

Transgressive Assemblages in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More* and *Sirens of Titan*

التجميع الإبداعي و التجاوز الفني في كتاب *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More* و *Sirens of Titan* لكورت فونيغيت

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Abstract:

Transgression and estrangement work hand in hand in subversive literature. They have the function of breaking the boundaries of imposed systems and crossing the new worlds that are different and free. Through science fiction, it becomes possible to write a transgressive work of literature using Estrangement. These concepts meet with the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari on Assemblage and Reterritorializations in the works of Kurt Vonnegut. His interplanetary settings and grotesque plots are perfect transgressive lines of flight and rhizomatic becomings, the point of which is to highlight the need of humanism and common decency in the common man's life.

Keywords: Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization, Assemblage, Transgression, Vonnegut

ملخص:

يعتبر مصطلحا اللإقليم وإعادة التحديد من تقنيات التجاوز في الأدب الثوري. بحيث يعتقد جيل دولوز وفيليكس جوتاري أن الأسئلة المتعلقة بالأدب الهامشي يجب أن يتم تناولها جميعاً ضمن هذا التعيين ، فقط إذا كانت مكتوبة بلغة القوة المسيطرة . لـ Kurt Vonnegut ، *Slapstick or Lonesome no More* و *Sirens of Titan* ، يمثلان أفضل كتابة لما يسمى التجميع الإبداعي و التحول الأفقي ، وهي تقنية تسمح بالتدفق المستمر وتجديد المعنى. من خلال إعادة بناء تعريف الأسرة والحب والعلاقات الإنسانية ، تجاوزت الرواية النظم الاجتماعية التي كتبت فيها الكلمات المتاحة: التجاوز، إعادة التحديد، الإقليم ، التجميع الإبداعي، فونيغيت

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1. Introduction

Transgression in literature is an act of subversion that leads to new definitions of the self and of Man in general, that are different from those of the imposed systems. It is a violation of basic systems, in which the transgressor assumes their subversion (Jenks, 2003, p. 3). In a work of fiction, it is an act of creativity, since imagination is based on a transcendence of common values (Booker, 1991, p.2). It is, thus, an act that is based on a shift from the common to everything that is subversively different. It does not include creativity only, but also the character of breaking the stillness of rules.

A successful literary work is a work that reaches a high level of literariness. According to the Russian Formalists, transgression is an important technique in making the literariness of a text, in its disruption of the boundaries of traditional literature (Booker, 1991, p. 2). It happens in literature through defamiliarizations of common concepts and definitions, estrangements and the creation of new worlds; becomings and reterritorializations.

The novels of American author Kurt Vonnegut perform these acts of transgression and estrangements by their use of science fiction plots. The author had rejected classification as a science fiction author because of the negative reception of this genre during his days (the 1950s to the 1980s). Yet, a deep reading of his works reveals that the science fiction in these novels is just a trope, while his intentions are far more *transgressive*. He relied on the creation of new worlds and alternate universes in his fiction to express his disapproval with imposed systems and his wish to end their hegemony, even if by providing comic alternatives that are more satirical and ironic than true suggestions of a different life.

In his 1976 novel *Slapstick, or Lonesome no More*, he created an alternate universe about a dystopian future America which is bankrupt, whose population is ignorant, and lives in isolation due to a dangerous virus. Yet, this dystopian America finds a way to be happy, through family love. It is, thus, a novel of empathy and love in a world in which no technology, nor any form of progress can make man happy.

Just like *Slapsick*, his 1959 novel, *Sirens of Titan*, presents a far more alien universe with events that happen not only on earth but also on different other planets (Mars, Mercury, Saturn's moon Titan). It is a novel about life choices, war, and the violation of man's free will in strictly structured systems. It shows three different stages of the life of Malachi Constant, a rich business man who inherited a great fortune while on earth. This man's life as well as priorities in life and choices have been changing as he travelled from one planet to another, to finally reach their best highest level of nobility on Titan, Saturn's moon.

