Trauma and Literature
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Lecture - 51
Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five - Part 2

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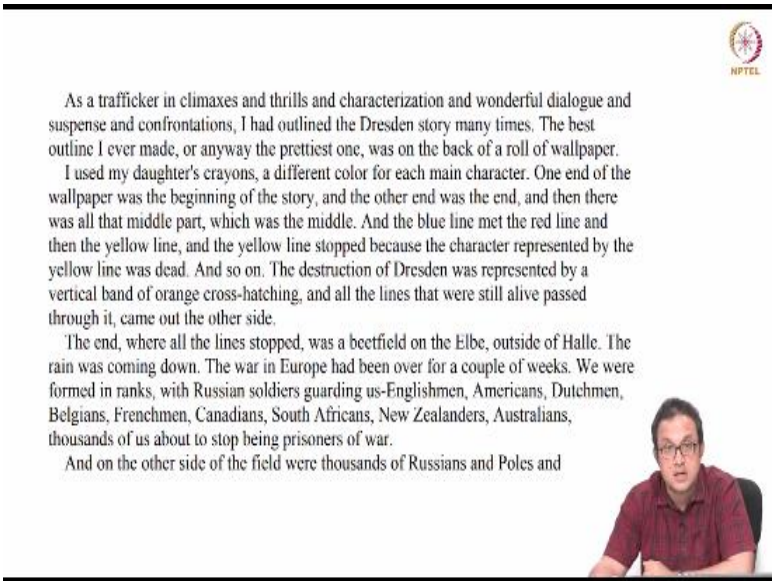

This is an NPTEL course titled "Trauma and Literature" on Vonnegut's novel "Slaughterhouse-Five". We will move on to the critical essay on this book, just how widespread comprehensive coverage what this novel is all about. We are still looking at the writerly process, the writerly experimental process through which the whole idea of Dresden bombing is sort of condensed into a narrative.

It becomes how that emerges into some kind of a narrative shape with which the novel is executed. We find that this constant play between the profound and the flippant is what makes this novel very carnivalesque in quality, pseudo comical in quality and also postmodernist in quality. He defines himself Vonnegut as a writer.

He is someone who is struggling to produce his memory into an act of fiction. This is what he says. As a trafficker and climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations. The Dresden story had been outlined many times. Climaxes and thrills and characterizations and dialogue writing and confrontation.

He is supposed to be the forte of the writer, the fiction writer. But the anti-climactic quality after that, the very next sentence where he says the best outline he ever made, or anyway, the prettiest one was on the back of a roll of wallpaper. This is constantly a play of profanity, interplay of profanity and flippancy.

The wallpaper, the back of the wallpaper seems to be the most suitable form, seems to be the most suitable site of laying out the characterizations, laying out the dialogues, laying out the suspenses. This whole idea of writing on the back of something, something seemingly unacademic, something seemingly nonliterary, is reflection on this particular book, per se.

This book is all about the mundane and the profound, the material and the spiritual. All these are combined together in this traumatized mind, which does not quite get around to telling the story about trauma, which does not quite get around to writing the narrative about trauma, or writing the memory about trauma. It never really sets off, that never really starts.

He confesses as a writer, this is a failed project. That failure to narrate the failure, to recount or put into a narrative shape what exactly happened in Dresden is something which emerges on the survivor's guilt, as well as from his own frustration and existential despair as a writer and as a, former soldier. "I used my daughter's crayons, a different color for each main character."

The oddity of the whole enterprise. He is using his daughter's crayon pencils to write about his characters, and each character will have a different color. One end of the wallpaper was the beginning of the story. The other end was the end. There was all the middle part, which was the middle.

The blue line met the red line and then the yellow line and the yellow line stopped because the character represented by the yellow line was dead, and so on. The destruction of Dresden was represented by a vertical band of orange cross hatching, and all the lines that was still alive, passed through it, came out the other side. There is that sort of shape like quality, this pattern of representation instead of words.

It is almost like a childlike representation where he is using different kinds of colors to talk about different sentiments. One line represents one sentiment. Another line represents some sentiments. The lines crisscross, mix and match. The colors mix and match too because the sentiments and emotions are quite varied and quite diverse in quality.

It shows us at a very structural constructive level, the level of constructedness is how the act of memory, the act of remembering, especially in an effort to put that in the fiction. It is a random process, sentimental process, and a biased process, and an uncertain process.

We often rely on imagination, often rely on the randomness principle in order to represent what we suffered, what we experienced. That randomness principle is very much there throughout the novel.

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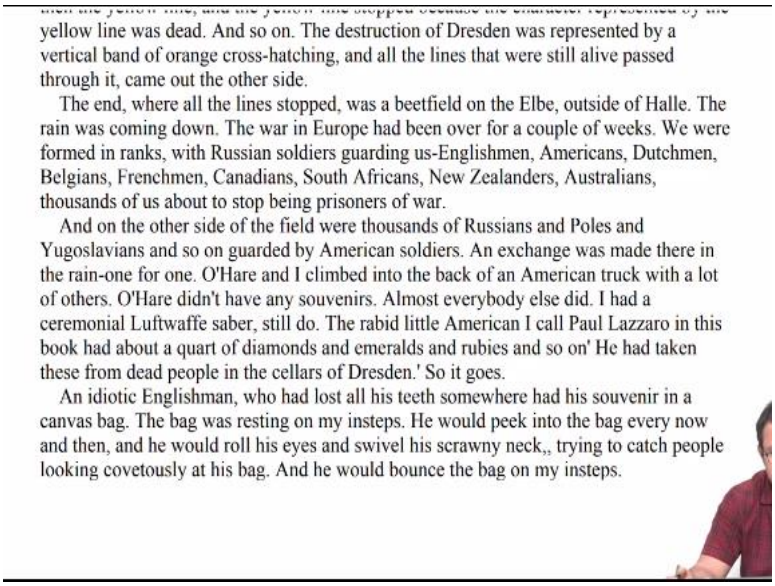
yellow line was dead. And so on. The destruction of Dresden was represented by a vertical band of orange cross-hatching, and all the lines that were still alive passed through it, came out the other side.

