A Pragma-Stylistic Study of Kurt Vonnegut's
Slaughterhouse-Five and its Arabic Rendition

دراسة تداولية أسلوبية لرواية المسلخ رقم خمسة لكيرت فونيجت
وترجمتها إلى العربية

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Abstract

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) is a renowned American writer who enjoys highly esteem among readers and critics. He is known for his depth of vision and satirical novels, which frequently use postmodern and science fiction techniques. Despite his use of black comedy, postmodern fragmentation, and the concept of non-linear time, his works remains serious, reflecting his humanist concern. His work exposes the horrors and brutalities of wars. Aware of the positive role played by literature, Vonnegut uses his minimalist and seemingly non-serious style to wage a relentless literary war against war injustice, and oppression inflicted by powerful nations, including his own country, the USA, on innocent people. This study presents a pragmastylistic analysis of Vonnegut's novel, *laughterhouse-Five* (1969). In addition, it applies the same approach to the Arabic translation of the novel to assess the translation quality of rendering this important novel into Arabic.

Keywords: Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, pragmastylistics, war, injustice, translation quality assessment.

مستخلص

كيرت فونيجت (١٩٢٢-٢٠٠٧) كاتب أمريكي يحظى بشهرة واسعة وتقدير كبير لدى الكثير من النقاد في انحاء مختلفة من العالم، ويعد من أهم الروائيين الأمريكيين في الفترة المعاصرة. تتسم أعماله برؤية عميقة، وإن كانت ساخرة، وتنتمي إلى نوع الكوميديا السوداء في أسلوب ما بعد حداثي. ورغم السخرية الكوميدية السوداء وما يصاحبها من تشظي في الأسلوب، وهذا ما يميز الكثير من رواياته، إلا ان فونيجت في الحقيقة الأمر إنساني النزعة، فهو يعرف جيدا دور الأدب وكيفية توظيفه في تعميق وعي الإنسان والانشغال بقضاياه. فهو يستخدم هذا الأسلوب غير المباشر ليشن حربا شعواء على الحروب وعلى الظلم الإنساني الذي تصبه القوى العظمى، بما فيها بلده، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، على رؤوس البشر الأبرياء من ظلم ودمار. والدراسة الحالية تحاول تقديم تحليل على منهج التداولية-الأسلوبية لروايته المشهورة تحت عنوان *المسلخ رقم خمسة* (١٩٦٩)، إضافة إلى تطبيق نفس المنهج على الترجمة العربية لهذه الرواية، في مقارنة لاستكشاف مدى جودة الترجمة، وسوف يتم هذا استنادا إلى الاستفادة من دراسات الترجمة الحديثة ومناهج التقييم التداولية والأسلوبية.

كلمات أساسية: فونيجت، المسلخ رقم خمسة، الحرب، الظلم، التداولية الأسلوبية، تقييم جودة الترجمة.

1. Introduction

Slaughterhouse-Five (1969) is an important modern classic of the American literary canon. Kurt Vonnegut (1922–2007) is a prominent American writer and humorist known for his satirical and darkly humorous novels. His deceptively simple style reveals many realities that many people are reluctant to face and are not ready to acknowledge. He is one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. In a terse style, he managed to explore relevant and complex themes, sending messages of peace and justice which reveal the atrocities of war in the manner of black comedy. As an anti-war humanist, he used his unique satirical style to defend free speech and oppose the vicious war waged by both Nazis (the enemies of his country) and his own country's brutal bombing of the German city Dresden, crimes of which he, himself, was an eyewitness.

Vonnegut's simple style is intentionally crafted to serve stylistic and pragmatic purposes. He has a didactic and a humanistic purpose. His art is not meant for itself; it is not art for art's sake. It is not intellectually complex or aesthetically removed from the reality of the human condition.

The novel encapsulates an important message within deceptively simple narrative and dialogues which interweave realistic events with fantastic occurrences in Vonnegut unique sarcastic style. David Andrews (2001), drawing upon a conversation Laurie Clancy (1988) had with Vonnegut, explains that Vonnegut is an anti-aesthete and refuses extreme intellectualism. He is falsely caused of lacking intellectual and aesthetic depth because of his "clear, concise prose style. Vonnegut neither plays "Henry Jamesian games" nor aims for long, lyrically opaque paragraphs, and thus his prose has a 'real simplicity'" (Andrews, 2001, p. 42). This explains Vonnegut's serious art. It is art for the people because "all of Vonnegut's works are informed by his humanism" (p. 18). However, the simplicity and clarity of style do not mean his art is not intellectually and aesthetically rich. On the contrary, Vonnegut's approach is very subtle and has its own intellectual depth and aesthetic splendor. Andrews (2001) posits that:

verbal clarity entails neither compositional nor intellectual simplicity. If novels like *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Bluebeard* are lucid, they are also structurally dense and metaphorically complex. (p. 42)

The main character in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is Billy Pilgrim, an American veteran who served in the American army in the last year of World War II in Dresden, Germany. He was captured by the German troops and, he-like the author-became a prisoner of war who was forced to work in a slaughterhouse, i.e., a meat locker, in Dresden far away from the front. This part of the fictional experience of the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, replicates the personal experience of Vonnegut himself. Vonnegut, who was an American prisoner of war in Germany, was one of the few who survived the Allied firebombing of Dresden on 13 February 1945.

Billy has come unstuck in time as the narrative goes backwards and forwards. The story reveals his death in 1976, while the main events take place in 1945, and the novel itself was published in 1969. Billy jumps around in time and place in a postmodernist technique of non-linear time and mixing the reality with fantasy.

