

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

There are many types of literary works, including the short story. A short story is essentially a literary work in the form of a storyline that was short in text and the time it takes the reader to read, where the short story itself can be read in one sitting, ranging from half to two hours, something that would be impossible to read in a single sitting, unlike a novel. According to March-Russell, the short story was a genre characterized by its brevity and focus on a single, unified incident or theme. It was designed to be read in one sitting and aims to create a strong, singular emotional impact on the reader. There are many genres in short stories, one of which is science fiction, or better known as Sci-Fi. Science fiction is a type of literary work that primarily explores how real or made-up science affects society or individuals in its literary form. Science fiction, a genre that has gained significant popularity in modern literature, primarily explores technological advancements, time travel, future societies, and extraterrestrial experiences. Hastings (2011), states that this genre of imaginative literature known as science fiction was set apart from fantasy by rejecting the use of magic or the supernatural and from realism by speculating about events that are not possible in the real world. Science fiction acts as a gateway to new perspectives that are currently unreachable within our world's logic, without relying on magic or supernatural elements. Instead, science fiction utilizes scientific aspects that are theoretically achievable.

Although speculative themes occasionally appear in old literatures familiar to modern science fiction, their stories did not attempt to make scientific and technological sense, which distinguishes science fiction from earlier speculative writings and other contemporary speculative genres such as fantasy and horror. From the book *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines* (1985), science fiction was a literary genre that emerged in the early 20th century through the rise of pulp magazines. According to Sterling, by the early 20th century, a series of standard science fiction collections had emerged around themes such as space travel, robots, alien creatures, and time travel. The genre formally originated in the Western world, where the cultural transformation caused by the Industrial Revolution encouraged writers and intellectuals to speculate on the future impact of technology. In another definition according to Stableford (2006), science fiction is a narrative style that explores the effects of science and technology on people, communities, and the universe rather than just being fiction about science. Because of the short story's condensed format, authors like Vonnegut may use simple yet powerful storylines to deliver satirical blows.

One famous short story writer was Kurt Vonnegut. Some critics consider Kurt Vonnegut to be a famous science fiction writer, despite his denials. He was one of the famous American Postmodern writers. Kurt Vonnegut was one of the American writers following Mark Twain who has achieved and maintained widespread popularity while boldly exploring new literary ideas and genres. Vonnegut's work was renowned for its satirical approach, using humor to critique humanity's issues. His satirical style not only entertains but also provokes thoughts about serious issues such as war, technology, and human nature. According to

Mosgren (2023), Vonnegut's writing theme was mostly about humanity's search for meaning through pointless pursuits. He was born on 11 November 1922 in Indianapolis. Written in the book by Strand (2015) describes the early life of Kurt Vonnegut. The humanism of his older brother Bernard and the scientific thought that was prized in his home drew him to reading and writing at an early age. Before he started writing, war trauma, disenchantment with authority, and exposure to science all influenced Kurt Vonnegut's early years and spurred his quest for purpose in a chaotic world. These encounters served as the basis for his unique theme of ironic and satirical humorous writing. Vonnegut passed away in New York on 11 April 2007. After his death, a memorial library in Indianapolis was established to honor his work and masterpieces, as well as a museum, reading room, and art gallery.

Vonnegut wrote many other literary works, such as plays, short stories, and novels. Kurt Vonnegut's major novels include *The Sirens of Titan*, *Mother Night*, *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Hocus Pocus*, and *Timequake*, while his notable short stories include *Harrison Bergeron*, *Welcome to the Monkey House*, *Who Am I This Time*, *Report on the Barnhouse Effect*, *EPICAC*, *2 B R 0 2 B*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Long Walk to Forever*, *Adam*, and *Mnemonics*. The majority of his works are identified with satirical elements, future life, humanist viewpoints, and criticism of modernism and politics (Wagner-Martin, 2009). Kurt Vonnegut's science fiction works are characterized by his criticism of modernity and technological advances that kill human freedom to fulfill their desires. In most of Kurt Vonnegut's works, he always showed a struggle between himself and his character (Greer, 1989). Because he considers himself a