The end, where all the lines stopped, was a beetfield on the Elbe, outside of Halle. The rain was coming down. The war in Europe had been over for a couple of weeks. We were formed in ranks, with Russian soldiers guarding us-Englishmen, Americans, Dutchmen, Belgians, Frenchmen, Canadians, South Africans, New Zealanders, Australians, thousands of us about to stop being prisoners of war.

And on the other side of the field were thousands of Russians and Poles and Yugoslavians and so on guarded by American soldiers. An exchange was made there in the rain-one for one. O'Hare and I climbed into the back of an American truck with a lot of others. O'Hare didn't have any souvenirs. Almost everybody else did. I had a ceremonial Luftwaffe saber, still do. The rabid little American I call Paul Lazzaro in this book had about a quart of diamonds and emeralds and rubies and so on' He had taken these from dead people in the cellars of Dresden.' So it goes.

An idiotic Englishman, who had lost all his teeth somewhere had his souvenir in a canvas bag. The bag was resting on my insteps. He would peek into the bag every now and then, and he would roll his eyes and swivel his scrawny neck,, trying to catch people looking covetously at his bag. And he would bounce the bag on my insteps.

It is to talk about something like Dresden bombing using crayons, that incompatibility that incongruence is exactly the point. It is a very incongruent form of representation. That we are talking about heavy bombing, talking about a deep dark tragedy at a very human level, which cause the loss of so many lives, and yet when you are representing it using your daughter's crayons we are mixing up colors, different kinds of colors to talk about that devastating tragedy.

That oddity is cognitive, artistic, and representative. It is exactly what gives this unique dimension to this novel, the dimension of depthlessness, or the dimension of, tragic comedy, which is actually more tragic. The dimension of uncertainty, which is always there as a sort of spectral condition.

The end where all the lines stopped was beet field on the Elbe, outside of Halle. The rain was coming down. The war in Europe had been over for a couple of weeks. We have formed in ranks with Russian soldiers guarding us, Englishman, Americans, Dutchmen, Belgians, Frenchmen, Canadians, South Africans, New Zealanders, and Australians.

So, thousands of them about to become prisoners of war and that sort of shows how this war is a global conflict where it does not really respect any division where again the difference between a foe and friend is just very slippery and very mutable. "And on the other side of the field were thousands of Russians and Poles and Yogoslavians and so on guarded by American soldiers.

An exchange was made there in the rain one for one." So, it is a very mechanical process where inside were releasing the prisoners and making them exchange and in the rain. There was heavy rain and that exchange was taking place at that time. We can see how it almost has a cinematic visual quality to it Vonnegut's descriptions.

"O'Hare climbed, O'Hare and I climbed into the back of an American truck with a lot of others. O'Hare did not have any souvenirs and almost everybody else did. I had a ceremonial Luftwaffe Saber, I still do. The rabid little American I called Paul Lorezo or Lazzaro in his book had about a quart of diamonds and emeralds and rubies and so on. He had taken those from dead people in the cellars of Dresden."

These are prisoners of war. When they are coming back, they have souvenirs. We have someone called Lazzaro. He had sort of stolen jewels from people who are dead in the Dresden cellar where they were held as prisoners and now they are about to combat America.

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I thought this bouncing was accidental. But I was mistaken. He *had* to show somebody what was in the bag, and he had decided he could trust me. He caught my eye, winked, opened the bag. There was a plaster model of the Eiffel Tower in there. It was painted gold. It had a clock in it.

'There's a smashin' thing,' he said.

And we were flown to a rest camp in France, where we were fed chocolate malted milkshakes and other rich foods until we were all covered with baby fat. Then we were sent home, and I married a pretty girl who was covered with baby fat, too.

And we had babies.

This is the kind of exchange that was taking place at that time. An idiotic Englishman who had lost all his teeth somewhere had his souvenir in a canvas bag. The bag was resting on my insteps. He would peek into the bag every now and then and he would roll his eyes and swivel his scrawny neck, trying to catch people looking covetously at his bag.

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And they're all grown up now, and I'm an old fart with his memories and his Pall Malls. My name is Yon Yonson, I work in Wisconsin, I work in a lumbermill there.

Sometimes I try to call up old girl friends on the telephone late at night, after my wife has gone to bed. 'Operator, I wonder if you could give me the number of a Mrs. So-and-

The reason chosen to read this bit at the opening is we can see how the war creates the violence at so many levels. There is the physical violence, people are dying, losing their loved ones. People are losing their humanity and just becoming thieves, taking looting other people's property and as a complete anarchy of that.