The fantasies of these novel seem childish or too imaginary to have any serious goal, yet, they are lines of territoriality and transgressions that lead to new territories that are different and liberating to the self. Through these plots, the act of transgression in literature, which highlights a very serious literature, meets the alternate universes of science fiction in deterritorializations of fixed definitions, and reterritorializations of new possibilities. They are assemblages that are not limited by a precise direction, and that continue to spring into new forms of expression.

2. Denaturalization as Transgression

One of the common aspects of Vonnegut's literature is his use of the grotesque in his plots. His characters often have a particular physical appearance, sometimes from birth, others due to a metamorphosis. Through such grotesque depictions of their bodies he sought to

represent corrupt systems and their influence on the modern Man. These malformations are simple metaphors for what these systems truly do to the individuals who have to bear them in the real life.

The scars of human egocentrism appear on the bodies of Wilbur and Eliza Swaine, the protagonists in *Slapstick*. Wilbur and Eliza are twins who are born of the union of a beautiful young and very wealthy couple. Unlike what they expected, their children have malformations and many health problems, which makes their doctors assume that they would die at the age of fourteen. The couple is heartbroken and cannot stand the ugliness of their children, so they send them to a mansion, which is well fashioned and equipped with all facilities and servants, ready to receive the two children.

Wilbur and Eliza grow up away from their parents and only see them once a year. They develop a very intimate relationship as they had no knowledge at all of the nature of human relationships, yet, one of the things they wished for the most was impressing their parents and gaining their love. The grotesque in the case of Wilbur and Eliza is reflected in their physical appearance and their parents' behavior. The parents act as perfect selfish human beings. The ugliness of their children's appearance is in fact the ugliness of their behavior. They cast hate and hostility on their children, yet these two take it as an occasion to develop a great world of their own, their line of escape which leads them to their own territory.

The grotesque condition of the siblings represents both an awful denaturalization for them and a reterritorialization. Denaturalization caused them a forced isolation. They grow up to think they had to be stupid because that is what human beings liked the most in the social life, so they never showed their true selves to their servants, their doctor, or their parents, until the age of fifteen. They had to live with a constant feeling of inferiority as opposed to their bodies, assuming that they were the ugliest creatures that ever lived on earth.

The two siblings report having caused their own misery and the end of their happiness by revealing their intelligence to their parents. The act of revealing their true selves to their parents caused their separation and end of their secret heaven; it even turned Eliza to an enemy who sought revenge from her brother Wilbur, who used to be her only partner during her childhood. During their parents' visit for their fifteenth birthday, Wilbur and Eliza hear their mother wishing they were more intelligent. They decided to reveal their true selves to get her love because they were raised without love at all. Denaturalization caused their harm first as they were deprived of this beautiful feeling throughout their entire lives, then when they revealed their greatest secret in the sake of getting some love.

The two protagonists transgressed the usual lines of stratification that are built by society by creating their own definitions of what society wants, "All the information we received about the planet we were on indicated that idiots were lovely things to be. So we cultivated idiocy" (Vonnegut, 1976, p.31). They replaced words with meaningless babbling; they rolled on the floor, always making the others believe they were unaware of the world around them. Denaturalization in the case of Wilbur and Eliza represents what the two French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari called deterritorialization and reterritorialization to refer to the different possibilities of meaning and its flexibility.

On the one side, denaturalization distances them from having a normal, casual human life and from receiving the love children should be getting from their parents, so it deterritorializes them and casts them into different lines of articulation. On the other side, it allows them to create a world of their own that is peaceful and creative, using the different lines of articulation they could assemble in their difference. Deterritorialization and

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reterritorialization are transgressive acts in writing that allow the human perception of the self to move and overcome the socially fashioned systems to multiplicities of becomings.

In *Kafka, Towards a Minor Literature* (2003), and *A Thousand Plateaus* (2005), Deleuze and Guattari introduce the terms rhizome, Assemblages, and Becomings. They are transgressions that work on deterritorializations that spark new beginnings, and reterritorializations which allow new possibilities of meaning. These transgressions happen in a rhizomatic flow of meaning within language, which are estrangements, or defamiliarizations of common concepts.

