

**A**  
**Synopsis**  
**On**  
**Consciousness of War and Fear for Survival: A Post- Colonial**  
**Reading in the Select Novels of Kurt Vonnegut**

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Kurt Vonnegut is a great American novelist who became an international celebrity with the publication of his famous novel *Slaughterhouse –Five and Player Piano*. Both the novels give a new direction to the American fiction. The present study will explore the consciousness of war and the fear of survival of the American people investigating the novels of Kurt Vonnegut; relying on the theory of New Historicism. This study is fresh and the texts of Kurt Vonnegut will be examined and investigated in this study.

The present research entitled “*Consciousness of War and Fear for Survival: A Post-Colonial Reading in the Select Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*” will explore the growing war psychosis of the people of America and their anxieties to survive in a harsh war ridden society depicted in the select novels of Kurt Vonnegut. There are many critical books, research papers on the war novels of the “Roaring Twenties” but there is no full length comprehensive study on Kurt Vonnegut. The Present study will have the intensive review of literature of the past and the present writers and critics, who wrote books and research papers on the themes of Kurt Vonnegut. William Rodney Allen explored the auto-biographical elements in Vonnegut’s fiction,

Boon Kelvin A in *Chaos Theory and the Interpretation of Literary Texts: The Case of Kurt Vonnegut*. (1997) took up the historical perspective and discussed the socio-political forces that led to the bombing of Dresden which is the main scene of dramatic action in the novel *Slaughter House-Five* (1970). Hipkiss, Robert A. (1984) in *The American Absurd: Pynchon, Vonnegut, and Barth* discusses in detail the existential vision of Kurt Vonnegut. Klinkowitz, Jerome. (1982) published two books *Kurt Vonnegut* and *Slaughterhouse-Five: Reforming the Novel and the World*. In which he took up the stylistic techniques of Kurt Vonnegut. Merrill,

Robert (1990) in his book *Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut* discusses in detail the farcical and comic elements used by Vonnegut in imitation of Dostoevsky in his novels. It is pertinent to note that *Player Piano* (1952); *Sirens of Titan* (1959); *Mother Night* (1961); *Cat's Cradle* (1963); and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965) were translated by Rita Rait-Kovaleva in Russian language. No critic talks about the growing consciousness of war and the post-colonial perspective of Kurt Vonnegut.

Kurt Vonnegut became popular in America since he introduced new themes and new humorous style. Born in 1922, he wrote essays, short stories, and novels for fifty years. He had witnessed the brutalities of war since he was deployed in Europe to fight with the German army. Unfortunately, the German guards captured him during the Battle of Bulge and sent Kurt Vonnegut to Dresden. Huge bombing was going on and he was lucky to survive in fierce fighting of Dresden. He took up the harsh decision and saved his life hiding in a slaughter house. He published all his experiences of the Dresden war and the gory events that he witnessed during the war. Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* created sensation in America and became the best seller of the year as reported by The New York Times. Like Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Vonnegut articulates his anti-war sentiments and uses all the tenets of post-colonial fiction. Vonnegut argues that history is progressive, that knowledge can liberate people. War consciousness is not a new feeling but it is prevalent in each society and since antiquity people have been haunted by the war psychosis. Hemingway depicts the destructive realities of war in his novels, but Vonnegut uses the metaphor of war in broader perspective. War is inevitable and inescapable and the fear for survival of people is universal. He has used the historical event of bombing of Dresden in a metaphysical manner. In his novels, each individual struggles to

explore the meaning of life in the war ridden society. He is known for his satirical wit and his novels expose and ridicule the power structure of social institutions that inhibit the free growth of the individuals. He expressed his genuine sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden.