So, the difference between humans and animals are going to disappear. Everyone is cheating things of everyone else and just going back with as much objects that they can steal. So, the whole enterprise of war becomes unglamorous, unheroic enterprise, where theft becomes the norm.

Theft becomes the grand narrative, and and that is the, again a very interesting, entangled condition that tragedy, thievery, between tragedy and pettiness, between horror and grief and this trivial pursuits of, material possessions, trivial thefts.

This pettiness of war, the tragedy of war, they all mingle together to create this constant notion of a constant experience of uncertainty, which is what informs the war.

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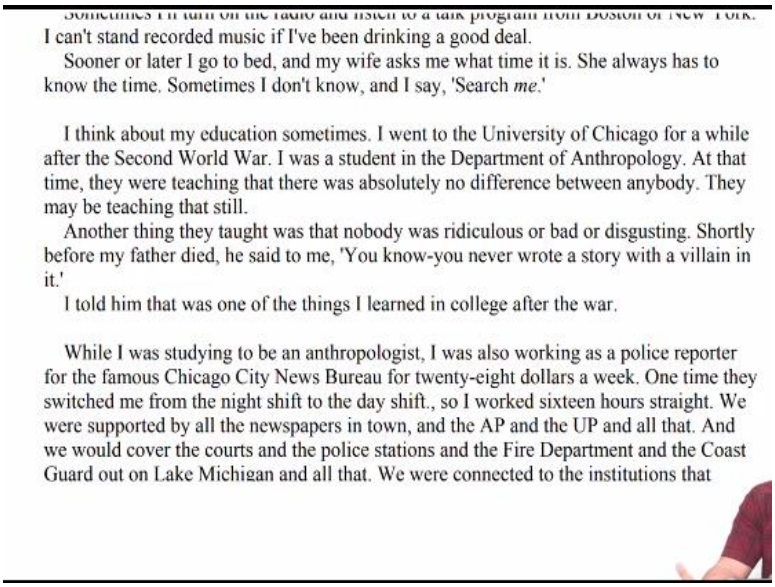

I can't stand recorded music if I've been drinking a good deal.

Sooner or later I go to bed, and my wife asks me what time it is. She always has to know the time. Sometimes I don't know, and I say, 'Search *me*.'

I think about my education sometimes. I went to the University of Chicago for a while after the Second World War. I was a student in the Department of Anthropology. At that time, they were teaching that there was absolutely no difference between anybody. They may be teaching that still.

Another thing they taught was that nobody was ridiculous or bad or disgusting. Shortly before my father died, he said to me, 'You know-you never wrote a story with a villain in it.'

I told him that was one of the things I learned in college after the war.

While I was studying to be an anthropologist, I was also working as a police reporter for the famous Chicago City News Bureau for twenty-eight dollars a week. One time they switched me from the night shift to the day shift., so I worked sixteen hours straight. We were supported by all the newspapers in town, and the AP and the UP and all that. And we would cover the courts and the police stations and the Fire Department and the Coast Guard out on Lake Michigan and all that. We were connected to the institutions that

Vonnegut goes on to describe. "I think about my education sometimes. I went to the University of Chicago for a while, after the Second World War. I was a student in the Department of Anthropology. At that time they were teaching that there was absolutely no difference, but anybody. They must be may be teaching that still.

Another thing they taught was that nobody was ridiculous or bad or disgusting. Shortly before my father died, he said to me, you never wrote a story with a villain in it. I told him that was one of the things I learned in college after the war. Now there is reason why we are looking at this. And education after the war, post war education becomes very interesting, sort of paradigm shift."

He tells, he confesses, he describes, and Vonnegut describes how he went to a college, University of Chicago. He went to the Department of Anthropology. There was this liberal education which talked about how everyone is equal, everyone is just equally, good or bad.

There is no dualism and how everyone is equally vulnerable to wickedness or equally vulnerable to greed, to violence. It is a leveling mechanism that was instructed to them. It does at a very writerly level is that, his shaping of his writerly imagination, begins to get informed with his education.

He talks about his dying father farther before he died. He told Vonnegut that he never wrote a story with a villain in it. He said his response was because he learned that from college after the war that there is no villain as such. Everyone is wicked, everyone is good in different degrees. Everyone is just grey.

This complex of greyness of human character, this complex greyness of human nature is revealed and highlighted at a spectacular level by the war. Because the war reveals there are no good guys or bad guys. So, everyone is vulnerable, everyone is the victim in the war. There are no winners. Everyone loses in different degrees. Some people lose more directly, some people lose more instantly or immediately.

And others just stay back to survive that guilt, that trauma, that devastation. So, the lack of villain is a very conspicuous absence. And that is something which we see even in this novel. There is no grand villain. There is no blaming of Hitler, there is no blaming of any individual of any war.

But rather, what is shown in a very clear way, and also in a very symbolic way, especially when it comes to Vietnam is the so the machinery of war and how that

almost becomes an automatic process of destruction and violence, where everyone becomes complicit, everyone becomes vulnerable. This merge between the vulnerable sufferers and the perpetrators and perpetrators also suffer and sufferers are also perpetrators.

And that merge begins to reflect this automatic condition of war. This sort of machinery of war, which is cannibalistic in quality, which is almost carnivorous in quality, almost automatic in quality and that takes away agency at a certain level after the war starts or after the war is executed, it just becomes an automatic process of an autopilot mode of destruction.

