

## BIOPOLITICAL VIOLENCE: TRACES OF WAR IN THE WORKS OF LIVANELİ AND VONNEGUT *THE LAST ISLAND* BY ZÜLFÜ LİVANELİ AND *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* BY KURT VONNEGUT

BİYOPOLİTİK ŞİDDET: LİVANELİ VE VONNEGUT'UN ESERLERİNDE SAVAŞ İZLERİ ZÜLFÜ LİVANELİ – *SON ADA* VE KURT VONNEGUT – *MEZBAHA-5*

**İrem Şevin KORKMAZ**

Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, School of Social Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, [iremsevin.korkmazz@gmail.com](mailto:iremsevin.korkmazz@gmail.com)

Van / Türkiye

ORCID: 0009-0003-5041-7453

**Prof. Dr. Bülent Cercis TANRITANIR**

Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, [bcercis@gmail.com](mailto:bcercis@gmail.com)

Van / Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0002-3276-7922

### Abstract

This article explores Biopolitic Violence very briefly in a Turkish novel *The Last Island* of Zülfü Livaneli, and American novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* of Kurt Vonnegut, which are significant novels representing the intersection of personal choices and national power play, when a nation is completely shaken by war and societal change. In a comparative perspective, the study explicates how the two authors express the psychological and existential implications of violence, and it shows how political power abuses and limits the subjects. Vonnegut's book, with its post-modern style and black humor, reflects the senselessness of war and the collapse of time for its hero, Billy Pilgrim. By contrast, Livaneli's sensitive depiction of life on a remote island becomes a metaphor for wider social dislocations, portraying the battles for identity and permanence in a post-conflict world. Through the examination of representations of trauma, memory and resilience in both texts, this study seeks to uncover the ubiquitous influence of biopolitical violence on humanity in general thus further enabling a critical understanding of how literature mirrors and deconstructs the repressive tactics of state authority in a moment of crisis.

**Keywords:** Biopolitical Violence, War, Identity, Existentialism, State Power

## Özet

Bu makale, Zülfü Livaneli'nin *Son Ada* adlı Türk romanı ve Kurt Vonnegut'un *Slaughterhouse-Five* adlı Amerikan romanında biyopolitik şiddeti çok kısa bir şekilde incelemektedir. Bu eserler, bir ulusun savaş ve toplumsal değişimle sarsıldığı bir dönemde kişisel seçimler ile ulusal güç oyunlarının kesişimini temsil eden önemli romanlardır. Karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısıyla, çalışma iki yazarın şiddetin psikolojik ve varoluşsal etkilerini nasıl ifade ettiğini açıklamakta ve siyasi gücün özneyi nasıl istismar edip sınırladığını göstermektedir. Vonnegut'un postmodern tarzı ve karanlık mizahı, savaşın anlamsızlığını ve kahramanı Billy Pilgrim'in zamanın çöküşünü yansıtmaktadır. Buna karşılık, Livaneli'nin uzak bir adadaki yaşamı hassas bir şekilde tasvir etmesi, daha geniş toplumsal çalkantılar için bir metafor haline gelmekte ve çatışma sonrası dünyada kimlik ve kalıcılık mücadelesini gözler önüne sermektedir. Her iki metindeki travma, bellek ve dayanıklılık temalarının incelenmesi yoluyla bu çalışma, biyopolitik şiddetin insanlık üzerindeki yaygın etkisini ortaya çıkarmayı ve edebiyatın kriz anlarında devlet otoritesinin baskıcı taktiklerini nasıl yansıttığını ve çözümlediğini eleştirel bir anlayışla kavramayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Biyopolitik Şiddet, Savaş, Kimlik, Varoluşçuluk, Devlet Gücü

## Introduction

Biopolitical violence is a complex and crucial conceptual tool which illuminates the layered and pervasive ways in which contemporary societies and states regulate individual bodies. The idea, firmly grounded in the philosophy of Michel Foucault, includes the power relations that determine how life must be governed, but also how people are made subject, in turn, to forms of violence, both physical and psychic. It is stated in the book as “Foucault was undoubtedly a thinker whose work presents a compelling, unique, and cohesive set of political ideas. It is valuable to examine his contributions in their entirety, as he was a bold, resourceful, and innovative political theorist and activist.” (Foucault, 2019, p. 1) At a time when there are rising modalities of state control, militarization, and the objectification of human life, the understanding of biopolitical violence is vital for making sense of governance and authority in the present moment.

Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* are two major works in which the politics of biopower are probed. Both novels explore the soul-destroying consequences of war and violence on the human mind, personal and collective traumas that return in the wake of such events. In Livaneli's *The Last Island*, he weaves an emotional tale about the plight of those who get trapped between political chaos and social commotion. The characters move carefully with their identities in a terrain of state power which is enacted through repressive means, and we recognize how the biopolitical control affects their lives and their decisions. Hanson indicates that “His title, *The Last Island*, strongly resembles that of wealthy leaders from the US or Turkey—individuals who are so despised that they have lost both their identities and their humanity.” (Hanson, 2022, p. 68)

Vonnegut's own *Slaughterhouse-Five*, on the other hand, is a different take on war – it explores a non-linear narrative, reflecting of the novel's protagonist's disjointed sense of time and memory. By the way of Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut investigates the stupidity of war as well as the powerlessness of mankind when confronted with ultimate evil. The book investigates psychological trauma in the aftermath of war, revealing the impact of biopolitical violence that not only inspires those involved to act, but extends into the fabric of society, shaping collective memory and identity. Edelstein explains in his work as follows:

“Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an unusual book that contrasts satirical observations of suburban life in America during the 1950s and 1960s with the grim realities of death and war, particularly the firebombing of Dresden in the final days of World War II, alongside the challenging time-travel experiences of the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim” (Edelstein, 1974, p. 128).

