

**ADDRESSING SOCIAL AMNESIA IN SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE, BY KURT
VONNEGUT**

**A AMNÉSIA SOCIAL EM SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE, DE KURT
VONNEGUT**

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Abstract: This article presents a critical and literary analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade* (1969), focusing on the particularities related to the dialogue between Vonnegut's work and History, such as the influence of cultural tradition in portraying World War II in works of art. We begin with a brief presentation of Vonnegut's biography and the historical context in which he and his work are inserted. This contextualization is relevant to the dialogue that the novel maintains with History and autobiography. We aim to show that the lack of available information and publicity about the attack on Dresden at the time was more than just an accident or oversight, but a fabricated situation in which the events surrounding it are intentionally left out from "official" History, constituting a process labeled "social amnesia" (BURKE, 1997). Throughout our analysis, we demonstrate Vonnegut's awareness of this condition of alienation and investigate the author's strategy for breaking with the romanticized view of World War II, especially his concerns about the (re)construction of the social memory of the events that involved the Dresden massacre. These observations will be made based on theoretical concepts from the fields of Literature and History, Comparative Literature and Memory Studies, and include texts by theoreticians such as Linda Hutcheon, Peter Burke, Jacques Le Goff, Tânia Franco Carvalhal and Sandra Nitrini.

Keywords: literature; history; social amnesia; Vonnegut.

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma análise crítica e literária do romance *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade* (1969) de Kurt Vonnegut, destacando as questões e particularidades relacionadas ao diálogo entre a obra literária de Vonnegut e a História, tal como influência da tradição cultural na representação da Segunda Guerra Mundial em obras de arte. Para tal fim, realizaremos inicialmente uma breve apresentação biográfica do autor e do contexto histórico-social no qual ele e sua obra estiveram inseridos. Esta ambientação contextual é indispensável devido ao já mencionado diálogo que a obra mantém com a História e, principalmente, pelo fato da primeira ser em partes autobiográfica. Nosso objetivo é mostrar que a falta de informações e publicidade disponíveis sobre o ataque de Dresden na época foi mais do que apenas um acidente ou descuido, mas uma situação fabricada na qual os eventos envolvendo o incidente são intencionalmente deixados de fora da história "oficial", constituindo um processo denominado "amnésia social" (BURKE, 1997). Ao longo de nossa análise, evidenciamos a consciência de

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Vonnegut sobre essa condição de alienação e investigamos a estratégia do autor para romper com a visão "romantizada" da Segunda Guerra Mundial, em especial suas preocupações com a (re)construção da memória social sobre os eventos que envolveram o massacre de Dresden. Essas observações serão feitas com base em conceitos teóricos das áreas de Literatura Comparada, História e Estudos da Memória e incluirão textos de Linda Hutcheon, Peter Burke, Jacques Le Goff, Tania Franco Carvalhal e Sandra Nitrini.

Palavras-chave: literatura; história; amnésia social; Vonnegut.

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Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) includes History as one of the grand narratives whose credibility would be *per se* fated to fail. The same would happen to the faith in Man, another repository for faded expectations in the postmodern era. As a by-product of such theory, war stories and their respective heroes are but another component of this ideological apparatus, which, over and over, conceive, produce, and replicate uneven patterns of a presumptive truth.

In the particular context of war history, it became clear that once World War II victims had been buried, some gray areas remained, which the official discourse or mainstream media had then either overlooked or purposefully failed to recognize. However, some increasingly noticeable voices have lately worked to unveil such neglect, echoing those who dare challenge our sense of judgment, lifting that cloak and exposing wounds and other manifestations that ought to be listened to.