The narrative starts long years after the war and the reader's attention is attracted to the calm atmosphere of post-war Dresden with a covert hint at the atrocities that took place years before that. The central character ,with three other American soldiers, is pushed back in time to 1944 finding themselves lost in a forest behind enemy lines. Billy closes his eyes, reminiscing, and finds himself back in the USA with his father, then opens his eyes to find that it is 1961 while he is visiting his old mother in a nursing home. Back in 1944, Billy cannot grasp what is going on; he is now on a train, a prisoner of war, captured by German soldiers and sent to Eastern Germany. On the train, he experiences other time-travel events.

Billy, representing Vonnegut in a manner, learns from his time travel that if people can see the future and learn the catastrophic consequences of wars, they would not wage wars. He believes that wars can be prevented; they are not disastrous natural

events that man has no power to stop. When, Billy, the imaginary character is put on parade in a zoo, his keepers love to listen to this bizarre creature with all the funny things he says, such as "wars can be prevented".

The Germans move the American prisoners of war to Dresden which is a city with no military value for the enemy; it has no military bases, no troops, and no weapon factories. Instead, it is home to civilian and exquisitely beautiful residential buildings, museums, churches, art galleries, etc. The American POWs are housed in the deserted Slaughterhouse-five. Billy: in his existence in fluid time, knows the city will be heavily bombarded, viciously incinerated, and totally destroyed. Billy and some of his fellow inmates take refuge in a meat locker under the slaughterhouse. When the bombing is over, they go out to find themselves in a totally alien landscape similar to the surface of another planet. Everything has been reduced to ashes, and no life seems to exist on this part of the planet.

The target text contains numerous translation errors of various types, however the study does not aim to enumerate them all. As the objective of the study is to investigate the pragmatic and stylistic elements of both ST and TT However, certain lexical and semantic elements must be investigated since they contribute to the consequent pragmatic effects and the quality of the text. There are no restricted views in pragmastylistics that drive semantics out of the equation as far as it is, contextual not formal. It "is a broader approach, the continental European approach, whose definitions are more liberal" and "is a highly dynamic, developing system" (Hickey, 1993, p. 577).

Slaughterhouse-five is written in a unique style that heavily depends on form to convey its message which makes a pragma-stylistic analysis the natural method that can adequately reveal its *purpose* and *literary value*. The following section will analyze various components of the pragmatic purpose and literary devices which both reveal the significance of this modern classic. The points discussed (lexical denotation and connotations; stylistic

devices; thematic implicature; irony and absurdity; functional syntactic structure; cultural context; style as content) follow the pragmastylistic approach of assessing the quality of the given translation as compared to its source text. Moreover, the Skopos theory adds to its basic rule of *Skopos* (purpose) two more: *the coherence rule* and *the fidelity rule*, in order to cater for accuracy. However, it tends to prioritize the TT, perhaps even adopting "Vermeer's idea of a 'dethronement' (Entthronung) of the source text" (Nord, 2018, p. 24). The current study, notwithstanding, sees that accuracy in transferring the ST to the TT should not suffer drastically as is the case with this particular Arabic translation.

2. Pragmastylistics:

Pragmastylistics has emerged as an approach based on both pragmatics and stylistics to emphasize the contextual elements of literary analysis. Leo Hickey (1993) asserts that "pragmatics coincides with stylistics in that both are directly interested in speakers' choices from among a range of grammatically acceptable linguistic forms" (p. 578) However, pragmatics views these choices as a means of performing action, Stylistics, on the other hand, focuses on linguistics consequences. Merging the two disciplines is not mere combination of the two approaches as their coordinated effort additionally explores the interaction of different ways of analysis. Hickey states:

> Pragmastylistics thus involves the study of all the conditions, linguistic and extralinguistic, which allow the rules and potential of a language to combine with the specific elements of the context to produce a text capable of causing specific internal changes in the hearer's state of mind or knowledge (p. 578).

Hickey further indicates that both disciplines remain distinct in their major points of emphasis, their integration enhances analytical depth as "pragmastylistics offers more complete explanations for many hitherto unexplained phenomena than stylistics or pragmatics can do alone" (p. 579). Chapman and Clark (2014) point out that such wide-ranging explanations are made possible through the work of pragmatists who share goals "to establish the ways in which what words literally mean and what speakers may use them to mean may differ" (p. 2).

Yan Huang (2017) defines pragmatic stylistics as referring to "the application of the findings and methodologies of theoretical pragmatics to the study of the concept of style in language" (p. 14). This endorses the argument of Elizabeth Black (2006) that "Since Pragmatics is the study of language in use (taking into account elements which are not covered by grammar and semantics), it is understandable that stylistics has become increasingly interested in using the insights it can offer (p. 2). Black, furthermore, points out that we now live in a world where meanings are relatively unstable [cf. postmodernism], emphasizing "the role of the reader is that of an interpreter, not a mere passive recipient" (p. 2). This renders meaning-making an interpretative process that varies from one reader to another, depending on more than just linguistic features, i.e., non-grammatical and non-semantic aspects of language. Such new insights necessitate using an interdisciplinary approach (combining stylistics and pragmatics) to deal with both understanding literary works and translating them into other languages. The interdisciplinary of pragma-stylistics enjoys a growing commitment in various branches of linguistic analysis.