postmodernist rather than a science fiction writer, all of his works also have their own unique narrative styles that differentiate himself with other writers from postmodernism and science fiction. Sometimes the story was combined with his satirical jokes against humans. John Tomedi, in his book *Great Writers: Kurt Vonnegut*, argues that Vonnegut tries to discuss the events after the World War II period in a humorous way in prose that was easy to read (Tomedi, 2004). In another publication work by Susan Farrell, the dehumanizing effects of technology and capitalism also become a unique theme in Vonnegut's writing (Farrell, 2008). Kurt Vonnegut's greatest collection of short stories was *Welcome to the Monkey House*. This collection of twenty-three short stories was first published in 1968. These stories, which were first published in magazines such as *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, directly reflect Vonnegut's bold sense of humor and truly astounding broad creative vision.

Kurt Vonnegut's *Welcome to the Monkey House: A Collection of Short Stories* was a collection of his best short stories, first published in 1968, comprising twenty-three narratives in the original book and twenty-six in the special edition with the name *Welcome to the Monkey House: Special Edition* that was published in 2014, divided into two major themes: science fiction and freedom. These works often included prophetic warnings, utopian aspirations, elaborate imaginary worlds, catastrophes, strange voyages, and political agitation presented through various literary forms such as sermons, satire, allegories, and parodies (Bloom, 2008). This diversity reflects a wide range of attitudes toward the process of techno-social change, varying from cynical despair to cosmic bliss. Vonnegut's science fiction narratives are characterized by their critical examination of modernity and



technological advancements that threaten human freedom in pursuing desires (2013). His storytelling often intertwines humor with serious critiques of societal constructs, as illustrated in the collection *Welcome to the Monkey House: Special Edition*, which showcases his bold sense of humor and creative vision while addressing significant themes relevant to contemporary society.

Given the above, literally everyone needs some achievements to pursue in life. Everyone needs goals to strive for in life, driven by a natural desire to achieve. In today's world, technology makes it easier to pursue our desires but also distracts us with instant gratification. The irony was that while technology helps humanity reach its goals, it can also lead it off track, making it harder to focus on what truly matters. Our challenge now was to stay focused and determined in a world full of distractions, using technology wisely to achieve meaningful success. Literature often reflects the complexities of human desires, as seen in Vonnegut's works, which critique societal and technological constructs. Humanity becomes one of the important aspects that builds the work itself, as we can see in most of Kurt Vonnegut's works, the famous collection entitled *Welcome to the Monkey House: Special Edition* (Vonnegut, 2014).

## **1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEMS**

Kurt Vonnegut was a humanist who wished good things for mankind, but on the other hand, he was also a pessimist who saw the world through the lens of irony. This was illustrated in his short story collection *Welcome to the Monkey House: Special Edition*, which will be discussed. This study investigates the underexplored role of irony and pessimism in Kurt Vonnegut's short stories as a

nuanced critique of humanity, addressing a gap that often overlooks these elements. Vonnegut's pessimism, which of course also does not provide answers to his concerns, stimulates human nature in the reader to respond to the irony and pessimism revealed by the thematic opposition in the short stories. It was hoped that the fear of irony and pessimism in the modern world would not kill our spirit and stop our efforts as humans in hoping for change and a better world. That is, amongst the irony and pessimism, humans as agents of change are expected not to stop moving towards better change amidst the conflicts narrated in the stories.

The narrative structure can be considered as the crucial aspect of a story based on the way the narrative structure determines how the story is told and arranged for the reader or audience to read. The connection between narrative structure and thematic function has not been thoroughly clarified, despite the fact that Kurt Vonnegut's works are frequently examined from the standpoint of social satire and dystopian themes. The short stories written by Kurt Vonnegut are suitable subjects for this research. This narrative structure can be found in the short stories. Given the limited prior research on the narrative structure of Kurt Vonnegut's short stories, this research applies Todorov's narrative structure framework to examine the selected short stories.

