey focuses on the application of pastiche or pasticcio in painting which the craft of making pasticcios - the most famous practitioner was Luca Giordano- evolved at the end of the Renaissance when the demand for paintings by the great masters (Raphael, Titian or Michelangelo) began
to exceed the available supply (Hoesterey, 4-5). She further claims that in the musical sense, the pasticcio as an Italian product of the mid-seventeenth century became a significant practice of arranging of pieces by several notable composers such as Handel, Gluck and Bach into a new work and identity in Europe and such composite works of opera had toured all over Europe, undergoing patchwork and alteration at every stage. A prime example is the opera Muzio Scevola (1721), the first act of which was composed by Filippo Mattei, the second by Bononcini, and the third by Handel.

In literature, as J.A. Cuddon puts it, “pastiche is a patchwork of words, sentences or complete passages from various authors or one author.” (Cuddon, 685). Nevertheless, pastiche is far more complicated to define since it is a more recent term than parody. In her book, *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon is skeptical whether pastiche is “more serious and respectful than parody” (Hutcheon, 38). She further argues that parody pursues “differentiation in its relationship to its model” whereas pastiche by being “superficial” adopts “similarity” and “correspondence” as “trivial game playing” (Hutcheon, 38). As a dictionary meaning, pastiche, which is associated with terms such as “bricolage”, “collage”, “capriccio”, “cento”, “fake”, “farrago”, “faux”, “imitation”, “montage”, “palimpsest”, “parody”, “plagiarism”, “recycling”, and “simulacrum” involves the reproduction of both the form and the content of a work and it attains a sense of originality by aiming to mimic the characteristic style of an author or, sometimes, an epoch. Pastiche may be used by parodist as a part of a parody and is similarly playful like parody but works by imitation rather than direct transformation. However, parody imitates the form of a work involving a change to its content.

**1.3. Modern Parody**

The main contribution of modern parody can be seen in the works of Russian formalists. Their works were as Michael O’Toole states “aimed at elucidating exactly what is ‘literariness’ and involved contrasting speech in literature with speech in ‘everyday genres’”(O’Toole,166). The Russian formalists propose another
framework for comprehending the basic question of literary development. They concentrated on the dynamic interaction between individual works of arts and genres and they adopted a new strategy which presupposes that texts relate to each other in certain ways. How texts relate to each other is made apparent through a close analysis of styles and genres. One of the devices of the literary text, Victor Shklovsky claimed in his book *Theory of Prose*, was the ‘lay bare’ technique (*obnazhenie priema*), the process of representing “an aesthetic form without any motivation whatsoever” (Shklovsky, 147). When Shklovsky’s essay was reprinted in his collection of essays entitled *O Teorii Prozy* (‘Theory of the Prose’), the critics paid attention to his essay on “Tristram Shandy” as being about parody. Although the term parody was not used in his essay, it was defined in the index as ‘device for alienation’ (*oststranenie*: “making strange”) for laying bare the artifice of a work. In *Theory of Prose*, Shklovsky claims that:

The appearance of *Tristram Shandy* was due to the petrification of the devices of the old *roman d’aventure*. All its techniques had become totally ineffectual. Parody was the only way to give them a new lease on life (Shklovsky, 147).

Shklovsky focuses on *Tristram Shandy* because of Laurence Sterne’s constant interruptions during narration by shifting characters around and dragging out trivial actions which makes alienation or defamiliarization possible. In his essay, “Art as Technique,” he later on cites Tolstoy’s technique in *War and Peace* as an example of defamilization because “his work is generally known” (Shklovsky, 24). Shklovsky’s other reference to parody in his *O Teorii Prozy* essays includes ‘Roman Tayn’ or ‘The Mystery Novel’, in which he analyses Charles Dickens’ *Little Dorrit* and Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* as the parody of the old novel; moreover, parody here again appears to be understood as making something new from an old dead form by ‘laying bare’ its devices. In his *O Teorii Prozy* essays, Shklovsky also refers to parodic stories by Boccaccio without making a specific investigation of the comic aspect of parody although he knows that he is using the term parody to describe stories which have changed other texts and which have been perceived to be comic by the readers.
and writers. In his analysis of a Chekhov story, entitled ‘It was She’, again the term
parody is used to describe the comic imitation and revitalization of worn-out devices.

Boris Tomashevsky is another Russian Formalist who dealt with the
complexity of parody. Tomashevsky defined parody in his Theory of Literature as an
incongruous split of the style and subject-matter and as a means for comic contrast;
nevertheless, he had reduced the comic to ridicule when speaking of parody as both
comic and ridiculing and destructive with reference to its ‘laying bare of the device’.
In later editions of his Theory of Literature, Tomashevsky added “grotesque” comic
distortion to the list of parody’s characteristics. He echoes Shklovsky when he writes
that “parody always assumes as the background from which it takes off, another
literary work (or a whole group of works)” and he further continues that “some
parodies, not primarily satiric, are developed as the free art of laying bare
techniques” (cited Rose, 114-115). Like Shklovsky, Tomashevsky describes parody
as a device giving new function and meaning to older texts.

It was Yuriy Tynianov who emphasized dualistic or ‘double-coded’ structure
of parody. Tynianov argued that parody is dual-planed. Tynianov regarded parody as
the essence of “mechanisation of a specific device” and the mechanization can only
be perceived when the device which it mechanises is acknowledged. In this way,
parody fulfills a double function. As Tynianov specifies, “the essence of parody lies
in a dialectical play with the device. If a parody of a tragedy results in a comedy, a
comedy parodied may turn out to be a tragedy” (Tynianov, 116). Tynianov raises
new problems with regard to the understanding of parody and he separates parody
from its comic elements in a more distinctive manner than Shklovsky.

For all their interest in parody as a device for laying bare other devices, the
Russian formalists degraded parody as a comic form and their analytic framework
was revolutionary when dealing with the structure of parody.
1.4. Postmodern Parody

1.4.1. Forms of Parody in Postmodernism

1.4.1.1. Pastiche, Intertextuality and Metafiction

1.4.1.1.1. Pastiche

In his book, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson argues that postmodernism is characterized not by parody, which has a critical ulterior motive, but by pastiche, which is a kind of neutral or “blank parody”, the imitation of dead styles, pure ‘*simulacrum*’ or identical copy without source (Jameson, 16-18). In *Postmodernism*, Jameson further claims that postmodernism is characterized precisely by its disinterest in politics and by its complicity with stereotype and doxa. Jameson sees this turn to “blank parody” as a falling off from modernism, where individual authors were distinguished by their “inimitable” styles: “the Faulknerian long sentence, for example, with its breathless gerundives; Lawrentian nature imagery punctuated by testy colloquialism; Wallace Stevens’s inveterate hypostasis of nonsubstantive parts of speech” (Jameson, 16). On the contrary, in postmodern pastiche, modernist styles turn into postmodern codes without “stylistic and discursive heterogeneity” and a “norm” (Jameson, 16). Postmodern cultural productions therefore dominate the scene as “the cannibalization of all the styles of the past” and “the play of random stylistic allusion”. (Jameson, 18) Jameson characterizes postmodern as a ‘cut and paste’ style which is unable to justify its fundamental relations because it does not appeal to any universal form.

The effect of pastiche as an emerging postmodern phenomenon is that meaning no longer lies in the text itself. Everything that could be said has already been said, the space between texts, where interpretation -- active, personal, and transient -- is not so much ordained by the text as it is inspired by it. Jameson also observes the increasing iconification of signifiers as a schizophrenic experience. Jameson regards pastiche and schizophrenic iconification of signs as symptoms of the bombardment of media which can enable to desensitize individuals to signs. Jameson views the increasing
iconification of signifiers in postmodern works as pathology, a feeling of loss and an “unreality,” but also as an aesthetic phenomenon characterised by a dazzling parade of timeless and meaningless images, an ethereal escape from the grasps of signification. Pastiche and the schizophrenic defamiliarization from signifiers epitomize contemporary consumer experience. They serve as an experiential education for naive consumers about the structuring principles of culture, and give rise to consumerism which is defined as the postmodern condition.

In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson claims that our contemporary moment, with its material production of pastiched images cancels out history and thus prompts a breakdown of the temporality necessary to focus the subject and “make it a space of praxis” (Jameson, 27). In the world of pastiche we lose our connection to history, which gets turned into a series of styles and superseded genres, or simulacra. Jameson states that “the new spatial logic of the simulacrum can now be expected to have a momentous effect on what used to be historical time” (Jameson, 18). In such a situation, the use of the past which Jameson calls pastiche, is not simply a parody, but a purposeless historical imitation. The lost moment of postmodernism, which for Jameson is the 60s, serves as the break that aids mark the difference between modernism and postmodernism. Jameson’s sixties represent primarily drug use and pollution. Postmodernism is the “bad trip” of the sixties' Utopian project and “the sixties [have] gone toxic” (Jameson, 117). For Jameson, the sixties also epitomize a time when an element of modern aesthetics, fresh perception was possible (Jameson, 3). Contemporary examples of pastiche are the increasingly popular ‘retro’ scene which imitates the music, dance, and clothing fashions of the 1970s and 1980s, and the resurgence of cult hit movies, such as *Grease*, which supposedly capture a past historical movement. In *Postmodernism*, he claims that aesthetic production has been taken in by commodity production, thus emptying the modernist aesthetic and the political effect in postmodern world. Jameson further states that:

> In the wholly built and constructed universe of late capitalism, from which nature has at last been effectively abolished and in which human praxis—in the degraded forms
of information, manipulation, and reification--has penetrated
the older autonomous sphere of culture and even the
Unconscious, the Utopia of a renewal of perception has no
place to go. (Jameson, 121-22)

The postmodern historical novels (those works Hutcheon characterizes as
“historiographic metafiction”) represent the past through pop images of the past.
Jameson gives E. L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime* as a perfect example and in
*Postmodernism*, Jameson states that: “This historical novel can no longer set out to
represent the historical past; it can only ‘represent’ our ideas and stereotypes about
that past (which thereby at once becomes ‘pop history’)” (Jameson, 25). In such
works, “we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and
simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach” (Jameson, 25).

Pastiche, involving the reduction of history to a series of texts, contributes to
the fragmentary nature of the past. Such a fragmentation of the past is a counterpoint
to the lack of narrative fabric of the consumer society. The abusive nature of
consumerism is thereby maintained; the abused consumer cannot remember the past
in any sufficiently coherent way to challenge the present. In Jameson’s terms, the
past as “referent” becomes “bracketed” and “effaced” which surrounds us nothing
but texts. We can no longer perceive the past as a repository of genres, styles, and
codes ready for commodification. David Bennett points out that Jameson associates
this mode with a “de-centering of discourse”, “the fragmentation and proliferation of
dialects”, and “the cancellation of demystification of the individualist subject”
(Bennett, 197) in postindustrial society.

In his “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” Jameson describes the death
of parody and its replacement by pastiche as accompanying the “death” of the
modernist individual subject. The disappearance of norms that Jameson claims has
made modern parody impossible and the blanker form of postmodernism takes over.
Much of Jameson’s criticism directed to parody stems from the fallacy that behind all
parody “there is a linguistic norm in contrast to which the styles of great modernists
can be mocked” (Jameson, 113-114). Jameson further writes:
Pastiche is like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique idiosyncratic style...but it is neutral practice...without parody’s ulterior motive...the satirical impulse...laughter... Pastiche is blank parody that has lost its sense of humour (Jameson, 114).

1.4.1.1.2. Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the relationship that exists between different texts, especially literary texts, or the reference in one text to others. The semiotic notion of intertextuality introduced by Julia Kristeva is associated primarily with poststructuralist theorists. In her essay, “Word, Dialogue, and the Novel,” Kristeva, influenced by the work of Bakhtin, charts a three-dimensional textual space whose three “coordinates of dialogue” are the writing subject, the addressee (or ideal reader), and exterior texts; she describes this textual space as intersecting planes which have horizontal and vertical axes:

The word’s status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus)... each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read... any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another (Kristeva, 37).

Essentially, every text is informed by other texts which the reader has read, and the reader’s own cultural context. Uniting these two axes are shared codes: every text and every reading depends on prior codes.

The concept of dialogue is at the core of Bakhtin’s theory which is the key function of intertextuality. Bakhtin’s examples of the dialogic use of language in its various forms are primarily drawn from printed literature, especially speech genres, folklore and the carnival. Michael Holquist relates “dialogism” as he calls it to the fundamental epistemological aim embedded in Bakhtin’s theses: “In dialogism, the
very capacity to have consciousness is based on *otherness*” (Holquist, 18) and this capacity is highly related with the question of language. For Holquist, as an abstract concept, Bakhtinian dialogue is the dialectical relationship between self and other where “self” occupies a relative center, and thus requires the other for existence.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin presents a detailed analysis of the different aspects of Dostoyevsky’s stylistics. It is centered on the claim that Dostoyevsky’s novel is dialogical, as opposed to the traditional notion that the novel is a mono-logic whole driven by the author’s ideology. He states that: “A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevky’s novel” (Bakhtin, 6). All voices in polyphony, Bakhtin claims, are autonomous, brought together in the artistic event. Unlike poetry, the language of prose is heterogeneous, and multiple social voices come forcefully together in the discourse, even though some of these voices remain unacknowledged. Bakthin sees Dostoyevsky’s prose as the prototype of the polyphonic novel. He asserts that his novelistic structure is unique because of his merits of “constructing a polyphonic world and destroying the established forms of the fundamentally monologic (homophonic) European novel” (Bakhtin, 8). The polyphonic novel subverts the notion of an omniscient narrator and characters subordinate to the main moralistic purpose of the novel. Dostoyevsky’s novels present many examples to illustrate the presence of multiple autonomous voices. An important assertion about the polyphonic novel is that the interrelations of the layers of diverse social language types are dialogic. The concept of “the dialogic imagination” was inspired by the role of dialogue in Dostoyevsky. The understanding of “the dialogic imagination” in Bakthin’s terms is closely tied to his study of Dostoyevsky. Bakthin opposes the “monologic” novel to the “dialogic” novel. The dialogic form reveals language in its “natural,” as opposed to its linguistic state. That means that in each character’s speech different social styles are fused as opposed to a unitary style dictated by the author.

Theorists of intertextuality problematize the status of “authorship” by treating the writer of a text as the orchestrator. The relationship of the disappearance of the
author with the growth of intertextuality can be traced back to Barthes’ “death of author”. In her essay, “The Ethics of Linguistics,” Kristeva also talks about the “death of poet” who “wants to turn rhythm into a dominant element” (Kristeva, 236). She further states that the poet is parodic in his or her poetic discourse and s/he “wants to make language perceive what it doesn’t want to say, provide it with its matter independently of the sign, and free it from denotation” (Kristeva, 236). Barthes, whereas, deals with prose and his main concern is the text itself. He claims that as long as no parodied text can assert originality, by definition it exists within the infinite text. When a text uses any form of textual repetition, the reader is consciously aware of the fact that s/he is drawn into the realm of “mutual relations of dialogue, parody, and contestation” (Barthes, 171). In his book *S/Z*, Barthes deconstructs Balzac's short story “Sarrasine” to demonstrate that it reflects many voices, not just that of Balzac. He lays claim to the “plural” quality of discourse and achieves to give the reader a better awareness of the innumerable codes in which he traces the cultural codes and meanings out of the woven texts. It is, however, the reader’s task to decipher these codes. Barthes claims that:

> To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them, but these named meanings are swept toward other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming.” (p. 11)

For Foucault, however, it is not enough to repeat that the author has disappeared. In his essay, “What is an Author?,” Foucault discards the notion of author as entity and begins to think of the author as “a certain functional principle” (Foucault, 209) in texts and in a culture: a function that varies from period to period and from one social order to another. In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, he claims that in fact, texts owe more to other texts than to their own makers. Foucault further declares that:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a
system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network... The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands... Its unity is variable and relative (Foucault, 23).

Unlike Foucault and Barthes, in his book, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale has suggested that postmodernist writing has a “mimetic function” which makes the reader to experience such mode through “the pluralistic and anarchistic ontological landscape of advanced industrial cultures” (McHale, 38). In his terms, paradoxically the author is back to the surface and s/he is much freer to confront the reader with his/her image in the act of producing text. Another critic, Gerard Genette proposed the term “transtextuality” as a more inclusive term than “intertextuality” in his book *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. He listed five subtypes: *intertextuality*: quotation, plagiarism, allusion; *paratextuality*: the relation between a text and its “paratext” - that which surrounds the main body of the text - such as titles, headings, prefaces, epigraphs, dedications, acknowledgements, footnotes, illustrations, dust jackets, etc.; *architextuality*: designation of a text as part of a genre or genres; *metatextuality*: explicit or implicit critical commentary of one text on another text; *hypertextuality*: the relation between a text and a preceding “hypotext” - a text or genre on which it is based but which it transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends (including parody, spoof, sequel, translation).

1.4.1.1.3. Metafiction

Metafiction can be defined as a work of fiction which describes a reflection by an author on his/her activity as an author, or on the structure or composition of another text, or on its audience. Patricia Waugh provides a comprehensive definition by describing metafiction as “fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality”(Waugh, 2). She identifies three types of contemporary metafiction. John Fowles’ subversion of the role of the “omniscient narrator” in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* exemplifies the first type, which Waugh describes as upsetting a particular convention of the novel. Within the
second type, she includes works that present a parody on a specific work or fictional mode. John Fowles’ *Mantissa* for example, presents a metafictional parody of metafiction. The third type, however, includes works that are less overtly metafictional. Like Richard Brautigan’s *Trout Fishing in America*, such novels “attempt to create alternative linguistic structures or to imply old forms by encouraging the reader to draw on his or her knowledge of traditional literary conventions” (Waugh, 4). Waugh further posits that metafictional parody is “double-edged” since it is either “destructive” or “evaluative” by breaking the norms that have once been conventionalized.

Another critic who dealt with the paradigm of metafiction and parody is Malcom Bradbury. His interpretations upon the metafictional and comic aspects of parody have contributed to the understanding of the role of the author, text, reader, and intertext in the literary work. In his book, *The Modern American Novel*, Malcom Bradbury defines postmodernism as “the sum of styles” in which “signs seemed to outrun signification” (Bradbury, 160). He suggests that styles have become styles due to multiple forms, offering themselves as parody. He furthermore focuses on the extension of the modernist use of parody in contemporary culture which challenges art with different techniques such as play, game, forgery and fantasy. In *The Modern American Novel*, Bradbury has stated that in the works of postmodern writers “the stable text disappears; the fiction becomes metafictional; the writer is invited into novels in novel ways” (Bradbury, 163).