The interdisciplinary nature of pragma-stylistics is a genuine bonding of a number of disciplines: linguistics, pragmatics, stylistics, literary theory, cognitive science, etc., which allows understanding nuanced complexities of literary creativity. For instance, referring to communication in narration as analyzed by pragma-stylistics: Barbara McMahon (2014) argues that there is a possibility for multiple layers of voice in narration, referring to the idea of the implied author(s) and the unreliable narrator. Such understanding helps in analyzing sophisticated and postmodernist methods of narration as used by Kurt Vonnegut.

3. Lexical denotation & connotations:

The conventions of English reference to cities, states, or countries are misunderstood: "...a lot like, Dayton, Ohio, ..." is rendered: (17) "مدينة دايتون أو أوهايو ..."; German name Gerhard Müller is a bit Anglicized into جيرارد ميللر instead of جيرهارت مولر (being German has a function in the narrative); communism is rendered as الاشتراكية (socialism) instead of الشيوعية. The change weakens Vonnegut's stance against all forms of oppression under capitalist and communist regimes; he is not against socialism.

River Elbe نهر إلبه is turned to the Alps mountains جبال الألب سفوح. The erroneous choice of certain lexical items instead of others with particular semantic denotations and connotations, in addition to what they create of stylistic, pragmatic, and thematic meanings strips the text of all levels of meaning.

Errors that perhaps arise from unintentional omission can sometimes have an adverse effect on the translated text from the pragmatic perspective, When Billy speaks of himself and his friend O'Haire, saying, "We had never expected to make any money after the war, but we were doing quite well" (p. 3), the translator drops the adverbial *after the war*. The resulting pragmatic effect is that both Billy and O'Hare were expecting to make money from the war like mercenaries. The time frame is their lives after the war. Thus, the omission of the adverbial confuses the reader and stands against the main theme of the text. Sometimes it is not omission that ruins the intended meaning but misrepresentation. The narrator says, "I really did go back to Dresden with Guggenheim money." (p. 1). This is his Guggenheim fellowship. The source text reader knows that this is a grant given to authors of exceptional ability to contribute to the arts and sciences. The fellowship provides funding so that creative writers can focus solely on their work (Guggenheim Foundation, 2024). The translator phrases the Arabic sentence in a manner that makes the narrator look like a money grabber, saying,

نقود كسبتها:عدتُ الآن إلى درسدن مع نقود كسبتها من منحة غوغنهايم.. (ص. ١٧)

Style and lexical choice communicate an intended meaning in a subtle way. The haphazard choice can create an effect (perlocution) not intended by the source text.

The narrator asked to see his "old war buddy" Bernard V. O'Hare (p. 4). The TT gives: صديقي الذي كان جندى حرب عجوز. The friend is not old and even not a soldier by profession; he was a young lawyer doing his military service just like Billy, who knew him in the *old* days when both served in the army. In this part of the narrative, sometime after the war, he is a district attorney in his state. The English text expresses a simple idea, something like صديقي القديم الذي عرفته في زمن الحرب. Both English and Arabic words change meaning according to context, and the larger multilayered context of the novel determines the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, etc. Then the semantic part is further seen in the pragmatic and literary contexts—facts that seem to be

totally ignored by the translator. Moreover, Billy laments the fact of the deteriorating interests of his society, saying,

> We were United World Federalists back then. I don't know what we are now. Telephoners, I guess. (p. 14).

The World Federalist Movement, founded in 1947, is a non-profit and non-partisan organization committed to the realization of global peace and justice. It is not the allied forces, i.e., the Allies of WWII, as the Arabic translation claims,

<div dir="rtl">لقد كنا نحن هناك، في الماضي، قوات الحلفاء المتحدة. ... (ص ٣٠).</div>

Mentioning belonging to the United World Federalist is a thematic reference to the writer's belief in pacifism, which is the main theme of the novel. No glorification of the Allied Forces is intimated at all. The misrepresentation of the basic, but vital, meanings of even the lexical items turns the perlocutionary effect upside down.

4. Stylistic devices:

Vonnegut uses a sarcastic tone when responding to his interlocutor's sarcastic question "Why don't you write an anti-glacier book instead?" (p. 4). The question explains itself as the narrator points out ironically, "... there would always be wars, which they were as easy to stop as glaciers." The comment "*as easy to stop as glaciers*" creates an ironic remark where the intended meaning is the opposite of what is stated. It is not easy, or even possible, to stop a *glacier* (the moving huge mass of ice running down a mountain side). Thus, the literal meaning is that war cannot be stopped as they are like natural phenomena which are impossible to stop. The translator keeps talking about:

<div dir="rtl">الحروب تحدث دائما، كما أن الأنهار الجليدية لا تجري مياهها، ...
كما يتوقف الماء في الأنهار الجليدية. (ص ٢٠)</div>

The back translation of the Arabic rendering fails to convey any meaning. It is rambling about ice rivers and no running water... and water stops in ice rivers. The confusion and total loss of meaning arose from the inability to find an exact Arabic word in many Arabic dictionaries for "glacier," and the translation into rivers confuses the translator who adds to the problem the translation strategy used which is belief in equivalence on the level of the lexical items (which is not even there since many

dictionaries are similarly confused). The translator ignored the meaning gleaned from the paragraph, the chapter, the whole book, the author, the time and place of writing, and those of the real-life experience. A translator can use one of two strategies either re-express the sarcastic tone, or resort to explicitation and say something like, "You can't stop war as you can't stop natural phenomena of glaciers moving under the pressure of gravity and their own tremendous weight". Sarcasm is a stylistic device which adds emphasis to the meaning. The whole novel's style is humorous of the black comedy type. If this is not accounted for, the conveyed meaning is diminished or even lost.