Assemblages are lines of articulation that develop and move into different directions. They escape territories to create new ones through assemblages of different lines. The consequences of Wilbur and Eliza's isolation and social denaturalization is a collection of assemblages that leads to the birth of a new territory that is grotesque and extraordinary at the same time. The two children are thought to be stupid from birth and so everyone around them treats them as stupid, while in fact they were more genius than an average intelligent person.

When Wilbur and Eliza touched or brought their heads next to each other's, they became very intelligent. They made a team with their brains together, which made them able to speak different languages, make difficult calculations easily, and retain more knowledge than any person around them could do. When they were together their brains functioned as one genius brain, they became one because of their social rejection and denaturalization.

The grotesque in this plot becomes a tool to create new territories and different lines of alteration. In *Sirens of Titan* (2014) too, denaturalization is a tool of deterritorialization and reterritorialization for transgression. It is a dystopia which shows man as a helpless creature under the control of machinery and people who own money. Man in this novel is denaturalized and loses his identity, becomes unable to recognize even himself. Veronica Hollinger considers that one of the basic aspects of a dystopian science fiction is a process of man's denaturalization, in which he is depicted as a "subject-in-technoculture" (p.53).

Unlike *Slapstick*, in which denaturalization serves as a transgression, in *Sirens* denaturalization is what leads to it. Malachi Constant, one of the protagonists of the novel, goes through three stages of denaturalization. In the beginning, he is a rich man who leads a very extravagant life in California. He has no respect for women as he considers them as conquests to brag about. He is a materialist capitalist who sells cigarettes that make men infertile and makes a fortune of it. He is invited to Winston Rumfoord's house, who travels in time and space through what is called the chrono-synclastic infundibulum, and who informs Constant that he will be living on Mars then on Titan, and will be married to Rumfoord's wife. Constant rejects the things he is told in his meeting with Rumfoord then starts to destroy his life to become everything Beatrice (Rumfoord's wife) would hate.

Constant goes back to California and sends disrespectful letters to Beatrice, then throws a party of more than fifty days in which he destroys his house and offers people oil wells and different properties, so that by the end of the party he was bankrupt. Ironically, because of his financial problems he faces huge charges that could put him in jail for years, and decides to escape that fate by accepting a mission on Mars, thus participating into another fate he destroyed himself to avoid.

On Mars Constant is still an egocentric show off. He is challenged about not falling in love with a very beautiful woman who was kept in a room in his base. He decides to go in there and rape the woman to prove that he was able to have sexual intercourse without falling in love with her. After he rapes her, he sees her face and discovers that she is the woman Mr Rumfoord mentioned on earth. He feels awful about himself realizing that he was one of

fate's tools of doing evil. The woman is impregnated by Constant and gives life to his son Chrono.

Beatrice's rape makes Constant into a different person who actually cares about feelings and about doing good. As a consequence his memory is deleted in a Martian hospital and his name is changed to Unk. He becomes a soldier on Mars, trained to participate in a mission to destroy earth and its inhabitants. He is brainwashed and controlled through antennas that are placed in his head which whisper orders in his ears and punish him when he does something wrong. He learns very few things about himself from the other soldiers and from a letter he wrote to himself before his memory was erased. The letter merely told him that he had to resist the totalitarian system in which he was enslaved against his will; and that he had to find Beatrice and Chrono because they were his family.

These written memories that Constant does not remember become his obsession. He becomes sensitive and keen in finding his family and leading a peaceful life with them away from Mars. Once he finds them, Beatrice is not able to remember him because her memory too was erased after her rape, Chrono does not recognize him because he never saw him. The two of them are agents in an experiment conducted by Mr Rumfoord who always saw everything coming because of his time traveling, yet, never tried to change the least thing. It was also him who ordered that their memories are erased. Rumfoord controls each of their steps from their lives on earth in their thirties until their death in their seventies. He then goes back on earth, creates a religion and prophecies that a space-wanderer will arrive on earth as a messiah and commercializes the idea.