1.4.2. Uses of Parody in Postmodernism

1.4.2.1. Double-coded Parody and Historiographic Metafiction, Non-intentional and Destructive Parody

1.4.2.1.1. Double-coded Parody and Historiographic Metafiction

In her major study of parody, Linda Hutcheon looks at works of modern literature, visual art, music, film, literature, theatre and architecture to arrive at a comprehensive assessment of what parody is and how it functions. Looking at works
as diverse as, Magritte’s “This Is Not a Pipe”, Tom Stoppard’s *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and Woody Allen’s “Zelig”, Hutcheon discusses parody in the vast body of works, while distinguishing it from pastiche, burlesque, travesty and satire. She shows how parody, through ironic playing with multiple conventions, integrates creative expression with critical commentary. In her book, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon claims that postmodern parody resembles modernist parody, which can be found “in the writing of T. S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, and James Joyce and the painting of Picasso, Manet, and Magritte” (Hutcheon, 99). She further continues that what postmodernist parody questions, however, is the “Unacknowledged modernist assumptions about closure, distance, artistic autonomy, and the apolitical nature of representation” (Hutcheon, 99). It serves to break down distinctions between “reality” and “fiction,” as in such disparate works as Christa Wolf’s *No Place on Earth*, E. L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime*, and Timothy Findlay’s *Famous Last Word*.

In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, by connecting Charles Jencks’ concept of postmodern double coding with the double-coded structure parody, Hutcheon states that “parody is double-coded in political terms: it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies” (Hutcheon, 101). However, she further contends that this position does not mean that the criticism is not harsh: postmodern parody “may indeed be complicitous with the values it inscribes as well as subverts, but the subversion is still there” (Hutcheon, 106). Borrowing Leslie Fiedler’s phrase “closing the gap”, Jencks has spoken of postmodern architecture as being able to bridge the gap between the classical and popular by the “double-coding”. Jencks has supported the pluralism of styles achieved by postmodernist use of pastiche and has used the term “code” to describe the styles of architecture since codes send out messages and meanings in a manner similar to messages sent out in a language or in other communication systems. He states that:

*double-coding [is] the combination of modern techniques with something else (usually traditional building) in order for architecture to communicate with the public and a concerned minority, usually other architects...Thus the*
solution I perceived and defined as Post-modern: an architecture that was professionally based and popular as well as one that was based on new techniques and old patterns. Double-coding to simplify means both elite/popular and new/old (Jencks, 14-5).

For Hutcheon, however, parody operates in doubleness or in duplicity. In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, she states that parody can be utilized “as a self-reflexive technique that points to art as art, but also to art as inescapably bound to its aesthetic and even social past” (Hutcheon, 101). This duplicity is inherent in representation: postmodernists want to represent but at the same time, they remain skeptical of representation. In her terms, this characteristic of postmodernism can be applied to feminism and feminists can use this double coding in a positive way to question how they construct their ‘selves’ by examining parody as offering a site for political polemic. Hutcheon’s reasons of placing parody at the centre of her descriptions of postmodern art, particularly music, architecture and literature is the need to define herself as a woman against a dominant culture. In her *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, she asserts that one way to do that is “to speak the language of the dominant but then to subvert it through ironic strategies of exaggeration, understatement and literalization” (Hutcheon, 22). By mentioning the “transgressive power of parody,” Hutcheon ultimately sees parody as a mode, which allows her to mimic that speech. She further refers to women writers, especially Jane Austen, Jeanette Winterston, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Ann-Marie McDonald who have certainly put parody to excellent political use to illustrate her point. Angela Carter, for instance, focuses on the shattering of male myths about femininity and speaks for women who have figured as objects in (male) literature without being allowed to tell their own stories. Another critic, Simon Malpas, like Hutcheon also draws attention to parody’s power from the woman artists’ standpoint. He argues that:

Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin use their work deliberately to parody masculine sexual repartee and thereby challenge the dominant constructions of gender identity that present men
as voracious predators and women as their passive victims. (Malpas, 21-22).

In *Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon regards parody as “one of the postmodern ways of literally incorporating the textualized past into the text of present” (Hutcheon, 118) and suggests that “historiographical metafiction” should be used to characterise postmodern metafiction. She further states that:

Historiographic metafiction is one kind of postmodern novel which rejects projecting present beliefs and standards onto the past and asserts the specificity and particularity of the individual past event. It also suggests a distinction between “events” and “facts” that is one shared by many historians. Since the documents become signs of events, which the historian transmutes into facts, as in historiographic metafiction, the lesson here is that the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted. Finally, Historiographic metafiction often points to the fact by using the paratextual conventions of historiography to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations (Hutcheon,122-123).

Hutcheon’s definition of “historiographic” does not refer to factual history, but rather it refers to history understood in a very general way as being, like fiction, yet another form of discourse. She stresses that parody gives an opportunity to re-examine the past of both art and history and can offer us a way to investigate it to alter our perception of what history should mean to us. Since past is not as haunting as it is, it should neither be avoided nor manipulated. History can be thought critically through irony and parody. In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon claims that postmodern parody is then a kind of “contesting revision or re-reading of the past that both confirms and subverts the power of representation of history” (Hutcheon, 95). Hutcheon does not approve of Fredric Jameson’s assertion of postmodern parody and nostalgia as merely narcissistic symptoms which lament a loss of a sense of history.
Unlike Jameson, who considers postmodern parody as a symptom of the age, one way in which we have lost our connection to the past and to effective political critique, Hutcheon argues in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that: “through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference” (Hutcheon, 93). Fredric Jameson’s concept of “pastiche” is contrasted to Linda Hutcheon’s understanding of postmodern parody. Hutcheon values postmodern literature’s stance of parodic self-reflexivity, and sees an implicit political critique and historical awareness in such parodic works. In her book, *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon states that “Parody is…an important way for modern artists to come to terms with the past-through ironic recoding or,…neogolism, “trans-contextualizing”(Hutcheon, 101).

1.4.2.1.2. Non-intentional Parody

Attributing the insight to Walter Benjamin’s discussions of the ways modern art acts to destroy the “aura”, Jean Baudrillard with reference to the recurrences of the images in Andy Warhol’s work defines parody as “non-intentional” and “blank”. In his essay, “The Orders of Simulacra”, he states that:

A kind of non-intentional parody hovers over everything, of technical simulation, of indefinable fame to which is attached an aesthetic pleasure, that very one of the reading and of the rules of the game (Baudrillard, 188).

He further claims that in postmodern world where the real and imaginary are confounded, we cannot speak of art and originality “because reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which is inseparable from its own structure, has been confused with its own image” (Baudrillard, 188). Reality does not even denote signs since they are repressed or absorbed by the world of digitality. In his essay, “Simulacra and Simulations,” Baudrillard states that:
The age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials—worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs...It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short circuits all its vicissitudes (Baudrillard, 167).

In his essay, “The Precession of Simulacra,” Jean Baudrillard describes postmodernity as “the age of simulation” and the “hyperreal” where “the truth, reference, and objective causes have ceased to exist” (Baudrillard, 343-344). The condition of hyperreality, as posited by Baudrillard, leads to a world in which there are no distinctions between the simulacra and that which they simulate. In a society where a constant flow of images via mass media and mass communication becomes part of everyday life, an endless bombardment of signs begins to erode and the real loses its meaning assigning itself to simulacra. Overloaded information, media messages, they all paralyze and silence the majority. For Baudrillard, there is no real behind the appearance and the very notion of reality disappears. “We are in a logic of simulation”, he writes in “The Precession of Simulacra,” “which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons” (Baudrillard, 354-355). In his essay, he furthermore depicts “a world that has lost all sense of perspective, where sight, distance and judgment have been lost” (Baudrillard, 166). The images are more real than any other reality. Even the traveling signs, media, models and supremacy rule the culture entirely. Like Fredric Jameson, Baudrillard focuses on the nature of capitalistic society where simulacrum as a cultural irony marks the death of culture. In *America*, Baudrillard uses the word parody to depict the culture of America as a culture of simulacrum. Bryan S. Turner suggests that:

Baudrillard’s America appears to reflect the simulated opportunities of American culture by celebrating the trivia of social relations in late capitalism [and] it has the characteristics of celebratory post-modernism (Turner, 75).
In the book, America is depicted as “hyperreal in its vitality”, a parody of other cultures and “a mirror of Europe’s decadence,” (Baudrillard, 104). In this culture of simulacrum or hyperreality, Disneyland becomes America. He further asserts that in this “drugged” society, there seems to be no room for culture and history (Baudrillard, 104). In such a society, the outcome can only be decadence and parody.

1.4.2.1.3. Destructive Parody

One of the critics, who stimulates controversy by contesting that academic critics have made too rigid a distinction between high culture and low culture, is Leslie A. Fiedler. Unlike Baudrillard, who negates parody due to its simulacrum and inauthenticity, Fiedler regards parody as something essential and positive to bridge the gap between the elite and popular. In his essay, “Cross the Border-Close the Gap” Fiedler mentions that parody is destructive and he describes a classical work of literature brought low as becoming “something closer to travesty than emulation” (Fiedler, 42-43). He further points out that the writer’s essential task in literature can be achieved by “parody” or “exaggeration”, by “adaptation” and “camping” of Pop styles. As Hans Bertens has stated:

In his ‘The new mutants’ of 1965 Fiedler offers elements from subliterary genres like the western, science fiction, and even pornography. Such “anti-artistic” and “anti-serious” art, Fiedler argues, is “political.”(Bertens, 31-32).

Such an early politicized form of postmodernism was first diagnosed in the mid-sixties by Ihab Hassan, who analysed the contemporary American scene. By looking back on the earliest days of postmodernism, Ihab Hassan noted that:

[i]t remained for Leslie Fiedler and myself, among others, to employ the term during the 1960s with premature approbation, and even with a touch of bravado. Fiedler had it in mind to challenge the elitism of the high modernist tradition in the name of pop. I wanted to explore that impulse of self-unmaking which is part of the literary tradition of silence. (cited Hans Bertens, 37).
As discussed previously, postmodern parody has been extensively covered in the works of critics ranging from Jameson to Fiedler. Jameson believes that in the age of total eclecticism, pastiche is all that remains of a parody that has lost its former function. As it is stated in “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” pastiche comes to the scene when we have “nothing but stylistic diversity and hererogenity” (Jameson, 114). Like Jameson, Baudrillard regards that there is a strong correlation between the developments in western capitalism and the rise of postmodern. In an age of simulacrum, his concept of postmodernism coincides with a world of images or signs whose referents have disappeared and the use of parody, which is blank, signals no authentic novelty or originality. Hutcheon, whereas, is more positive than Baudrillard and Jameson and she sees parody essential in postmodern art. Hutcheon contends that Jameson has been misled by the notion of parody as ridiculing imitation; on the contrary, parody does not need that ridiculing or critical edge since it is transgressive by its nature. Hutcheon believes that parody is the mark of a gameful but productive relationship with the past which nevertheless demonstrates the persistence of critical distance into the high art of the present. Fiedler, like Hutcheon praises parody as being destructive in the sense that it can bridge the gap between the high and the elite.

Since postmodernism challenges or subverts the traditional notions of certain strategies in literature by means of pastiche or parody, metafiction and intertextuality, it is evident that it will continue to mark its significance in an age of hyperreality, in which the individual is characterized by new consumption patterns or by the logic of late capitalism, by the presence of advertising and media and by the demands of popular culture. As for the artist, s/he feels as if “condemned to lifeless imitations and permutations, that is, to produce art that is essentially about art itself and, more specifically, about its own failure” (Hans Bertens, 163).
2. Kurt Vonnegut as a Parodist

2.1. Postmodern Fiction in America

The critical discussion of post-modernism for a long time was almost an American phenomenon. Post-modernism meant a lot in America than Europe, where the debate did not really start until late 1970’s. Postmodernism has been accepted as a term for the experimental literature written in the United States since the end of the Second World War. The theory and practices of postmodernism have altered the question of crisis of consciousness, raised in the fifties and brought to its “final neurotic conclusions in the sixties in America”, in “a more positive mode of confrontation between the subject and power” (Olderman, 124). The American postmodern writer’s reply to this phenomenon has been to generate new and different structures of survival, “new mutants” as Leslie Fiedler puts it. This new tendency, especially in novel, was revealed out in the modes of Science Fiction. By mentioning the names of William Golding, Anthony Burgess, William Burroughs, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Harry Matthews and John Barth, Leslie Fiedler in his essay, “The New Mutants,” argues that “young readers tend to respond with a sympathy they do not feel even toward such forerunners of the mode (still more allegorical than prophetic) as Aldous Huxley, H. G. Wells and George Orwell.” (Fiedler, 381-382). Fiedler further continues that:

If we make a brief excursion from the lofty reaches of High Art to the humbler levels of Pop Culture--where radical transformations in literature are reflected in simplified form--the extent and nature of the futurist revolution will become immediately evident. Certainly, we have seen in recent years the purveyors of Pop Culture transfer their energies from the Western and the Dracula-type thriller (last heirs of the Romantic and Gothic concern with the past) to the Detective Story especially in its hard-boiled form (final vulgarization of the realists' dedication to the present) to Science Fiction (a new genre based on hints in Poe and committed to
extrapolating” the future). This development is based in part on the tendency to rapid exhaustion inherent in popular forms; (Fiedler, 381).

John Barth, like Fiedler, epitomized the mood of the late 1960s and radically stressed the exhaustion of both realism and modernism. He applauded this new emergence in American fiction by denoting “literature of exhaustion” not as a subject of “physical”, “moral” or “intellectual decadence” but rather the “used-upness of certain forms” or “exhaustion of certain possibilities” (Barth, 19). This explains why many contemporary novels involved and experimented with different forms such as the western, the sci-fi and the detective fiction in the 1960s. These genres offer hybrid forms, ideal for postmodernist. Especially, in the detective genre, as Barry Lewis claims, “the pursuit of clues appeals to the postmodernist writer because it so closely parallels the hunt for the textual meaning by the reader” (Lewis, 126).

The question of self in American postmodern fiction may be regarded as the key notion in defining the literary panorama of the sixties and henceforth. Unlike Fiedler and Barth, Christopher Lasch negates this new tendency in American fiction by focusing on “narcissism” of American culture and its signals: America appears to be as a culture where manipulation dominates, a persistent self dissociates individualism, spontaneity has vanished, collective institutions are rendered meaningless and the body becomes an object of worship. The survival of individual consciousness as a power has become even more impossible in a system where reality dissolves itself into the most appealing forms of advertising in an age of simulacra. The individual has forced him/herself to believe in the fabricated truth. Lasch suggests that art not only fails to create the illusion of reality but also suffers from the same crisis of self-consciousness that afflicts the man in the street. He declares that:

The mere act of writing already presupposes a certain detachment from the self. Yet the increasing interpenetration of fiction, journalism, and autobiography indicates that many
writers find it more difficult to achieve the detachment indispensable to art. Instead of fictionalizing personal material, they have taken to presenting it undigested, leaving the reader to arrive at his own interpretations (Lasch, 17).

Lasch identifies signs of this new narcissism in certain works of fiction and he suggests that by the use of parody, irony and eclecticism, the writer retires from his subject but at the same time he becomes so aware of this distancing technique that he finds it difficult to write about anything except the difficulty of writing. Lasch claims that such writers like Philip Roth, Paul Zweig, Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut and Frederick Exley display self-parody in their works by fascinating the reader instead of asserting importance for their narrative. He declares that such writers “use humor not so much to detach themselves from the material as to ingratiate themselves, to get the reader's attention without asking him to take the writer or his subject seriously” (Lasch, 18).

Another critic, Charles Caramello depicts the American novel of the 1950s and 1960s along with its critical works as highly preoccupied with “action” and “inaction” and “with the failure of language and literature to liberate the self” (Caramello, 75). Caramello refers to mainly three major critics Ihab Hassan (as being critical about the protagonist’s desire for self-definition as far as oppressive social and cultural norms are concerned), Tony Tanner (as being concerned about the narrator who creates a verbal environment for his character, which later on turns into their prison) and Raymond M. Olderman (as being pessimistic about the American novel which metaphorically resembles the waste land that is sterile and impotent ) who share the same concern about the authenticity of the self. It is, however, Olderman who believes that only self-reflexive fiction can work as a force to enliven the self through imagination. Caramello summarizes the major themes in postmodern American novel by quoting the names of Eugene Wildman, Raymond Federman, Kurt Vonnegut and Ronald Sukenick. He states that:
We can observe that a number of “American” themes remain operative in postmodern fiction: the radical distrust of discursive language (Eugene Wildman), the Jamesian Europe-America confrontation (Raymond Federman), the courting of apocalypse rather than the pursuit of identity in history (Kurt Vonnegut), the quest for freedom and possibility in westward movement (Ronald Sukenick) (Caramello, 55).

The era, particularly between 1960 and 1968 marked the beginning of self-reflexiveness in American fiction. The question of representation in fiction has begun to be discussed extensively and the line between the real and the imaginary, or in other words between reality and fiction has been erased. Among these writers who challenged the stylistics of modernist-fiction, dealing with disorder, chaos, fragmentation, dislocation and discontinuity were Flannery O’Connor, John Hawkes, Kurt Vonnegut Jr, John Barth, Richard Brautigan, Thomas Pynchon, Ismael Reed, William Gass, William Gaddis, Jerzy Kosinski, Donald Barthelme and Robert Coover. In *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays*, Raymond Federman characterizes the modes of American fiction in the 1960s as the mixing of official history with the “picaresque” and “burlesque” and the existence of characters as “verbal beings” (Federman, 129). He further claims that for the writer, any attempt to illustrate reality is “fraudulent”. American history being “remade” and “replayed self-reflexively” (Federman, 26) has been extensively examined by the parody novels of Kurt Vonnegut Jr, Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, Ismael Reed and Richard Brautigan.

The dominant scene of self-reflexiveness has further been emphasized by Jerome Klinkowitz. Klinkowitz has explained the nature of the innovative fiction in the 1960s as systematic challenge against conventional practices. He suggests that writers from Kurt Vonnegut in the 1960s to Stephen Dixon in the 1990s have tried to structure the void and devise ways of generating narratives from their background and past in their self-reflexive novels. In his book, *Structuring the Void: The Struggle for Subject*, Klinkowitz believes that Vonnegut’s achievement stems from his usage of autobiographical collage in a network of different stylistics, which is named as parody, play, black humour and intertextuality. He continues that:
From *Player Piano* and his short stories of the early 1950s to his fiction of 1950s, Vonnegut proposes a uniquely systematic response, generating an interrelated narrative that defines itself not in reference to an outside world but in terms of its own act of structuring. Once accomplished, such work may efface the void of an incomprehensible world, but it certainly suggests what may be counterposed against it. As such, it becomes one of the chief examples for subsequent writers, who from this biographical base move on to study the structuring powers of such self-made systems as ritual, comedy, game, play and even such determinants as gender, warfare, and the spatial nature of the artifacts we build (Klinkowitz, 26-27).

In order to “efface the void” as Klinkowitz has identified, American writers have further begun to elaborate on the absence of meaning with the rise of new fiction. Vonnegut, Barthelme, Brautigan, and Coover by exposing the absurd and deforming the reality into some grotesque manner have focused on the inadequacy of sense and meaning. In such writers’ works, language and temporal disorder, paranoia, looseness of association and creation of vicious circles have become evident. Barry Lewis refers to “derangement of postmodernist writing” and the “insanity” (Lewis, 132). He believes that the association of schizophrenia and linguistic experimentation of contemporary writing, which Fredric Jameson discusses in “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” in terms of Lacan’s view of schizophrenia as a language disorder resulting from the subject’s failure “to accede fully into the realm of speech and language” (Jameson, 118) is not a coincidence. Lewis further argues that the authors between 1960 and 1990 had no faith that the old cultural values were recoverable after the Holocaust and they “gave up the struggle and delighted in delirium. The alienation effects of their fictions express the effects of alienation upon themselves” (Lewis, 133).