In their narratives, both Livaneli and Vonnegut used the literary structures themselves to challenge your understandings of agency, memory, and what it means to be a human being when those things are forced under state authority by violence. They show how individuals struggle to recover their identities shot through in the chaos sown by biopolitical forces. The present study aims to make a comparative analysis of the representations of biopolitical violence in *The Last Island* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Through a critical look at the psychological and social consequences of these depictions, this research can contribute more generally to discussion on literature and its place as reflector or critic of human society at large. This kind of reading also looks at the interface between memory and identity, between survivors' guilt or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and how those can often be intertwined in very complicated ways. Javidi and Yadollahie state that "Significant traumatic events that often lead to PTSD include warfare, violent personal attacks (such as sexual assault and physical violence), being taken hostage or kidnapped, imprisonment as a prisoner of war, torture, terrorist attacks, and serious car accidents." (Javidi & Yadollahie, 2012, p. 3) In short, it seeks to contribute a corrective against the silly over-emphasis on isolated cases that some critics use to prove particular political points. It provides evidence that literature usually speaks to community as well as merely individual practice.

Through this examination, the research will encourage critical reflection on the sensitivity required to engage with the actual stakes of biopolitical violence in literary depictions, and the extent to which these narratives may function, not only as mirrors of the real, but as sites of compassion and social indictment. Duarte emphasizes as follows:

"To support the introduction of the concept of biopolitics in contexts where it was not initially present, it is essential to grasp how biopolitical violence has emerged as a unifying factor in contemporary politics. This phenomenon diminishes the gap between modern mass representative democracies and totalitarian systems" (Duarte, 2005, p. 3).

Finally, this inquiry will demonstrate the continuing relevance of Livaneli's and Vonnegut's texts in the ongoing dialogues on war, the state, and the indomitable nature of the human spirit in the most trying of circumstances.

### **Definition and Significance of Biopolitical Violence**

Bio-political violence is a term that arises from the nexus of political theory, philosophy and sociology, largely grounded in the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault. It refers to the means by which sovereign power reaches into individual lives and populations, through technologies that govern aspects of life including birth, death, and health and other socially significant areas of existence. Gimbo explains that "The life targeted by biopower is always a life intertwined with language, which acts, which is transforms, which is in relation to itself and to others, is a social and individual life, corporeal and cultural, temporal and spatial cial." (Gimbo, 2018, p. 67) This violence isn't always overt; it is often subtle, systemic violence that normalizes and disciplines bodies within a culture.

At its core, biopolitical violence means merely that modern states do not simply use physical force to operate. They derive their power as well from controlling life itself. This involves regulating population movement, health care policies, surveillance systems and even code enforcement measures. In this way, biopolitical violence may be understood as a type of strength that works in such a way as to legitimize activities even though these might deprive people of their independence and dignity.

The importance of biopolitical violence in literature lies in that it can show something of the hidden structures that run our everyday lives. Literature offers a powerful medium for authors to expose the complexities of human experience under heavy control. By presenting characters and stories that are seriously affected by biopolitical violence, writers are able to make people think about the meaning of state power and personal existence from a critical standpoint.

These days biopolitical violence often takes the forms of war, trauma and identity and it emerges in literature. According to Tanrıtanır and Adil “Moreover, the concept of identity is used in different senses in literature, for instance, national, racial, ethnic, and gender identity.” (Tanrıtanır & Adil, 2024, p. 153) Authors use their writings to criticize how government systems and social norms may result in actual physical or psychological harm being inflicted upon individuals as well as marginalized groups. Tanrıtanır and Zengin argue on a similar subject mentioned in another book as “1984 explores how individuals are molded to fit an ideal social order, serving as a critique of the various regimes established by governments in the post-war era.” (Tanrıtanır & Zengin , 2023, p. 51) In situating their stories inside the realm of biopolitical violence, authors not only represent what exists but also present readers with an opportunity to feel truly sorry for others who live within these oppressive structures. According to Emerson “Critique opens up previously underexplored areas in biopolitical literature, where violence permeates collective existence, fostering new insights that extend beyond conventional governing logics and contribute to a biopolitics focused on violence.” (Emerson, 2022, p. 3)

When biopolitical violence in literary texts is considered, there are some central tendencies:

**1. Control and Surveillance:** So many stories address the omnipresent surveillance and the way that it interacts with the individual. Characters can feel a surveillance-driven atmosphere and such feelings can contribute to internalized oppression and self-monitoring. Fuchs explains that “Negative surveillance concepts view surveillance as inherently linked to violence and control.” (Fuchs, 2010, pp. 1-2)

**2. Identity and Agency:** Biopolitical violence directly affects its characters’ selves and their ability to act. Writers are free to write the stories of persons coming to terms with themselves while struggling to break free of forces who would limit and shape them. Hull and Greeno clarify that “We examine various approaches to understanding identity and agency, primarily focusing on the concept of identity and agency as positional in relation to interaction and the subject matter, as well as the idea that identity and agency are linked to participating in a discourse.” (Greeno & Hull, 2006, p. 77)

**3. Memory and Trauma:** The aftermath of Biopolitical Violence in Literature. The characters often struggle with memories of violence, at times suffering from trauma that impacts their relationships and sense of reality. Lasko et al. suggest as follows:

“Investigating traumatic memories is difficult since the intense emotional experiences that cause posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) cannot be simulated in a lab, as evidenced by the fact that normal college students do not experience PTSD symptoms even after watching movies that depict real executions” (Lasko, Gurvits, Kuhne, Orr, & Pitman, 1994, p. 374).

