

## Billy Pilgrim's Traumatic Symptoms and Triggers in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Yohanis Mesang<sup>a,1</sup>, Anik Cahyaning Rahayu<sup>b,2\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

<sup>1)</sup> [hanses19xx@gmail.com](mailto:hanses19xx@gmail.com); <sup>2)</sup> [anikcahyaning@untag-sby.ac.id](mailto:anikcahyaning@untag-sby.ac.id)

\* Corresponding Author: Anik Cahyaning Rahayu

### ABSTRACT

Psychological trauma is one of the psychological problems which may happen to a human being. Someone is known to suffer from trauma if he or she shows or experiences some special symptoms. This psychological problem, trauma, can happen due to some triggers or causes. Relating to this problem, this article is about Billy's psychological trauma in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Billy is the main character of the novel who suffers from trauma. His psychological disease can be known from the symptoms he experiences or he shows. Besides the symptoms of trauma experienced by Billy, the triggers or causes of Billy's trauma are also explained in this article, which both of them as the objectives of the research. The analysis uses literary theory of trauma by Cathy Caruth. Because trauma relates to psychology, the psychological approach is used in this research. The method used to analyze Billy's trauma is descriptive-analytical which means that the data relating to the topic which are taken from the novel are described and analyzed based on the objectives of the research. The findings show that symptoms experienced by Billy are recurrent uncontrollable memories of past traumatic events, losing his enthusiasm for life, delusion about Tralfamadorian planet as well as his adventure in time, and sleep disturbance followed by weeping for no reason. The triggers or causes of Billy's trauma are the result of his participation in World War II where he witnesses many horrific events like the bombing event in Dresden city and getting humiliation as well as harsh treatment from his fellow soldiers, fellow prisoners, and German soldiers. The other cause is facing the events after the 2nd World War that exacerbates his trauma that is the plane crash he is travelling in and the death of his wife due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In conclusion, after analyzing Billy's traumatic symptoms and the triggers, it can be stated that Billy really suffers from psychological trauma. All the traumatic events influence Billy's life, how he sees life, and he responds about life and death.

**Keywords:** trauma, traumatic symptoms, traumatic triggers

**Submitted:**

20 November 2022

**Accepted:**

29 December 2022

**Published:**

30 December 2022

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Some veterans of World War II write their life war experiences in the form of literary work which contains their experience, their point of view about war, and the long-term effect of the war that they have. Literature is one of the ways humans use to tell about their experiences and behavior with the concept of time and place that are specific when literary work is written by the author. As the main subject of a literary work, every aspect of human life can be a theme. The theme that the author can use contains human behavior, culture, social problems, and many others.

One of the examples of World War II veterans who wrote his experience in the form of literary work is Kurt Vonnegut. Vonnegut wrote 14 novels during the 50 years of his life after the Second World War. One of the famous novels by Kurt Vonnegut is *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The *Slaughterhouse-*

Five is the biggest and the most well-known novel that tells a story from the point of view of Billy Pilgrim, the main character and a war veteran of World War II who suffers from psychological trauma or PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). PTSD is a mental disorder after someone has witnessed a terrible event. War, life-threatening accidents, life-threatening diseases, sexual abuse, harsh treatment, and bullying are a few terrible events that can lead someone to suffer or to be diagnosed with PTSD because of the trauma triggers.

There is one branch of literary research called the Psychology of Literature, that is, the study of human psychological state. Wellek and Warren (1963, 81) explain that psychological analysis can be done from the aspect of the actor, the aspect of the characters in the story, or psychology aspect of the reader. According to Aras (2015), Literature and Psychology have a strong correlation with the fact that deal with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts, reconciliations, or individual and social concerns. Varied concepts, methods, and approaches are used to analyze literary works. In writing a literary work author will use his perspective and experience when making about his work through the main character or all the characters in his literary work or the theme. This article is about the psychological trauma suffered by Billy Pilgrim, the main character in the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. The settings of the place of the novel are the German city of Dresden, Luxembourg, New York, and Tralfamaldore, an alien planet where Billy is placed in a zoo by Tralfamaldorian. The setting of time is World War II.

Billy Pilgrim is the main character in the novel who suffers from prolonged trauma or PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) after the world war has ended. This article deals with Billy's traumatic symptoms and the triggers of Billy's trauma, as the objectives of the research. The theory of Trauma by Cathy Caruth is used to analyze Billy Pilgrim's trauma. Cathy Caruth (1996) as cited in Shoukat and Waheed (2021) introduces literary trauma theory. According to her theory, trauma is a recurring phenomenon, with no time limit and an unexplainable phenomenon. She describes trauma as a recurring phenomenon because it happens again and again in the mind of the character. She adds that trauma is no time limit because it gets someone stuck in a situation. In this way, a person starts mingling both his past and present. On the other hand, she also explains that trauma is an unexplainable phenomenon because it causes problems in one's consciousness and the way of expressing it in language. Due to the trauma, the person cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy because he is trapped in memories and finds it difficult to express what he feels to others. The research aims to describe Billy's traumatic symptoms exposed in the novel as well as the triggers of Billy's trauma. The research is very important because it is related to the situation in which war may happen in the world. By understanding Billy Pilgrim's trauma in the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, it can be seen that war has a long-term effect on those involved and that war has no benefits, but it harms the individuals involved with trauma. As explained above that the author of the novel is a veteran who, more or less, has experienced what Billy Pilgrim, the main character of the novel experiences. Accordingly, this special fact encourages this research to be done.