Gordon E. Slethaugh contends that postmodern writers deliberately inhibit the reader’s expectations in search for coherence and unity by questioning a rational order of reality to demystify the harmony “between the experiential or real world and the text, to raise possibilities of a multiplicity of credible answers, and to use traditional elements of fiction ironically and parodically but without satiric motives”
(Slethaugh, 3). As Tony Hilfier suggests “parody”, “disorienting games”, “baroque” and “allegorical plots” (Hilfier, 10-11) have become predominant in the works of these writers. In *Modern American Novel*, Malcom Bradbury argues that although parody is like a mixture of all art forms and in a sense denotes an escape from artistic conventions, it certainly employs freedom as far as language is concerned. As Ronald Sukenick claims, “We live in language and only writers are free” (Sukenick, 32). Since language is a collective socio-linguistic construction, the relation between the reader and the writer is a dialectical one. The writer reads the text and reads it back. In other words, the writer deconstructs the text continuously. Then, in a sense, parody becomes a form of deconstruction.

The post-war American scene has for sure provided materials for writers to experiment their techniques. The silencing of political dissent under Senator McCarthy in the 1950s, the rise of neo-imperialism, Vietnam War, the ongoing political marginalization of the blacks, the standardization of America through technology and the power of huge corporations all yielded to a sense of disillusionment. In the seventies, after the assassination of Kennedy and Martin Luther King, American citizens were shocked by the Watergate scandal. Furthermore, mass media failed to reflect illusion and optimism in American society which led to distrust of the official discourse. Powerful modes of experiments in fiction along with “parody”, “picaresque”, “marginal”, “absurd”, and “denunciation of the systems” (Chénetier, 199) have slowly altered the accepted novelistic conventions.

Türkan Araz labels the subversive practices of this new fiction, which is metafiction, as “unreliable” and “multiple” with “shifting narrators”, “characters of changeable identity or no identity”, “fragmented, indefinite setting or no identifiable setting”, “discontinuous, ambiguous plot or no plot” and “multiple, ambiguous ending without closure” (Araz, 65). Araz further states that:

Metafiction was employed not as a means but an end in itself as it involved an introspective gaze which rendered self-
referentiality functional in the process of demystification for purposes of subversion. Linguistic norms were disrupted, syntax, semantics, orthography abandoned or subverted. Authorial commentary no longer applied to the causality of the narrative’s phases or closure, but was shifted to the episodes of parody and pastiche since here the fictionist committed himself by his selection of material (Araz, 65).

New Novelists of the 1960s, with the confrontation of the scandalous historical events, have brought forward a new idea of history. They have aspired to disrupt the official discourse in their self-reflexive novels. In Critifiction, Federman claims that historical events must be “doubted”, “reviewed”, and “manipulated” (Federman, 25) by the authors of the 1960s. By nature, history has vanished into the past and cannot be studied at first hand. Indisputably, the study of history is a textual pursuit: the lessons of the past are taught through written documents. Even the ancient objects that shape our perception of history are textual. The problem with history is that the documents, which have reached us through the ages, may be full of inaccuracies. History, then, as Hutcheon claims in Poetics of Postmodernism, may not be the “transparent record of any sure truth” (Hutcheon, 129) since it is written by the winners. Thus, since “postmodernism rejects the authority of tradition”, it “turns to the past with ironic revisitation, in its extensive employment of parody and pastiche” (Araz, 34).

The need to grasp the present as history dialectically has been brought by Fredric Jameson on the basis of his Marxist presuppositions. Fredric Jameson has analyzed postmodern art as being recycling about the past. His standpoint is to situate postmodernism historically in relation to the transformations in the capitalist system. In Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Jameson has pointed out that “Historicity is, in fact, neither a representation of the past nor a representation of the future… it can first and foremost be defined as a perception of the present as history” (Jameson, 284). Historicity, in Jameson’s terms, can be viewed as forming a relationship to the present. The only way to gain a historical perspective is done by distancing ourselves from immediacy or by defamiliarizing it.
In American literary tradition, Vonnegut has been considered as one of the prolific writers along with Barth, Barthelme, Pynchon and Brautigan. Despite his appeal to the techniques of parody, irony and satire, Vonnegut received little attention and remained virtually unknown for the first twenty years of his writing career. As Klinkowitz has stated in Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction:

Unlike Barth and Pynchon, who have drawn their models from classical literature and theoretical physics, Vonnegut simply stayed with the common fantasies he had exploited for fifteen years, during the heyday of such family magazines as Collier’s, The Saturday Evening Post, and even such adult fare as Argosy, Redbook and Ladies’ Home Journal. Conventional literature remained just as distant from him as Barth’s regressive parody and Pynchon’s esoteric theory (Klinkowitz, 197).

2.2. Kurt Vonnegut and his Fiction

Kurt Vonnegut’s literary career has been one of the most interesting ones in American history. Although he has been dismissed by critics as a “popular writer”, after the publication of Slaughterhouse-Five, he has gained a critical as well as a commercial success. Characterized at various times in his career as a science fiction writer, Vonnegut commonly utilizes elements from all of genres in his fiction. Ihab Hassan sees Vonnegut “as a gruff sentimentalist with a soft spot in his heart for science fiction” (Hassan, 113). Vonnegut’s playful narrative style, which typically features slapstick, aphorisms and self-effacing humour, makes him a highly distinctive and experimental writer.

Vonnegut is most significantly noted for his parodic style. He uses parody as a thematic and structural basis for his novels by mixing historical documentary with fantasy and comic absurdity. Raymond M. Olderman has heralded Kurt Vonnegut as a master of fabulation -the term is defined by Robert Scholes in Fabulation and
Metafiction as “an attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality” (Scholes, 8). Olderman stated that:

No novelist in the sixties is more aware of the necessity of exorcising our dreams of death than Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and no novelist is more avid in his use of the fable form as an exorcising comfort and a loving prod. The dark, tough, apocalyptic quality of Vonnegut's vision results from his hard-minded recognition that we do commit sins against ourselves which need to be exorcized. But he dresses that perception in the fable's soft fabric, moral fibers and all, because he sees love as the proper instrument of exorcism and the fable as the proper form for the expression of the artist's love (cited Pinsker, 100).

Vonnegut started his literary career in 1950s. 1952 saw the publication of his first novel, Player Piano, a parody of technology, a satiric look at future when automation takes over the world, leaving no room for mankind. Critics have often compared Player Piano with Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World and George Orwell’s 1984. The novel is set in the future after a fictional third world war. During the war, while most Americans were fighting overseas, the nation's managers and engineers developed ingenious automated systems that allowed the factories to operate with only a few workers. The novel begins about ten years after the war, when most factory workers have been replaced by machines and describes an almost fully mechanized society run by a small, elite group of managers and engineers. The entire economy is run by an enormous computer that determines how many television sets and toasters the nation needs. Thomas F. Marvin declares Player Piano, a symbol of “dissonant” system because “it destroys the harmony of human life, replacing it with the unpleasant noise of machines” (Marvin, 37).

His second book, The Sirens of Titan (1959) following the elements of science fiction was regarded the first Vonnegut novel that displayed an interest in the techniques of self-reflexive art. In Postmodernist Fiction, Brian McHale describes this kind of strategy as “frame-breaking” in which a “factual” being is incorporated into a “fictional” landscape or into “an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural.”
(McHale, 37). The main climax in the novel is the Martian invasion that threatens the Earth. The novel begins with a crowd waiting outside the Newport, Rhode Island, estate of Winston Niles Rumfoord, a main character in the novel. Rumfoord exists as a spiral of electricity orbiting the sun because he sailed his personal spaceship through a “chrono-synclastic infundibulum,” a funnel in space and time. As a result, Rumfoord exists simultaneously at all points in his orbit and at all times of his existence. He can see the past and the future, and he can read minds. He materializes on earth every time our planet’s orbit intersects his own. *The Sirens of Titan*, has been dismissed by a number of critics as a “space opera,” full of improbable actions and adventures which lack serious content. However, Vonnegut mocks the conventions of the “space opera” which at that time appeared in the pulp magazines, movies and television. The novel can be read as a parody of space series in television and in pulp magazines.

During the sixties, Vonnegut published a collection of short stories and four more novels, including his sixth famous novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. *Mother Night* (1962) with its World War II subject matter had fascinated readers of Vonnegut’s own generation. The title, *Mother Night* is an intertextual parody of Goethe’s *Faust*. Thomas F. Marvin declares that:

The title Mother Night comes from a speech by Mephistopheles in Goethe’s *Faust*. The speech provides a useful introduction to the novel’s principal themes. Mephistopheles claims to be part of “Mother Night,…the darkness that gave birth to light (Marvin, 69).

The novel is about Howard W. Campbell, Jr., an American, who broadcasts Nazi propaganda during the Second World War. Campbell is also a valuable spy for the Allies, so it is impossible to simply condemn him as a Nazi collaborator. Instead, the novel presents multiple perspectives on the question of Campbell’s guilt or innocence and shows that society’s judgment is often arbitrary. Vonnegut’s refusal to judge his characters makes it difficult to know where he stands, but more importantly, he forces his readers to consider how they make moral judgments.
One of Vonnegut’s favourite themes schizophrenia is at the heart of novel. Campbell, in the novel, exhibits several symptoms of schizophrenics. He complains of “several selves” coexisting uneasily within one body. Near the end of the novel, Campbell freezes twice because he is unable to decide where to go or what to do, and he even applies the clinical term “catalepsis” to his condition. Vonnegut defines American culture as schizophrenic and makes a parody of its ideals such as nationalism and patriotism. The book brought two popular themes of the time it was written; espionage and the trial of a German Nazi. The cold war and the U2 incident was a major national concern while Vonnegut was writing his novel. The United States and the Soviet Union spied on one another, and on April 31, 1960, the Soviets shot down a U2 spy plane over their territory and placed the pilot, Gary Powers, on trial. Another incident was the capture of Adolph Eichmann, an S.S. officer, by Israeli agents in Argentina to be brought to Israel for trial. *Mother Night* may be read as Vonnegut’s response to the issues raised by these two trials.

*Cat’s Cradle* (1963) caught hold with a younger audience as soon as it was published. The book, a combination of an invented Bokonist religion and its language, made Vonnegut a postmodern writer. The parody of religion and language with the inclusion of playlets, mini-stories, poems, recipes, calypsos, songs, drawings, the refrains and repeated exclamations is at the heart of the novel. As Zoltan Abadi-Nagy has declared:

An unmistakable feature of Kurt Vonnegut's creative genius is a refreshing originality in devising new ways in which to examine American culture and society. His originality is exercised in multitudinous new fashions in a highly complex satiric art. Among other things, he invented and fully elaborated two ideologies that are central and all-pervasive in two novels. One is the ironic gospel preached by what he calls “The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent” in *The Sirens of Titan*, and the other is the Bokononism of *Cat's Cradle*. The two ironic religions are constructive and destructive; they mean salvation and damnation to the ironic worlds that choose to be pivoted upon them (Abadi-Nagy, 85).
Picking up on a theme that Vonnegut introduced in *Player Piano*, *Cat’s Cradle* points out that science became a kind of false religion that filled a spiritual vacuum in the twentieth century. In his book, *The Short Fiction of Kurt Vonnegut*, Peter J. Reed declares that:

The novel relates to the real world of Haiti, with its “Papa” Monzano a caricature of the actual island’s dictator, “Papa Doc” Duvalier, and its religions a parody of symbiosis of Roman Catholicism and Voodoo there (Reed, 127-128).

In this novel, Vonnegut again draws the readers’ attention to intertextuality. The first sentence of *Cat’s Cradle* “Call me Jonah” invokes the prophet Jonah in the Bible, in which God calls him to travel to Nineveh to warn its citizens to give up their evil ways or He will destroy the city. Jonah does not want to go, so he gets on a ship bound in the opposite direction. A furious storm erupts, and the sailors try to determine who has brought the wrath of God upon them. Jonah confesses, they pitch him overboard, and he is swallowed by an enormous fish. After three days in the fish’s belly, Jonah is cast up on shore, and he decides to go to Nineveh and preach as the Lord demanded. The people of Nineveh repent and the city is saved, but rather than being pleased by the effectiveness of his preaching, Jonah is mad at God for not following through on his promise to destroy Nineveh. God replies that he is more concerned with the lives of Nineveh’s people than with making Jonah’s prophecy come true. Jonah could be described as a reluctant prophet of doom, and the same phrase applies to John in the book as well. *Cat’s Cradle*’s opening sentence also calls to mind the first line of Herman Melville’s novel, *Moby Dick*: “Call me Ishmael.” In *Moby Dick*, the white whale that Captain Ahab pursues relentlessly symbolizes the enigma of nature that man fails to comprehend. Ahab’s desire to kill the whale represents humanity’s quest to subdue nature, and the same quest can be applied to *Cat’s Cradle*. In *Moby Dick*, the unsuccessful attempt to kill the whale leads to the destruction of the little world of the whaleship, but in *Cat’s Cradle*, Dr. Hoenikker’s success in creating ice-nine results in the destruction of almost all life on earth.
Although Hoenikker apparently succeeds in controlling nature, his creation turns on him, just as the white whale turns on Ahab and destroys his ship.

*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965) can be read as a study of the aristocracy of wealth in American society. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* tells the story of Eliot Rosewater, heir to a large fortune, war hero, philanthropist and alcoholic. Norman Mushari, a lawyer who works for “the Rosewater Foundation”, puts the novel’s plot in motion by setting up a plan to take control of the foundation away from Eliot and pass it to a distant cousin. A clause in the foundation’s chapter says that its president may be removed only if he is proven insane. The novel opens in 1964, and Mushari is examining his law firm’s private files on Eliot, looking for information that will convince a judge that Eliot is crazy.

In the novel, Vonnegut introduces his most interesting creature, a parody of a science fiction writer, Kilgore Trout. Kilgore Trout, who appears in seven of Vonnegut’s novels, makes his first appearance in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. He is Eliot’s favorite science fiction writer and at Eliot’s insistence, he has been summoned by Senator Rosewater to help prepare Eliot’s defense against the charges of insanity. Trout is an old man who is described as looking like a kind “country undertaker”. Although he is an incredibly prolific writer, he is unable to make a living from his work, so he has taken a job at a stamp redemption center in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

Trout is later on featured in *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a prisoner of war, during the Second World War before becoming the central character in *Breakfast of Champions* and *Timequake*. Trout is once more mentioned in *Jailbird* and his son Leon narrates *Galapagos*. The wealthy, aloof and aristocratic Rumfoords, are also familiar to the readers of Vonnegut. There is Winston Niles Rumfoord and his wife Beatrice in *The Sirens of Titan*, the historian Bertram Copeland Rumfoord in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and there are Rumfoords in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* and *Cat’s Cradle*. The appearance of these recycled characters in Vonnegut’s novels signals intertextuality.
With the publication of anti-war novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1969, Vonnegut achieved the peak of his fame. In his essay, “The Later Vonnegut,” Peter J. Reed suggests that:

The novel has the characteristic of being fragmented or segmented, most of its actions taking place in three distinct time periods which are then chopped up, intermixed, and shuffled out of chronological order (Reed, 118).

In the book, Vonnegut denies the logical sequence of events that linear narrative usually uses with random shiftings in time and place. There seems to be no cause-and-effect which makes an event rational, but instead, the reader can only come across with the absurdity and chaos. By mixing fact and fantasy, Vonnegut seems to overcome the massacre and his experience of World War II.

*Breakfast of Champions* published in 1973 carried the metafictional impulse in Vonnegut’s writing to the point of author’s appearing in the novel, as himself, and even talking to his fictional alter ego, Kilgore Trout. Through the end, Vonnegut finally sets him free. In *Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut meticulously deals with parody and diagnoses the dissolution of consumer culture. By conveying its fluid and arbitrary symbols of American culture, his work offers a remarkable study in the way that history, language, religion, science and technology can be exploited and remarked on critically through parody. Robert Nadeau has noted that in *Breakfast of Champions*, through irony and parody, Vonnegut demonstrates that “the major problem of Americans is that they lack communal ethos necessary to sense that they fully belong to and participate in a culture” (Nadeau, 129).

Vonnegut’s appeal to films and comedies, especially “pop culture” revealed itself in *Slapstick* (1973). In *Slapstick*, Vonnegut admitted that he had called the book *Slapstick* because “it is grotesque, situational poetry-like the slapstick film comedies especially those of Laurel and Hardy, of long ago” (Vonnegut, 1). The critic,
Loree Rackstraw, focuses on the twin’s relationship and interprets it as a comic polarity in reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's classic study, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

[The twins’] duality functions most importantly, I think, as a parody of Friedrich Nietzsche’s classic study of the interplay of opposites in the origin of Greek drama, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Eliza is the Dionysian energy that combines with the Apollonian form represented by Wilbur. Nietzsche believed this was the synthesis that generated the empowering tragic worldview of Greek culture. In Vonnegut's parody, however, their effort to maintain androgynous synthesis results in an adaptive, comic struggle. Their slapstick life story becomes an allegory--Vonnegut's revision of Western history--that allows us to look more critically at the polarities and values shaping our tradition (Rackstraw, 126).

In *Jailbird* (1979), Vonnegut deals with the parody of American Dream and turns the rags-to-riches motif into a failure by referring to a series of major historical accounts in American culture. Kay Hoyle Nelson states that:

[Starbuck's] story…clarifies central dilemmas for American culture. Fact and fiction shift with reference to World War II, the McCarthy era, the Sacco and Vanzetti case, Einstein's theory of relativity, the Sermon on the Mount, Sleeping Beauty, and the legacy of labor relations along the Cuyahoga River. Thriving on duplicity, the era recalls the beloved Cinderella story while reestablishing the less popular success parody (Nelson, 103).

Vonnegut narrates a Cinderella-like transformation of protagonist Walter F. Starbuck or Stankiewicz, a son of Russian-Lithuanian cook and Russian-Polish bodyguard/chauffeur into an Anglo-Saxon, Harvard-educated product of the American Dream. However, as the novel develops, in this fairy tale, the promise of a happy ending slowly fades and Starbuck is introduced as an unwitting and misguided Watergate coconspirator in the White House.

In *Deadeye Dick* (1982), the story is based on a series of four murder plots, two of which are accidental, the other two are not. The pharmacist Rudy Waltz is known as “Deadeye Dick” for his accidental murder of Mrs. Eloise Metzger and her
unborn child. Her death date is the same as Vonnegut's mother's suicide, Mother's Day 1944. The second murder involves Police Chief Morrissey, who accidentally blew the head off August Gunther while on a hunting trip, and Rudy’s father helped cover up the crime. Rudy’s accidental crime, bred by the foolish irresponsibility of his gun-collecting father, is repeated on a grand scale by the American government when it accidentally drops a neutron bomb on Midland City, Ohio. Vonnegut, once more, illustrates how individual murder and mass destruction signal the end of the American Dream and he simply raises the suspicion that the dropping of the bomb was no accident but that Midland City had been neutron-bombed on purpose because the government needed to test the new weapon. The inhabitants of Midland City became the victims of some hidden conspiracy of American government and the system as well.