The study is focussed on the hypothesis that war is an evil and brings death and destruction. It is very convenient to analyze the novels of Kurt Vonnegut relying on the theory of New Historicism. In the novels of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Player Piano* Vonnegut has depicted war experiences from the cosmic perspective. The vision of Kurt Vonnegut is at once original as he breaks away from the conventional form of writing. As a post-colonial novel it is created in fragmented forms. The novel is written in fragments of reality. Billy is the main hero and his experiences form the core of the novel. Kurt Vonnegut became an international celebrity with the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). He emerged as a man of ideas seriously concerned with the menace of war and the problem of survival confronted by the people. He presents serious social problems in his novels and expresses his concern to find answers. In *Player Piano* (1952), he challenges humanity's headlong craze for replacing individuals with machines. *Sirens of Titan* (1959) shows him wondering if humans have free will. *Mother Night* (1961) projects the sufferings of Campbell, who confronts the existential absurdities of life alone. In *Cat's Cradle* (1963), deals with the themes of science and religion and the nature of truth.

Vonnegut in his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* presents the heart rending tale of Billy Pilgrim to give a fresh perspective of war and crimes in the war. Tony Tanner observes that Kurt Vonnegut has used all the Post-colonial devices to depict his vision of love and war in this novel. The structure of the novel is cyclical; the life of Billy Pilgrim is the main focus of the novel. He

is not an ordinary character, but an Everyman representing humanity. Billy is “unstuck in time.” His journey begins and once he is on a journey there is no control over his movements. The structure of the plot is not chronological; the events of present are blended with the past events. Vonnegut has invented new techniques; the sections are small and the readers listen to the long speeches of Billy pregnant with meanings. Billy describes various moments of his turbulent life. On the surface level the story is very simple. Billy tells how he joined the night classes at the Ilium School of Optometry. Billy lost his father, who was killed a hunting accident. Billy was not a soldier by choice; he had no ambition to join the army, but the economic circumstances compelled him to join an infantry regiment in Luxembourg. The consternation fell on him when the Germans took him as a prisoner.

Vonnegut had suffered during the World War II and he created Billy to articulate the tragic war experiences. He has witnessed the German cruelties and the war crimes; he had witnessed the heavy bombing in Dresden. He depicted the horrors of war through the character of Billy. Vonnegut explores the reactions of people about war in this novel as Billy is given liberty to comment on the events of war. He expresses his vision of life; his ideas about war through Billy. Like Hemingway Vonnegut depicts his anti-war philosophy in the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. He also discusses the question of free will and determinism. Billy believes that man is a puppet in the hands of fate and everything in the world is pre-ordained. But Vonnegut rejects this philosophy of determinism and observes that man has potential to change his fate by his actions. Vonnegut uses Billy, who is desperately struggling to survive in a harsh world. Billy lives in Hobbesian society where the laws of the jungle prevails and where might is the right. In mad race for man has thrown all values in the winds. Vonnegut discusses the

problem of war and its destructive nature with O'Hare in first section of the novel and observes that nobody can claim heroism "about a massacre" (19). Cox opines that the theme of the novel is the real answer to the mass brutality committed during war.

Billy Pilgrim is not an ordinary character; he is Everyman of Vonnegut created to depict the horror of war. Billy was a ordinary boy, but the horrible scenes of war brought about depression and sickness in life. He couldn't understand the mystery of war and the involvement of large numbers of people knowing that war doesn't solve any problem. His outlook about life changed after he witnessed the horrible scenes of war; mass killings and wholesale destruction. Billy is put into the jail and he realizes that nothing constructive comes from war. He believes that there is nothing heroic about the war; it is a conflict between good and evil and in war people witness the scenes of senseless slaughter and butchering. Vonnegut gives the concrete image of slaughtering in the novel to articulate his realistic experiences of war. When Billy comes home he feels dejected and he behaves like a neurotic; his disorientation of mind is visible as he remains silent most of the time and doesn't share his experiences of war with anyone. He tries to distance himself from his friends and relatives and becomes an escapist. Vonnegut uses the image of death in the novel to create the horrors of war as Billy is always haunted by the traumatic experiences of war. Billy cannot forget the scene when his friend Weary tried to save him in the Battle of the Bulge. Billy's response was very touching and pessimistic. He says: "You guys go on without me. I'm all right"(47). Billy has seen mass destruction and he comes to believe that life is meaningless on earth as man is a puppet in the hands of fate. He doesn't show any care or positive attitude towards life. Marvin opines in "*Kurt Vonnegut: A Critical Companion*" that "through Billy Vonnegut dramatizes the brutality of war appealing to the

