THE ABSURD WORLDS OF BILLY PILGRIM

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1   INTRODUCTION

1999 sees not only the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War but also the 60th anniversary of the start of the Second World War in Europe. This paper examines the narrative technique of one of the most celebrated and influential texts to deal with that conflict, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* (1969).

In literary criticism, *Slaughterhouse 5* has most frequently been discussed in terms of its Absurd content (e.g. Klinkowitz 1975 and 1982, Somer 1975, Stableford 1981, Wood & Wood 1975 and Meeter 1975). Developed from Albert Camus (1942), the term Absurd was first utilised in literary criticism by Martin Esslin (1963) to describe the works of a number of disparate, twentieth century playwrights, including Samuel Beckett, Eugéne Ionesco and Harold Pinter. Yet despite the fact that the Absurd is a constantly expanding collection of works, with the term now being applied to contemporary novelists such as Paul Auster, John Irving and Joseph Heller, literary critical consideration of the genre has progressed little since Esslin's seminal observations. These focused heavily on general themes rather than specific linguistic features and the term Absurd continues to be applied umbrella-fashion and with much melodramatic impressionism, as exemplified in Abrams' (1988) circular definition below. Indeed, literary criticism as a whole has yet to display any effort to specify how Camus' philosophical concerns have manifested themselves stylistically in works by other authors:

> **Absurd, Literature of the …** to view a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent human truth, value or meaning, and to represent human life, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the nothingness where it must end, as an existence which is both anguished and absurd (Abrams 1988:1).

While a comprehensive definition of Absurdism as a whole is beyond the realms of this paper, my aim is to provide a deeper insight into the Absurd textual mechanics of

Slaughterhouse 5 through the application of Paul Werth's (1994, 1995a, 1995b and ms) Text World Theory, an outline of which is given in section 2, below.

2 TEXT WORLD THEORY

Like many proponents of the cognitive linguistics movement, Paul Werth began his career in generative linguistics. However, while acknowledging the revitalising effect generative grammar had on language studies from the 1950s onwards, Werth also comments:

> … in other terms, Linguistics, led by its flagship the Generative Enterprise, is heading for the asteroid belt. It is travelling in ever decreasing circles, using more and more complex devices to talk about smaller and smaller fragments of language (Werth ms:21).

Werth accuses generativists of having actively distorted their observations, simplifying or normalising data in order to confirm pre-formed hypotheses. Those aspects of language not susceptible to formalist treatment are simply shelved or ignored.

As an antidote to this generativist tunnel-vision Werth proposes' a more human linguistics' (ms:21), a Cognitive Discourse Grammar which shares the same anti-objectivist research commitments as those set out by George Lakoff in 1990:

> For me, cognitive linguistics is defined by two primary commitments … The generalisation commitment is a commitment to characterising the general principles governing all aspects of human language … The cognitive commitment is a commitment to make one's account of human language accord with what is generally known about the mind and brain, from other disciplines as well as our own (Lakoff 1990:40).

However, while Werth's approach appears to be generally consistent with that of the cognitive linguistic movement on the surface, Lakoff and his colleagues do not escape criticism either. Discussing the work of Ronald Langacker, Werth argues that:

> Like democracy, discourse is universally assumed to be a Good Thing, but as also with democracy, very few are prepared to go out of their way to approach it. Indeed, even those who apply experientialism ideas most consistently tend to avoid direct confrontation with the horrors of context (Werth ms:50).

Werth points out that recent cognitive analysis has largely been limited to sentence level phenomena. He acknowledges that his text worlds have much in common with

Fauconnier's (1994) mental spaces but also argues that most of Fauconnier's examples too are isolated sentences. According to Werth, what Fauconnier calls a discourse does not bear any resemblance to what a speaker or reader might recognise as such.

In his introduction to Fauconnier's (1994) *Mental Spaces*, George Lakoff enthuses that one of Fauconnier's central accomplishments is the production of a theory capable of solving complex logical puzzles. He uses the following examples "to get an idea of how profound Fauconnier's idea is":

> If Woody Allen had been born twins, they would have been sorry for each other, but he wasn't and so he's only sorry for himself (Fauconnier 1994:x).
>
> John thinks I am taller than I am (Fauconnier 1994:xii).