In *Galapagos* (1985) the narrator is the decapitated spirit of Leon Trout (the son of Kilgore Trout), a Vietnam era deserter who lost his head in a sheet metal accident in the lowest part of the cruise ship Bahia de Darwin during its construction. His story tells of the end of humanity, but the race continues through the offspring of a genetically mutated Hiroshima victim cunningly impregnated with the sperm of a German American sea captain. Vonnegut refers to biological history and makes his readers realize that within the seeds of our destruction, there is a promise of salvation. Marc Leeds suggests that:

> Throughout all of Vonnegut's novels is the implication that due to our loss of history man has forgotten—or refuses to believe because of our egocentric mythmaking—that our biological uniqueness is due to the practical applications of biochemistry and genetics, as well as dumb luck. …Galápagos is unsettling and dark if we reject any intimation that man could fall from his present position atop the great chain. It is … dark to portray man so alone, without divinity, or at least without the awareness of community. And yet, there is the promise of regeneration. Having once risen from the primordial ooze, why not again? (Leeds, 98).

*Bluebeard* (1987) is presented as the autobiography of Rabo Karabekian, -one of his paintings also appears in Midland City’s Art Festival in *Breakfast of
Champions-, a minor Abstract Expressionist artist whose most famous works fell apart because he used defective paint. Almost all of the novel’s major characters are artists, and Vonnegut reflects on the importance of art to society and to the individuals who create it. Vonnegut shows his readers that even art can be parodied. In Bluebeard, he puts aside the science fiction elements that he used so successfully in earlier novels and seems to shift to a realistic mode of writing which is fundamental in telling a story.

Hocus Pocus’ Eugene Debs Hartke - the teacher-narrator- wins his often-mentioned silver star for personally going down a North Vietnamese tunnel and using a hand grenade to kill five enemy soldiers. He later learns three of the five were a mother, grandmother, and baby. His unjust imprisonment for aiding the prison break in Athena permits him the opportunity to collect his memoirs which include considerations of parental fraud (his father), the legacy of genetic disabilities (the Tarkingtons), and the loss of a traditionally dynamic communal bond held by the wealthy in common with the working classes. Eugene believes that human beings are so dumb and aggressive that the planet’s destruction is inevitable as imagined by the science fiction writer, Kilgore Trout. According to the story Eugene reads in Black Garterbelt called “The Protocols of the Elders of Tralfamadore” by Trout, the Tralfamadorians will render the earth sterile, first by making the planet a hell of hatred and aggression through a rewriting of the Genesis myth, and second by populating the universe with microscopic spacemen–self-reproducing germs that earthlings will appropriate as new chemical weapons. The elders instruct the writer of the Genesis story to encourage humans to fill the Earth and subdue it and have domination over the birds of the air and over everything that moves on the Earth. Believing that the Creator Himself thus wants them to wreck the joint, earthlings proceed to make the deadliest weapons and poisons in the universe, annihilating “strangers” as if doing “Him” a big favour.

In Kurt Vonnegut’s novels, mentioned above, parody is a double-coded course which allows the subversive reading of a high-cultural text. Parody flourishes in today’s literature since we live in a culture that has modified the concept of art.
Vonnegut in almost all his works uses parody for metafictional and intertextual purposes common to postmodern fiction by defamiliarizing literary forms, exemplified by various technical and stylistic conventions.

Vonnegut’s deliberate manifestation of his work as an artifact often has a strong connection to the presentation of his thematic concerns on the predicament and disasters of human beings. As for the themes, Vonnegut mainly deals with our basic assumptions about the universe which have been changed dramatically, why our faith has lost its validity, and why the writer has become even more trapped within his fictional cosmos. By focusing insistently on the creative process itself, Vonnegut hopes to illuminate how man defines himself in his chaos and his response to world is through the use of parody, satire and irony. The most notable postmodern strategy in Kurt Vonnegut’s novels is his denial of the conventional imitative form. Vonnegut casts off traditional linear plot and characterization by utilizing fragmentation of time, structure and character. The elusiveness of his characters sometimes makes Vonnegut’s narrative “unreadable” As Molly Hite indicates:

[T]his use of the authorial persona disrupts both realist and modernist strategies of reading, in that it resists the reader's desire to assign a textual phenomenon to a particular ontological level, such as the level of real-world fact, fictional “fact,” or fictional “fiction” (Hite, 703).

Such mode of fiction is rather frustrating for the reader because it challenges the traditional reading strategy. The inconsistencies of character in his novels serve to undermine the reader’s possible attempt to pin the character to a list of qualities or properties. Furthermore, Vonnegut’s characterization makes the readers feel no affinities with the worlds they confront or discover the truths about human nature. The focus in the act of reading then begins to dissolve along with the fragmentation of his characters. The grotesque, comical or obtrusive characters are often dramatized in absurd situations. As Jack Hicks claims:

Vonnegut is especially attracted to children, harmless eccentrics, naïfs, mildly insane characters—divine idiots all
but immune to the chaos and hostility of the modern world. They are by no means isolated in their interest in the minds and rendered worlds of the innocent (Hicks, 10).

Sarah E. Lauzen suggests that characters in metafiction don’t actually exist to emphasize the extremities of experience against the absurd banalities of daily life; they are just simply there as part of the “pomp” and “circumstance”, “the happily perverse imaginative celebration of fiction” (Lauzen, 100). Vonnegut’s passive, dehumanized and pompous personalities turn out to be a cardboard, cartoon-like representation or merely parodies. As Federman claims in *Surfiction*, such characters in metafiction are not “well-made characters”, have no “fixed identity” or “a stable set of social and psychological attributes” (Federman, 7), but this does not mean that they are mere marionettes. As the conception of character becomes non-linear, the readers’ focus of attention “shifts from the psychology of character (something ‘human’) to the inadequacy of the concept of character” (Currie, 64).

This brings to mind Marshall McLuhan’s types of media/text as “cool” and “hot” (McLuhan, 25-26). In his definition, cool media is highly participatory and inclusive because the user must fill in the gaps. By contrast, hot media is defined as exclusive which means that there is little information to be filled by the user. In the modernist tradition, character is essential in narrative and there are samples of hot characters which are detailed and complete requiring minimal cooperation. In postmodernist fiction, the characters’ lack of plausibility sometimes disrupts the typical reading strategy and the readers fail to draw analogies to themselves. However, they feel less restricted to embrace the characters in their realm of imagination. As a postmodern writer, rather than constructing three-dimensional characters, Vonnegut gives life to flat, superficial and doodle-like characters lacking any psychology. His characters can be read as parodies of modern characters and they are the intertextual parodies of themselves.

In the realistic tradition, language is conveyed as a transparent medium which offers us a natural access to the fictional world being represented. However,
Vonnegut sees language as a problem in a complex world and he parodies language by showing how the words create an illusion of transparency. His tedious repetition of words and his choice of short and abrupt dialogues note that language no longer conveys meaning. The reader is made to be alert by his treatment of language, which is less a verbal object carrying some meaning. He rejects to comment upon a knowable world and silences himself with the abundance of recurrences of words, jokes, symbols and sentences.

In his works, Vonnegut usually deals with irony, satire and parody which mock the realistic claims of artistic significance and truth. His works are demanding for the reader since he wants his fiction to be accepted as an invented, purely made-up entity. Vonnegut asks for his reader to understand his creative process, not to understand the text better. In that sense, the reader functions as the “empirical author” (Eco, 85), that is, he/she can master a text in relation to different cultural frameworks.
3. Breakfast of Champions: Cultural Parody

“What a dreary way to begin a story he said to himself...Another story about a writer writing a story! Another regressus in infinitum! Who doesn’t prefer art that at least overtly imitates something other than its own processes?”

John Barth, *Life Story*,

America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality.

Jean Baudrillard, *America*

In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut, resigning himself to self-parody, displays an interest in the techniques of metafiction. The novel details the collapse of a man who toys with the idea ‘we are all machines, doomed to collide and collide and collide’ and there is nothing scared about any human being. The story is told in short, dry, abrupt narrative ruptures, which describe the histories and actions of people in and around Midland City. Vonnegut’s favourite protagonist science fiction writer Kilgore Trout takes a long journey from New York to Midland City not only to participate in Midland City’s Arts Festival, but also to “be born again”. In Midland City, Trout meets his potential audience, Dwayne Hoover, who becomes insane after reading one of Trout’s novels. Through his eyes and through the accounts of dozens of sci-fi novels Trout has written, Vonnegut explores a possibility to satirise our failure to communicate (BC, 58), the preference of government to deal with minor issues rather than primary ones (BC, 73), our disastrous inattention to ecological problems (BC, 86-87), and our abhorrence for art and the artist (BC, 128-129). In *Breakfast of Champions*, parody is dominant; it is a “parody of the American way of life, parody of literature, of technology, of art, of religion, and last but not least, of language” (Puschmann-Nalenz, 99).
In the preface of the book, Vonnegut, as his self-parody, claims that Philboyd Studge wrote the novel (BC, 4). Charles Berryman suggests that the narrator’s name, Philboyd Studge, brings to mind Saki’s (Hector Hugh Munro) short story “Filboid Studge, The Story of a Mouse that Helped” whose character draws a picture of hell in order to advertise his awful breakfast cereal called “Filboid Studge”. In “Vonnegut’s Comic Persona in Breakfast of Champions,” Berryman further states that:

Filboid Studge is thus the image of what the damned public wants but cannot enjoy, and the artist who gives them the image remains at the end of the story unrewarded. The perversity of public taste and the ingratitude faced by an artist are among the chief themes presented and mocked in Vonnegut’s novel (Berryman, 53).

Even the name of the book is parodic and it surely signifies the demystification of the author’s writing process. As Robert W. Uphaus has stated “the question Vonnegut asks of himself in the book is whether he can create art out of his American Experience or whether America has replaced art-his art-with advertising” (Uphaus, 172). Vonnegut always pursues a possibility to parody his art and form. The self-mocking portrait of the author as character in Breakfast of Champions enables him to question the very nature of his art. He presents a comic image of the author dissatisfied with own his work. The writer shows up as a character in his own novel, not only to converse with himself about the relationship of art and life (BC, 4-5), but also to amaze the reader with unexpected changes in plot. Vonnegut, for instance, as an author, out of the blue, appears wearing dark glasses in the cocktail lounge of the Holiday Inn where he has gathered Dwayne and Trout for their violent interaction (BC, 192). The dialogue between his author persona and the author is unconventional in the sense that it throws light on the inventive process of his writing. The reader is alarmed by his metafictional parody as it is reflected in the following dialogue:

“This is a very bad book you are writing” I said to myself behind my leaks.
“I know,” I said.
“You are afraid of you will kill yourself the way your mother did,” I said.
“I know,” I said (BC, 193).

Vonnegut’s attempt to overthrow the myth of the author recalls Barthes and his definition of writing in which the subject slips away and all identity is lost. In linguistic terms, Vonnegut’s voice is kept hidden behind the language since as Barthes claims in “The Death of Author,” “the author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a ‘subject’, not a ‘person’” (Barthes, 168). This scene also signifies how Vonnegut loses certain authorial control as he presents a negative image of an author. The line between the author and author as persona blurs. When the dog, Kazak “a leading character in an earlier version of this book” (BC, 285) springs from jugular vein of the author, the narrator Vonnegut makes a funny leap over his rented automobile for safety (BC, 289). This specific moment shows the author’s powerlessness and the need to secure his fiction in the eyes of the readers.

Vonnegut problematizes the author’s identity and shatters the god-like-image of the author in traditional novels. He distorts the main premise of an author by releasing his characters just as Thomas Jefferson and Count Tolsoi once did (BC, 293). He also plays God, but he does so not to demonstrate confidence in a Supreme Being but to express doubt about that Being’s motives. This recalls his musings about the rattlesnake (BC, 159). He furthermore indulges in more details by reporting several of the novel’s male characters’ penile measurements (BC, 144) and the female characters’ hip-waist-bosom measurements. Vonnegut, in his-self parody determines to “shun storytelling” (BC, 210) since he can conform to the possibilities of chaos. In most metafictional novels, as Larry McCaffery states “any of order, whether derived from aesthetic principles, paranoia, madness, or superposition, is preferable to a life of emptiness” (McCaffery, 5). And yet in his brief quote of Theodor Adorno “I would bring chaos to order” (BC, 210), Vonnegut still yearns for harmony, either out from chaos or fiction itself.
The full comedy of the author trying to dismiss his characters occurs in the end of the novel. The author in his rented Plymouth chases after his creation, Kilgore Trout: “Whoa! I’m a friend! I said…‘Mr. Trout’ I said from the unlighted interior of the car, ‘you have nothing to fear. I bring you tidings of great joy’” (BC, 290). When the author says,” Arise, Mr. Trout, you are, you are free” (BC, 294), the character all of a sudden appears as Vonnegut’s own father, and his last words are: “Make me young, make me young, make me young!” (BC, 295). Since the author has no power to make his father young, he can not set him free either. The whole scene reveals Vonnegut’s self parody and his satire of the empty notions of pompous writers. The dialogue between the writer and the confused Kilgore is also interesting and it shows the distrust of the characters in Vonnegut’s fiction. Trout’s unexpected response to the good news of Vonnegut is simply, “Um” (BC, 291). Frustrated by this reply, Vonnegut pushes the extreme: “If I was in your spot, I would certainly have lots of questions” (BC, 291). Trout’s suspicious reply is “Do you have a gun?” (BC, 291). Trout kidnapped by a Pluto Gang earlier in the novel, is uncertain about Vonnegut’s presence as a writer. The emancipation of Vonnegut’s archaic characters, however, is complex. A minor character in the book, Wayne Hoobler has been “freed” paradoxically from the security prison and turned loose in a hostile world, which offers him no purpose. Kilgore Trout who is “freed” by Vonnegut’s own initiation understands the fact that he will never be made young. Dwayne Hoover’s mind is also “freed” since his insanity is proclaimed. In response to their personal isolation, these characters either retreat or invent a system of meaning which will help to supply their lives with hope, order, possibly, even some measure of beauty. Trout retreats to his fictional world since he is not freed. Dwayne feels himself victimised by a repressive, cold social order and his life seems meaningless. He keeps fantasizing in a “fairy land” (BC, 264). Eventually, all these characters are consumed by the system itself and turn into victims of their own decayed social settings. In short, they become parodies of a mechanistic and dehumanized world.
3.1. The Parody of Consumer Culture and its Symbols

Vonnegut, through the eyes and stories of his failed science fiction writer, Kilgore Trout, inspired by Theodore Sturgeon, who produced novels and short stories during the 40s, 50s and early 60s, preoccupies himself with the codes and symbols of American culture. Trout’s stories in the novel serve as a kind of manual for the writer to comprehend the dynamics of a culture. Although Vonnegut has greatly been influenced by Sturgeon, it is hard to say that these two novelists have too much in common. Trout has the literary genius of neither Sturgeon nor Vonnegut. However, Sturgeon, like Trout was not eager to publish his work and he never had the right connections to get himself on the best-seller list. As Norman Spinrad argues:

Sturgeon’s fiction is always realistic, in the sense that his worlds are rendered with verisimilitude, and his stories take place on a deep empathic stage of character. They don’t zen dance across the surface like Vonnegut’s successful novels, and they are anything but wise-guy cosmic gimmick stories like Trout’s (Spinrad, 179).

In Lingo-Three, Trout narrates a story of a planet run by animate automobiles which destroy the planet and ultimately themselves. Kago, an inhabitant of Lingo-Three, outraged by how “human beings could be as easily felled by a single idea as by cholera or the bubonic plague” (BC, 27) fails to warn the Earthlings about the “evils of the automobile”. Mistaken as a match by a drunk automobile driver, he unfortunately dies on his way to attend a lecture (BC, 219). As a crude parody of Earth, Lingo- Three signals the doomsday and it is rather witty that a tiny, homosexual creature, Kago, carries the message to rescue the earth from destruction. Although Trout’s book has nothing to do with pornography, the illustration shows two Chinese girls with their legs wide open (BC, 27). Vonnegut, parodies car crazed and sex oriented American society by drawing subtle analogies. He echoes Baudrillard who claims in America that American culture is “a vanishing point,”
where everything is meant “to reappear as simulation” (Baudrillard, 32). Women are regarded as fetish objects, ideas as “bubonic plague” and apocalypse as fairy-tale.

The automobile has been valued as a means of progress by most Americans and has played a crucial role in the transformation of the wilderness. The dependence of car in American society is related with the utopia of technological progress. The car is seen as a leap to move from “wilderness” to “urbanization”. Since the car has enabled people to be more mobile, it also has enabled them to survive, adapt to the natural environment, and enhance their quality of life. As Howard P. Segal argues:

“The ending of the age of automobility undoubtedly marks a significant turning point in American historical development. For automobility has had a more profound impact on Americans in the twentieth century than even Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier had on our nineteenth-century forebears. The question for the future is whether the new era of American history that is dawning will continue to develop as the age of the superstate serving the supercorporation, with self-interest, greed, and waste being its cardinal, and ultimately self-destructive, values. An alternative future characterized by true community and expanded democracy, free from the privatism, materialism, escapism, and exploitation that the automobile culture encouraged, is also within our grasp (Segal, 27-28).

Nevertheless, the critical point is “how to live sanely and humanely in America's pervasively technological society. That is where serious discussion about America's and technology's future ought to begin” (Segal, 9).

Another story of Trout’s is about the alien dirty movies which consist of a family eating itself in ecstasy at a feast and then throwing away large amounts of waste food (BC, 60-61). The family reminds one of two yeast organisms wondering what life is all about as they smother in their own excrement (BC, 208-209). Vonnegut’s excremental slant is linked to the suffocation of a euphoric American family in a consumer society. The rich Pontiac dealer, Hoover symbolizes a version of the standard middle-class norm of success in American society. However, he is ironically left asking ‘What is the purpose of the life?’ The reader’s conventional
perception of feast and success is disturbed by seeing them as obscene. Trout, moreover, constructs his stories on the junk of life-vaginas, assholes, transvestites, garter belts and underpants-. His book, just like Vonnegut’s, is “a sidewalk strewn with junk” or “trash” (BC, 6) in which the stories turn into a toilet paper in the hands of his reader, the truck driver whom he meets on the way to festival (BC, 128). Furthermore, Dwayne is told to read the Bible for his constipation (BC, 62). His constipation recalls the storyteller in “Anonymiad” in John Barth’s *Lost in the Funhouse* in which the narrator is abandoned on a deserted island and cannot come up with any new stories to tell. He realizes that in order to survive and overcome his constipation, he must continue his storytelling through writing. Since he is out of paper, he has only goat skin to write on. “Anonymiad” ends with the protagonist urinating his name in the sand. Barth, like Vonnegut uses excrement as an analogy for “exhaustion” and the grotesque. Fungus, excrement, and constipation are shown as absurd parodies of a system feeding itself on junk and greed. They all exemplify Vonnegut’s hatred of consumerism which magnifies evil, alienation and loneliness in a society.