And that is something he experiences at a very close level, at a very great proximity from his own experience in the war. He goes on to talk about his experiences post-war.

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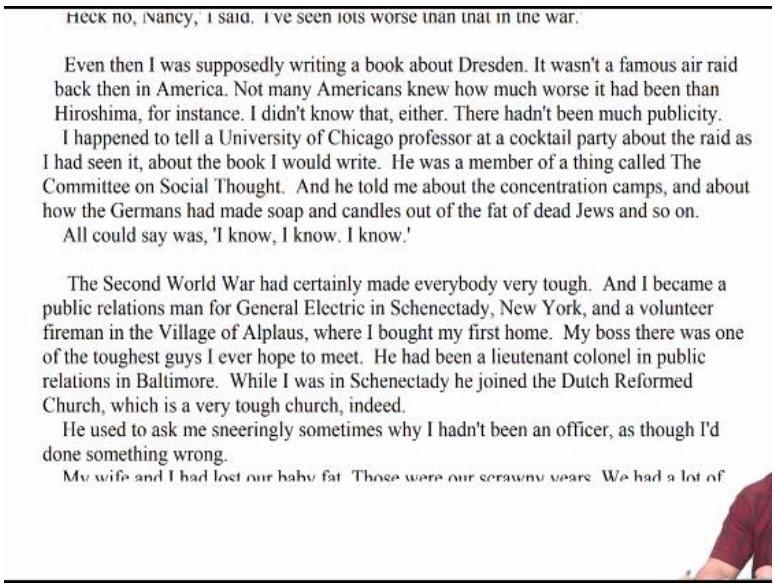
Heck no, Nancy,' I said. 'I've seen lots worse than that in the war.'

Even then I was supposedly writing a book about Dresden. It wasn't a famous air raid back then in America. Not many Americans knew how much worse it had been than Hiroshima, for instance. I didn't know that, either. There hadn't been much publicity.

I happened to tell a University of Chicago professor at a cocktail party about the raid as I had seen it, about the book I would write. He was a member of a thing called The Committee on Social Thought. And he told me about the concentration camps, and about how the Germans had made soap and candles out of the fat of dead Jews and so on.

All could say was, 'I know, I know. I know.'

The Second World War had certainly made everybody very tough. And I became a public relations man for General Electric in Schenectady, New York, and a volunteer fireman in the Village of Alplaus, where I bought my first home. My boss there was one of the toughest guys I ever hope to meet. He had been a lieutenant colonel in public relations in Baltimore. While I was in Schenectady he joined the Dutch Reformed Church, which is a very tough church, indeed.

He used to ask me sneeringly sometimes why I hadn't been an officer, as though I'd done something wrong.

My wife and I had lost our baby fat. Those were our scrawny years. We had a lot of

He talks about in this section that we will see now he talks about how the Dresden air raid, the bombing at Dresden was not really a very well-known phenomenon in American popular culture, and he wanted to cash in on that. And he goes on to say, “even then, I was supposedly writing a book about Dresden. It was not a famous air raid back then in America.

Not many Americans knew how much worse it had been that how much worse it had been the Hiroshima for instance. I did not know it either. There had not been much

publicity." The irony and humor and that is a dark humor. He was in prison in Dresden. So, but he did not know about the Dresden bombing because he did not suffer it. He was just released after the war.

But he knew it much later that this was far worse than Hiroshima. Everyone tells me Hiroshima, everyone talks about the devastating effect of the atomic explosion in Hiroshima and how that continues even to this day. But, there is hardly any conversation or any public discourse about how the Americans bombed Dresden.

And that sort of goes on to show the bias that informs history writing the bias informs memory and remembrance of an event where the allied forces which won the war. Because they won the war, the violence wrought by them, the violence perpetrated by them assumed to be a sort of paler in significance, seemed to be less tragic, seemed to be less devastating than the violence of the axis forces, the other forces.

There is relativity of violence over here, because the Hiroshima bombing gets more attention, the Hiroshima bombing gets more international attention in terms of the people who got killed and the devastating effect on humanity. But the Dresden bombing, which according to Vonnegut was worse, it seems to be of less important. There is also this racial undertone to it.

It is the white people bombing white people and so that just become something that ought not to be discussed. Whereas the Japanese bombing in Japan in Hiroshima, it just becomes more of a dualistic thing, more of a binary thing which gets a sort of spun into the good versus evil narrative. But the point being that not all events of the water are remembered equally.

Some events are forgotten, conveniently forgotten. Some events are represented or remembered over and over again. And the irony or the humor in this bit is he was there, Vonnegut was there in Dresden when the Dresden bombing happened. But even then he says, "I did not know it either. Because, he was a prisoner. There had not been much publicity."

“I happened to tell a University of Chicago professor at a cocktail party, about the raid as I had seen it, about the book, I would write. He was a member of a thing called the committee on social thought. And he told me about the concentration camps and about the how the Germans had made soap and candles out of the fat of the dead Jews and so on. All I could say, all was I know I know I know, right?”

We can look at the shift of narrative over here. He is a professor of University of Chicago, presumably a very learned person. But look at the bias of remembrance. The moment he talks about, Vonnegut talks about the Americans bombing Dresden, the narrative shifts to a concentration camp and the horrors of concentration camp and how the Germans killed Jews and converted their bodies into commodity, etc.