### **1.3 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES**

A work entitled *Welcome to The Monkey House: Special Edition* (Vonnegut, 2014) was a collection of short stories written by Kurt Vonnegut that reflect his concerns about human life being governed by technological advances. Previous research on this short story collection is still limited. The author focuses on

evaluating previous research related to this work and research topic, conducted by other author, to gain a deeper understanding to enhance the author's analysis in this research.

The first study related to the short story collection book, entitled *Welcome to the Monkey House*, was written in the form of a research work, entitled *The Pursuit of Desire in Kurt Vonnegut's Selected Science Fiction and Romance Short Stories in Welcome to the Monkey House* (Sofianti, 2016). In this research, Siska Sofianti in 2016 examines the selected short stories above aim of understanding the characteristics of Kurt Vonnegut's romance and science fiction short stories and their relationship with the pursuit of desire that occurs in each story. A.J. Greimas' actant theory was used to find out the role of each character in the process of pursuing their desires, and the canonical narrative schema theory was applied to find out in detail the phases that the main character goes through in achieving their desires. Even though A. J. Greimas's actantial model focuses on the functional roles of characters within a narrative, whereas Todorov's narrative structure emphasizes the temporal progression of plot through stages. This thesis provides a framework for understanding Vonnegut's humanitarian ideals that are in line with this research, but it did so by applying theory or technique that is different from Todorov's approach and narrative structure.

The second work is by Markus Mosgren titled *Kurt Vonnegut and the Postmodern Satire* (2023). Through the lens of postmodern satire, this research analyzes Kurt Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan*, *Cat's Cradle*, and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, emphasizing his use of black humor, estrangement, and intertextuality to

critique the war, scientific, and Cold War eras. This thesis by Mosgren describes how Vonnegut, as the writer, views humanity through his novels *The Sirens of Titan*, *Cat's Cradle*, and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. This thesis analyses satire in postmodern works by Vonnegut, but not specified to Vonnegut's short stories nor Todorov's theory and approach.

The third writing for this research reference was an article written by Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader Abu Jweid, Arbaayah Binti Ali Termizi, and Abdulhameed A. Majeed, titled *Postmodern Narrative in Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five* (2015). They observed Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a postmodern critique of modern literary modes. This article explores elements in Vonnegut's work, particularly how he critiques modern literary modes through experimental narrative techniques. Although this article focuses on *Slaughterhouse-Five* and its postmodern narrative, the insights into Vonnegut's narrative style may be relevant to the analysis of Vonnegut's short stories that the author will attempt to apply. Vonnegut experiments with the novel's narrator, setting, and characters to provide a fictional critique of the prevailing literary fatigue in the modern literary mode. The representation of postmodernism in Vonnegut's novels is the main emphasis of this journal, but his science fiction, short stories, and narrative structures and topics are not mentioned at all.

Fourth, related study was the thesis by Rifqi Tafthazani, titled *Narrative Structure and Binary Opposition in the Complete Works of H.P. Lovecraft* (2022). This thesis examines how H.P. Lovecraft structures his stories and the themes he uses, especially in *Dagon*, *The Dunwich Horror*, and *The Call of Cthulhu*.



Tafthazani (2022) have analyzed his work using Tzvetan Todorov's ideas on story structure and Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of opposites in storytelling. This approach aligns closely with Todorov's theory of narrative structures in *Welcome to the Monkey House: Special Edition*, short stories to explore modernity and technological advancements while exploring themes of humanity and societal constructs. This thesis uses Todorov's narrative structure as a relevance to this research, but concentrates on binary opposition and cosmic terror as opposed to themes of technology and humanity.

The fifth, a journal by Keanu Adepati titled *Narrative Structure of The Minds of Billy Milligan Novel and Split Film* (2018). This paper examines how the 2017 movie *Split* adapts the narrative structure of Daniel Keyes' novel *The Minds of Billy Milligan*. The main goal was to explore how director M. Night Shyamalan translates the book's storytelling into film. To do this, the study uses a qualitative method to describe the adaptation in detail. The research was based on Tzvetan Todorov's narrative structure theory, which includes stages like balance, disruption, recognition, restored order, and balance again. It also applies a structuralist approach to analyze the characters and setting. This journal article discusses intricate narrative structures, although it concentrates on movie adaptations rather than written literary works.

