

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**



**ALTERNATIVE REALITY AS AN ECSTASIES EFFECT IN BLINDNESS BY
JOSÉ SARAMAGO AND SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE BY KURT
VONNEGUT**

THESIS

Yasin ACAR

**Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program**

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ThesisAdvisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Timuçin Buğra EDMAN

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Yasin ACAR



Dedicated to Oluş....



FOREWORD

In this study, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, published in 1969, and *Blindness* by José Saramago in 1997, have been examined. In both novels, alternative & hyper realities and ecstasy effect have been examined and the effect of postmodernism on novels has been investigated.

September, 2019

Yasin ACAR



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ABBREVIATIONS

MDMA : Methylendioxyamphetamine (drug/ecstasy)
WWI : World War I
WWII : World War II



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**ALTERNATIVE REALITY AS AN ECSTASIES EFFECT IN BLINDNESS BY
JOSÉ SARAMAGO AND SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE BY KURT
VONNEGUT**

ABSTRACT

Ecstasy is a term which has deep roots in ancient Greek philosophy, Christianity and the Existential philosophy. Because of its affiliations within these elements, ecstasy as a term, managed to find its place in the worldwide known works such as *Blindness* by José Saramago (1997) and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut (1969). This term is originally found to be connected with the Greek Word “*ekstasis*” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011). In Greek language, “*ekstasis*” means ‘stand outside oneself or a removal to elsewhere’ (Altschuler, 2007).

Observing these mentioned meanings with the ancient Greek language, it is not difficult at all to recognize a great part of Billy Pilgrim’s personality, the protagonist’s characteristics in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. It can be said that Billy’s personality is not willing to join the army and to participate in the pursuing bloody events that are likely to happen as a result of the war. He is aware of his nationality (American) and he knows what is expected of him to do, as a part of his nationality. However, at the same time he knows that this war is not his war, and because of this, intentionally or unintentionally, he opposes very clearly to this war. His connection with the other -alternative- reality known as Tralfamadore, confirms the second meaning of ecstasy in ancient Greek language known as *a removal to elsewhere*. It is about a planet where Billy can find his real personality and fulfill his desires, and he is stuck in an illusion there because for Billy, living in an illusion world means that it is better than to live in the meaningless world. Therefore, Billy’s unintentional journey to the alternative reality shows his will to find himself in Tralfamadore, and helps him escape from the captivity of the present and to live in an unidentified time period and space.

On the other hand, in *Blindness* by José Saramago, there is a quite similar situation in which the persons trapped in an asylum, try to escape from the temporal chaos into a better and less painful reality. *Blindness* starts with a group of nameless (no name used for characters) people get blind first and then it spreads quickly to the rest of city like a plague. This phenomenon creates separation in itself; in other words, passing a phenomenon to another one force us to think about the alternative reality in the novel. The asylum is a matrix where the reflection of characters echoes on the walls. The place where people keep a close watch on them is a salute to Plato’s *Cave Allegory*. In the *Cave Allegory* of Plato, a couple of people are chained from their arms and hands. The cave has an urgent entrance where light leaks from there to inside, but people in the cave can only see their shadows because they are chained, and they can't even move their heads. One day, one of the cavemen gets rid of the

chains by chance, and he comes out and sees the real world. The man can no longer feel or touch what is surrounding him, but now he can see the light and different colors around him. The man who left the cave goes back and tells his friends about the situation, but they do not believe him because they have been living in the shade all throughout their lives (Hamilton & Cairns, 1963). Both the freed man in *Allegory* and the characters in *Blindness*, especially doctor's wife, try to escape from their situation in order to heal themselves and create an artificial world as does Billy in *Slaughterhouse-five*, when he travels between dimensions. In *Blindness* people first lose their sight and then are imprisoned to an asylum, in their captivity, the blinded people try to escape from the asylum because they want to live in the real world. Both Billy and nameless characters in *Blindness* search for an alternative reality because both are overwhelmed with trouble, destruction and a meaningless existence. So, the temporary blindness guides nameless people to find not the virtual reality but the way of reality. In this context, the essence of both books is to abandon the current reality, looking for an alternative reality accompanied by the ecstasy effect.

This paper addresses not only the impact of ecstasy on both books but also the creation of the alternative reality when the society's distortion causes total blindness in all human actions. The freed person in Plato's Cave Allegory is to be oblivious of the real world as well as he lacks light; he and other captives have no clear vision to comprehend between what is real and what is illusion. To identify them, the freed is examined by Plato to find reality. There is a similar connection between Plato's freed person and both Saramago's nameless characters and Vonnegut's protagonist, Billy, for they have to escape from captivity and leave themselves in order to find the meaning of what they have been looking for. Metaphor of blindness in Saramago's comes to mean carrying oneself from the current dimension to another dimension, in other words, ecstasies effect is activated by blindness because all the nameless characters somehow leave their situations, and in turn, suddenly something affects them one by one and causes them to be blind, and then they are kept under observation. Finally, thanks to the doctor's wife (who equals to the freed person in Plato's *Cave Allegory*) lead them to find their way. Here, maybe at first it is thought that the situation is negative but the all characters at the end of the book, start to get their sense of seeing. There is quite a resemblance in the plot of *Slaughterhouse-five*, when the protagonist Billy, gets bored from his life and then gets stuck to a vicious cycle. He enlists to army, but he seems to be a clown more than a ferocious soldier. As a result, all these negativities force him to find an alternative reality because he looks for a way out. This possibility will provide him to find a fictional or an alternative reality by means of ecstasy. And when he finds that alternative reality, he realises the true nature of life.

Even though they are carried to other realities, the characters in the aforementioned books can never truly and completely escape their realities. For Billy in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, there is no chance of escape because he is stuck between the alternative reality and the physical reality, so he constantly comes and goes between the two realities. During his journeys between the two realities, he realises that what he fears the most, which is death, is not the end in itself, but just a part of the circle of life. Similarly, Saramago's characters manage to find a way from the alternative reality, which was created by their sudden blindness. These characters finally understand that they need to work together and support each other in order to break the bondage of their blindness,

and towards the end of the book, they take the first steps to achieve this goal. Both Billy and Saramago's characters actually get the chance to understand and change the physical reality that they are in. So, it can be said that in hard times, creating an alternative reality seems to be an answer to the problems, however, it is only a step on the path that leads to the real solutions for those problems. Because the creation of alternative realities helps people to realise the true nature of their troubles and guides them to find the actual way out of their misery.

Key Words: *Ecstasy Effect, Alternative Reality, Cave Allegory, Postmodernism, Reality, HyperReality*



KURT VONNEGUT'UN MEZBAHA NO. 5 VE JOSÉ SARAMAGO'NUN KÖRLÜK ADLI ROMANLARINDA EKSTAZİ ETKİSİ OLARAK ALTERNATİF GERÇEKLİK

ÖZET

Ekstazi, eski Yunan felsefesinde, Hristiyanlıkta ve varoluşsal felsefede derin kökleri olan bir terimdir. Ekstazi, bu unsurlar içerisindeki ilişkileri nedeniyle, dünyaca ünlü edebiyat şaheserleri José Saramago'nun Körlük (1997) ve Kurt Vonnegut'un Mezbaha No 5 (1969) romanlarında yerini bulmayı başarmıştır. Bu terim Yunanca "ekstasis" kelimesiyle bağlantılıdır (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011) ve Yunanca'da, bu kelime "başka yerlere gitmek" anlamına gelmektedir (Altschuler, 2007). Söz konusu anlamları eski Yunanca ile inceleyerek, Billy'nin Mezbaha No 5 romanındaki özelliklerinin büyük bir bölümünü tanımak zor değildir. Billy'nin kişiliği, orduya katılmaya ve bu anlamsız savaşın neden olacağı kanlı olaylara katılmaya istekli görünmemektedir. Her ne kadar Amerikan milletine ait olduğu gerçeğinin farkında olsa da Billy, bu savaşın kendi savaşı olmadığını hissetmektedir. Kasten veya kasıtsız olarak bu savaşa açıkça karşı çıkmaktadır. Öteki ile olan ilişkisi, Tralfamadore olarak bilinen bir alternatif gerçekliğe gitmesi romandaki ekstazi etkisinin varlığını doğrulamaktadır. Tralfamadore, Billy'nin gerçek kişiliğini bulabildiği ve arzularını yerine getirebileceği ve yanılısamaya kapılıp kaldığı bir gezegen olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Çünkü Billy, illüzyon dünyasında yaşamının, anlamsız bir dünyada yaşamaktan daha iyi olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bu nedenle, Billy'nin istemeden alternatif gerçekliğe olan yolculuğu, kendini Tralfamadore'da bulma isteğini ve bugünün esaretinden ve tanımlanamayan bir zaman diliminde ve uzayda yaşamaktan kurtulma isteğini göstermektedir.

José Saramago'nun Körlük eserinde, karantina altına alınmış kişilerin zamansal kaostan daha iyi ve daha az acı verici bir gerçekliğe kaçmaya çalıştıkları oldukça benzer bir durum göze çarpmaktadır. Körlük bir grup adsız insan (karakterlere isim verilmemiştir) hakkında yazılmış bir romandır. İnsanlar kör olur fakat her şeyi siyah değil beyaz görmeye başlarlar ve bu salgın şehrin her yerine yayılır. Hastalığa yakalananların beyaz renkte görmesi yaratılan alternatif gerçekliği hatırlatmaktadır. Karantina, karakterlerin yansımasının duvarlara çarptığı bir matristir. İnsanların karantinaya alındığı akıl hastanesi, Platon'un mağara alegorisine yapılan bir atıftır. Platon'un mağarası alegorisinde, birkaç kişi kollarından ve ellerinden zincirlenmiştir. Mağarada ışığın içeriye sızdığı bir giriş vardır, ancak mağaradaki insanlar sadece gölgelerini görebilirler ve başlarını bile hareket ettiremezler. Bir gün mağaradaki adamlardan biri tesadüfen zincirlerden kurtularak dışarı çıkar ve gerçek dünyayı görür. Bütün hislerini kaybetmiştir; hissedemez, dokunamaz ve farklı renkleri göremez. Mağaradan ayrılan adam geri döner ve arkadaşlarına dışarı hakkında bilgi verir, ancak arkadaşları gölgede yaşadıklarından dolayı ona inanmazlar (Hamilton ve Cairns, 1963). Alegori'de serbest kalanlar ve Körlük'deki

karakterler, özellikle doktorun eşi, tıpkı mağara örneğindeki gibi kendi gerçekliklerinden kaçmak isterler ve Mezbaha no 5'deki Billy'nin, boyutlar arasında seyahat ederek yarattığı alternatif gerçeklik gibi bir gerçeklik yaratırlar. Körlük'de insanlar önce görüşlerini kaybederler ve sonra karantinaya alınırlar. Bu tutsaklıktan sonra, kör olmuş insanlar, hapsedildikleri yerden kaçmak ve mağara alegorisinde olduğu gibi gerçek dünyayı yaşamak isterler. Hem Billy hem de Körlük'deki isimsiz karakterler alternatif bir gerçeklik arayışı içindedir çünkü iki romandaki karakterler de hem acı çeker hem yıkıma uğrar hem de dünyayı anlamsız bulurlar. Bu yüzden, geçici kör olan insanlar aslında alternatif bir gerçeklik ararlar. Bu bağlamda, her iki kitapta da karakterlerin esas amacı ekstazi ile birlikte alternatif bir gerçeklik yaratarak kendi gerçekliklerini terk etmektir.

Bu araştırmanın amacı ekstazi etkisinin her iki kitapta nasıl işlediğini anlamak, Körlük'te toplumun bozulmasıyla oluşan körlüğün ve Mezbaha No 5'te bireyin kendisi ile toplumsal beklentiler arasındaki uyumsuzluktan doğan çatışmanın sonucu olarak, söz konusu eserlerde, insanların hayatlarındaki olumsuz yönlerden kaçmak için yaptıkları alternatif gerçeklik arayışını incelemektir. Platon'un mağara alegorisinde serbest kalan kişi, ışığı hiç görmemesinin yanında gerçeği hayal dünyasından ayırabilecek kapasiteye sahip değildir. Platon tarafından gerçekliği nasıl bulduğu irdelenmiştir. Platon'un serbest kalan ve Saramago'nun isimsiz karakterleri ile Vonnegut'tun Billy karakteri arasındaki bağlantı, aradıkları şeyin anlamını bulmak için benzer şekilde esaretten kaçmak ve kendilerini bırakmak zorunda kalmalarıdır. Saramago'nun körlük metaforu, başka bir boyuta ulaşmak anlamına gelmektedir. Kör olan karakterler başka bir gerçekliğe ulaşmaktadırlar. Kör olan ve karantina alınan karakterlere doktorun eşi gerçekliklerini bulmalarına öncülük etmektedir. Doktorun eşi, Platon'un mağara alegorisindeki serbest kalan adamı anımsatmaktadır. Kitabın sonunda bütün karakterler görme duyularını yeniden kazanmaya başlamaktadır. Mezbaha No 5'de de benzer konu işlenmektedir. Romanın kahramanı Billy, hayatından sıkılmakta ve kısır döngüye saplanmaktadır. Orduya katılmış ama birini öldürecek kapasiteye sahip biri olmadığından diğer askerlerin yanında palyaço gibi görünmektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu olumsuzluklar bir çıkış yolu arayan Billy'i alternatif bir gerçeklik bulmaya zorlamaktadır. Bu ihtimal ona ekstazi aracılığıyla kurgusal ya da alternatif bir gerçeklik bulmasını sağlayacaktır. Ve alternatif gerçekliği bulduğunda, fiziksel gerçekliğin tabiatını anlayabilecektir.