The space wanderer's arrival was that of Constant who finds his way to earth after being stranded on Mercury for three years (as part of Rumfoord's plan for him). His arrival is received as a form of a pilgrimage in New York in which he is exposed by Rumfoord as a sinner who does not deserve to stay on earth and who should be sent back to space, in front of a large number of people. Constant, not knowing about the things he is told he had done, goes back on his space ship, this time joined by Beatrice and Chrono, with whom he is united. The three are sent to Titan, where they meet Rumfoord again, in his palace.

On Titan, Rumfoord finds out that not only Constant and Beatrice were controlled, but he was, himself, too, controlled by the tralfamadorians (the inhabitants of the fictional planet Tralfamadore). They tricked him to bring a piece of metal that was lacking for the space ship of Salo (a tralfamadorian robot who was stuck on Titan), to allow him to finish his journey. The piece was in the pocket of Chrono, who used it as a good-luck piece, that he picked up on Mars in a flamethrower's factory.

All this series of events reveals processes of denaturalization that each of the characters goes through as they are subjugated by their systems. Beatrice and Constant lose full control over their lives because of machinery and Rumfoord's plans. Technology becomes a major character in *Sirens of Titan* as it controls the characters' lives and deprives them of their free will.

Technology reaches a high level of progress that estranges man from his original nature. Hollinger argues that "technoscience" transforms into a conflicting nature to the human self in narratives that contrast man to such power. It challenges man's perception of his "first-[human]-nature" (Hollinger, 2011, p.53). The case of Rumfoord's confrontation of his condition as a subject of Tralfamadorian control is an example of this challenge, as he rejects this role by putting an end to his friendship with Salo. Rumfoord's anger stems from the fact that everything he always thought of as a spontaneous human invention (like the

Great Wall of China, England's Stonehenge, The Golden house of Roman Emperor Nero) were in fact Tralfamadorian messages to Salo.

Denaturalization takes unstructured forms of transgression the moment the narration shifts from earth to space. The Assemblages begin as lines of stratification of a perfectly totalitarian republic on Mars. The lines begin to spring into new lines of flight as Constant reads his letter to himself in which he calls for rebellion. Constant leaves the mission on which he was supposed to go to earth to fight human beings and deserts to find his son and mate. This transgressive line is a disruption of order not only from a soldier who deserts from the army, but also in Constant's life himself, if compared to the old Constant who was heartless and careless about the evils he did. His condition as a *new* person (also denaturalized from his earthly self), makes him into a more considerate person.

Constant is caught by his officials and still sent on a ship to fight with Boaz whom he hated because he was a spy. Their ship is stranded on Mercury, where they are given hints from time to another on how to leave the planet. Their isolation on Mercury reveals a new level of their sub-conscious. Boaz who was an evil army official on Mars, who used to torture soldiers, becomes a sensitive man who loves the small creatures he finds on that planet. His desire for life seems to grow as his outfit is always clean, his beard always shaved, his hair is well cut, and he takes care of the small creatures who gather around him because he offers them their food, music.

Constant is even more anxious because his plan to find his wife and son is interrupted on the planet Mercury. Unlike Boaz, Constant never cuts his hair, nor shaves his beard, and within a short time loses his outfit and boots and becomes a naked wanderer in the planet. What the two contrasting characters have in common is their belief in a temporary meaning of life which keeps them dreaming, and wishing to reach particular points. Boaz seemed to have found the meaning of life, or its purpose, in feeding the creatures of Titan and receiving their love, Constant's life happiness was next to his wife and son. At the end of the novel it is revealed that the purpose of life is to love whoever is around to be loved, because only that will sustain the will to survive and keep being alive.

