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VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



YÜKSEK
LİSANS
TEZİ

ECCENTRIC CHARACTERS AS SOCIAL
COMMENTARY: A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS OF IGNATIUS J. REILLY AND
KILGORE TROUT

ROJDA SANCAN

İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI
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MASTER THESIS

**ECCENTRIC CHARACTERS AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IGNATIUS J. REILLY AND KILGORE
TROUT**

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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

SOSYAL YORUM OLARAK EKSANTRİK KARAKTERLER: IGNATIUS J.
REILLY VE KILGORE TROUT'UN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ANALİZİ

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Rojda SANCAN tarafından hazırlanan “ Eccentric Characters as Social Commentary Sosyal Yorum Olarak Eksantrik Karakterler: Ignatius J. Reilly ve Kilgore Trout'un Karşılaştırmalı bir Analizi: (Eccentric Characters as Social Commentary: A Comparative Analysis of Ignatius J. Reilly and Kilgore Trout)”Adlı tez çalışması aşağıdaki jüri tarafından OY BİRLİĞİ / OY ÇOKLUĞU ile Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalında YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ olarak kabul edilmiştir.	
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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	v
ÖZET.....	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	7
1. THE WRITERS AND THE WORKS	7
1.1. John Kennedy Toole's <i>A Confederacy of Dunces</i>	7
1.2. Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s <i>Breakfast of Champions</i>	10
CHAPTER II	13
2. LITERARY CONTEXT AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY	13
2.1. Contextual Background and Theoretical Framework	18
2.2. Satire as Social Commentary: Critiquing Capitalism, Consumerism, and Social Decay	26
CHAPTER III	38
3. ECCENTRICITY, ALIENATION, AND THE AUTHORS' INNER WORLDS	38
3.1. The Authorial Doppelgänger	39
3.1.1. Key Characteristics of Ignatius J. Reilly	41
3.1.2. Key Characteristics of Kilgore Trout	43
CONCLUSION	47
WORK CITED	49
CV	51

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ÖZET

Toplumsal sorunları eleştirmek amacıyla hiciv ve kara mizahı ustalıkla kullanmalarıyla tanınmış olan John Kennedy Toole ve Kurt Vonnegut Jr. eserleriyle tarihin tozlu sayfalarına kalıcı imzalarını atmayı başarmış Amerikan yazarlarındandır. Bu tezde ele alınacak olan eserlerinde her iki yazarın da eksantrik, anti-protagonist olarak tanımlanabilecek ana karakterleri romanlarının merkezine konumlandırıp, bu protagonistler üzerinden kapitalizm, tüketimcilik, toplumsal yapıların bozulması ve siyahi bireylerin maruz kaldığı yapısal eşitsizlikleri daha sonra detaylı olarak anlatılacağı üzere kendilerine has hiciv kullanım teknikleriyle eleştirmektedirler. Tezin ilerleyen sayfalarında ele alınacak olan eserlerin genel olarak detaylı analizi yapıp; yazıldığı dönem, *Alıklar Birliği* (1963) ve *Şampiyonların Kahvaltısı* (1973), üzerinden yazarların içinde bulundukları periyodun eserlerine yansımalarının analizinin teorik çerçeveler içerisinde yapılması hedeflenmektedir. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada yazarlar ve protagonistleri arasındaki ilişki araştırılıp, bu karakterlerin edebi alter egolarının bir versiyonu mu yoksa yaratıcılarının sadece toplumsal problemleri, ciddiyetsiz bir şekilde yansıtması için oluşturdukları kurgudan mı ibaret olduğu tartışılmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alter Ego, John Kennedy Toole, Kurt Vonnegut, Hiciv, Sosyal Yorum

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ABSTRACT**

John Kennedy Toole and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. are among the prominent American authors who have secured a lasting place in the annals of literary history through their masterful use of satire and dark humor to critique social issues. In the works examined in this thesis, both authors position eccentric, anti-protagonist figures at the center of their narratives. Through these protagonists, they critique capitalism, consumerism, the degradation of social structures, and the structural inequalities faced by Black individuals, topics that will be explored in detail in subsequent sections, along with each author's distinctive techniques of satire. This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1963) and *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), within their historical and sociopolitical contexts, highlighting how the periods in which these novels were written are reflected in the authors' works through a theoretical framework. Additionally, this study will investigate the relationship between the authors and their protagonists as well as an analytical comparison between these two authors and the characters, questioning whether these characters represent literary alter egos or merely serve as fictional characters created to satirize societal problems in an unserious, ironic manner.

Key Words: Alter Ego, John Kennedy Toole, Kurt Vonnegut, Satire, Social Commentary

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SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.



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INTRODUCTION

Could it be that the most eccentric outcasts in literature are also its most fearless critics, daring to expose the world's darkest truths beneath layers of absurdity? Could these characters be reflections of their authors' inner lives, their frustrations, alienation, and sharp-eyed skepticism? These questions lie at the heart of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Breakfast of Champions*, two novels that defy conventional storytelling and blur the line between satire and personal confession. Both novels focus on eccentric protagonist, who are rather unique in their own judgments rather than following society's ethical norms. In a sense, they are both considered anti-heroes in their respective plots. Ignatius J. Reilly, with his grotesque arrogance and disdain for progress, and Kilgore Trout, the underappreciated science-fiction writer whose works question the very essence of humanity, offer biting commentaries on the societies they navigate. Despite their outlandish behaviors and often absurd situations, these characters function as lenses through which the authors explore themes of alienation, societal decay, and the contradictions inherent in modern life. However, these characters are not merely vessels for critique; on the contrary, it can be said that they are deeply personal creations. Toole's Ignatius, with his exaggerated disdain for societal norms, reflects the author's own struggles with societal expectations and creative frustrations. Toole's life, tragically cut short, was marked by isolation and a sense of alienation, themes that are inextricably woven into Ignatius's story. As will be detailed later in this thesis, Toole's entire life was spent in New Orleans, where he was born, just as the protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly, whom he created as his alternate persona, spent his entire life in New Orleans. When the author's life was researched, it was seen that, just like Ignatius, he lived in his mother's house and could not publish his works during his lifetime, so he believed his work would never be published or understood, and it was learned that he committed suicide at the age of thirty-two while struggling with various mental illnesses and was in a severe depression. However, eleven years after his death, *Confederacy of Dunces* was finally published with his mother's efforts, Thelma Agnes Ducoing. It is possible to see the absurd parallel of this tragic story of the author in the

character he created, Ignatius. The author managed to create another parallel universe and reflect traces of his own life into the work. Similarly, Vonnegut's created character, *Kilgore Trout*, a recurring figure in his works, serves as an alter ego for the author, channeling Vonnegut's disillusionment with capitalism, war, and the mechanization of human relationships. Like *Ignatius and Toole*, both *Kilgore Trout* and Kurt Vonnegut faced difficulties in their writing careers. Trout's books were generally limited to low-budget science fiction magazines, reflecting the difficulties Vonnegut had in publishing his works early in his career. Unlike Vonnegut, Trout does not seem to mind this situation too much and gives the reader the impression that he has accepted this and not reacted excessively, which might give the idea that he's not bothered by his place in the literary world. This brings to mind the contradiction of whether Vonnegut actually approached these difficulties he experienced in the early stages of his career like Trout did, or whether this was the attitude he wanted to adopt. Nevertheless, it is a fact that must be accepted, and this parallel brings to mind the disappointments and difficulties Vonnegut experienced in gaining recognition for his literary efforts. Trout and Vonnegut, like Ignatius and Toole, felt alienated from society, and this is clearly seen in both their works and when their biographies are examined. Trout's unconventional thinking and narrative strategies are often overlooked or underappreciated and reflect Vonnegut's own experiences as a writer whose novels were initially rejected or misread. This shared sense of alienation from society gives depth to the character and the author, allowing readers to question the very nature of artistic production and reception. There are many examples of writers whose tragic life stories parallel their work in gaining an audience and perhaps the attention they did not receive during their lifetimes. The posthumous fame of authors like John Kennedy Toole, Franz Kafka, and Sylvia Plath reflects a tragic literary paradox: voices too honest, too eccentric, or too fragile for their time, yet destined to resonate with generations that came after. Their personal struggles, mirrored so closely in their protagonists, imbue their satire and sorrow with haunting relevance. This is exemplified by John Kennedy Toole's novel *Confederacy of Dunces*, which was only published in 1980, eleven years after his death, and won the Pulitzer Prize the following year. Percy Walker, who helped publish the work and also wrote the

foreword for this book, says of Toole that indicates his attempt to point out Toole's extraordinary way of using absurdist satire:

A great rumbling farce of Falstaffian dimensions would better describe it; commedia would be closer to it. It is also sad. One never quite knows where the sadness comes from — from the tragedy at the heart of Ignatius's great gaseous rages and lunatic adventures or the tragedy attending the book itself. (Toole, 1987: 4)

John Kennedy Toole mastered his way of writing, combining absurdism and satire in his work to take serious matters in a lighthearted manner while capturing the readers' attention on uncomfortable truths that are mostly overlooked by society. Similarly, Kurt Vonnegut Jr. also uses satire in his work, but what makes it different from Toole's is that Vonnegut's usage of satire in *Breakfast of Champions* is the type of Horatian satire with a touch of Juvenalian elements. His tone, often lighthearted and humorous, also appears in some parts as dark, absurd, and existential. His unique way of writing includes the frequent use of irony and surreal situations to make his point, even breaking the fourth wall in his novel to point out that this is, in fact, a novel. In the final chapters of his book, he inserts himself in the world he created to observe the scene in the art gallery where the novel's plot reaches its climax; the meeting between Kilgore Trout and Dwayne Hoover right beside Kurt Vonnegut. This direct involvement serves as the author's active participation within the events, he becomes part of the story as a creator. His attempt to portray himself within the novel's frame draws attention to the artificiality of the narrative and the power dynamic between creator and creation. In the final moments of the novel, after the art gallery scene, followed by a series of events, Vonnegut again appears in the novel, this time to tell his alter ego, Kilgore Trout, that he's 'free' now, so he says, "You are the only one I am telling. For the others, tonight will be a night like any other night. Arise, Mr. Trout, you are free, you are free" (Vonnegut, 2000: 227). This moment underscores the irony of the situation, which Vonnegut has the power to grant freedom and create a better reality for his alter ego and the other characters. Yet, he chose to implement the same unfairness, social, political even individual problems from his own reality to the novel he created. This highlights Vonnegut's dark, existential critique of free will, even with the ability to shape a better world, the cycle of human suffering tends to be continue and by creating a world full of chaos and inequity, he critiques not only his characters' lack of agency but also the limitations of free will in a world that seems incapable of escaping its own. John Kennedy Toole's style more of Menippean which is known for

being; filled with eccentric characters instead of a traditional plot, philosophically playful or absurd, given in the how Ignatius obsessed over philosopher Boethius, with mix of Carnavalesque satire where Toole's New Orleans is full of grotesque, exaggerated character, low comedy that perfectly aligned with Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. In this type of satire, there are some distinctive elements, such as social hierarchies being inverted, which makes one think how Ignatius is capable of judging in a mocking tone of his boss in *Levy Pants* or his professor at Tulane University. The other features of this type are the authority being mocked, the rules are gleefully broken, and the body and physicality are celebrated, which Ignatius severely mentions about his gas problems, almost in every chapter, making it impossible to notice. In carnival, all that is high becomes low; the sacred becomes comic, says Bakhtin, and Toole manages to capture this spirit of Bakhtin accordingly.

The parallels between authors and their protagonists invite readers to consider how personal experience shapes and enriches literary narratives. Both novels provide critical examinations of the societal structures that underlie modern life. Both authors have managed to reflect the culture and society of their time in their aforementioned novels by skillfully using the art of satire. John Kennedy Toole's *New Orleans* of the 1960s, which is positioned at the center of his book, clearly reveals the identity crisis in the region after the Civil Rights Movement, consumerism, unemployment problems, as well as a society where people are discriminated against based on their color. On the other hand, Kurt Vonnegut's fictional America of the 1970s witnesses the existential identity crisis of the country, which has just come out of the Vietnam War, and the society based on consumerism, which also discriminates against color, just like 1960s New Orleans. It is seen that both authors not only mock social norms, but also aim to reveal these problems through satire in order to make a change in their world. Ignatius J. Reilly's obsessive disdain for consumerism and perceived moral decline contrasts sharply with Kilgore Trout's resigned observations of humanity's absurdities. However, these eccentric protagonists actually show how difficult and unacceptable it is to be an individual and think against the system in society. Society does not understand them or consciously excludes them. This situation is clearly seen as the main theme of both novels: society's intolerance of those who are different. As mentioned before, Toole and Vonnegut use humor as a shield, especially absurdism

and satire, to reveal the economic, cultural, and political distortions in large systems within their region. These authors show how inconsistent, unfair, and questionable the rules and values that turn people into puppets are. By writing about such issues in a way that makes the reader laugh, but in reality, they aim to point out these social matters and want society to think, realize the situation. To sum it up, these writers show the price of being different, eccentric even, but they do not neglect to criticize the system that they are a part of.

