

Time in Postmodern Novels: A Study of *Slaughterhouse-five*,
Time's Arrow and *The Sense of an Ending*



Md. Maqsudul Arefin

Student ID : 11363010

Department of English and Humanities

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Md. Maqsudul Arefin

Student ID : 11363010

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Certification

This is to certify that the research “Time in Postmodern Novels” is done by Md. Maq̄sudul Arefin in partial fulfilment of the requirement for M.A. in English Literature in Brac University. The research has been carried out under my guidance and the work carried out successfully.

Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam

Professor, Department of English

Dhaka University

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Abstract

The study attempts to illustrate how Kurt Vonnegut, Martin Amis and Julian Barnes depict time in keeping with postmodernist practice and the three novelists present a new aspect of time. In the introductory part, the paper has talked about the long-established ideas on time and some debatable points of time. In the next part, the study has tried to depict how time is structured in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century English literature. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the novels are based on traditional concept of time. It indicates clock-governed fiction. The 20th century novel talks about new psychology and the paper argues that psychology has a great connection with time. Later the research has explained that postmodern novelists talk about a new reality that it is a reality beyond over a reality. In *Slaughterhouse-5*, time is connected with the glorification of science fiction. Time in *Slaughterhouse-five* is science fiction time. In *Time's Arrow*, we realize that nothing is correct in the world. Neither Tod Friendly nor Tony Webster can comprehend reality as well as time. They even do not know themselves. So, it is not possible for them to realize time. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Julian Barnes demonstrates that memory and time are interconnected. Tony Webster tries to construct his memory but his memory is fragmented. Like Billy Pilgrim and Tod Friendly, we see divided self in Tony Webster's personality. The research tries to discuss, compare and contrast *Slaughterhouse-five*, *Time's Arrow*, and *The Sense of an Ending* with some theories and books. Finally, the research tries to elucidate that time in the postmodern novel is totally different from the novels of eighteenth and nineteenth century because new ideologies and World War I and World War II and there is no particular definition and ideology of time in postmodern novels.

Introduction

Time is a fundamental element of the ultimate reality. We know that it is a movable dimension. Time is moving onwards constantly and we measure it with clocks and calendars. We experience natural things around us that change or transform with time- plants and animals, the seasons, the sun, the moon and stars. But it is very tough to explain accurately what time is. If we travel to another country, we usually have to adjust and change the compass of the watch. The further we move east or west, or north or south, the larger the time changes.

Time is an organized system of moments or the framework in which all events or changes are located. It points out duration as well as a bicycle wheel. It continues in terms of hours, months, and years. One day is identified as 24 hours that is 86,400 seconds. If nothing happens, time exceeds and will exceed. It can be said that we can not see and touch time. It is a mighty unexplained power which directs everything and conveys true reality.

It is obvious that time is an abstract concept. It is a general sense that time once gone is gone forever and it never breaks its journey to eternity. It is the liaison of before and after. Our best knowledge ascertains that we can move forward in time but never backward in time.

There are plenty of concepts of time. James L. Christian, in his *Philosophy*, views on time broadly. Christian explains a second sort of time that is 'psychological' time or 'experimental' time. Many scholars believe on empirical time. "Consciousness is time". When we are at loss of sensation or 'asleep', time is unreal, "but it begins again the moment we regain consciousness" (186). It in reality means that if there is no action or activity, there is no time. Christian further argues that psychological time is made different or fluctuated in relation with human "temperature : if temperature is raised, time passes slower, if lowered, it passes faster"(188). Although most of the scholars believe on experimental time, it can also be said that time is also related with imagination. For example, if you spend one hour monotonously, it seems that you were spending more than two hours. On the other hand, if you spend two hours to your dear ones, it appears to you that you were with your beloved one only for five minutes.

Christian also refers through Augustine's theology that there are two kinds of time ; celestial and terrestrial time . We are not in timeless rather God is. God has created time as well as everything. As God has formed time, He continued to be a prime mover "before time". So, God exists beyond time or reality. To God , there is no past, present or future. Everything happens all together or concurrently. So, God continued to be alive before consciousness or sensibility or time (190).

P.D. Ouspensky argues in *A New Model of the Universe* that time emerges from a nameless 'past' and evanesces into a mysterious 'future' . So, death indicates that "there is no more time". But if we talk about the reincarnation of soul or "the consciousness" , the spirit has no particular line ; "but there must be both before and after on all sides". Ouspensky further points out that the principles of time and infinity are irrational since they can not be scientifically and mathematically researched and analyzed(488- 490).

In *Iqbal as a thinker* , discussing on "Iqbal's conception of time and space " Razi-udiddiqi demonstrates that time is not tenable and the world can be experienced through the 'senses'. Time is psychological and time is nothing without motion. The holy *Quran* teaches that " the universe is dynamic and motion being a fundamental part of it". Time has no starting or limit point. Time means a "single super-eternal now". Iqbal is highly influenced by Einstein and his theory of relativity that time is 'relative'. Everything in the cosmic system has a "dual character". So, it seems that there is more than one individual thing in the world . Rumi shows Iqbal on time about the heavenly journey by explaining that "Miraj is just a change in consciousness" (5-27). We know that Iqbal is highly influenced by Bergson's concept of time .