## 2. METHOD

This research is qualitative research that uses the reading and note-taking technique to collect the data and the descriptive analysis method to analyze the data. According to Hancock (1998), qualitative research is the development of information based on social phenomena based on existing data without reducing the explanation or meaning of the phenomenon. Because the topic of the research relates to a psychological problem, the approach used to analyze the data is the psychological approach. The source of the data is the novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. The scope of this research is the trauma experienced by Billy Pilgrim, the main character of the novel. The research, however, is limited to analyzing the traumatic symptoms and triggers of Billy's trauma.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Billy Pilgrim as the main character of the novel suffers from psychological trauma after joining World War II. Billy's traumatic symptoms prove that he suffers from trauma. His trauma is caused by some factors which are called traumatic triggers. Both Billy's traumatic symptoms and traumatic triggers are elaborated on below.

#### 3.1 Billy's Traumatic Symptoms

There are symptoms of trauma experienced by Billy. The first is memories of traumatic events that continue to appear uncontrollably. The second is losing enthusiasm for life. The third is delusion of believing that he is once taken by aliens to a planet called Tralfamadore and he can travel in time without controlling. The fourth symptom is having sleep disturbance characterized by his frequent wiping of tears that keep flowing whenever he tries to sleep. Caruth (1996) in her book, *Unclaimed Experience*, explains that trauma is a response to a terrible incident or event that cannot be understood at that time which later returns in form of repetitive phenomena like flashbacks, nightmares, and others. In the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, there is a description where the main character, Billy Pilgrim, experiences repeated events in the form of flashbacks which it calls "unstuck in time", delusions about the Tralfamadorian planet and his adventure in time, and weeping for no reason every time he takes a nap. The explanation of each traumatic symptom experienced by Billy is as follows.

##### 3.1.1 Recurrent Uncontrollable Memories of Past Traumatic Events.

Billy experiences recurrent uncontrollable memories of past traumatic events or Billy experiences flashback for most of his life. Billy's first time having a flashback on his memories is during his service as a chaplain's assistant. Billy's first time has a flashback which is called "unstuck in time" when World War II is still in progress in 1944, long before his delusional adventure on the Tralfamadorian planet. The first time Billy has a flashback is when he and three American soldiers escape from the battle of Bulge he has been wandering for three days. On the third day, Billy stops in the middle of the forest and leans against a tree, and closes his eyes. At that moment Billy has a flashback which is called "unstuck in time". Nurhadi (2019) explains that the unconscious mind of a traumatized person is suppressed by constantly experiencing flashbacks and influencing the way they think. It can be seen that this is also experienced by Billy. Billy is not aware of having a flashback, and Billy's mind is also affected by believing that this event is time travel. Billy who does not know that he is having a flashback sees it as an uncontrollable back-and-forth passage of time. Billy thinks he is the only person who can know what will happen next to him and those around him without realizing that it is all just flashbacks from his memories long ago. It is not clearly explained which memory first time he has flashbacks for, but it is clear that since that day Billy has continued to experience flashbacks throughout his life. From this event, he later often gets into a delusional state in which he believes that he can be travelling in time without controlling it. Caruth (1996:91) describes that people who suffer from a traumatic event are often in a repetitive flashbacks.

*Billy says that he first came unstuck in time in 1944, long before his trip to Tralfamadore. The Tralfamadorians didn't have anything to do with his coming unstuck. They were simply able to give him insights into what was really going on. Billy first came unstuck while World War Two was in progress. (Vonnegut, 1968:31)*

The quotation above is an explanation about Billy who has an argument with his daughter, Barbara because he has written a letter about his explanation about Tralfamadorian and what he has learned from his journey to the Tralfamadorian planet. His first letter is published by the local newspaper.

One month before he writes his letter he has made a controversial announcement on radio night talk in New York City that he has been kidnapped before by extraterrestrial creatures named "Tralfamadorian" and taken to their planet and placed in a zoo and he also tells a story that he has been travelling in time without controlling since 1944 during the World War II. This announcement happens after he has a crash plane accident. In the debate between Billy and his daughter Barbara regarding the letter that is published by Billy, it can be seen that Barbara does not know what has happened to her father, Billy, since the plane crash he is traveling in and thinks that her father has become senile because of the concussion he has from the plane crash. This describes how Billy's immediate family either do not know or try to ask what has really happened to Billy since the plane crash. His family only see Billy as a war veteran who is successful in business.