As the art of literary satire continues to develop, critics such as Dustin Griffin have approached the genre in a different way. Griffin sees satire as an open-ended, essayistic narrative style that tends to ask questions rather than answer them, or being used as a sarcastic, didactic, and definitive way of criticizing moral, social, or political problems. According to Griffin, satire should be more of a thought-provoking style that asks questions rather than just giving a message and reaching a definitive conclusion, and is full of ambiguities that make the reader feel uncomfortable. This perspective is seen in *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Breakfast of Champions*. Rather than offering a clear solution to problems, both novels consist of ambiguities and contradictions, as Griffin defines satire, leaving the reader alone with the feeling of discomfort brought on by social problems. These two writers use satire to criticize not only systems of power, capitalism, racism, and consumerism, but also the alienation of the individual who is stuck in the middle of these problems.

In this thesis, the lives of John Kennedy Toole and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., and their perspectives on social problems, as well as their works *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Breakfast of Champions*, which are represented as the written voices of these social problems, are researched and examined in detail. Furthermore, this study aims to shed light on the inner worlds of the writers by making a comprehensive comparison between the writers and their anti-heroes (alter egos). Their sarcastic and eccentric personas towards the problems of the modern world, which are evident in both novels, are explained in the context of satire as a means of social commentary. In addition, research is made on the effects of certain historical events that occurred or continued during the period in which the works were written on the works of the authors. For example, *A Confederacy of Dunces* was written in the early 1960s and describes New Orleans in the 1960s, and it is appropriate to analyze it in the context of the historical

and cultural environment of that period. The post-war economic situation, the Civil Rights Movement, and the strong resistance to modernization in the American South, where society was clinging to the 'old ways', were present at that time. Similarly, *Breakfast of Champions* was published in 1973 and is about the fictional America of the 1970s. At that time, the United States had just come out of the Vietnam War, and there was a serious disillusionment, identity crisis, distrust of institutions, government, and even the concept of self in society. The novel also reveals the striking effects of capitalism, media, and mechanization on society.



CHAPTER I

1. THE WRITERS AND THE WORKS

1.1. John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*

John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* was published after his death, and in a way, he created his alternate persona with the protagonist of the novel, Ignatius J. Reilly. The protagonist and Toole have plenty of similarities, considering his life, Toole sheds light on his life and mind through the eccentric main character J. Reilly. John Kennedy Toole, born on December 17, 1937, in New Orleans, was the only child of John Dewey Toole and Thelma Ducoing Toole. Thelma, a talented singer and actress with dreams of New York City stardom, chose to remain in her hometown, teaching music and theater at local schools. Toole, a prodigious child with a flair for language and math, skipped two grammar school grades and flourished academically. As he grew into his teenage years, he discovered a fervent passion for writing essays and fiction. At age sixteen, Toole penned his first novel, *The Neon Bible*, a gripping tale of a young boy growing up in rural Mississippi, wrestling with the small-town perspectives on race, poverty, sexuality, and religion. The novel was inspired by a neon church sign in Louisiana, which Toole wrote for a school contest that he never submitted. Later, he committed suicide at the age of thirty-one, leaving two unpublished books back at home. He never submitted his first novel. After his death, Thelma Toole made sure not to publish it unless under her control, but she died in 1984; she entrusted the manuscript to W. Kenneth Holditch, who also wrote the foreword in *The Neon Bible*. Holditch was eventually forced to allow the publication of the novel in 1987 by a court order. Today, the first novel he penned, *The Neon Bible*, represents a haunting, emotional portrayal of religious oppression and small-town life, written by a teenager with passionate insight.

Toole began his university journey at Tulane University at the age of sixteen. He studied engineering in his first year as a means to escape the poverty that he struggled with throughout his lifetime. However, later, he switched to English Literature, which he was so passionate about. He also worked as a cartoonist for the school's newspaper, called *The Tulane Hullabaloo*. Toole was a successful and

hardworking student at Tulane University, where he excelled in his studies and wrote his undergraduate honors thesis on 16th-century writer John Lyly. Later, he studied his master's at Columbia University. After graduating with High Honors, Toole went on to teach English at various colleges. However, his academic pursuits were temporarily paused as he answered the call of duty, serving in the army and teaching English to Spanish recruits in Puerto Rico for two years. The protagonist of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, J. Reilly, is also a highly educated individual and got a teaching job at the university. Toole created somehow his alter ego with J. Reilly, he put his own worldview and thoughts about society's corruption into reality through Ignatius' blue-yellow irises with an enormously big body full of gas that made his 'valve' shut down whenever he stressed.

Toole had long dreamed of crafting a novel, and military service provided the perfect opportunity, a private room, free time, and a steady paycheck. After borrowing a typewriter, he eagerly shared drafts with friends, who offered endless encouragement. Upon leaving the army, Toole faced a choice: accept a teaching position at Hunter College in New York or return to New Orleans to finish his masterpiece. Robert Gottlieb, an editor at Simon & Schuster, saw potential in Toole's novel but suggested some revisions. He advised Toole to ensure every element had a purpose and to tone down Ignatius. Toole spent a year grappling with these critiques but ultimately struggled with making the changes. He explained that the book was a mix of observation and invention and that the characters and settings were based on his own experiences. Toole believed that this unique milieu deserved to be represented in literature, and he couldn't bring himself to discard these authentic elements. Sadly, he never submitted a revised manuscript. In the years that followed, Toole began to exhibit signs of paranoid schizophrenia. He grew increasingly concerned about students stalking him and mysterious cars driving by his home at night. Toole even confided in a colleague that he believed the government had implanted a device in his brain. Alongside these symptoms, he also displayed signs of depression, withdrawing from those around him. Mental illness seemed to run in Toole's family. As he aged, his father became increasingly paranoid and housebound, while his mother's uncle took his own life just months before Toole was born. In 1966, his mother's brother was committed to a psychiatric hospital in New Orleans. Tragically, on January 19, 1969,

after an argument with his mother, Toole stormed out of their home, only to return the next day to pack his belongings, withdraw money from the bank, and drive away. Similarly, Ignatius, the protagonist of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, runs away from his home and from his mother to not to be kept in a mental hospital. On March 26, 1969, at just thirty-one years old, Toole parked his car in Biloxi, Mississippi, penned several letters to his parents, and ultimately took his own life by running a hose from the exhaust into the car. His mother, Thelma, destroyed the letters and never revealed their contents to anyone.

In March 1973, four years after her son's passing, Thelma sought to publish the manuscript of *A Confederacy of Dunces*. After numerous rejections, she contacted Walker Percy, and together they convinced Louisiana State University Press to publish the novel in 1980. By April 1981, it had won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. The story revolves around Ignatius J. Reilly, a thirty-year-old medieval scholar living in New Orleans. Ignatius is a complex character - rude, mean, manipulative, and deceitful - on a mission to expose society's various crimes against taste, nature, and decency. Throughout the novel, Ignatius strives to bring some 'theology and geometry' to a city known for its debauchery. At its heart, *A Confederacy of Dunces* satirizes 1960s New Orleans society, focusing on themes like religion, race, sexuality, and poverty. Ignatius rejects the values that American society holds dear, such as optimism, success, and even Mark Twain. He stated his opinion about Mark Twain, "Therefore, the Mississippi as Father-God-Moses-Daddy-Phallus-Pops is an altogether false motif begun, I would imagine, by that dreary fraud, Mark Twain. This failure to make contact with reality is, however, characteristic of almost all of America's "art." (Toole, 1987: 105) Moreover, he highlights the darker aspects of 1960s America through the character of Burma Jones, the novel's sole Black character, who experiences the effects of contemporary racism firsthand.

In the story, Ignatius is an unemployed individual who spends his days in solitary confinement crafting written pieces and has a severe disdain for employment, triumphs, and aspirations. From the outset of the story, it becomes apparent that he shares a strained relationship with his mother. Later in the plotline, her acquaintances propose sending him to Charity Hospital, a local mental asylum. Incensed by this notion, Ignatius argues that psychiatry is akin to communism as these institutions are

populated with individuals who have differing beliefs from society's materialistic values. As the events unfold, Ignatius starts to panic in his own dramatic and eccentric way, that he will be locked up in a mental hospital, so he's trying to process what that really means for his life, such as identity and dignity. He frets over psychoanalysts' potential inability to comprehend his unique worldview and worries about how psychiatric treatment may encroach upon both his spirit and intellectuality simultaneously— criticisms frequently articulated during Toole's era where influential publications such as *The Myth of Mental Illness*; *The Divided Self*; *One Flew Over Cuckoo's Nest* were released publicly scrutinizing psychiatry practices heavily. John Kennedy Toole's novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, celebrates people who are unique, eccentric, as seen in the protagonist, J. Reilly. Toole turns the tables on psychiatry, usually seen as the authority on who's *sane* or *insane*, but he shows how it can be misunderstood, especially when it tries to fix people like Ignatius, who just don't fit in the box. Toole criticizes and points out the fact that society often labels people as crazy just because they think differently from the rest of them, and by doing that, he doesn't just say this outright; he uses humor, irony, and exaggeration to mock how flawed and ridiculous the psychiatric system can be. Toole's literary talent, combined with his intelligence, did not help him to publish his works; he was unable to find a publisher for his novel during his lifetime, which caused his mental health and eventually led to his tragic suicide. While Toole uses satire in his literary work to criticize the shortcomings of 1960s psychiatry, it is striking to realize that the shortcomings he satirizes in his novel have had a real-life impact on his existence.

1.2. Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Breakfast of Champions*

Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on November 11, 1922, Kurt Vonnegut Jr. hailed from a well-to-do family. His mother, Edith, was the daughter of a wealthy brewer, while his father was a renowned architect. However, the Great Depression of 1929 brought financial turmoil, forcing them to sell their luxurious home and live in reduced circumstances. This took a toll on both his parents, eventually leading his mother to commit suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills on May 14, 1944. His father, Kurt Vonnegut Sr., withdrew into himself until his death in 1957. Young Vonnegut transitioned from private to public schools, attending Shortridge High in Indianapolis.