Such practice, in tandem with the waves of the contemporary gaze, follows a revolutionary work never to be forgotten: Kurt Vonnegut Junior's *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade* (1969) and its contribution to the American novel. Not only is it masterfully narrated, employing several technical innovations and strategies, but it is also famous for its notable reevaluation of the past, projecting WWII with a broader spectrum of villains and victims. Most importantly, though, *Slaughterhouse-Five* reminds us about the perils of narrating, bringing to light the process by which our social memory is constructed or obliterated. Thus, our study aims at readdressing Vonnegut's novel as illustrative of an important concept, the phenomenon of "social amnesia" as conceived and explored by Peter Burke in his *Varieties of Cultural History* (1997).

We believe that the character of uncertainty permeating the tribunal of history is present in this pioneer piece, which constitutes a warning against the many traps the uncritical eye may be vulnerable to.

Kurt Vonnegut Junior (1922-2007) stands as one of the most influential American writers and thinkers of the 20th century, whose works have become famous for combining satire, black humor, science fiction and fantasy, often offering a unique insight into everyday life. His personal life itself was filled with tragedy, one of which was his imprisonment by the Germans during World War II. He was therefore present during the bombing made by the Allied forces on the city of Dresden, witnessing, on the ground, the massacre of several thousands of citizens.

Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade emerges as a result of the author's firsthand experiences with this event. In order to understand the magnitude of the attack, a few figures follow: 722 British Air Force planes and 527 United States Army Air Forces aircrafts were used to launch almost 4000 tons of incendiary explosives over the city of Dresden, resulting in the death of approximately 25,000 inhabitants, most of whom were civilians. The information presented here is the most widely accepted and was taken from the *World Heritage Encyclopedia*. However, depending on the source, the numbers may range widely, from 25,000 to 300,000 deaths. The exact death toll is heavily debated and remains controversial up to this day, especially among Americans. In the Kurt Vonnegut Museum Library website, for instance, the figure provided is 60,000 deaths.

These disparate reports highlight the subjectivity embedded in narrative, memory, and History, the main concern of the novel itself and of this article. This is even more evident when one considers the dichotomy in the interpretation of the attack in Dresden by both the Nazi and the Allied forces. Both sides put significant effort into either emphasizing or suppressing the event according to their own interests. For instance, the Nazi government, taking advantage of the attack, exaggerated the bombardment by making its press print a false figure of the death toll – from 200,000 to 300,000 deaths reported. At the same time, the Allied forces printed much lower figures while also justifying the attacks by labeling Dresden as a center of communication and rail transport. Their narrative denies what many contemporary historians and scholars – such as Gregory Stanton, founder and president of Genocide Watch – now consider a war crime; or, as Claudia Jerzak (2015, p. 60) describes it, “the senselessness of the destruction of an extraordinary city”.

The discrepancy of the presented versions leads us to the problematization of History to be developed in this article. Dresden's situation is one of the many examples which shows that historiography can

no longer [be] considered the objective and disinterested recording of the past; it is more an attempt to comprehend and master it by means of some working (narrative/explanatory) model that, in fact, is precisely what grants a particular meaning to the past (HUTCHEON, 1989, p. 64).

This perspective is shared by many other authors and historians, such as Peter Burke, who affirms, in *Varieties of Cultural History* (1997), that “remembering the past and writing about it no longer seem the innocent activities they were once taken to be. Neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer” (BURKE, 1997, p. 44).

Thus, what has surfaced in recent work and research in this area is that “official” History is a narrative like any other, “a human-made structure – never as ‘natural’ or given” (HUTCHEON, 1989, p. 62). According to this perspective, the act of writing about a past event – to write History – is also an act of interpreting and bestowing on those events a meaning that is *always* tainted by one's ideology. As Hutcheon (1988, p. 178) points out, “we always act and use language in the context of politico-discursive conditions”. Even when consciously attempting to remain on neutral ground, historians will always find themselves in a position in which they are required to choose between sources and documents. This selection by itself is already ideologically biased. Jacques Le Goff writes about this specific paradox and explains:

The intervention of the historian who chooses the document, extracting it from a set of data from the past, preferring it to others, attributing to it a value of testimony that, at least in part, depends on his own position in the society of his time as well as on his mental organization, is inserted in an initial situation that is even less "neutral" than his intervention. The document is not innocuous. (LE GOFF, 2003, 537)³

It is therefore clear that the historian's choice of what to tell and how to tell it “depends on his own position in the society of his time as well as on his mental organization,” and is thus highly susceptible to manipulation – especially by those holding positions of power. Because of that, the document operates at the same time as a confirmation of power and as a mechanism of its dissemination.