After his first flashback experience which is called "unstuck in time," Billy still experiences this flashback memory until his death. Another explanation is that he experiences flashback during World War II in progress. The special event when Billy first time "unstuck in time" in World War II is when he and three other American soldiers survive the famous Battle of Bulge.

*"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, 1968:27)

There is another explanation that Billy's flashbacks cannot be controlled and most of his flashbacks are not always about good memories. It happens because most of his memories come from his experiences during the World War II where he witnesses terrible events like the bombing of Dresden that has killed more than 130.000 people because of the massive bombing from the alliance, and the humiliation he has received during the war from his fellow soldiers and enemies, and bullying from Roland Weary. Billy's condition is getting worst after he returns from the war. A doctor who takes care of him in the veteran mental hospital fails to diagnose Billy with a nervous disorder and people close to him are thinking that he is going crazy. Caruth (1996) explains that trauma is a delayed response by the sufferer to an incomprehensible horrific event that returns in the form of repetitive phenomena. This is in line with what Billy experiences in his lifetime after returning from the war where he constantly has flashbacks to the horrific memories he experiences starting from his escape from the battle of the Bulge city. He also gets the violence and humiliation from his fellow soldiers, and the most affected in his life when he witnesses the bombing of Dresden city. Billy's psychological condition is getting worst when doctor misdiagnoses the mental illness he is suffering from the war and his family do not seem suspicious of what has really happened to him besides he never tells his family about what really happens to him during the war. In Billy's lifetime, people do not yet know about what is trauma and trauma symptoms someone has if she/he is suspected of experiencing a traumatic event. Caruth (1995) in her book *Exploration in Memory*, explains that American Psychiatric Association recognizes the Trauma phenomenon in 1980 under the name "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder". Billy is dead in 1976, four years before the recognition of Trauma as a psychological disorder.

### 3.1.2 Losing Enthusiasm for Life

Billy feels that life is meaningless and he has lost his enthusiasm for life because of what he has experienced and witnessed during the war. The novel also explains that every time he finds someone dead, he always responds with the phrase "so it goes". The novel also describes that Roland Weary several times saves Billy from death and Billy will do nothing to save himself, as seen the below quotation.

*“Saved your life again, you dumb bastard,” Weary said to Billy in the ditch. He has been saving Billy’s life for days, cursing him, kicking him, slapping him, making him move. It was absolutely necessary that cruelty be used, because Billy wouldn’t do anything to save himself.” (Vonnegut, 1968:32)*

Long before his time in the veteran mental hospital, he has tried to get shot by a German Markman and wished that everyone would leave him behind so he can get shot or captured by German soldiers. This happens after he and three other American soldiers survive the Battle of Bulge and on the third day of wandering after having escaped. Billy has the nickname “filthy flamingo”.

*“The third bullet was for the filthy flamingo, who stopped dead center in the road when the lethal bee buzzed past his ear. Billy stood there politely, giving the marksman another chance. It was his addled understanding of the rules of warfare that the marksman should be given a second chance. The next shot missed Billy’s kneecaps by inches, going end-on-end, from the sound of it.” (Vonnegut, 1968:32)*

Roland Weary saves Billy's life from his stupid decision more than one time. Billy's lack of enthusiasm in life is clearly described when he gives the German Markman another chance to shoot him which he believes is normal. The novel also explains that Roland Weary even has to kick and curse Billy because he wouldn't move or do anything to save himself. Even after Weary saves him, Billy has told Weary and the scouts that he wishes they would leave him. There is also some indication that explains that this is not Billy's first time to try to die or quit.

*“Billy had a framed prayer on his office wall which expressed his method for keeping going, even though he was unenthusiastic about living. Lot of patients who saw the prayer on Billy’s wall told him that it helped them to keep going, too.”*

(Vonnegut, 1968:50)

The quotation above shows Billy's lack of enthusiasm in life is about a framed prayer hang in his office which expresses his method for keeping going even though he is not enthusiastic about living. This also explains since Billy leaves the veteran mental hospital, he still finds life meaningless and never tells anybody about his situation or his feeling. His situation gets worse for his psychological condition since leaving the veteran mental hospital because his family never know what has happened to him during the World War II and people think he is going crazy. The doctor who diagnoses Billy with a nervous disorder thinks what happens to Billy is because his childhood experiences. Since getting out of hospital, Billy “acts” like normal and never shows anything strange to his family until the plane crash. The plane crash accident is the turning point for Billy when Billy indirectly starts to reveal on the radio night talk what happens to him from World War II until today even though he also does not know what really happens to himself. Billy's daughter Barbara thinks that his father becomes senile because of the brain-damaged from his plane crash accident.