Vonnegut's humorous style evident in his choice of words that create a mocking tone. Billy Pilgrim and his group were captured as prisoners of war in Germany. On their way, they passed by German reserve troops eagerly rushing to fight at the front. The narrator describes them, narrating that they:

> .. were festooned with machine-gun belts, smoked cigars and guzzled booze. They took wolfish bites from sausages, patted their horny palms with potato-masher grenades. .. One soldier in black was having a drunk hero's picnic all by himself on top of a tank. (p. 82)

The choice of merry, festivity-sounding words and phrases, such as "festooned," "guzzled booze," "wolfish," "horny," and "potato-masher," creates an atmosphere of levity and party-going, which stands in contrast with their grave and dangerous mission. They are heading towards acts of war where many of them will certainly die. The stylistic device of irony foregrounds the theme of the absurdity of war. The idea of absurdity is expressed stylistically and pragmatically, where the reader grasps the intention of the author through the manner and context of expression. The idea is not expressed lexically. The translator has to grasp this just like the native English speaker, and transfer the same levity and irony. However, the Arabic text uses a grave tone:

كانوا يرتدون أحزمة مدججة بذخيرة الأسلحة الرشاشة، يدخنون السيجار ويسرفون في الشرب. كانت أكفهم الشبقة تقبض على القنابل اليدوية الألمانية التي تشبه هراسة البطاطا، وكان هناك جندي أسود فوق الدبابة قد شرب لوحده ما يكمن أن يُسكر مجموعة كاملة من الناس .. (ص ٩٧)

The humorous "festooned with" مزينة بأكاليل turns into the grave مدججة. Vonnegut is poking fun at these soldiers not praising their solemn appearance. The rest of the Arabic choice of words ignores the register and funny nature of the words, e.g., *guzzle booze* becomes the equivalent of the neutral *drink a lot*, etc. The soldier who was drinking "a hero's picnic all by himself" is an image of a party of one, where party means festivity, not consuming the provision of a whole *party* meaning group. The error of turning party (festivity) into party (group) strips the situation of its comic tone. Other simple linguistic errors also recur as in the rest of the text. The *soldier in black* becomes *a black soldier*. A German soldier in black uniform in Hitler's racist Nazi army *is* black.

Furthermore, an important stylistic device that rhythmically unifies the various parts of the text and foregrounds an essential thread of the major theme is ignored. This is *repetition* which is a stylistic and a pragmatic device that gives a rhythmical beat to the narrative text and carries across authorial intent. Vonnegut uses this rhetorical device as a refrain on a large scale that engulfs the whole novel in order to both give unity and aesthetic effect to his message. Facing death, the expression "So it goes" is repeated at the end of some passages of the narrative in a similar way to a refrain in an epic poem .Structurally, it creates cohesion which binds together the disparate chunks of narrative and the seemingly unrelated events. Thematically, the phrase "so it goes" emphasizes the feeling of resignation (passive acceptance of what had happened) but still stirs resistance against future man-made catastrophes. It is used a hundred and six times in the novel to punctuate the stage immediately after deaths and other catastrophes. It is an indication of fatalism seen from a

philosophical point of view, which means that the past cannot be changed and there will always be evil practiced by the greedy against the innocent, or natural disasters will always take place, but this does not mean that there is no hope and people cannot try to alleviate pains if they cannot prevent them. It is also an existentialist stance which faces the loss of meaning by the subject creating meaning. Vonnegut is a humanist and not a postmodernist in his basic beliefs.

For the effect of the repeated expression "So it goes" to be accomplished it has to be repeated verbatim, i.e., exactly in the same wording and manner. When the translator chooses an equivalent expression, this expression also has to be repeated verbatim in the target text, which is not the case in the given translation.

The English "So it goes" is omitted in the Arabic translation when it first occurred. The next occurrences vary greatly, for instance, the novel gives different translations such as:

وما إلى ذلك من هذه الأمور (ص ٢٤)؛ وهذا ما حصل. (٤٢)؛ كل ذلك سيمضي (٤٩)؛ إلخ.

Moreover, many occurrences are omitted. These omissions and variations occur at random. Translation is whimsical and at best lexical. Even the division into paragraphs is random and the literal translation itself is ridden with mistakes and misunderstands. Unfortunately, the total negligence of form and literary devices is a strategy adopted by the translator.

All stylistic devices, such as this repetition, should be reproduced in the TT. In literary works, form is part of the content; they work together to create meaning. Missing both the stylistic and pragmatic functions of the repeated tagline "So it goes" rendered the translation bland stylistically and ineffective pragmatically.

5. Thematic implicature:

Most important of all is the main message or the authorial intent. Is it carried across to the target text? Does the target text stir the same feelings and evoke the same or similar emotional and intellectual reaction as the ST does to the source reader?

Vonnegut has a unique and subtle way of infusing what looks like matter-of-fact narrative and banal conversations with his deep grief and adamant condemnation of war atrocities, especially the catastrophic destruction and incineration of almost the whole city of Dresden with its inhabits. The narrator mentions his German cabdriver Gerhard Müller whose mother "was incinerated in the Dresden firestorm" (p.2). The TT reads:

وكانت أمه قد أُحرقت في درسدن على يد قوات العاصفة. (ص ١٨).

The American-British *fire-storm* is turned into the German *Storm Troopers*, flipping the main theme upside down.