In Delmore Skag’s story, written by Trout, Vonnegut parodies the institution of family and shows the ridiculing effect of parody. Trout tells a comic tale of this bizarre scientist who can clone himself in chicken soup. Delmore protests against the wastefulness and absurdity of large families and invents a way of reproducing replicas of himself by shaving living cells from the palm of his right hand and tissue removal (BC, 21). Vonnegut assumes that the split of families is preordained in American culture and only “tribes, gangs, mafia families, secret societies, and perverse communities can survive, not couples in this “anti-Ark” (Baudrillard, 18). Vonnegut examines the destructive effect of traditional American family structure, which makes the reader confront the lack of care, love and affection in their lives. Vonnegut portrays the mother as crazy as a “bedbug” (BC, 181), his fathers are as pitiful. They are both “programmed to bawl each other out for being defective loving machines” (BC, 257) and can not find comfort in their family circles. Vonnegut moreover, parodies the disintegration of community life in industrial societies by
contrasting American black and African extended families with the pathetic family structures of the whites in Midland City.

In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut recounts the history or rather the tragedy of America. Throughout the book, he elaborately depicts the pathetic human condition in an ironic parody of the middle class. Vonnegut depicts America as “outraged” as Midland City (BC, 208) whose citizens are “treated by their government as though their lives were as disposable as paper facial tissues” (BC, 210). By parodying the social issues, Vonnegut mirrors “suicidal” and “schizophrenic American middle class” life: he spells out the loss of meaning in their lives. As Jameson claims in “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” the “deeper logic” (Jameson, 125) of capitalism has led the individuals to schizophrenia and depthlessness, where their search for truth and continuity is futile. Like Jameson, Baudrillard in “The Ecstasy of Communication,” regards that the postmodern subject experiences “a new form of schizophrenia,…open to everything in spite of himself, living in the greatest confusion” (Baudrillard, 132-133).

As Robert Merill has stated: “The novel is filled with social commentary of every conceivable variety, especially a series of rather crude reflections on American hypocrisy” (Merill, 155). Vonnegut’s naiveté, expressed by ironic prose and childish line drawings of the simple objects he described, uncovers much of the absurdity. Vonnegut finds out that America, for instance, is the only country, “with a national anthem which was gibberish sprinkled with question marks” (BC, 8). Its flag is “undippable” (BC, 9). Although it is a sign of the successful label in international commerce, it seems to be, as Baudrillard claims in *America*, “the only sign of life in the dead centres of American towns” (Baudrillard, 65). Even the graphic designs on American currency seem absurd, saying to its citizens “In nonsense is strength” (BC, 10). The national anthem is “pure balderdash” (BC, 8). The names of American cars are banal to the point of obscenity. Holiday Inns are droll places. The Statue of Liberty is “an ice-cream cone on fire” (BC, 11), not a beacon of hope and freedom. In *Breakfast of Champions*, as W. Robert Uphaus suggests “Vonnegut’s humour takes on a more conceptual slant and allows the reader to acknowledge his/her
apparent state with some detachment, if not with good cheer” (Uphaus, 170). In “Playboy Interview,” in *Wampeters, Foma and Granfallons*, Vonnegut has himself accepted that “the biggest laughs are based on the biggest disappointments and the biggest fears” (Vonnegut, 257). His remarks on humour reinforce the view that his novels aim to frustrate the reader by revealing the bitter aspects of human existence, which can only be tolerated by means of parody.

Like his symbols, the abundance of advertisements in *Breakfast of Champions* glorifies the way of life in America through false images. “Goodbye Blue Monday” (BC, 171), “Craig’s Ice Cream” (BC, 279) “Support the Artists” (BC, 212), and “Queen of the Prairies” (BC, 190) all parade kitsch and fetishism substituting for a culture which has no “humane harmony” (BC, 5). Vonnegut mocks the idea that happiness can only be an ice-cream brand, arts can be supported when only we wear these silly badges. As a brand name, “Excelsior” foolishly recalls anything but a fire extinguisher. The motto of “Robo-Magic washing machine” or “Goodbye Blue Monday” is “cheerful” despite its depressed connotation. Even a novel might take its name from a cereal product. David Cowart states that:

> The novel’s title is intended to include, in the overall indictment of American capitalist civilization, a direct jab at the consumer society and its holy center-Madison Avenue (Cowart, 173).

The mall, an iconographic and symbolic phenomenon of American capitalistic society, provides an environment where the self, transformed into a consumer, can achieve happiness and the realization of dreams by the purchase of commodities. Since capitalistic economy has created its own manifestation: “I consume, therefore I am”, the only value becomes greed: “Everybody in America was supposed to grab whatever he could and hold onto it. Some Americans were very good at grabbing and holding, were fabulously well-to-do” (BC, 13).

Vonnegut scoffs at American society whose individuals are inactive, apathetic and atomized. It is rather hard for him to fluctuate between the life of
materialism and the life of imagination to give a shape to his fictional realm. As a writer, he then could express his “amorphous” criticism of American life not through realistic picture, but through “fable”, “picaresque”, “prophecy” and “nostalgia” (Howe, 26). As long as madness, neurosis, nostalgia and eccentricity rule in a consumer society, the writer’s main devise for portrayal of his society becomes merely parody. Vonnegut’s main success springs from his presentation of American society so bluntly, especially his “countrymen” who become so vile by copying the cartoon lives of fictional characters, not only in novels, but also in cinema, plays, and art in general:

In “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?,” Jean-Francois Lyotard sees today’s capitalism as a dominant power, which seizes to control objects, social roles and institutions so that realistic representations can no longer conjure reality except as “nostalgia and mockery, as an occasion for suffering rather than for satisfaction” (Lyotard, 119). Following Ernest Mandel’s Late Capitalism, Fredric Jameson mentions three major epochs in capitalism: market capitalism, the monopoly stage and multinational capitalism. The emergence of capitalism has been widely absorbed by David Harvey in The Condition of Postmodernity. Harvey describes the change in cultural as well as political-economic practices since around 1972. He cites the transition from the Fordist-Keynesian systems to the more advanced capitalism of “flexible accumulation”. He sees postmodernity rising from the transformation of a modern system of mass production with a relatively fixed system of capital accumulation and what makes this culture specifically postmodern is “its total acceptance”(Harvey, 44) of this condition. George Ritzer describes capitalistic consumer society as the “MacDonaldization of society”. He employs the central concepts in the fast-food industry which have spread to all types of restaurants (Ritzer, 155-156). Everything from pizza to lobster, from ice cream to bread, from alcohol to fried chicken is dominated by the Chain mentality. These
chains are in the suburbs, the central cities, the malls, our schools and military bases, our hospitals and airports, even our airplanes and ballparks. They dominate the highway interchanges. It’s not only the food industry that represents this process of McDonaldization. Toy stores (Toys R Us), Bookstores (B. Dalton’s), Newspapers (USA Today), child care (Kinder Care), learning (Sylvan Learning Centers) and a host of others have followed.

In a capitalistic consumer society all institutions designate the emptiness of life or void into which everything has fallen. Art becomes schizophrenic, the dream of equality, “Out of Many, One: E pluribus unum” (BC, 9) and the exercise of freedom come to be irrelevant as long as materialism predominates. In “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” Fredric Jameson states that “schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence” (Jameson, 119). Then, the individual is condemned to live in a perpetual present, in a state of “nostalgia” which makes him/her fail to achieve a sense of history. Vonnegut’s clichés about guns (BC, 50), women being big mammals with large brains (BC, 136), prostitutes surrendering themselves not to Jesus, but to a pimp (BC, 73), alcohol, drugs, and all the like-what may actually constitute American consumerism-permit him to witness American misery from a different perspective, rather from a nostalgic slant. The nostalgic tones are evident in Breakfast of Champions. In his preface, Vonnegut explains that he has dedicated the book to an old friend Phoebe Hurty who had faith in Prosperity (BC, 2). “But nobody believes anymore in a new American paradise.” (BC, 2) Vonnegut admits, “I sure miss Phoebe Hurty” (BC, 2).

Breakfast of Champions consists of strange juxtapositions of ordinary objects. As Kathryn Hume has stated: “Vonnegut uses his sense of the world as flux to create many touches of defamiliarization” (Hume, 218). Even a “miraculous insulating material”, used on rocket ships to the moon, becomes the ornament of Dwayne’s “dream house”. In reference to insulating material, Vonnegut evokes parody by saying that “One small step for man, one great leap for mankind” (BC, 74). The relationship between the author and the object of criticism transforms itself into
parody with the recognition of incongruity. Vonnegut’s main intention is to startle the reader with this peculiar proximity of objects and distortion of symbols. Vonnegut deliberately forces incongruities on the reader; furthermore, he plays with the traditional plot patterns to arouse expectations in his readers. Eventually, he refuses to fulfil their expectations. Although his tapestry of these inflated symbols may not provoke laughter, they effectively exemplify the consequences of a collision between his artistic involvement and his culture’s signs. William E. K. Meyer Jr. claims that:

The irony, of course, that surrounds Vonnegut’s simple drawings is the result not just of his subjects- the “sanitary” strap on the toilet bowl, or the monstrosity of the “electric chair”, or the vapid homeliness of the well known “Holiday Inn” sign-but the irony springs most powerfully from Vonnegut’s simple desire to have his “readers” see for themselves the images or “objective correlative” of their hypervisual waste land (Meyer Jr., 101).

In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut for instance refers to Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise which is a popular brand name in America; he describes a chicken and then inserts his own drawing of chicken, a stupid looking but lively bird (BC, 157). His next step is to demonstrate how it is transformed into buckets of crispy and inanimate pieces of eating matter:

The idea was to kill it and put out all its feathers, and cut off its head and feet and scoop out its internal organs-and then chop it into pieces and fry the pieces, and put the pieces in a waxed paper bucket with a lid on it, so it looked like this (BC, 158).

In Vonnegut’s metamorphosed world of symbols and signs, even the names have no fixity. Dwayne, for instance, calls Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise as “Nigger joint” (BC, 161). Horsepower recaptures the memory of a workman as The Hundred-Nigger Machine (BC, 146). The romantic screen idol, Rudolph Valentino turns into Ralston Valentine in Trout’s story (BC, 151). Leaks
happen to be glasses (BC, 193). The truck bearing the name Ajax has of course got nothing to do with warrior in Greek mythology (BC, 91). Hence Skylark is odd enough for a car name (BC, 96). Vonnegut repetitively alters the names of objects and people, thus initiating new cycles of semiotic destruction and creation. By making fun of the names given to certain items, he thereby questions the purported reality of the objects named. In this way, he points us to the indeterminacy of language. Language surely becomes enigmatic and intangible when words are deprived of their fixed and true meanings.

Through the book, Vonnegut eagerly keeps on doodling and transforming a cow into hamburger (BC, 124) and the “blood” of maple trees into maple sugar (BC, 275). He introduces a series of definitions for the reader to make them realize that what they mean is not in fact what they signify. Vonnegut just like the black ex-convict, Wayne, attempts to decode every single familiar word, symbol or sign. (BC, 190-191). Alcohol is defined as a “substance produced by a creature called yeast. Yeast organisms ate sugar and excreted alcohol. They killed themselves by destroying their own environment with yeast shit” (BC, 208). Drano takes him back to the suicide of Celia:

Celia had committed suicide, for instance, by eating Drano-a mixture of sodium hydroxide and aluminium flakes, which was meant to clear drains. Celia became a small volcano, since she was composed of the same sorts of substances which commonly clogged drains (BC, 65).

Reindeer becomes the “code word” for all blacks. Reader’s Digest is playfully changed into Black Panther Digest (BC, 164). Vonnegut links the beaver (the rodent) (BC, 23) to crotch (BC, 23) like the ones seen in pornographic magazines bearing the label “Wide-open beavers inside!” (BC, 22). The names of trucks frequently evoke laughter. When Kilgore Trout notices a truck belonging to the Pyramid Trucking Company, he wonders why someone would name such a company after “buildings which haven’t moved an eighth of an inch since Christ was born” (BC, 109). Even a broken car might mean a lemon: “A lemon was an
automobile which didn’t run right, and which nobody was able to repair” (BC, 275). A beetle suggests both the Nazis’ popular car and the insect fashioned by the Creator of the Universe (BC, 135). When Germans were “full of chemicals”, Vonnegut shows us how their flag, their symbol of nation looked like (BC, 133). He further inserts the picture of a German flag after they recovered from insanity (BC, 134). In his parodic realm, these “Earthling symbols” by and large convey dichotomies; they are for nothingness as well as for everything. (BC, 206)

All these transformations, tapestry of incongruities and binary oppositions as Baudrillard claims in *America*, in fact imply that United States is “a giant hologram” (Baudrillard, 29). It is “a fantastic switching between similar elements, that everything is only held together by a thread of light…scanning out American reality before our eyes” (*America*, 30). Vonnegut skims through these orderly woven objects to bare America’s camouflaged banality. He bitterly ridicules how every aspect of American culture has become a trivial, abject and insignificant parody of itself. Furthermore, Vonnegut labels a culture, which Klinkowitz claims in *Structuring the Void: The Struggle for Subject*, “outstripped all definitions and threatened to make no sense at all” (Klinkowitz, 73). The whole life resembles a kind of simulation, a hyperreality. G. Christopher Williams draws a parallel between Dwayne Hoover and Truman in the film “Truman Show” in the sense that Hoover believes that he alone is real and everything that exists around him exists only to test his reactions (Williams, 2). His escape from the simulation, like Truman, turns out to be disastrous and futile. Since his life is simulated, the sign exists, but not the signified. Neither Truman nor Dwayne can talk about free will and meaning in the realm of simulations.

In *Breakfast of Champions*, Vonnegut dedicates much of the book to mocking the symbols of American culture, the idea that Columbus discovered America, (BC, 10), the dignity of the founding fathers (BC, 11-12), the useless family cohesion (BC, 21), commercial greed (BC, 170) or American sexual revolution (BC, 150). He further satirizes how American Utopia has disintegrated and obliterated: “The Earthlings hadn’t demolished West Virginia and Southeast Asia. They had demolished everything. So they were ready to go pioneering again” (BC, 170). As a
citizen of a pioneer society, Vonnegut regards emigration as a destructive experience since the predecessors “had been among the principal destroyers of the surface and the people of West Virginia” (BC, 126). It is then inevitable that in their collective subconsciousness “Americans are afraid of coming home” (BC, 196) although “The past has been rendered harmless” (BC, 196). Vonnegut continues to attack almost all institutions. For instance, he disparages West Point as “an institution devoted to homicide and absolutely humorless obedience” (BC, 179), a site for “flourishing ideas”, such as Fascism. In his parody of “The Midland City Police and Sheriff’s Department”, run just by “white men”, who are committed reindeer (black people) hunters, Vonnegut severely criticises the idea that the eradication of racism in America is pointless. The symbol of capital in capitalist countries gold is referred to quite often in the book. Human passion for this “soft” and “weak” metal is flippantly compared to men’s lust for girls’ underpants (BC, 24). His mention of gold hints at the famous Gold rush in America and recalls Chaplin’s gentle and sensitive Tramp character in “Gold Rush” who is reduced to eating his shoes in one scene in the materialistic and amoral environment of a mining town. Dwayne and Trout stand out like Chaplin’s Tramp, striving to survive in such a similar hostile environment. In his parody of gold, Vonnegut condemns his “frenzy” society and its booming assets, gold mines, oil reserves which set off the rise of capital with Midas touch. Yet, he purges himself of the painful traces of history: “So now we can build an unselfish society by devoting to unselfishness the frenzy we once devoted to gold and to underpants” (BC, 25). Deploying parody, Vonnegut moves in a few pages through the matters of theology, irrelevant statistics of penis size, perverse sexuality, washroom graffiti and automobile sales statistics. He directs his main interest at American idiocy with the use of “three-dimensional” and “juicy” symbols, which indeed have been “poisoned by great sins our nation has committed, such as slavery and genocide and criminal neglect, or by tinhorn commercial greed and cunning” (BC, 293).

Vonnegut by the use of parody portrays a culture that is sterile, superficial, dominated by commodities and alienated from itself. Materialistic achievements, however, lead to the spiritual emptiness and even schizophrenia which Vonnegut
regards as epidemic in that society. Since money stands as the supreme measure of value, the foundation of that culture –science- fails to contribute to the myth of a happy, just and prosperous “American paradise” and turns into a benign production of this consumer culture.

3.2. The Parody of Science and Technology

The common conception of America as a land of utopia brought by the dynamics of technological progress is familiar and this idea is still shared by many Americans despite the growing doubts about its future. The criticism of technology is generated by the atomic weapons, the pollution of environment and the malfunction of nuclear power plants. After the Second World War, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned the nation about the power of military-industrial complex that came to dominate United States policy in the 1950s and 1960s. Unfortunately, the alliance between arms manufacturers and military kept pressure on the Congress to ensure that newer and more powerful weapons systems were in need. After that, a clear shift in the nation’s values was seen. The return of prosperity after the war and the introduction of consumer goods made Americans spend even more. The middle class was not complete without a new Chrysler and the latest kitchen gadgets were quickly purchased. However, the new products meant more than mere conveniences. They were seen as substantial proof of the superiority of the capitalist system over communism during the cold war. Today, there is a loss of faith in American technology’s ability to overcome problems and improve society. Howard P. Segal asserts that the 1991 implementation of computerised weapons systems in the Persian Gulf War caused Americans to begin believing that science and technology could lead to fatal consequences (Segal, 1-2). Although the novels of Kurt Vonnegut do not explicitly deal with the idea of nuclear weapons, there is a recurrent image that the massive catastrophe can annihilate human life. Vonnegut uses the conventions of science fiction to make his readers think more deeply about the world we live in. As Benjamin DeMott claims “science fiction allows Vonnegut to project himself into the future and there to discover a kind of futility and gloom in man’s existence.” (DeMott, 99). Science fiction is, both a “flexible instrument for social criticism”
(Hillegas, 280). Parody, in the same manner, can be a device to critique generic conventions. Vonnegut, for the most part, tends to parody science fiction, through Kilgore Trout. In the novel, Trout’s subplots, for instance, on a larger scale show Vonnegut’s artistry in parodying the conventional elements of science-fiction genre-visits by creatures from other planets, flying saucers, outer space- in the sense that humankind can not even save itself from apparently inevitable extinction by the plausible endeavours of aliens. Vonnegut subverts the whole concept of the invasion of the aliens by showing its absurdity. Even outer space is a frivolous effort, a comedy to assure the continuation of human life. Joe Irwing states: “The apocalyptic parody manifests itself once again in one of Trout’s fables, Gilgongo, which points to the end of the world through technological playfulness and crack-pot morality” (Irwing, 219). Trout narrates the story of merciless people in the “Extinct” planet, who do their best to reduce the number of species, “so that life could be more predictable” (BC, 87). Although they start off with little panda bears, they see that it is a pointless effort to resist nature. Vonnegut by this parody demonstrates how technology can set humanity apart from nature and how misinterpretation of natural selection and survival of species can lead to exploitation. In the end, contrastingly natural selection deprives man of all supremacy and Vonnegut blatantly mocks the ability of humanity to assess its own state:

But Nature was too creative for them. All life on the planet was suffocated at last by a living blanket one hundred feet thick. The blanket was composed of passenger pigeons and eagles and Bermuda Erns and whooping cranes (BC, 87).