*“They had both found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in war. Rosewater, for instance, had shot a fourteen-year-old fireman, mistaking him for a German soldier. So it goes. And Billy had seen the greatest massacre in European history, which was the fire-bombing of Dresden.” (Vonnegut, 1968:76)*

Another explanation in the novel which indicates Billy's lack of enthusiasm in life and finds life meaningless is when he and Rosewater a veteran of war from a different battle are hospitalized in the veteran mental hospital. They both find life meaningless because of what they have experienced



and witnessed during the war. It is explained that Rosewater on purpose has shot a fourteen-year-old fireman whom he thinks is a German soldier and on the other hand, Billy has seen the greatest massacre in European history which is the bombing of Dresden. Trauma sufferers in their symptoms think that life no longer has meaning and it is difficult to carry out activities as usual after being mentally and physically unable to avoid the long-term effects of the traumatic event. The death of a close family member, experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, suffering from a life-threatening illness, and extreme bullying are some of the many more reasons a person can experience trauma, some of which also cause sufferers to lose their willingness to live. The thing that complicates the situation of trauma sufferers is that trauma sufferers often close themselves and do not tell anything that bothers their minds and most sufferers do not realize that they are suffering from trauma.

### 3.1.3 Delusion

This is related to Billy's delusional condition about the Tralfamadorian planet and his adventure in time that he believes is real. He believes that he can travel in time uncontrolled and he is kidnapped before by a Tralfamadorian spaceship and placed in a zoo with an artist named Montana Wildhack. However this delusion is imaginary about Tralfamadorian, flying saucer, and adventure in time that he believes is influenced by science fiction novels written by Kilgore Trout. This is where all of Billy's delusion comes in. Rosewater is the person who introduces Billy to science fiction in the first place during their recovery in the veteran mental hospital.

*:"So Rosewater told him. It was The Gospel from Outer Space, by Kilgore Trout. It was about a visitor from outer space, shaped very much like a Tralfamadorian, by the way. The visitor from outer space made a serious study of Christianity, to learn if he could, why Christians found it so easy to be cruel." (Vonnegut, 1968:80)*

All his delusive planet and travelling in time are influenced by science fiction books that Rosewater introduces to him. All the science fiction books Billy reads are coming from a writer named Kilgore Trout. Billy devotes himself to tell his story one day but he has waited for the right time to tell it. Billy believes that the first time he "travels" on the Tralfamadorian planet is when he is 44 years old in 1967 on the night of his daughter's wedding. He reveals all of his adventure in radio night talk after the plane crash. This is when his daughter Barbara knows about his father's delusion but he has not known that his father suffers from PTSD.

*"And then, without any warning, Billy went to New York City, and got on an all-night radio program devoted to talk. He told about having come unstuck in time. He said, too, that he had been kidnapped by a flying saucer in 1967. The saucer was from the planet Tralfamadore, he said. He was taken to Tralfamadore, where he was displayed naked in a zoo, he said." (Vonnegut, 1968:27)*

Billy really believes that his adventure in time and the Tralfamadorian planet is real, even after his airplane crash incident without telling his daughter he goes to New York and gets an all-night radio program to talk about his adventure in time and tell the story that he has been kidnapped by a Tralfamadorian spaceship in 1967 and displayed naked in a zoo in Tralfamadorian planet. His daughter Barbara hears about this and becomes upset. Billy insists that all of his adventure of time story and Tralfamadorian planet are true. All of this situation about his confession on an all-night radio program happens after Billy's plane crash incident.

Then after one month without incident, Billy writes a letter to the Ilium Leader in which he describes Tralfamadorian and the second letter in which he explains about what the most important

thing that he learns from Tralfamadorian. His daughter Barbara goes to his house after knowing about his father's letters and has an argument with him about this situation. He is trying to convince his daughter that his story is true.

*"What is it about my letter that makes you so mad?" Billy wanted to know.*

*"It's all just crazy. None of it's true!"*

*"It's all true." Billy's anger was not going to rise with hers. He never got mad at anything.*

*He was wonderful that way.*

*"There is no such planet as Tralfamadore."*

*"It can't be detected from Earth, if that's what you mean," said Billy.*

(Vonnegut, 1968:30)

Billy in his basement works on his second letter. There is also a description in an implicit way that Billy is often in a delusional state, and this is related to Caruth's theory that someone who suffers from Trauma often experiences repetitive phenomena. The example repetitive phenomena is delusions. Delusion is a state in which a person believes something that is contrary to reality and logic. In the case of Billy who has delusions about the Tralfamadorian planet and time travel, he believes that everything he has experienced is real and tries to convince those around him. It can be concluded that all the delusions experienced by Billy are his dreams and hopes that he is difficult to explain, so he tries to express the dream in the form of a fantasy. It is explained that Billy sees the Tralfamadorian planet as a dream place in the fourth dimension that is peaceful where he does things normally and can travel through time, and this is in contrast to planet Earth which Billy thinks is a place of massacre and murder since the beginning of time. Billy also fantasizes that while he is on the Tralfamadorian planet he has been placed in a zoo with an adult film artist named Montana Wildhack. It is explained in the novel that in fact Billy initially did not want to marry his late wife Valencia who is described as having an ugly face and fat. In short, Montana Wildhack is a picture of Billy's dream woman who has a proportional body similar to the photo of naked woman Roland Weary shows to Billy in the war.