Lakoff claims that our understanding of these propositions can only be explained with the aid of Fauconnier's mental space theory, in which a conditional mental space is set up separately from the reality space. In actual fact, it is difficult to see how this reasoning differs from the Possible Worlds Semantics developed by David Lewis (e.g. 1973) and colleagues from the 1950s onwards in a tradition dating back to leibnitz in the seventeenth century. Paul Werth's main criticism of possible worlds is that they comprise only those elements which will make the truth conditions under scrutiny come out right; they are *minimalistic* and contain none of the complexity that speakers and hearers would recognise as a world. Similarly, regarding Fauconnier's mental place theory, Werth argues that

> … given the cognitive principles underlying (mental space theory), one would expect (the approach) to apply *principally* to discourses, and only secondarily to sentences, since the latter are merely practical components of the former, and in cognitive terms do not actually occur without the other deictic components which make them part of discourses (Werth ms:79).

Although Fauconnier does relate his system to discourse circumstances, in practice his analysis is limited to single sentences. Werth (ms:79-80) also argues that the contexts which Fauconnier claims surround his examples are "nominated" or "declared" and "rather like rabbits out of a hat":

> The president is Reagan. Irving believes the president is Kissinger. He would like Brown to be the president. In the movie, Goofy is the president (Fauconnier 1994:42).

Werth (ms:79) comments in a footnote that such examples bear a remarkable resemblance to those he himself has used in past works (e.g. Werth 1984:16) to show the pseudo-discourse impression repetitious sentences can give, as commonly found in EFL exercise books.

As far as Werth is concerned, Cognitive Linguistics has so far failed to produce a truly experiential theory of language. Though he acknowledges the advances that linguists such as Fauconnier, Lakoff and Langacker have made towards "a more human linguistics", he finds their analyses of "discourse" as fundamentally distorted and contrived as any observation offered in the objectivist tradition. Werth proposes his Text World Theory, then, as a "new research programme", the essential pretext for which is the inextricable relationship between language and human experience.

Werth claims not only to be able to account for the stylistics of entire texts, but for the context surrounding their production and interpretation as well. The first level of his Text World Theory is the *discourse world*, or the immediate situation surrounding one speaker or writer and one or more listeners or readers. The sentient beings at this level are known as the *participants* and are crucial to the very nature of the discourse world. This is to say that immediate situations are not simply a collection of entities at a certain place and time, but rather "states of affairs conceived of by participants" (Werth 1995:50). Furthermore, Werth (ms:87) argues that "situations do not occur in a conceptual vacuum, they are given their conceptual status by an act of human will". The experiential basis of Text World Theory hinges on this basic premise and Werth states that all discourse worlds are consciously and purposefully initiated.

All the elements of the discourse world, along with the linguistic and conceptual processes contained within it, are regulated by a set of meta-principles. Werth (ms:53) refers to these as "the principles of discourse". Explicitly, they are:

(i)   communicativeness …
         discourses should normally be assumed to be purposive, and
         to be efficient in prosecuting their purposes …

(ii)   coherence …
         except in pathological cases, entities, events and

propositions are not introduced into the Common Ground (see below) superfluously …

(iii)   co-operativeness …
the participants in a discourse tacitly agree to jointly negotiate a CG as efficiently as is consistent with the other principles. Part of this efficiency comes from a joint understanding of the role of each entity in the CG … (Werth ms:53-54).

The discourse world participants are involved in the joint and deliberate negotiation of what Werth calls Common Ground. This involves the construction of a *text world* in which propositions are advanced and make complete sense. Common Ground, then, constitutes all those propositions expressed during the discourse together with any propositions evoked from general or mutual knowledge. This information store "is no less than *all* the knowledge available in principle and in fact to the whole human race" (Werth ms:122). Werth (ms:122) admits "small wonder, then, that so many people have fought shy of attempting to deal with the notion in any systematic or methodical way", but claims that such reluctance is misguided. Werth stresses that the negotiation of Common Ground is *text-driven*. From the vast personal and cultural knowledge the participants bring with them to the language event, along with all those elements manifest to them in the immediate situation, it is the *text world* that they jointly construct which will enable them to discern and activate those areas of knowledge *necessary* for the discourse to make sense.