It can be said that time is an anonymous and mystical concept and it is an unending rolling stream. Everything exists in time. Although it is difficult to define time, however , time can be categorized in various ways; for example- metaphysical time, new time or time in postmodernism, historical time, family time , chronological time ,relativistic time, clock time, science fiction time, and psychological time.

It is completely impossible to define time. There are numerous questions and controversial area on time. These are discussed below:

- a. Is time socially constructed or not?
- b. Is consciousness is time or time is mind dependent ?
- c. Is it possible to change the past?
- d. Do present, past and future tense indicate actual time or not ?
- e. Was time itself created before creation ?
- f. Time in relation with religion ; for example – the reincarnation of soul, the Judgment day ?
- g. Does time itself run or we travel in time ?
- h. Is it realizable and practicable to journey through time?
- i. Is time temporal and permanent?
- j. How is time treated in animal world? How do the animals measure and evaluate time ?
The animal world is also a vital part of the universe.
- k. Could time have a starting and ending point ?
- l. Is time cyclical or linear ?
- m. Is there no time without event? Is it applicable in sleeping or unconscious moment?
- n. Dream is an another reality. How is time measured in dream ?

Many people believe that the sun symbolizes perpetuity . We know that the earthly time is made and measured in terms of the sun. The best clock maker in the world can not make a clock in relation with the sun. Our clocks do not run in relation with the sun. These are run by the man-made sun or imaginative sun for measuring a point or dimension.

As a student of English literature my point of view is that time is an endless flow that can only be imagined but can be felt a tiny part of it only.

It is me who is required to try to see/ feel/ measure/ understand time. Scholars have defined time in various ways but me is the key person to study, analyze and evaluate those in relation with my writings.

Objective : The research paper argues and explores how time has been framed and focused in *Slaughterhouse- Five* , *Time's Arrow* , and *The Sense of an Ending* .

Limitations: There are many limitations in my research paper. I can not define time how a scholar of physics delineates . I have taken the references and information from some books . The methodology of my thesis is based on my concepts. What I have comprehended , I have exactly expressed. My idea and system might be wrong. Moreover, philosophy is nothing without the concept of time. From time immemorial , scholars and scientists have been giving a lot of concepts of time . In my thesis I have not discussed them. Moreover, for analysis time the significance of the writings of Virginia Woolf is immense but I have discussed them a little. There are a lot of books on time but I have neither read nor discussed in my research.

Methodology: The study has been consisted of descriptive and argumentative. I have taken all my information from the primary and secondary sources. Except the three texts, I have discussed on *The Time Machine* and Walt Whitman's concept of time and T.S. Eliot's idea of time; although these are not parts of postmodernism but these play a great role for a good discussion on time. I have also talked about a little on some philosophical theories, science, and postmodernism for enriching my thesis . In *The Sense of an Ending*, I have elaborately discussed on memory as time, memory and self are interconnected .

Time in Realistic Novels

The novel conveys ideas . The novelist can view mentally the stream of time . The novelist chronologically and sequentially mentions date, length, place, time, and every action of life . So in the traditional novel, we see a clear sense of time and place . E.M. Forster argues in *Aspects of the Novel* that “it is never possible for a novelist deny time inside the fabric of his novel ... in a novel there is always a clock ”(37). “The novel is arranged in time sequence ”(38). We see the faithful picture of the soiled world of common men and actions and their events from morning to night in the novels .

The ancient Greece, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Maya civilization had their own calendars. In the ancient time, people used to measure time by the movements of the sun, moon, and stars. In the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a “Treatise on the Astrolabe ”. The prose depicts a machine –driven tool for measuring time by the observation of astrology and astronomy. Chaucer’s astrolabe had been used for a long time by the mariners.

The English novel is in fact an eighteenth century product . The eighteenth-century novel depicts the time of geographical and intellectual travel ship, imperial and colonial power and nationalism because of the rise of the middle class . The novels show the realism of life, other times and other places. We see the time of imperialism in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Oroonoko* , although *Oroonoko* is a seventeenth century novel, it has a great message in eighteenth century literary theme. Robinson Crusoe is the “representative of that spirit of expansionism ” (Hawthorn 33) .Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* delineates eighteenth century enlightenment and science . Briant Tippett argues the novel in terms of historical time as the novel mirrorises its time, the Royal society . Tippett tries to show how past and present times are interlinked . Some scholars have regarded Lilliput as a utopia and in utopia time can be categorized in various ways . The Houyhnhnms measure and calculate time and year by observing and studying astronomy . Jane Austin portrays eighteenth century morality and sensibility . In *Pride*

and Prejudice she depicts her contemporary time through the characters that in the eighteenth century there existed a law of inheritance in Britain that a deceased leaving no male heir could by no means be inherited by his female children. In the nineteenth century, novel emerges as a strong social dynamism. Each thing in Emily Bronte's *Weathering_Heights* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* works together to fabricate realism. *Jane Eyre* stands for the time of female individualism as the first chapter shows us her private space. Charles Dickens' novels give us an idea about the time of realism. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens demonstrates that there is no family time and poor and orphan children do not have any human rights. *A Tale of Two Cities* is set in London and Paris which depicts the time of the French Revolution. *Great Expectations* begins with the description of the marsh area of Kent. Here we see how the sunrises and sets and night coming after day. There is a harmony in time and place. In chapter 8, we view that Miss Havisham shows Pip her failed wedding party. She continues to wear her wedding –dress to freeze time. She is alienated from the earthly clock as she announces "You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born"(50). Satis House is changeless as it was on Miss Havisham's wedding day and the clocks are permanently stopped and the clocks present the accurate time that her wedding was annulled. Time has no significance on her life and she knows nothing on days, weeks, months, and years.