### 3.1.4 Weeping for No Reason and Sleep Disturbances.

It is explained in the novel that Billy always weeps for no reason when he is trying to sleep. There is none of his family rather than his doctor who knows about his condition. He is under his doctor's order to take a nap every day to fix his complaint but in that condition, Billy would weep for no reason most of the time. At that time during the life of Billy Pilgrim, psychological trauma is not yet known by the public or medical personnel and psychiatrists, so sometimes doctors or psychiatrists only provide advice that is not directly related to the trauma problem and sometimes incorrectly or unable to diagnose patients who have psychological trauma disorders. This happens because at that time trauma is not yet recognized.

*"Billy took off his tri-focals and his coat and his necktie and his shoes, and he closed the Venetian blinds and then the drapes, and he lay down on the outside of the coverlet. But sleep would not come. Tears came instead. They seeped. Billy turned on the Magic Fingers, and he was jiggled as he wept." (Vonnegut, 1968:51)*

Because of this condition, Billy has sleep disturbance. Every time he tries to sleep, the weeping would come out for no reason. Someone who suffers from trauma at some point has sleep disturbance because their mind never rests from thinking about the traumatic event they have

witnessed. This thing is also experienced by Billy and every time he tries to take a nap, sleep wouldn't come instead of coming to tears.

The weeping that Billy experiences, whenever he tries to sleep, is an unconscious reaction and sometimes for an unknown reason. The reason is unknown because the situation where Billy as a person who experiences this situation does not have any clue about the reason he is crying bitterly and also the doctor who treats him can only provide advice that is not directly related to the trauma experienced by Billy. The doctor only advises Billy to rest every day to get calm, but it is in this calm state that Billy cries bitterly while experiencing flashbacks to the traumatic events he experiences. People closest to Billy also never know that Billy often cries in his sleep. The reason behind it is because Billy has never shown this to those closest to him and is secretive about the situation he is experiencing.

### 3.2 Billy's Traumatic Triggers

The main trigger of Billy's trauma is the result of his participation in World War II where he has witnessed many horrific events like the bombing event in Dresden city. In addition, he often gets humiliation and harsh treatment from his fellow soldiers, fellow prisoners, and German soldiers. All of this would be the triggers of the trauma experienced by Billy. The next event after the World War II that exacerbates the trauma experienced by Billy is the plane crash he is travelling in and the death of his wife due to carbon monoxide poisoning. These triggers are elaborated below.

#### 3.2.1 Insulting and Physical Violence

Billy often gets insulting and becomes an object of mockery by his fellow soldiers and prisoners, and sometimes gets physical violence especially from Roland Weary. Weary often insults with physical violence to Billy since they escape from the Battle of Bulge until they become German prisoners and bring to Dresden city. Sometimes Weary insults and threatens Billy by using physical violence. Caruth (1995) explains that Trauma is a late response to an overwhelming event. Save says that trauma experienced by Billy is his late response to all violence he has experienced from his enemy and from fellow soldier during World War II. All his violence experiences become the trigger of the trauma that he suffers during his life. The quotation below describes how Billy later suffers from trauma.

*"Weary laid the spikes along Billy's cheek, roweled the cheek with savagely affectionate restraint. "How'd you like to be hit with this—hem?" , he wanted to know.*

*"I wouldn't," said Billy.*

*"Know why the blade's triangular?"*

*"No." (Vonnegut, 1968:35)*

The event in the quotation above is a conversation between Billy and Roland Weary when they are at the ditch and Weary makes Billy look very close to his trench knife and asks him how he would like to be hit by Weary's trench knife. Billy answers the question from weary shortly and does not expect the conversation to continue any longer. The novel also explains that since the beginning of Billy's childhood, he already has contemplated torture and hideous wound. Therefore, for Billy, what Weary has done to him is nothing new but something that is worse than his childhood. In several parts of the novel, it is also told that Weary often blames Billy for everything that has happened to him and exalts his sacrifice for Billy while lowering him.

*"It was entirely Billy's fault that this fighting organization no longer existed, Weary felt, and Billy was going to pay. Weary socked Billy a good one on the side of his jaw, knocked*



*Billy away from the bank and onto the snow-covered ice of the creek. Billy was down on all fours on the ice, and Weary kicked him in the ribs, rolled him over on his side.”* (Vonnegut, 1968:43)

The quotation above explains that Weary blames Billy for his fantasy organization named “The Three Musketeers” which no longer exists. The members of this organization are Weary and two scouts who are together since they escape from the Battle of Bulge, even though the two scouts never hear about this organization. Billy is not included in that organization because according to Weary, Billy is weak and dumb. He even thinks that Billy doesn’t deserve to be in the army since he is weak among the fours. The next quotation describes those Weary insults and uses physical violence against Billy.