readers that war is horrible and destructive; it is a crime against humanity and the destruction of civilization” (124). Vonnegut is evoking empathy for Billy. Billy experiences the traumas of war and his experiences are universalized by Vonnegut. Marvin observes that “Vonnegut has depicted a sensational scene of the tragic death of Edgar Derby in the novel to heighten the catastrophe of war” (126). Vonnegut uses Derby’s death to highlight the destructive effects of war; telling the world that war is pointless and senseless. Derby was a forty-four year old teacher with a wife at home. He was leading a comfortable and peaceful life with his family at home. He participated in war, but he survived and came home where he got killed as he was taking tea with his family. He had been a prisoner of war and had witnessed the horrible firebombing of Dresden. Roland Weary was very upset and he was anxious to wage war against the Nazis who were killing people in a senseless manner. Marvin further observes that “Vonnegut has articulated his ideas of the glorification of war. There are numerous war stories and very often the heroic deeds of the soldiers change the attitude of the people as the young boys become eager to fight on the war front just out of false adventure”(125).

*Slaughterhouse Five* is a historical novel based on the realistic experiences of Kurt Vonnegut. In the opening of the novel there is an interesting encounter between Vonnegut and Mary O’Hare. She fears that the novel of Vonnegut will emerge as a traditional war novel glorifying war. But Vonnegut uses his poetic imagination giving the novel a cosmic dimension. Mary O’Hare. She fears that the novel may not send wrong signals to the readers as the coming generations may misunderstand the brave attitude of Weary, but Vonnegut assures Mary that the theme is directed to the nature of the savageness of war and he never intended to sing the glories of war. Vonnegut observes that he will “call it ‘The Children’s Crusade’” (15). This scene depicts

his modern outlook of war as he uses his characters to explore the realities of war. Following the ideas of New Historicism Vonnegut argues that each historical event is not linked with the people of the past. History and culture are not static in nature, but dynamic. Bombing on Dresden was no longer a local historical event but can be reinterpreted in the modern perspective. Time has changed, but the problems are the same and the fear for survival of people is universal in nature. Vonnegut's approach is socialistic as he critically examines the pros and cons of war situation giving his own example and comes to the conclusion that war is a crime against humanity that leads to the death of civilization. There is no morality hidden in the war scenes and there is nothing positive in a war. Vonnegut uses the French phrase "Poo-tee-weet" to express the futility of war (215). Billy is bewildered as he turns to the Tralfamadorian belief that the deaths in this world are inevitable and man cannot escape the events of death. Fate is supreme in this universe as a few survive and the majority of them are killed in war or in accidents. Man has no power to change his destiny and often the dice is loaded against man by fate. Billy expresses the whole situation and the helplessness of man against fate in a catchy phrase that "so it goes" (96). Vonnegut uses the phrase "so it goes" like a refrain in the novel to depict the power hunger of the people. The phrase "so it goes on," historical significance. Apparently, Vonnegut is referring to the history of wars as man continued war in the past and the war would continue in the future also as man's nature wouldn't change and the people would go on suffering from the traumatic war experiences. Marvin opines that in this phrase "so it goes on: Vonnegut expresses his philosophy of war taking. Billy speaks of death as a natural phenomenon; it was a daily event of life and Vonnegut tells the readers that wars are general and common situations as the nature of man wouldn't change. Marvin has praised Vonnegut taking



up the realistic stand and demonstrating the power of human beings, who can change the war situation for the survival of humanity (128).

The major issue of Vonnegut in the novel *Slaughterhouse Five* is about the question of free will and the transcendental power of fate. Shakespeare has written a lot on the role of fate and chance in his plays. No one in this world can escape from the hounds of fate. When Billy visits the island of the Tralfamador; he comes to know about the inevitability of fate. Billy learns the mysterious nature of fate and destiny from the life of the inhabitants of Tralfamador. Life is uncertain and the future is unpredictable. The time of birth and death are fixed and man has no power to change his fate. They contend that the Earth is the only place where people believe in “free will” (86). Billy cannot fully comprehend this mystery because he has the power to understand three aspects of life. Billy comes to know that Tralfamadorians has the power to explore the fourth dimension also. They possess the supernatural power to see into the life of things and can see their future. They realize that it is impossible to change destiny because it has already been set. Billy becomes aware of the forces of fate and chance and after his interaction with the Tralfamadorians he starts living in a natural manner without bothering about the future. Nothing shocks Billy because he believes no one can control his future.