In other words, the Dresden bombing is entirely hushed up, is entirely made invisible, and is entirely unremembered and sort of dismembered from public imagination and public memory.

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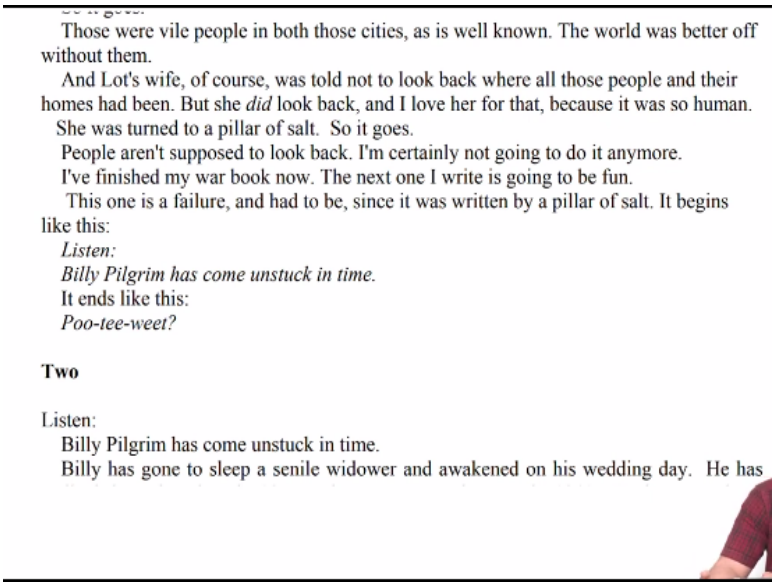

Those were vile people in both those cities, as is well known. The world was better off without them.

And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she *did* look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human. She was turned to a pillar of salt. So it goes.

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore.

I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun.

This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt. It begins like this:

Listen:

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

It ends like this:

Poo-tee-weet?

Two

Listen:

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has

So and let me come to the end of chapter one, then move on quickly to chapter two after this. And we find again, how the sense of being a failure comes back in Vonnegut’s mind. And he talks about how he is going to start writing the book. And he says, this should be on the screen, people are not supposed to look back. I am certainly not going to do it anymore. I finished my war book now.

“The next one I write is going to be fun. This one is a failure and have to be since it was written by a pillar of salt. It begins like this, listen, Billy pilgrim has come unstuck in time. It ends like this, Poo-tee-weet, right?” This is the meta-fictional quality about this novel. He talks about the first line and then the first line will come in the second chapter. So, second chapter is the first chapter in the novel.

The first chapter is the process of writing the novel. We can see how postmodern it is immediately. Now what it does at a very fundamental level is he talks about the, in foregrounds the act of writing, in foregrounds the ritual of writing, the exercise of writing, the machinery of writing, and in the process he talks about the difficulty of putting emotions into words.

And how the whole writing the process is an act of failure, because every second you realize, the insufficiency of words, the inadequacy of words. How words will just taper down into emotions which are not felt, which are not rekindled, which are not remembered sufficiently. And this insufficient remembrance of emotion is exactly what gives sense of failure.

This consuming sense of failure that Vonnegut suffers. And the same words, the opening words appear in chapter two, which is the first chapter of the novel, “Slaughterhouse-Five” and this is how it begins.

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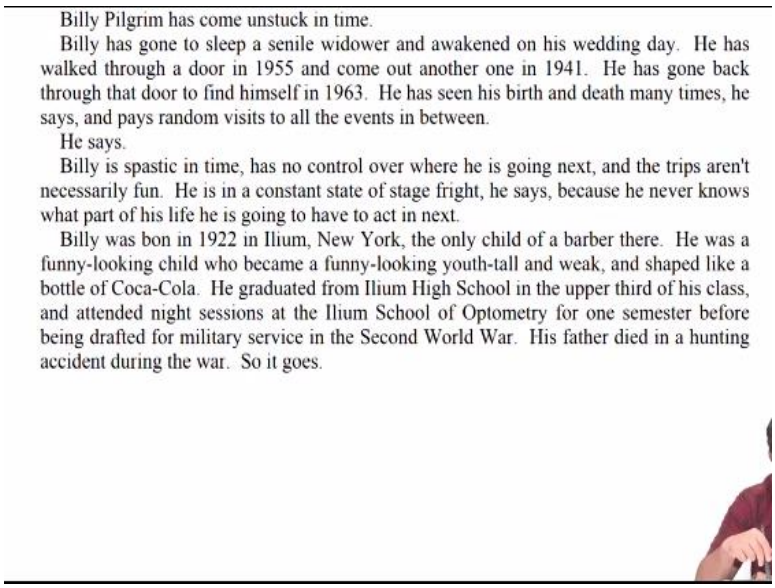

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

He says.

Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next.

Billy was bon in 1922 in Ilium, New York, the only child of a barber there. He was a funny-looking child who became a funny-looking youth-tall and weak, and shaped like a bottle of Coca-Cola. He graduated from Ilium High School in the upper third of his class, and attended night sessions at the Ilium School of Optometry for one semester before being drafted for military service in the Second World War. His father died in a hunting accident during the war. So it goes.

“Listen, Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through the door and he find himself in 1963. He has seen this birth and death many times.”

He says, and pays random visits to all the events in between. Now what it does at a very immediate fundamental level is he talks about time traveling. Billy Pilgrim is a time traveler, and he can connect different points of time. He can see his own death. He can come back from it, he can go back to his position of birth. He can connect to events in between.