Text worlds, then, are conceptual spaces which, as I have already mentioned, bear some resemblance to Fauconnier's mental spaces. Text worlds are also deictic spaces, defined initially by the discourse itself and specifically by all the deictic and referential elements in it. These deictic and referential elements Werth calls *world-building elements*. World-builders denote the basic deictic arrangement of the text world and can be seen to provide some sense of setting, including time, place and characters. What the text is actually "about" is composed of *function-advancing propositions*. These relate to the actions, events or arguments involving the entities present in the text world, as well as any predications made about them. Werth claims that all the levels of his Text World Theory are constitutionally equivalent, which means that the structure of the text world is fundamentally similar to that of the

discourse world. The structure of the final level of Text World Theory, the *sub-world*, is thus essentially equivalent to that of the text world from which it springs.

Sub-worlds, then, contain the same rich deictic and referential detail as text worlds. They occur for a variety of reasons and, in basic terms, are of three types:

- *Deictic sub-worlds* constitute departures from the basic deictic arrangement of the text world. They are based on a variation of the world-building parameters of time, location and entity. Deictic sub-worlds are also often temporal, as in flashbacks, and can include spatial alternations of the "meanwhile, back at the ranch" variety, which act as windows onto other scenes.

- *Attitudinal sub-worlds* cover the conceptual areas of desire, belief and purpose. Their world-building elements are such predicates as *wish, want* and *hope* and relate to notions entertained by protagonists.

- *Epistemic sub-worlds* occur when characters express modalised propositions. The boundary between epistemic and attitudinal sub-worlds is rather fuzzy, but Werth claims that epistemic sub-worlds cover any instance of remoteness or hypotheticality, including reported speech and conditionals.

Werth also makes a further distinction between participant-accessible sub-worlds, which are initiated by one of the participants (namely the author in written communication), and character-accessible sub-worlds, which are initiated by characters. Werth emphasises that participant initiated sub-worlds are still bound by his "principles of discourse". If a character erects a sub-world, however, in recalling a memory for example, the information given cannot be accepted as a reliable insight into the text world as the character only *inhabits* that level rather than being responsible for it. Any departures initiated by characters are unpredictable and irrecoverable by the reader as, unlike the text world, character initiated sub-worlds are remote rather than negotiated.

3   THE ABSURD WORLDS OF BILLY PILGRIM

Billy Pilgrim is the central protagonist of *Slaughterhouse 5*. He serves as a chaplain's assistant in the United States Army during World War Two and witnesses the destruction of Dresden as a prisoner of war. It is a little-known fact that more people died during the Allied bombing of Dresden than died at Hiroshima. In Vonnegut's fictionalised account, Billy Pilgrim survives. He is being held in an underground meat locker, from which the novel takes its title, and the morning after the raid Billy and his fellow prisoners are put to work excavating and burying corpses. Billy is also "unstuck in time" and leaps from decade to decade throughout the narrative; from his

childhood in New York, to Dresden in 1945, to the planet Tralfamadore, where he is put in a zoo by the planet's inhabitants to mate with the beautiful movie starlet, Montana Wildhack.

I would like to begin by discussing the opening of *Slaughterhouse 5*. The text world of Chapter One is the novel's first oddity. It exists outside the central narrative as an apparently autobiographical account of the text's origins. Vonnegut describes his meeting with an old war buddy, Bernard O'Hare, and the promise he made to O'Hare's wife, Mary, to write *Slaughterhouse 5* as an unglamourised account of war without a part for Frank Sinatra or John Wayne. The text world of the main narrative is not constructed until Chapter Two, the opening of which looks like this:

> *LISTEN:*
>
> *BILLY PILGRIM* has come unstuck in time.
> Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his
> wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out
> another one in 1941. He as gone back through that door to find
> himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he
> says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.
> He says.
> Billy is spastic in time, has not control over where he is going next,
> and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage
> fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is
> going to have to act in next (Vonnegut 1969:17).