Her ne kadar ekstazi etkisi ile başka bir gerçekliğe taşınırsalar da söz konusu kitaplardaki karakterler, içinde buldukları fiziksel gerçeklikten asla tam olarak kaçamazlar. Mezbaha No 5'teki Billy karakteri alternatif gerçeklik ile fiziksel gerçeklik arasında sıkışıp kalmıştır, bu yüzden de iki gerçeklik arasında sürekli olarak gidip gelmektedir. Billy bu yolculukları sırasında hayatta en çok korktuğu şey olan ölümün, hayatın sonu olmadığını anlamış ve hayatın kendisi için anlamını çözmüştür. Aynı şekilde Saramago'nun karakterleri, körlük ile gelen alternatif gerçeklikten kaçmanın yolunu bir şekilde bulmayı başarmışlardır. Bu karakterler, en sonunda zincirlerini kırıp birbirlerine tutunarak ve birlikte çalışarak esaretlerinden kaçabileceklerini anlamışlar ve kitabın sonunda da bunu gerçekleştirmek için adım atmışlardır. Hem Billy hem de Saramago'nun karakterleri, içinde buldukları fiziksel gerçekliği anlama ve düzeltme şansını bulmuşlardır. Zor durumlarda alternatif gerçeklik çözüm gibi gözükse de aslında çözüm değil, çözüme giden yolda bir adım olabilir. Çünkü

alternatif realitelerin yaratılması insanların, sorunlarının gerçek yapısını anlamalarına yardımcı olur ve ümitsizlikten kaçış yolunu bulmalarını sağlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ekstazi Etkisi, Alternatif Gerçeklik, Mağara Alegorisi, Postmodernizm, Gerçeklik, Hiper Realite*



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Topic

The concept of reality has been discussed by philosophers throughout history. This paper will try to find an answer to the question of what reality is in regards to the ecstasies effect, which claims that only through abandoning yourself reality can be fully conceived. In this context, this paper will try to examine the alternative reality and ecstasies effect in two contemporary novels which are *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut and *Blindness* by José Saramago.

1.2 Thesis Statement

In the 21st century, the individual has lost his/her sense of reality and this has led him/her to search for a path of alternative reality. The alternative reality can be described as one that is turning from one situation to another because the individual is not satisfied with the situation that he/she is unable to realize. A tool is needed to create an alternative reality. This thesis aims to show that this tool is "ecstasy", through examining the novels *Slaughterhouse-number Five* by Kurt Vonnegut and *Blindness* by José Saramago, and that the alternative realities created with the help of ecstasies effect constitute the first step in the comprehension of reality.

1.3 Aim of Thesis

This paper aims to analyze the selected works *Slaughterhouse-number Five* by Kurt Vonnegut and *Blindness* by José Saramago through ecstasies effect to display the alternative reality.

1.4 Secondary Objectives of Thesis:

This paper aims:

- To explain what alternative reality and ecstasies effect are.
- To clarify how two terms are handled in the two postmodern works.
- To clarify how alternative reality is created by explaining the concepts of hyper reality, simulation and post truth.
- To reveal post-modern theory and hyper reality in two works, Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut and Blindness by José Saramago.

1.5 Research Questions

This paper tries to find answers for the following questions:

- What is ecstasies effect? How is it used to create alternative reality?
- Is hyper reality a way in the creation of an alternative reality?
- How simulation theory and post truth are employed in contemporary culture?
- Plato assumes that everything in the world is an imitation of an ideal world. According to him whatever you do is unreal and just a part of ideas' world. In this context, can we say both José Saramago and Kurt Vonnegut's dystopias support Plato's ideas or to what extent can reality be trustable by using imitation?

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

All throughout history, humanity have been suffering from countless ills: wars, invasions, poverty, famine, natural disasters, and so on. Millions of people died and many were left homeless since the last century until our time, as a result of the ongoing strife in several parts of the world such as Africa, Asia and Europe. With every kind of burden that is put upon them, people started to dream of a life that is much more different than theirs and that carries them away from their harsh living conditions. Since the time people started to build societies, a majority of humans were used as easily dispensable forces of labour. They were worked to their deaths in the construction of glorious buildings that show off the greatness of their masters. With the Industrial Revolution, the common men's situation got even worse because the abuse from their masters started to become more systematic and on a much larger scale than before. The division of lands and resources to be plundered caused great animosity among the most powerful states, while the rest of the world suffered under those states' misuse. The great world wars broke out as a result of all this chaos. In the aftermath of these wars, many people were left injured both physically and mentally. A great number of people were killed and millions of them had been forced to migrate, and eventually became homeless. The economic crises on global scale, for example the Great Depression, caused people to abandon the search for a better and more hopeful life. People started to question notions such as reliability, loyalty, morality, religion, and eventually, reality because their reality just brought along destruction to them. As a consequence of all these troubles, people started to look for alternative ways to deal with the brutality of their reality. The easiest method was to create outlets of temporary escape by using certain kinds of chemicals, which would change their current reality, albeit for a short time (Joseph, 2000). For that purpose, people began to search for or synthetically develop such materials. At that time, a Russian-American scientist named Alexander Shulgin, the first person to describe the effect of MDMA in humans,

discovered a certain effect of this substance, which was meant to be only taken as a medicine. What Shulgin writes about its effects is quite interesting:

“(…) I understood that the entire universe is contained in the mind and the spirit. We may not choose to find access to it, we may even deny its existence, but it is indeed there inside us. When you take it, you probably awaken the God inside you,” (Joséph, 2002: 21)

In the same parallel, definition of ecstasy in Britannica resembles Shulgin’s experience:

“In mysticism, the experience of an inner vision of God or of one’s relation to or union with the divine,” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011).

Ecstasy and hallucinogenic pills have many different definitions and uses. Hallucinogenic drugs are commonly used as an intoxication agent, and its world-wide usage amounts to an approximately \$400 billion-per-year industry (Joseph, 7:2000). The most common purpose in the usage of hallucinogenic drugs, is to induce feelings of well-being, stimulation, and distortions in time and sensory perceptions that they produce. (Vollenweider, 2001:34) Ecstasy, is the sensations and feelings created by such drugs, and its very name evokes fun and pleasure among the general public. The other important definition of ecstasy is “hallucinogenic and stimulatory amphetamine”, and it has the combined characteristics of amphetamine and LSD (acid) (Joseph, 8:2002). On the other hand, MDMA is a lab-generated drug that became popular in the 1980s, and ecstasy is derived from that substance (Passie, Benzenhöfer; 48:2016). People use such drugs that induce ecstatic effects in them, to escape from their reality and get into another plane of reality which is much more pleasing to them.

Use of drugs that carries the spirit of an individual to a plane where he/she can be in more control of the surrounding conditions and surpass his/her previous achievements, is a popular theme in mass culture. An emblematic Hollywood film, *Limitless* (2011) somehow prefigures that humans can uncover God’s knowledge on them. The protagonist, Eddie, gets a pill and his life changes afterwards. His mind works like a computer, for example he can count lots of numbers in a second and he can write a book in an hour. Briefly after Eddie, is not himself anymore, for he becomes more than just a normal human being as a result of his superhuman capabilities. He earns, builds companies, lives in a

light world and consumes like a gear machine. Of course, there is something more destructive than these situations. In the movie *Matrix*, Neo takes the pill and gets the knowledge of all human life, as well as his own existence. In both of these movies, the truth is hidden from the eyes of regular people, however, with the help of a special substance they distance themselves from their daily and shallow existence, and they see all life in its purest and the most truthful form. As a result, the question ‘Why does God hide the reality from humans?’ comes to mind and makes us question the reality in which we have been living: “Maybe what I have called real all my life is just an illusion and I have been living a lie my whole life.” In the example of Prometheus, it can be claimed that God inherently penalizes human beings from seeing the reality, meaning that God hides the truth from them because, if they awake and start to search for the truth, they will realize that they do not need any creator. At that point of realisation, humans can finally stand on their feet (Hamilton, 1942).

Humans’ knowledge of themselves and of their reality would not change the reality itself, but still, it would give them a better and a more informed understanding of their existence of the universe. At this point, it is important to define what reality is. To define reality, let’s paint a picture of an instance in time: For example, there is a girl with her drink that probably she gets from Starbucks, and she wears a red T-shirt. The man behind the girl grasps a red apple, and bites it. There are many low trees on the streets, and they are covered with balloons as two days later the festival will be started. The boy drinks his water, and his loving mother holds his hand. In these pen-portraits, colors, people, roads, items can vividly be seen. We see lots of different items, objects and stuff through the day. All these bits of data can be depicted or described by our perceptions because all the things which appear to us can be classified by our sense of sight. It is important to determine the concept of reality because it defines the world to be both understandable and livable. Slovenian philosopher Žižek states that:

“(…) reality means fully identifying oneself with the fantasy, namely with the fantasy which structures the excess that resist immersion in daily reality” (2002).

In his book “*Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002)”, Žižek speaks about reality and its fictional situation. Facing with two great wars, chained by modern world’s hustle and bustle, human beings unfortunately lost the sharpness of their sight and other perceptions. Our obligations, duties and other petty daily cares force people to live in a deep black hole. In that hole, people survive in a vicious circle. In the course of time, humans eventually get lost in this vicious circle and to find their way, they create a new alternative fictional lifestyle. Since reality sometimes seems to be quite cruel and even quite difficult to be accepted, people either create their alternative versions or go completely mad. That is why Saramago and Vonnegut try to create a totally different reality from the reality which would make us angry because of our human inability to create a world without injustice, accompanied with pain. Žižek states that this is the reason why real life is filled with numerous difficult moments, which are also known as traumas that are either as a part of the horror (2002), or as a part of the human weakness to recognize that the human being is not willing to accept the fact that he/she has failed in his or her intention to create a world without painful moments. And because of this, the human being, just like in Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) and Saramago’s *Blindness* (1997), tries to escape from the painful daily reality and find an alternative reality. On this or that way, the painful reality can be understood as a bridge between the unpleasant reality and alternative reality, or maybe even fantasy. Thanks to this bridge, either for a shorter or a longer period of time, human beings manage to find the much-desired moments of enjoyment and contentment, as it can be seen in Saramago’s *Blindness*. Unfortunately, sometimes the same bridge can also keep up certain barriers to remind us one more time about the fact that it may not be possible to create a reality without some pain. Maybe that is why in the previously mentioned works of Saramago and Vonnegut, there are numerous events within almost until the very end, and there can be observed two parallel worlds; a world where the human daily reality is filled with pain and a world where the human being looks desperately for an alternative reality without pain.

In order to support all previously mentioned details/statements related to the reality/alternative reality, which can be observed in Saramago’s *Blindness* and

Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, it is necessary to explain additional details related to the reality as a term. For that purpose, in the next part of this thesis, different explanations related to the definition of the term reality will be elaborated such as 'actuality', 'case', 'fact' and 'materiality'.

The general definition for the term reality refers to the quality or the state of being real. The persons in Saramago's *Blindness* as well as Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* are the alive witnesses to humans' frailty in dealing with the harsh problems surrounding their existence, however, they are not willing at all to do something concrete in order to repair the actual unpleasant situation; to fix the unfavorable actuality which occurs in front of their eyes. Completely helpless with their own vulnerability, all the characters from previously mentioned works try to find an alternative world; an alternative reality filled with elements of fantasy, fiction as well as illusion. All previously mentioned terms like illusion, fiction and fantasy actually represent antonyms of the term reality/real. Through these terms, directly or indirectly, Saramago and Vonnegut manage to show the absence of concrete will to react in humans and the absence of their will to face with the concrete facts of reality. Instead of confronting with their problems, it seems that humanity prefers to find a certain consolation in something which temporarily seems to be better than the actuality. However, until which point illusion/fiction/fantasy can be their escape from the daily challenges of reality? It seems that this quite logical question hangs somewhere in the space trying to stimulate the human being to react, not just to shake his head in front of the daily problems.

When it's about the term real/reality, it is important to explain Plato's view according to which "the ideal nature of essence of a tree or a circle or a color, was more fundamental, more 'real' than physical reality, and that physical reality, a tree for instance, comes into being as an imperfect instance of the ideal." Plotinus, a staunch defender of Plato against Plato's rivals and philosophers who misinterpret him, had a more mystical bent, and believed that matter was a manifestation of something deeper and more ethereal. His Platonic philosophy argued that spirit creates the world by stepping from eternity into time and form," (Hanratty, 1977). It seems that the actual world in Saramago's

and Vonnegut's works, reflected in the worlds of the characters in these two works, represent Plato's imperfect instance of the ideal. That's why the characters in these works, try to replace that imperfect instance of the ideal with totally new world which will not be just an imitation of the actual imperfect world, but it will rather be a good alternative.