Billy’s uncaring attitude is depicted in the first section of the novel. Billy does not care about his life and is least concerned about his death since he has got awareness. His traumatic experiences of the slaughterhouse are heart rending. Billy does not express his sadness when he discovers thousands of people, who were just firebombed to death. Billy’s closest friend and champion Edgar Derby, dies. Billy accepts his death as a natural and inevitable event of life. Billy’s philosophy of life is simple based on the idea that there is nothing to worry since what

has to happen in life does happen. Billy has a passionate belief in quietism and he keeps on harping his vision of life and war. As stated by Merrill in *“Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut”* that “Billy Pilgrim is a powerful character of Vonnegut puts his absolute faith on quietism” (178). Vonnegut’s hero is bold and thoughtful; his consciousness of war is the off-spring of his realistic experiences at Dresden.

Billy Pilgrim is the Eye of the Camera of Vonnegut to reveal to the people about the destructive and absurd nature of war. Vonnegut has depicted the poignant story of Billy to articulate his vision of life, fate and war and the helplessness of man in this universe. Tanner in *“The Uncertain Messenger: A Study of the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut”* contends that Vonnegut has raised serious questions in this novel. “He has depicted the value of life in this universe with the hope that man has no control over his fate and death is inevitable in life”. Harris in *“Time, Uncertainty, and Kurt Vonnegut: A Reading of Slaughter House- Five”* also opines that the issue taken by Vonnegut in this novel is serious and for the survival of man in this cruel world. Man has a special purpose in this universe and if he is not allowed freedom or is restrained to strip the illusions from his mind about war “man’s confidence collapses” (131). Harris observes that Vonnegut is teaching through this novel the idea of a purposeful universe. People continue seeing “the illusion of a purposeful universe” (131). The moral presented by Vonnegut agrees that some things are out of man’s control, but there are also things that man can change. Vonnegut wants the readers to realize “that it would be nice to possess the courage to change the things we can” (137). It is futile to worry about the things man cannot change. Vonnegut gives his own positive attitude to life through Billy and inspires the readers that they should respond with “resigned acceptance” (137). Vonnegut’s style is quite humorous as he uses very sharp

irony saying that if war do not occur there would be plain old death” (04). Ironically there is a caption of prayer hanging on the wall of Billy’s office that “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change (60). This is the message about man’s purpose and destiny. Vonnegut has conveyed the real message through this prayer. Billy is sure that man cannot change his past and has to live in a natural manner. Vonnegut uses this weakness in Billy to tell the readers that the entire world is beyond man’s reach; all he can do is wait and trust. Beckett in his famous drama “*Waiting for Godot*” gives the same message though in a pessimistic and absurd way. McGinnis observes in “The Arbitrary Cycle of *Slaughterhouse-Five*” that in his novel Vonnegut emphasizes the consequences of quietism. Billy is used as a tool to convey his vision of life and war. The life of Billy Pilgrim raises the question, “What is the purpose of life?” (55). Billy believes in the transcendental power of fate. Vonnegut’s main themes in *Slaughterhouse Five* are the reality of free will and determinism

In his novel *Player Piano*, published in 1952, Kurt Vonnegut depicts a new kind of brave world as Huxley had imagined in his novel *Brave New World*. Vonnegut firmly believes that the greatest enemy of man is war and machine in the contemporary world. War is destructive and the consciousness of war has brought about anxieties and tensions of life as the fear of war is always haunting the humanity. The destructive scenes of war and its memories are haunting the Americans day and night. But after the war there was massive technological advancement in engineering and science. The Americans were directing their energy to make America as a super power in the world. The *Player Piano* takes place in the future, but that future seems very much like the present. The plot of the novel is focused on the growth of science and technology as numerous industries were set up to manufacture lethal weapons in America. The novel is not