Here, he began writing for the Daily Echo and eventually became its editor. After graduating in 1940, he enrolled at Cornell University in upstate New York as a biology and chemistry major, following in the footsteps of his elder brother, Bernard. However, Vonnegut struggled academically in the sciences, finding his niche as the managing editor and columnist for the Cornell Daily Sun. Similar to John Kennedy Toole's educational life, he also quit engineering school for literature. During World War II in 1943, Vonnegut enlisted in the army before being asked to leave Cornell due to poor academic performance. He was captured by the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge on December 22, 1944. Vonnegut was taken to Dresden. He was among the prisoners held in a slaughterhouse cellar and forced to work in a factory manufacturing vitamin syrup for pregnant women. Dresden, an 'open city' known for its stunning architecture and china production, had no military installations or defenses. On February 13, 1945, Vonnegut witnessed the devastating bombing of Dresden by British and American airplanes, which killed over 135,000 people and left the city in ruins. Returning to the US after the war, Vonnegut tied the knot with his kindergarten sweetheart, Jane Marie Cox, and the couple settled in Chicago. While struggling academically at the University of Chicago, Vonnegut worked as a police reporter for the Chicago City News. After his Master's thesis was rejected, he landed a job as a publicist for General Electric and moved to Schenectady, New York, where he started a family. Juggling family life and work at General Electric, Vonnegut's writing career took off when Collier's Magazine published his short story, *Report on the Barnhouse Effect*. Soon, he was churning out stories for various magazines, enabling him to quit General Electric, move to Cape Cod, and publish his first novel, *Player Piano*. While raising his family, Vonnegut taught English, wrote ad copy, and even opened the first-ever Saab dealership in the US. Overcoming personal losses, he continued to write and publish novels, eventually securing a Guggenheim Fellowship to research his best-known work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. After *Slaughterhouse-Five's* success, Vonnegut faced memories from Dresden's firebombing and wondered if he'd reached his peak. Seeking a change of pace, he turned to teaching at Harvard and crafted a play called *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*. In the meantime, Vonnegut's son Mark divorced, and his mental health was getting worse, so Vonnegut faced family issues, yet he continued to passionately engage himself in social matters like advocating pacifism, free speech,

and socialism. *Breakfast of Champions* was published in 1973, and it became a commercial hit of the time, even though it received mixed reviews from the critics. Vonnegut's academic career continued to grow steadily, given his intelligence and talent for literature. He was selected for honorable positions, such as becoming Vice President of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and was named honorary president of the American Humanist Association, which the Association focused on advanced secular humanism and ethics. Meanwhile, Vonnegut's personal life wasn't that perfect; he struggled with mental illnesses that played a significant role in his divorce from Jane Marie Cox in 1979. He remarried Jill Krementz in the same year that he got divorced, and their marriage lasted till his death in 2007. During his struggle with mental issues, he tried to end his life and attempted suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills and alcohol. His family helped him recover after the incident, he shared his thoughts on suicide in several works through the characters in a satirical way. In *Breakfast of Champions*, Kilgore Trout, being a voice of the alienation and worthlessness that he talks to his parrot 'Billy' because he is lonely and has no one to talk to. This creates a parallelism of the inner world of the author's loneliness, even though he may be surrounded by people. After his failed suicide attempt, he explored his artistic side through drawing, which is evident in his novels *Fates Worse Than Death* (1991) and *A Man Without a Country* (2005). Although his passion for drawing's early signs can be seen in *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) with a little doodling here and there, he tried to explain things with a simple drawing throughout the novel. Later in 1980, he penned a children's book called *Sun Moon Star*, which is basically about the Creator of the universe reborn as a male infant on Earth, and the book is about the Creator's point of view. This children's book, as a genre, is the only one he ever penned throughout his career, and it is strangely connected with his philosophical sense used in *Breakfast of Champions* or *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Especially at the last pages of the *Breakfast of Champions*, where he placed himself in the world he created as a creator, that somehow ties the rope of the Creator of the universe parallels, between the two books. All this hard work throughout his career earned him the New York State Author for 2001-2003.

CHAPTER II

2. LITERARY CONTEXT AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Literature often acts as a barometer for the cultural, political, and philosophical conditions of its time. In the post-World War II era, as societies grappled with the failures of modernity, the collapse of grand narratives, and the absurdities of social norms, literature responded not only by questioning tradition but by deliberately dismantling it. In order to facilitate a clearer and more detailed understanding of the complexities embedded within this statement, a word-by-word breakdown will be provided. As both books are deeply related to these matters, it's crucial to understand what was going on in their respective times. The first sentence mentions the failures of modernity as the reasons for the aftereffects of World War II, where the world was no longer the same. The atrocities of war, the Holocaust, and the atomic bomb, and suddenly modernity looked like a trap, not a triumph. These events shattered the Enlightenment's belief in rational progress and the idea that science and reason would lead the world to a better place. In the West, especially in the U.S., people began to question the foundations of society. As Ignatius stated his opinion as if he were mocking the Enlightenment, the very movement that brought reason, science, and secularism into the center of Western thought. "Merchants and charlatans gained control of Europe, calling their insidious gospel 'The Enlightenment.'" (Toole, 1987: 27) . Ignatius sees it as a corruption and not enlightenment; to him, it's not progress, it's the rise of conmen and profiteers, dressed up in fancy ideas. The same kind of example on failures of modernity would be the 'Goodbye, Blue Monday' slogan on a bomb thrown out to Hamburg during World War II in *Breakfast of Champions*. In order to explain it in detail, Blue Monday was a slang term for the depressing feeling workers had at the start of the workweek, after a short Sunday break, they were dragged back into the grind of factory life. The reason 'Goodbye, Blue Monday' sounds so optimistic is the way of manipulating society into thinking no more depressing Mondays, while in *Breakfast of Champions*, it's written on a literal bomb, showcasing that instead of killing depression, it's killing people. Vonnegut's 'Goodbye, Blue Monday' bomb is an example of how modern industrialism created mass death while it was supposed to make life better, and the tools of 'progress' did not free people, as

Ignatius, as known as the 12th century philosopher trapped in a modern world he completely despises, sets a deeper understanding on this matter. Since this situation shows how scientific progress got twisted into absurd, violent, meaningless acts, and not utopian advancements as advertised. As for the collapse of grand narratives, which societies tell stories to give life meaning, like religion, nationalism, capitalism, or the idea that history is moving forward in a good direction. Eventually, these stories started to fall apart after World War II, and people did not believe so easily anymore, given that religion could not explain the horror of the Holocaust, or capitalism seemed soulless and dehumanizing, and the American Dream felt fake to many, especially after Vietnam and Watergate. These can be exemplified by Vonnegut in his novel, where he brutally mocks the idea that World War II was a clean, heroic fight for justice. “The war was staged by robots... Harold Newcomb Wilbur got his medals for killing Japanese, who were yellow robots.” (Vonnegut, 2000: 159) By describing the enemy soldiers as ‘yellow robots’, Vonnegut strips away the humanity from both sides of the conflict. War becomes dehumanized machinery, robots killing robots, and not the heroic narrative America traditionally tells itself. It shows how nationalism and heroic sacrifice are hollow constructs, manufactured for propaganda, which is the result of racial superiority myths and heroic war narratives, are shown to be grotesquely absurd in this quote, portraying the American Dream. Also, it can be noted by the ‘yellow robots’ statement, Vonnegut refers to the color of the asians in a satirical way. In the *Confederacy of Dunces*, Ignatius also frequently points out the fact of the collapse of grand narratives. In the passage where he interacts with Dorian Greene and the ‘sailor’ Timmy, Ignatius spirals into paranoia, which reflects his usual eccentricity, about the honorable image of soldiers and sailors, the very symbols of national security and patriotism, might be a complete sham. Instead of seeing the military as protectors of freedom and strength, he envisions them as mad decadents merely playing roles in a ridiculous masquerade.

Every soldier and sailor that we see could simply be some mad decadent in disguise. My God! We may all be trapped in some horrible conspiracy. I knew that something like this was going to happen. The United States is probably totally defenseless!. (Toole, 1987: 217)

This absurd fear mocks the traditional grand narrative that national armies are pillars of order, morality, and bravery. After World War II, as real political scandals and military abuses became more visible, especially post-Vietnam, trust in these

institutions eroded. In this quote, Toole, through Ignatius' wild imaginations, satirizes that deep societal anxiety, which is the question of what if the very structures people believed would save them are hollow and false? Ignatius' exclamation 'The United States is probably totally defenseless!' captures this collapse of faith. In the world Toole portrays, institutions are not only flawed but absurd and powerless, exposing the myth of national invincibility and moral superiority. Absurdism is key to understanding both authors' approaches. In philosophy and literature, absurdism recognizes the conflict between humanity's desire for meaning and the unreasonableness of the universe. In Toole's work, this is evident in the exaggerated, doomed efforts of Ignatius to impose his medieval ideals on a corrupt modern world. In Vonnegut's work, absurdism is portrayed through the mechanical portrayal of human beings and institutions, emphasizing that meaning is either arbitrary or entirely absent. This is the way of their writing when they highlight the absurdities of social norms; how everyday expectations, roles, and institutions seem irrational, contradictory, or even meaningless when closely examined. Ignatius' refusal to accept regular employment highlights the absurdity of the American capitalist value system that defines human worth through productivity in the work field: "(...) death, destruction, anarchy, progress, ambition, and self-improvement were to be Piers' new fate. And a vicious fate it was to be: now he was faced with the perversion of having to GO TO WORK" (Toole, 1987: 27).

In this moment, Ignatius frames having to work through his mock-historical lens, not as a noble necessity but as a grotesque perversion, a punishment tied to the collapse of older, more pure value systems. Work, in this satire, is not about dignity; it's merely about submission to a broken system where productivity does not mean equal virtue. There can be a mention of the absurd justice in the *A Confederacy of Dunces*, as for the absurdities of social norms, taking into consideration social structures in New Orleans, for example, the police, the job market, and the nightclubs, are shown as chaotic, corrupt, or even ridiculous. Patrolman Mancuso, for example, is punished by being forced to wear silly costumes until he catches a criminal, a sign of absurd justice. As for Vonnegut's take on the absurdities of social norms, it's clear to observe that his depiction of American consumer culture shows social norms as empty and mechanical:

I used to be a conservationist. I used to weep and wail about people shooting bald eagles with automatic shotguns from helicopters and all that, but I gave it up. There's a river in Cleveland which is so polluted that it catches fire about once a year. That used to make me sick, but I laugh about it now. When some tanker accidentally dumps its load in the ocean, and kills millions of birds and billions of fish, I say, 'More power to Standard Oil,' or whoever it was that dumped it. (Vonnegut, 2000: 74)

Vonnegut shows through Trout that society, driven by consumer culture and the need for profit, has made him believe that this destruction is just part of the world. That's why he came to a realization of how corporations are the ones in control, and he's given up fighting against it. The absurdity here is that instead of reacting with outrage or concern, Trout laughs at these catastrophic events. It portrays how social norms like caring about the environment can become empty and mechanical; people don't genuinely care anymore, it's almost as if they've been programmed to ignore the destruction and just keep consuming, like the world won't affect the consequences. As for the dismantling tradition goes beyond questioning since it involves actively deconstructing or parodying traditional systems, values, or literary forms. In *A Confederacy of Dunces*, no character achieves success in most traditional stories; the hero grows, learns, or wins, but for Ignatius, since he can be labeled as an anti-hero, he stays ridiculous and deluded from beginning to end. To sum it up, there's no personal growth on Ignatius' take, just going on absurdity, eccentricity. In *Breakfast of Champions*, this matter, the dismantling traditions, is taken into consideration in several parts throughout the novel, with the most obvious part being the drawings that Vonnegut added here and there, resembling a child's drawings as if he's trying to show how his world is looking like to the aliens from outer space and not for the earthlings. These drawings consist of flags, signs, trucks with messages on them, and even an apple with a descriptive text right above it, which mentions it is a popular fruit on Earth. Vonnegut, drawing these little doodles, proves his view of literature by not following the traditional way of writing to describe for pages; instead, he prefers to show the readers what he was talking about. In addition, Vonnegut shows how American history is taught in oversimplified, dishonest ways like glorifying Columbus, downplaying genocide and racism, and he strips these myths bare through brutal, straightforward commentary. To sum it up, both novels respond to post-World War II disillusionment by showing the failures of modernism, the societal norms are absurd, such as work, consumerism, justice, art, and also the mentioned traditions are

questioned, like heroes, myths, values like free will, and hard work. The traditions are dismantled through parody, grotesque characters, broken narrative forms, and open rejection of traditional storytelling. They reveal that after the chaos and trauma of the twentieth century, clinging to old ideas seemed not only naïve but deeply absurd.

This chapter generally focuses on some themes that are the subject of both novels. Groundwork has been prepared for the subheadings of Chapter 2.1. Contextual Background and Theoretical Framework, and 2.2. Satire as Social Commentary: Critiquing Capitalism, Consumerism, and Social Decay, and these topics will be explained in more detail in these subchapters. In 2.1, the main points to be investigated are as follows, based on John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *Breakfast of Champions*: It investigates how satire criticizes social contradictions, ideological decay, and systemic dysfunctions through an eccentric and absurd lens. It will be mentioned in this section only for introductory purposes and is explained in more detail in 2.2 as a social commentary of satire.