Another important philosopher whose ideas will also be examined in the works of Saramago and Vonnegut is John Locke. According to Locke, we can believe in something only if we can see it. Locke states that the human mind starts out without any knowledge, and that everything what a human being knows is built up from the experience that is achieved thanks to the senses. In comparison with Locke, (Hanratty, 1977) Bishop George Berkeley claims that the things cannot be perceived thanks to our senses because of the simple fact that through the senses the things cannot even exist at all (Limerick Institute of Technology, 2015). That means neither in Saramago's *Blindness* nor in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, characters may never exist or the things they have experienced are just their simulation or they are just the reflection of an idealization. Berkeley's contemporaries accuse him of creating a meaningless theory according to which the real world represent nothing else but an ordinary illusion. However, despite this disagreement between Berkeley and his contemporaries, Berkeley's assertion that reality is something totally opposite of the real/actual world, and the fact that illusion or fantasy represent something quite favorable for all the characters in *Blindness* and *Slaughterhouse five*, serve as an excellent instrument/tool for the helpless human being to find his/her escape route to that virtual, alternative, illusional, imaginary world.

Other important philosophers whose theories/ideas can be examined in *Blindness* as well as *Slaughterhouse-Five*, are David Hume and René Descartes. David Hume is an Irish philosopher who managed to bring the empiricist elements until its skeptical extreme. Hume supports the idea that in a virtual sense, there is no knowledge that can be rationally justified with certainty. For example, how we can know that even tomorrow, just like any other morning, the sun will rise in east? We know it just because it always rises in east.

It seems that the characters in these two literary works are not willing to undertake a concrete action which will negate their or our human weakness because of the fact that the next morning and next day will pass just like any other morning or day, without a concrete will/wish to take a concrete and decisive action. To a great extent, Hume's theory just describes the human coldness, indifference in facing the challenges of daily life. Descartes is a philosopher who is totally different from all the previously mentioned philosophers. For him the only one thing which can define what the truth or the real is, is the reason, not the senses. Descartes argues that the mind has to accept that reason is the sole provider of the truth, and that some things are eternally and undeniably true. Just as Descartes asserts the indisputable nature of truth, the characters in these two works seem to accept eternally and undeniably their complete infirmity.

Another work that can be referred to in the analysis of Saramago's *Blindness* as well as Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* is Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* published (1988). In this work, Baudrillard underlines the role that images play in contemporary society, and the way through which reality is mediated by these images. For that purpose, Baudrillard introduces the term "hyper-reality", which actually refers to numerous areas of our daily lives like education, cinema, architecture, agriculture and many other fields which seem to lose the connection with the real daily world. *Simulacra and Simulation* starts with this quotation: "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth - it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true." (1988) According to Baudrillard, simulacrum, or the hyper reality, is not an imitation of anything but the real thing itself. It strongly reflects the unconscious human desire to distance itself from the challenges of daily life and to approach another reality, or to the hyper reality where the ordinary human being does not have any more control of the daily regular events. In addition, the simulacrum or the simulation in Saramago's and Vonnegut's works, is only there because of the characters' lack of will to undertake something concrete in order to face with their daily problems, however, this simulacrum/simulation doesn't hide the ugly truth from them but just confirms the characters' coldness and powerlessness. Even though the characters feel freer and happier in the simulation, this only confirms the

fact that the simulation cannot be a definitive escape from the unpleasant reality.

In this context, hyper reality serves as an alternate to reality; to put it differently, hyper reality becomes an alternative reality for the characters in *Blindness* and to Billy in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The way that a person creates his/her own reality starts with that person's breaking out of his/her self, with experiencing the reality outside of his/her consciousness. This experience is referred to as 'the ecstasy effect', which is called by the Ancient Greeks as "the separation of one's self, the migration of the soul from one place to another" (Conley, 1975). It means that the individual experiences the reality outside of his/her body, however he/she is still an intricate part of the alternative reality created by the ecstasy effect because whatever he/she does in that reality, it directly affects him/her. The ecstasy effect actually serves Billy in *Slaughterhouse-Five* to create his own alternative world. The best proof for the creation of his own separated alternative world is his statement which appears in Vonnegut's book many times. It's about his famous statement "So it goes". Not only about the member of his own family but even for the animals that perish, he uses that his famous statement "So it goes". It seems that Vonnegut's character Billy is not prepared to face with the painful truth, he is not willing to accept the reality in which the loved ones around him are passing away, and he is not willing to accept the fact that any other human's or other creature's life can stop in just one/few seconds. That is why Billy decides to create his own alternative reality, different from daily life. On this or that way, we have almost the same situation which can be observed in Saramago's "*Blindness*", where the characters actually pretend to be blind in order to avoid the cruelty of reality, creating also another totally different alternative universe; a universe appropriated to the terms like illusion or fantasy. However, there is not any illusion or fantasy which managed to survive forever.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Roese (1994), one reason people create alternative realities for themselves is that they may want to learn from their mistakes and change the future. They dream about how the events of the past might be different and thus create different realities for themselves. Emotional decisions such as regret can make people make better decisions (Ritov & Baron, 1995). Markman et al. (1993) state that thinking of something that does not exist can prevent people from making mistakes. Another reason why people produce alternatives to reality may be to facilitate the causal relationships (Roese & Olson, 1997).

Byrne believes that people tend to imagine alternative realities rather than for their inactions, but for their actions (2005). An example is when two mothers decide whether or not to vaccinate their children against a new disease. Patricia decides to vaccinate her child and the child is seriously ill due to an allergic reaction to the vaccine. On the other hand, Brigid decides not to vaccinate his child, but the child gets sick because of this decision. In your opinion, who will feel more regret? Many of the participants in an experiment stated that Patricia would regret more than Brigid who did not vaccinate her child, because Patricia vaccinated her child, (Kahneman & Tversky 1982; Ritov & Baron 1990). There is an effect of action, because some ideas are dual probability ideas, meaning that people need to think about two possibilities.

The fact that an object is expressed as real often serves to distinguish the actual and the existing from what is claimed to be so. Reality then contrasts with the following alternatives:

Table 3.1: Alternatives for reality

fiction	contrived or imaginary accounts
fakery	imitations, spurious pretenses, illusions, “magic”/ slight of hand
delusion	mirages, voices
pretence	deceit, make-believe, seeming, merely apparent
ersatz	synthetic, substitute
simulacra	look-alikes (like stuffed animals)

Source: Rescher, 2010

The question of reality begins with the question of whether the object we see is real or not. As a result, the main distinction is not between what is in our experience and those that are inaccessible to it, but that are true in our experience and in some way incorrect or misleading. Therefore, it would be wrong to think of reality as a species different from the extraordinary realm of what people do. The essence of the work is not the contradiction between what is and what is supposed to be, or rather, the contrast between what is considered right, and wrong (Rescher, 2010). It is not certain that what is visible is true or real, as the proverb says, the appearance can be deceptive. For example, a broken and stopped clock does not show the time correctly. However, it will show exactly the right time twice a day. But if this situation makes us blind to the flaw of this watch, we will be very deceived. The appearance is no different from reality and nature, it is how reality shows itself. The fault line between the real and the visible extends not only through the field of alternative possible realities, but also through the range of envisaged possibilities. Some real possibilities can be overlooked, and some impossibilities can be misinterpreted

as possible. For example, suppose a family has a cat that they call Tom or Puss. There is only one cat in the house, but a guest arriving home thinks there are two similar cats corresponding to these names. Tom's presence at home and Puss in the garden is set in the guest's anticipated range of possibilities. However, the probability spectrum of reality falls outside this prospect (Rescher, 2010).

People perceive, experience and interpret the world and its events in accordance with their predominant consciousness levels. This is further reinforced by the tendency of the mind to explain through mentalization and rationalized interpretation of perceived data. Thus, each level tends to self-reinforce by the stage of materialization (reification). This process results in the stage described as "paradigm allegiance" (Hawkins, 2006). The assumption that the person has his / her perceived or experienced world represents "reality" (Hawkins, 2008). As René Descartes puts it, because the mind is unable to distinguish perception from the internal or the external due to its innate structure, it assumes that it knows the reality because it experiences it, and therefore, that other perspectives are wrong. Although the modern, sophisticated man is consciously aware of reality, people with a low level of consciousness are not so unaware, and like children, they believe that fiction is real and that they live in an "alternative reality" (Pitts, 2007; Marzeles, 2007). For example, as the Nazi propaganda minister Joséph Goebbels discovered, when a lie is told frequently enough, it is finally believed to be true, and this is a created alternative reality because people are not capable of distinguishing reality from wrong (Hawkins, 2008).

After the great world wars, general public tended to abandon the traditional belief and worship systems because of their disillusionment with the cruelty of their living conditions (Gilkey, 1945). The horrific atrocities that were committed in the wars resulted in the loss of faith in established religious and political systems altogether, and not one particular and all-embracing religion, such as Christianity, seemed to hold large numbers of people under its control. People started to look for new emotions and new awareness to fill the void left by the traumatising effects of war. The expression of these deep and somewhat

irrational impulses, which people try to control by tradition, reason, law, and a set of meanings and values, found new outlets such as recreational drug use (Berridge, 2014). The devaluation of tradition and religion and the subsequent rise of materialism after the world wars was a protest against the technological society, the state, industry, education and the impersonal state of religion, the inhumanity and ruthlessness of poverty, racist hatred, and war (Gilkey, 1945). People who were fed up with living their lives according to the conventional methods, which were propagated by these institutions, eventually decided to abandon the solutions that these institutions gave to their problems. Millions of people, many of whom were not young, tried to discover new sources of inspiration and satisfaction that were not part of the society's destructiveness and persecution. As a result, they looked for ways to reach ecstasy (Meserve, 1971).

Levenson (2000) states that ecstasy is an indefinable aspect of reality, that is, being in the extreme richness of reality. He continues that in the ordinary world of consciousness, beings are structured and not natural. For example, a chair is a chair within the limits of being a chair, or a tree is a tree within the limits of being a tree, and as humans, we also stay within certain limits. The area of our being, our wisdom, our strength, the length of our days, our sorrows and our sins are all assigned to us within certain limits and these limits make us what we are, and they are our reality.

As to philosophy's point of view of reality and alternative reality, Westerhoff (2012) states that the books of philosophy refer to the fact that some of the objects, which are generally accepted as real, are unrealistic (such as material objects, the moment we live), and that objects generally considered unrealistic (such as the future) are real. He expresses the aspects of philosophical views pointing to reality by describing the map below:

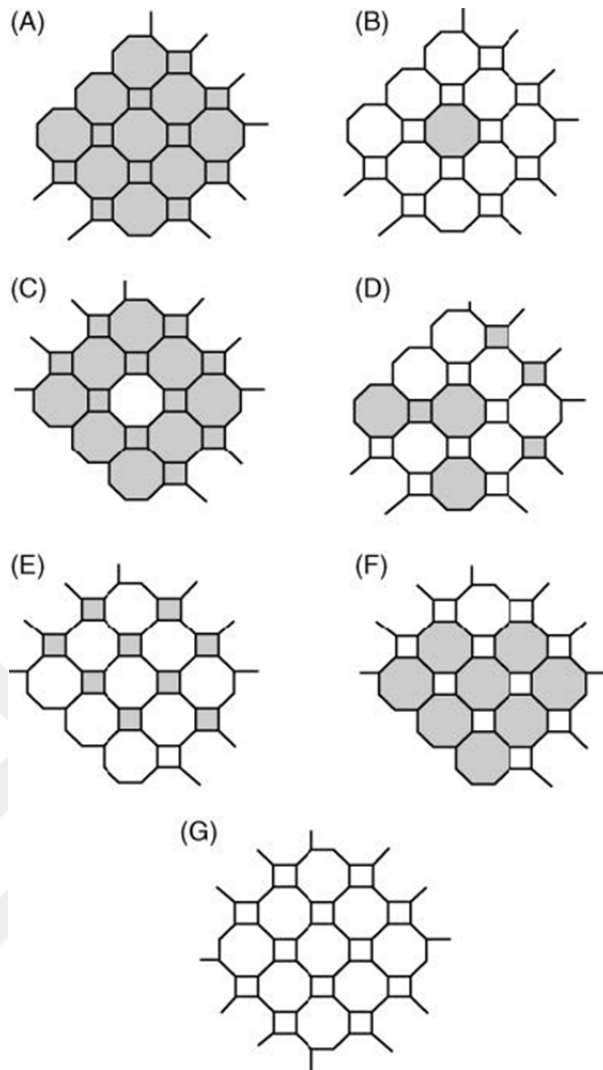


Figure 2.1: Philosophical maps

Source: Westerhoff, 2012

As it can be seen from the image, all the shapes on the map A are painted in gray. According to this theory, which is called *universalism*, everything is real, electrons, minds, money, numbers are all real members of this world. The point where universality is criticized is that it accepts non-existent objects such as your non-existing sister or king of Turkey as real. The map B is much more minimalist, so that the only real thing is you and nothing else. This view, *solipsism*, has led to heated debate among philosophers over the years. It is attractive because it cannot be rejected; it is frightening because in such a world most people would be claustrophobic. It is unfortunate that this theory has drawn much more attention than its equally interesting cousin, *anti-solipsism*, shown on the map C. According to anti-