In the twentieth century, the English novel as well as other literary genres talks profoundly about the human mind, time and space. It may be that H. G. Wells is the first man as well as the first novelist who has analyzed time in relation with science in the contemporary age; "there's another dimension besides length, width, and depth" (12). In *The Time Machine*, Wells looks for utopia through time and we get his future vision. It may be Wells concept that we, in reality, do not know what time is or the clock or calendar time is not right. At the beginning of the novel H. G. Wells voices through a Time Traveler that the present-day mathematicians "are not teaching geometry correctly in today's schools" (8). "Time-the one factor they always manage to skip in teaching us geometry- time is the forth dimension!" (14) The three dimensions are length, width, and depth. We can change our directions in the three dimensions or we can go everywhere in space but we are not able to "go backward or forward in time" (14) or forth dimensions. "I can't not move into yesterday or tomorrow"(16).

The idea of the contemporary time bears intellectual exercise of existing riddle and the emptiness of man's struggle. Many scholars talk about time that they can not comprehend the current time, its significance and how the present-day time changes and turns back the social norms, philosophy, and religious issues. In *The Time Machine* the Time Traveler has invented a machine that takes people move toward the back or onward in the fourth dimension. The machine does not travel "through space, only through time"(26). Time can be researched by this machine.

The machine gives a hope that journey in time is achievable. The Time Traveler is naturally a thirsty soul who follows a line of investigation that the world can be turned into an answerable and trouble-free place by time. Like a renaissance man, for taking the highest excellence and exquisiteness in life, the time traveler moves towards past and future. It seems that all the answers in the world lie in time as the scientist has invented the machine for the good fortune of mankind. It may be that it is H. G. Wells' philosophy to evade the catastrophic present and future time by the time machine. It is the time machine which can lead people into the sweetest time of human being.

It is obvious that the early twentieth century has paid attention a strong clash in western humanism. To Leslie Fiedler, "postmodern sensibility" is "apocalyptic, antirational" (*The Humanities* 493). New trends on indeterminacy, fragmentation of soul, pluralism have arrived the artistic and cultural flow. Camus argues in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that man is an alien as he is left without his reminiscences and he is exiled and separated from his self (*The Humanities* 439). We have gone from a God-centered world to a human-centered world, a world as text" (503). Because of the sense of dejection, obscurity, and irrationality, the scholars of the existing time try to come out from the "lost generations of the twenties" and look for a new time. We experience in literature that future vision is formed by dream. Since the human existence is a threat to human existence, "Oh, God! I cried. Please let me wake up from this terrible nightmare!" (*The Time Machine* 180), the scientist tries to escape from the dreadful reality by his invention, the time machine. The time machine could be H.G. Wells' as well as the Time Traveler's imaginative invention or dream. It might be that the scientist is

continuously dreaming or hallucinating what Billy Pilgrim does in *Slaughterhouse-5* ; “I was confused about what was the dream and what was reality “ (*The Time Machine*200) . However, it is understandable that *The Time Machine* contains many philosophical notions, it shows that how people used to live in harmony in the erstwhile time ; “ they lived a life of security and ease” (86).

Walt Whitman , who is one of the greatest modern American poets, metaphysically describes time in his poetry. “To Think of Time” is a poem consisting of nine parts where the poet reflects the present time that ultimately conveys death. The poet emphasizes the present tense not the past or future tense as “the beginning less past nothing? ... the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing ” . No one is superior to his own selected time. People can not comprehend the significance of time since experience differs from man to man. Whitman argues that reality is in time , meaning time makes everything real ; “The earth is not an echo... The law of the past can not be eluded ... The law of the living can not be eluded , it is eternal ”. Time always accepts goodness that time immortalizes and glorifies greatness . Whitman optimizes time when he states that “I have dream’d that heroes and good doers shall be under the present and past law ” . Everything in the universe has an “eternal soul ” . So, time is a moving abstract figure of infinity . In “Time to Come ” Whitman connects time with the “mystery of fate ” and “mighty mystery ” .Similar to self, time is one of the vital themes in Whitman’s “Song of Myself” .Here Whitman states that how Hindu philosophy on time has persuaded him (Sastry 65) . There is no division between self and time since both are never-ending (76).Time is a common phenomenon in Eliot’s poetry . Eliot is highly influenced by Bergson’s duree. This ‘duree’ means the existing present moment that “accumulates all the past and holds preparedness for the future ”(Dwindevi 116). Influenced by Bergson , Eliot views that there is no fragmentation in life (116) . Time awareness leads Eliot to the realization of a holy time (120). In *The Waste Land* , Eliot defines time into three parts :

- a. “time as succession, flow, history or development ” ,
- b. “time as a perpetual revolution and repetition”, and
- c. “time as eternal extension” .(117)

T.S. Eliot utters about time in *Four Quarters* and we perceive his attitude of immortal time ;

“Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past .

... All time is unredeemable”

In the first of the quarters “*Burnt Norton*” , we notice that the past and future are always in the present time and Bergson’s theory that “all time is eternally present ”(4) , indicating that reality means existing moment . In the second section Eliot asserts that “To be conscious is not to be in time ”(88) . Here Eliot rejects the traditional idea of time that consciousness has a boundary but time has no border line.