Additionally, it is crucial to understand the respective works periods, which are mid to late twentieth century, and the socio-political background of that era, such as consumer capitalism, rapid changes in social norms including race, gender, power structures, and disillusionment with traditional values. This study aims to investigate and critique the social problems of that era and how these problems take place in these novels. Moreover, this chapter focuses on several theoretical perspectives, especially satire theory, that have a huge impact on these two novels, as well as Bakhtin's carnivalesque in *A Confederacy of Dunces*, postmodern criticism, and anti-hero theory. These frameworks guide the progression of the comparison of these two protagonists, Ignatius J. Reilly of *A Confederacy of Dunces* and Kilgore Trout of *Breakfast of Champions*. Both of them critique modern problems from their perspectives within their cultural and historical settings. For Ignatius, with his delusional arrogance combined with over-the-top behaviour, his opinions on modern consumer culture, with the collapse of intellectualism or even religious hypocrisies, and as for Trout, the alienation that comes with his outsider perspective and unique stories that no one really appreciates enough, as well as capitalist system and dehumanization mentioned as 'machines' within the book. To sum it up, they both represent their cultures by using satire; they do not just serve a happy ending or moral guidance. Instead, these anti-

heroes show how the world works in their own unique way. In this context, this study aims to connect to Griffin's redefinition of satire as a critical commentary rather than a tool for moral reform, with both of these anti-heroes' perspectives on exposing uncomfortable truths and not bothering with the solutions. Moreover, Chapter 2.2 mentions how satire is used as a tool in both novels, as well as how satire reveals social problems and cultural contradictions in detail.

2.1. Contextual Background and Theoretical Framework

What is satire? How is satire used as a social commentary for speaking the bitter truths of society's biggest problems through the lens of eccentric characters that are seen as lazy or even crazy? Would these characters be the right option to convey these important matters in their eccentric way, or is it not appropriate to discuss such matters humorously? These questions can only be answered when the works of authors such as John Kennedy Toole and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., as well as their respective novels *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Breakfast of Champions*, are examined in that matter. Both of these novels make a great contribution to the socio-political context of their protagonists by reflecting broader societal problems and absurdities. This chapter also provides a contextual framework for the period of the mid to late twentieth-century American life, which these novels have been affected by; the ongoing Civil Rights Movement, consumer capitalism, where people were no longer just people, and they were 'consumers', like 'consumer machines' as Vonnegut would refer, as well as disillusionment that has been prominent after the empty promises of post-war prosperity that made people felt let down and as for a result, systems such as religious, political or social became meaningless and untrustable. As Toole portrays this feeling of hopelessness through the conversation of Ignatius and Dorian, where Dorian mentions how wonderful it would be to travel to foreign countries as a means of government relations to bring peace; "Wouldn't that be wonderful? The government would pay us to travel. How divine. We would bring an end to world strife and renew people's hope and faith." (Toole, 1987: 219) Furthermore, this section introduces the theoretical approaches, particularly satire theory, postmodern criticism, and theories of the anti-hero, that will guide the comparative analysis of Ignatius J. Reilly and Kilgore Trout, positioning them as both products and critics of their cultural moment.

The historical and cultural context surrounding *A Confederacy of Dunces* is crucial for understanding the novel's use of satire and absurdism. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, John Kennedy Toole is from New Orleans, Louisiana, which is the main setting for his novel. The novel captures the city's rich racial and ethnic diversity, including its Creole, African American, Italian, Irish, and Jewish communities. This multicultural backdrop is not merely decorative; it highlights the complex social dynamics and deep-seated tensions that characterize New Orleans society. The characters, drawn from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds, embody the chaotic, fragmented nature of the city, reinforcing the novel's broader critique of modern American life. The ethnic background of the protagonist of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, Ignatius J. Reilly, blends with the complex cultural and ethnic background of New Orleans. Ignatius, with all his unique appearance and questionable fashion choices, that even one of the characters in the book, Dorian Greene, calls Ignatius with several nicknames during their encounter when Ignatius is attending the hot dog cart in the Pirate's Alley towards to Cathedral:

Oh, dear, (...) What am I seeing? I come out to see this dreadful, tacky art exhibit, and what do I find as Exhibit Number One? It's the ghost of Lafitte, the pirate. No. It's Fatty Arbuckle. Or is it Marie Dressler? Tell me soon or I'll die.(...) What in God's name are you doing in that bizarre outfit? You look like Charles Laughton in drag as the Queen of the Gypsies (Toole, 1987: 213-214)

The reason Dorian comes up with these nicknames is merely as a result of Ignatius's appearances; the hoop earrings, the plastic sword, and his scarf, combined with his hunting cap and heterochromia that resembles a Van cat with his one yellow one blue eye, and all on top of that, his eccentric medieval way of talking his absurd and unique ideas. Ignatius is portrayed as a white, Irish-American Catholic, which parallels his creator, John Kennedy Toole, in terms of the same ethnic background. Toole hints at Ignatius's ethnic background through his surname, Reilly, which is an Irish surname. In Peter Freese's article *A Medieval Crusader in Twentieth Century New Orleans: John Kennedy Toole's A Confederacy of Dunces*, it is evident that Ignatius represents the Irish-American Catholic tradition, who is also an anachronistic medieval scholar. His thoughts and behaviours resemble a medieval scholar, but on the contrary, he is living in a modern New Orleans in a time of TV, ads, and hot dogs. That's why Freese mentions him as a tragic, anachronistic medieval who's trying to live by outdated ideals in a completely modern timeline. About his background,

another critic, Michael Kreyling, who wrote about Southern ethnic identities, defines Ignatius as a satirical mirror that reflects and even ridicules the cultural values of Southern and his ethnic background, Irish Catholic identity. Also in Joel Fletcher's memoir, *Ken and Thelma*, about John Kennedy Toole's life, he discusses how Toole's own background, being Irish-American, heavily influenced the creation of Ignatius and his mother Irene Reilly. New Orleans historically had a significant Irish immigrant community, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the 1960s, Irish-Americans were seen as part of the broader white working-class population, which fits Ignatius's social standing perfectly. This Irish-Catholic identity places Ignatius within a historical context where Irish immigrants, once marginalized within the broader white working class of New Orleans. The city's rich ethnic diversity caused the accent of the city to be unique and distinctive. Walker Percy stated in his foreword in *Confederacy of Dunces* that New Orleans, especially the downtown Third Ward, had strong German and Irish immigrant populations whose speech patterns resembled the famous working-class New York/New Jersey accent. This is important because it shows that Irish-Americans were a major ethnic group in New Orleans, not just in New York or Boston. Percy notes that the Irish and German working classes shaped both the cultural atmosphere and the language of downtown New Orleans. This historical reality connects directly to *A Confederacy of Dunces*, where Ignatius J. Reilly, with his Irish surname, Catholic beliefs, and working-class background, represents part of this ethnic landscape. Although Ignatius' way of speaking is deliberately exaggerated and absurd, to match his eccentric character, the roots of his identity lie in a real and historically important Irish-American presence in the city.

The Civil Rights Movement, which gained momentum in the 1960s, was a catalyst for addressing the deep racial inequalities and systemic injustices that had long been entrenched in American society. In New Orleans, where most of the population was African-American, the movement heightened social tensions and exposed the economic and political marginalization of Black citizens. Moreover, the civil rights activism that was mostly supported by organizations like the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) played a key role by challenging the discriminatory forces with protests and legal battles. The NAACP worked pretty hard on the lawsuits, public advocacy, and voter registration drives to dismantle the

systemic barriers, nevertheless, the progress of this was incomplete and uneven. Although there were legal victories, many Black citizens continued to suffer from poor working conditions, still facing systemic oppression as well as restricted access to political and economic power. As a result of this uneven progress of that period, the disillusionment and deep tension within the New Orleans society that John Kennedy Toole manages to portray subtly in the novel. Within this context, it is prominent that *A Confederacy of Dunces* successfully reflects the contradictions of a society in transition. It can be seen through the character of a young black man named Burma Jones, who works at the Night of Joy bar, to avoid getting in jail just because of his color. The police arrested him in the early pages of the book, and when they believe he is not at fault, they demanded that he get a job if he doesn't want to come back to the precinct. So Burma came across the Night of Joy and told the boss, Lana Lee, about his story. Lana Lee, like every other employer, takes advantage of the situation of this young black man and hires him as a janitor under poor conditions and low wages. Burma mentions this situation; the low wages and the blackmailing from his boss to Mr. Watson, when they were drinking in Mattie's Ramble Inn. Mr. Watson suggests going to the police and telling them that he's going to quit this place and find another job. Burma Jones strictly refuses this idea by saying;

Hey! I ain walkin in no precinc and flappin my mouth at no po-lice. Them po-lice take one look at me, throw my ass in jail. Whoa! Color peoples cain fin no job, but they sure can fin a openin in jail. Goin in jail the bes way you get you somethin to eat regular. (Toole, 1987: 209)

His poor working conditions represent all of his black community of that period, as well as the unjust police forces that only used force on the black civilians. Even if the working conditions were bad, the African Americans during that era had many choices but to endure, because when they were unemployed, they were opposed to the threat of being sent to jail, despite the supposed advances of civil rights reforms. Through Burma Jones, it is evident that the gap between the unfulfilled promises of equality and the lived realities of systemic racism took place during that era. Basically, there were earned rights for them, but only on paper and not in the streets. On the other hand, a white, Irish American Ignatius J. Reilly is unemployed and opposed to the idea of working and being a part of the system, forced to work for his mother's sake. He also had an encounter with Patrolman Mancuso earlier in the novel when he was shopping with his mother on Royal Street. The newbie police officer was excited to

take in a criminal, so he was eyeing Ignatius because of his eccentric outerwear and behaviour. Nevertheless, the crowd stands with Ignatius and does not let the police take him to the precinct. It can be seen that the white community has the power to stand up for their rights, unlike the African Americans. Ignatius also embodies another form of alienation, which is that he holds onto the medieval ideals in a rapidly modernizing society as an individual with outdated ideas, as mentioned before. During the social change within the culture in that period, it mirrors the dislocation felt by many, kind of like how Ignatius's inability to adapt to his time. Thus, *A Confederacy of Dunces* subtly reflects the realities of the Civil Rights Movement era, a society caught between old structures of oppression and the imperfect, often chaotic process of social transformation. Toole's satirical portrayal of New Orleans captures both the absurdities and the underlying injustices of the time, revealing how deeply historical and cultural forces shape individual lives, even when characters like Ignatius seem willfully oblivious to them. It can be understandable with this quote, 'Plenty time they pickin up color peoples for nothing, but, mister, you gotta be here for somethin,' (Toole, 1987: 16) spoken by Burma Jones in *A Confederacy of Dunces*, highlights the racial injustice and police discrimination that were major issues during the Civil Rights Movement. Jones is describing how Black people were often arrested without any real reason, simply because of their race, while white people were treated with more fairness and suspicion only if they had actually done something wrong. His casual, almost humorous tone hides a serious truth: that in the 1960s, especially in Southern cities like New Orleans, law enforcement regularly targeted African Americans through racial profiling and unfair policing. This connects directly to the goals of the Civil Rights Movement, which fought to end such practices and demanded equal treatment under the law. Through Jones's voice, the novel reflects the reality that even after legal victories like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Black Americans continued to face deep systemic racism, especially in policing. His statement shows the gap between American ideals of justice and the ongoing racial inequalities that civil rights activists were trying to expose and change.