solipsism, everything is real, but you are not. This represents the notion that a fictional character can have the world of the author (rather than the fictional world in which she/he lives) and it also opposes the belief that we are the center of our world. Map D represents a theory we may wish to call *selective realism*. Most of the philosophical theories that are still being discussed can be grouped under this label. According to this view, you are real as well as many other people. But characters like Lara Croft and Sherlock Holmes are not real. According to some philosophers who advocate this view, electrons can be real, but mathematical objects are not real. On the other hand, according to some, while mathematical expressions are real, material objects are not real. The maps E and F represent the views that can be categorized under selective reality. For the theories that the map E symbolizes, *mindless* theories, nothing conscious is real. The lower level is made up of things like the Earth, subatomic particles, space-time points, or mathematical objects, but not the mind, person or self. Of course, such theories should explain how unconscious things can emerge in a mindless world. Although mindless theories have provided insight into the relationship between mental and physical, it is true to say that this project has not yet been completed for the satisfaction of all. On the other hand, the theories on the map F, *group-mind* theories, argue that the only real things are conscious things. Everything that is real is what a mind or a mind does. So how do we explain that non-mental things, such as a teacup or Mount Everest, can be considered as part of the world we live in? Instead of explaining how the mind emerged from matter, group-mind theories must show how matter comes from mind. Every place on the map G is painted in white. According to this theory called *irrealism*, nothing is real. This has a better perspective than nihilism theory. Nihilism claims that nothing exists. Well, if that's true, would not there be at least something, which is the truth?

4. ALTERNATIVE REALITY AND ECSTASY EFFECT

4.1 What is Alternative Reality?

In today's predominantly materialist world, we are convinced that the physical world around us is real. Woolley states that: "Reality has left the physical world and moved into the virtual one" (1992). There has been long debate about the "objective" existence of alternative reality. Since its appearance within the grand stage of the universe, mankind has searched truth in all its forms and varieties; from within its day to day struggle to much greater inquiries such as his place and purpose in the cosmos. And for a great portion of history, humans sought and found the answer within the boundaries of various religions, in different shapes and sizes. Religions from all around the world had (and still have) claims of existences of other, capital T 'Truths' -i.e. alternate realities- which are parallel to/intersecting the world of senses. Some mystical beliefs combine the-world-as-it-appears (i.e. the sensory world) with the-world-as-it-is and offer alternate realities. One of them is Sufism which speak of "shining" and "hiding". Shining means "breaking through of the sun of the reality of God from the clouds of humanity" (Shah, 1964: 312). According to this view, "the reality of God" is the perception gained when entering the alternative reality, and "the clouds of humanity" means the ordinary. Similarly, in Hinduism, *māyā*, a religious concept and originally a word meaning 'wisdom' and 'power', refers to an understanding of the world different than it appears to be, eventually meaning 'illusion, unreality, and deception'. From Islam to Christianity, from Hinduism to Shinto religion, a veil seems to be covering the reality, through which only a religious peek is possible, or at least such was the case until the Scientific Revolution, in this quest for knowledge.

The 'world of senses' (as opposed to the veiled truth of dogma), which is based upon the empirical data one collects through senses, started offering an almost coherent and more or less rational, verifiable, falsifiable alternative 'reality' to

the one offered by religions. And it has been shaping our contemporary understanding of the universe at every level since then. And yet, even within this strictly materialistic world, the human instinct still seeks to find (or if unlucky enough, to build) alternate realities. The earliest cave paintings of Franco-Cantabrian region are nothing but exquisite and skillful attempts to create an aestheticized, meaningful, complete and alternate renditions of the life in the Upper Paleolithic era. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey are naught but heroic reconstructions of ancient Greece for the audiences in antiquity. All art, and especially literature, has been a hotbed of alternate realities from its very conception. Authors, through their formations of imaginary worlds, take an important part in the creation of alternative realities. Particularly, postmodern writers play with the boundaries of simple logic by constructing settings with inexact time and place configurations.

Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five* abandons the traditional structure of a linear time and a firmly fixed space, thus providing the reader with a variety of ways of perceiving reality and human condition (1998). We can also understand that Billy Pilgrim suffers in his own reality and is in search of a reality in which he and no one will suffer, from the following piece which is stated to hang on the office wall.

“(...) Billy had a framed prayer on his office wall which expressed his method for keeping going, even though he was unenthusiastic about living. A lot of patients who saw the prayer on Billy's wall told him that it helped them to keep going too. It went like this:

GOD GRANT ME
THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT
THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE
TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN,
AND WISDOM ALWAYS
TO TELL THE
DIFFERENCE” (Vonnegut, 1969: 32).

With this writing on his wall, it can be seen that Billy is already at odds with perceiving the physical reality around him, and that he needs help to separate between different realities.

On the other hand, José Saramago deals with reality in a different style. On the cover of Saramago's book, there is a phrase like 'Nobel laureate winner'. The winner is Saramago himself, not the book. The Nobel Prize for Saramago has been given to him because he has enabled us *to comprehend an elusory reality with parallels with imagination, compassion and irony* (The Nobel Prize in Literature, 1998). In Saramago's book, we learn the life story of a few people who are blinded by a sudden developing blindness and who are distant from their own reality and who are trapped in another reality. In the novel, we see how people behave in a reality where they are in very difficult conditions. Saramago speaks of this reality as follows:

“(...) He dreamt at once that he was pretending to be blind, he dreamt that he was forever closing and opening his eyes, and that, on each occasion, as if he were returning from a journey, he found waiting for him, firm and unaltered, all the forms and colours of the world as he knew it. Beneath this reassuring certainty, he perceived nevertheless, the dull nagging of uncertainty, perhaps it was a deceptive dream, a dream from which he would have to emerge sooner or later, without knowing at this moment what reality awaited him. Then, if such a word has any meaning when applied to a weariness that lasted for only a few seconds, and already in that semi-vigilant state that prepares one for awakening, he seriously considered that it was unwise to remain in this state of indecision, shall I wake up, shall I not wake up, shall I wake up, shall I not wake up, there always comes a moment when one has no option but to take a risk, What am I doing here with these flowers on my lap and my eyes closed as if I were afraid of opening them, What are you doing there, sleeping with those flowers on your lap, his wife was asking him (...)” (Saramago, 1997: 5).

In Saramago's book, an alternative reality is created because of the characters' inability to see, accept and handle the reality they have been living in, for itself. The alternative reality created by their blindness is their way of escaping from the reality they already inhabit. In both books, the ecstasy effect is achieved in order to make that kind of an escape possible: in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy creates his alternative reality in Tralfamadore because he cannot deal with the idea of sudden and untimely death in his physical reality; while in *Blindness*, the characters are powerless and reluctant to perceive their desperation in coping with their situations in life. In both books, the authors create alternative worlds by removing the characters from their original realities to alternative ones.

4.2 What is Ecstasy Effect?

Ecstasy, is a concept that emerged in the writings of some important social theorists such as Max Weber, Sigmund Freud and Karl Mannheim. The generally accepted definition of the term "ecstasy" is the "soul journey" (Eliade, 1964; Harner, 1990). It is used to describe a short-term and very intense experience that a person feels away from himself or herself and from everyday life. Manheim (1956) refers to this term as follows:

“It is that achieving from time to time a certain distance from his own situation and from the world is one of the fundamental traits of man as truly a human being. A man for whom nothing exists beyond his immediate situation is not fully human ... We have inherited from our past (the need) of severing from time to time all connection with life and with the contingencies of our existence. We shall designate this ideal by the term *ecstasy*.”

Weber states that this mystical situation, expressed as ecstasy, is opposite to our world of experimental experiences and the action in this world of aestheticism (1946). Sigmund Freud was criticized by Romain Rolland for his work *The Future of an Illusion*, in which he analyzed the issue of religion in a family drama, and this criticism is that Freud was unable to grasp the ultimate source of religious experience. Freud states:

“A peculiar feeling, which never leaves him personally, a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of “eternity,” a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded something “oceanic.” It is purely subjective experience not an article of belief. . .”

It can be said that the concept of oceanic feeling is similar to the expression of ecstasy mentioned by Karl Mannheim and Max Weber. Sigmund Freud stated that he never experienced this ecstasy feeling (Ennis, 1967). These few examples show that the concept of ecstasy is an individual experience that is of great importance, with limited time, and it can be confronted in everyday life.

What are the general conditions for maintaining the ecstasy experience? Some of the hints come from anthropological and new psychological considerations, and Jane Belo's work *Trance in Bali* can be cited as an important example (1960). The work starts with the following words:

“The Balinese are a people whose everyday behavior is measured, controlled, graceful, tranquil. Emotion is not easily expressed. Dignity and adherence to the rules of decorum are customary. At the same time, they show a susceptibility and a facility for going into states of trance, states in which there is an altered consciousness and behavior springing from a deeper level of the personality is manifested... Ruth Benedict who made the classical distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian configurations of culture went over our material with great care and came to the conclusion that the distinction could not be applied to Balinese culture. Their customary pose and moderation resemble the Apollonian, while the outbreak into trance, approved and recognized in the culture, is nearer to the Dionysian.”

The author has the view that public ritualized trance-behavioral performance is seen by the Balinese as proof of the power of the gods, and that the gods have established a communication between the upper world and the world of the living in order to reduce public concerns. Another noteworthy concept here is *the alternation of states*. Both the religious and theatrical forms of ecstatic participation discussed above contain a significant pattern of transition from everyday life to higher states. Marghanita Laski (1961) states in her work “*Ecstasy: A Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences*” as follows:

“Some ecstasies have as their result the discovery of a continuing and often expanding focus of value in the trigger to the experience.”

According to this view, there is an empirical connection between the quality of everyday life and ecstatic behavior, and human beings need to have a varied stimulus environment (Ennis, 1967). Furthermore, according to Ennis, the more homogeneous the daily life of a person, the more ecstatic separation of this routine will be. Given the high role differentiation of people to an advanced urbanized and industrialized culture, and as a result of various role behaviors, there are many options for alternation styles of behavior from work, play, and the office to the family room. However, none of these day-to-day activities represents an ecstatic transcendence that people need. Everyday life does not exhaust the human beings, ecstatic transcendence is a part of our nature and must therefore be part of our civilization. *Slaughterhouse-Five's* Billy experiences ecstatic behavior by his removal from the physical reality to Tralfamadore, where he is outside of his old self and in a completely different environment. Likewise, the characters in *Blindness* are outside of their selves as a result of the blindness they are suffering from.

In Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, whenever he feels distressed or unhappy, Billy repeatedly finds himself in Tralfamadore, where he can live in more desirable conditions of existence, compared to his daily-life reality. Billy experiences this type of transitions smoothly all throughout the book, and they occur at the times when he needs them to happen the most, which shows that it can be possible for an individual to transfer his/her consciousness from one plane of existence to another, or from one reality to another. In Saramago's *Blindness*, people who cannot cope with the harshness of their reality are carried into the alternative reality that is created by their sudden blindness. They experience the life outside their previous level of consciousness, and their transition from one plane to another enables them to live outside their selves and realities, thusly creating an alternative level of existence for them.

5. HYPER REALITY, SIMULATION AND POST TRUTH

5.1 Hyper Reality

Questioning what is and is not real, and how (or if) we can know the real, is a subject that has been occupying the minds of thinkers since Plato. Among the most valid answers that were given to such questions is the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's. According to Baudrillard, we can never actually perceive the real because there is no 'real' to be perceived, or what we might believe to be real (something tangible and concrete) does not exist. What we perceive as real is just the interplay of images and signs, creating the reality before us, which is actually achieved by "substituting signs of the real for the real itself" (Baudrillard, 1988). So, if the world around us, with its symbols of power and various sets of rules and institutions, is not real, then why not, everything we see, touch and feel cannot be real as well? If the social, political and economic world is a constructed reality, then other aspects of our lives can be created in a similar way. At this point, it is crucial to explain Baudrillard's theory of 'hyper-reality'.