As Donald E. Morse has stated, “science fiction is rooted in the belief that through thinking and technology we will find a way out of the current ecological dilemma; that progress is not possible, it is probable through science” (Morse, 17). However, Vonnegut rails against the technologically advanced society through science. For him, the only mode to mock this idea seems to write a science fiction novel which emphasizes not utopias, but anti-utopias. Thomas F. Marvin claims:
Vonnegut is not interested in high-tech gadgets for their own sake, nor does he describe future civilizations merely to excite his readers. Instead he imagines other worlds because they allow him to point out what is wrong with contemporary society (Marvin, 14).

Progress as being “the most important product” (BC, 290) of man is not necessarily beneficial and benevolent. It certainly validates destruction. The human race yearns to perish dreadfully “since it had behaved so cruelly and wastefully on a planet so sweet” (BC, 18). In reference to Robo-Magic and it is “cheerful” advertising motto “Goodbye Blue Monday”, Vonnegut lampoons both technology and innovation. He raises his most favourable issue: the eradication of humanity through automation. Vonnegut ludicrously shows us how the “defunct” washing machine’s brain became the part of bombs during the Second World War:

That brain became the nerve centre of the so-called “BLINC System” during the Second World War. It was installed on heavy bombers, and it did the actual dropping of bombs after a bombardier pressed his bright red “bombs away” button. The button activated the BLINC System, which then released the bombs such a way as to achieve a desired pattern of explosions on the planet below. “BLINC” was an abbreviation of “Blast Interval Normalization Computer” (BC, 246).

Vonnegut supplies more evidence concerning the demolition of America through war machinery. His mention of Sugar Creek polluted by the gangster-controlled Barrytron Company, which manufactures an anti-personnel bomb for the Air Force, (BC, 224) demonstrates how American citizens are fooled by malicious corporations and companies.

Vonnegut sets Breakfast of Champions in a context of global catastrophe brought on by the ideals of the Western civilization held sacred. The earth becomes a parody of junk, a vast garbage can where we dump polymer, oil, all sorts of products- washday products, catfood, pop-(BC, 84). Vonnegut by continually satirizing “trashy”, toxic, “stinking condition” of the planet, acknowledges that he had programmed its abuse so it would become “a poisonous festering cheese” (BC,
254). For him, life itself is a polymer in which the earth is tightly wrapped, as in “cellophane” (BC, 228). It ironically resembles to a “flawed equation” lacking its most crucial component, which is, awareness (BC, 241). In the novel, we are told that continents ride on a slab that drifts “on molten glurp” and “when one slab crashed into another one, mountains were made” (BC, 143). This abusive crashing is incessantly “going on” in the universe making scientists to foretell “that ice ages would continue to occur” (BC, 144). Like continents, people collide, ideas collide, and even nations collide. Vonnegut does the similar impact to his readers as Trout does to Dwayne with his collision theory in Now It Can Be Told. Vonnegut’s sense of universe is “destructive”, operating itself as parody. In the novel, in reference to the symbol of ratio, Vonnegut makes fun of the bounties of outer space and parodies man’s eagerness to communicate with the creatures from other planets: “Earthling scientists were monotonously radioing that number into outer space. The idea was to show other inhabited planets, in case, they were listening, how intelligent we were.” (BC, 207)

Vonnegut regards science and technology as a farce which renders the absurdities of American civilization and the human follies which support these absurdities. For Vonnegut, science is a sin. Vonnegut’s scientist is “abstract” and “amoral” (Kavadlo, 126). His notion of progress is catastrophic since freedom and social justice can no longer be achieved by technological utopia which undermines ethics and ideals. Lyotard stresses that it is impossible to found science in truth since knowledge itself has become a commodity in a post-industrial world, which he defines as ‘the mercantilisation of knowledge’. In his book, The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard claims that: “Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, and it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases the goal is exchange” (Lyotard, 4). The validity of science is, then, arbitrary. The belief in science as pure and authentic knowledge has lost its credibility. The predominance of grand narratives such as science requires no further legitimation. As Antony Easthope claims:
Knowledge now consists of a heterogeneity of competing local knowledges in which there are simply ‘islands of determinism. Knowledges have become performative, arbitrated no longer by the question ‘Is it true?’ but ‘What use is it?’, each discourse judged in terms of what Lyotard calls ‘paralogy’, the ability of parallel rather than hierarchically arranged knowledges to come up with a new move, an innovation (Easthope, 19-20).

Vonnegut makes the readers ask this question repeatedly: “What is the use of science and technology?” in the plurality of knowledges. Rather apologetic about the condition of earth, he defies the Creator of the Universe and mocks his role in creation by saying that the universe is nobody’s creation, indeed because it has always been there (BC, 200). Even a poor creature, like him might have created it: “I was on a par with the creator of the Universe in the cocktail lounge. I shrunk the Universe to a ball exactly one light-year in diameter. I had it explode. I had it disperse itself again (BC, 200). In this particular sentence, Vonnegut both undermines and praises his writing strategies. Since he is the author of the book, he has the right both to destroy and create his fictive universe just like a scientist does.

**3.3. Religion: The Divine Comedy of Creator of the Universe**

Trout’s science fiction novel, *Now It Can Be Told* is written in the form of a letter from the Creator of the Universe to the only creature in the entire universe that has free will. When this message from the Creator was read by Dwayne Hoover, who was just insane to believe it, the outcome was his mad rampage through the Holiday Inn. Trout, in the book, develops his idea that everyone else on earth is a fully programmed robot and all the robots are dying while waiting around their experimental creature to show up (BC, 269). Vonnegut’s uneasiness concerning religion mostly originate from its failure as a source for permanence and order since religion arouses “every possible atrocity” in humans both to “amaze” and to “get a reaction” from the Creator of the Universe (BC, 256).

In *Now It Can Be Told*, Vonnegut succeeds to parody about “the disasters that can occur when people and societies unconsciously imitate characters and structures
in imaginative literature” (Rackstraw, 128). Peter J. Reed calls attention to the book’s “solipsistic whimsy” (Reed, 163) and the danger becomes explicit when it falls into the hands of the already solipsistic and insane Dwayne Hoover. Trout’s book becomes the bible of Dwayne and makes him believe that he will eventually become an Adam figure and will be transferred to a virgin planet, an Eden, where “Living cells were sliced from the palms of his hands, while he was unconscious.” (BC, 173) would evolve into ever more complicated life forms, all of them possessing free will like their progenitor. The whole scene brings to mind Genesis. However, the portrayal of Adam and Eve are quite unusual. The female mate for this particular Adam is not what one would expect.

“On the virgin planet” we are told “The Man was Adam and the sea was Eve” (BC, 173). Vonnegut’s inability to portray a sufficient Eve Figure for Dwayne and especially women characters in his books results from his traumatic experience over his mother’s suicide. Vonnegut accepts the fact that truthful American novels cannot fully develop women characters although “A mother is much more useful” in a novel (BC, 268). Despite his faith in woman characters, in Vonnegut’s Eden, Eve seems to be pacified and her talents are only reduced to shooting her Adam, or rather making him “sleepy” and “sticky” after his dive into “an icy stream” (BC, 174). The only function of Eve seems as if just to seduce Adam. It is actually Dwayne’s lover, Francine, who realizes God’s intention for the creation of woman, that is, “men could relax and be treated like little babies from time to time” (BC, 154).

As the book develops, Vonnegut asserts more biblical parallels and contrasts. On one particular visit, the angel-bear asks why the Man, while dipping himself into his Eve-sea one day, shouted the word “cheese” (BC, 174). The Man’s mocking response is “Because I felt like it, you stupid machine” (BC, 174). Such conceited behaviour, which is the cause of the Fall in Genesis, however, in Vonnegut’s Eden represents his refusal to be subdued by the divine authority of God unlike Adam and Eve.

Vonnegut’s brief quote from the Book of Job “When he hath tried me / I shall come as gold” signifies Dwayne’s prevailing emotional pain. Since “Dwayne was a
new type of creature being tested by the creature of the Universe” (BC, 15), he has to undergo Job-like divine testing. This testing evokes “destructive testing” of Pontiac cars at General Motors (BC, 165) which makes Dwayne question God. Dwayne says “I couldn’t help wondering if that was what God put me on Earth for- to find out how much a man could take without breaking” (BC, 166). Dwayne is reminiscent of Job and he is a travesty of God’s creation, caught up in Vonnegut’s metafictional world.

Speaking of the Biblical Job’s humbleness, Leonard Mustazza suggests that his modesty does not only derive from “his harsh experiences” during the testing, but also from “direct divine instruction” (Mustazza, 119). When Job finally does question the justice of God’s ways, he receives a roaring response: “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: for I will demand of three, and answer thou me. (Job 38: 257).

Job’s God then starts to ask numerous rhetorical questions: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4), “Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the cornerstone thereof;” (Job 38:6). Although God’s main intention is to chasten Job, His tone is quite threatening as well: “Gird up thy loins like now like a man: I will demand of three, and declare thou unto me” (Job 40:7). Parody functions even more significantly when Vonnegut brings out the conversation between Trout and the truck driver. Trout’s questions immediately prompt Job’s testing. The whole conversation reveals Vonnegut’s own remarkable twist, which generates to draw parallels between Job and the truck driver:

“I realized,” said Trout, “that God wasn’t any conservationist, so for anybody else to be one was sacrilegious and a waste of time. You ever see one of His volcanoes or tornadoes or tidal waves? Anybody ever tell you about the Ice Ages he arranges for every half- million years? How about Dutch Elm disease? There’s a nice conservation measure for you. That’s God, not man.” (BC, 85).

In Trout’s novel, Now It Can Be Told, by contrast, we encounter a humble God congratulating his test creature and apologizing for any discomfort he may have
caused the man (BC, 173). As the novel proceeds, unlike Job, Dwayne becomes even more self-centred and arrogant believing that his actions are a kind of happening, a show for a divine audience-himself and his Creator (BC, 257) When he punches a woman on the jaw in the cocktail lounge, he repudiates everything once he believed. “Never hit a woman, right?” Dwayne asks the Creator of the Universe, imitating his biblical tone. (BC, 258) “I used to think war was a shame-and automobile accidents and cancer” (BC, 263) he says later in the novel. Unlike Job, Dwayne rebels against God and scornfully voices his loss of faith: “You are pooped and demoralized… Of course it is exhausting, having to reason all the time in a universe which wasn’t meant to be reasonable” (BC, 253).

God in the end rewards Job for his endurance by making him even more prosperous and happy, but in Dwayne’s case, his suffering is rewarded with violence. The lawsuits resulting from his rampage eventually leave him a penniless bum on Midland City’s Skid Row” (BC, 280). As a significant turning point, Dwayne eventually becomes aware that the whole plot is nothing but a “textual reality”: “He thought he was on the virgin planet promised by the book by Kilgore Trout…The book had told him that he went swimming …It was a game” (BC, 272).

It is with use of metafiction that Vonnegut turns Trout’s book into a game, a sick joke to reflect the writer’s frustration. Here parody brings both identification and distance for the author and the reader. In *Poetics of Postmodernism* as Hutcheon has claimed, “Parody functions like Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt” and it further sets up a “dialogical relation” (Hutcheon, 35) by both distancing and involving the reader. In Trout’s novel, *Now It Can Be Told*, Vonnegut requires the reader’s active recognition of contrasts or similarities between the original text and the authorized text. In his playful intertextuality, the reader is defamiliarized and thus acknowledges this new meaning arising out of the old.

### 3.4. History: The Amnesia of a Nation

History is without any doubt one of the controversial issues in postmodern fiction. Since postmodernity no longer relies on “a possible rational course of
history” or a “unified point of view on history.” (Vattimo, 133), history is recreated/remade into a new form of narration what Vattimo calls “a history of Being” (Vattimo, 139). History is historiography, a discourse which aims to offer a writer a rewriting of history in a more imaginative and open-ended narrative mode. Madan Sarup writes of a move to ‘textualize everything’ and states that “history, philosophy, jurisprudence, sociology and other disciplines are treated as so many optional “kinds of writing” or “discourses” (Sarup, 132). Vonnegut’s reference to history in *Breakfast of Champions*, in that sense can be read as an attempt to demystify or rather disrupt the power of representation of history. By incorporating historical facts into the novel, Vonnegut masters to achieve that the power of dominant culture could be disputed through parody. Vonnegut’s tendency to textualize several historical facts found in the archives of Western civilization indicates how the past could be agonizingly re-experienced. Moreover, the only way to overcome the trauma of the past is not to judge it but to address the perplexity and elusiveness of restoring it. His treatment of history is to recuperate it on more aesthetic terms without the fear of being too critical. For him, even awesome truths can be reconstructed by means of parody.

In *America*, Baudrillard argues that America was created in the hope of escaping from history, of building a utopia sheltered from history. It is this disruption with history which resigns American people, especially the whites to verifying the inanity of their aspirations projected to the future. Despite its collapse, colonization still dominates as a verified form of nostalgia and melancholy. Squeezed in between its past and present and trapped by these bipolar forces, American society seeks freedom in oblivion and amnesia. Vonnegut directs the reader’s attention to the illusions of American culture fostered by nationalism, colonization and slavery. He parodies the role of pioneers in American history, rather engaging in social protest:

Actually, the sea pirates who had the most to do with creation of the new government owned human slaves. They used human beings for machinery, and even after slavery was eliminated, because it was so embarrassing, they and their descendants continued to think of ordinary human beings as machines. (BC, 11)
Marc Leeds states that the novel “is meant to mock the false history taught in the mythmaking days of our earliest education/indoctrination. Our wilful ignorance of historical truth consigns us to continued victimization” (Leeds, 197). It is obvious that neglecting history makes the foundations of the future much more frightening. Leeds refers to *Mother Night’s* Arnold Max, the eighteen year old Jewish prison guard as a good example of such an outcome. The grandson of a World War I Iron Cross medal winner, Max knows nothing about the war criminals of World War II. He overlooks the ancient Jews’ slaughter of 40,000 Assyrians, instead he concentrates on the atrocities of their Arab avengers twelve centuries later. Max neither grasps the cycles of attempted genocide nor understands that Israel’s present occupation of land once held by the Palestinians would mean cultural oppression and more war. Dwayne who also knows little about history can only associate his madness with the Nazis in sympathy and he believes that the Holocaust happened because of bad chemicals that the Germans possessed in their brains (BC, 133). When they recovered from bad chemicals, they were back to normal life with their new inventions, one of which was a “durable automobile” called “the beetle” (BC, 135).

Vonnegut’s talent is to narrate a simple story with an explicit moral and then to ridicule it. He much of the time employs a sarcastic strategy as a pseudo-historian to haunt the human race. Furthermore, he openly displays his disbelief in history. Historical facts become the pretexts to render his nihilism:

> The teachers told the children that this [1492] was when their continent was discovered by human beings. Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. This was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob and kill them. (BC, 10)

Vonnegut constantly moves the reader between the real life and fiction by mentioning the icons of American culture: Kennedy, Lincoln, Walt, Whitman, and Thomas Wolfe. All these historical names stand out as parodies to show the reader how America has ultimately changed into a land of misery rather than the land of
rejoicing. Walt Whitman brings to mind the name of a bridge (BC, 120); Lincoln prompts a tunnel in the minds of Americans (BC, 83), but not as “a man who had the courage and imagination to make human slavery against the law” (BC, 83). John F. Kennedy evokes only a name for school in Midland City since “Presidents of the country were often shot to death” (BC, 133). Midland City is also known as “Birthplace of the Nation” where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of United States were drawn up no longer the land of freedom for America has become such a “dangerous”, “unhappy nation of people” (BC, 210). As well as future, it is the past which haunts Americans. In Trout’s words: “It is the past which scares the bejesus out of me” (BC, 187).

In *Breakfast of Champions*, by forcing collages from American history, Vonnegut achieves to contrive parody. The electric chairs, for instance, remind Dwayne and Francis the “double electrocution of a man and woman for treason”, the couple who “had supposedly given secrets about how to make a hydrogen bomb to another country” (BC, 156). Vonnegut extraordinarily hints the execution of Rosenbergs during the McCarthy era. Throughout the novel, he also consigns to black history. His demonstration of the write inhabitants’ vulgarity against the blacks is satirical. It is rather black humour transposes itself into parody. Dwayne remembers, for instance, the chronicle of a black family told “gleefully” by his stepfather when he was unemployed. The family was barbed by a “white mob”, presumably Ku Klux Klan for merely not seeing the absurd Shepherdstown’s warning: “Nigger! This is Shepherdstown. God help you if the sun ever sets on you here! (BC, 239). Since then the flight of black population to the city has been prevented: “there ain’t been a Nigger even spend the night in Shepherdstown” (BC, 240).

One of the exploits of Vonnegut is to subvert the historical facts. The bank robber Jesse James turns into a “skeleton which Dwayne’s stepfather had bought from the estate of a doctor back during the Great Depression” (BC, 117) and ‘Sacred Miracle Cave’ becomes the site once used by black people “after escaping to freedom across the Ohio river” (BC, 118). Vonnegut admits that none of the stories
reveals the truth and he surely mocks the historical naivety of American culture: “The story about the slaves was as fake as the one about Jesse James. The cave wasn’t discovered until 1937; a small earthquake opened it up a crack” (BC, 118). He further continues that the only link the cave has with slavery is “The Blue Farm”: “the farm on which it was discovered was started by an ex-slave, Josephus Hoobler. He was freed by his master, and he came north and started the farm” (BC, 118).

Vonnegut counts on the significant role of oral tradition in history more than the official history. Unlike the whites black people know much more about their ancestors in Midland City (BC, 271). The white people’s ancestors, one of them was the Rosewaters who owned the mineral rights just after the end of civil war, however, were responsible for the destruction of nature. “The truth was that Rosewater’s ancestors had been among the principal destroyers of the surface and the people of Virginia” (BC, 126). A young black ambulance driver, Eddie Key, a descendant of a white American patriot who wrote the National Anthem, is a born-story teller. His “familiarity with a teeming past” (BC, 271) is quite ironic in the sense that his slave forefathers were supposed to have little interest in their family records. Eddie Key’s treatment of his past, his memorization of all the names and adventures of his ancestors when he was only six evokes an old tradition in Africa that has still been practiced by generations (BC, 270). Eddie Key in a sense recalls Sethe and Paul D. in Toni Morrison’s Beloved which the characters in order to confront their past, separately, tell their stories. They sustain a community by doing so collectively. These unrecoverable gaps both in memory and record are covered with oral tradition. Vonnegut fuses the histories of the blacks and whites to impose the significance of multiple stories. He employs postmodern strategies as a means for narrating and refiguring the past so that black identity, traditions and spirits have a continuing vital existence in contemporary America. Thus, he directs his criticism to the ignorance of white Americans about their past.