Similarly, in *Breakfast of Champions*, the disillusionment that was prominent in the 1950s-60s, although the Civil Rights Movement made legal gains in terms of desegregation and voting rights, and eliminated the poor working conditions. Of

course, these changes could not be adapted the moment they were presented to the public. Just like John Kennedy Toole portrays this era through the character of Burma Jones in *New Orleans*, Kurt Vonnegut Jr. successfully manages to capture the systemic racism, poverty, and alienation that were evident in his book through several African-American characters that he occasionally mentions. In the book, there's a part where Grace LeSabre talks about Dwayne Hoover, who's a friend of her husband Harry, and they were worried if the black maid could overhear them, so they use a code word for black people in general which is 'reindeer' when they want to talk about them without offending them. Vonnegut writes about this situation bluntly;

The reindeer's asleep—or reading the Black Panther Digest,” she said. The reindeer problem was essentially this: Nobody white had much use for black people anymore—except for the gangsters who sold the black people used cars and dope and furniture. Still, the reindeer went on reproducing. There were these useless, big black animals everywhere, and a lot of them had very bad dispositions. They were given small amounts of money every month, so they wouldn't have to steal. There was talk of giving them very cheap dope, too—to keep them listless and cheerful, and uninterested in reproduction. (Vonnegut, 2000: 132)

Through a fragmented narrative that mainly shifts between Kilgore Trout to Dwayne Hoover, and diverse characters, Vonnegut explains the situation that was prominent in that era, like how post-civil rights America is not fulfilling the promises that were hard-earned for freedom and equality that the black community had long deserved. As Peter B. Messent suggests, Vonnegut's portrayal of America is pretty pessimistic, and the novel contains a wide-scale indictment that not only racism but the whole system, including education, economics, and law enforcement within American institutions. Vonnegut refers to these corrupted norms by using satire, indicating the harsh truth in a humorous way, such as when he mentions the Black Americans who worked on the farms for the white farmers, but eventually white farmers switched to the machines made out of metals because they were much more cheaper and reliable than the 'black machines'. Vonnegut points out that the dehumanization of the black communities was faced as a part of the working class, although the supposed progress of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. The depiction of the mechanized individuals, polluted environments that come with the terrible social relations, shows the corruption of post-Civil Rights America through absurd characters and fragmented storytelling. Vonnegut states his opinions on this era that the class oppression and structural racism, which the Civil Rights Movement fought against, did not take action against the problems immediately rather they were adapted into

new forms. The black community and other minorities continued to suffer from the empty promises of freedom and equality. Vonnegut mentions earlier pages in *Breakfast of Champions* how the natives were getting under the oppression of the white pirates;

The sea pirates were white. The people who were already on the continent when the pirates arrived were copper-colored. When slavery was introduced onto the continent, the slaves were black. Color was everything. Here is how the pirates were able to take whatever they wanted from anybody else: they had the best boats in the world, and they were meaner than anybody else, and they had gunpowder (Vonnegut, 2000: 20)

He depicted the situation of that era where race became everything, from dictating rights to privileges and social status for centuries within the American society. It is evident just from this short but powerful statement, ‘Color was everything.’ Vonnegut points out the ridiculousness of the color that humans can't even choose, that it's simply what they were born with, faced with the cruelest inhumane sufferings. Vonnegut exposes the harsh reality with his childlike narrative, that the simplicity in his language makes it all even more normalized, institutionalized, that from the moment when the pirates landed the America, the colonization violently took place, and social hierarchies began to form. Although Vonnegut questions whether true equality has ever been achieved with the Civil Rights Movement, despite all this ongoing racial oppression, through his simple language combined with his satirical perspective. It is safe to say that in this context, both novels, even though stylistically different, use satire and absurdity to expose the enduring gap between the nation's democratic ideals and the social realities of racial and class-based oppression in late twentieth-century America.

Dustin Griffin, with his perspective on satire, provides a meaningful understanding of the role of satire in *A Confederacy of Dunces*, Toole's work. Griffin's insightful work, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, helps this thesis outline the theoretical framework. In his book, Griffin explains satire not only as a humorous tool but also as a critical mode of discourse that examines the contradiction fundamental in modern society. According to him, satire does not claim to have answers or offer moral solutions; instead, satire aims to expose the societal problems and contradictions. Griffin's work includes the types of satire, as well as the respective critics that bring light to these satire types, such as Menippean satire with the insightful definitions of the writers Northrop Frye, Erasmus, and Mikhail Bakhtin. In the work

of Griffin, he collected the thoughts on several satire types from various writers. Even though the Menippean satire has a long history with famous authors, Griffin points out that it hasn't been clearly defined and put in a definitive label. Moreover, for Northrop Frye, Menippean satire is like an anatomy of the literary system. He suggests it's an extroverted genre that focuses on abstract ideas, but does not prove his point with deep analysis. As for Bakhtin, his version of 'Menippea' is in harmony with his carnivalesque spirit. He suggests a philosophical purpose that often targets the dominant ideologies. Of all these different voices explaining the Menippean satire, Griffin notes his take on this matter;

My argument, in contrast, is that when Menippean writers sustain "complex ironies," they are writing satire; and when they engage in "dialogical parody," they are doing what verse satirists do. To read Menippean works alongside those of Horace, Donne, or Pope is to see poetic satire, even formal verse satire, in new light. The moral design is but one of several elements. Neither tradition, in Bakhtin's terms, is "monological." (Griffin, 1995: 44)

Toole's portrayal of satire in *A Confederacy of Dunces* aligns with Griffin's conceptualization, as the protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly exhibits a profound contempt for modern society while simultaneously being dependent on it. Ignatius's multifaceted relationship with his surroundings, replete with contradictions and absurdities, reflects the role of satire as Griffin describes it, not as a means of moral reform, but as a critical examination of the contradictions inherent in the social fabric. In this manner, Ignatius's character embodies the function of the satirist as a critic, rather than a moral instructor. Similarly, in Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*, the protagonist Kilgore Trout employs absurdist, obscure science fiction narratives to peel back the façade of contemporary American society, thereby exposing its underlying emptiness and absurdity. Just like Ignatius, Trout's critique of social norms is not to propose reforms, but to reveal the disturbing realities lurking beneath the surface. The protagonists in both novels satirically mirror the contradictions, hypocrisies, and ridiculous norms that societies have long accepted or adapted without questioning. Satire, in these novels, is not just about being funny for the sake of entertainment, instead, it is a rebellious act, a wake-up call for society, an intellectual protest. Griffin's theoretical framework provides a deeper analytical perspective on the use of satire in *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Breakfast of Champions*. The work of Griffin showcases how satire can be a tool for expressing social critique, allowing for challenging the societal assumptions as well as the contradictions that underpin the

structures of consumerism, social decay, and capitalism. This expanded conceptualization of satires underscores their capacity to expose the uncomfortable truths and absurdities that lie beneath the surface of modern life, making it a powerful tool for questioning the prevailing social order rather than merely proposing moral solutions or prescribed reforms.

2.2. Satire as Social Commentary: Critiquing Capitalism, Consumerism, and Social Decay

There are so many problems within society in these two novels, and ironically enough, the voices of these problems are the ones society deemed as eccentric or even crazy. It's not the first thing to convey these social problems in a humorous way like these anti-heroes do; there are so many other examples in the literary world, for example, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) contains the elements of Horatian satire, which is named after the Roman poet Horace (65-8 BCE). In her book, she teases society's obsession with marriage while keeping the tone playful, humorous, and indulgent. Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) as well as most modern sitcoms falls under the category of Horatian satire. There is also a much harsher, ironic, and even morally outraged type of satire that conveys the social injustices to provoke change or make the reader uncomfortable with the realities. Juvenalian satire that named after Juvenal (late 1st-early 2nd century CE), fits the description on that matter. George Orwell's *1984* (1949) or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), or one of the first works written in this tone, Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729), especially the 'let's eat the babies' essay, are examples of the Juvenalian satire. There's also Menippean satire, which is the third main type of satire. It originated in Ancient Greece by Menippus (3rd century BCE), although his original works are lost, they were later revived by Roman writers like Varro, followed by Lucian. The tone is a mix of playful and critical, but mostly absurd, to question dogmas, rigid belief systems, and absurd thinking. The most well-known examples are Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), and some of Kafka's works also include elements from this type of satire, like *The Metamorphosis* (1915) or *The Trial* (1925). So what makes Vonnegut and Toole different from the rest of them? The answer would be hiding in their unique way of combining these types to create even more depth in their works,

since every author mirrors their personality in their works, even if they're in little pieces. They aim to be the voice of the problems and just create solutions. As Dustin Griffin observes in *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, satire is 'more inclined to ask questions than to provide answers' (Griffin, 1995: 13) presenting a problematic, open-ended form that resists easy categorization. Both *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Breakfast of Champions* deploy satire as a magnifying lens through which the absurdities of modern life are mocked, amplified, and laid bare. In *Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut largely adopts the tone of Horatian satire, marked by a light, amused, and witty voice that gently mocks human follies and societal absurdities rather than condemning them with anger. His playful commentary on American consumerism and cultural superficiality often masks a deep existential sadness beneath its humor, as seen when he writes, "It was as though the country were saying to its citizens, 'In nonsense is strength.'" (Vonnegut, 2000: 19) This line is one of the most important encapsulations of Vonnegut's critique of American society in the novel. It's a parody of the famous totalitarian slogan from George Orwell's *1984*: 'Ignorance is strength.' But while Orwell's slogan highlights how oppressive governments control citizens by keeping them ignorant, Vonnegut twists it even further, suggesting that modern American society encourages nonsense, empty slogans, mindless consumerism, and meaningless rituals as a new form of control. Instead of building a society based on rational thinking, truth, or meaningful action, Vonnegut portrays America as thriving on absurdities such as meaningless advertisements telling people to buy products they don't need, superficial patriotism without real understanding of justice or democracy, simplified media and politics that distract people from real problems. Thus, in nonsense is strength means that the more chaotic, meaningless, and hollow public life becomes, the easier it is to maintain the illusion of order and success. If citizens believe in nonsense, whether it's false ideals, fake news, mindless consumption, or unattainable dreams, they are easier to control because they never question the real structures of power or injustice around them. Vonnegut doesn't say this in a fiery, angry way like Orwell does. His tone is absurd, playful, but deeply sad, suggesting that America, through its over-saturation of slogans, products, and distractions, has voluntarily traded wisdom for nonsense because it feels easier, lighter, and more comforting.

However, Vonnegut also slips into Juvenalian satire at moments, offering a darker, more scornful critique of human nature, particularly through the depiction of human beings as deterministic machines devoid of free will: "...we were all machines, doomed to collide and and collide and collide." (Vonnegut, 2000: 172) The tragic encounter between Dwayne Hoover and Kilgore Trout at the art gallery marks the culmination of this darker vision, suggesting a bleak and mechanistic view of human existence. Meanwhile, John Kennedy Toole masterfully captures the spirit of Menippean satire in *A Confederacy of Dunces* through his portrayal of Ignatius J. Reilly, a pseudo-intellectual medievalist whose obsession with Boethius and contempt for modern life become a ludicrous parody of philosophical pretension. Ignatius's delusional grandiosity is consistently undermined by his grotesque physicality, social ineptitude, and farcical misadventures, encapsulated in his plaintive complaint, "Oh, my valve!" Ignatius gasped. "Please don't make a scene. My psyche will crumble entirely after the assaults it has recently received." (Toole, 1987: 335) Toole's work also draws heavily on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, wherein the traditional hierarchies of society are inverted, authority is mocked, and bodily functions are celebrated with irreverent humor. New Orleans, as depicted by Toole, becomes a carnivalesque space teeming with exaggerated characters, from the hapless Patrolman Mancuso to the scheming owners of Levy Pants, while Ignatius's constant references to his digestive issues, "My valve will not tolerate luncheon meat, I'm afraid." (Toole, 1987: 98) serve as a comic celebration of the grotesque body. As Bakhtin famously notes in *Rabelais and His World*, 'In carnival, all that is high becomes low; the sacred becomes comic,' and John Kennedy Toole brilliantly captures this spirit of inversion and chaotic laughter. Ultimately, both Vonnegut and Toole use satire not merely for comedic effect, but as a profound means of exposing the absurdities, hypocrisies, and existential uncertainties of modern existence, challenging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about society and human nature with a mixture of humor, discomfort, and reflection.

In John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*, the theme of education takes center stage, showcasing the varying degrees of knowledge and its impact on the characters' lives. Protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly, a highly educated figure with a disdain for contemporary society, derives his ideas from ancient philosophy and sees himself

as a genius thwarted by the ‘dunces’ around him, reminiscent of medieval philosopher Boethius (Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, a prominent Roman philosopher, statesman, and scholar of the late 5th to early 6th century AD era is widely celebrated for his influential publication titled *Consolation of Philosophy*. The work which was penned during his confinement in prison has remained an enduring classic.) Boethius highly influenced him; from the beginning of the book, Ignatius mentions him and his work quite a lot. The book, *Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy*, had an important role in the whole storyline. The book, initially gifted by Ignatius to patrol member Mancuso, took on heightened significance as it came into the possession of George, a young man entangled in unlawful endeavors. Notably, the book's pivotal role in aligning the various elements of the plot became apparent, underscoring its instrumental nature. For further explanation, through the character of Darlene, who works in the Night of Joy, she has a stage name, Miss O’Hara, where she dances with her pet, a cockatoo. Lana Lee, the boss of Night of Joy, asks George to bring her a book to use in a pornographic photo of Darlene. Lana aims to gain money with her new side business and uses George for her own gain. George ends up stealing the book that Ignatius gifted to Patrolman Mancuso. But George, still young and eager to earn money too hastily, does not want to end up too educated like Ignatius when he first saw him. During their first encounter with Ignatius, George offers him ten dollars to put his so-called school supplies in Ignatius’s wagon’s little compartment door. Ignatius takes the money and also tears down one of the brown packages before allowing George to put it in his wagon. He’s astonished by what he saw: a nude woman who leans against a desk, and there’s a globe right next to her, and she’s covering her face with the big book that once belonged to Ignatius. Ignatius thinks highly of her, that she is an intellectual who had no choice but to pose for such photos in order to earn a living for herself. So he has an urge to meet with her immediately. Toole satirizes this situation, about how education is being sold in an immoral way, just like how Kilgore Trout’s stories in *Breakfast of Champions* end up in pornographic magazines to fill up the blank spaces.