In hyper reality, there are no longer the 'real' things themselves but signs and symbols that are actually substitutes for certain things. In hyper reality, the image of a thing is more real than the thing itself. Jill R. Chancey gives the example of Princess Diana, who was the princess of Wales and the wife to Prince Charles of Great Britain, as a perfect example of the creation of the image of a modern-day celebrity through media (1999). According to Chancey, the image of Princess Diana as the gold-hearted noble who cares for the poor, the loving wife of a prince who went bad after her disgrace, is created in the media through the various use of images from her life. However, at first, she was presented as a misfit noble who was not worthy of her title, then she was almost canonised by the media as the princess who just died early in the bloom of her youth. Then, who actually is Diana? Is she really the person that media

showed her to be? And after her death, her image was reversed and she was appraised for her kind and loving spirit. Millions of people mourned after her even though they did not know her in person. Her image that was purported by the media is the only frame of reference for the people who cried after her loss, however, did the general public really know her? Or what is more important, who was she: was she the person whose images were repeatedly shown in the media, or a completely different person? Diana's image was reconstituted in the media, and a whole different person was created and presented to the public. Her life was real for millions of people who only know her by trusting the evidence presented through media, and she was real only to the extent those images provided for her. Media, as one of the most powerful tools at the disposal of hegemony, is the creator of alternative realities, or in this sense, hyper reality. And in hyper reality, many alternatives for one particular thing can exist, among which you can choose for yourself to create your own reality.

Ecstasy creates a temporary space of existence for individuals, in which they can experience a reality much more different than theirs. This temporary space, with all its associated elements, gives the individual a sense of reality where he/she can live as he/she does in the reality of everyday life. In this alternative reality the individual acts and feels like he/she does in everyday life; for example, he/she wakes up in the morning, takes a shower, goes to work, converses with friends, and so on. All the sensations related to the simplest everyday actions such as feeling the ground under one's feet and hearing the sound of the passing cars while walking on the street, as well as more complex actions such as experiencing feelings of contentment, jealousy, anger, and so on, can be simulated in an alternative reality created by technology. This is what computer and telecommunications scientists call "Hyper Reality" (Tiffin, 2001). Hyper Reality is the medium where the artificial and the real meets, and it is where a new reality that is both dependent on and independent of the physical reality, comes into being (Terashima 2001). In the creation of this reality, "real and unreal objects" are put in "the same space to create an environment called a Hyper World." (2001) For example, a person exists in the physical world with his/her body and organs as well as his/her emotions and senses. If that person is transferred into a virtual world via technology, he/she would exist in that world

as “bits of information.” (2001) In the virtual world created by Hyper Reality, there would be not only these exact copies of real people or objects that exist in the physical reality but also beings that exist only in the virtual reality, such as sentient and sapient computer programs that can take the forms of people or objects that do not exist in the physical world. In Hyper Reality “real and virtual life forms can work and interact together”, meaning that a real person’s virtual presence could communicate and exchange information with each other, for example you can take your actual body’s form in the hyper reality and converse with a computer program about a diverse number of subjects. This interaction can take many forms, and what makes it possible is the medium called “coaction field” (Terashima 2001). Hyper Reality works in the coaction field that is provided using information technology at its highest capabilities, and this kind of technology is not fully operational yet. People can already communicate in a virtual reality created by computer games or other certain programs by using “words and gestures”, and later they would eventually be able to communicate by “touch and body actions” (2001). However, to feel like you are living in a real world, you have to be able to use all your senses that you normally use in daily life: you have to not just see the red apple but also be able to touch, even bite and taste it to feel like you are really eating the apple. So, the world created in the Hyper Reality should also provide its inhabitants with the data relating to “associated sound, touch, smell and, [...] even taste” to feel as authentic as the actual physical world (2001). With all the involving elements doing their parts perfectly, this precision can be achieved and one can really feel like he/she is living in the hyper world. Thus, it can be said that the main goal of Hyper Reality is “to make physical and virtual reality appear to the full human sensory apparatus to intermix seamlessly”, and this can be accomplished by the flawless cooperation of many different but related technologies, such as telecommunication technologies, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and interface technologies.

In the future, technology can help the individual live in a reality of his/her liking, and can give the sense of authenticity of living in an alternative reality. And in literature, an author can already create his/her characters’ reality. In Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy creates his own reality with the images

of things and people in his head. For example, Montana Wildhack, a young Hollywood starlet, has no value of herself for Billy in real life, but she has a value as his companion in Tralfamadore. In the real world where she is a Hollywood actress, she is only an image for Billy because he does not know her in person. However, in Tralfamadore, she is Billy's lover. Her character in Tralfamadore is both dependent upon and independent of her image in the real world; the reflection of her Hollywood self in Billy's alternative reality is different from her original self because she is there not just for what she signifies to Billy but also exists in a new persona as Billy's companion in Tralfamadore. Billy, with the images of people and things he is familiar with in the real world, creates this new identity for her in Tralfamadore, and in return, Montana exists within the limits of her personality that Billy has created for her. So, it can be said that Billy creates his own 'hyper reality' in Tralfamadore with the images of Montana Wildhack, which he has taken from the media. He feels her presence by touching her, conversing and interacting with her in the hyper reality of Tralfamadore. On the contrary, in Saramago's *Blindness*, the blinded characters are living in the whiteness of not having a sight, and they have no images left for them to use in a different way. They have to create new images for themselves because around them, there are no images to work upon. Their alternative reality, or the hyper reality, is created as a result of the lack of images, not as an abundance of them.

5.2 Simulation and Post-Truth

As technology keeps advancing rapidly in the recent decades, many questions regarding the nature of reality have emerged. Since there are many ways that can simulate anything, be it a driving lesson for beginners or a virtual medieval world in a computer game, people began to suspect if all life on earth is also a highly elaborate simulation. Simulation is, by definition, "imitation or enactment, as of something anticipated or in testing", meaning that it is an artificially created environment that has all the necessary elements which makes the medium seem real to its inhabitants or participants (Simulation 2019). Simulation gives its 'players' a sense of being in the 'real' environment with the interplay of the surrounding elements. Test drivers or game players know that

what they are engaging in is just a ‘simulation’, not the reality. But, what if our world and physical reality are also a part of a simulation? How can we be sure that is not? Philosophers and scientists such as Nick Bostrom and Hans Moravec, and business gurus like Elon Musk, have asked the same question and answered in a similar way: “Is the world around us just a simulation?” And the answer: “Yes, it might be.” So, we might actually be living in a simulation. According to Rizwan Virk, “the idea that what we call reality is actually a super-sophisticated video game is popularly referred to as the *Simulation Hypothesis*” (2019). If we perceive the world around us through the senses and that the senses are not reliable in the perception of reality, then it can be said that what we perceive as reality is rather subjective than objective. Since the data we collect through the senses can easily be manipulated, what we perceive as reality can also be manipulated. Then it might be possible that we are the players in a very elaborate game which we call ‘reality’. The hypothesis that life is a simulation bases its claims not only on mathematical “probability” but also on the findings of “quantum physics” (Virk, 2019). As scientists started to dig deeper into the nature of how particles work in the subatomic level, they found out that widely accepted rules of physics do not apply to those particles. For example, “electrons” do not behave as static values but they “jump from one state to another without going through the values in between”. Particles even change their behaviour when they notice that someone is watching them. So, if the rules of the physical world do not apply at the subatomic level, is it because the subatomic level has not been programmed yet? Žižek likens God to a programmer, who built “the world for us” (2013). The fact that there are still phenomena which cannot be explained logically shows that the programmer, or God, has not finished designing his work yet:

We can read it as a sign that we already live in a simulated universe, but also as a signal of the ontological incompleteness of reality itself. In the first case, the ontological incompleteness is transposed into an epistemological one, that is, the incompleteness is perceived as the effect of the fact that another (secret, but fully real) agency constructed our reality as a simulated universe.

As a result, it can be said that the world around us can be a simulation of a very complex and advanced kind, and there does not seem to be a definite way to prove that it is in fact a simulation or not. This concept of reality as a simulation has been investigated also by science fiction writers and film-makers. In the movie *the Matrix*, whole life we live in is shown to be nothing but a very sophisticated and elaborate simulation (1999). This simulation is run by super intelligent computers who have gone independent of their creators a long time ago, and they harvest the energy of humans to maintain their system running. There is an ongoing conflict between the machines and humans who oppose to them. The protagonist, Neo, is the only one who can solve the conflict because only he can manipulate the simulation in whichever direction he pleases. Even though the question of life being a simulation was not new, *the Matrix* franchise reached a large number of audiences and purported that question for many viewers. Neo is given the chance to learn about the truth of his existence by Morpheus, who wakes him and many others like him from a deep sleep. The truth is too horrible to accept for Neo, which he immediately denies upon learning.

The idea that our reality can be just a simulation is a lot to take, and in fact, if the truth about our existence or our lives is too much to bear, we might choose to ignore it and create better ones. If the physical reality is too scary and awful to put up with, we might choose to avoid even thinking about it. In Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the Tralfamadorian philosophy summarises such attitude towards reality because Tralfamadorians choose to "ignore the awful times, and concentrate on the good ones" (1969). Billy goes through a lot of troublesome experiences in his life because he participates in WW2, during which he is taken hostage and has to live in inhumane conditions. The reality of the war, with its casualties and unbearable miseries, is too much for Billy to face so he chooses (or maybe is forced to choose) to go between the good and the bad moments of his lifetime. His alternative reality does not have a timeline so he jumps between the moments of his life, and he experiences the reality as if going through hoops in an endless circle. In this book Vonnegut paints the picture of the ugly side of war for the mostly-young American troops, most of them coming from poor families. The book does not glorify the war, neither it

victimizes or idolizes the ordinary American foot soldier. The wretchedness that WW2 or any other war causes, is given in plain detail all throughout the book, just as Stanley Kubrick painted the ugly picture of Vietnam War in his movie, *Full Metal Jacket*. According to Baudrillard, Kubrick “manipulates his film like a chess player, who makes an operational scenario of history” (1994). Although Baudrillard does not talk about this particular movie of Kubrick, it can be said that whatever reality portrayed on the screen adds up to the whole of the concept the movie handles with. The concept in *Full Metal Jacket* is the Vietnam War. The true nature of this war can be seen in the old battlefields, which are now turned into touristic places that represent an old and reconstructed past. The old relics of the war, the remains of the dead bodies and the hundreds of thousands of casualties on both sides (the number is supposedly larger on the Vietnamese side, of course) are the real outcomes of the war. However, what general public remembers the most about the film comes from the images created by the media-newspapers and TVs- who oversaw the war in Vietnam, as well as film-makers who handled different aspects of the war on the big screen. Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* depicts the ugliest side of the war, starting with the horribly sadistic and sexist training the newly recruited troops have to go through (1987). One of the privates, nicknamed Gomer Pyle, named after a goofy character in a TV show, mentally breaks down after the training he takes in the boot camp. He is singled out by the drill sergeant because of his weak mental capabilities to follow the orders properly. And when he realises that he cannot function at all in his life, he shoots his drill sergeant and then himself. Even the training before partaking in the war is too hard to bear for the soldiers, however, what they have to face in the actual war is even more unbearable. There is a mindless destruction of the war in the streets of Hue, where one of the most brutal atrocities of the war took place. Not just the troops on both sides but also civilians are being killed, and the reason or the cause of the war is unclear. One American tail gunner shoots civilians and soldiers alike as if he is raping the land, saying “get some, get some, baby” and bragging about the number of kills he has made so far in a way a womanizer man brags about the women he has slept with. Later on, he asks “ain’t war hell?”, looking and smiling at the land he penetrated with his automatic rifle gun. One of the

troops, weary of the destruction he has caused on the people of Vietnam, says: “Do I think America belongs in Vietnam? I don’t know. I belong in Vietnam, I’ll tell you that.” He has no place outside of Vietnam, even in his hometown because he would have nobody to shoot and kill because he has become a mindless killing machine by now, as a result of the war he participates in.

One of the many films about Vietnam is Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*. According to Baudrillard, *Apocalypse Now* is a perfect example how “Americans made war” (1994). Coppola’s technique in film-making is similar to the USA’s technique in waging a war, for they both utilise the technology they have to the fullest and test their strength. Similarly, Baudrillard says, Coppola uses the technology available to him in excess, showcasing what “special effects” can do for a movie to make it spectacular masterpiece and a travesty at the same time (1994). Baudrillard argues that in this film, the war in Vietnam is depicted as if it was a very bad and troublesome dream. The real casualties of the war are not mentioned, however, the psychological toll the war takes on American soldiers are depicted as the only and most important outcomes of the war. For this purpose, the fact that the Vietnam war did involve the killing of hundreds of thousands of people, is not as necessarily important and worth mentioning as its psychological effects on American soldiers. Even the bombing of a Vietnamese village can be seen as a picturesque moment in history, with Wagner’s *Ride of Valkyries* playing in the background.