*“Billy’s jacket and shirt and undershirt had been hauled up around his shoulders by the violence, so his back was naked. There, inches from the tips of Weary’s combat boots, were the pitiful buttons of Billy’s spine.*

*Weary drew back his right boot, aimed a kick at the spine, at the tube which had so many of Billy’s important wires in it. Weary was going to break that tube”.* (Vonnegut, 1968:43)

The quotation above shows that after Weary thinks that Billy is the one who is responsible for the no longer existence of his fantasy organization, he decides to hit and kick Billy as a form of revenge. He even tries to disable Billy by kicking his spine. This indicates how cruel Weary treats Billy since they meet. Lucky for Billy before Weary kicks him in the back some German soldiers see the two. This is the beginning where Billy and Weary get arrested by German soldiers and take them to the city of Dresden in Germany using a boxcar. Billy and Weary are included with other American prisoners on the way to the city of Dresden. During the time in the boxcar, American prisoners are not treated humanely and Billy is the one who gets the worst condition besides Weary and the hobo. Billy gets insulted even by his fellow soldiers. During their travel in the boxcar Billy gets insulted and ignored by his fellow prisoners.

*“Get out of here! I want to sleep!”*

*“Shut up,” said somebody else.*

*“I’ll shut up when Pilgrim gets away from here.”*

*So Billy stood up again, clung to the cross brace. “Where can I sleep?” he asked quietly.*

*“Not with me.”* (Vonnegut, 1968:61)

The quotation above is a conversation between Billy Pilgrim and an American prisoner who doesn’t want to share a bed with Billy and Billy gets insulted. Because of this, Billy almost cries. Another moment is when Billy becomes a dumper for the other American prisoners’ excreting. During their time in the boxcar, American prisoners excrete into their steel helmets and pass to a person who is near the ventilator. The person for each boxcar who is near the ventilator becomes a dumper. Because Billy is the person in the boxcar who is near the ventilator, he has to dump another prisoner’s excreting.

*“Human beings in there were excreting into steel helmets which were passed to the people at the ventilators, who dumped them. Billy was a dumper. The human beings also passed canteens, which guards would fill with water. When food came in, the human beings were quiet and trusting and beautiful. They shared”.* (Vonnegut, 1968:57)

On the ninth day during their travel to Dresden City, the hobo who talks to Billy before saying that his experience in the boxcar is nothing and saying to Billy they all will be fine is now found dead together with Roland Weary who suffers before from his wound. Before being dead, Roland Weary

tells the other prisoners about his travel with Billy and two scouts and Weary blames Billy for his bad condition. He makes a false accusation and says that Billy is the reason why he dying. Paul Lazzaro together with Weary before his death promises Weary that he will take revenge for Weary on the person named Billy, as seen in the quotation below.

*"Next to Billy was little Paul Lazzaro, who had promised to avenge Roland Weary. Lazzaro wasn't thinking about vengeance. He was thinking about his terrible bellyache. His stomach had shrunk to the size of a walnut. That dry, shriveled pouch was as sore as a boi".* (Vonnegut, 1968:70)

The quotation above is a situation where Billy, Paul Lazzaro, and Edgar Derby are sitting together. At this point, Paul Lazzaro does not know anything about who is Billy. He just knows that Roland Weary's death because of a person named Billy Pilgrim. Billy who is sitting next to Paul Lazzaro hears everything about Lazzaro's plan to kill Billy after the war. After he hears about Lazzaro's plan he knows that someday who may be killed by Lazzaro is himself. Later Billy finds that Lazzaro lives in the same town as him and Billy gets shot by a sniper.

*"He says. "Many years ago," he said, "a certain man promised to have me killed. He is an old man now, living not far from here. He has read all the publicity associated with my appearance in your fair city. He is insane. Tonight he will keep his promise."* (Vonnegut, 1968:99)

The quotation above is a situation during the night on February 13, 1976 Billy gets killed, at the baseball park in his town. At that moment he says he would die this night. He explains to the crowds about Paul Lazzaro and his promise to Roland Weary to take revenge on Billy. Billy already knows that Lazzaro is living near him and threatening his life but Billy never tells about this to anybody even his family so he keeps silent until that night, the minutes before he gets shot and dies.