While George evaded indifferent slaps from the unoccupied paw, Ignatius scrutinized the title on the cover of the book: Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy. “Do I believe what I am seeing? What brilliance. What taste? Good grief. (Toole, 1987: 249).

Toole satirizes university life through characters like Professor Talc of Tulane University, who is ignorant of the subjects he teaches and becomes a target for student mockery. This portrayal highlights the conflict between traditional academia and modern student culture, emphasizing the dissatisfaction with conventional educational topics. Education alone does not guarantee ethical behavior or responsible actions. That is clear in the note that Reilly wrote to Professor Talc.;

Pray to him, you deluded fool, you “anyone for tennis?” golf-playing, cocktail-quaffing pseudo-pedant, for you do indeed need a heavenly patron. Although your days are numbered, you will not die as a martyr — for you further no holy cause — but as the total ass which you really are. (Toole, 1987: 114)

The novel juxtaposes contrasting characters to underscore that education does not necessarily enhance moral values or eradicate ignorance. George, an innocent and uneducated young boy, abandons his schooling to work for Lana Lee, a morally corrupt figure. This contrast between George and Dr. Talc, both depicted as ignorant individuals, suggests that education alone does not guarantee ethical behavior or responsible actions. Similarly, in *Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut satirizes the American education system by revealing how it sustains racial, social, and economic inequalities through distorted narratives. Early in the novel, Vonnegut critiques the way history is taught, quoting how 1492 was when their continent was discovered by human beings. “Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. That was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob, and kill them.” (Vonnegut, 2000: 19)

This passage highlights how American schools sanitize the brutal realities of colonial conquest, turning violent theft and genocide into a story of heroic discovery. Vonnegut exposes that such historical distortion is not innocent; it creates a foundation for nationalist pride while erasing Indigenous suffering, reinforcing a false moral superiority in American identity. Vonnegut’s satire continues by targeting the myth of American exceptionalism in education. He mocks the traditional narrative taught to children, stating, “Here was another piece of evil nonsense which children were taught: that the sea pirates eventually created a government which became a beacon of freedom to human beings everywhere else.” (Vonnegut, 2000: 20)

Through this, Vonnegut unmasks the hypocrisy behind the celebrated American founding story. By labeling it as evil nonsense, he suggests that the glorified image of the United States as a global champion of liberty is built upon deep

foundations of slavery, oppression, and exclusion, contradictions that education deliberately obscures to maintain existing power structures. The critique of elitist education is sharpened when Vonnegut describes the nation's founders: "The founders were aristocrats, and they wished to show off their useless education, which consisted of the study of hocus-pocus from ancient times. They were bum poets as well."(Vonnegut, 2000: 19)

Here, he attacks the artificial prestige attached to traditional, classical education, a system that, instead of addressing real human problems, produces empty intellectualism and social elitism. Education, in this depiction, becomes not a means of empowerment but a status symbol designed to uphold class divisions and disconnect the educated elite from the broader struggles of society. Through these examples, Vonnegut portrays education not as a vehicle for enlightenment or progress, but as a mechanism for reproducing ignorance, conformity, and social inequality. His satire highlights how education reinforces a deeply flawed social order, one that continues to mask historical atrocities, support systemic racism, and preserve elite power structures under the guise of democratic ideals.

Consumerism and the collapse of traditional social structures also play a significant role in the novel. Lana Lee, the proprietor of the Night of Joy club, represents the decadence and corruption of American society. She engages in pornography and exploits George, the young delivery boy, by involving him in her illicit activities. This situation represents the moral decline of modern American society and how important it is to have material wealth, even if that means using innocent people for their gain. Lana's profit-driven action sets an example in this context. Toole satirizes this with the potential for a better future through education on the last pages of the book, where George was working on his school scrapbook, his mother mentions the importance of being educated. "What chance did a boy without a high school education have nowadays? What could he do?" (Toole, 1987: 297) George's involvement with Lana highlights the consequences of economic desperation and the need for education to escape societal decay. The fate of Lana Lee and the three lesbians who end up in prison further exemplifies the novel's examination of education and social reform. Lana, demanding her rights and protesting her imprisonment, "Get me out this goddam hole," Lana Lee screamed at the matron. "I can't take another

minute with these three bats.” (Toole, 1987: 298) signifies the downfall of those engaged in immoral activities. In contrast, the educated and morally upright option, represented by George's potential to pursue education instead of succumbing to corruption, offers a path toward a better society. Moreover, consumerism and the collapse of traditional social structures serve as additional layers in the novel's exploration of education. Toole critiques the rampant consumer culture that alienates individuals from genuine human connections and meaningful experiences. Burma Jones, a potential employee, and Gus Levy, a potential employer, exemplify this phenomenon. Both characters ultimately face the consequences of their engagement with consumerism. Ignatius, too, embodies the disillusionment with a society driven by hollow capitalism, realizing the need for a revolution to liberate it from its inherent hollowness. Consumerism and capitalism are also prominent themes in the *Breakfast of Champions*. In *Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut uses satire to reveal how consumerism, capitalism, and systemic racism work together to erode traditional social structures and human dignity. Through the story of the Robo-Magic washing machine, Vonnegut shows how technological progress was marketed not as a path toward equality, but as a continuation of historical exploitation. Fred T. Barry's advertising campaign for Robo-Magic appliances positioned machines as replacements for domestic labor historically performed by African Americans. Barry openly envisioned a future where machines would perform ‘*all the Nigger work of the world*,’ exposing how even new technologies were entangled with racist assumptions about labor and social value. Advertisements featuring caricatured Black maids, such as the exaggerated, fearful figure saying “*FEETS GET MOVIN’! DEY’S GOT THEIRSELVES A ROBO-MAGIC!*” (Vonnegut, 2000: 198), reveal how consumer products profited from racist stereotypes while celebrating the displacement of Black workers as progress. At the same time, Vonnegut satirizes the broader myth that consumerism leads to freedom and happiness. The Robo-Magic is marketed as liberating white women from household chores, allowing them leisure time for activities like bridge clubs. Yet Vonnegut points out that even the link between ‘Blue Monday’ and laundry was a fabricated tradition, showing how consumerism constructs false narratives to sell products. More profoundly, the social decay of Midland City during the Great Depression is symbolized by the omnipresence of Robo-Magic ads:

while the economy and community institutions collapse, billboards advertising domestic machines dominate the landscape. This situation, showcased in fictional America in Vonnegut's work, shows that hollow symbols of status and fantasy are prominent due to consumerism instead of meaningful social structures for a better society. Capitalism merely masks the social problems with products and slogans rather than solving them, which leads to alienation, inequality, and even moral collapse. *Breakfast of Champions* portrays a bleak portrait of a society that is now at the claws of greed, racism, and self-deception, where consumer culture conceals but cannot heal those profound fractures within the American society. The novel's tragicomic depiction of Ignatius J. Reilly, the anti-hero, further highlights the complexities of education and its societal reception. Ignatius is a character who elicits both repulsion and adoration, requiring a discerning perception of the subtle nuances and tragicomic elements woven into Toole's narrative. To fully appreciate the novel's brilliance, one must possess wit and a keen understanding of the layers beneath the surface. In conclusion, *A Confederacy of Dunces* delves into the theme of education and its implications for individuals and society. Through characters like Ignatius, Dr. Talc, George, and Lana Lee, the novel examines the limitations and misconceptions surrounding education. It critiques traditional academia, consumerism, and the erosion of traditional social structures, ultimately highlighting the need for education to be relevant, morally grounded, and connected to the practical realities of life. Toole's satirical and humorous approach underscores the complexities and contradictions inherent in education, provoking readers to reflect on the role it plays in shaping individuals and society.

Another prominent theme in *A Confederacy of Dunces* is the rise of individualism and the subsequent loss of a shared sense of identity. Toole presents a diverse cast of characters, each with their own unique struggles and aspirations. However, this focus on the individual often comes at the expense of a cohesive community, and the characters are somehow connected, even if they have separate lives. Every character in the novel leaves a lasting impression on one another, with protagonist Ignatius Reilly at the center of it all. With his unique worldview and disdain for society, Ignatius chooses a life of isolation in his musty room with the windows always closed. Despite being well-educated, he never pursued a proper

career after university, instead focusing on his book without making any real progress. Living off his mother's pension and contributing nothing to the household, Ignatius disregards traditional family values in favor of his staunch individualism. It is possible to observe Reilly's views on going to work through the character of Piers in his book:

The gyre had widened; The Great Chain of Being had snapped like so many paper clips strung together by some drooling idiot; death, destruction, anarchy, progress, ambition, and self-improvement were to be Piers' new fate. And a vicious fate it was to be: now he was faced with the perversion of having to GO TO WORK. (Toole, 1987: 27)

This quote encapsulates Ignatius Reilly's despair over the collapse of traditional structures in *A Confederacy of Dunces*. 'The Great Chain of Being' symbolizes the medieval belief in a divinely ordered universe where every being had a designated place, providing a shared sense of purpose and identity. Ignatius's lament reflects his horror at the modern world's embrace of ambition, self-improvement, and chaos, values that prioritize individualism over communal harmony. His invented character, Piers Plowman, serves as a tragic extension of this fear, representing the humble, pious man stripped of dignity by the 'lords of the New Order.' In Ignatius's bitter satire, Piers is forced to sell his children and ultimately to participate in the grotesque perversion of modernity by 'GOING TO WORK.' Through Piers, Ignatius dramatizes his belief that modern society demands the sacrifice of moral and communal values for hollow progress. As Peter Freese notes, Ignatius clings desperately to his medieval ideals while the world accelerates toward disarray, making him both a critic and a reflection of the very chaos he despises. Thus, this passage, coupled with the tragic image of Piers, poignantly highlights the novel's larger theme: the rise of individualism and ambition leading to the fragmentation of a once-cohesive cultural identity.

After his mother caused a car accident, Ignatius was quite indifferent to the news that the other party wanted them to cover the damage, or they would be sued. While his elderly mother told Ignatius that they could mortgage the house or she would be imprisoned if they could not pay the money, Ignatius, who had reached the level of the indifference of individualism, replied, "I wish that you wouldn't bother me with this." (Toole, 1987: 38) Ignatius, the character in whom the concept of individualism is seen the most throughout the novel, starts to work as the staff member in charge of the files in the Levy Pants business, which attracts him with its musty smell and clutter

reminiscent of his own room. In this small office with only three staff, including himself, he decides to be nice to Miss Trixie, ‘...our Earth Mother of the world of commerce,...’ as Ignatius puts it, in line with his interests, at the expense of putting his big plans in motion. Another example of individualism is Mr. and Mrs. Levy. Mr. Levy's indifference towards his family and work, spending all his time on his own interests; On the other hand, Mrs. Levy takes her place in the book as another character who tries to give the impression of being very sensitive and caring to her surroundings and her daughters, but who only cares about herself and lives for the sake of her own pleasures, which can be considered as a negative example of individualism. Although it is actually time to retire for Miss Trixie, who, as Mr. Levy put it, is Mrs. Levy's 'new toy', she is still going to work as an elderly and senile state at the request of Mrs. Levy, which is also encountered as a remarkable example in this context. Myrna Minkoff, Ignatius' ex-girlfriend from university, has quite opposite views from Ignatius and is such an unusual character in the book. She does not avoid creating spaces where she can participate in all kinds of social activities and announce her own ideas. In her letters, Myrna frequently refers to Ignatius coming out of his shell and exploring the world that exists outside his small, damp room in New Orleans. The individualism in *Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut critiques the rise of individualism and the loss of a shared sense of identity, portraying a fragmented society where people are increasingly disconnected from collective meaning. Through the character of Dwayne Hoover, Vonnegut illustrates how individualism can lead to profound isolation and madness. Despite being materially successful, Dwayne is emotionally detached and teetering on the brink of insanity, showing that economic achievement does not prevent the collapse of human connection. The broader social condition is similarly fractured, as Vonnegut notes, “Much of the conversation in the country consisted of lines from television shows, both present and past”(Vonnegut, 2000: 180), indicating that genuine human communication has been replaced by mass-produced, recycled media slogans. Rather than building meaningful relationships or shared values, citizens echo fragments of consumer culture, reflecting the postmodern condition where authentic identity has dissolved into empty repetition. Vonnegut further critiques capitalist-driven individualism with the observation that “Everybody in America was supposed to grab whatever he could and hold on to it” (Vonnegut, 2000:

22), exposing a culture where personal gain is prioritized over collective well-being. The relentless pursuit of self-interest fractures the social fabric, leaving individuals isolated and communities weakened. Kilgore Trout, the failed science fiction writer, embodies the existential absurdity of modern self-identity. Considering himself not only harmless but invisible, Trout represents the dislocation and irrelevance that individuals experience when shared cultural frameworks disintegrate. Without common narratives or communal belonging, people drift into loneliness and meaninglessness. Ultimately, Vonnegut's satire exposes individualism not as a path to freedom or fulfillment, but as a force that isolates individuals and dismantles collective identity. His portrayal aligns with postmodern skepticism, challenging the belief that self-interest and consumer culture can sustain genuine human connection or societal cohesion.