**4. Resistance and Resilience:** Literature tends to narrate acts of resistance against biopolitical violence; many texts display the strength and resistance of characters who fight to regain their self-agency and contest repressive structures. The terms are defined as: “Generally, resistance refers to a community's ability to stay unchanged when faced with disruptions,” (Grim & Wissel, 1997, p. 324) while “Resilience is defined as a system's capacity to endure disturbances and adapt during changes, maintaining its fundamental function, structure, identity, and feedback mechanisms.” (Holling, 1973, p. 2)

**5. Personal versus Communal Experience:** Writers may discuss the manner in which biopolitical violence affects individual and collective experiences of violence and trauma, which emphasize interplay between personal and communal trauma. Baum suggest that “The concept known as “shared reality,” “shared trauma,” or “shared traumatic reality” pertains to circumstances where both the helper and the person receiving help, as well as the psychotherapist and the client, experience the same collective disaster.” (Baum, 2010, p. 249)



These themes help literature communicate the complex realities of biopolitical violence, and help the reader understand the emotional and ethical stakes of state power in their own life. In our examination of texts such as Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, we can observe how these themes materialize in the experiences of the characters and how they comment on larger global narratives. Tanrıtanır and Karaman argue that "Humanity is perpetually engaged in a quest within a materialistic world, a pursuit that brings both benefits and drawbacks for individuals and the environment." (Tanrıtanır & Karaman, 2018, p. 91) In sum, knowing biopolitical violence matters for comprehension of the unruly multiplicities of contemporary life. Literature however not only reflects these, realities but also as a site of critical reflection and engagement, provides in which the moral implications of power, governance and humanity are debated. In the context of biopolitical violence, we can learn a few things about how narratives mediate our perception of the world and the human condition.

### Individual and Societal Effects of War

The last installation focuses on the radical transformations of views and values which war causes in individual actors and in the societies within which it is waged. Psychological aspects of war, commonly encapsulated within terms such as trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and moral injury, profoundly affect an individual's psychological health, as well as interactions with the wider world. Tanrıtanır and Üney assert that "Abel has recently come back from World War II, experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and feelings of alienation." (Tanrıtanır & Üney, 2020, p. 201) At the same time, war is a catalyst with the power to transform social relations and dynamics by eroding cultural values, beliefs, and the collective memory. This section will also examine these themes in literature, more specifically in Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

Both Livaneli's and Vonnegut's works. They both focus on the psychological cost of war. Characters in the narratives typically wrestle with terrifying memories from the front line, from losses inflicted on them, or simply brought a moral ambiguity. In *The Last Island*, by contrast, the protagonist's experiences in that war serve as a particularly powerful account of suffering. The novel details the private agonies of individuals who have been seared by atrocities, and showed undoubtedly sense hopelessness that arises from such experiences. We can see from 'last island' that Livaneli perceives war as something that not only leaves physical wounds but also inflicts deep psychological damage to those involved in it. Yıldız indicates that "*The Last Island* portrays the ruin of a paradise-like island under the rule of a tyrannical leader." (Yıldız, 2017, p. 355) He depicts the way characters see themselves and their relationships with other human beings undergoing massive changes as a result of these invisible injuries.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut presents Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist until now as symbolizing what war does to human beings inside themselves and from without, not physically but mentally. Time travel is used by Vonnegut to catch the absurd nature of war and its crippling aftermath. Billy's experiences in Dresden, especially the firebombing leave him a tortured, disordered figure forever after living through PTSD; he finds it difficult to get through the simplest daily chores. Vonnegut's portrayal of Billy's psychological state is a repudiation of the military-civilian approach, highlighting its injurious consequences. Vanderwerken argues that "It is evident that Billy does not possess "first-rate intelligence," and he can barely be described as someone who can "function"; he ultimately breaks down under the pressure of his situation." (Vanderwerken, 2013, pp. 567-568)

War changes the lives of people, but it changes the ways in which we interact, at the same time with it. It remakes communities, upends social norms and generates new power dynamics. In *The Last Island* which degenerated into a long series of messages about balance, harmony and love. Livaneli says in the book as follows:

"We were a group of forty peaceful families who had somehow stumbled upon the island by chance. We were content, and no one interfered in anyone else's business. After so many wounds, disappointments, and deep sorrows, I loved the new friends we made on the island so much that I had named it 'The Last Island.' Yes, yes; this was the last island, the last refuge, the last corner of humanity. All we wanted was for this tranquility to remain unbroken" (Livaneli, 2009, p. 9).