As we see throughout *Slaughterhouse-Five*, these concerns were also clearly present in Vonnegut's mind during his writing process. The result is a literary classic

³ When no English translation from French was available, we have given our own translation.

that is among the most controversial works in American history, frequently banned from many school programs and libraries.

It takes Vonnegut 23 years after the war to finally bring to words the horror he saw firsthand in the attack. As a witness to what now is considered a war crime, Vonnegut writes a partially autobiographical book. The writer re-presents himself as character and narrator of the story, often making remarks that remind the reader of this fact, such as in: “That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book” (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 130).

The first chapter of the novel on which most of the arguments presented here are based on, stands out from the rest of the book, not in quality but in the nature of its content. It is a meta-fictional *manifesto* in which the author explains and ponders on his reasons and goals in writing *Slaughterhouse-Five* in a particular way: a narrative that contests the version presented by “official” History, and, most importantly, depicts war in a non-romanticized manner.

Thus the chapter begins with the following excerpt:

All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really was shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really did threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. And so on. (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 3, our italics)

The first sentence, by itself, already points to the discussion regarding the truthfulness of the events in a given narrative. Although *Slaughterhouse-Five* is partially an autobiographical book, it is also, in theory, a work of fiction. Therefore, the statement “[a]ll this happened” is a strong and unusual claim to be found in a novel, that would attempt to place it alongside the traditional view of historical documents. By adding “more or less” to his claim, the author shows his awareness of the unreliability of memory, as well as of the fact that his work would be *his own* perspective of the events.

It is also interesting to notice that already in the book's first paragraph some crucial parts of the plot are revealed – the surprising death of a character and the murder threat made by another. Such early revelations may strike the reader as very odd, as they are somewhat anticlimactic. Nonetheless, this is precisely the author's desired effect: there is no intention of climax or cathartic moment in the novel. No moment is supposed to stand out among others. In war, everything is on the same level of irrationality and senselessness.

Furthermore, the narrator confesses that one of his reasons for writing *Slaughterhouse-Five* is that he finds himself trapped in the memory of what happened in Dresden. He alludes to the image of this prison through a musical device, associating it to those children's songs that cling to one's thinking and never seem to leave:

[...] I'm reminded, too, of the song that goes
 My name is Yon Yonson,
 I work in Wisconsin,
 I work in a lumbermill there.
 The people I meet when I walk down the street,
 They say, 'What's your name?
 And I say,
 'My name is Yon Yonson,
 I work in Wisconsin...
And so on to infinity. (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 5, our italics)

"And so on to infinity," specifically captures the feeling of being stuck in a memory loop. While the dynamics of the song is suggestive of the painful process of being trapped in remembrance, it also ultimately implies the difficulty of transferring one's impressions to paper.

Vonnegut's struggles around the task at hand are explicit in the following excerpt:

I would hate to tell you what this lousy little book cost me in money and anxiety and time. When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a masterpiece or at least make me a lot of money, since the subject was so big.
 But not many words about Dresden came from my mind then - not enough of them to make a book, anyway. And not many words come now, either, when I have become an old fart with his memories [...]" (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 4)

As Hutcheon points out, language can sometimes be "limited in its powers of representation and expression" (HUTCHEON, 1988, p. 183). The confession that the words that come to his mind are not sufficient to write a book provides us with glimpses into the anguish the narrator experiences in his writing when attempting to describe what he had witnessed in the most fitting way, a process which took him twenty-three years.