about the war scenes but about the war machinery manufactured by the business tycoons of America. The hero Paul Proteus is a man who would seem to have it all in this high-tech world, except that he does not really like what he and his world have become. Paul becomes the pivotal figure in a protest movement that eventually becomes a revolution, but the nobility of his quest is undercut by human nature. His own followers can't resist the lure of what they are fighting. The player piano becomes a rueful symbol of the hope humankind once placed in the salvation of machines, a hope that in Vonnegut's swirling imagination has become a ridiculous reality. Doctor Paul Proteus was the most important, brilliant person in Ilium, the manager of the Ilium Works. He is only thirty-five, tall, thin, nervous, and dark, with the gentle good looks.

The plot of the novel is structured around the deadly nature of machines that have enslaved men and there would be just robots and not human beings in America. The machines would rule America in future and the machines will soon take away the dignity from the working man. Doctor Paul Proteus is a young and energetic the main protagonist of the novel as a modern engineer and manager. He is the main supervisor of the Ilium Works. His father had created a wonderful empire for him and becomes the main care taker of the vast establishment. He believes that the world is fast changing and his father was wrong when he created this empire. He expresses his doubts and despair, while running the establishment and soon realizes that the real inner strength and originality have been eaten away by the machines. In his struggle to deal with the machines, he lost his wife and his job. He has emerged as the leader of the proletariat class and dreams to bring revolution to end all exploitations in the industrial establishments. As the novel progresses Doctor Paul Proteus is presented as the manager of the Ilium Works. He is the highest paid and most powerful man in Ilium, New York. He is a versatile genius, an expert

in dealing with the machines, but soon he realizes that there is nothing in his hands as the machines decide the future of man. Paul's wife Anita is highly ambitious, energetic, and intelligent. Anita tells Paul by mistake that she is pregnant, prompting his marriage proposal. Later Paul is shocked to know that Anita is a barren woman.

Paul is sick of the world and the machines. His old friend Finnerty appears on the scene and he comes to know that his friend had been promoted higher than Paul as he is posted in Washington, D.C. The irony is that his friend too is dissatisfied and mentally sick. He is shocked to know that his friend has resigned the job out of depression since he couldn't cope with the absurdities and challenges given by the machine culture. He is given to alcohol to escape from the sordid and mundane life and machine world. Paul is involved in a trouble and soon he disappears into the average man. He leaves the world of the Ilium Works. He cannot see how people are displaced by machines. Paul gives up everything and expresses his wish to turn to farming like an ordinary farmer. His friend Finnerty becomes a radical rebel leader to fight with the machine culture. He goes underground being the member of the Ghost Shirt Society. The bosses plan to implicate Finnerty in a false case to stop his militant activities. Paul decides to resign and quit the place for ever. The bosses of his organization just don't believe in him; they think he is planning other schemes to outwit them. Anita is shocked to know that Paul has been sacked so she deserts him and goes to a new lover. Paul is the real sufferer; he is alone and aimless; broken hearted and without a job. In desperation Paul takes shelter in a bar and thinks that drinking can solve all his problems. He has lost the job; the wife; home and dignity that he enjoyed in the society. In a drunkard state he moves into the office of the headquarters of the Ghost Shirt Society. Paul is being recruited. It becomes the talk of the town that Paul is the leader

of the rebellion launched against machines controlling mankind. Paul is arrested, but his bosses still believe he's acting as a spy.

*Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano* is loaded with the images of war and fear as its aftermath. Vonnegut is critical of the machine age and depicts the plight of the intellectual who are bound to become the slaves of machines. Vonnegut argues that machines are more dangerous than the destructive war. In war people are physically killed, but the machines kill the soul of man and gives the traumatic pain.. War is very destructive but, the machines are proven more destructive as the American youth, who lost their spirit and originality in quest of dollars. After the war America emerged as a super power in the world and the tremendous strides were made in science and technology. Vonnegut depicts the dehumanization, degradation of the Americans with the rise of machinery and heavy industry. Vonnegut had worked in the famous department of General Electric where he witnessed the slavish nature of the people. He was inspired to write *Player Piano* to depict the slavish mentality of the workers in America. Machines provide most goods and services, leaving the masses with what should be an enviable freedom to pursue ends other than work. The trouble is that the average citizen, freed from both drudgery and want, reacts more like a slave than like a liberated spirit, War killed people physically but machinery killed the spirit of the people. They lost their freedom; they lost their purpose of life in the war-ridden society of America. Vonnegut in *Player Piano* depicts a dehumanized society; people who have lost their dignity of life and who behave like robots. *Player Piano*, which purports to be “not a book about what is, but a book about what could be,” Kurt lashes at the growing trends of a totalitarian society. After the war the business flourished and the Americans resorted to smuggling of liquor to make money. Paul Proteus is shocked to observe the rotten nature of