Livaneli looks at what war does to the small island community and to the landscape, to its lines and grounds, and how its destructive consequences materialize as disunity and loss of cultural identity and survival. The story looks at the shared trauma of the community, and how its social relationships are tested and defined in the wake of conflict. In telling the story of the survivors rebuilding through the power of memory, Livaneli also explores the role of storytelling in managing and surviving loss, as well as in maintaining collective identity; the story is that of a community that comes back from the brink.

"*The Last Island*, which initially appears as a miraculous place free from the disappointments and evils of the modern world, is actually a fantasy realm that, much like the rest of the country, is on the brink of being overwhelmed by malevolence, transforming from an envisioned utopia into a dystopia plagued by the calamities brought about by modernism." (Koyun, 2019, p. 56)

*Slaughterhouse-Five* is Vonnegut's commentary on the effects of war on society as a whole, the unsound principles of militarism, and the ethical dilemmas resulting from man's nature. The Dresden bombings are a vivid reminder of destruction and moral compromise in the age of "total" war. Vonnegut depicts a society coming to terms with the consequences of war, warning against the myths of heroism and sacrifice. Gallagher states in his work as follows:

"*Slaughterhouse-Five* recounts the American bombing of Dresden during World War II, and it is clear from the discrepancies between statements made in interviews and Vonnegut's behavior that he grappled with his dual identity as a German American throughout his life, especially regarding his wartime experiences" (Gallagher, 2012, p. 73).

This absurdist novel's anti-war message is driving home the irony of the events detailed to, the absurdity of them, all the way to where readers are forced to consider violence in a wider context, and society's role in making it an unstoppable cycle.

Both novels focus on the overlap of individual and collective experience of war. The psychic wounds carried by many are also an echo of the collective trauma of their communities. Livaneli and Vonnegut juxtapose personal despair and guilt in the context of national loss and grief in a complex tapestry of hope and despair. These writers' stories reinforce the importance of recognizing individual and communal experiences in recovery.

In conclusion, the examination for the effects of war on the individual and the community in *The Last Island* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* clearly outlines that the glucose of war is various. Both Livaneli and Vonnegut express the adverse psychological consequences of war on people, as well as the implications that war has on social institutions. Offering these powerful portrayals, which inspire readers to contemplate the meaning of trauma, memory and survival, both personally and at the societal level, Prometheus bound and strengthened, is an eye-opening experience on the lasting impact of war.

### Struggle for Identity and Continuity

Identity and continuity are prominent themes in Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In both stories, the protagonist has to endure the chaos of war and the societal shifts that accompany it, increasing their own internal turmoil, centering on their own identity, and their need for constancy. In this section, I would like to discuss the characters' inner dilemmas and how this is mirroring changes in the society.

The protagonist of *The Last Island*, a young man strongly influenced by the island where he grew up, undergoes a deep identity crisis as he wrestles with the results of war and political upheavals. The conflict threatens not only his physical environment but also challenges his self-understanding in relation to his community or roots. Livaneli vividly portrays the protagonist's inner struggle to accept the loss of friends, family, and familiar backgrounds. This quest for identity is characterized by the desire to protect cultural memory while dealing with the terrible costs of war. The protagonist's musings about his past, in which childhood innocence is remembered and the harsh realities of adult life contrast with it, function to highlight the discord between who he was and who he is going to become. Livaneli writes about the inner feelings as follows:

*"Recently, even the sea surrounding our island had begun to look frightening to me. The tides, which I used to enjoy watching while sitting on the shore, and the game of counting that one of the seven waves was larger, now filled me with unease; I sensed a cruelty, a threat in the sea's sway. As my anxiety increased, I started to think not about the shimmering surface of the water, but about its dark depths. How could we explain the bad nature of the sharks and the good nature of the dolphins, living in the same sea under the same conditions? What determined that a shark was bad, and a dolphin was good? Perhaps there was no such thing as good and evil"* (Livaneli, 2009, p. 152).

Likewise, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is more than a coming-of-age with none of the usual bellyaching and self-pity. Billy exemplifies the disorientation of a soldier who has been ripped across time and space, viewing his life in random snapshots. The time jump is a metaphor for his difficulty integrating his war experience with who he is as a civilian and a person. Alienation and absurdity haunt Billy in the novel, especially as he becomes more and more exposed to the absurd instances of warfare as he tries to come to terms with the meaning of his life. His dilemmas at once reflect the fact that he jumps around in time so damn much, and then the fundamental tension between who he used to be, and what he's become. It can be understood from the following words in the book:

*"Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, hesays, and pays random visits to all the events in between"* (Vonnegut, 1969, p. 12).

Both Livaneli and Vonnegut consider how social change complicates the characters' quests for self and for a past. By *The Last Island*, the hero's bond with his community is eroded by the island's threatened and then actual invasion and by internal division. The upheaval of war in society makes his interrogations about loyalty, belonging and maintaining one's cultural identity loud and present. The island, so long the haven of tradition and continuity, is now a battlefield for opposing philosophies, adding to the struggle the protagonist faces on his personal journey of self-discovery. Livaneli points to the significance of memory and the feeling of togetherness in such times of anarchy to guide and protect from the feeling of a void.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut attacks the social consequences of war, especially the militarization, and subsequent commercialization, of human life. Billy's journey parallels the society's struggle with the effects of technological progress and lack of a moral foundation with which to navigate a world of war. Witnessing the demise of Dresden and the insanity of war, Billy's quest for identity becomes paralleled and reflected in the wider view of an increasingly dehumanized world captured in this portrait of modern society. The mythology of male machismo itself comes to a head with Billy's existential crisis of disconnection from societal roles of masculinity, heroism, and sacrifice. Tanrıtanır suggests that "Heroism, particularly in the context of wars, has consistently been a central theme in world literature." (Tanrıtanır, 2019, p. 53) Vonnegut's depiction of Billy's inner struggle illustrates the struggles of those who must reconcile the forging of their own identity in the wake of societal disarray.