Virginia Woolf is a modern novelist known for her exhibition of inner realities . She defines time “time on the clock and time in the mind ”(Thakur 90) . She argues that “The mind of man , moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time (*Orlando* 91)” .Time is understood in relation with the study of personality . The idea , experience and psychology of time can be different from person to person. *Mrs. Dalloway* , *To the Light House* , *Orlando* and *The Waves* reflect the Bergsonian philosophy on time. Real time is connected with psychological time or inner duration contrasted with the mechanical clock . In *Mrs. Dalloway* , the line among past, present and future is bedimmed. All the three are the part of the stream of one time.

Time in Postmodern Novels

The philosophy of postmodernism is that it does not have any specific philosophy. So, it could be said that it accepts or rejects all the isms or some isms in the philosophical world. Much of the postmodern writings illustrate the alienation of the individuals and meaninglessness of human existence. "Postmodernism has proved to be a snake-like concept whose twists and coils are difficult to pin down" (Woods 6). So, time in postmodern novels is measureless and infinite, indicating new time and new reality. We "now inhabit a new sort of reality- the postmodern world" ... "Postmodernism refers to the non-realistic and non-traditional literature" (Hawthorn 83). Raleigh argues that the singular represents "a purely psychic entity" (Davis 243) In the three novels, *Slaughterhouse five*, *Time's Arrow* and *The Sense of an Ending*, we see that the chief character is a man of dual personality. So, time goes at an unpredictable rate. Neither the characters nor the readers can comprehend the significance of time in a plot. The divided self can not allot time dimension in relation with clock and calendar. The characters can not comprehend themselves. As a result, they can not realize reality as well as time.

Science fiction plays an essential part in postmodern novels. Science and technology have enhanced human being power over natural world. Science creates a prophetic vision. Scholars and scientist put science in the service of human race. Ursula K. Heise argues in *Postmodernism* about "Science, technology and postmodernism" that science and technology play a principal role in present day because of western controversy and question. The travel and analysis of the planets and space, the inventions of DNA, nuclear science, "the cloning of animals", computers, android or mechanical man, and many other discoveries make a new sense of "techno scientific postmodernism". Science has become the pier of western aesthetics and ideology. Although science makes new hopes or a land of make believe hope, it gives a message of "apocalyptic fear" as well. Scientific and technological scholarship and logic are vastly questioned by postmodernism. Heise further argues that "information is the most important commodity in postmodern society" and digital

technology makes everything clear to us (136-162). Now-a-days science and technology create “artificial intelligence and artificial life ”(Grant 59 : Sim). Science makes people inactive as virtual reality and cyberspace take over reality. The division between the true and untrue is not understandable (Grant 66: Sim). The characters of postmodern novels hang about nowhere . So, postmodern novelists suggest a new and different design of time .

Although man is getting robotic but he does not follow time in terms of machine. Science makes people inactive as virtual reality and cyberspace take over reality. The characters of postmodern novels hang about nowhere. The traditional concept of time is nothing in postmodern novels . Because of “futuristic technology “ , virtual or artificial space is accepted in lieu of existent room and place. Philip Rieff mentions that the current age is psychological and the psychosomatic man is an infant of technological innovations “not of nature ” (Sharman 471). The “new man must live beyond reason –reason having proved no adequate guide to his safe conduct through the meaningless experience of life ”(Sharman 472) .So, new categories of cultural and social people are emerging. All “the psychic action is seen as the relentless unfolding of time (Davis 246)”. However, postmodern novelists are highly influenced by science, science fiction and scientists .It should be noted that in science fiction, everything is achievable and time can be measured and created different ways. Einstein rejects past-present- future , indicating a type of time which contains all time in each instant of time .Einstein’s relativism or time dilation theory states that when object moves with velocity higher / more than light, the whole world remains constant with respect to that movable substance. The theory can be comprehensible when we discuss about the heavenly journey or ‘Miraj’. According to the earthly time , Hazrat Muhammad (Sm) stays with Allah for one day. But to the divine time the Muslim prophet stays for 27 years. So, when motion or speed is accelerated , time is static or decreased. If we go to a place by walking , it may take fifteen minutes ; but if we go by running, it may take four minutes. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is a postmodern novel . In C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* , we see that , like the examples of heavenly journey , time does not pass in Narnia while time passes in the earth. If anyone goes to Narnia and spends hours and comes back again , he would realize that it is the same second when he has entered into Narnia. The four earthly

children spend hours and years in Narnia , but in the real world it is only some seconds. It means that time moves or varies from dimension to dimension, planet to planet and country to country. Time does not increase or decrease . It is always set in its own way. These are the some quotations taken from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and its later part *The Voyage of Dawn Treader* : “it was just after breakfast when I went into the wardrobe , and I’ve been away for hours , and had tea, and all sorts of things have happened” (24-25) ... “ But there was no time , said Susan, Lucy had had no time to have gone anywhere , even if there was such a place. She came running after us the very moment we were out of the room. It was less than a minute , and she pretended to have been away for hours” (49)... “It was the same day and the same hour of the day on which they had all gone into the wardrobe to hide”(188). “Narnian time flows differently from ours . If you spent a hundred years in Narnia, you would still come back to our world at the very same hour of the very same day on which you left. And then if you went back to Narnia after spending a week here you might find that a thousand Narnian years had passed , or only a day, or no time at all. You never know till you get there” (18).