Without a doubt, media and cinema have tremendous power over the perception of reality by great masses. They help power holders to manipulate how general public would view the events happening in their country as well as around the world. According to Gerbner, “the power to create a crisis merges with the power to direct the movie about it”, meaning that if a state is capable of controlling the public’s view about a war, it is through the usage of media, and in particular, cinema (1992). The USA could not fully wield this power in Vietnam war, however in the Gulf war, it was much more capable in doing so. According to Patton, “the Gulf War witnessed the birth of a new kind of military apparatus which incorporates the power to control the production and circulation of images as well as the power to direct the actions of bodies and

machines” (1995). In this war, we saw only as much as the USA wanted us to see and nothing more. However, in Vietnam war, the socio-political nature of the war was more open to debate because of the state’s restricted ability to control the public perception. In Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket*, the efforts of media to manage people’s views on war can be seen to be in its earliest steps. In the headquarters of the military newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, the editor warns the journalists, who are also soldiers themselves, that it is their duty to make the war look more favourable to American viewers: “In case you didn’t know it, this is not a particularly popular war. Now it is our job to report the news that these why-are-we-here civilian newsmen ignore” (1987). To that end, the editor suggests that his fellow journalists add certain details to their news stories in order to appeal to both sides of the American public: the ones who oppose to and the ones who support the war. The main idea here is to make the war to seem like it is worth waging for, with “winning of hearts and minds” by showing American troops helping the poor Vietcong, as well as with “winning the war” through combat action (1987). Kubrick shows here that the media aims at not making the general public “who read the paper feel bad”, so they give a twist to stories to make it look more favourable to readers. The press changes the stories about the war to make the war seem less destructive and negative, and purport the idea that there is a reason for the US troops to be in a foreign land far away from their homes. The main point of *Full Metal Jacket* is to show that Vietnam war is meaninglessly brutal and inhumane to the core, and that what we see and perceive as war is mostly constructed by media, which is completely different from Coppola’s take of the war in *Apocalypse Now*.

Vonnegut’s book depicts the ugly side of the war, such as the mindless destruction and the lack of a proper cause of waging a war, just as Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* does. As opposed to Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*, in which the Vietnam War is shown to be a horrible nightmare for the American military service, without mentioning the losses and the destruction that resulted from combat. The representation of world affairs in books and films, as well as in other mass media organs, helps to create the conception-perception of reality in general public’s mind. By manipulating people’s feelings about and understanding of certain things, the power holders in a society can create the

commonly accepted reality in the forms they want. As a result, an alternative reality where nobody seems to be in trouble can be created, even when this conflicts with the actual facts of life. Once mass media organs started to handle the power under the table, power holders in society finally had the chance to manipulate the crowds' perception of reality in a larger scale. To best define this situation, a new concept named "post-truth" emerged. The definition of the word is "relating to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs, rather than one based on facts". (Post-truth 2017) Ralph Keyes asks "why do we have to tell lies?" (2004). The reason of telling lies can be various but the main reason is to escape from facing reality such as war, poverty, or some other terrible hidden truth, so and so forth. The vital point for understanding of how honesty collapsed and how lies rose is centered in Keyes's work. We know that America never leads to democracy, and we know that Trump is hiding the truth, however, we still follow their steps. This pretension causes catastrophe, such as forcing media to get people involved in the hiding of the truth, and this situation eventually hides all the lies. Keyes claims that politicians are not the only subjects who manipulate the truth but also lecturers, journalists, clergy, authors/writers and story-tellers they participate in telling lies (Keyes, 35). All these groups of people are the main subjects of post-truth, because they all partake in the creation of a false reality. They make the biggest contribution to the acceptance of lies and institutionalization of those lies.

The more we engage in professional life, step to professional training and increase our professional motivations, the more we lie in our lives, for it is a purely existential matter. Because both honesty and lies are sources of motivation for us. As a result, in both books (*Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Blindness*) and the films (*Full Metal Jacket*, *the Matrix*, *Apocalypse Now*), the creators of these works put together a reality that does not actually exist. In this way, they also participate in the formulation of the post-truth.

6. REVIEW AND EXAMINATION OF *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* BY KURT VONNEGUT (1969)

The basic and most important aim of utopian novelists is to attract the attention of the readers to the utopian world and to make the readers believe the reality of this world (Yalinalp, 2003). Utopian thought is guided by the desire of order. Strong utopian desire is to save the world from as much chaos and disorder as possible. Utopia is a dream of order and in the background is the nightmare of history (Kateb, 1971: 8). History's nightmare is the war in the *Slaughterhouse-Five* of Vonnegut. The brutality and meaninglessness of war makes people stupid and incapable of reacting to a catastrophic event. The words of director Harrison Starr to the narrator in Chapter 1 as are following:

“(…) Over the years, people I've met have often asked me what I'm working on, and I've usually replied that the main thing was a book about Dresden. I said that to Harrison Starr, the movie-maker, one time, and he raised his eyebrows and inquired, "Is it an anti-war book?" "Yes," I said. "I guess." "You know what I say to people when I hear they're writing anti-war books?" "No. What do you say, Harrison Starr?" "I say, 'Why don't you write an anti-glacier book instead?'" What he meant, of course, was that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers. I believe that too” (Vonnegut, 1969: 6).

Billy Pilgrim tries to survive in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, with no control over his own life. The narrator himself goes through a process similar to Billy. Although he knows that he cannot change the end of the war, he wants to write a book about the war. The narrator, who knows that there is violence in human nature and that he cannot change it, tries to change things by doing his best. In this case, all he can do is create a reality for himself.

Humanity is made up of people who are mad and cannot be individuals, because there is nothing left for them to give a good meaning to life. The main hero of the novel, Billy Pilgrim, has many traumatic events. Particularly, the bombing of Dresden during WWII deeply affects him.

Seeing how ruthless the war is, Billy sees a different reality as his own salvation. For example, in a conversation between British colonel and Billy in Chapter 6 about Dresden Bombing, the colonel says:

“(...) You needn't worry about bombs, by the way. Dresden is an open city. It is undefended, and contains no war industries or troop concentrations of any importance” (Vonnegut, 1969: 72).

Billy is concerned that Dresden will be destroyed. The colonel, on the other hand, makes it clear that Dresden is not an important place. The lives of millions of people are of no value because the strategic location of the region is more important for those who fight. Therefore, the best thing Billy can do in the face of what he sees is to create an imaginary world by ignoring this dystopian world. Perhaps this world actually exists, and he has the privilege of being able to feel and see the world through his perception power. In this imaginary alternative world, Tralfamadore, there are no conflicts and tensions. There are no horrible truths, such as war that human beings may be responsible for. However, Vonnegut does not approve such an escape and argues that acting responsibly is more valuable than passive living without doing anything. The most important question of the novel in the reader is: What could be the most appropriate attitude and reaction of human being to meaninglessness and violence in life?

Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, leaving the traditional structure of linear time, presents the reader with various ways of perceiving reality and the human condition. In the first and last parts of the novel, Vonnegut creates a persona who speaks directly with the reader. There are three different perspectives that represent three different worlds at the same time. The first persona reflects the author's vision of life. The Billy Pilgrim persona who experiences the terrible world war represents the dream world. The last persona is the alternate reality, the Tralfamadorian philosophy, that Billy takes refuge in. In order to create a dystopian version of the world as a slaughterhouse, the novel reveals a historical fact, the WWII, the elements of Vonnegut's fiction, and a kind of utopian fantasy. By combining fantasy and reality, Vonnegut creates a powerful utopia in which he protests against

the blind and aimless persecution of men and tries to prevent the realization of the last catastrophe.

The slaughterhouse in the novel's name literally means the meat locker where American prisoners of war were locked when Dresden's bombing took place, but metaphorically reflects the dystopic view of our world. In this world, a meaningless and absolute massacre like Dresden can take place. Vonnegut tries to warn the reader that if something is not done, humanity turns into a kind of apocalyptic disaster. The question of what the reaction of mankind towards nonsense and meaninglessness is the main subject of this novel.

Vonnegut opens the novel with the following words:

“All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true” (Vonnegut, 1969: 1).

These lines prepare the readers for a mixture of reality and delusion. Merrill and Scholl argue that Tralfamadore is a fantasy that is out of reality. “...a desperate attempt to rationalize chaos, but on most sympathizes with Billy’s need to create Tralfamadore. After all, the need for supreme fictions is a very human trait.” (1978: 69). Hume (1982) states that:

“(…) when Vonnegut’s characters are confronted with the shifting currents of his universe, they are naturally insecure. They want meaning, or at least a recognizable pattern. (...) Like all people in all societies, they both inherit and make bulwarks against the flux.”

To express the view that wars are meaningless and cruel, Vonnegut creates Billy Pilgrim, a peaceful, sensitive, young man with a war experience, as a fictional character. With Billy Pilgrim's great psychic shock, we can see why and how an incomprehensible and frightening moment an experience can be. The image of the massacre deeply affects Billy Pilgrim, so it is not surprising that he acts as a passive victim of a hostile fate. He has an anxious awareness of the miseries he witnesses during the war. As a result, Billy Pilgrim has created his own alternative world by using the ecstasy effect, thus trying to protect himself from the destructive effects of war.

“Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future” (Vonnegut, 1969: 32).

The narrator constructs this sentence when talking about Billy's irrevocable fate. Billy knows he can't change his destiny. Throughout the novel, Billy passively acknowledges every event that has happened to him. Billy knows that he has no control over fate and time. Therefore, it cannot be said that Billy has free will.

Through the Tralfamadorian experiences of Billy, we see the illusions of his dreams lured in a utopian world he desires along with what remains of his will to live. The Tralfamadorian vision, which Billy creates from psychological needs through ecstasy, provides some relief from the difficult conditions of his life. Through the Tralfamadorian philosophy, Billy develops his fantastic ability to become unstuck in time, so that he can escape the horrors of his time and visit different periods of his life, such as past, present and future. Considering the above excerpt, it can be said that Billy puts the events that he cannot change into whatever he wants in the alternative reality he creates. As for Billy's story of going to war, Billy goes to Europe to join the WWII. His job in the war is to serve as a priest's assistant.

“(…) Billy first came unstuck while the Second World War was in progress. Billy was a chaplain's assistant in the war. A chaplain's assistant is customarily a figure of fun in the American Army. Billy was no exception. He was powerless to harm the enemy or to help his friends. In fact, he had no friends. He was a valet to a preacher, expected no promotions or medals, bore no arms, and had a meek faith in a loving Jesus which most soldiers found putrid” (Vonnegut, 1969: 18).

Ironically, however, Billy does not provide protection or consolation to his soldiers. Instead, he is seen as a fun figure because he cannot harm the enemy or help his friends (Vonnegut, 1969: 22). Billy never meets the priest he needs to help, but he survives until he becomes a prisoner of war and becomes “a dazed wanderer” (Vonnegut, 1969: 23). In the novel, there are people who do not have characters because violence makes people unable to form an internal unity. The attempt of a person to join his/her destiny is in vain, because the terror of war eliminates the courage to find someone's fate, and therefore the possibility of change is unthinkable. The most real awareness is the recognition of the meaninglessness of the person

himself/herself. The quote from Chapter 3 below refers to a poor dog who, like Billy, has been brought into battle against her will. The fact that both Billy and Princess were exposed to uncomfortable situations underlines the fact that war is the opposite of free will. Many people in the novel have no choice in determining their own lives.

“(…) The dog, who had sounded so ferocious in the winter distances, was a female German shepherd. She was shivering. Her tail was between her legs. She had been borrowed that morning from a farmer. She had never been to war before. She had no idea what game was being played. Her name was Princess” (Vonnegut, 1969: 28).

Billy Pilgrim, stranded in a slaughterhouse with his friends during the bombing of Dresden, suffers from nervous breakdowns after the end of the war. While in the hospital, he meets Eliot Rosewater, who introduced him to science fiction, particularly Kilgore Trout's work. Both Billy and Rosewater seem to find science-fiction as an escape from reality as the narrator observes:

“(…) Rosewater was twice as smart as Billy, but he and Billy were dealing with similar crises in similar ways. They had both found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in the war. Rosewater, for instance, had shot a fourteen-year-old fireman, mistaking him for a German soldier. So it goes. And Billy had seen the greatest massacre in European history, which was the firebombing of Dresden. So it goes.

So they were trying to reinvent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was a big help” (Vonnegut, 1969: 73).

As it can be understood from these sentences, to be able to continue living in a meaningless and absurd world, Vonnegut believes that people need to establish their own alternative realities through ecstasy. Science fiction helps Billy continue to live, but he remains “detached and unenthusiastic in life” (Vonnegut, 1969: 44). It can be said that Billy uses science fiction as an ecstasy to create his own reality. Even though he is a successful businessperson in his later life, Billy is on the verge of collapse. For this reason, it can be said that the Tralfamadorian parts are Billy's alternate realities where a place far different from the cruel world in which he lives. It is understood from the following words that Billy feels much happier in this alternative reality:

“If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadorians is true, that we will all live forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still—if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I’m grateful that so many of those moments are nice” (Vonnegut, 1969: 103).

- Billy survives a plane crash in 1968, where everyone died except himself. During a conversation with a military historian, whom he shared a hospital room with, he emphasizes that Dresden has actually took place.

“(…) There in the hospital, Billy was having an adventure very common among people without power in time of war: He was trying to prove to a wilfully deaf and blind enemy that he was interesting to hear and see. He kept silent until the lights went out at night, and then, when there had been a long silence containing nothing to echo, he said to Rumfoord, "I was in Dresden when it was bombed. I was a prisoner of war." Rumfoord sighed impatiently. "Word of honor," said Billy Pilgrim. "Do you believe me?" "Must we talk about it now?" said Rumfoord. He had heard. He didn't believe” (Vonnegut, 1969: 141).