In the end, both novels consider continuity as a sort of antidote for the dislocation of war and altered society. In *The Last Island*, we learn that continuity is not just about keeping a past alive but also about bending to the realities that life sends and respecting the past, the way we were raised. These stories of resilience, and the power of story in the face of loss, become essential tools in the preservation of identity.

On the other hand, *Slaughterhouse-Five* offers a less certain perspective of continuity. The temporality of Billy Pilgrim's transits through time is a cyclical figure of thought, a repetition or recurrence of events, a history from which there is seemingly no escape. The recurrence in Vonnegut of the expression "*so it goes*" is a kind of mystical insistence on the unfathomable nature of suffering and the life force in spite of it. Vonnegut states that "*The rabid little American I call Paul Lazzaro in this book had about a quart of diamonds and emeralds and rubies and so on' He had taken these from dead people in the cellars of Dresden. So, it goes.*" (Vonnegut, 1969, p. 4) Though Billy is barely able to hold himself together, he is also possessed of his own doughty determination, accepting the chaotic nature of his life even as he seeks some larger pattern to make sense of a world that so often seems unaccountably cruel.

In conclusion, the quest for identity and continuity in *The Last Island* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* brings to the fore the immense influence of war and change in a society on ordinary human beings. Livaneli and Vonnegut both encounter characters wrestling with their inner turmoil and how to define themselves in turbulent and transformative times. These stories are not just about the self-sacrifice of individuals, but also about societal reflections of war. In their investigations of self and continuity, both writers evoke the poignancy of human survival in dislocation and bereavement, and of the ways in which the human heart and mind struggle to find a sense of selfhood in a world forever in flux.

### Representation of Memories and Trauma

That memories and trauma are closely and frequently linked forms a touchstone theme in both of the books Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. The writers' conceptions of how memory works and how trauma routine taking in their protagonists is gradually nibbled away will generally differ in an attempt to express this distinctive theme. Concerning memory, these two novels examine a relationship both complex and heavy with anesthesia. And they begin to show how past conduct affects the present, and especially they attend to the scheduling of activities designed to include bitter early experiences.

In *The Last Island*, memory is a double-edged sword. Memories of the hero's happy boyhood on the island intermingle with the grave foreboding of war and destruction looming ahead. Through the motif of memory, Livaneli deftly illustrates the contrast between the idealized past and the brutal present. Memory is one of the protagonist's weapons in dealing with the trauma around him. These memories are not fixed; they develop through the protagonist's present conditions and feelings. The island, in its layered history, is a vessel of reminiscences: joyous pasts and painful present. Kaya suggests it in the article as follows:

"The author portrays the serene life of the island's inhabitants, who live in harmony with nature, and illustrates how this harmony is disrupted by the arrival of a general following a coup d'état, suggesting through an ecocritical lens that the text's environmental messages highlight the negative changes imposed by the general on the island's ecosystem while reflecting the political, cultural, and natural conditions of the country" (Kaya, 2017, p. 28).

Memories are thin, according to Livaneli; they both sooth and trouble, describe a hero's longing of the past but also echoing a fear of tomorrow.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, on the other hand, memory is fractured and non-linear, as if to evoke the disorienting impact of trauma. Billy Pilgrim, his ability to become "unstuck in time" enables him and by extension the audience to relive moments in his life – mundane and traumatic alike. Vonnegut tells about it in the book as follows:



*"Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next"* (Vonnegut, 1969, p. 23).

Vonnegut's novel is structured, as its story takes place in the mind of Billy Pilgrim, so the memories too do not appear in chronological order, but rather tumble out of his mind like a child playing with a kaleidoscope. This portrayal emphasizes the chaotic and traumatic nature of trauma, as well as its effect on memory. Billy's life and World War II experiences disruptively percolate into his consciousness, in a manner that reflects how trauma fractures the passage of linear time and engenders an imperishable struggle to grapple with the past.

The traumas suffered by the characters in both novels indelibly define for them who they are and how they see the world. In *The Last Island*, the protagonist is traumatized by the death of family members and the obliteration of his local environment. Livaneli shows how the emotional devastation of war plays out through the protagonist's relationships and acquaintances. The island that was once a symbol of continuity and belonging becomes a place of mourning and confrontation. Özyön states that "In the novel *Son Ada*, the story portrays the President, who arrives on the island later and symbolizes the modern individual, as he attempts to conquer nature in order to transform and civilize his surroundings." (Özyön, p. 106) His fumbling for a way to harmonize in recollection a bucolic past with the newly violent present is the battle to incorporate trauma into a revised self. And the violence that upends his life is not only his own, but the community's, haunted by its own wounds and losses.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut offers trauma as a fact of existence from which there can be no escape. Billy Pilgrim represents the traumatized soldier, with his time in Dresden acting as the trigger for his mental divarication. The firebombing of Dresden is not only a historical event but a deep-seated trauma that echoes throughout Billy's life. It's a meditation on "shell shock" and how the experience of war stays with you, how it often numbs you and leaves you feeling disconnected from the world. Coleman states that "A common interpretation of Vonnegut's novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* suggests that the author promotes a stance of passive acceptance in the face of overwhelming situations that inflict unimaginable yet untellable and unquantifiable suffering on humanity." (Coleman, 2008, p. 681) Billy's jumpy travels through time mirror the up-and-down struggles of some deeply damaged war survivors to process their traumas: He alternates between clear-eyed sanity and numbing madness.