In *A Confederacy of Dunces*, John Kennedy Toole quite realistically reflected the hardships of the lives and working conditions of the black community in New Orleans, Louisiana. This is evident in the depiction of Burma Jones, a key character in the book, and black workers at Levy Pants. The reader's first encounter with Jones begins in an argument in the market due to Ignatius when the patrol Mancuso arrests an elderly white man who calls him a 'communiss'. Jones, who learned why the old man he met at the police station was detained, emphasizes that as a black man, let alone calling the police a communist, he was detained just because of the color of his skin, even though he had no crime; "Cawmniss! Ooo-woo. If I call a po-lice a cawmniss, my ass be in Angola right now for sure." (Toole, 1987: 16) Jones, who was taken into custody for a crime he did not commit, must stop being idle and get a job immediately in order not to be taken to the police station again. It was time for Jones to experience the working conditions of black people firsthand, so he got a job as a cleaner at the club Night of Joy. The owner of the club, Lana Lee, was delighted to find someone who could pay low wages and treat him almost like a slave. "A colored guy who would get arrested for vagrancy if he didn't work. She would have a captive porter whom she could work for almost nothing." (Toole, 1987: 30) It can be clearly seen from Jones' work experience in Night of Joy that black people are preferred for this type of work, which is well below the minimum wage of twenty dollars a week. The Black workers at Levy Pants factory further represent the Black community.

Though their roles aren't deeply explored, their presence highlights racial diversity and experiences in the workforce. Toole captures their struggles in a predominantly white workplace, emphasizing the challenges they face while seeking economic stability and equal opportunities. The fact that Levy Pants enterprise consists of black people working in the factory and that a white person who is in charge of controlling blacks drunk most of the day is just another example of black workers who shared the same fate as Jones. In order to oversee the factory and find out how things are going, Ignatius realizes that the blacks there are working for very low wages and feels a kind of closeness to them. He states this in his work diary: "In a sense, I have always felt something of a kinship with the colored race because its position is the same as mine: we both exist outside the inner realm of American society." (Toole, 1987: 108) To get this done, Ignatius plans to start by organizing the blacks and putting them under the manager, Gonzalez. However, after an unsuccessful attempt, the workers were forced to work as before, and Ignatius was dismissed as responsible for this turmoil. Through characters like Burma and the Levy Pants factory workers, Toole challenges stereotypes and presents a more complex representation of the Black community. He underscores the multifaceted nature of their experiences, focusing on their resilience, dignity, and aspirations despite societal and economic barriers. Toole also examines individualism's rise, which intersects with the portrayal of Black individuals in society. Characters like Ignatius exemplify individualism, which can worsen the marginalization of already disadvantaged communities. Ignatius's defiance of societal norms often overlooks the experiences and struggles of others, including Black individuals.

CHAPTER III

3. ECCENTRICITY, ALIENATION, AND THE AUTHORS' INNER WORLDS

In both *Breakfast of Champions* and *A Confederacy of Dunces*, eccentricity and alienation are the two central themes used to explore the fractured inner worlds of their protagonists, as well as the self-referential roles of their authors. Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* emphasizes alienation through its fragmented structure and explicit insertion of the author into the narrative. Vonnegut's use of collage, absurd drawings, and metafictional commentary underscores the author's control over the universe of the novel, reinforcing rather than diminishing his subjective presence. The novel's chaotic form, which blends fact and fiction, inner dialogue and external reality, captures the dislocation experienced in postmodern life. The character of Kilgore Trout acts as an alter ego for Vonnegut himself, embodying eccentricity and isolation. Trout's irrelevance and invisibility mirror Vonnegut's concerns about the diminishing meaning in storytelling and human connection in a commodified world. Moreover, Dwayne Hoover's descent into madness reflects the extreme alienation of the individual in a society driven by capitalist values, where personal identity collapses under pressure. Vonnegut deliberately uses schizophrenia as a metaphor for the breakdown of meaning itself, connecting personal alienation to the structural fragmentation of language and culture. 'The world had paid so little attention to him that he supposed he was dead. He hoped he was dead.' (Vonnegut, 2000: 17). This quote shows Kilgore Trout's deep alienation. He feels so irrelevant and unnoticed by society that he imagines he is already dead. It's a powerful image of social invisibility; Trout exists physically but has no meaningful place in the social world. His hope that he might actually be dead reflects a deeper existential despair: if society sees no value in him, then life itself feels meaningless. This perfectly reflects Vonnegut's broader themes of how individuals in a consumer capitalist society can become spiritually abandoned and psychologically fractured, "Trout did another thing which some people might have considered eccentric: he called mirrors leaks. It amused him to pretend that mirrors were holes between two universes" (Vonnegut, 2000: 21).

This quote captures Trout's eccentricity and his creative inner world. Calling mirrors leaks shows how he reimagines everyday reality with a strange, imaginative twist. Rather than seeing mirrors as simple reflections, he fantasizes about parallel universes, revealing his need to escape the ordinary and his refusal to fully accept the limited, disappointing reality around him. It shows Trout's coping mechanism, eccentricity, as a defense against alienation and disillusionment.

Similarly, John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* presents Ignatius J. Reilly as an exaggerated figure of eccentricity and social disconnection. Ignatius lives in deliberate opposition to the modern world, retreating into a fantasy of medieval scholasticism and railing against contemporary values of consumerism, pragmatism, and social mobility. His alienation is further emphasized through his fascination with and hatred of modern cinema, a medium he simultaneously despises and cannot escape, illustrating his broader struggle against cultural modernity. While Ignatius' grotesque appearance and grandiose delusions offer comic relief, they also highlight a deeper psychological dislocation: he exists outside of his time, unable or unwilling to participate in the social realities around him. Toole's narrative layers moments of genuine psychological insight with satirical exaggeration, suggesting that Ignatius's eccentricities are both a personal defense mechanism and a commentary on the absurdity of modern life.

3.1. The Authorial Doppelganger

In *Breakfast of Champions* and *A Confederacy of Dunces*, the protagonists, Kilgore Trout and Ignatius J. Reilly, are used for social commentary to convey the problems within American society. Through their eccentric behaviors, intellectual pursuits, and interactions with others, they expose the absurdities and contradictions of society. It is common in literature to find the pieces from the authors in their works as fractured parts. In this context, both of the authors mirror themselves through these protagonists to convey their insights about the society they have been a part of. These characters' refusal to conform to societal norms raises questions about the value of conventional success and the importance of individuality. As embodiments of societal critique, Ignatius and Trout push readers to reevaluate their own assumptions and beliefs. By highlighting the flaws in mainstream culture and questioning the values

and norms that govern society, these characters encourage readers to consider alternative perspectives and envision a world that embraces diversity and encourages creative expression. Ultimately, the eccentric characters of Ignatius J. Reilly and Kilgore Trout inspire change and self-reflection in both their fictional worlds and the real world. By presenting a stark contrast to the status quo, they challenge readers to confront their own prejudices, biases, and assumptions, and to consider the potential for growth and transformation in society. Through their peculiarities, humor, and unique worldviews, these characters illuminate the complexities of the human experience and the power of literature to spark meaningful dialogue and change.

A Confederacy of Dunces by John Kennedy Toole, the protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly, has an Irish American background just like Toole. He is also an underappreciated writer, who society deems as absurd and eccentric, which leads him to be a sort of outcast. As for Toole, it is evident in the book *Ken and Thelma* by Joel Fletcher that he was working in a school as a teacher after he came back from the military. During his military years, he started to write *A Confederacy of Dunces* with the Halda brand typewriter that his friend David Kubach gifted him. He continued his novel during his teaching at the school, and sent a copy to Simon & Schuster. Robert Gottlieb, a famous editor who worked for the publishing company, contacted Toole about his work and told him to tone down Ignatius as well as some other changes that he should be done in order to publish his work. But Toole did not want to change anything, and he got pretty depressed after he got rejected by the publishing company. Later, he committed suicide due to his worsening mental health. He's ideas and personality continue to live with Ignatius J. Reilly today.

As for *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut, the protagonist, Kilgore Trout, is a recurring character also known as Vonnegut's alter ego. Kilgore Trout is mirroring Vonnegut's ideas and even real life in his novels. In *Breakfast of Champions* at the last pages in the book, when Vonnegut refers Trout's legs and shins he remembers his own father's shins with varicose veins; "His bared shins were rococo with varicose veins and scars. So were the shins of my father when he was an old, old man." (Vonnegut, 2000: 175) and when he was talking about the white woman who does not want to do the Nigger work he places real life examples of his own mother, "My own mother was that way, too, and so was my sister, may she rest in peace. They

both flatly refused to do Nigger work.” (Vonnegut, 2000: 191) Vonnegut’s family was German-American, and they lost most of their wealth during the Great Depression. Vonnegut was born in Indianapolis on November 11, 1922. His background appears symbolically in several of his works, either as a place of lost innocence or as a heartland that failed to live up to its promises. In *Breakfast of Champions*, the main plot is set in Midland City, Dale, Alabama. Where also Vonnegut describes during Trout hijacking from Cohoes to Midland City; the truck driver says after he learns where Trout’s planning to heading “Midland City is the asshole of the Universe,” said the driver. “I’ve often wondered where the asshole was,” said Trout.” (Vonnegut, 2000: 105) Vonnegut also places himself within the story to set free Kilgore Trout, the earlier pages in this study, this part was discussed in detail. This situation, where Vonnegut sets free his alter persona, could be his way of setting himself free in some sort of way. Throughout his whole life, Kilgore Trout suffered; he had no friend, no one to talk to besides his parrot Billy, he was desperate, barely afford his rent, his writings wouldn’t publish anywhere worthy besides the nudist magazines to fill up the empty spaces. So when Vonnegut decides to free him, he could be free about his deeply buried, oppressed feelings about his life. When researched, it is evident that Vonnegut also suffered a lot from depression to the point of attempting suicide. He somehow alienates himself in the same way Kilgore Trout does.

3.1.1. Key Characteristics of Ignatius J. Reilly

Ignatius possesses a prodigious intellect and believes himself to be intellectually superior to those around him. He often expresses disdain for mainstream culture, dismissing it as shallow and ignorant. Ignatius is an avowed underachiever, rejecting conventional notions of success and preferring to live on welfare rather than seeking unmeaningful employment. Ignatius's distinctive clothing choices, including his green hunting cap and voluminous tweed coat, and his frequent outbursts of loud and verbose rants contribute to his eccentric persona. The way he puts his thoughts in words is also another noticeable characteristic of him, he likes to dramatize his sentences. Just like the time when he saw Ms. Trixie, “I imagined that the luncheon meat would activate her faculties. Over here, Mother Commerce.” (Toole, 1987: 98) Ms. Trixie is elderly, frequently confused, and wants nothing more than to retire, but the Levy Pants

company does not let her retire, for tax and image reasons, and keeps pretending like she's still all healthy and useful around there. So when Ignatius refers to her as 'Mother Commerce', he points out the absurdity of keeping a senile woman working against her will and the way capitalism clings to appearance over substance. He's basically mocking, meaning 'Look at this poor woman still being dragged to the workplace, now isn't she a glorious symbol of productivity?'.