By constantly self-parodying, Vonnegut seems to bear the burden of history, which allows him to justify his flight from frustration and the catastrophes he encounters. In his reference to slavery, parody once again enables him to articulate
the sheer facts of American history. And yet he rationalizes that Americans can live
with the predicament which history sets only if they regard history critically:

…the end of Civil War in my country frustrated the white
people in the North, who won it, in a way which has never
been acknowledged before. Their descendants inherited that
frustration…without ever knowing what it was. (BC, 246)

Vonnegut’s use of autobiography much of the time serves him to bring about
the secrecy of his own past in a bitter sarcasm: “And both our mothers committed
suicide. Bunny’s mother ate Drano. My mother ate sleeping pills, which wasn’t
nearly as horrible” (BC, 181). When he feels uneasy about the book, Vonnegut does
not conceal from the reader that he takes pills “cheer up again” (BC, 4) like his
mother. Yet, the reader learns more about the author’s past. Vonnegut furthermore
admits that there is a resemblance between Kilgore Trout and his father: “I gave him
the same legs the Creator of the Universe gave to my father when my father was a
pitiful old man” (BC, 32).
4. Slaughterhouse-Five: A Duty-Dance with War and History

You are not dead,
But only sleeping.
We should smile,
And stop our weeping.

Kurt Vonnegut, Cat’s Cradle

Slaughterhouse-Five is Vonnegut’s first work to confront personal experience. Like his protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut was a soldier captured by Germans in World War II and interned as a prisoner of war in Dresden. Sheltered in a meat storage cellar below a slaughterhouse, Vonnegut was among the few to survive the Allied fire-bombing of Dresden, an open city, merely a city of no military or strategic value on February 13, 1945. However, the bombardment has been largely disregarded by American historians. Slaughterhouse-Five, published at the height of American military involvement in Vietnam, is Vonnegut’s attempt to preserve this massacre from obscurity and to reconcile his own feelings regarding this destructive incident, which for him symbolizes humanity’s meaningless barbarism. By subtitling the novel “Children’s Crusade”, Vonnegut draws a parallel between all modern warfare and the original Children’s Crusade of 1213, in which 30,000 youths lost their lives pointlessly. The novel shifts through time and space, recording Billy Pilgrim’s ghastly experiences in World War II, his unhappy marriage and dull postwar life as an optometrist in Ilium, his nervous breakdown, and his visits to an alien planet known as Tralfamadore on which Billy learns about their philosophy of time and death. As Tony Tanner has stated Billy Pilgrim’s time travel “entails not only undergoing the war time experiences, but also getting involved in the fantasies which Vonnegut has invented” (Tanner, 194-195). The outcome is an interplay “between history and the dreaming cast in an appropriately factual/fictional mode” (Tanner, 195). While Slaughterhouse-Five is classified as an anti-war novel, the book is as a whole a more complex, experimental work that inventively treats a conventional subject. In the “Preface” of Contemporary American Fiction Malcom
Bradbury writes that the novel represented a period of “mass armies”, “decadent military relations” and “totalitarian wars” (Bradbury, xiii).

4.1. “The Pastime of Past Time”: History

The relation between postmodernism and history is one of the most contentious areas among the critics. While postmodern and poststructuralist thought have often been simply characterized as negating history, the critics are deeply engaged with the question of how to understand our relationship to the past. For Fredric Jameson, postmodern narrative is historical and hence politically dangerous, playing only with pastiched images and aesthetic forms that generate degraded historicism. Whereas Linda Hutcheon regards postmodern fiction as historical since it problematizes history through parody, and thus retains its potential for cultural critique. Historicism is the name Jameson assigns to what he regards as an aestheticization of historical styles devoid of political contradictions. Since all history is mythologizing and commercialized, artists and theorists should provide a new sense of history in order to recover a meaningful history from postmodernism’s degraded history. Postmodernism can no longer achieve a critical distance necessary for parody and the result is pastiche which is the outcome of the transformation from a society with a historical sensitivity to one with a degraded historicism. A historical novel cannot represent the historical past, but can only represent our ideas and stereotypes about the past. If we speak of realism, it is the realism that is derived from our awareness of this new historical situation in which we are condemned to seek history by means of our pop images and simulacra.

Hutcheon’s historiographic fiction blends the self-reflexivity of metafiction with an ironized sense of history. This mix oscillates, she claims in The Politics of Postmodernism, “between brute events of the past and the historical facts we construct out of them” (Hutcheon, 57). Historiographic fiction refers, for Hutcheon, not to the aesthetic past but simply to the past and the fabrication of history. Hutcheon’s focus is primarily on the artist as a producer. In Poetics of Postmodernism, she objects to postmodernism’s relation to history as reactionary and
claims that this condition “ignores the actual historical forms to which artists return” (Hutcheon, 39). Hutcheon deliberately asks: “Which “facts” make it into history?” and “whose facts?” (Hutcheon, 71). Although both Jameson and Hutcheon cover similar terrain, they approach history differently due to their different orientations. Hamid Shirvani considers the difference between Jameson’s and Hutcheon’s versions of postmodernism in a review essay. Shirvani argues that their different accounts of postmodernism can be explained by gender differences. For Shirvani, Hutcheon as a woman and feminist celebrates postmodern difference that gives an “opportunity to promote a decentered multicultural society” (Shirvani, 296) while “Jameson is worried about the disintegration of his cultural authority” (Shirvani, 293). Alternatively, in “Postmodernism, or, the Anxiety of Master Narratives,” Brian McHale suggests that Hutcheon fails to incorporate the master narrative of feminism in postmodernism as a secure site for social critique since her claim is to disown master narratives (McHale, 21-22). McHale argues that Jameson’s Marxist account of postmodernism is more successful because he regards Lyotard’s critique of master narratives less anxiously as being “an unreconstructed totalizer” (McHale, 23) whereas Hutcheon is wrong about the consequences of “endorsing a master narrative” (McHale, 24).

According to Robert Scholes, Slaughterhouse signifies the problem of writing fiction about historical events (Scholes, 200). Through the presentation of the historical event of the Dresden bombing, Vonnegut calls attention to historiographic metafiction. He rejects projecting present beliefs and standards onto the past by asserting the specificity and particularity of his individual past. Vonnegut deconstructs the realist version of history. As he criticizes the realist version of history, he disagrees with the idea that history as a text surely enjoys a special status in relation to reality. The historian’s work is essentially different from the author’s work. The historian traditionally works within a confined area and combines his data in a more systematic way. Vonnegut suggests that the novelist lives in the world as well as the world living in the novelist. As “a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations” (SF, 11), the author can only claim his fictional world. The
incorporation of the documentary source forces the reader to accept that history is nothing but a human construct and it is as fictional as a novel.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut criticizes the realist representation of war. In the first chapter of the book, the author insists upon the impossibility of writing a regular novel about such a brutal historical episode as the saturation bombing of Dresden, which he experienced as a prisoner of war. This brings to mind Theodor Adorno's famous statement “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”. No matter how he tries to reconstruct the bombing and the cleaning up into a novel, Vonnegut finds himself tangled up by the paradoxical tendency of novels to celebrate that of which they disapprove. Vonnegut voices his opposition to the “novelization” of the massacre several times in the book on different occasions. For Vonnegut, the only way to cope with such a devastating experience is to write a unique novel, an anti novel. He writes that:

> It is so short and jumbled and jangled because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, (SF, 20).

Thomas F. Marvin claims that:

*Slaughterhouse-Five* introduced readers to “the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore,” and American literature has not been quite the same since. Vonnegut’s writing resembles telegraphic messages because all unnecessary words are left out. Short chapters are divided up into even shorter sections and placed side-by-side without the usual connections to lead readers from one to the next. This technique forces readers to make their own connections and highlights the subjective nature of reading a novel (Marvin, 17).
Even though the firebombing can be represented in the novel, it would become a reproducing of cruelty and violence, which the narrator refuses to do. Vonnegut implies that *Slaughterhouse* will then mimic a war novel. Consequently, neither the author’s personal memories nor the official history can help with the composing of the war book. Vonnegut suffers from remembering Dresden and feels the agony of the past. He punctuates this tragically false war story by saying “I was there”.

Marianne Hirsch coins the term “postmemory” in order to refer to complexities of memories of the Holocaust and the process of cultural memory itself. Hirsch claims that postmemory posits from the experience of people who grow up “dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated” (Hirsch, 22). Postmemory, not empty or absent, is obsessive and relentless and “as full or as empty, certainly as constructed, as memory itself” (Hirsch, 22). Andrea Liss who also employs the term, claims that authors engage in postmemory not only to reexamine the strategies in which past is understood, represented or mediated, but to reconsider the past itself. Liss poses questions such as: What forms should retrospective witnessing and remembrance take? or, How can events, already transferred from history to memory, pass into memory (Liss, xi). It can be said that postmemorial culture has been marked not by amnesia or forgetting, but by an obsession with the past. *Slaughterhouse* can also be read as Vonnegut’s attempt to distance himself from the painful experience of Dresden massacre. Vonnegut devoid of telling stories about the war is silenced and becomes even more submissive. Like Billy Pilgrim, he undergoes a stoic tolerance of war because “the idea of preventing war on earth is stupid” (SF, 139). The final answer the book offers to the solution of war seems to be only the chirping of the bird “Poo-tee-weet?”(SF, 43) which is discouraging rather than calming because no word can convey such agony. Vonnegut’s fiction is a reply to history, in a manner very much like the leitmotif of the novel, “So it goes”. Marguerite Alexander alludes to Vonnegut’s fragmented style in the novel by claiming how the experience of Dresden has transformed his fictional mode:
The restraint of language implies that language itself lacks the resources to deal with such events. The omnipresent authorial voice -benign, decent, accepting, despairing- registers the response of hapless and powerless humanity when confronted such catastrophes (Alexander, 56).

Vonnegut’s decision to call the novel *The Children’s Crusade* is inspired by Charles Mackay’s Children Crusade in his *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* first published in 1841. Mackay tells of a “sordid” Crusade, planned by two monks to raise an army of 30,000 European children who thought that they were going to Palestine. “Most of the children were shipped out to of Marseilles, and about half of them drowned in shipwrecks” (SF, 18). The other half of the children were sent to North Africa where they were sold into slavery. Mackay calls them “idle” and “deserted” who “generally swarm in great cities, nurtured on vice and daring...and ready for anything” (SF, 18). Vonnegut admits quite mockingly that the only appealing thing about war is that “everybody gets little something” (SF, 76). Mackay’s point is that wars bring no treasure but only blood:

> Now what was the grand result of all these struggles? Europe expended millions of her treasures, and the blood of two million of her people; and a handful of quarrelsome knights retained possession of Palestine for about one hundred years! (SF, 18).

In a parodic manner, Vonnegut demonstrates that the wars are in fact nothing but the Children’s Crusade, fought by children (SF, 74). In the novel, the soldiers in the World War II, like the children on the crusade, have little or no idea what they are doing in the war. The only characters who glorify war like Colonel Wild Bob, Weary and Bertram Copeland Rumfoord are made to appear absolutely ridiculous and are presented as parodies. Vonnegut in reference to Children’s Crusade makes the reader realize that history is relativistic. The author finds that people inappropriately exaggerate and distort the violence and atrocity of war into heroism.
and romance. The original text taken from Mackay, who believes that the Children’s Crusade is more horrifying than the ten Crusades for grown ups, gives Vonnegut an opportunity to stand back and let history speak.

*History in her solemn pages informs us that the Crusaders were but ignorant and savage men, that their motives were those of bigotry unmitigated, and that their pathway was one of blood and tears. Romance, on the other hand, dilates upon their piety, and portrays, in her most glowing and impassioned hues, their virtue and magnanimity, the imperishable honor they acquired for themselves, and the great services they rendered to Christianity* (SF, 18).

Vonnegut incorporates Mackay’s text as pastiche for the second time when he brings about the parody of “The Three Musketeers” (SF, 39-40). Ironically, different from the musketeers in Alexander Dumas’s book, these Three Musketeers cannot stick together and survive because of Billy’s clownish behaviours and wrongdoings which end in catastrophe (SF, 29-30). Vonnegut also mentions the Three Musketeers as a candy bar in various occasions. The Three Musketeers bar recalls his experience as a police reporter for the Chicago City News Bureau. One day, as he has to cover the death of a young veteran who has been squashed in an elevator accident, the woman reporter eating “Three Musketeers” candy bar asks Vonnegut whether his contact with the dead man’s wife has affected him emotionally or not. Vonnegut’s reply is quite interesting: “I have seen lots worse than that in the war” (SF, 14). This is actually the only scene that Vonnegut mentions his horrific experience so explicitly. The candy bar foreshadows Billy’s fiancé Valery’s appetite for sweets.

In the coming pages, Vonnegut keeps relying on more historical facts. Mary Endell’s book, *Dresden, History, Stage and Gallery*, published in 1908 employs the author this time to draw analogies between the destruction of Dresden and Dresden as the city of art and prosperity. The introduction of Endell’s book begins with how the city was transformed into wealth:
It is hoped that this little book will make itself useful. It attempts to give to an English-reading public a bird’s-eye view of how Dresden came to look as it does, architecturally; of how it expanded musically, through the genius of a few men, to its present bloom; and it calls attention to certain permanent landmarks in art that make its Gallery the resort of those seeking lasting impressions (SF, 19).

Dresden captures Billy’s memory as the city of “bloom” as well. Billy, as if in a “light opera” (SF, 101) or rather in a surreal world is mesmerized by the architecture of the city: “Merry amoretti wove garlands above windows. Roguish fauns and naked nymths peeked down…from festooned cornices. Stone monkey frisked among scrolls and seashells and bamboo” (SF, 102). But “with his memories of the future”, Billy knows that the city will be “smashed to smithereens and then burned-in about thirty more days” (SF, 102) just like in the Prussian siege that Endell describes:

Now, in 1760, Dresden underwent siege by the Prussians. On the fifteenth of July began the cannonade. The Picture-Gallery took fire. Many of the paintings had been transported to the Königstein, but some were seriously injured by splinters of bombshells—notably Francia’s ‘Baptism of Christ.’ Furthermore, the stately Kreuzkirche tower, from which the enemy’s movements had been watched day and night, stood in flames. It later succumbed. In sturdy contrast with the pitiful fate of the Kreuzkirche, stood the Frauenkirche, from the curves of whose stone dome the Prussian tombs rebounded like rain. Friederich was obliged finally to give up the siege, because he learned of the fall of Glatz, the critical point of his new conquests. ‘We must be off to Silesia, so that we do not lose everything’ (SF,19).

Throughout history, however, the destruction of Dresden was “boundless” (SF,19). This time, Vonnegut refers to Goethe, visiting the “sad ruins” (SF, 19) as a young student. Vonnegut incorporates Goethe’s impressions concerning the devastation of the city in German.
The incorporation of historical texts may be unsafe and threaten author’s authority. Lars Ole Sauerberg suggests that when authors incorporate these sources into their novels, they sometimes take the risk of no longer being in full control of their material; besides, the source imported with an aim to strengthen their imaginative efforts whereas turns into a mocking parody, of which they themselves are the very targets (Sauerberg, 195-196). The readers also have difficulty to find out if there is a satisfactory commensurability among all the elements in the narrative. In this respect, the intention of the novelist may seem insignificant. Whereas Robert Scholes suggests that it is not “the departures from history but the intrusions of it and the restrictions it generates” (Scholes, 202) that weaken the novel as a work of art.

The episode of the encounter between the narrator and Mary, the wife of his war buddy O’Hare indicates that traditional war novels or movies inappropriately praise heroism and justify brutal killings. The exposition of the writing process by the author is actually a denial of the traditional war production of John Wayne. The movie adaptation of the book would then star “Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men” (SF, 17). Vonnegut parodies the realism in war novels and the heroic deeds of males in war movies. The brutality of war can be screened “backwards, then forwards again” (SF, 54) in films, but cannot be fully covered in fiction. In films, fires can go out; dead or wounded soldiers are made whole; bombs fly back into planes which fly backwards to friendly cities; the bombers are dismantled and minerals used for bombs are returned to earth (SF, 54). The title of Trout’s book The Gospel from Outer Space recalls American B movies of the 1950s, such as, “It Came from Outer Space”, “Plan 9 from Outer Space”, “The Thing from Another World”, or “Invaders from Mars”. These B movies reveal American people’s hysteria that they are constantly under attack. Vonnegut tends to attack war tradition in American fiction, especially Hemingway who preys on romance and love in war. In his mention of Stephan Crane’s book The Red Badge of Courage (SF, 69), he brings forth the difference between traditional war novel and his anti-novel. After reading the book, Billy Pilgrim enters a
“morphine paradise” (SF, 69) full of giraffes in a garden and loses contact with reality.

Since Vonnegut is incapable of writing a realistic novel about the past, these incorporations of the textualized past into the text of present denote parody. By closing the gap between the past and present, Vonnegut rewrites the past in a new context from his vantage point. What is paradoxical for him is his inability to lay bare the truth of massacre because for him no one could in fact have “had any good war stories to tell” (SF, 43). As his character Billy who is trapped in the amber of time (SF, 56), Vonnegut feels the restraint of history. He allows “loony” (SF, 85) Billy Pilgrim to journey in the past, present and the future because in this case, he feels free to provide a narration to present the event of the Dresden firebombing without making a cause-and-effect reasoning of it. No matter how the juxtaposition of the fragmented events and episodes in the past, present and future is all related with each other, there is no chronological time-sequence in the novel. The reader constantly shifts from Vonnegut’s present tense to Billy’s present future from a novelistic past tense of historical fact to Billy’s travels in time and space. Although it is hard for the reader to map all these time warps, the author supplies information from the Tralmafadorian concept of time: “It is an illusion we have here on earth that one moment follows another, like beads on a string” (SF, 24). Unlike Billy Pilgrim, humans are all stuck in time; therefore, they feel great sadness for death and cannot escape from this catastrophic moment in life because they can only relate to their surrounding in three dimensions. Whereas, the Tralfamadorian notion of time is simple and neat: “All time is all time. It does not change” (SF, 61). “All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist” (SF, 25). As Patrick W. Shaw declares “[Tralfamadorians] cleanse the pipes of [Billy’s] perception, unclog his vision by disabusing him of historical, sociological fixations” (Shaw, 106).

David Harvey focuses on the compression of time and space which has had a “particular bearing on postmodern ways of thinking, feeling and doing” (Harvey, 285). “The rapid deployment of new organizational forms and new technologies in
production...entails parallel acceleration in exchange and consumption” (Harvey, 284-285) which shows the capitalist industry’s “intensification (speed up) in labour processes” (Harvey, 285). In his terms, capitalism stresses “the values and virtues of instantaneity…and disposability” (Harvey, 285-286) which people experience as they do to things. Harvey also draws parallels between “satellite communication” and the “rapidity with which currency markets fluctuate across the world’s spaces” (Harvey, 298). This “spatial transformation” has yielded to “the destruction of traditional working-class communities as power bases in class struggle” (Harvey, 294). “The result”, Harvey writes, “has been the production of fragmentation, insecurity, and ephemeral uneven development within a highly unified global space economy of capital flows” (Harvey, 296). Harvey recalls Jameson concerning postmodernism’s effects on time and space. In *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson writes that “postmodern hyperspace...has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself...in a mappable external world” which parallels to “the incapacity of our minds...to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects” (Jameson, 44). He further claims that postmodern temporality has affinities with a schizophrenic “series of pure and unrelated presents in time” (Jameson, 27). In this respect, Jameson writes “the subject has lost its capacity actively to...organize its past and future into coherent experience” and the subject can only experiences “a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary” (Jameson, 25).

