
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

After reading and analyzing *Slaughterhouse-Five*, I conclude that Vonnegut viewed war as meaningless and rejected World War II status as a “good war”. His view particularly related to the firebombing of Dresden that claimed thousands of innocent lives and destroy the beautiful city of Dresden. His experience as the witness of the firebombing of Dresden prompted Vonnegut to criticize the use of strategic bombing against civilians. Kurt Vonnegut also writes *Slaughterhouse-Five* to criticize the glorified depiction of World War II in books and films. Vonnegut felt that he needed to tell the brutality he had seen during the war—namely, the firebombing of Dresden—to break the illusion of World War II as “good war” in the eye of American people.

Slaughterhouse-Five signified Vonnegut’s view about the “meaninglessness of war”, which was resulted from his experience of witnessing the firebombing of Dresden. In order to make his readers understand his view, Vonnegut adjusted his writing style so his messages could get across. The narrative techniques that Vonnegut used in the novel not only served as to make the story more unique and different, but also required in order to convey his view towards war, which couldn’t be achieved using traditional narrative techniques. By using black humor in the novel, Vonnegut aimed to distort the romantic depiction of war. It was also Vonnegut’s response towards the fact that he couldn’t do anything to prevent the firebombing of Dresden. By employing irony in the novel, Vonnegut ‘deglorified’ and ‘undramatized’ the depiction of war.

Metafiction serves as reminder towards the readers that despite *Slaughterhouse-Five* was a work of fiction, it still based on Vonnegut's own experience of witnessing the firebombing of Dresden, so they could get the idea about what Vonnegut's felt regarding the bombing raid and why it contributed towards his view about war.

Throughout the novel, I found that Vonnegut shares anti-war sentiment similar to other anti-war authors at the time, however, instead of write about it directly in his book, Vonnegut conveyed it using narrative techniques that he develop for the novel. Through historical-biographical approach, I explain Vonnegut's view towards war in relation to the firebombing of Dresden and how he conveyed it in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Historical-biographical approach sees a literary work in relation to the author's life and time. As mentioned previously, as a World War II veteran and witness of the firebombing of Dresden, Vonnegut understood the impact of war towards a person's life. Through this event, Vonnegut started to find out more about the firebombing of Dresden, but then he realized that the bombing raid was kept a secret by the US government at the time. The result of the bombing prompted Vonnegut to write *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The novel tells the story of Billy Pilgrim, a chaplain's assistant of the United States Army, who has been 'unstuck in time' and saw how his life progressed through flashbacks and flash-forwards. Unlike American soldiers who portrayed as tough and masculine in the cinema at the time, Billy is described as being weak, hopeless, and reluctant to fight. His description was Vonnegut's way to mock the idea of glory, manhood, and brotherhood in war.

Although the bombing raid itself didn't change Vonnegut's psychology, it certainly changed his view regarding US involvement in future wars. With how he witnessed the firebombing of Dresden during World War II and how Vietnam War was fought during the time when he wrote *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut came to a conclusion that all wars are the same and "there is no good war". *Slaughterhouse-Five* then ultimately became Vonnegut's way to express his criticism towards the depiction of war in films and books, which could engender future conflicts. His criticism also directed towards those who was responsible of the firebombing of Dresden and also bombing raids during Vietnam War. Due to how massive anti-war movement at the time, *Slaughterhouse-Five* became popular and considered as one of the most influential post-modern literary work alongside Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity Rainbow*.

Finally, from reading *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut hopes that his readers could become "agents of change" for a better world. Vonnegut put many efforts in writing *Slaughterhouse-Five* so that his view regarding war and what he felt towards the firebombing of Dresden could reach his readers. Vonnegut's resignation in "so it goes" was the fact that he couldn't change what had been happened. Despite its initial setbacks and problems during writing of the novel, Vonnegut finally accomplished his work. For many, *Slaughterhouse-Five* was still considered as one of the influential novel.