The two novels are written in Assemblages that keep escaping closure to ensure continuous flow of the plots. They keep flowing into new plots all the time and thus the traditional linearity is disrupted. They are compositions of *plateaus* which spring into new territories, the transgressive alternate universes. Deleuze and Guattari (2007) argue "in a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification." (p.3). The multiple plots of *Sirens* and *Slapstick* are put in the form of movements of destratification. They challenge all forms of authority and experiment with estrangements both in form and narrative.

3. Artistic Movements of Destratification

The transgressive Assemblages of the two novels are made possible with a series of experimentation that the author performs in the plots. First, he breaks the chronological and rational linearity of the plots, thus taking the reader to a new plateau every now and then. Just like Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (2005) which is written in different unstructured lines and which can be read from any chapter, so are the plots of *Slapstick* and *Sirens* which can be started at any chapter.

Vonnegut experiments with time in *Sirens* (2014) as he makes protagonists that are able to travel both in space and in time. Rumfoord's time travelling is related to his message to human beings about love and empathy. His methods of controlling Beatrice and Constant's

lives were subversive as he cost them their life memories and much pain, yet he led them finally to understand the true purpose of life and to love each other.

Rumfoord was stuck in the Chrono-synclastic infundibulum, which is a spiral that takes him into space and places him in a dimension that is different from earth. He cannot **control** his movements, he “materializes” on earth (Vonnegut, 2014, p. 8) once in 59 days and it lasts only one hour. The narrator does not truly explain what the Chrono-synclastic infundibulum is but explains that everyone in it is right. What is also known about it is that whoever is inside it is stuck in time. They can see the past, the present and the future, they can travel from one moment to another **yet** do not control the points they go to, and cannot change things. Something similar to the Chrono-synclastic Infundibulum also happens in *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), where Billy Pilgrim comes unstuck in time after being kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians. Billy can also appear at different moments of his life without controlling where he is going and cannot change them.

Both the Tralfamadorians in *Slaughterhouse Five*, and Rumfoord in *Sirens*, find it funny and deceiving that human beings seek to change things because they know what will happen in the future. Rumfoord compares life to a roller coaster ride which will happen anyway even if he warns the others about how bad things can be (p. 34). The time travelling in the Chrono-synclastic infundibulum allowed Rumfoord not to teach human beings about their future but to unify them.

Both *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Sirens* are novels about Vonnegut’s contribution in war. The time travelling in the two novels is also related to war events and to the idea that human mistakes will happen anyway. In *Sirens* Vonnegut revisits war in the character of Malachi Constant who hates his role in the army and deserts because he was against the war he was sent to. The same scenario is that of Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five* who rejects war and refuses to fight in it even inside the battlefield. Both are reflections of Vonnegut’s refusal of war, being himself, a former prisoner of war who has witnessed war atrocities in Dresden, Germany during WWII.

Vonnegut (2014) chooses to unify the people of the earth in *Sirens* in a plan that Rumfoord did purposefully. He elaborated a very weak and passive army on Mars composed of people who had no purpose in life on earth and sent them to earth with less developed weapons than those of the human beings. As a consequence, every Martian that attacked earth was killed by the earthlings who unified to face them. Rumfoord had built an army “whose whole purpose was to destroy itself in uniting the peoples of Earth” (p. 125). Rumfoord thought that they were “saints” who had died so that the world would be “united as the Brotherhood of Man” (p. 111). In so doing Vonnegut deterritorialized the traditional meaning of war to give it a new one that is awkward but more humanist. War in *Sirens* unifies the human beings instead of separating them.

Destratification in *Slapstick* happens differently. Vonnegut relies on defamiliarizations of the meaning of family, but also plays with form of the text as he relates it directly to his life experience. He begins with a prologue in which he mentions that it is the closest he gets to writing an auto-biography. The novel, according to his prologue, is a representation of him and his sister, depicted in the characters of Wilbur Rockefeller and Eliza Mellon Swain (Vonnegut, 1976, p. 20). He speaks of his experience with love, showing that it has never taken a great part of his life, and that he never received enough of it.