This kind of a time traveling does, it talks about the universal condition of war. It talks about the universal condition of horror because it connects different wars. It connects the Second World War. It connects the Vietnam War. It connects the sense of devastation.

Time traveling is also in a way to define the chronology of remembrance, the chronology of experience, the chronology of memories that Billy Pilgrim, the narrative, the focalized persona, the persona through which the narrative is focalized. He is symbolically a time traveler and his time traveling becomes in a way a defiance of the chronology of remembrance, a defiance of the compulsory chronology of remembrance.

That compulsive chronology of remembrance is something which this novel sort of undercuts with this postmodern playful narrative. This playfulness is interesting. But what is also immediately evident that this time traveling does not empower Billy, it just makes him more paralyzed. This is what he says, what we see immediately right after.

Billy is spastic in time. Has no control over where he is going next. The trips are not necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright he says because he never knows what part of his life is, he is going to have to act next. When he begin to realize that maybe time traveling is an agentive process, is an empowering process, we get to see immediately how it is not.

How it is actually just the opposite. He is just an agency-less traveler in time. He is just stuck in different points of time. He has no sense of direction. He does not know where he is going next. He is just pushed back and across time. The agencylessness of Billy Pilgrim is in a way the reflection of the agencylessness of the writer, Kurt Vonnegut.

He almost becomes some kind of a writer persona. He does not know where he is going next. He does not know what he is going to talk about next. He does not know what he is going to remember and write next. That failure to negotiate with time, the failure to navigate time with will, with agency, becomes also part of the supposed failure of Kurt Vonnegut as a writer to just write down and execute his writerly process through an act of remembrance.

But he was born in 1922 in Ilium, New York, as the only child of a barber there. He was a funny looking child who became a funny-looking youth, tall and weak, and shaped like a bottle of Coca Cola. He graduated from Ilium High School in the upper third of his class, and attended night sessions at the Ilium School of Optometry for one semester before being drafted for military service in the Second World War.

His father died in a hunting accident during the war. So it goes. We find that the sentence so it goes is almost like a refrain, it keeps coming as a recursive condition. It has a sense of futility to it. It has a sense of purpose-lessness to it. It has a sense of lack of control. So it goes. When the narrative goes, the action goes, and just nothing you can do as a narrator, there is nothing one can do as a storyteller, one cannot control it.

It goes on his own accord. We find that Billy studied Optometry the study of eyes, the medicine concerning eye, the health of eye. And that vision, that expertise in vision, symbolically speaking becomes quite ironical over here because Billy Pilgrim is also someone who just sees the war and the horror of the war from very close proximity. So that sense of vision, that sense of sight becomes quite symbolic in quality.

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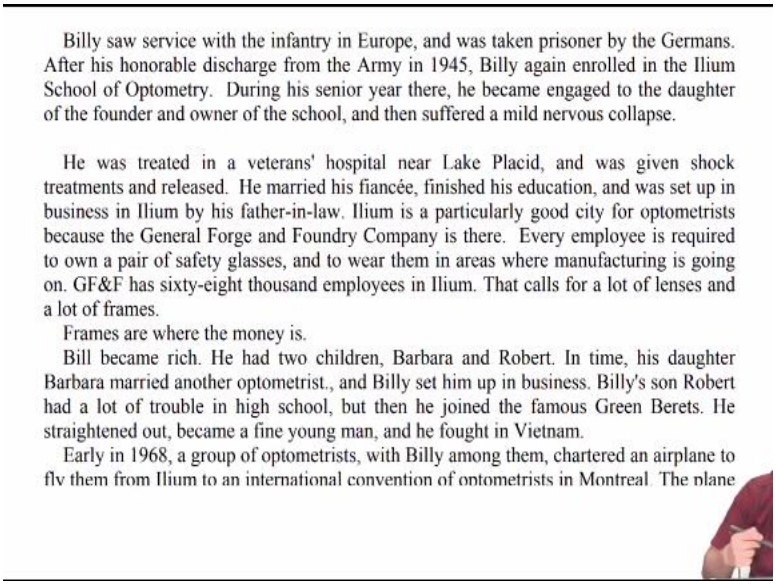

Billy saw service with the infantry in Europe, and was taken prisoner by the Germans. After his honorable discharge from the Army in 1945, Billy again enrolled in the Ilium School of Optometry. During his senior year there, he became engaged to the daughter of the founder and owner of the school, and then suffered a mild nervous collapse.

He was treated in a veterans' hospital near Lake Placid, and was given shock treatments and released. He married his fiancée, finished his education, and was set up in business in Ilium by his father-in-law. Ilium is a particularly good city for optometrists because the General Forge and Foundry Company is there. Every employee is required to own a pair of safety glasses, and to wear them in areas where manufacturing is going on. GF&F has sixty-eight thousand employees in Ilium. That calls for a lot of lenses and a lot of frames.

Frames are where the money is.

Bill became rich. He had two children, Barbara and Robert. In time, his daughter Barbara married another optometrist., and Billy set him up in business. Billy's son Robert had a lot of trouble in high school, but then he joined the famous Green Berets. He straightened out, became a fine young man, and he fought in Vietnam.