The background of *The Lion, the witch and the Wardrobe* , *Slaughterhouse-five*, and *Time’s Arrow* is World War II . It might be said that in *Slaughterhouse-five* the Tralfamadorians appear to be the gods and goddess of the postmodern age. Billy Pilgrim as a post- Christian as well as postmodernist tries to evade from the present day time to the metaphysical time through science fiction myth. The Tralfamadorians believe that all times are concurrently existent and anyone has the power to elect where to set oneself. So, there “is no absolute time through out the universe by which absolute simultaneity can be measured ”(Christian 388). Christian refers through Immanuel Kant’s voice that “both time and space are aspects of the mind. They are modes of perception, that is the structure of consciousness through which we experience the real world ”(395). In *Time’s Arrow* , Tod Friendly , who is the spectator of the holocaust , backwards from the event of his death to his birth. His soul longs for reaching towards the times past. Billy Pilgrim, Tod Friendly and Tony Webster prefer the long-gone time . The two wars and existing principles have smashed the aesthetics of western cultural heritage. The three novelists mention through their characters’ voice that the present and the future

actually bring curse to the mankind. So it will be the best for them to stay alive in the past time as past is always changeless .

It is obvious that postmodern novelists talk about a new psychology that consciousness does not move in a straight line .Consciousness as well as experience is flux and fluid . Human beings survive as alienated individuals .There is a great connection among psychology, mind , brain and time. The mind travels back and forth . Physical existence can not be understood in terms of clock time. In the present day novels, time has a good relation with personality or individuality. So, time is relative in the postmodern novels.

Chapter 1

Slaughterhouse-Five is a novel by Kurt Vonnegut about World War II who observes, senses, and travels through time with Billy Pilgrim's eyes. Billy Pilgrim is kidnapped by extraterrestrial aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. The Tralfamadorians, who have got the power to watch in fourth dimensions, have already caught sight of their existences. We know that time is fourth dimension and time in the novel is extraterrestrial time. Although the Tralfamadorians can heed each moment of their lives, they can not remodel or change the time of their fates. It may indicate that they are predestined or believe on predestination or time is structured. We also experience that time-traveler Billy Pilgrim also knows his future that when, how, and where he will be dead. The outsider race give lessons him about time in relation with destiny, divine will and the ultimate reality of the universe. We know that extraterrestrial race are present in Vonnegut's novel. It may indicate Vonnegut's belief on another time or reality. Here the Tralfamadorians do not accept spiritual time rather material life that life is short and time is fleeting in order to be enjoyed. So, everybody should make the best of the existing time; "the Tralfamadorians would advice Billy to concentrate on the happy moments of his life, and to ignore the unhappy ones" (142).

Through Billy Pilgrim, Kurt Vonnegut places time in various dimensions. Billy understands his time discontinuously and he haphazardly apprehends his childhood, boyhood, adulthood and death. We see in the novel that there is no chronology or sequence of time before and after the war. In the novel, everything is written in disorder way. So life as well as time is fragmented. Vonnegut illustrates that the "devastation of Dresden was boundless" (13) ... "Everybody is supposed to be dead" (14). Because of World War II, people are physically and mentally injured or dead. Law is reversed. The cosmic system is compared with the bird's voice indicating nothingness. The first and last chapters of the novel end with bird's sound, "Poo-tee-weet?" So, "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre" (14) or a bird's sound as it has no meaning. We know that postmodernism questions and challenges about realism but does not answer about reality. As a postmodern novelist Kurt Vonnegut wants to know

about truth and time as well. At the beginning of the novel *Billy Pilgrim* states that "Sooner or later I go to bed and my wife asks me what time it is. She always has to know the time. Sometimes I do not know and I say search me" (6). So, time is meaningless or pointless in the novel as well as the contemporary age since the background of the novel is present-day holocaust.

In my introduction part I have talked about time in relation with theology that "all moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist" (*Slaughterhouse-five* 19). "All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warning or explanations" (*Slaughterhouse-five* 62).

Matthew Arnold lives in a materialistic age which is a time of spiritual void. Due to the advancement of science, religion has lost its grip on the minds of men. Arnold argues in *The Study of poetry* that poetry is the religion of the future. All the existing tenets and theological beliefs are shaken and submerged. But poetry keeps alive eternity, "the strongest part of our religion is unconscious poetry". Browning's poems pacify Victorian people. Darwin's *The Origin of Species* dethrones God from His Creations. Tennyson has the courage to declare that God Almighty is the creator of the universe and the reflection of His personality is visible in all the physical and spiritual aspects of life. Man's soul is a part of the divine soul. However, the philosopher and scholars of the time ridiculed the Bible. The Bible illustrates that "God is in heaven; everything is alright". The thinkers of the age state that nothing is alright in the world, so God is not in heaven. Moreover, they misinterpret the spirit of the Bible. In this crisis of faith and hope, Browning's poems serve the secular Scriptures. In his poetry, he portrays optimism that if we are in cope with God's direction, everything must be alright in the world. This is the hallmark to the shattered mind of the Victorian. No science, no philosophy came in the help to save the turbulence mind of the Victorian. It is only poetry and poetry alone can lead a better life.