Billy’s insistence with the words “We don’t ever have to talk about it (...) I just want you to know: I was there” (Vonnegut, 1969: 141) means that he will not allow anyone to question the reality he has created.

As Billy begins to tell his adventures on the planet of Tralfamadore after the plane crash, everyone thinks Billy is mentally ill because of brain damage and that he makes up stories he has adapted from science fiction novels that he has read. Tralfamadore serves as an escape mechanism for Billy by offering a kind of escape and protection from the absurdities of the world. With these alterations in reality, Billy has the opportunity to fill the gap between his longing for utopia, a world of harmony, and the quest for answers to the hidden meaning of life, free from the present troubles of mankind.

“So it goes”

“So it goes” becomes a persistent and relentless punctuation that is used throughout the novel in every word of death, which makes the reader annoyed. The fear of death and death is so horrendous and unbearable that

Billy needs to develop an attitude to deal with them. Smith (2016) explains his views on this statement:

“It’s a musical motif that falls just short of being a chant, the echo to each instance of death and decay that appears in the novel’s dark pages—over 100 times in scarcely more than 200 pages—a memento mori that reverberates among the numerous storylines and punctuates the author’s absurdist sense of humor.”

This statement insists that the reader should participate in every death described in the novel, but also offers a way to minimize its impact. This reminds us of the Tralfamadorians who believe that death is not the end that three-dimensional beings like us have thought. The deaths are told in the *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the last chapter begins with these short and concise paragraphs:

“Robert Kennedy, whose summer home is eight miles from the home I live in all year around, was shot two nights ago. He died last night. So it goes.

Martin Luther King was shot a month ago. He died, too. So it goes.

And every day my Government gives me a count of corpses created by military science in Vietnam. So it goes.

My father died many years ago now – of natural causes. So it goes. He was a sweet man. He was a gun nut, too. He left me his guns. They rust” (Vonnegut, 1969: 154).

This narrative provides further evidence of humanity being a killer and explains the escape routes Billy seeks through ecstasy. The last paragraph brings another dimension. Billy's father has not been murdered by others, he died of natural causes. However, the fact that he refers to this death as "So it goes" shows that Billy Pilgrim regards the death of his father as equivalent to the murders and reminds the readers of the desperation of death. The words below indicate that Billy sees death as inevitable and accepts it.

"When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in a bad condition in that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments. Now, when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is ‘so it goes’” (Vonnegut, 1969: 17).

The story of this defeated, passive and deceived man who moves with the need to escape and creates his own vision of reality ends with the end of the war.

7. REVIEW AND EXAMINATION OF *BLINDESS* BY JOSÉ SARAMAGO (1997)

José Saramago's *Blindness* (1997) is concerned with a story that revolves around single-minded people of a blind community. The novel begins with a sudden outbreak of a dystopian blindness. A man at the wheel, who waits for the traffic lights to turn green, suddenly becomes blind. In the case of blindness, everything is supposed to be black; however, the man on the steering wheel sees everything as white, “as if I were caught in a mist or had fallen into a milky sea” (Saramago, 1997: 3). However, there are no clinical findings that can lead to this white blindness. Then the ophthalmologist who the man has been taken to, the other patients in the office, the taxi driver and the hotel room attendant are also infected, and the outbreak begins to spread. *Blindness* from the blurb of the paperback edition is quoted as follows:

“A driver waiting at the traffic lights goes blind. An ophthalmologist tries to diagnose his distinctive white blindness but is affected before he can read the textbooks. It becomes a contagion, spreading through the unnamed city. Trying to stem the epidemic, the authorities herd the blind into a mental asylum. The wards are terrorized by blind thugs. And when fire demolishes the asylum, the inmates burst forth and the last links with a supposedly civilized society are snapped” (Saramago, 1997).

The characters in the novel do not have a name. The reader recognizes heroes by the names the author gave them. The doctor, the doctor's wife, the first blind man and his wife, the girl with the dark glasses and the old man with the black eye patch are led by the doctor's wife. Although we live in modern times, the quarantine method is applied as in ancient times when cholera or yellow fever were seen. With the Government's decision, the blind and those who are likely to be affected by the epidemic by contacting the blind are gathered in a building and isolated from the community. The needs of food, health and cleaning supplies will be provided by the government and the blind will survive with these aids. Thus, it is thought that the spread can be prevented. However, the outbreak is not limited to the small groups associated with each other and is

spread. Quarantined blind people begin their new lives at the bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, namely physiological needs such as food and shelter. While trying to settle for a small amount of food sent by the government, they do their personal cleaning as long as conditions allow. But in the difficulties, everything begins to deteriorate. As they try to hold on to life, they will also witness deaths among themselves, bury their dead and live with the remaining crumbs. As the number of blind people in quarantine increases, different problems arise. In this harsh environment where everyone struggles to live with blindness, "indecent blind" people are plagued by all. These indecent blind people can be said to be the most despicable level of the human race, because they are blind, but they try to establish superiority over others by using the advantage of weapons and brute force. "There's likely to be a battle, a war. The blind are always at war, always have been at war," (Saramago, 1997: 72). Thereafter, the eternal struggle between immoral blind and other blind men is doomed and this is the struggle for freedom.

"(...) all stories are like those about the creation of the universe, no one was there, no one witnessed anything, yet everyone knows what happened," (Saramago, 1997: 98).

The whole country turns into a land of the blind who lives on an endless day. Stores and shops have been looted, houses have been occupied, and no food and water left. Electricity, sewerage and infrastructure systems have collapsed, streets are full of rubbish, human droppings and corpses. The doctor's wife summarizes the terrible situation they are in as follows:

"...we're so remote from the world that any day now, we shall no longer know who we are, or even remember our names, and besides, what use would names be to us, no dog recognises another dog or knows the others by the names they have been given, a dog is identified by its scent and that is how it identifies others, here we are like another breed of dogs, we know each other's bark or speech, as for the rest, features, colour of eyes or hair, they are of no importance, it is as if they did not exist, I can still see but for how long" (Saramago, 1997: 23).

The group led by the doctor's wife is organized, trying to survive by taking care of each other, and by supporting and sharing what is in their hands. As long as the conditions permit, they protect their humanity and provide shelter, nutrition and cleaning needs. They seek to reach their families and homes by searching for traces of their lives before the epidemic. This can be attributed to the ecstasy

effect, as they want to move from the alternative reality created by blindness to their reality. For example, the doctor's wife recognizes some signs and places while walking on the street but starts to cry when she loses her way. This can be interpreted as the reaction of someone who has lost his/her reality.

“The doctor's wife reads the street signs as she goes along, she remembers some of them, others not at all, and there comes a moment when she realises that she has lost her way. There is no doubt, she is lost. She took a turning, then another, she no longer remembers the streets or their names, then in her distress, she sat down on the filthy ground, thick with black mud, and, drained of any strength, of all strength, she burst into tears. The dogs gathered round her, sniffed at the bags, but without much conviction, as if their hour for eating had passed, one of them licks her face, perhaps it had been used to drying tears ever since it was a puppy. The woman strokes its head, runs her hand down its drenched back, and she weeps the rest of her tears embracing the dog” (Saramago, 1997: 87).

The crying of the wife of the doctor who is forced to live in a reality where everyone except her is blind is expressed as her reaction to this reality.

When the people come to understand that they cannot return to their old lives, they accept the situation. The doctor's wife says these words to the people in the ward; “...If we cannot live entirely like human beings, at least let us do everything in our power not to live entirely like animals...”

“...words she repeated so often that the rest of the ward ended up by transforming her advice into a maxim, a dictum, into a doctrine, a rule of life, words which deep down were so simple and elementary, probably it was just that state of mind, propitious to any understanding of needs and circumstances, that contributed, even if only in a minor way to the warm welcome the old man with the black eyepatch found there when he peered through the door and asked those inside, Any chance of a bed here” (Saramago, 1997: 45).

They try to adapt to their new lives, and under the negative conditions they are in, they try to live as much as they can in accordance with their old reality.

New buses that carry those who are blind and who have the potential to become blind arrive at the isolation building which is a mental hospital. This building is not a place of isolation for the control and prevention of the epidemic, but a cemetery for the disease-bearing to die and kill each other, and it symbolizes the alternative reality that Saramago has created. Although the doctor's wife wants to establish a system, they do not want to submit to an authority created before them. The doctor also warns his wife about it and it is exactly as calculated. The

number of those who try to find their way in this white world of blindness and being suddenly blind, begin to increase in the mental hospital, away from eating and hygiene, just like the germs of the epidemics they are victims of. In this alternative reality, the behavior that people have when they are blind is actually their true self (Akkoyunlu, 2018). The reality of *Blindness* refers to whether human beings can still be human in the most inappropriate conditions.

In *Blindness*, it can be said that the author explores an alternative reality with the help of the imagination, and Saramago reorganizes reality while intensively studying society. As it is known, people with visual impairment from the birth cannot think of the external world through images (Valente, Theurel & Gentaz, 2018). Their mental accumulation occurs with the help of other senses; for example, there is object, color and light for a person who can see and there is sound, sense of touch and smell for a person who does not see. In *Blindness*, the characters who are deprived of their senses of sight are doomed to a kind of illumination, not to the darkness. Thus, this is a second issue that is astonishing for them and they will not be able to think logically in time. Sight is a process that occurs when the light is broken and interpreted with the help of the brain. In the novel, when people's vision is lost, it is seen that many things that have been seen as a value have become worthless. In the novel, the following words are remarked about the moral structure:

“The moral conscience that so many thoughtless people have offended against and many more have rejected, is something that exists and has always existed. It was not an invention of the philosophers of the Quaternary, when the soul was little more than a muddled proposition. With the passing of time, as well as then social evolution and genetic exchange, we ended up putting our conscience in the colour of blood and in the salt of tears, and, as if that were not enough, we made our eyes into a kind of mirror turned inwards, with the result that they often show without reserve what we are verbally trying to deny. Add to this general observation, the particular circumstance that in simple spirits, the remorse caused by committing some evil act often becomes confused with ancestral fears of every kind, and the result will be that the punishment of the prevaricator ends up being, without mercy or pity, twice what he deserved” (Saramago, 1997: 9).

Under these dreadful quarantine conditions, people cast aside their moral structure and conscience, and start to plunder and do not avoid damaging each other's honor and human dignity. Personal desires and fear dominate life, freedom is restricted. As a result, chaos dominates. The reasons for all these

tragedies are not the great wars, the hunger, the drought, the collapse of the stock exchange, the fall of a meteor to the world or a natural disaster. The main reason is that people lose their vision. There is something that Saramago points out in the reality of this chaos through the characters who lose their humanity along with their senses of vision. It is not blindness, but fear and panic in the blindness epidemic and selfishness to avoid it cause a collapse of values in this absurd reality.

It is no doubt that the most interesting and striking character of the novel is doctor's wife who is not blind and who goes to quarantine by pretending to be blind in order not to leave her husband alone. She tries to help both her partner and the other blind people under quarantine. Since she has not lost her sight, she witnesses all events and makes many sacrifices. On the one hand, she has to protect herself from the blind people who wander around as gang members. Some suspect that she has the ability to see, but the event remains incomprehensible. The new order to be established at the end of the novel will be shaped around this woman as a leader. As Saramago states: "As the saying goes, in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king," (1969: 38-39). Thus, doctor's wife can provide the ecstasy effect that will allow the characters to escape from this alternative reality.

"(...) And the people, how are they coping, asked the girl with dark glasses, They go around like ghosts, this must be what it means to be a ghost, being certain that life exists, because your four senses say so, and yet unable to see it..." (Saramago, 1997: 90).

In this reality, the characters feel incomplete because they are deprived of their sense of sight. This shows their desire to return to their own reality, which they can fully see.

8. POSTMODERNISM

The concept of modernism, which refers to the transition from the past to the new, refers to a process that involves the differentiation of lifestyles, individualization, a social structure that is not tied to the traditional structure, and shapes the individual-society-state relationship in terms of social, economic and political aspects. The concept of postmodernism, which was put forward as a remedy for the deadlock of modernism, reflects a period in which changes in production and consumption are experienced as well as in many areas of social change and transformation due to factors such as globalization, change in information and communication technologies and the spread of mass media (Kirilmaz & Ayparcasi, 2016). The phenomenon of postmodernism has expanded its sphere of influence with its social, political and economic manifestations to include daily life practices. Starting with the Enlightenment and continuing with the Industrial Revolution, the necessity of the consumption phenomenon to enter every field of life has emerged in order to ensure the continuity of capitalism.

There has not been any consensus in the definition of postmodernism, which is a widely spoken concept, from the mid-20th century to the present. However, it is accepted that postmodernism corresponds to globalization, consumption, change of centralist understanding in state levels, commodification of information, and life-style deformation (King, 2005). It is difficult to say that postmodernism has evolved through distinct processes as modernism has done. It is said that postmodernism was born in the place where modernism cases erupted with the WWI (Berkday, 2000). The problem of defining the concept stems from the fact that it is about modernism. Although the "post" prefix ahead means "after and beyond", it is not clear that postmodernism refers to after-modernism, or that there is no consensus on whether post-modernism is a continuation of modernism (Möngü, 2013). According to Habermas, there is no transition to postmodernism because modernism is not completed yet (1987).