The sixth previous study, a thesis titled *The Narratological Study of L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz* by Novita Sari (2016). This study examines *The Wizard of Oz* as a classic novel, focusing on its plot, characters, and structure using Tzvetan Todorov's narratology theory. This thesis by Sari, showing results that the

story has a clear beginning and end, a straightforward plot, and fast-paced events. It follows a one-way progression, with opposing conflicts and characters. This thesis applying only narratological theory and the object is L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, not Vonnegut's works that was used in the author thesis.

The seventh work was *Narrative Structure and Theme in "Young Goodman Brown"* by Hostetler (1982). Norman H. Hostetler's analytical analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown* focuses on the meticulously planned narrative structure and ambiguity that underlines the story's major themes of faith, moral ambiguity, and loss of innocence. Hostetler claims that the story was based on a dream-like narrative framework that was purposefully designed to blur the lines between reality and illusion. The story follows a clear sequential path, beginning with Goodman Brown's departure from Salem, continuing into the forest, and culminating in a climactic satanic ceremony, but the increasingly strange and disorienting occurrences cause readers to question the narrative's actual validity. Although this thesis utilizes Todorov's narrative theory, its application is restricted to a purely structural analysis of a dark romantic novel, without examining the interplay between narrative structure and thematic concerns.

Finally, a thesis by Syafira Novianti titled *Loneliness as the Path to Happiness in Alice Munro's Four Selected Short Stories in Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage: A Structural Analysis* (2017). This thesis applies Todorov's narratology to analyze Munro's works. It demonstrates how narrative structure can reveal elements inside literary works, which aligns with the author's intention to use Todorov's theory for analyzing Vonnegut's stories. In this thesis,

an examination of four short stories by Alice Munro, utilizing the theory of Todorov's narrative theory by focusing on the narrative pattern of the stories, this research discovers what the stories primarily dealt with. This thesis focuses on the proposition and sequence to better comprehend the story's narrative structure, but not a single mention about the thematic approach from the stories.

The studies mentioned above offer useful perspectives on the use of narrative structure theory in literary analysis. However, because they tend to separate structural analysis from thematic interpretation, they reveal a gap that this research aims to fill by combining Todorov's narrative framework with an examination of irony and pessimism in Vonnegut's short stories. The topic to be analyzed may have already been researched, but the analysis that the author wants to do has never been discussed. Although several studies have discussed *Welcome to the Monkey House* and Vonnegut's short stories in general, the specific group of stories examined in this research, using Todorov's narrative structure together with their thematic elements such as irony and pessimism, has not been widely explored in existing research. Therefore, the author intends to research the narrative structure of some of Kurt Vonnegut's science fiction short stories using Todorov's narrative structure method.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the above description, the authors conducted this study to answer the following questions:

1. What narrative structures are found in Kurt

Vonnegut's selected short stories in *Welcome to the Monkey House*:

*Special Edition?*

2. How do these narrative structures reflect the themes of modernity and technology?

### **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

Kurt Vonnegut's collection *Welcome to the Monkey House: The Special Edition* (2014) contains five short stories that are the only focus of this study: Harrison Bergeron, EPICAC, Report on the Barnhouse Effect, Tomorrow and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Welcome to the Monkey House. The examination centers on the work's themes and narrative structure. The study will focus on two key areas: the narrative structure and the thematic implications.

This research focuses on analyzing the irony behind modern man's beliefs that rely on the advancement of science and technology in living life. To support this research, Tzvetan Todorov's theory of narrative structure and his concept of thematic function, which reveals the irony stemming from the modern era, will be applied. After fruitful analysis, it can be concluded that the particular narrative structure of Kurt Vonnegut's selected science fiction short stories: EPICAC, Harrison Bergeron, Report on The Barnhouse Effect, Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow, and Welcome to The Monkey House. All the five of short stories was found in the short story collection *Welcome to The Monkey House: Special Edition* and the narrative structure relationship between the selected short stories.

### **1.6 OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

This study will explore the narrative structure of selected science fiction short stories from Kurt Vonnegut's collection *Welcome to the Monkey House:*