Vonnegut spent 23 years contemplating and writing drafts of his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), which is based on his experience of the **firebombing** of Dresden in 1945. He was an American prisoner of war, captive in a slaughterhouse in Dresden. He was one of the few eye-witnesses who saw first-hand the brutal destruction of Dresden under three successive waves of British and U.S. aircraft raids, dropping thousands of tons of high explosives and incendiary bombs, causing the *firestorm* that reaped the lives of around 250,000 people (Vonnegut & McConnell, 2019, p. 30). The reaction of the novelist to this event is the major theme of the novel. It is this *firestorm* that is referred to on page two of the novel as a reference to the brutal bombing, causing the *firestorm* whose Arabic translation should be عاصفة نارية ناجمة عن قصف واسع النطاق بقنابل حارقة. On the other hand, قوات العاصفة used in the translation are, in fact, the German *Sturmabteilung*, i.e., Storm Division or Storm Troopers, who were the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party.

It was the American-British firestorm bombardment that incinerated the German Müller's mother among thousands of others of her fellow citizens and American prisoners of war. The German Storm Troopers did not burn alive the German citizens in Dresden; it was the American-British raids that did that. The Arabic translation reversed the fact since it did not know who did what to whom.

Translation evaluation indicates that the intended meaning, overt and covert, implied in the illocutionary force of the narrative is lost when the translator ignored the stylistic and pragmatic components of the source text and resorted solely to the apparent and confused dictionary meanings of isolated lexemes.

The theme of a novel, the underlying message, the illocution meant to bring about perlocution, is embedded in the events and the stylistic devices employed in the narrative and dialogues. The passing reference to the firebombing is just one example among many.

Another example is the use of the sentence "So it goes" which is repeated at the end of some passages similar to a refrain in an epic poem—the point is discussed *stylistically* in the previous section **3.2**. The translator either omitted some instances of the repeated refrain, or gave a different translation each time. The result is that the implied thematic value expressing resignation to the inevitability of death while rejecting all wars and man's injustices inflicted on innocent people is lost in the translation. Almost all the points discussed, connotations, irony, absurdity, functional syntax, cultural context, etc., carry thematic implicature as discussed in the relevant sections.

6. Irony and Absurdity:

The narrator asks O'Hare whether the incident of executing a soldier for a petty theft offence can be the climax of his story, i.e., the narrator being extremely ironic as the wholesale crime of incinerating thousands and thousands of innocent civilians goes unpunished. "Don't you think that's really where the climax should come?" (p. 6). The Arabic text clumsily turns the question

about "whether" the incident should be the climax (black comedy) into merely "where" to put "this plot" in the text: أين تعتقد أن نضع هذه الحبكة ضمن الحكاية (ص ٢٢). That is to say, the narrator has already made up his mind, taking for granted that this *is* the climax. This is a misrepresentation of the ST at the level of lexical and semantic components, leading to damaging the literary and pragmatic levels. The authorial intent is engaging the reader in thinking about the irony of the whole situation, and why the author did not simply write a memoir recalling the events riddled with the atrocities just like any other war novel. The illocutionary force of the author's utterance question is so powerful that it jolts the readers and the world into realizing the absurdity of what happened in Dresden. The pragmatic question wakes them up to face the absurdity of the whole situation. It is not a harsh world. It is an absurd world where even anti-Nazi forces behave in a Nazi manner, or worse—hence all the black comedy and the circular time. The question is a rhetorical one and not a simple inquiry waiting for an answer. It is a condemnation camouflaged under an apparently innocent inquiry. It is rather comic in the sense of black humor which makes the readers look into the abyss of our brutally absurd world. Incinerating a quarter of a million of innocent civilians and POWs [friendly fire?], and destroying a whole city viciously is not a big crime, but stealing a teapot is.

Irony abounds in Vonnegut's style. The narrator refers to the book he is working on, i.e., *Slaughterhouse-Five*, saying, "This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt" (p. 28). The book *is not* a failure, and the speaker is proud of it, which is ironic. The irony is clear when the sentence is read within its contexts. The smaller context is the previous lines on the same page, where he admired Lot's wife for "looking back" for which act she got punished, i.e., turned into a pillar of salt. "People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore," which is ironic too. He certainly looks back, as the next sentence reads, "I've finished my war book now" which is looking back. The larger context of the sentence is the large part of Vonnegut's literary career writing this book as his life's message and all he stands for—*looking back*, raising people's consciousness, attempting to prevent future wars. The Arabic translation does not see the irony since it takes one word at a time,

and does not see words, phrases and sentences in their multi-layered context. The translator turned "had to be" into the Arabic equivalent of "It should be,"

> This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was
> written by a pillar of salt. (p. 28)

هذا الكتاب فاشل، ويجب أن يكون كذلك لأنه كُتب بيد عمود من الملح. (ص ٤٣)

Using يجب means the writer emphatically agrees to describing his book as a failure, instead of complaining that *it had* to fail [كان من المقدر له أن يفشل] under the circumstances that prevent us from studying the past to save the future. The narrator was earlier mocked for writing an anti-war book (p. 4).

7. Functional syntactic and semantic structures and paratext:

The syntactic structures of language do the various functions that language performs. This particular novel uses linguistic functions to express more than the surface meanings; it builds up its unique style where almost all the sentences and phrases *do* a function that is more than the dictionary meaning. Functional grammar proves a valuable tool exactly because it can show the workings of grammar on several levels and scrutinize the importance of individual grammatical features (Kavalir. 2006). Boundary (1993) notes that "It is Vonnegut's complex mixture of tones, techniques, genres, and cultural levels that makes *Slaughterhouse-Five* both a great work of popular science fiction and a 'postmodern' novel" (Bradbury, 1993, p. 216).