The complex nexus of memory and trauma is also troubled by the construction of time in both novels. In *The Last Island*, time moves as a line but then memories keep surfacing, throwing the protagonist's past into question. The cyclical quality of memory is seen in the protagonist dealing with the trauma of war and frequently returning to seminal events in his life that continue to shadow him. Livaneli suggests that while time moves forward, the past remains an ever-present influence, shaping the protagonist's identity and emotional landscape.

*Slaughterhouse-Five*, on the other hand, shows time as non-linear and circular, as it corresponds with the Tralfamadorian belief that all moments exist at once. The term can be understood from the words in the book as follows:

*"The most important thing I [Billy] learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist ... When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in that particular moment, but that same person is just fine in plenty of other moments"* (Vonnegut, 1969, p. 23).

This outlook provides Billy with a unique perception of time that goes beyond the concept of Past-present-future. Vonnegut's treatment of time reinforces the notion that the experience of trauma has been known to disfigure one's perception of reality, creating a warped sense of existence. "*so it goes*" becomes a chorus, a relentless meditation on the inescapability of suffering and the persistence of life in the face of the harrowing events that mark it.

Ultimately, the portrayal of memories and trauma in *The Last Island* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* highlight the devastation of past experiences on identity and the difficulties with dealing with trauma. Livaneli and Vonnegut both use distinct narrative styles to discuss how memories influence our self-identities and experiences of the world, as well as pointing to the breaking and disordering effects of trauma. Both writers present memory and time as a volatile, knotted bond and in doing so, ask readers to consider the lasting impact of trauma in the human condition. The examination of these subjects adds more depth to the characters and provides a touching perspective on the devastating circumstances of war and its aftereffects on society and individuals.

### Critical Reflection of State Authority in Literature

Literature has long been an effective tool for questioning the coercive power of state control, providing writers with a space to explore the dynamics of power, influence, and opposition. In Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, state power dictates the life of individuals and societies, and it becomes evident that the result of oppression and the fight for freedom lead into horrible disasters.

In *The Last Island*, Livaneli offers a subtle indictment of the power of the state in the context of political repression and violence. The action takes place in a context of civil violence and the threat of war, a metaphor for the more general social mechanisms used by the state to maintain power. Their souls are damaged by repressive state and military power that seeks to quash opposition at all means. Livaneli portrays the way in which the state uses violence and fear to crush personal liberties and to silence voices that speak out against the existing situation. This is indicated by these lines in the book:

*"Managers are using the country's wealth for their own interests; they do not hesitate to destroy natural beauties or to leave the people ignorant and poor. They are pitting the people against each other. Thus, while people fight among themselves, they forget to criticize the leaders" (Livaneli, 2009, p. 11).*

On the island the protagonist is affected by the far reaching influence of state violence. While the landscape as it is now is rather utopic and starting to crumble under the blow of war, the theme of peace does feel quite fragile and threatened by authoritarian power. The slow dissolution of a community demonstrates a skepticism of how state power eats away at the life of a society and how citizens become mere cogs in a political machine. Livaneli's characterization of the islanders' fight against the state highlights the obverse nature of personal yearning for liberty when juxtaposed to the state's repression.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut satirizes state power, and by extension, the lack of structure formed within war and the bureaucratic process that sustains violence, is inherently idiotic. The anti-war message of Vonnegut's novel is clear: the firebombing of Dresden is used to illustrate the mindless havoc caused by decisions of those in power. Vonnegut uses morbid humor and irony to accentuate the arbitrary reality of state power, in which human lives are expended for the sake of ill-defined concepts such as patriotism and obligation.

Billy Pilgrim is a metaphor for the individual resistance to the authority of the state and his experiences of being immersed in the fog of war and in the soul-crushing cogs of military bureaucracy expose the dark underbelly of the power the state holds over its people. With Billy's disjointed time travel and his meetings with creatures who live in the Tralfamadorians that see time as an unchanging sequence, Vonnegut evokes the feeling of fatalism when challenged by state control.

The repeat of “*so it goes*” adds emphasis to the idea of inevitable suffering, and the lack of control individuals have against the cogs of war and bureaucracy. Vonnegut writes about it as follows:

*“When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in a bad condition in that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments. Now, when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is “so it goes””* (Vonnegut, 1969, p. 13).

Both Livaneli and Vonnegut explore the theme of resistance in the face of oppressive authoritarian rule. They highlight how individuals or groups tirelessly fight against this power for freedom. However, *The Last Island* presented readers with situations where characters under attack by the state go home or elsewhere in hope of saving themselves. While others turn and face the oncoming storm, some seek escape; still more wish simply to endure. The internal conflict of our protagonist mirrors the existential struggle of dissidence versus conformity. Within a world that complies with authoritarian control all around him, this is the tapestry. Livaneli suggests that even behind such brutal repression is a yearning for liberty. There is longing out of bondage and people want their fate back in their hands.