Vonnegut's internal conflict derives especially from the ultimate purpose of the book and the confessed inability of the author to find a model of composition capable of fulfilling it. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an **anti-war book**, and, as such, is unsuccessful by

nature, since, as the narrator himself admits in a discussion with one of the characters, wars would never cease to exist, whether he wrote the book or not:

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, p. 5-6).

The irony with which the character Harrison Starr manifests himself is alarming, and demonstrates that the belief that humans are incapable of living in a world without wars is firmly rooted in the social imaginary, including that of the narrator, who concurs when he responds "I believe that too". So why does Vonnegut insist? Why all the effort to write an anti-war book if one does not believe that their work can contribute to ending wars?

One of the answers to this question is found in the title of this article: the process called "social amnesia" (BURKE, 1997). Perhaps the most frightening aspect of the Dresden massacre is the fact that the vast majority of people are simply unaware of its occurrence. As the narrator points out, "not many Americans knew how much worse it had been than Hiroshima, for instance. I didn't know that, either. There hadn't been much publicity" (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 12). Here, the author puts the attack on Dresden on an even greater scale of brutality than the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, and claims that a great part of the population was oblivious to the details of the Dresden bombing because the press did not release much information on the subject. Further down the line, as he was trying to gather information from official sources to help his writing, the narrator contacts the American Air Force:

I wrote the Air Force back then, asking for details about the raid on Dresden, who ordered it, how many planes did it, why they did it, what desirable results there had been and so on. I was answered by a man who, like myself, was in public relations. He said that he was sorry, but that the information was top secret still. I read the letter out loud to my wife, and I said, 'Secret? My God - from whom?' (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 13).

The public relations officer's refusal, reporting that this type of information was still top secret, is both revealing and alarming. In disbelief, and confused by the motives of the American army, the narrator inquires "Secret? My God – from whom?". It took

him some time to realize that he himself was among the minority who had significant knowledge of the bombardment, and that this knowledge was available to him only because he had personally witnessed and survived the attack. Otherwise, he would probably be oblivious to the event as much as the rest of the world.

The aforementioned sections are two of the many instances in which History is brought to the fore in the novel. The first quotation reveals how the totalized version of human History is no more than a myth, as there appears to be events about which there is very little information available, as in the case of Dresden. The officer's refusal, however, suggests that this lack of available information is more than just an accident or oversight, but a fabricated situation in which Dresden's events are intentionally left out from "official" History.

What happens regarding Dresden is not only manipulation of social memory, but what Burke would call "social amnesia":

To understand the workings of the social memory it may be worth investigating the social organization of forgetting, the rules of exclusion, suppression or repression, and the question of who wants whom to forget what, and why. In a phrase, social amnesia [...], the official erasure of memories of conflict in the interests of social cohesion. (BURKE, 1997, p. 56-57).

As mentioned previously, it is in this official and deliberate erasure of the memory about the bombing of Dresden that the author finds part of his motivation to write *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In this context, his work would be an attempt to "remedy" this social condition, through the (re)construction of lost memories.

It is precisely thanks to this kind of effort made by numerous authors that, today, we get to hear several voices that were once silenced, and get to know several histories that were once forgotten, or, more specifically, as Hutcheon puts it, "[...] the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, and I might add, of women as well as men" (HUTCHEON, 1989, p. 66).