The syntax used by the writer varies according to the different purposes of parts of the narration. It is generally minimalistic with very short and simple sentences, but with the change of mood and tone when quoting historical books, or an elegant description of Dresden's architecture, the syntax becomes formal and more complex. Verb tense puts events in order, without which the content of the text would be misunderstood if understood at all. A simple and banal use of the past perfect tense can connect to a thread leading to the major theme. In a reference

to Lot's wife looking back despite being forbidden to do so, the narrator says he loved her for that. He identifies with her because he too is forbidden to look back because symbolically this means remembering Dresden's catastrophe. She looked back at where all those people and their homes *had been*. This is similar to the landscape of Dresden after the bombardment. In the following quotation the narrator mentioned that:

> And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back
> where all those people and their homes had been.
> But she did look back, and I love her for that,
> because it was so human. (p. 28)

However, the Arabic text says,

> وزوجة لوط، كما هو معروف قيل لها ألا تلتفت إلى الوراء عندما ينزل العذاب على هؤلاء ... لكنها التفتت، وأنا أحبها لأجل هذا .. لأنها كانت حركة إنسانية جدا. (ص ٤٣)

This makes her look back at what is happening, not what had happened. That's to say she is looking at the "torture" العذاب [not in the English text], not looking at what had happened earlier or remembering it. What had happened earlier is a biblical description which is amazingly similar to what had happened in Dresden—*brimstone and fire*, etc., similar to *incinerating bombs and firestorm*. Looking back at what had been is simply writing this novel. The past perfect and the fine understanding of the text as lexical items and verb tense are neglected, which leads to not grasping the intended meaning (illocution) of studying the past and bringing its memory up to the present. The effect on the reader (perlocution) is lost. The translation mishandles the text on different levels. The narrator loved her because her act was so "human" not "humane"—it is أن يفعل ذلك من طبيعة الإنسان not حركة إنسانية جدا.

Linguistic modality represents some difficulty for an Arab learner of English as a foreign language. This is especially the case when the false idea of lexical equivalence rules supreme. Words like *must* or *should* do not give the dictionary meaning يجب. Their meanings as modal verbs vary a great deal according to the linguistic structure they happen to occur within. Modality is

> a resource speakers and writers use when they are staking claims to knowledge: it allows them to formulate different kinds of claims (e.g., assertions, opinions, hypotheses, speculations) and indicate how committed they are to those claims. … Learners must acquire the skill of making claims in a way that comes across as judicious— neither too weak to carry conviction nor so strong as to ride roughshod over reasonable doubts. (Cameron, 2007, p. 75)

When the narrator complains that he has written many pages and then destroyed them and started again, he says:

> I must have written five thousand pages by now, and thrown them all away. (p. 19)

The Arabic translation:

> لو كنت قد بدأت بكتابته في وقته لكنت قد كتبت خمسة
> آلاف صفحة حتى الآن .. ولألقيت بها جانبا. (ص ٣٥)

The English modal structure *I must have written* denotes a strong inference about the past with an affirmative meaning, similar to the Arabic لابد أنني كتبت. It is not a conditional denoting what could have happened but did not happen. The Arabic text seems to get confused when English modal verbs or structures are used, as in other parts of translation. This is the result of looking at languages as isolated lexical items with perfectly equivalent isolated lexical items in other languages.

Furthermore, from a paratextual point of view, the layout of the text is designed by the author to complement his style as content, i.e., the manner the text is laid out on the page, and the simplicity or complexity of sentence structure work together to emphasize certain points and to create a certain effect which differs with the change of form. The third paragraph of the first chapter, as an instance of many others, is divided into three paragraphs. Other short paragraphs and short sentences are lumped together. The ST divided paragraphs into smaller sections, done significantly to create perlocutionary effect. Short and long sections are marked by lines of three asterisks. For instance, a highly significant short paragraph of simple sentences is laid out on the page thus:

***

We were United World Federalists back then. I don't know what we are now. Telephoners, I guess. We telephone a lot—or I do, anyway, late at night.
*** (p. 14)

In the TT, there is no such division. When divisions made they are haphazard, not mirroring the ST whose divisions are intended to create a sharp effect or emphasize threads of the thematic content.

Another paratextual element ignored is the use of text typeface and other formatting elements to make quoted texts stand out and not merge into the flow of the narration and get merged with the narrator's words. The English text, as is the norm, uses different font type or *italics* to set the boundaries of the quoted texts. It even includes the Goethe quote in its original German with no English translation, which makes it clear as an inserted quote and another voice in the polyphonic text. The TT ignores that and treats some quotations as words of the narrator. For instance, the narrator tells how he picked up a history book on Dresden, and quotes the words of the writer, which are clearly separated from the words of the narrator thus:

It was published in 1908, and its introduction began:

It is hoped that this little book will make itself useful. It attempts to give to an English-reading public a bird's-eye view of how Dresden came to look as it does, architecturally … (p. 21)

The Arabic text merges narrator's words an quotation:

وكان الكتاب قد نشر سنة ١٩٠٨ وتبدأ المؤلفة مقدمتها بأملها أن يكون الكتاب مفيدا. كان الكتاب معدا ليعطي نظرة عامة عن درسدن للقارئ الانجليزي العام كما هي في الواقع، من ناحية معمارية .. (ص ٣٨)

It is not clear whose voice the reader is hearing. The words of the quoted writer and those of the narrator are mixed, contrary to the clear demarcation set by the ST author. If italics look ugly in Arabic, there are other options such as quotation marks, change of typeface (font), and indenting the quoted text.