The plot begins to unfold into different lines of flight that become hard to catch as the events develop. It is a far from conventional plot, or a combination of plots, that can be read at any level and would still make sense. Vonnegut starts by mourning his dead sister and

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interferes at the end to finish the story of his speaker, whom he identifies with as his future self in the prologue (Vonnegut, 1976, p. 20). The intrusion of the author as narrator at the end adds to the complexity of the narration as it becomes self-conscious of its artificiality. From the very beginning the reader is aware that the work they have in hand is a product of imagination, a work of fiction.

The disruption of the traditional writing system is a transgression in itself which Deleuze and Guattari (2003) refer to as the collective value. It is the shift to a more creative, and different writing tradition to de-centre the grand narratives and shed light on new experiences of commonly silenced groups (p.18). In the collective value, the author's concerns or stories represent a common concern for the group the author belongs to, and are "necessarily political" for their status as marginal (p.17).

Vonnegut's prologue calls the attention of the reader to the book's artificiality. Such is a technique of Assemblage that allows him to write through Becomings. Using metafiction

¹ he breaks the boundary between his original world and that of the text. The text is transformed into an ever flowing becoming, that continues to develop into new territories.

Wilbur and Eliza's transformation of their original situation from rejection to power is a Becoming in itself. Their union is a source of great energy and genius that are scary to their surroundings (Vonnegut, 1976, p.44). They extract energy from the love they can provide to each other. Their relationship turns to something incestuous as a reaction to their social rejection. Their love is a phenomenon that is aborted by external interruption. Once Wilbur is taken to a private school they are no longer Wilbur and Eliza but Betty and Bobby Brown (p.64), names they have picked for the strangers they become when they are separated.

In the second plot, Wilbur becomes president of the United States, but it is bankrupt. It shows a bizarre utopia in which everyone is poor, ignorant, starving, yet they are happy in their extended families. The group of people discussed in this novel lives in isolation due to a virus that spread in the Manhattan Island (for which it was referred to as the Island of Death) (Vonnegut, 1976, p. 22). The only project that worked in Wilbur's term was the extended artificial family- project, America ceases to be a nation in his age, and becomes only families (who call themselves kingdoms) (p. 127).

Vonnegut defamiliarizes the ideas of love and complicity through the characters of Wilbur and Eliza. They are two humans who have been raised as mental retards and thus never received any information about human relations. They developed their own understanding based on things they have seen around them or from the books they have been secretly reading.

The two siblings often hid in the library where Wilbur read to Eliza. He did the reading while she did most of the thinking. Together they wrote a critique of the American constitution in which they consider that all human beings equally deserve family love without any restrictions. Yet, at age fifteen they are separated by a psychologist who thinks that Wilbur is the most intelligent because of his ability to read. Eliza on the other hand, is placed in an institution for the feebleminded as she is judged mentally ill. A few years later, Wilbur becomes president of the United States and puts into practice his plan of the extended family which he elaborated with Eliza.

4. Estrangement to Territorialization

Assemblages make literature a machine that produces a world yet-to-come. It is a machine that deterritorializes, then reterritorializes meaning, into worlds with which marginal groups can identify through acts of transgression. *Slapstick* presents the occasion to these marginal groups to find their territories through their estrangement.

The extended family is a reterritorialization of a new meaning of family that also entails the affects of care, and what Vonnegut referred to as “common decency” (Vonnegut, 1976, p. 11) in his prologue, instead of love. He destabilized the traditional sense of family by overcoming the biological boundaries within which it has always been placed. The extended family is a new form of becoming, built through the rhizomatic flow of common decency and good will between human beings (or what Vonnegut expresses as the purpose of life in *Sirens* (2014), loving whoever is around to be loved). His definition of love is empathic. He is always calling people to love each other and to provide love as long as they can because he feels it is lacking in the modern world.

The extended artificial family was Wilbur's project as President of the United States. It is a system in which Americans are assigned middle names and numbers arbitrarily. The people who have the same middle names become members of the same artificial family, brothers, or cousins. The goal of this project is to make sure that every American, regardless of their color, manners, mental health, have the right for a family and can find someone they can go to any time and anywhere in America.