Early in 1968, a group of optometrists, with Billy among them, chartered an airplane to fly them from Ilium to an international convention of optometrists in Montreal. The plane

"Billy saw service with the infantry in Europe and was taken prisoner by the Germans. After his honorable discharge from the army in 1945 Billy again enrolled. So we are told that the sense of, he served in Europe and then he enrolled in the Ilium School of Optometry and this constant reference to Optometry to sight, to eyesight, to sense of vision becomes interesting and quite symbolic in the context of this story.

During his senior year there he became engaged to the daughter of the founder and owner of the school and then suffered a mild nervous collapse. He was treated in a veterans' hospital near Lake Placid and was given shock treatments and released. He married his fiancée, finished his education and was set up in business in Ilium by his father-in-law.

Ilium is particularly a good city for optometrists, because the General Forge and Foundry Company is there. Every employee is required to own a pair of safety glasses and to wear them in the areas where manufacturing is going on. GF&F and has sixty-eight thousand employees in Ilium that calls for a lot of lenses, and a lot of frames. Frames are where the money is.

We are told about the backstory of Billy Pilgrim and how this as mentioned, the constant reference to optometry, to vision, to study of vision, study of eyesight becomes interesting. Not least because the whole focal point in the story is Billy's eyes Billy's eyesight, about his vision.

We are told that this particular line, the frames are where the money is. That is the very symbolic statement. “What frame are you using, what focal point are you using determines the kind of money you are making. It determines your success, determines your position of success, your achievement.” It is possible to read this in a symbolic way, and interpret it as an act of de-framing.

The war does, it just completely de-frames your recognition of reality, it de-frames the awareness of reality and an act of de-framing caused by the war, the act of de-familiarization caused by the war is exactly what this novel is all about and that de-familiarization, that de-territorialization, it just becomes part of the space time disturbance, space time discontinuity, space time disruption, that this novel does.

Billy Pilgrim’s ability to travel across time is not really an ability, it is actually a form of a disability. He just has no power. He just get pushing back and across time and space. But the whole idea of him studying sight, eyesight or glasses, becomes interesting in a symbolic way, especially in the context of the war.

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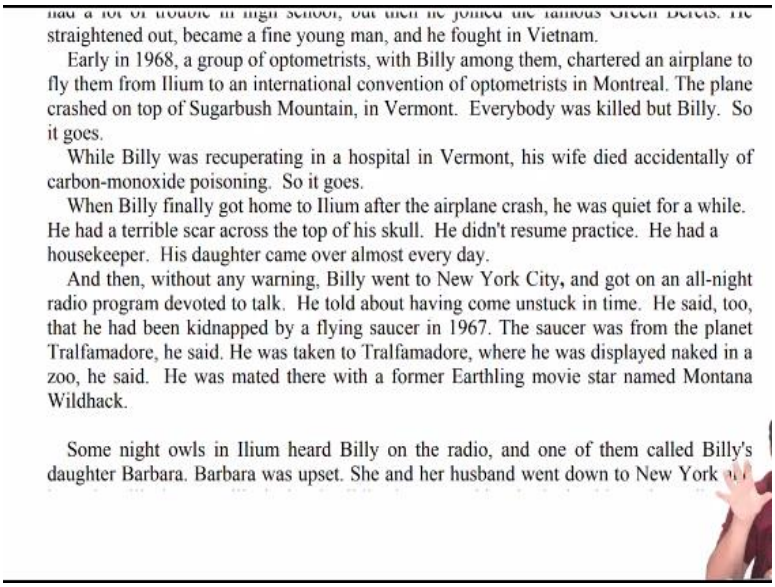
had a lot of trouble in high school, but then he joined the famous Green Berets. He straightened out, became a fine young man, and he fought in Vietnam.

Early in 1968, a group of optometrists, with Billy among them, chartered an airplane to fly them from Ilium to an international convention of optometrists in Montreal. The plane crashed on top of Sugarbush Mountain, in Vermont. Everybody was killed but Billy. So it goes.

While Billy was recuperating in a hospital in Vermont, his wife died accidentally of carbon-monoxide poisoning. So it goes.

When Billy finally got home to Ilium after the airplane crash, he was quiet for a while. He had a terrible scar across the top of his skull. He didn't resume practice. He had a housekeeper. His daughter came over almost every day.

And then, without any warning, Billy went to New York City, and got on an all-night radio program devoted to talk. He told about having come unstuck in time. He said, too, that he had been kidnapped by a flying saucer in 1967. The saucer was from the planet Tralfamadore, he said. He was taken to Tralfamadore, where he was displayed naked in a zoo, he said. He was mated there with a former Earthling movie star named Montana Wildhack.

Some night owls in Ilium heard Billy on the radio, and one of them called Billy's daughter Barbara. Barbara was upset. She and her husband went down to New York

The ontology of tragedy in this novel is looking at how this novel “Slaughterhouse-Five” like “Catch-22”, it does not look at the big event model of trauma. It does not look at the big event model of memory. But rather, it looks at a small event. So, the minute model, the less trivial domestic dailiness of trauma and violence.

We see that in the beginning of this novel, right at the beginning, where we are told that someone got shot, because he took a teapot, which was not his. And that just so domestic drama becomes a reason for death. We have something similar over here, the death of Billy's wife, which is again, an act of accident, but not a war accident, not a war trauma.