In this particular novel, form with all its components, text structure and layout included, is highly significant and can be described as content.

8. Cultural context:

Vonnegut situates his novel in a tradition. His reference to writers such as Ferdinand Céline, together with quoting some lines of his poetry and ideas, is part of the meaning and significance of his work. Transferring the references accurately helps in carrying across the context of the ST to the TT, reproducing the context and its associated atmosphere. The surrounding cultural aspects, quoting Goethe, Theodore Roethke, and Céline as literary figures, and Charles Mackay as a historian, set a serious mood which offsets the ludic part (playful), the science fiction, and what seems like low-brow comedy. Vonnegut weaves all this in a post-modernist style of fragmentation, collage, non-linear time, and seemingly unreliable narrator. However, the novel is serious enough to deserve rigorous accuracy and an honest functional approach, which carries across this mixed mood.

Unfortunately, the Arabic translation of this deceptively simple novel ignores the seriousness of the ST. The sentence "My other book was Erika Ostrovsky's *Céline and His Vision*" (p. 26) is translated as:

كان كتابي الآخر بقلم سيلين ايريكا اوستروفسكي (ص ٤٢)

The other book the narrator was carrying with him is, in fact, written by Erika Ostrovsky about the French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline as the norms of writing English tell the reader, using italics. The Arabic text cannot see the title سيلين ورؤيته and merges the writer Erika Ostrovsky with the subject matter of the book. The writer, a woman, becomes a man called the bizarre Celine Erica Ostrovsky. Later on, the TT reads وذكرني أوستروفسكي in the masculine. If the reader is so misled about the title of the book and the name of the writer, being presented by garbled information, how can the mood, meaning, and significance be communicated and the total effect created as Translation Studies with all its different approaches requirements?

The historian Charles Mackay's views are garbled as well. Mackay had a low opinion of all Crusades, which means he did not respect them; he despised them. He criticized their campaigns as misguided, or even a delusion of the crowd, resulting in immense suffering and great human and material losses. The Arabic translation turns 'low opinion' into the equivalent of 'was not much interested in them':

> Mackay had a low opinion of all Crusades. The Children's Crusade struck him as only slightly more sordid than the ten Crusades for grown-ups. (19-20)

> لم يُبدِ ماكاي اهتماما كبيرا بالحروب الصليبية ككل، بينما كانت حملة الأطفال الصليبية أقل تأثيرا بالنسبة له من الحملات الصليبية العشر التي قام بها البالغون. (ص ٣٦)

Furthermore, while the English text expresses *low* opinion of *all* Crusades in order to include the Children's Crusade, the Arabic text mistranslate *low*, turns *all* into generally, and renders *slightly more sordid* as of less effect أقلّ تأثيرا. The meaning intended by Mackay is that "it was *sordid*" [morally degraded, تتسم بالخسة] only a little more so.

The reference to Mackay's book and the subsequent long quote are an example of Vonnegut's extensive use of intertextuality, which he does intentionally. The deceptive simplicity of the novelist's style may confuse the reader/translator into thinking that the allusions and quotations used are also simple, trivial, or just mere fillers. They are, however, there for a purpose which a pragmastylistic reading of the text reveals.

The cultural background gives words their meaning. In the same context of criticism of the Crusades, there is criticism of the false idea of heroism as depicted in medieval romance stories. The quote from Mackay's book explains that history teaches us that the crusaders were ignorant and savage men while romance [not Romanticism] exaggerates the qualities of heroism and religious piety of these crusaders. Silly romance stories bestow a false halo on some warriors of the past. In contrast, romanticism of the 19th century is a literary movement with no such ideas. The translator confuses the two as he rendered ST as follows:

وفي جانب آخر كان الفكر الرومانسي قد طغى على فكر التقوى والمجد (ص٣٦)

On the source text: "Romance, on the other hand, dilates upon their piety and heroism" (p. 20). There is neither "romantic thought" in the ST, nor was it mentioned that the…..

There is no "romantic thought" in the ST, neither is there romanticism overwhelming piety and glory. Even if the difference between romance and romanticism is ignored, the lexical and syntactic structure of the ST sentence does not say something like *overwhelm* طغى but *dilate* بالغ في تمجيد. The English sentence can be paraphrased as: The popular stories of love and chivalry greatly exaggerated the glory and religious piety of these Crusaders. Thus romance (or mistakenly romanticism) *praised* piety and glory, not *denigrated* them. The major theme of this novel, *Slaughterhouse-five*, is to see wars and warmongers in their sordid reality. This is entirely different from writers and movies that glorify wars. In an interview, Vonnegut said he was determined to write about war without romanticizing it (Vitale, 2022).

The narrative includes a quote from Goethe in its original German without an English translation. Translators have two ways to do so: either retain the original text in their translation or that of the others, or give an accurate translation in the target language.

The Arabic translation opted for giving a translation in the target language. However, the translation from German is inaccurate. The meaning of the German text includes the fact that the architecture of the church, *Frauenkirche*, is a marvel of a master builder who had already prepared the church and dome for such an undesirable eventuality and made it bomb-proof. Nevertheless, the Arabic equivalent is truncated and gives the opposite meaning, talking instead about the harm that hit the church and the dome; it reads:

رغم إصابة القبة والكنيسة بأضرار القنابل الظاهرة على محياها (ص ٣٩).

