

Д. Вилькс (*ГУО «Средняя школа № 35 г. Бобруйска имени П. И. Батова»*)
О. П. Бусел (*научный руководитель*)

**EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVE USE
OF POSTMODERNIST TECHNIQUES IN KURT VONNEGUT'S NOVEL
«CAT'S CRADLE»**

The problems of understanding postmodernism are currently among the most controversial. Various interpretations of the term “postmodernism”, the diversity of literary practices and artistic worlds united within the framework of this concept, only confirm the widespread of this phenomenon, which embodies the most essential characteristics of our era. Criticism attributes to this movement writers who are very different in their ideological and aesthetic attitudes and creative practices, which gives rise to different approaches in the very principles of analysis and contradictory interpretations.

The issue of postmodernism is one of the most pressing and controversial both in the theoretical aspect and in artistic practice. Until now, the term “postmodernism” has not been fully established and is used in the field of aesthetics and literary criticism along with some duplicating terms (“poststructuralism”, “post-avant-garde”, “trans-avant-garde”, etc.). This is due to the fact that we are dealing with a relatively new, still insufficiently studied cultural phenomenon, ideas about which continue to be refined.

The term "postmodernism" remains a topic of ongoing debate, lacking full consensus and coexisting with related terms. This ambiguity stems from its relative novelty and ongoing refinement. Today, the term is conceptualized not only as a universal category of culture of the 20th century, but also as an expression of the "spirit of the times" in all spheres of human activity: art, sociology, philosophy, economics, politics, etc.

Kurt Vonnegut, a renowned American writer of German origin, stands as a classic and legend in American culture, often dubbed the modern Mark Twain. Recognized as a prominent figure in the postmodernist movement, his novels continue to command attention, evident in the establishment of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library in Indianapolis in 2011.

Studying and re-interpreting the novels of Kurt Vonnegut allows us to take a fresh look at the work of the writer, whose authority in the eyes of the American audience is extremely high to this day. This can be judged based not only on the volume of reprints of his books, but also on the fact that interest in his person does not fade among literary critics. In January 2011, the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library was opened in Indianapolis, where anyone can familiarize themselves with his works and learn more about the writer's personality.

Postmodernism (English postmodernism, French postmodernism, German Postmodernismus) is multi-valued and dynamically mobile, depending on the historical, social and national context, a complex of philosophical, scientific-theoretical and emotional-aesthetic ideas.

Postmodernism as a direction of modern literary criticism (main theorists: the Frenchman J. F. Lyotard, the Americans I. Hassan, F. Jameson, the Dutch D. V. Fokkema, T. Dan, the English J. Butler, J. Lodge, etc.) is based on the theory and practice of poststructuralism. The main concepts used by supporters of this trend: the world as chaos and postmodern sensitivity, the world as text and consciousness as text, intertextuality, crisis of authority, author's mask, double code and parodic mode of narration, pastiche, inconsistency, discreteness, fragmentation of narration, failure of communication (or, more generally, communicative difficulty), metastory.

Researchers recognize the United States as the birthplace of postmodern literature—it was from here that postmodernism spread throughout Europe. The theory of postmodernism is beginning to take shape in the United States in the wake of interest in the intellectual, philosophical, post-Freudian and literary concepts of the French poststructuralists. American soil turned out to be the most favorable for the perception of new trends for a number of reasons. Here there was a need to understand those trends in development of art and literature that have made them known since the mid-50s. (The emergence of pop art, which made quotation the leading artistic principle) and increasingly gained strength, which led in the mid-70s to a change in the cultural paradigm: modernism gave way to postmodernism.

American literary postmodernism is represented by such key figures as J. Barth, T. Pynchon, D. Barthelme, R. Sakenik, R. Federman. Moreover, most of the named authors are not only practitioners, but also theorists of this art. In American postmodernism, traditional forms and motifs are transformed not as a result of natural evolution, but as a result of the dominance of the concept of general chaos and decay.

Kurt Vonnegut (1922–2007) was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, and comes from a family of architects, a renowned American writer of German origin, stands as a classic and legend in American culture, often dubbed the modern Mark Twain. Recognized as a prominent figure in the postmodernist movement, his novels continue to command attention, evident in the establishment of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library in Indianapolis in 2011.