Besides his terrible and terrifying experiences close to death, Billy suffers from being insulted by his fellow prisoners during their time in a boxcar in World War II. Litaay (2018: 34) describes psychological abuse is not just ordinary verbal abuse, but an attack on a child's social and emotional abilities. Furthermore, it is a threat to human psychology. The definition and explanation about people who suffer from a traumatic event are not only about experiences close to death like war and natural disasters but also some people suffer from traumatic experiences because of insulting, harassment, psychological abuse, or bullying from other people or someone close to the person. The death of family members or someone close also can make the person suffer from trauma. Billy is the ultimate example of people who suffers from a post-Traumatic event. Billy experiences anything possible about the thing which can cause trauma like the death of someone close to him, insult from his fellow prisoners during his time in World War II, physical violence and insulting from Roland weary.

### 3.2.2 Witnessing the Bombing of Dresden City

The Bombing of Dresden is the most significant event which really affects Billy's post-war life following other events which are worse for Billy's psychological condition. At that moment he witnesses the greatest slaughter in European history. More than 130.000 people are dead at that event. "War always contributes bad effects for the world. It can damage some important places or country and kill many people. Moreover, war kills countries economy and future. Indirectly, a war can create trauma." (Nurhadi, 2019 : 49). The novel describes that Billy finds life meaningless because of what he has seen in war especially the Bombing of Dresden. In Dresden city, Billy has seen German schoolgirls' bodies get boiled alive by his fellow soldier because she is trying to escape. Billy and some

of his fellow soldiers survive and escape from this terrible event. This event is the last time Billy evolves into the war.

*“How the inhabitants of a whole planet can live in peace! As you know, I am from a planet that has been engaged in senseless slaughter since the beginning of time. I myself have seen the bodies of schoolgirls who were boiled alive in a water tower by my own countrymen, who were proud of fighting pure evil at the time.” This was true. Billy saw the boiled bodies in Dresden.” (Vonnegut, 1968:84)*

The quotation above is a testimony from Billy during his time on the Tralfamadorian planet. He answers a question from Tralfamadorian about what he has learned from their planet and he says the thing about the Tralfamadorian planet he has learned is that the Tralfamadorian creatures live in peace and how different it is from Earth where senseless slaughters happen since the beginning of time.

Among the many traumatic events experienced by Billy, the bombing of the city of Dresden is the worst and the last one he witnesses which later affects Billy's life and his mindset. Billy sees life as meaningless since the following war and he only lives based on a destiny that he believes is predetermined and cannot be changed. When Billy is hospitalized after returning from the war Billy finds his life has no meaning and purpose, in short because of the bombing of Dresden, Billy in the future just lives without living his life at all. It is explained that during his stay at the hospital Billy tries to rediscover his identity. “Without any warnings, those traumatic events can happen to every person when they are not mentally prepared and those can also trigger people to experience trauma.” (Sartika, 2020, p.122). One of the triggers of someone suffering from PTSD is that in his life he has experienced and witnessed extraordinary cruelty or terrible events that are not understood but stored in memory which then gradually will become a psychological disorder in the future because it is not treated or investigated. During Billy's lifetime until his death in 1976, the psychological trauma is unknown to both the public and psychiatrists. Psychological trauma only begins to be recognized by experts and is recognized as a mental illness in the 1980s.

The next events after the 2nd world war that exacerbates the trauma experienced by Billy are as follows. Two post-war traumatic events experienced by Billy are the plane crash he is traveling in and the death of his wife, Valencia due to Carbon Monoxide poisoning. In the plane crash where Billy is flying, he is a survivor of the accident and his father-in-law who is also on the plane with Billy is among the fatalities in the incident. Then Valencia, Billy's wife, dies from carbon monoxide poisoning while Billy is recovering in hospital after a plane crash.

### 3.2.3 Plane Crash Accident

Billy's plane crash is a traumatic event that has been directly experienced by Billy since World War II, which is told as part of a flashback experiences by him. In that incident, Billy is the only passenger who survives the horrific incident and has injuries all over his head. This made her psychological state become worse because he loses her father-in-law and several friends he knows in the plane crash.

*“Early in 1968, a group of optometrists, with Billy among them, chartered an airplane to fly them from Ilium to an international convention of optometrists in Montreal. The plane crashed on top of Sugar Bush Mountain, in Vermont. Everybody was killed but Billy”.* (Vonnegut, 1968:27)

The quotation above briefly explains that Billy in 1968 attends an international meeting of ophthalmologists. Billy along with his father-in-law who is also an ophthalmologist and his professional colleagues depart by the same plane to the city of Montreal where the meeting is held. On the way Billy's plane crashes and he is the only person who survives in the accident. As a result of this accident, Billy has injuries all over his head and suffers a concussion. Billy is hospitalized for an unspecified period of time but during his treatment, Billy's wife has an accident and is poisoned by Carbon Monoxide. It is also explained that Billy, who has flashbacks of the plane crash, feels that he knows what would happen to the plane he is flying in but does not want to tell anyone because he feels that this incident is predestined and could not be changed. After finishing his treatment, Billy returns to his house and he is quiet for a while. At this point Billy without telling his daughter, Barbara, heads to New York City on his own and makes an announcement on a late night radio talk program that he is abducted by aliens at the age of 44 and has time traveled. A month after his confession, Billy writes a letter about his journey on the Tralfamadorian planet. Billy's daughter Barbara thinks that her father has gone senile from a concussion and doesn't know what to do.