Slaughterhouse-Five is a work of art that lives within a tradition, and it is understood and appreciated as such. Reading Theodore Roethke's lines of poetry within this novel create literary connotations, experiential learning, and extra meanings. The poetic tradition of the English language, British, and American, is one whole, a continuous stream, a large context. Enriching his narrative with intertextuality that is meant to shed more light on his basic theme, Vonnegut, quotes the first tercet (a stanza of three lines) of Roethke's villanelle (19-line poem of five tercets followed by a quatrain) "The Waking":

> *I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.*
> *I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.*
> *I learn by going where I have to go.* (p. 26)

The first line contains a paradox about waking or sleeping that can be interpreted as symbolizing life and death. The lines have a contemplative tone and philosophical meanings. We wake in order to go to sleep again; we are born and have life, then walk slowly towards death in a cycle of life and death. American poet Theodore Roethke (1908-1963) urges people to appreciate each moment in their lives. This arises from the fear of the world

ending in the conflagration of wars. The purpose of the poem coincides with that of Vonnegut's book, which explains the intertextuality. Thus, we can slow down the natural process by enjoying life while we can. The context of the ideas of both Vonnegut and Roethke is one of the aftermaths of WWII. Moreover, reading Vonnegut and Roethke in this small context immediately invokes a larger context of lines of poetry such as Shakespeare's *To die: to sleep*, Wordsworth's "To Sleep," and Robert Frost's "*And miles to go before I sleep*". The analysis of this point requires a whole study, and the limitation of the current one does not allow for that. It is sufficient to say that the ST reader will have all that in the back of his/her mind, and the desired effect will be accomplished. Vonnegut's intended effect is secured in English. Sadly, the Arabic translation ignores all that, fails to understand the paradox, excises it and gives the funny:

استيقظتُ لأشربَ.
ولكي أبطئ استيقاظي.
أنا أخطو متأخرا نحو ما لا أخافه.
وأتعلم عبر ذهابي إلى ما يجب أن أذهب إليه. (ص ٤٢)

The tercet (turned quatrain) bizarrely solved the problem of the paradox and all the traditions of poetry, literature, philosophy, and translation studies. The poet wakes up because he craves a drink of water!

As in the rest of the TT, the syntax is misunderstood and misrepresented because the translator thinks that words in isolation have meaning and this is all that matters. Earlier in this study, section 3.5, it was shown how the translator rendered "had to be" into the Arabic equivalent, "It should be." Here again, in the translation of Roethke's lines which speak of fate and predetermination (the same as one thread of Vonnegut's theme), the poet uses "have to" and the translation gives the equivalent of "should," reversing the meaning from *necessity* to *advisability*. This is also a proof that lexical items, syntax, and semantics are the basic foundation on which pragmatic purpose is built. Misrepresenting the substructure of the text causes the literary and perlocutionary superstructures to falter and collapse.

9. Conclusion:

Applying the tenets of pragmastylistics to Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and its Arabic translation, the current study investigated stylistic and pragmatic elements of the novel, which is written in a deceptively simple minimalist style, hence the difficulty to grasp the intended meanings and the main purpose of writing the novel. Despite the postmodernist style of fragmentation, black comedy, nonlinear time, science fiction, and the absurd, seemingly frivolous events, the text has a serious purpose that is embedded in almost every line and creates a literary total effect.

The given Arabic translation failed to grasp some parts of the immediate context (mostly linguistic and literary). Consequently, most of the meanings created by the wider context was absent, leading to the loss of illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects intended by the author of the ST. In addition, the literary quality with most of its fine stylistic aspects was sacrificed. The lexical translation neglected form, which is an essential part of literary meaning.

The current study examined various aspects of style, theme, context, lexical connotations, and functional syntax in order to compare the rendering of such elements in both ST and TT. The outcome shows how the given Arabic translation failed to recreate a TT that carries across the authorial intent and the main purpose of writing this novel as understood by both pragmatics and stylistics.

The *Slaughterhouse-Five* translator did not seem to have done any research on the novel, its author and cultural contexts, nor did he try to acquire some knowledge concerning the art and science of translation. Basic references to the major theme, epitomized in the destruction of Dresden, were missed because the author expressed the theme within layers of irony and satirical rendering. In addition, the translator did not understand the technique of intertextuality and dealt with allusions and incorporated texts from the canon of the English literature as mere lexical items with strange meanings since he could not see their relation to the thematic elements in the novel. Thus, allusions to ideas of Goethe, Roethke, Céline and Charles Mackay were all misunderstood and misrepresented.

The Arabic translation of this masterpiece is mostly a poor dictionary work where single words are chosen at random in an effort to produce a target text that is lexically equivalent to the source. It ignores all what a translator can learn from translation studies: contexts, dynamic equivalence, lexical items having different meanings according to lexical, cultural, stylistic, and pragmatic contexts. Mere and meager knowledge of some lexis and a little grammar do not make a translator.

This example is a wake-up call and a couple of questions addressed to publishers: How many books are translated in this manner? Why do you allow innocent readers and scholars in the Arab world to be deceived into thinking they are really reading very important works of world culture?

Moreover, the current researcher would like to attract attention to Antoine Berman's retranslation hypothesis. Berman (1985) posits that first translations may be tending more towards domesticating the text to make it easier to read for the target reader. A need emerges to retranslate the same source texts in order to be more faithful to the original even if this means tending towards foreignization. Berman urges translators not to be satisfied with transferring the content, while ignoring form, tone and historicity (Berman, 1985, p. 128). The current researcher would like to add to Berman's hypothesis that, in the current situation of publishers dumping bad translations on the market, retranslations have become a categorical imperative.

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