Vonnegut’s vision of resistance is more covert, delivered with humor and absurdity. Billy Pilgrim’s time leaps enable him to escape warfare’s linear narrative and point to an alternative reading of the deterministic logic of state power. His inertia of passive resistance to what happens to him questions the concept of accountability in a violent system. In this contrast of the ridiculousness of bureaucratic language with the horror of war, Vonnegut satirizes the process of state authority dehumanizing people and turning them into statistics in the cause of power. According to Livingston “*Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut (1969) is often interpreted as either satire or black comedy, which involves humor that has a sharp or critical edge.” (Caryn, 2018, p. 1)

Both writers employ memory as an essential instrument of questioning state power. In *The Last Island*, the protagonist’s recollections of the island become a counter-narrative to the oppressive truth the state enforces. These are not just individual memories, but collective ones, those that belong to a people and which cannot be erased by political violence. In a similar way, Livaneli emphasizes the significance of memory in maintaining both identity and community in the face of state power that seeks to enforce one and the same script. Livaneli tells about the memories in these lines:

*“In recent days, even the sea surrounding our island had begun to appear frightening to me. The tides that I used to sit by the shore and watch with pleasure, the game of counting one of the seven waves as the big one, now sent shivers down my spine; I sensed a cruelty, a threat in the sway of the sea”* (Livaneli, 2009, p. 152).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, memory is a central mode of resistance against how the state tries to control history. Billy’s disjointed memories of the war contrast with the idealized pictures of war made popular by the government. Vonnegut’s jumbled narrative, which spurns chronology, mirrors the disorder of trauma and memory, ultimately challenging the ability of the state narrative to interfere with individual experience in the service of politics.

Finally, there are strong criticisms against the state authority and its oppressive mechanisms in both Zülfü Livaneli’s *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In their depictions of political violence, the meaninglessness of combat, and the vagaries of memory, the two writers reveal the price individuals and communities pay under the burden of oppressive force. Their stories provide testaments to the necessity of resistance, the effects of preserving memory, and the ongoing struggle for autonomy against state authorized regulation. In considering these themes, Livaneli and Vonnegut speak not only to their moment in history, but also to power and authority in the present and the lasting effects of trauma on society.

## Conclusion

The journey through this biopolitical violence comprises the greater part of the sequences described above and as vividly represented in Zülfü Livaneli's *The Last Island* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, sets a mark on the rest of humanity. In these novels she explores the subtle ways violent acts often informed by political power plays and war shatter individual lives and entire communities, leaving indelible wounds on people's shared psyche.

In *The Last Island*, Livaneli offers a psychological and emotional glimpse of conflict by depicting characters who live and die with the shadows of war and oppression in the background of their lives in a political maze. As a story, it is a sharp reminder of how biopolitical violence not only scars the terrain of a nation, but also the inner lives of the people. Through Livaneli's sensitive portrayals of suffering and survival, we gain access to the experiences of the individual traumas that result from group violence, and are forced to see and acknowledge the cruel truth of the people who are drawn into the vortex of violence.

In contrast, Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* uses an unconventional narrative form to highlight the absurdity of war and the effect of trauma on life. In the figure of Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut conveys the disorganizing impact of biopolitical violence when he becomes unstuck in time, jarringly disoriented temporally through the random shuffling of moments from his life. It raises the splinteredness of trauma and the difficulty in making sense of things that too easily resist sense. Darkly satirical and realist both Vonnegut's wit and trenchant observation contributes to, if you read it right, a critique of glorification of war while not avoiding the ongoing moral and psychic debilitations that warfare instigates at the individual and personal level.

Collectively, these works make a substantial contribution to this discussion of biopolitical violence by showing how the personal and political sphere intermingle. They also stress the power of literature as a means of processing socially traumatic events and of fostering communication in times of despair. In their stories Livaneli and Vonnegut ask readers to consider the ethics of, and to bear witness to, the shared humanity that underlies individual experiences of suffering.

When looking at the relationship between literature and political change *The Last Island* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* are complementary as they are both important and necessary to create empathy and to make people think. They force readers to face unpleasant truths about the nature of humanity, and the functioning of society to perpetuate violence. By voicing the effects of this biopolitical violence, these novels archive the memory of the targets of the violence and motivate readers to consider their part in a broader socio-political picture.

In conclusion, exploring biopolitical violence through the works of Livaneli and Vonnegut allows us to see just how deeply such violence affects both individuals and society as a whole. Their stories not only highlight the pain and struggle that arise from these experiences but also emphasize the vital role of storytelling in helping us process our trauma and push for social change. Literature, as they demonstrate, has the incredible ability to connect us, heal wounds, and motivate us to act when faced with challenges. Through their narratives, we are reminded of our shared humanity and the resilience that can emerge even in the darkest times.

## Works Cited

Baum, N. (2010). Shared traumatic reality in communal disasters: toward a conceptualization. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 47(2), 249-259.

Caryn, L. L. (2018). War Satire as tragedy: redemptive genres for catch-22 and slaughterhouse-five. *MS Thesis*.

Coleman, M. (2008). The meaninglessness of coming unstuck in time. *ransactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, 44(4), 681-698.