As we move forward in the chapter, Vonnegut continues to explain the genesis of the novel. The author, then, faces another decisive moment that will strongly influence the way he will construct his narrative. The narrator schedules a meeting with his friend, Bernard V. O'Hare, in order to try to recover significant memories of his moments in Dresden, hoping to mend his struggle in writing the book. There, he is faced with the wife of his companion of war, Mary O'Hare, to whom he ends up

dedicating *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In a heated discussion, Mary shouts her beliefs at him – beliefs that would later “wake him up” and inspire him to search for different narrative strategies:

‘You were just babies then!’ she said.
 ‘What?’ I said.
 ‘*You were just babies in the war – like the ones upstairs!*’
 ‘I nodded that this was true. We had been foolish virgins in the war, right at the end of childhood’
 ‘*But you’re not going to write it that way, are you.*’ [...] *‘You’ll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you’ll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we’ll have a lot more of them. And they’ll be fought by babies like the babies upstairs.’*
 So then I understood. It was war that made her so angry. She didn’t want her babies or anybody else’s babies killed in wars. And *she thought wars were partly encouraged by books and movies.* (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 16-17, our italics).

Mary’s statement reveals yet another significant tool that works in the molding of social memory: the romanticized depiction of an event – in this case, war. When we look back at how wars are usually portrayed in books and movies, we notice that many of its horrors are essentially hidden from the eyes and minds of the public, such as the attack on Dresden that slaughtered around 25,000 of its inhabitants in just one night. What is usually exposed is not the senseless and gratuitous death of thousands of youngsters; but the heroism, honor and sacrifice of soldiers and officers who find themselves fighting and defending what is always shown as a greater ideal, one that is worth dying for. Mary’s attitude is in tune with a growing questioning of US foreign intervention policy by means of war, shared by the American counterculture movement of the 1960s. It is worth mentioning that Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* was published in 1969. At that time, the USA was involved in yet another gruesome conflict – the Vietnam War.

Thus, in addition to all the issues about history previously exposed here, the author also faces the problem of representing the past in a non-romanticized way. According to O’Hare’s beliefs (which become his own), the mystification of war would end up contributing to the opposite goal he set out to achieve. Instead of criticizing war and showing what they truly are, he could end up influencing and operating social memory in a manner that could encourage their reiteration.

Whether the narrator’s encounter and conversation with the character Mary O’Hare actually happens or not (the narrator only guarantees that the parts about the war are true), such a discussion evinces the process of influence between literary works

and works of art in general, especially in relation to the *tradition* of representation of a specific theme or subject.

Sandra Nitrini, in *Literatura Comparada* identifies in Paul Valéry's theories various types of influence, among which we highlight "influence by reaction, that is, refusal of influence" (NITRINI, 1997, p. 133). What the author argues is that the denial of influence is in itself a kind of influence. Doing the "new" with the intention of being deliberately different from the "old" is proof of being influenced by the "old". Vonnegut's text finds itself influenced by an earlier cultural body of works, and is constructed in this particular way precisely because it is, at the same time, absorption and response to these works. Thus, Vonnegut positions his own work as an attempt to break away from the romanticized view of the war traditionally diffused in other works of art, whether literary or cinematographic.

The author-narrator reiterates his position through a promise made to Mary O'Hare:

So I held up my right hand and I made her a promise 'Mary,' I said, 'I don't think this book is ever going to be finished. I must have written five thousand pages by now, and thrown them all away. If I ever do finish it, though, I give you my word of honor: there won't be a part for Frank Sinatra or John Wayne. 'I tell you what,' I said, 'I'll call it *The Children's Crusade*.' (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 17, our italics).

It is because of this promise that the secondary title of the book – *The Children's Crusade* – comes into place, referring to one of the episodes in history whose romantic social memory diverges from the actual nature of events. The narrator himself explores a book of History on the Crusades during the plot, and comments on character attributed to the crusaders. When “accurately” described, crusaders are portrayed as “ignorant and savage men, [and] their motives were those of bigotry”, while romanticized depictions “dilate upon their piety and heroism, [...] and the great services they rendered to Christianity” (VONNEGUT, 1969, p.18).