Vonnegut's first literary experience was at school, where he was editor of the school's daily newspaper for two years. In 1940, Vonnegut entered the biology and chemistry department of Cornell University and at the same time began contributing to the Cornell Daily Sun newspaper. From the university he was drafted into the army during the Second World War. During the fighting in Germany, Vonnegut was a scout; he was captured by the Nazis in December 1944 and sent to work in the underground meat warehouse of the Dresden slaughterhouse, where he witnessed the ruthless bombing of the city by Anglo-American aircraft. Kurt Vonnegut was among the seven American prisoners of war who survived that day in Dresden. His experiences will be reflected in many works, especially in the novel "Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children's Crusade," which brought fame to the author.

In the bizarre variety of Vonnegut's plots, three main themes are discernible: condemnation of war and weapons; a call for humanistic understanding and use of the results of technological progress; and the related topic of ecology. Vonnegut in his books touches on a variety of issues that concern the world today, and the theme of war, the threat of total catastrophe and the incredible indifference of humanity to its future "determine the main tone of his prose". The myth of the American dream, which is based on the belief in the rapid realization of one's potential and the indispensable desire for success, makes him bitterly ironic, the naive optimism of his fellow citizens regarding the infinity of their capabilities and the belief in overcoming all conceivable and inconceivable obstacles make him laugh sarcastically.

The main paradox of Vonnegut's artistic method is that he talks about the most critical, tragic moments of human life with laughter. In his novels we observe a deadly game of life that a person plays.

Cat's Cradle is a novel by Kurt Vonnegut (written in 1963). It became one of the author's most popular novels and, together with Slaughterhouse-Five, brought Vonnegut international fame. For this novel, in 1971, the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago finally awarded Vonnegut a master's degree.

The responsibility of scientists for their inventions and the problems of the global environmental situation – the central themes of Vonnegut's entire work – are well developed in this book. The plot of the novel is built around the most dangerous invention of Dr. Felix Hoenikker – a substance called *ice-nine* 'лед-девять'. This is a crystalline modification of water with a melting point of 45.8 °C. A tiny crystal of ice-nine, falling into some body of water (even a puddle), one way or another communicating with the world's waters, can lead to their rapid transformation into ice-nine and, thus, the death of life on Earth.

Vonnegut's technocrats are happy people who do not know suffering. Honnaker, for example, "played" all his life, creating toys of incredible destructive power. One infantry general once complained about the dirt making combat difficult. Honnaker became interested in the problem of "fighting dirt" and invented "ice-nine", a substance, a tiny amount of which is enough to freeze all life on the planet. But playing with ice does not lead to good things: the island of San Lorenzo will die from it, confirming the validity of the conclusion contained in the 14th volume of the works of the great philosopher Bokonon. The title of the treatise reads:

"What Can a Thoughtful Man Hope for Mankind on Earth, Given the Experience of the Past Million Years?" ("Can a reasonable person, taking into account the experience of past centuries, have even the slightest hope for a bright future for humanity?").

The content of this fictional treatise is laconic, of course, and by its very existence it speaks of the author's style belonging to the postmodernist movement. So, the answer to the question posed:

Nothing 'Het'.

Laughing at scientific concepts, Vonnegut creates a deliberately contradictory philosophy of bokononism, extensively equipping it with buffoon terminology – karasses, granfalloon and wampeters.

The concept of "postmodernism" is ambiguous and conditional, but this does not interfere with its in-depth study and determination of its characteristic features, which, of course, are not final, since this phenomenon is extremely dynamic and not frozen in its forms.

The debate about postmodernism continues today. This is one of the controversial problems of modern literary criticism, which attracts the attention of a wide range of researchers. And yet, despite all the differences in approaches, the majority of scientists recognize the main features of the poetics of postmodernism.

The concept of time is chaotic and inherent in postmodernism's theory of eclecticism. The work does not fetishize "new" or "old" time; these concepts dissolve into each other, intertwine or change places.

With his works, Vonnegut showed his understanding of reality, which, despite previous experience, proved the validity of the main thesis of the 14-volume collected works of Bokonon, a mysterious figure of great influence that humanity can not hope for a bright future. A new attempt to correct the world is an appeal to reality through the prism of a new reflection, which our time requires, through the poetics of postmodernism.