The time travels formulate Vonnegut’s fragmented writing pattern in the book as well. The principle of becoming “unstuck in time” operates as a guide to the construction of the novel and the way the author wants it fabricated:

...each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message-describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn’t any particular relationship between all the messages, 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 once (SF, 62).

Vonnegut presents another example concerning time. When Billy and the war prisoners have a feast provided by the Englishmen, they play a musical version of Cinderella. There are two lines that Billy finds “so comical”: *Goodness me, the clock has struck/Alackaday, and fuck my luck* (SF, 69). These two obscene lines bring forth the metaphorical parallel between the fairy character, Cinderella, and the author/narrator. Cinderella loses her magic power as she hears the strike of a clock and the author/narrator becomes incapable when he deals with the destruction of Dresden and death within the trap of time. Earlier in the book, on his way to visit Bernard V. O’Hara in Philadelphia, Vonnegut crosses the Delaware, and then relies on the river as a metaphor in his reflections upon the nature of time: “And I asked myself about the present: how wide it was, how deep it was, how much was mine to keep” (SF, 19). Vonnegut then regards Dresden as an illusion since history is a series of non-causal, random events, having no ultimate meaning as the Tralmafadorian claim. He obliges the readers to decode his signs, which insistently point to the inexplicable horror. Vonnegut not only inscribes and blurs the line between history and fiction, but he chooses to lay bare what we know about the “spoils” (SF, 42) of the war. Vonnegut undermines the authority and objectivity of historical sources. In order to illustrate his point, he directs the reader’s attention to Professor Bertram Copeland Rumfoord of Harvard, the official historian of the United States Air Force who wants to publish “a readable condensation of the twenty-volume Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two” (SF, 127). Vonnegut states:

The thing was, though, there was almost nothing in the twenty-seven volumes about the Dresden raid, even though it had been such a howling success. The extent of the success had been kept a secret for many years after the war—a secret from the American people. It was no secret from the Germans, of course, or from the Russians, who occupied Dresden after the war, who are in Dresden still (SF, 127).
It is then not a historian’s task but a writer’s duty to make the massacre public knowledge to bring it back into living memory. Because the government turned down his attempts to make it known shortly after the war, saying that it was classified, it took Vonnegut years to realize the scale of destruction. The book written by Rumfoord is significant in the sense that it shows how wrongly the brutality of war is justified as necessary for improvement even though it claims to be the official history. However, the secret concerning the raid is twisted in the hands of the professor.

[Americans] know now how much worse it was than Hiroshima. So I’ve got to put something about it in my book. From the official Air Force standpoint, it’ll all be new (SF, 127).

The whole conversation between Billy and Rumfoord reveals professor’s highly disputed reflections about the raid of Dresden:

“It had to be done” Rumfoord told Billy, speaking of the destruction of Dresden.
“I know” said Billy.
“That’s war”
“I know. I’m not complaining”
“It must have been hell on the ground”
“It was,” said Billy Pilgrim.
“Pity the men who had to do it”
“I do.”
“You must have mixed feelings, there on the ground”
“It was all right,” said Billy (SF, 132).

The Destruction of Dresden, written by David Irving, makes references to Ira C. Eaker, Lieutenant General, and British Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby on account of the bombing. These two soldiers both drawn and repelled by the experience of the raid voice their opinion from military standpoint, believing that the
bombing was inevitable to mark the end of war. Moreover, it was a must to “utterly destroy nazism” (SF, 125). Robert Saundby wrote that:

I find it difficult to understand Englishmen or Americans who weep about enemy civilians who were killed but who have not shed a tear for our gallant crews lost in combat with a cruel enemy (SF, 125).

Although Robert Saundby refers to heroism of the American army, Vonnegut’s presentation of it denotes parody. The American Army is described as a group of poorly equipped soldiers in a “fool’s parade” (SF, 44) with “machine-gun belts”, “smoked cigars” and “guzzled booze” (SF, 48). But mostly, Billy, who leads the parade of his fellow prisoners acts like a buffoon when they make gargantuan “wolfish bites” from sausages and rub their “horny palms with potato-masher grenades” (SF, 48). These “children” surely turn war into “a very comical thing” (SF, 102). They become the metaphors of excrement, urine and dump in packed wagons (SF, 52). For instance, Billy does not look like a soldier at all; instead he looks like “a filthy flamingo” (SF, 29) and “a broken kite” (SF, 38). Ironically in the book, although Pilgrim himself is an optometrist, he fails to function as an eye doctor. As his own vision is progressively cleared by his experiences with the spacemen, he begins to become aware of the fallacies of history and earth time. However, finally in the book, he is forced to abandon his efforts to repair human sight. Patrick W. Shaw declares that:

Vonnegut’s sight parody also encompasses the myth of poetic vision—a myth accepted and propagated by writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman who announce that they possess all-seeing eyes that can gaze into the essence of nature’s purpose. Vonnegut denigrates such romantic self-delusion. He realizes that human insight is limited and offers at best a distorted view. The artist has no more perspicacity than the fool (Shaw, 107).

As being a “chaplain’s assistant”, a figure of “fun” (SF, 27) in the American Army, Billy is either despised or threatened by Lazarro (SF, 57). Ironically, he is
regarded as a typical American by a German war correspondent with his Leica who “wants an actual capture” (SF, 44). The correspondent eventually catches the scene of Billy and Roland Weary’s bare feet to show “how miserably equipped the American Army often was” (SF, 44) despite its legend for being rich. In his “fur-collared vest”, Billy is regarded as “one of the most screamingly funny things” (SF, 64) that Germans have encountered. The English soldiers, whereas, are not as scary as the German soldiers who cover their faces with “black wind masks” (SF, 105). These German “golliwogs” “pretending to be black for the laughs they could get” (SF, 105) all of a sudden trigger only one shivering “address” for Billy, that is, “Schlachthof-fünf” (SF, 105). In contrast to Billy’s grotesque outlook and frightening Germans, English soldiers are idolized with bellies like washboards and muscles like cannon balls. They give a lecture to the American war prisoners on the importance of personal hygiene, which they regard as a means to keep themselves going on living, but what they do not know is the candles and the soap are made from the “fat” of the executed Jews, Gypsies, fairies and communists (SF, 67). These animate and flamboyant Englishmen have more food than they actually need while the Russian soldiers starve. “They made war look stylish and reasonable and fun” (SF, 66) in their fancy outfit. War is a feast for them, or rather domestic chores; sweeping, mopping, cooking, baking, sawing (SF, 67) which remind the coziness of their homes. By making a parody of English soldiers and their wrong conception of war, Vonnegut mocks a nation whose values are nurtured by exploitation and colonization of other countries throughout history.

In the novel, a marina major at Lions Club advocates bombing the North Vietnamese until they admit that stronger nations should not be allowed to “force their way of life on weak countries” (SF, 45). Later on in the book, Howard W. Campbell, an American Nazi, whose “shoulder patch” (SF, 109) adorned with swastikas, quite oddly brings to mind Abraham Lincoln. He addresses the “sleepy” audience and refers to the colors of American flag as the symbol of freedom and revolution:
“Blue is for the American sky” Campbell was saying. “White is for the race that pioneered the continent, drained the swamps and cleared the forests and built the roads and bridges. Red is for the blood of American patriots which was shed so gladly in years gone by” (SF, 109).

Vonnegut continues to refer to the historical facts in the book. As he writes the final chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Martin Luther King has been recently buried and Bobby Kennedy has died the night before: “And every day my Government gives me a count of corpses created by military science in Vietnam” (SF, 140). Billy’s own earthly death date is thirty-first anniversary of Dresden’s bombing which just happens to fall in the year commemorating the 200th anniversary of American independence.

The forward of General Eaker pops up as another historical source in the novel in order to show the reader how the massacre is justified from the standpoint of the officials and military:

*I think it would have been well for Mr. Irving to have remembered, when he was drawing the frightful picture of the civilians killed at Dresden, that V-1’s and V-2’s were at that very time falling on England, killing civilian men, women and children indiscriminately, as they were designed and launched to do. It might be well to remember Buchenwald and Coventry, too...I deeply regret that British and U.S. bombers killed 135, 000 people in the attack on Dresden, but I remember who started the last war and I regret even more the loss of more than 5,000,000, Allied lives in the necessary effort to completely defeat and utterly destroy nazism* (SF, 125).

Although Air Marshal Saunby accepted the destructive power of bombing, in his terms, the raid was inevitable from the military point of view:

*That the bombing of Dresden was a great tragedy none can deny. That it was really a military necessity few, after reading this book, will believe. It was one of those terrible things that sometimes happen in wartime, brought about by*
an unfortunate combination of circumstances. Those who approved it were neither wicked nor cruel, though it may well be that they were too remote from the harsh realities of war to understand fully the appalling destructive power of air bombardment in the spring of 1945.

The advocates of nuclear disarmament seem to believe that, if they could achieve their aim, war become tolerable and decent. They would do well to read this book and ponder the fate of Dresden, where 135,000 people died as the result of an attack with conventional weapons. On the night of March 9th, 1945, an air attack on Tokyo by American heavy bombers, using incendiary and high explosive bombs, caused the death of 83,793 people. The atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima killed 71,379 people (SF, 125).

In the novel, however, Dresden is much of the time mentioned as an open city, “undefended” which contains no war industries or troop concentrations of any importance” (SF, 99). Even in Edgar Derby’s letter to his wife, we learn about that the city will never be bombed (SF, 100). Vonnegut’s persistent mention of Dresden as an open city is in fact nothing but “to hasten the end of war” (SF, 120) because “everybody in the city was supposed to be dead, regardless of what they were, and that anybody moved in it represented flaw in the design. There were to be no moon men at all” (SF, 120).

One of the parodies in the novel is about the book found by Billy under his cushion. Written by Bradford Huie, The Execution of Private Slovik is based on a “true account of the death before an American firing squad of Private Eddie D. Slovik”, who is “the only American soldier to be shot for cowardice since the Civil War” (SF, 36). Vonnegut refers to the opinion of the staff judge advocate that reexamined Slovik’s case and by doing this, he demonstrates that killing soldiers in the name of authority and disciple is as vicious as killing civilians in the war:

[Eddie D. Slovik] has directly challenged the authority of the government, and future discipline depends upon a resolute reply to this challenge. If the death penalty is ever to be imposed for desertion, it should be imposed in this case, not as a punitive measure nor as retribution, but to
maintain that discipline upon which alone an army can succeed against the enemy. There was no recommendation for clemency in the case and none is here recommended (SF, 36).

Vonnegut furthermore includes President Harry S. Truman’s announcement about the drop of atomic bomb on Hiroshima:

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British ‘Grand Slam,’ which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many-fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production, and even more powerful forms are in development.

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.

Before 1939, it was the accepted belief of scientists that it was theoretically possible to release atomic energy. But nobody knew any practical method of doing it. By 1942, however, we knew that the Germans were working feverishly to find a way to add atomic energy to all the energies of war with which they hoped to enslave the world. But they failed. We may be grateful to Providence that the Germans got the V-1’s and V-2’s late and in limited quantities and even more grateful that they did not get the atomic bomb at all.

The battle of the laboratories held fateful risks for us as well as the battles of the air, land and sea, and we have now won the battle of the laboratories as we have won the other battles.

We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city...We shall destroy their docks, their factories and their communications. Let there be no mistake: we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war (SF, 124).
Vonnegut draws parallels between the atomic bomb and saturation of Dresden. He merely attempts to illustrate the insanity of war and the scale of destruction. By the most conservative estimates, it is declared that 135,000 people died in Dresden in the raid. That means more civilians were killed by either of the atomic bombs the United States dropped later that year on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Although in the novel the author omits the telling of the actual firebombing of Dresden, in an interview, Vonnegut admits that this massive destruction of life was achieved by the combination of two kinds of bombs:

They went over with high explosives first to loosen things up, and then scattered incendiaries. When the war started, incendiaries were fairly sizeable, about, as long as a shoebox. By the time Dresden got it, they were tiny little things. They burnt the whole damn town down...A firestorm is an amazing thing...It’s fed by the tornadoes that occur in the midst of it and there isn’t a damned thing to breathe...It was a fancy thing to see, a startling thing. It was a moment of truth, too, because American civilians and ground troops didn’t know American bombers were engaged in saturation bombing (Hayman, et al, 173-174).

In *Structuring the Void*, Jerome Klinkowitz states that:

As Vonnegut would explain in many other interviews, massacre on such a huge scale –the Dresden casualties were measured as high as a quarter million from the single raid- simply does not register with the mind...some atrocities are simply too large for the human mind to grasp. As a result, people shrink away from such happenings or excuse them with a nervous giggle; and since the reality of mass murder is never absorbed, it is never understood, and thus cannot be prevented from happening again. But rather than losing the subject entirely, or—even worse- writing a detached account glorifying the adventure of war, Vonnegut kept it in front of him, inexpressible as it was, by detailing his attempts to face it (Klinkowitz, 37).

From these examples, as it is seen, the objectivity of the “historical narrative” is undermined and the “facts” are reduced to be merely rigid projection of the
individual. Most importantly, Vonnegut proclaims that there is not only one truth to explain the process of history, but there is pluralism in one truth. That is to say, for Vonnegut, as Hutcheon claims in *Poetics of Postmodernism*, “to re-write or re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it being conclusive and theological” (Hutcheon, 110). Vonnegut uses parody for the metafictional purposes common to postmodern fiction. By defamiliarizing literary forms, exemplified by various technical and stylistic conventions, Vonnegut reveals his artifice in which it is based upon historical and social contexts. He also uses parody to critique genres, demonstrating that narrative forms are inherently ideological. He questions romantic assumptions about literary production and interpretation regarding the role of the Author as the omniscient origin of the text. It should also be noted that while all parody is intertextual, not all intertextuality is necessarily parodic. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut refers to a wide variety of texts, including William Bradford Huie’s *The Execution of Private Slovik*, David Irwing’s *The Destruction of Dresden*, Harry S. Truman’s statement about Hiroshima, the twenty-seven volume *Official History of the Army Air Force in World War Two*, the “Know Your Enemy”/ “Why We Fight” pamphlets, and the account, in Genesis 19, of Sodom Gomorrah, in which Lot’s Wife, like Vonnegut, decides to look back because it was so humane to do so. All these texts support a basis for his metafiction. Vonnegut resembles a “scriptor” who “mix[es] writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them” as Roland Barthes talks of in “The Death of Author” (Barthes, 170).
CONCLUSION

The revival of parody as an art form is considerable in contemporary practice. In this dissertation, Kurt Vonnegut’s extensive use of parody has been both fully illuminated and comprehended by referring to the critics and theorists. Parody’s formal beginnings as a genre are attributed to Hegemon of Thaos who was the author of the mock epics such as the Gigantomachia or ‘Battle of the Giants”. These mock-epics, generally imitating Homer, are epitomized by the Batrachomyomachia [“Battle of the Frogs and the Mice”], the only complete example of an ancient parody of the epic which we know today. The origin of parody demonstrates how complex parody may function. Greeks used several different words while depicting parody; however, modern commentators have limited words in their descriptions of parody. For Greeks, parody was a device to transmit serious and complex messages, but it also meant comic. Thus, its ridiculing aspect made it synonymous with the Renaissance notion of “burlesque”. It was, however, the Russian formalists who concentrated on parody extensively in their works and demonstrated how texts relate to each other by using certain strategies. They described parody as a device for alienation and dealt with its laying bare technique and double-coded structure. Although the origin of parody is rather complex to grasp, theorists and critics such as Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, Gerard Genette, Patricia Waugh, Malcom Bradbury, Leslie Fiedler and Linda Hutcheon have either negated the term as being the mode of simulacrum in the late capitalist world or praised its significance over the originality. Both camps, whereas, have agreed on the complexity and paradoxical aspect of parody.

In Breakfast of Champions and Slaughterhouse-Five, Kurt Vonnegut deals with not only the comic aspect of parody, but also destructive, non-intentional and double-coded aspects of parody. Vonnegut as being a self reflexive writer, he highly utilizes pastiche, intertextuality and metafiction as forms of parody. A close examination of Breakfast of Champions and Slaughterhouse-Five has shown how parody may operate multifaceted and complicated. Vonnegut’s treatment of parody is metafictional in the sense that he applies parody as a self-reflexive technique in order
to point to his art. He parodies the more modern prose convention of author-omniscient narration. He much of the time engages the reader as a participant in his fictional narrative. His tendency to confound autobiography and fiction makes the reader realize that his fiction is artifice which represents reality. His “anti-artistic” and “anti-serious” art works positively in order to bridge the gap between the elite and the popular. His novels Breakfast of Champions and Slaughterhouse-Five have shown the aspects of metafictional parody. Vonnegut quite elaborately achieves the reader to understand the role of the author in postmodern fiction in a subtle way. He invites his author persona into the novels to display his writing process to the reader. By using parody as a stylistic mask, Vonnegut makes the reader to decipher his signs.

Breakfast of Champions can be read as a compilation of symbols and referents of America depicted rather oddly and grotesquely to amaze the reader with peculiar juxtapositions and distortions. Such defamiliarization transforms itself into parody with the recognition of incongruity. Throughout the novel, Vonnegut constructs numerous parodies of American institutions and way of life. America becomes a parody itself, a culture of simulacrum. In this culture of simulacrum or hyperreality, the self loses his/her notion of reality in a realm of bombardment of signs, overloaded information, and media messages. In a consumer society, these signs enable to desensitize individuals to signs. Pastiche and the schizophrenic defamiliarization from signifiers epitomise contemporary consumer experience. A consumer bases the principles of culture on such ideals which give rise to consumerism. Since capitalism begins to control everything, social roles and institutions, the realistic representations can no longer conjure reality except as nostalgia and mockery. In a capitalistic consumer society, institutions then indicate the void into which everything has fallen. Art becomes schizophrenic and the individual is condemned to live in a perpetual present, in a state of “nostalgia” which makes him/her fail to achieve a sense of history. Vonnegut by the use of parody depicts a sterile and superficial culture dominated by commodities. Materialistic achievements lead to schizophrenia which Vonnegut regards as epidemic in that society. Since money stands as the supreme measure of value, the foundation of that
culture—science—fails to contribute to the myth of a happy, just and prosperous “American paradise” and turns into a benign production of this consumer culture.

Vonnegut regards parody as a mode which allows him to subvert the voice of the dominant. *Slaughterhouse-Five* reveals Vonnegut’s artistry concerning his treatment of past which grants him to sabotage the power of representation of history. History can be recreated or remade into a new form of narration for Vonnegut and the only way to come to terms with past is to manipulate the dominance of it by parody. Vonnegut’s reference to historical sources in the novel can be read as an attempt to demystify or rather disrupt the power of representation of history. By incorporating historical sources, Vonnegut deconstructs the realist version of history.

Vonnegut’s appeal to parody, especially in *Breakfast of Champions* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* makes him a highly experimental and unique writer. The intertexts of books, films and historical documents denote the intertextual aspect of parody. These intertexts demonstrate that parody is transformational in its relation to other texts. By feeding off these texts, Vonnegut thus shows that his art is referential. His achievement also stems from his intense use of autobiography and self-reflexivity in a web of diverse literary techniques such as parody, comic absurdity and satire.
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