The ages of English literature can be categorized into eight ages and every writer is the autobiography of its age. Postmodern age is totally different from the other seven ages. Science fiction is an integral part of postmodernism. *Slaughterhouse-five* is the glorification of

science fiction. The Tralfamadorians “ were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe . Science fiction was a big help” (73). There is nothing impossible in science fiction. Thomas McPherson argues in *The Philosophy of Religion* that “Theology is the science of God”(142). Vonnegut refers through Billy Pilgrim’s voice that science fiction can be the new theology for the contemporary people as it’s a science of fiction. It is the science of man’s imagination . “ It is Rosewater who introduced Billy science fiction , and in particular to the writings of Kilgore Trout ... Those beloved frumpish books gave off a smell that permeated the world... Kilgore Trout became Billy’s favourite living author , and science fiction became the only sort of tales he could not read”(73)... Science fiction “ was the Gospel from the outer space by Kilgore Trout”(73). . . “the intent of the Gospels was to teach people”(78).

John Macey states in *The Story of the World Literature* that “*The Pilgrim’s Progress* became a second Bible and it was from the first Bible , also from common speech , that Bunyan leaned his style” (272). *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is a dream allegory where Christian takes a book in his hand and the Book , the Bible, guides him in the search of the truth. Dream vision is a medieval literary genre , defining journeys to heaven and hell. Medieval scholars and theologians depend on religious conviction .

Vonnegut points out that “Billy Pilgrim was having a delightful hallucination”(35) and the doctors “ introduced an anesthetic into Billy’s atmosphere now , put him to sleep”(55). As a contemporary theologian Vonnegut Pilgrim confides in science fiction as the answer and resolution of the contemporary world where the world will turn into a technological oriented utopia. The Scriptures “ were all theoretically dead now” (23). All the religions of the world talk about utopia. Utopia is an abstract concept. Billy tries to make an utopia in science fiction . In science fiction, Billy gets eternal things and “Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present and the future ” (44). As a postmodern theologian and dream-seer Billy Pilgrim dreams or hallucinates utopia through Tralfamadorian’s concept of time that “ There is no beginning, no middle, no end , no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time” (64).

So because of science fiction, Billy is “going to comfort so many people with the truth about time” (20).

If we analyze the novel in relation with historical time, Billy represents those soldiers who have partaken World War II . Because of the injurious incident, after the war, Billy is anesthetized (55) and entered “a morphine paradise” (71). So, “Billy is spastic in time , has no control over where he is going next” (17). The war has shattered his life and it is his existential tussle to ask “ Where had he come from , and where should he go now ?” (90). As a result , Billy produces false impression in his mind in order to evade the existing time since the present time is insoluble and it is out of his control. Heraclitus , who is an Ionian philosopher and pre-Socratic philosopher argues on dynamism that the universe is in a state of ceaseless change. In *Slaughter house-Five* , Billy pronounces 36 times “And so on” and 104 times “So it goes”. Billy Pilgrim , the time traveler , always tries to get the real answer through time by dream or hallucination. The solution as well as everything lies in time.

Finally , it can be said that Vonnegut establishes his concept of time through Billy’s voice that nothing is concluding; we are jouncing to and fro in time. Although there is no solution, it will be carrying on .

Chapter 2

Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* is a novel of holocaust and flashback where the central character's life is moving, and changing towards backward and all chain of thoughts and normative truth are reversed. Time moves en route backwards and the novel advances from death to birth of the protagonist, Tod Friendly.

The title of the novel is *Time's Arrow*. It may be that Martin Amis as well as Tod Friendly tries to throw the arrow or the compass of the clock towards time, so that he can point out the exact time; but he does not get any direction as time "now passed untrackably" (5) and "time's arrow moves the other way" (87). Amis further points out that "This is a world of mistakes, of diabolical metrical mistakes" (8). So, the cosmic law or time is not accurate. That's why everything is in reverse in the novel. As a holocaust novel, we can easily experience the mass destruction and genocide of World War II. The people who have experienced the war have no value on rationality. Time, in reality, progresses onwards towards the future. In the contemporary novels, many leading roles neither comprehend the present-day time nor the future time. Martin Amis exhibits a time that is past and bygone time is always unchangeable. Amis proves that the effect of holocaust can not stand that time when Tod Friendly announces that "We're getting younger. We're. We're getting stronger. We're even getting taller... All the other people are getting younger too" (8). Tod Friendly also mentions the sweetest time of every man. It is the spontaneous joys of childhood; "I think I know the name of this kiss. It is called the kiss of life" (6).

The title of the first chapter is "What goes around comes around". Here Martin Amis argues that "Life is no bowl of cherries. It's swings and roundabouts" (9). Here we see again Heraclitus' concept on dynamism. Kurt Vonnegut also states *Slaughterhouse-five* that all things as well as time flow in a circular figure. Time is such a mystifying theory where man can travel in time and go the point where he wishes.

Both Billy Pilgrim and Tod Friendly have metaphysical power and they can go beyond the border lines of clock time and human limitations. Billy Pilgrim learns that nothing is fixed or absolute. The Tralfamadorians communicate by telepathy. Martin Amis introduces us metaphysics that “There is another language, a second language, here in Tod’s head. We sometimes dream in that language too” (7). It may be that Tod Friendly has invented a time that is neither related with past nor future. It may be a new time which can not be defined in relation with clock-world, as time has “no arrow” (143).