Duarte, A. (2005). Biopolitics and the dissemination of violence: the Arendtian critique of the present. *HannahArendt. net*, 1(1).



- Edelstein, A. (1974). Slaughterhouse-Five": Time out of Joint. *College Literature*, 1(2), 128-139.
- Emerson, G. R. (2022). Critique of biopolitical violence. *Critical Studies on Security*, 10(1), 3-15.
- Foucault, M. (2019). *Power: the essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. (Z. Gürsel, Ed.) Penguin UK.
- Fuchs, C. (2010). How Can Surveillance Be Defined? Remarks on Theoretical Foundations. *The Internet & Surveillance-Research paper series*.
- Gallagher, R. (2012). All this happened, more or less": Making Sense of the War Experience Through Humor in " Slaughterhouse-Five" and" The Sirens of Titan. *Studies in American Humor*(26), 73-84.
- Gimbo, F. (2018). BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND HETERONOMY: FOR A CRITICAL CONCEPTION OF CARE OF THE SELF IN MICHEL FOUCAULT. *Princípios:Revista de Filosofia*, 25(46), 59-83.
- Greeno, J. G., & Hull, G. A. (2006). Identity and agency in nonschool and school worlds. *Counterpoints*, 249, 77-97.
- Grim, V., & Wissel, C. (1997). Babel, or the ecological stability discussions: An inventory and analysis of terminology and a guide for avoiding confusion. *Oecologia*, 109(3), 323-334.
- Hanson, M. (2022, November-December). The Last Island by Zülfü Livaneli. *World Literature Today*, 96(6), 68-68.
- Holling, C. S. (1973). Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annu. Rev. Ecol. Syst.*(4), 1-23.
- Javidi, H., & Yadollahie, M. (2012). Post-traumatic stress disorder. *The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 3(1), 2-9.
- Kaya, O. (2017). DOĞANIN MUHAFAZA EDİLMESİ VE KORUNMASI GEREKLİLİĞİNE İŞARET EDEN ÇAĞDAŞ TÜRK ROMANLARINDA ÇEVRECİ YAKLAŞIMIN YANSIMALARI. *Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 19(1), 19-39.
- Koyun, M. (2019). "Dystopia in the Works of Zülfü Livaneli Named "Son Ada" and Anthony Burgess Named "Clockwork Orange". *Journal of Current Researches on Social Sciences (JoCReSS)*, 9(3), 53-66.
- Lasko, N. B., Gurvits, T. V., Kuhne, A. A., Orr, S. P., & Pitman, R. K. (1994, September-October). Aggression and its correlates in Vietnam veterans with and without chronic posttraumatic stress disorder. *Comprehensive psychiatry*, 35(5), 373-381.
- Livaneli, Z. (2009). Son Ada. *Remzi Kitabevi*.
- Özyön, A. (n.d.). *researchgate.net*. Retrieved from *researchgate.net*: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Arzu-Oezyoen/publication/325486377\\_Zulfu\\_Livaneli'nin\\_Son\\_Ada'si\\_ile\\_Utopyadan\\_Distopyaya\\_Bir\\_Ekoelestiri\\_Denemesi\\_-\\_From\\_Utopia\\_to\\_Distopia\\_with\\_Zulfu\\_Livaneli's\\_Son\\_Ada\\_An\\_Essay\\_on\\_Ecocriticism/links/5b1110ec0f7e9b49](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Arzu-Oezyoen/publication/325486377_Zulfu_Livaneli'nin_Son_Ada'si_ile_Utopyadan_Distopyaya_Bir_Ekoelestiri_Denemesi_-_From_Utopia_to_Distopia_with_Zulfu_Livaneli's_Son_Ada_An_Essay_on_Ecocriticism/links/5b1110ec0f7e9b49)
- Tanrıtanır, B. C. (2019). A COWARD HERO IN STEPHEN CRANE'S THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE (1895). *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*(44), 53-61.
- Tanrıtanır, B. C., & Adil, L. (2024). JEFFREY EUGENİDES' İN MIDDLESEX VE THE VİRGİN SUİCİDE ADLI ROMANLARINDA CİNSİYET KİMLİĞİ KAVRAMI. *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, 6(70), 153-161.
- Tanrıtanır, B. C., & Karaman, F. (2018). SEARCHING IDENTITY IN; THE REMAINS OF THE DAY AND A PALE VIEW OF HILLS BY KAZUO ISHIGURO. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 11(56), 91-94.

Tanrıtanır, B. C., & Üney, M. (2020). KEEPING A CULTURE ALIVE: SOME RELIGIOUS RITUALS, LEGENDS AND SYMBOLS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF AMERICA IN HOUSE MADE OF DAWN. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 13(73), 201-208.

Tanrıtanır, B. C., & Zengin , E. (2023). DYSTOPIC REALITY IN THE UTOPIAN DREAM IN 1984 AND A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. *NEW ERA INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL RESEARCHES*, 8(19), 47-56.

Vanderwerken, D. L. (2013). Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five at Forty: Billy Pilgrim—Even More a Man of Our Times. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 567-579.

Vonnegut, K. (1969). *Slaughterhouse-Five*. New York: Delta.

Yıldız, F. (2017). A COMPARISON OF TOTALITARIANISM IN GEORGE ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM AND ZULFU LIVANELI'S LAST ISLAND. *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research (JSHSR)*, 4(10), 355-359.