Through the artificial family, Wilbur established a new stratum which later becomes a nation-wide system. When he visited his artificial family in Indianapolis with his cook, who also belongs to the same family, he reported having felt an exceptional experience with them; better than that of being a millionaire, senator, pediatrician, and president of the United States. He went on: “The people there were poor, and had suffered an awful lot of death, and all the public services had broken down... But they put on parades and feasts for me, and for Carlos Daffodil-11 Villavicencio, too” (Vonnegut, 1976, p. 142). The extended artificial family offered home to people from different backgrounds. They loved the idea and identified with it.

The concept quickly escalated to a number of limitless assemblages as more people started creating their own clubs and new concepts based on the families they belonged to and even based on the numbers they shared. The outbreak of the tendency of belonging to a limitless number of groups that can share good will towards each other inspired unending possibilities of becoming. Vonnegut came up with the concept of the extended family because he thought human beings were easily replaced and forgotten in the “American machine” (Vonnegut, 1976, p.11)

The concept of the artificial family also occurred indirectly in *Cat's Cradle* (2011) as the Karass (a spontaneously connected group), Granfalloon (connected individuals on the basis of belonging or ideological belief that are also depicted as ridiculous), and Bokononist faith. In *Galàpagos* (1985) it appeared in the small group who then becomes the new human race and evolve to fisherfolks, and in a less direct way in *God Bless You Mr Rosewater*, when the protagonist walks in the country to give love. They all share the idea of the minimized community who identify with each other and who feel they only found home among each other.

Patricia Waugh (2001) argues that language is “an independent, self-contained system which generates its own ‘meanings’” (p.3). The dislocation of perception is not only related to production of new meanings but also to the suggestion of the emergence of new ones that might (or not) happen (in the present case, Assemblages). This projection reveals true

intentions and hopes of the author (what life feels like), in new and alternate universes of fiction). Vonnegut's main concern in his society, and which is depicted in the two present novels, is that of family love and loneliness. As a matter of fact, he considered loneliness as the "dominant malaise" of the modern world society (Freese, 2009, p. 407). He thought that what mattered more than providing love is providing common decency, by this, he dislocated love and reduced it to a feeling more empathic and more humanist. In this displacement he came close to his personal experience which he translated into fiction. When Vonnegut wrote a fiction that represents "what life feels like" for him (Vonnegut, 1976, p.11), he elaborated a direct connection between the work of art and his real world, yet still emphasizing its artificiality.

5. Conclusion

Alternate worlds in the science fiction work have a power that is often underestimated both by critics and readership. The power of estrangement is a power of transgression of boundaries and the beginning of a new world thought impossible before. Through estrangement, Vonnegut made a set of transgressions and deterritorializations which brings his works to the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

The first technique through which he reached transgression was denaturalization. By staging dystopian plots like that of *Sirens of Titan*, he made a total displacement of man, who becomes a subject entirely controlled by technology. The novel features a totally devastated individual whose life has shifted from power to disempowerment, only to open the endless number of assemblages of how free he can be. The grotesque also served as a tool of displacement and denaturalization which works on two levels. At one level, it reveals itself as the main reason for which the protagonists in *Slapstick* were alienated. At the second level, it became their tool of transgression, through which they built their own intimate world. Wilbur and Eliza transform their alienation and rejection into a heaven of their own, they go through a process of becoming in their transformation to one soul and one brain. In their own alternate universe they are one.

Transgression also happens in the narration as the author uses different forms of destratification. He interferes within the narrative and reappropriates the text, thus breaks the boundary between the fictional and the real world. His text is self-conscious of its artificiality. He also plays with time and plot linearity as essential disruptions of the traditional writing. Finally, the definition of family is dislocated into an assemblage based on common decency and good will. The traditional family is estranged, and goes through a rhizomatic becoming, the point of which is to grant love to whoever is around for it.

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¹ A fiction that is "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh, 2001, p. 2)