### 3.2.4 Death of Billy's Wife

In the novel, it is explained that during Billy's treatment in the hospital after a plane crash, his wife, Valencia, has an accident where she is poisoned by Carbon Monoxide. At that time, Billy does not know that his wife has died in an accident. His daughter Barbara is the one who takes care of all of her mother's funeral.

The quotation "While Billy was recuperating in a hospital in Vermont, his wife died accidentally of carbon-monoxide poisoning." (Vonnegut, 1968:99) explains that while Billy is recovering in hospital as a result of the plane crash, his wife, Valencia, is dead in an incident of Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Since the plane crash and the death of his wife, Billy no longer cares about the businesses he owns and focuses on convincing those around him about what he has experienced and seen on the Tralfamadorian planet. Even though Billy shows symptoms of mental disorders, no one from his immediate family find out or invites Billy to have his mental state checked by a psychiatrist. His daughter, Barbara, thinks he is senile from a concussion.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Trauma experienced by Billy is a late response from Billy and people around him about what really happened to Billy during his time in World War II and becomes worst for Billy because he has to deal with his trauma until his death without support from his family. All the symptoms that Billy has shown, directly and indirectly, fail to be recognized by his family or even doctor. Billy is the type of person who is never open about his feelings. Billy hides all his pain and trauma for himself. Because of the lack of recognition by Billy or his family, Billy's unconscious mind forms all Billy's dream and wish in the form of delusion.

Because of failing to recognize the symptoms that Billy has showed directly and indirectly, Billy experiences uncontrollable memories of past traumatic events, loses his enthusiasm for life, delusive about Tralfamadorian planet and his adventure in time, sleep disturbance followed by weeping for no reason. Billy has to live with his trauma until his death comes without one of his own family or people close to him knowing. Billy has to deal with his trauma as a late response from terrible events that he has witnessed.

All these traumatic events influences Billy's life, how he sees life, and how he responses about life and death. During his time in World War II, he has witnessed and experienced on the first hand about the terrible effect of war. Billy has seen one the greatest slaughter in history, the bombing of Dresden. He has experienced insulting and physical violence on the first hand by his fellow American

soldier. After coming back from war, his doctor fails to diagnose Billy's mental breakdown. His family never asks or searches about his past, especially during his time on World War II and Billy is the type of person who never tells about his personal matters. The events that make Billy's life even worse are the plane crash he has traveled in, losing his father-in-law, and the death of his wife because of Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

From the explanation of Billy's traumatic symptoms and triggers above, it can be concluded that Billy Pilgrim really suffers from psychological trauma because of the effect of war, which makes him unable to live a normal life. Considering the important and universal topic, Psychological trauma as the effect of the war in general, further research on universal topics are encouraged to be done.

## REFERENCES

- Aras, G. (2015). Personality and Individual Differences: Literature in Psychology- Psychology in Literature. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 185, 250- 257.
- Caruth, C. (1995). *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*. Baltimore and London : The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hancock, B. (1998). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Nottingham,UK: Trent Focus Group.
- Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books.
- Litaay, Adeline. G. M. (2018). The Effects of the Abuse Experienced by David Character's in David Pelzer's *A Child Allied and The Lost Boy*. *Anaphora :Journal of Language, Literary, andCultural Studies*, 1(1), 33-38.
- Nurhadi, M. (2019). Traumatic Neurosis of War in Collin's *Mockingjay* *Anaphora Journal of Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies*, 2(1), 49-55.
- Qodariyah, B., Rohmah, A., & Natalia, S. (2017). The Major Characters in GillianFlinn Novel "Sharp Objects" (A Psychoanalysis Freud). *Channing :English Language Education and Literature*, 2(2), 78-85.
- Sartika, E. (2020). Traumatic Experiences in Eka Kurniawan's Novel *Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Dibayar Tuntas*. *Poetika : Jurnal Ilmu Sastra*, 8(2), 121-138.
- Shoukat, L., Waheed, S., & Arshad, K. (2021). An Analysis of Personal and Collective Trauma in Khaled Hosseini's Novel *Sea Prayer*. *Journal of English Education*, 6(2), 117-130.
- Sibi, K. J. (2020). Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalytic Theory. *ResearchGate*, 75- 79.
- Suherman, H., & Supsiadji, M. R. (2012). Psychological Effects of War in Gertrudge Samuel's *Of David and Eva: A Love Story*. *Paraphrase*, 12(2), 21-27.
- Vonnegut, K. (1969). *Slaughterhouse-Five*. United States: Delacorte.
- Wellek, R., & Austin, W. (1962). *Theory of Literature*. New York: A Harvest Book.
- Wellek, R., & Austin, W. (1963). *Theory of Literature*. London: Penguin