Using Werth's framework, a diagram can be drawn of the initial narrative structure of *Slaughterhouse 5* (Figure 1, below), which basically comprises a text world within a text world. The text world of Chapter One has the United States in 1967 as its basic setting and contains the narrator, Bernard O'Hare and Mary O'Hare as characters.

The text world of Chapter Two, on the other hand, contains only Billy Pilgrim in an unknown location, unstuck in time.

TEXT WORLD FOR CHAPTER ONE

World-building elements:

      time   1967

      location   United States

      characters narrator, Bernard O'Hare, Mary O'Hare

Function-advancing propositions:

narrator

   ↓

meets Bernard O'Hare →old war buddy

   ↓

makes primise to Mary O'Hare

   ↓

goes away to

> ## INITIAL TEXT WORLD FOR MAIN NARRATIVE
>
> **World-building elements:**
>
>   **time**   unstuck
>
>   **location**   unknown
>
>   **characters** Billy Pilgrim
>
> **Function-advancing propositions:**
>
> Billy Pilgrim→unstuck in time
>
>   ↓
>
> goes through a door in 1955.
>
>   ↓
>
> comes out in 1941
>
>   ↓
>
> comes out again in 1963

Figure 1. The Initial Narrative Structure of *Slaughterhouse 5*

To return to the text of Chapter Two, there are two particularly striking stylistic features in evidence in these opening paragraphs; modality and temporal structure. These features will form the focus for discussion for the remainder of this paper. I will return to a discussion of modality in *Slaughterhouse 5* in due course, but firstly I want to look at the representation of time, both in Chapter Two and throughout the rest of the text.

As I have already mentioned, the opening chapters of *Slaughterhouse 5* introduce the reader into two separate text worlds, one of which exists outside the main structure of the novel and the other which forms the central fictional narrative. The initial text world of the main narrative contains the character Billy Pilgrim, who we have been told is experiencing some difficulties with time, in a so-far unknown location. The reader is then given a brief description of Billy's personal and family history, from his birth in 1922, through until 1968, when he sends a letter to the Ilium *News Leader* describing his meeting with the Tralfamadorians. The narrative then switches back to 1944 and describes a series of chronological incidents that happened to Billy during his service in Europe. Billy then travels forwards in time again to 1967, where he wakes up as an optometrist and asks himself, "Where did all the years go?"

Under Werth's model, these frequent temporal alternations can be classed as deictic sub-worlds, occurring as a result of a variation in the basic deictic arrangement of the text world. On the surface, this category appears to account for Billy's temporal dilemma and the subsequent disruption in narrative chronology quite adequately.

However, a closer analysis of the initial text world of *Slaughterhouse 5* reveals that, in the Absurd world of Billy Pilgrim, things aren't always so simple. As shown in Figure 1, the text world of Chapter Two lacks one crucial world-building element, namely that of *time*. In the majority of canonical literature, to which Werth limits his own applications of Text World Theory, deictic sub-worlds can be seen to flash backwards or forwards from a text world with specific temporal co-ordinates. This would probably explain why Werth chooses the term *sub-world*, which suggests some sort of world-hierarchy within his model. Time in *Slaughterhouse 5,* though, is *unstuck*, and there is no sense of a central event time to which all other temporal alternations can be seen as subordinate. Billy Pilgrim's time leaps, then, are not so much flashbacks or flashforwards as *flash-arounds*. Indeed, the entire text of *Slaughterhouse 5* is made up of deictic alternations, all of which have an equal status within the narrative. These might, therefore, be more accurately described under Cathy Emmott's (1997) model of narrative

comprehension, which uses the considerably less evaluative term *frame switch* to refer to variations in the temporal focus of a narrative. The significance of *Slaughterhouse 5*'s temporal oddities is further emphasised once it becomes evident that time is thematic, as well as structural, concern within the novel. The following passage describes the way Billy's friends, the Tralfamadorians, view time, particularly in relation to mortality:

> "When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition at that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments. Now, when I hear myself say that somebody is dead, I simply shrug my shoulders and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is "So it goes" (Vonnegut 1969:20).