After what we assume to be a long period of deliberation, the narrator then decides to tell the story of Dresden from the perspective of Billy Pilgrim, a very unconventional protagonist:

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. Billy was Preposterous-six feet and three inches tall, with a chest and shoulders like a box of kitchen matches. He had no helmet, no overcoat, no weapon and no boots. On his feet were cheap, low-cut civilian shoes [...]. Billy had lost a heel, which

made him bob up-and-down, up-and-down. The involuntary dancing up and down, up and down, made his hip joints sore.
 He [...] had a beard. It was a random, bristly beard, and some of the bristles were white, even though Billy was only twenty-one years old. He was also going bald. Wind and cold and violent exercise had turned his face crimson.
 He didn't look like a soldier at all. He looked like a filthy flamingo. (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 33-35).

The unusual characterization of a major character is yet another resource in Vonnegut's strategy to break with tradition. In contrast to most stereotypical strong and determined men encountered in war films and books, Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* employs a protagonist who is exactly the opposite of what one would consider a hero. Billy Pilgrim is weak, awkward, and slow, with no obvious virtue that could possibly be exalted, bears no arms and occupies a position that is made fun of. As per his promise to Mary, this is certainly not a character to be played by a John Wayne type of actor.

As a crucial moment in the story, having finished the novel, Vonnegut gives it to his editor, with whom he discusses the frustrated results of his creation:

It is so short and jumbled and jangled, Sam, because *there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre*. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds.
 And what do the birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like 'Poo-tee-weet?'
 [...]
 I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun.
 This one is a *failure*, and had to be, since it was written by a *pillar of salt*. It begins like this:
 Listen:
 Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.
 It ends like this:
 Poo-tee-weet?
 (VONNEGUT, 1969, p. 21-24, our italics).

Similarly to the very first paragraph of the novel, Vonnegut continues to reveal decisive details of the plot. In this case, he already foretells how the narrative will begin and end. Reiterating previous comments made here, this seems to be a deliberate decision made by the author: there is no intention of having a climax in the book, or great twists in the plot, as we often encounter in novels. All the moments of war are equally irrational and pointless. On that note, the birds' question – "Poo-tee-weet?" – incomprehensible and seemingly devoid of meaning, symbolizes the notion that "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre". "Poo-tee-weet?" seems as appropriate as any other question or comment on the matter, since no words can really describe the horror of the Dresden firebombing.

Furthermore, a revealing mention of a “pillar of salt”, which recalls the myth of Lot's wife (BIBLE, Genesis, 19, 26), bears great significance in this context. Instructed to flee and ignore the past to save herself, Lot's wife had been forbidden, by a higher power, to look back into the destruction of Sodom, the city she lived in. She fails the challenge, turning back to gaze at it, and is transformed into a pillar of salt for her transgression and disobedience, which deemed her unworthy of salvation. The narrator, labeling himself as a “pillar of salt”, aligns himself thus to Lot's wife. It's interesting to notice that the biblical figure, traditionally described under a negative light, is rescued by Vonnegut's sympathetic approach, being given a sense of curiosity and empathy. He assumes his humanity and the limitations that come with it by doing now what she had done before him, clinging to a memory that was supposed to be forgotten.

Ultimately, despite the extreme effort in confronting History and tradition, as well as making use of several technical innovations throughout the novel, Vonnegut seems conscious that there are always other limitations of language in representing human experience in face of something as dreadful and intangible as the massacre of Dresden. The writer labels his book as a “failure”, and it probably is, if one considers its ultimate goal as an anti-war book. Nevertheless, in investigating a tragic event purposefully erased from History, Vonnegut's act of bringing it to light already steers us, as a society, in the right direction. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a masterpiece that stands a pinnacle example of how narrative strategies can be used to break paradigms and reconstruct concepts. Joining Literature and History while revising their roles in society, Vonnegut demonstrates that “the past can be altered by the present as much as the present is driven by the past” (CARVALHAL, 1992, p. 62). As author, narrator and witness to events that were supposed to be erased, Vonnegut refuses to comply with the romanticized versions of war and brings to life histories that have been silenced, effectively working towards the reconstruction of our social memory.

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