It shows how all accidents and war the ontology of violence becomes sort of a connective condition around the war. And how the world accentuates, that how the war crystallizes it. So, when Billy was recuperating in a hospital environment, his wife died accidentally of carbon monoxide poisoning. So it goes.

We have the reference to Vietnam, one of the very rare references of Vietnam in the war. We are told Billy's son Robert had been in lot of trouble in High School. But then he joined the famous Green Berets. He straightened out, became a fine young man and he fought in Vietnam. We are told how the Vietnam War straightened out Billy's son.

It is ironical in a way because the whole idea of the Vietnam War is straightening out someone, is just historically untrue. There is this ring of irony and right after that, Billy's wife died. In early 1968, a group of optometrists with Billy among them chartered an airplane to fly them from Ilium to an international convention of optometrists in Montreal.

The plane crashed on top of Sugar bush Mountain in Vermont. Everybody was killed but Billy. When Billy was recuperating in a hospital in Vermont, his wife died accidentally of carbon monoxide poisoning, so it goes. We can see how this so it goes becomes a recursive condition. It also becomes a pointer to the futility to control one's life narratives.

"When Billy finally got home to Ilium after the airplane crash, he was quiet for a while. He had a terrible scar across the top of his skull. He did not resume practice. He had a housekeeper. His daughter came over almost every day."

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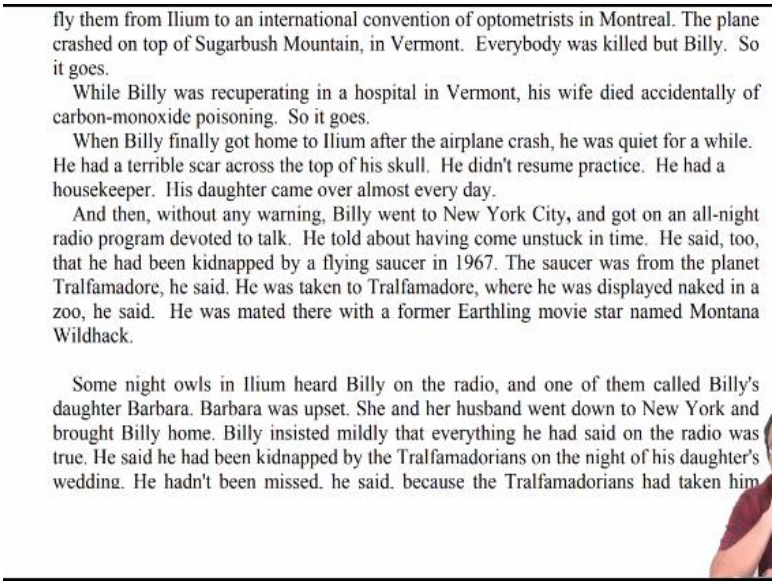

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And then, without any warning, Billy went to New York City, and got on an all-night radio program devoted to talk. He told about having come unstuck in time. He said, too, that he had been kidnapped by a flying saucer in 1967. The saucer was from the planet Tralfamadore, he said. He was taken to Tralfamadore, where he was displayed naked in a zoo, he said. He was mated there with a former Earthling movie star named Montana Wildhack.

Some night owls in Ilium heard Billy on the radio, and one of them called Billy's daughter Barbara. Barbara was upset. She and her husband went down to New York and brought Billy home. Billy insisted mildly that everything he had said on the radio was true. He said he had been kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians on the night of his daughter's wedding. He hadn't been missed, he said, because the Tralfamadorians had taken him

"And then without any warning, Billy went to New York City and got on an all-night radio program devoted to talk. He told about having come unstuck in time. He said too that he had been kidnapped by a flying saucer in 1967. This saucer was from the planet of Tralfamadore. He said he was taken to Tralfamadore when he was displayed naked in a zoo he said. He was mated there with the former Earthling movie star named Montana Wildhack."

We find that this is a point in the story in the novel where the randomness principle, the chaos theory begins to become more important and it almost becomes magic realism in a very wild violent way.

We are told that Billy has been time traveling, he has been unstuck in time. The sort of sense of being unhinged and unstuck in time, it just becomes almost a corporeal condition. A traumatic condition, but also a position of agencylessness. This agencylessness is very important because he just is unhinged.

He talks about how he was kidnapped by a flying saucer and that sounds just magical and like an alien movie and he goes to planet of Tralfamadore while he is in prison and when he is just display naked. He is museumized by a zoo, in a zoo and he was mated there by a former Earthling movie star named Montana Wildhack.

We find that in this story Vonnegut makes constant references to Hollywood a constant references to cinema and the popular from representation because the reason

why that art form or that media form is referred to and sometimes parodied in some details is because the representation of Vietnam War in cinema was very different at that time.

It was celebrated, it was made heroic, it was made in some kind of a noble enterprise of rescue mission, etc., which is completely the opposite of what Vonnegut is setting out to do writing an anti-war novel. The references to cinema as an art form, as an alternative representation becomes interesting, becomes part of the narrative strategy in Vonnegut's part.

To sort of show how his novel "Slaughterhouse-Five" departs from the dominant modes of representation, especially of the Vietnam War without mentioning the war directly. This oblique references as you can see Billy Pilgrim's son presumably went to Vietnam War and the war straightened him out. It just made him more able man, ironically speaking.

There is a ring of irony to it, which is there, especially given the anti-war context, the anti-war sentiment, a cynical, almost nihilistic sentiment this novel displays.