American society. *Player Piano* envisions a dark future for Americans who rely on machines and are becoming senseless and inhuman. They are becoming the victims of the destructive forces of capitalism. Humans are the messy, inefficient, and irrational distractions for the machines. Man has replaced humanist values with a machine ethic predicated upon a new holy trinity: “Efficiency, Economy, and Quality.” Vonnegut’s vision is dark and pessimistic. Paul Proteus expresses Vonnegut’s negative views about the use of scientific knowledge: “Every new piece of scientific knowledge is a good thing for humanity” The novel is of 270 pages and gives the true analysis of manmade society ruled by science that invented atom bombs and the nuclear holocaust during World War II. Vonnegut comments thus “The main business of humanity is to do a good job of being human beings, not to serve as slaves to machines, institutions, and systems”

### **Objectives of the Proposed Research**

This present research entitled *Consciousness of War and Fear for Survival: A Post- Colonial Reading of the Select Novels of Kurt Vonnegut* explores the themes of psychological traumatic experiences explores the terrors of war victims. The select novels of Kurt Vonnegut will investigate and examined relying on the theories of New Historicism propounded by Greenblatt. Precisely, the present Research study will have the following objectives:

- 1) To trace the traumatic impact of war on the mind and sensibility of the protagonists of Kurt Vonnegut.
- 2) To investigate the harrowing scenes of death, destruction, collapse of families, broken relationships in a war ridden society.

- 3) To apply the theories of New Historicism and to investigate war situations as cultural events from the post-colonial perspective.

## **New Historicism**

- 1) In the modern times the popularity of New Historicism has increased manifold as the modern critics are taking active interest in historical documents from the perspective of social vision.
- 2) New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic.
- 3) Stephen Greenblatt argues that a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances the text of each author is relevant at all times.
- 4) A New Historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times. Thus, literature is both shaped by history and itself shapes history. Example of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Othello* are reinterpreted.

In this study the main research question is to analyze the texts; *The Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Player Piano* from the perspective of the consciousness of war and the struggles of the common people to survive during the war situation. War is treated as a universal and cosmic event and has relevance in all times and in all times. The main thesis of Kurt Vonnegut is that war is an evil and the survival during the war is challenging. Kurt Vonnegut had hidden himself in a slaughter house during the bombing of Dresden. The



present study is a fresh and original and innovative as will be done relying on the theory of New Historicism.

### **Review of Literature of Past and Present**

Kathryn Hume (1988) in his article “Vonnegut’s Melancholy” published in *Philological Quarterly* explored the traumatic experiences of the people of Dresden. His approach is historical as he has highlighted all the forces that led to the bombing of Dresden.

Oliver W Ferguson (1999) in the article “History and Story: Leon Trout’s Double Narrative in *Galápagos*,” published in *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, explored the stylistic techniques of Kurt Vonnegut. Faulkner and Hemingway wrote about the plight of the soldiers; Joseph Heller wrote *Catch-22* depicting the oppressive war machine. Kurt Vonnegut explored the various forces that led to the World War in a new and unconventional style.

Donald E. Morse (1952) in his article “Sensational Implications: Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano* published in *The Ana -Chronist* explored the sensational and destructive effects of war. His approach is historical as he has discussed the events of world war depicted in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut from social and political perspective. In the novel *Player Piano*; Morse argued that Kurt Vonnegut discusses the growth of science and technology after the World War 1.