World War II has paralyzed people both physically and mentally. So, the present-day time is cruel as the war has changed many ideologies. Like Billy Pilgrim, it may be said that, Tod Friendly is continuously hallucinating or having visions since he pronounces at the very beginning of the novel that “Although my paralysis was pretty well. At any rate, my eyes moved” (4). It is his existential struggle to make and activate his sense; “for the first time in his life, he seemed to be trying to look where he was going” (66) ... “The world is going to start making sense” (115). Tod Friendly strives to go onwards but moves in toward the back in view of the fact that he can not come out the time of holocaust.

Martin Amis refers Einstein’s and Maxwell’s hypothesis that “The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second” (9). Einstein’s theory on time dilation states that nothing can move faster than light and the faster we travel the more time seems to slow. There is an article in *The Daily Star* which elucidates that scientists have lengthened Einstein’s theory that it is possible to travel “faster than light” meaning “motion faster than light is possible” (7). It is my limitation that I can not elaborate this concept but I talk about in terms with literature. It can be said that both Dr. Faustus and Faust travel and reach beyond the normal reality or time. The two legends have conquered the endless power of time. However, in imagination, everything is possible. In imagination or telepathy, time can be utilized as the fastest way. Martin Amis expresses a new time in relation with a metaphysical space.

Chapter 3

Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* is a novel is of time and memory . Here the main character , Tony Webster, is trying to construct, and reconstruct his memory by exploring his life through time .

The first part of the novel is full of disordered memory as the first sentence of the novel is "I remember , in no particular order : "(3) . All human beings are fallible . Memory is selective and fallible. Later Burns mentions that "we live in time- it holds us and moulds us- but I've never felt I understand it very well" (3) .Tony Webster states that he never comprehends time . We know that many scholars believe that time is socially constructed . Clock time does not have any universal value. Time forms us . We cannot come out from time. Our mental and physical metamorphosis lie in time. Julian Barnes depicts that time is all about in mind that emotion makes time faster and slower as well (3). Julian Barnes further argues that "the novel was about character developed over time " (15) . Martin Amis proves that there is a great division between individual time and collective sense .

Julian Barnes explains memory in terms with time that time transforms memory; " to some approximate memories which time has deformed into certainty " (4) . So both time and memory are unexplained and imperfect. Tony Webster searches "for hidden complexities " of life. But he can not get the truth of life as his inexact memory throws him surprises . In the first part of the novel we realize that Tony Webster is retired, divorced, and living alone. He himself is the speaker and listener of his universe that "His action had been unphilosophical , self –indulgent, and inartistic "(14) . The readers can easily comprehend that his suffocating self –consciousness makes his memory so false that his memory does not work properly. So, time has no value in his life.

The "sense of an ending " denotes that ending is the real ending . As a contemporary man , Tony Webster as well as we are wondering. The book longs for making a clear definition of life that Tony Webster needs to look back through time and memory . He takes an attempt

for evaluating what he has done. It is not apparent whether he has confronted the reality of life or he has run away from reality since he declares that memory as well as “time goes faster for me nowadays “ and his life goes “in different directions”(55) . Tony Webster does not know who he is as “the imagination’s first duty was to be transgressive ” (10) .We know that man is born free but everywhere he is fettered. Tony Webster can not come out from the shackles of bygone memory or “imperfections of memory” . It appears that “there is-was-a chain of individual responsibilities” (12) . Tony Webster himself argues that life is not situated in a particular space . Both *Time’s Arrow* and *The Sense of an Ending* prove that through death life can be understood and time and memory as well; “suicide was the true philosophical question ”(13) ... “It had seemed to us philosophically self-evident that suicide was every free person’s right : a logical act ... ”(48) . . . “the longer we live , the less we understand ”.(131)

The novel reverberates the flaw of memory and “reiterations of memory “ and the second part of the novel deconstructs the first part as well as Tony Webster’s memory. In the second part of the novel Tony Webster is philosophical on time and memory and he consciously makes an endeavor to activate his sense . So he is “using light in an attempt to reach greater light” (87) . Tony Webster acknowledges that social issues , new cults like “the fall of communism ... mixture of fear , anxiety, and cautious optimism ” change everybody’s mind, brain, and memory (60). So his “imperfections of memory meet the adequacies of documentation”(59) since he can not comprehend time and its dimension ; in reality , he comprehends nothing . He can not select, constitute, and throw light on anything because “ there is unrest . There is great unrest ”(150) . In this stage his memory arises like a “mechanism” which throws him into an enigmatic situation .

In the second part, Julian Barnes defines time in various ways . These are discussed below :

We are not able to define time as time is incomprehensible; but everything is in time . No one can come out from time and time teaches the exact lesson. (60). Time and memory are connected mutually and intimately in various ways in view of the fact that “memory equals events plus time”(63) and time makes “sense of touch ” (59).

“when we are young , we invent different future for ourselves ; when we are old , we invent different future for others ”(80) . So erstwhile time plays a significant part in life for apprehending the present and the future.

Time adds and subtracts everything in life . Time what gives later takes away . Time gives”us enough time ” , thereafter it makes empty “(93) . So, “our life is not our life , merely the story we have told about our life ”(95).

“I am a great believer in time’s revenge ” (95) indicating that time does not forgive anyone and time has a justice . So, every action has its opposite and equal reaction proved by time.

“I can’t do anything to you now, but time. Time will tell. It always does”(97) . It might be Julian Barnes’ viewpoint that all the hidden questions are answered by time . Time opens the veiled .