Postmodernism, which is defined as a revolt against dominant expressions or meanings, opposes universal and general discourses with the assumption that the progressive, developmental approaches of modernism suppress people by rejecting any integrative, generalizing approaches. In this case, postmodernism refers to a serious break from the developmental conception of modernization and the sacredness of scientific knowledge brought by the Enlightenment, Scientific and Industrial Revolutions (Kirilmaz & Ayparcasi, 2016). Postmodernism refers to a situation in which the narratives of claims of general validity are rejected, pluralism and fragmentation are accepted, and differences are emphasized, and that individualization is blessed (Harvey, 2014).

The controversial situation of the concept of postmodernism derives from the fact that this concept is derived from different view of points. The concept of postmodernism, which was used in art, painting and architecture from the 1960s to the 1980s, also had an impact on the disciplines such as philosophy, sociology and literature with the influence of political and social movements in the world. In the 1980s, the concept of postmodernism continued to be produced with new meanings. In this period when the effects of globalization were felt very quickly, it is possible to say that economic developments triggered new style searches in production. One of the interesting comments on the subject belongs to Foucault. According to Foucault, there has been a change in the state administration and similar management styles, and everything that is systemic has been replaced by anarchy. It has come to the forefront that the structures taking an active role in the production have moved out of the established order and moved to a nomadic and moving order (1986).

Postmodernism is defined in different fields. Postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism, which is expressed as a transnational, nation-state, and consumer society. Postmodernism is defined as the period of chaos in which the theory of knowledge is reconsidered, the concept of progress and development has lost its content, and the individuals whose behaviors and preferences are transformed into different personalities and identities (Jameson, 1994). Postmodernist theorist Lyotard sees postmodernism as a periodic differentiation or break from modernism and the emergence of a new social formation (1997).

Postmodernism, which is composed of a string of chaotic meanings, is at the center of criticism as a concept and process related to a wide range of fields. The main point that postmodernism has been criticized is that it is not theorized like modernism. Kellner, in particular, criticizes Foucault and Derrida on the issue, but criticizes Baudrillard and Lyotard for failing to provide an explanation of what is breaking the postmodernity from modernism or what is causing the fracture (1997).

There are also critics of postmodernism for conceptual qualifications. According to Heller and Feher, postmodernism is not a new era or change of time. Postmodernism is a parasite who tries to uncover the dilemmas of modernism or who struggle to criticize its achievements (1993). In addition, there are opinions that consider postmodernism as a revolt to modernity (Kizilcelik, 1994). There are also opinions that think that an atmosphere of chaos will emerge when modernity is prevented by postmodernism (Yilmaz, 1996).

To conclude the process of the emergence of postmodernism, especially the social problems that emerged after the WWII and the failure of modernism to fulfill its promises due to various reasons led some of the intellectuals to search for new ones. As a result, postmodernism emerged that emphasized pluralism, locality and emancipation against the philosophy of modernity and the monopoly of scientific knowledge.

8.1 Slaughterhouse-Five and Postmodernism

Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) can be seen as a postmodern critique of modern literary modes. It describes the literary experimental aspect of postmodernism as a novel that outlines a postmodern relative perspective of reality (Jweid, Termizi & Majeed, 2015). *Slaughterhouse-Five* tells the story of a former American soldier and prisoner, Billy Pilgrim. Billy was taken prisoner by the Germans during his service at the bombed Dresden during WWII. He finally goes to New York, where he meets Kilgore Trout and gets married. After Billy survives a plane crash, he is hospitalized. Billy's story is described as a return to the past through ten chapters, and this narrative structure is typical for

postmodern fiction. The reason for this is that the events have a narrator who knows everything, and that Billy tells his own story. In short, the narrative category of *Slaughterhouse-Five* corresponds to the postmodern literary tradition, and postmodern fiction, especially after the WWII, is a literary fiction of many works. Chellamatu states about *Slaughterhouse-Five* that “a postmodern novel relying on metafiction, the first chapter of *Slaughterhouse Five* is a writer’s preface about how he came to write his novel,” (2005). Postmodern reality is narrated throughout, “the factual method, whenever it becomes diagrammatical in this book, sketches long stretches of time in the life of the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim” (Hoffman, 2005: 549). *Slaughterhouse-Five* depicts the subject matter of the postmodernist novels mentioned under the previous title, namely the suffering of people, the need for freedom and the hope for peace in a seemingly uneasy world in different textual representations. Postmodernism presents the absence of reality in large textual structures as “projects of political transformation” (Kellner, 1989: 84). The deliberately and consciously rejection of the reality in postmodern texts is attributed to the new way of looking at the world radically from a humanitarian perspective.

8.2 Blindness and Postmodernism

A sudden outbreak of disease begins in an anonymous city in an anonymous country. Everyone starts to catch the disease called white blindness. The characteristic of the disease is that people are blind, but they see everything white instead of darkness. Following the spread of the epidemic, the state will quarantine those who are infected as a precautionary measure. An ophthalmologist also suffered from the disease and was taken to the quarantine zone. The woman who does not want to leave her husband alone pretend to be caught in the disease and is quarantined next to his husband. In a place where everyone is blind, only that woman can see, and every moment she lives with the fear that she will get sick. Nevertheless, she does not leave her husband alone for a moment. Nobody wants to approach people in the quarantine area because of disease progression, and the system is completely disrupted in the area. The gangs begin to be established and the area becomes a place where the strong is tormenting the weak. The outbreak is not lethal, but all moral values

lose its verdict since people witness the murders and rape with blind eyes. When things get worse, the doctor's wife secretly kills the gang leader, but everything deteriorates more. The rebellion begins in the quarantine and everyone escapes. In the city, the disease is completely spread. The white blindness epidemic, which captures everyone slowly, loses its influence and everyone starts to have the sense of sight again.

This novel by Saramago has created an impressive scholarship with his criticisms of subjectivity, identity and postmodernity in general. His novel is meticulously extraordinary, because texts are perfectly strengthened by careful text creation. Saramago, who chose to plunge into the ambivalent waters of postmodern metafictional poetics” (Mendes, 2001) emphasizes the fact that the context or message he wants to convey to his readers is of great importance. Postmodernity is often characterized by self-reflection and destabilization, as in *Blindness*. In this sense, the novel makes itself an ideal postmodern text (Salazar, 2016).

Especially in developed and industrialized countries, people are fed up with the rational and functional structure of modernism, and their search for differentiation, dreams of rationality and separation from functionality have arisen and, thus a suitable ground for postmodernism has been created. When the novel is examined, it is not unreasonable that everyone in the world is blinded by an epidemic. However, it is irrational for all blind people to see white rather than black, and this is only possible in an alternative reality created. Postmodernism is based on questioning and critically evaluating the basic principles of modernism. In the novel, it is consistent with the view that people who are blind and quarantined in a small area are literally broken down and lost their humanity. The main objective of postmodernism is to examine why modernism fails to show the expected success in bringing humanity to good and beautiful, and from time to time, to make suggestions about them without attempting any direction. In the novel, Saramago does not make suggestions, but the critical view can be felt in the whole novel.

Blindness, with the characteristics of postmodernism, deals with both the reality and beyond the seeming and predicted side of the imagination, and beyond the

appearances of the beings and phenomena. On the other hand, postmodernism has removed the cause-and-effect relationship from the conditions of a literary text and the fact that the cause of the white blindness covering the whole world in the novel is not known can be attributed to this. However, the relationship between reality and fiction is strongly emphasized in the novel.



9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, novels of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) and José Saramago's *Blindness* (1997) were examined. The novels have been evaluated according to hyper reality and ecstasies effect in relation to the creation of alternative realities. The hypothesis that life can be a simulation is elaborated in contemporary culture regarding the conception of war, which is the main subject of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Later, the characteristics of the postmodernism movement have been discussed in a broad manner and the ways in which this movement influenced the two novels that have been the subject of this thesis. According to the findings of this study, it has been found that alternative realities have been formed in both novels and it has been determined that the authors have made the characters pass from one reality to another with the ecstasy effect, which was explained in the previous headings and this feature has been a common aspect of these two novels. The alternative realities created by or for the characters in the books examined in this study, can also be likened to Baudrillard's theory of hyper reality. The characters either use the existing images as bits and pieces to create the things that correspond to them in the hyper reality, or they suffer from the lack of images and create new things or concepts with new images. In Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy, the hero who suffers from the reality of post-war, tries to change his reality by creating a fantasy world, and in Saramago's *Blindness*, the characters try to escape from this reality created by the author after getting a disease called white blindness. Finally, the characteristics of postmodernism and hyper reality, and their effects on these two novels have been discussed. It has been observed that the effects of the postmodernism movement which emerged as a result of the rational and realistic point of view of the modernism, was quite high in both novels which question and change reality.

The alternative realities created in both books (*Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Blindness*) bring to mind Plato's theory about the World of Ideas, and the cave

allegory in particular. Also, Baudrillard's theorisation of hyper reality and simulation, as well as the ecstasies effect, can be considered to be euphemisms for the fact that the truth or what we perceive as real, can be easily manipulated. Plato suggests that we cannot perceive reality in this world because everything we see and perceive is just an imitation of the Ideal World. In this context, for Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the Ideal World is the alien planet Tralfamadore; because there he can be the happiest. In *Blindness*, the Ideal World does not exist, however, the characters are in a desperate search to find the reality where they can be more content with their lives.

It can be hard to accept the reality we live in because of the troubles we face in our lives, so, to escape the hopelessness of the physical reality, we create alternative realities. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, in order to break away from the burdens that war causes for him, Billy goes to his alternative reality in Tralfamadore. In his alternative reality, Billy learns how to cope with the most troubling matter for him, which is the fear of death: he finally accepts that death is not the end but a part of existence. In *Blindness*, the nameless characters pass from their reality to an alternative reality, which is created by the sudden white blindness that strikes them. In their alternative reality, imprisoned in an asylum, they have to unite and work in solidarity to survive. As a result, they learn how to overcome their main problems in life, which is lack of communication and the degeneration of their relationships with each other.

In conclusion, it can be said that creation of alternative realities is a not a definite way of escaping from the difficulties in our lives, on the contrary, it enables us to comprehend the true nature of our problems. In this way, by the creation of alternative realities, we can learn how to cope with the struggles in life.

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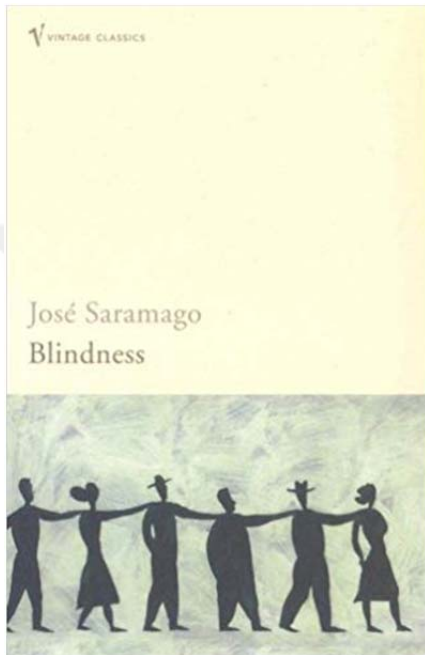
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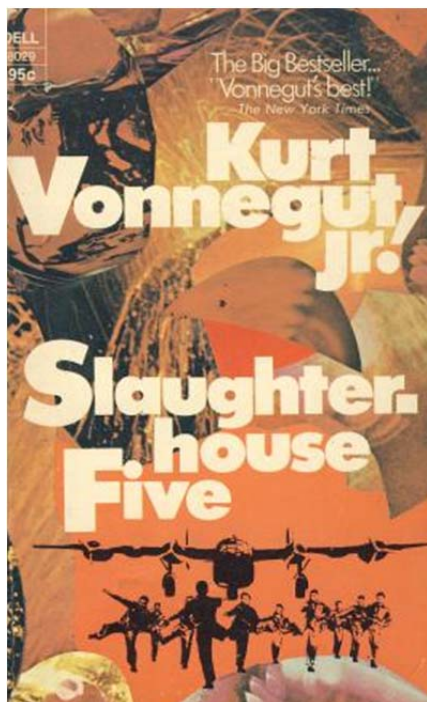
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APPENDIX

Appendix1: Book Covers



Saramago J. (1997). *Blindness*. London, LND: Vintage Books.



Vonnegut, K. (1969). *Slaughterhouse-five. Or, the children's crusade: A duty-dance with death*. New York: Dell Publishing, Random House, Inc.

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2009-2013-Bayburt University-Faculty of Education-Lecturer

2014-..... –Bülent Ecevit University-Ereğli Vocational School-Lecturer

Languages:

-Turkish: Native Language

-English: Advanced

-German: Intermediate

Skills:

-Communication, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Flexibility, Creativity

- Computer skills (Microsoft Office) and others