Donald E. Morse (1973) wrote the article “The ‘Black Frost’ Reception of Kurt Vonnegut’s Fantastic Novel” published in *Breakfast of Champions*, He explored the use of wit, irony and paradox in his novels. Kurt Vonnegut is known in the world as the master of satire and witty dialogues in American fiction. He used new and original images of American situation to expose and ridicule the social and political malaise of the American society.

Mónica Calvo Pascual (2001) in his article “Kurt Vonnegut’s *The Sirens of Titan: Human Will in a Newtonian Narrative Gone Chaotic,*” published in *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* explored the nature of human will depicted in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut. It is a critical work which aims to unveil the evil sources of power that leads humanity into a dormant state. Thus, Vonnegut exposes those who worship science and religion in the real world by displaying a timeless story where humans let themselves be drawn into a cycle of doom by believing in science and religion blindly.

Támas Benyei (2001) in his article “Leakings: Reappropriating Science Fiction: The Case of Kurt Vonnegut” published *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* observes that the novels of Kurt Vonnegut are scientific in nature as his approach is rational and scientific. Kurt has depicted the humanity at the crossroads and has expressed his serious concern about the decline of civilization as the war mongers are disturbing the peace of the world.

Peter Freese (2002) in his article “Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano*” has discussed the destructive role of machine in American society. America emerged as a super power in the world after world War as its economy zoomed and the machine age was set in. The rapid progress was made in science and technology by the American workers; the skyscrapers and the big molls and other institutions grew up. Kurt Vonnegut has documented all the political and scientific changes in his novel *Player Piano*.

Josh. Simpson (2004) in his article “This Promising of Great Secrets: Literature, Ideas, and the Invention of Reality in Kurt Vonnegut’s *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, Slaughterhouse-Five,* and *Breakfast of Champions* discussed in detail the interest of Kurt Vonnegut in science fiction

in imitation of Adlous Huxley;s *The Brave New World*. The approach of the learned critic is scientific and rational as he believes that Kurt wrote from the rational sensibility.

Gilbert.McIunis (2005) in his article “Evolutionary Mythology in the Writings of Kurt Vonnegut published in *Critique; Studies in Contemporary Fiction* explored the mythical elements in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut. He argued that each novel of Kurt is based on a myth and has an eternal significance for the American people. Kurt was a serious novelist and his chief concern was to expose the loss of individuality because of the growing hegemony of the institutions.

Kevin Brown in his article (2006) ““A Launching Pad of Belief”: Kurt Vonnegut and Postmodern Humor,” published in *Studies in American Humor* explored the humorous elements of Kurt Vonnegut. He became famous in the American fiction for his satirical and humorous devices and some critics opined that Kurt was influenced by Dostoevsky and Rabelais when he wrote his novels.

A.L.A. Privett in his article “Always-Already Recreating the “Same Old Nightmare: The Function of Ideology in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano*” *observes that* Kurt Vonnegut raises the problems of the workers in his debut novel *Player Piano* He finds that the workers rebuild the machines to exploit and to oppress the workers. The rat race to make money is growing everyday in America and all the workmen from engineers to workmen exploit the poor workers for their greed to make more money and to become rich.

Leonard Mustazza (1990) in his article “The Machine Within: Mechanization, Human discontent, and the Genre of *Player Piano* “ compares the plot of the novel with other dystopian

novels. He believes that “machines have not imprisoned the people of Ilium; their own humanity has.

## **Research Methodology**

The guidelines of the latest 7<sup>th</sup> edition of MLA style will be observed.

- 1) The main focus in thesis is on the *Consciousness of War and Fear for Survival depicted in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut.*
- 2) The research will be, qualitative based on knowledge. Comparative textual study will be the main focus.
- 3) The theory of New Historicism will be relied on to examine the cosmic nature of issues depicted by Vonnegut.
- 4) The researcher will collect the data from Central Library of Punjab University, Chandigarh.

The present study adds new dimensions to the research domain since the war novels of Vonnegut have been investigated from the perspective of New Historicism. This dissertation highlights the mystery of war and futility of life. War had been a necessary evil in the past and even today North Korea is threatening the world of another destructive Nuclear Holocaust. This study has modern relevance as war consciousness is examined from the cultural and broader perspective.

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