Julian Barnes categorizes time into three parts but he does not elaborately discuss the three parts : “objective time ” , “subjective time ”and “personal time” (122). According to him personal time is the actual time as it “is measured in your relationship to memory ” (122). So, time is psychological , it has no rational or mathematical value.

Conclusion

Postmodern novels smash time and space. The characters are dynamic, moving everywhere. In postmodern novels, we experience that the central characters move backward, forward, and upward. They travel into transtemporal time where past, present and future are examined. All the heroes triumphantly journey in time but their journey is entirely beyond our understanding. Dream takes place in a timeless world. The characters dream dreams. "Space and time are the framework in which all reality is concerned" (Cassirer 62). In my research, it is noticeable that the novels talk about abstract space. So, the space is not a space of action or logic and truth is seen as plural. "In the absence of the real, there is only the hyper real" in the novels (Connor 31).

Postmodern novels talk about a new kind of time since the characters see a great number of physical objects than the others see. The contemporary physicists live in "two worlds" (Bell 12: Levenson). Time is the most significant part of physics. In the traditional novels we see the accurate uses of clock and calendar. The leading roles bear, mature, take steps, marry and finally die. Every action happens chronologically in relations with chapters, timepiece and datebook. According to the traditional definition, "a novel is concerned with real life of past or present times" (Hawthorn 9). This idea can not be applied in postmodern novels as in postmodern novels, nothing can be chronologically located in space and time. In *Gulliver's Travels*, we see infinite time and space. Gulliver transcends the limits of human experience but we see the chronological order of earthly clock and calendar. Pluralism and dualism are deeply connected with postmodernism. In *The Strange Case of DrJekyll and Mr Hyde*, we experience that everybody "has two parts" (80); "man is not truly one, but truly two" (V). *Slaughterhouse -five*, *Time's Arrow*, and *The Sense of an Ending* do not continue in a straight line rather in a rounded, twisting, and untwisting shape. There is no continuity of life. The first sentence of my thesis is: time is a fundamental element of the universe. Reality in the three novels is disjoined and illusion. Reality is neither spiritual nor material. It is a reality beyond over a reality. So, time in these novels is disordered and disarray flux and fluid; as the novels

start without conclusion and end without start ; the whole world begins to recreate and quiver . There are two worlds . One is the world we hear and see , the world of talk and action . The other is the imperceptible mental worlds of thoughts, intentions and desires (Gallaty 9). Sometimes the central characters of the postmodern novels transcend the two worlds through time. Julian Murphet defines postmodernism in relation with “special imagination ” and “special turn”. He refers Michel Foucault ‘s voice that “ the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space , no doubt a great deal more than with time . Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space ” (116) . Time has a good connection with self and memory. (That’s why I have slightly focused memory in terms of time in the part of *The Sense of an Ending*) . In *Slaughterhouse-five* , *Time’s Arrow* , and *The Sense of an Ending* , time is constructed and reconstructed as “human existence and history are in someway alienated from the divine” and ... “the individual has become a riddle of himself ” and ...“ the goal and standards of the action are obscure ” and ... “the physical cosmos is indifferent ”(Copsson 141). The world has changed more in the twentieth century than any other time in history . Unrest and violence create great changes which shake the intellectual shackles of the past and give a new way of thinking . Nicholas Spark who is a contemporary novelist has written a novel named *A Walk to Remember*. Unlike Julian Barnes’ Tony Webster and other characters, here, Landon Carter is not affected by the “loss of faith, the groundlessness of value , the violence of war and nameless , fearless anxiety ”(Levenson 5) . Landon Carter expresses the past events chronologically .There is no disharmony and fragmentation in his memory ;“My entire future was on the line here , so I formulated my strategy ”(31). At the beginning of the novel we see that he is “fifty-seven years old ”. He exactly tells and remembers the happenings from “seventeen ” to till now since the happiest events go “round of the brain and mind ”(213) ... “I remember everything as clearly as if it were all still unfolding before my very eyes ”(209). It can be said that the postmodern characters, especially the three novels, have not become familiar with the sweetest moments of life . So, their emotions do not recollect from tranquility . They suffer from “an uncanny sense of moral bottomlessness ” (Levenson 5). It can be said

that time is a debatable issue in the three novels since time in the three novels does not move straight way and the three novelists place time in metaphysical and abstract space .

John Henry Raleigh ascertains three types of time in relation with the novel that the novelists follow three kinds of time- “cosmic time ” or clock-calendar time, “historical time ” or “horizontal line” and “existential time ” or “vertical line” . The 18th and nineteenth century novelists use clock time and historical time. The novels are not completely based on psychology. Their characters as well as everything is clock-governed. The modern and postmodern novelists are highly influenced by existential time. Existential time is “an extreme form of individualism ” that “in all men’s psychological experience, time has different speeds ”(244). It could be said that time in postmodern novel points out existential time since the human sensibility has its own time system. It can make an individual time method . Postmodern figures “live only through others, outside himself” as “chaotic unconscious” elements always propel them towards unconscious (Nicholas 25) . As the characters are machine-minders, their sense of time is on the non-linear features of irrational, subconscious and psychological time. As a final point it could be said that time is not absolute in the postmodern novels and the major figures in the three novels evaluate time through their psychology, experience, awareness, and the existing milieu and they prefer earlier time to present or future time.

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