In *A Confederacy of Dunces*, Toole portrays Ignatius as an Irish-American in his thirties who lives in New Orleans in the 1960s with his mother. Ignatius refuses to work even though he is capable, he sees working as a capitalist way of degrading the human body and soul. He is eccentric in so many ways, his appearance, for example, he has one blue one yellow eye, and his bodyweight can be mentioned as obese. Earlier pages in this study, there was a part about his heterochromia and how he resembles a Van cat, which is a cat species originating from Van, Turkey. John Kennedy Toole often refers to Ignatius's hands as paws in the novel, "The syndicate. Whoever they are. Look at my hands." Ignatius shoved two paws into the man's face.' (Toole, 1987: 142) or 'his slitted eyes' takes part where Ignatius rests on the hospital bed reading the newspaper that he is been photographed as a dead cow lying on the street of the Night of Joy bar; he looks at the photo "Ignatius scrutinized the center photograph through slitted eyes." (Toole, 1987: 289) Another example, Toole made him a cat personified, where Burma Jones nicknames him as a white cat, "How come a white cat like you, talkin so good, sellin weenies?" (Toole, 1987: 255). And the cockatoo, normally would just perform with Darlene, ends up chasing Ignatius the moment it sees him, showcasing the nature of the cat and bird relationship. Toole's animalization of Ignatius would be referring, his way of playing with grotesque satire that exaggerated the animalistic and absurd to reflect the madness of modern society. His fashion choice is pretty questionable; he prefers to wear a green hunting cap to prevent head colds, the tweed trousers with pockets enable him to store his belongings, and the hoop earrings he always wears, combined with the scarf and the plastic sword he carries when he was working for the paradise vendors. Although he is proud of his fashion choice, and ridicules the prices and the qualities of the outfits when he was shopping on Canal Street by saying;

Several of the outfits, Ignatius noticed, were new enough and expensive enough to be properly considered offenses against taste and decency. Possession of anything new or expensive only

reflected a person's lack of theology and geometry; it could even cast doubts upon one's soul. Ignatius himself was dressed comfortably and sensibly. The hunting cap prevented head colds. (Toole, 1987: 5)

As for his eccentric characteristics, he's deeply intertwined with theology and geometry; he frequently mentions Boethius and quotes him in his writings. He frequently mentions Fortuna, the goddess of luck, fate, and the famous Wheel of Fortune. One moment he prays to her, one moment he curses at her. "Oh, what low joke was Fortuna playing on him now? Arrest, accident, job. Where would this dreadful cycle ever end?" (Toole, 1987: 43) Ignatius almost always sees Fortuna against him; if something does not go in his way, he blames it on Fortuna has turned her wheel against him. He is delusionally dramatizing the bad events that happened to him and not owning his failures throughout the novel. Toole uses Fortuna ironically, because Ignatius acts like he is Boethius's noble victim of fate, but in reality, he's just fooling himself by acting lazy and being a bystander and not a part of the world he lives in. Ignatius shows no character development throughout the novel. He continues to be intellectually arrogant and contradictory. He talks all mighty about his worldview, criticizes modern society for its immorality, and yet can not see his own flaws. He also believes he's waging a moral war against decadence, capitalism, and even black rights in 1960s New Orleans. He's alienated not just from society but from intimacy and empathy when the way he talks to his mother and Mryna Mirkoff, who's an ex-girlfriend of his. He lacks humane empathy on that matter, considering he lives with his mother in his thirties, not helping her economically or with the housework.

3.1.2. Key Characteristics of Kilgore Trout

Kilgore Trout, created by Kurt Vonnegut Jr., appears as a recurring character in several of his novels, including *Breakfast of Champions*. Trout is an obscure science fiction writer, living in poverty and obscurity, whose imaginative stories rarely find a substantial audience. He embodies a sense of detachment from societal norms and often finds himself in bizarre and surreal situations. Trout's imaginative mind allows him to envision bizarre and fantastical scenarios, exploring the boundaries of science fiction. However, his works are largely disregarded by mainstream publishers and readership. Trout is an outsider in the literary world and struggles to find recognition for his talents. Despite this, he remains committed to his writing, driven by his passion for storytelling rather than the pursuit of fame or fortune. Trout's stories often touch

upon existential themes, questioning the nature of reality, humanity's place in the universe, and the impact of technological advancements on society.

While Ignatius J. Reilly and Kilgore Trout share some commonalities as eccentric characters, they also possess distinct traits that set them apart. Both characters challenge societal norms and exhibit disdain for mainstream culture. They embody a sense of disillusionment and find themselves on the fringes of society. However, Ignatius is driven by intellectual arrogance and his desire to restore what he perceives as a lost era of cultural refinement, while Trout is motivated by a genuine passion for storytelling and an exploration of existential themes. Ignatius J. Reilly and Kilgore Trout also differ in their levels of self-awareness. Ignatius is largely unaware of his own flaws and shortcomings, considering himself an intellectual elite amidst a world of ignorant 'dunces.' In contrast, Trout is more self-reflective, acknowledging his limitations and the limitations of his work. He understands that his ideas may not resonate with the masses, but he remains committed to his craft nonetheless. Furthermore, Ignatius and Trout inhabit different narrative contexts. Ignatius's story in *A Confederacy of Dunces* is a tragicomic exploration of societal dysfunction and personal delusions, set in the colorful backdrop of New Orleans. On the other hand, Trout's appearances in Vonnegut's novels, including *Breakfast of Champions*, serve as metafictional devices, blurring the lines between fiction and reality. Trout's character often represents Vonnegut's own perspectives and acts as a vehicle for social commentary and philosophical musings within the narrative. In terms of impact, Ignatius and Trout leave lasting impressions on readers. Ignatius's larger-than-life personality and his hilarious yet poignant journey through the novel invite both laughter and introspection, ultimately challenging societal norms and expectations. Trout's recurring presence in Vonnegut's works offers a metafictional commentary on the nature of storytelling and the role of the author. Through Trout, Vonnegut raises questions about the power of imagination, the responsibility of the artist, and the blurred boundaries between reality and fiction. Ignatius J. Reilly and Kilgore Trout, two eccentric protagonists in American literature, captivate readers with their idiosyncrasies, unconventional perspectives, and impact on their respective narratives. While both characters challenge societal norms and exhibit disillusionment with mainstream culture, they possess distinct traits and motivations. Ignatius represents an

intellectual arrogance rooted in a desire for cultural refinement, while Trout embodies a passionate storyteller exploring existential themes. Through their compelling journeys, these characters leave a lasting impression, inviting readers to question societal expectations and the role of art in the world. Their presence in *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Breakfast of Champions* contributes to the rich tapestry of American literature, offering unique and thought-provoking insights into the human experience.

Breakfast of Champions is undeniably a novel that showcases the strong connection between the author, Kurt Vonnegut, and his fictional creation, Kilgore Trout. Their shared experiences, outsider status, and critiques of society allow readers to see the profound influence of Vonnegut's life on his work. In addition, the novel's metafictional elements and exploration of free will provide a platform for Vonnegut to examine his role as an artist and the responsibilities that come with it. Ultimately, *Breakfast of Champions* is a testament to Vonnegut's distinctive writing style and his ability to provoke thought and challenge societal norms through his unique voice. Kathryn Hume points out that matter in her article, *Vonnegut's Self-Projections: Symbolic Characters and Symbolic Fiction* as;

Readers have long recognized Kilgore Trout as an alter ego for Kurt Vonnegut, and when Vonnegut 'liberated' his characters at the end of Breakfast of Champions, some critics suspected that he would have troubled to gain his own freedom from Trout. They were right. (Hume, 1982: 177)

Breakfast of Champions centers around the character Kilgore Trout, a struggling science fiction writer who is often regarded as a fictional alter ego of Vonnegut. Through an examination of their shared experiences and perspectives, several striking parallels between Trout and Vonnegut, illuminating the profound influence of the author's life on the construction of the novel. Both Kilgore Trout and Kurt Vonnegut faced obstacles in their writing careers. Trout's works were often relegated to cheap science fiction magazines, mirroring Vonnegut's early struggles with mainstream publishers. This parallel suggests Vonnegut's personal frustrations and the challenges he encountered in gaining recognition for his literary endeavors. Trout and Vonnegut shared a sense of being outsiders within society. Trout's unconventional ideas and storytelling methods often went unnoticed or unappreciated, reflecting Vonnegut's own experiences as an author whose works were initially dismissed or misunderstood. This shared perspective of societal alienation adds depth to both the character and the author, allowing readers to question the nature of artistic

expression and its reception. *Breakfast of Champions* serves as a scathing critique of American society, exposing its absurdities and hypocrisies. Vonnegut, through Trout's character, tackles a range of social issues, including racism, consumerism, and environmental degradation. This echoes Vonnegut's own disillusionment with the state of the world, as he used his writing to provoke reflection and challenge societal norms. One of the defining features of *Breakfast of Champions* is its incorporation of metafictional elements. Vonnegut blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality by including himself as a character within the narrative. In the novel, Vonnegut meets Kilgore Trout, creating a self-reflexive exploration of the author's relationship with his own creation. This metafictional technique allows Vonnegut to reflect on his role as a writer and the power dynamics between creator and character. Furthermore, Vonnegut uses *Breakfast of Champions* as a platform to examine the nature of free will and the responsibility of the artist. Both Trout and Vonnegut grapple with the notion that they have the power to shape and influence the lives of their characters. This introspective exploration adds a layer of complexity to the novel and invites readers to consider the ethical implications of artistic creation. In addition to these similarities between Trout and Vonnegut, it is worth noting that *Breakfast of Champions* reflects the author's distinctive writing style. Vonnegut's satirical wit, dark humor, and fragmented narrative structure are all present in the novel, allowing readers to identify the unique voice that defines his body of work.

CONCLUSION

The novels that have been examined within the satirical framework, as well as taking into consideration their written periods. *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole is a portrayal of 1960s New Orleans, where the post-Civil Rights Movement, the disillusionment, and the alienation of the society of that era are examined in detail to highlight the protagonist Ignatius J. Reilly's eccentricity on these serious matters by mentioning them in a satirical way. J. Reilly's unique worldview, his outfits, and the way he expressed himself when he was conversing with someone, evidenced his affection for medieval philosophy, depicting him as an anachronistic individual. The relationship between the author and the protagonist has been researched and has concluded due to the great resemblance in both their personal lives and the worldviews that these two indeed the creation of the alter persona of John Kennedy Toole. Similarly, in the *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. created his alter-ego known as Kilgore Trout, a recurring character in several other novels is investigated in detail. Kilgore Trout mirrors Vonnegut's insight in many ways, including his perspective on black communities, the aftereffects of the war, and consumerism and other matters. Trout parallels with Ignatius on several matters, whether they're both unappreciated writers, outcasted within their society, their approaches to facing these hardships resemble one another. For Ignatius, he is living in a world full of 'dunces' that could not comprehend his worldview, he always ridicules the social norms, hierarchies in his writings, he's not accepting the modern ideologies such as the Enlightenment are symptomatic of a deeper cultural disillusionment, and as for Trout, he criticizes by mocking the social norms of the society in his uniquely absurd stories that end up being published into some adult magazines to fill the spaces that left out from the images. The exaggerated language of Ignatius hints at Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory. In carnivalesque, the high becomes low, the subversion of authority, rules, and hierarchies mocked just like how Ignatius mocks and ridicules every aspect of the social norms and institutions. Both of these anti-heroes represent their author's inner worlds and mirror the socio-political context of their society's period. This study examined in detail the types of satire used in these respective novels, the author's language, tone, as well as their connection with their

protagonists in detail. Furthermore, the alienation and eccentricity that are evident in these two books shed light on investigating these matters in a detailed research. In conclusion, Toole and Vonnegut not only ridicule or mock society through satire, but they also offer a profound commentary on the problems that society often ignores. Their novels employ satire to expose the failings of modern American society, challenging dominant cultural narratives and revealing the absurdities within post-war social, political, and economic structures. Through this satirical perspective, the authors give voice to feelings of isolation and resistance, urging readers to question the status quo and envision alternative worldviews.



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- Kabul ve onay sayfası hariç,
- Teşekkür hariç,
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- Simge ve kısaltmalar hariç,
- Gereç ve yöntemler hariç,
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- Tezden çıkan yayınlar hariç,
- 7 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 7 words)

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Tez Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılmasına İlişkin Yönergeyi İnceledim ve bu yönergede belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içmediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimizi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğumuz bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederiz.

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

Danışman		Öğrenci
Adı Soyadı	Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Zeki EDİS	Rojda SANCAN
İmza		
		Tarih 23.05.2025