The Tralfamadorians help Billy to understand time and existence from a truly objective perspective and, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that he has adopted a new way of seeing. This is perhaps most evident in the extract below, probably the most famous, and certainly the most imitated, sequence in *Slaughterhouse 5*. Billy is at home in 1967. It is late at night and he cannot sleep. He begins watching a war film on the television, only Billy sees the entire story in reverse:

> American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards, sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen. They did the same for wrecked American bombers on the ground, and those planes flew up backwards to join the information.

> The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes. The containers were stored neatly in racks. The Germans below had miraculous devices of their own, which were long steel tubes. They used them to suck more fragments from the crewmen and planes. But there were still a few wounded Americans, though, and some of the bombers were in bad repair. Over France, though, German fighters came up again, made everything and everybody as good as new.

> When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals. Touchingly, it was mainly women who did this work. The minerals were then shipped to specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground, to hide them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again (Vonnegut 1969:53-54).

By the end of the novel, it also becomes evident that the *narrator* shares the Tralfamadorian perspective on life, the universe and nothingness, too. I will return to this point later in the paper.

For the moment, though, I would like to return to the opening paragraphs of Chapter Two, and the second Absurd feature of *Slaughterhouse 5,* namely its modality. The text under analysis is reproduced for a second time, below, for the reader's convenience:

> LISTEN:
>
> BILLY PILGRIM has come unstuck in time.
>
> Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.
>
> He says.
>
> Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next (Vonnegut 1969:17).

What is interesting about the modality of this passage is that, having begun an apparently neutral presentation of Billy Pilgrim's predicament, the narrator qualifies the report by subordinating the information to the reporting clause "he says". This is repeated in the next sentence, which is further emphasised by its graphological isolation. The effect of this qualification is to create considerable epistemic distance between the narrator and Billy Pilgrim. A similar technique has been identified by Paul Simpson (1993) in another Absurd novel, Samuel Beckett's *Molloy.* Following Roger Fowler (1986), Simpson identifies numerous "words of estrangement" within Molloy's narrative, which render the epistemic modality of the text unstable and emphasise Molloy's uncertainty and alienation. In *Slaughterhouse 5*, this epistemic distancing is abundant and occurs most frequently following descriptions of emotionally disturbing events. The following description of the allied bombing of Dresden is a typical example:

> Billy thought hard about the effect the quartet had had on him, and then found an association with an experience he had had long ago. He did not travel back in time to the experience. He remembered it shimmeringly - as follows:
>
> He has down in the meat locker on the night that Dresden was destroyed. There were sounds like giant footsteps above. Those were sticks of high-explosive bombs. The giants walked and walked. The meat locker was a very safe shelter. All that happened down there was an occasional shower of calcimine. The Americans and four of their guards and a few dressed carcasses were down there, and nobody else. The rest of the guards had, before the raid began, gone to the comforts of their own homes in Dresden. They were all being killed with their families.
>
> So it goes.

> The girls that Billy had seen naked were all begin killed, too, in a much shallower shelter in another part of the stockyards.
>
> So it goes.
>
> A guard would go to the head of the stairs every so often to see what it was like outside, then he would come down and whisper to the other guards. There was a firestorm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn.
>
> It wasn't safe to come out of the shelter until noon the next day. When the Americans and their guards did come out, the sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everyone in the neighbourhood was dead.
>
> So it goes (Vonngegut 1969:129).

"So it goes" is used again and again in *Slaughterhouse 5* (exactly one hundred times during the course of the novel), always following emotive narrative and always with the same distancing effect. The following extract is a further, chilling example:

> At each place was a safety razor, a washcloth, a package of razor blades, a chocolate bar, two cigars, a bar of soap, ten cigarettes, a book of matches, a pencil, and a candle.
>
> Only the candles and the soap were of German origin. They had a ghostly, opalescent similarity. The British had no way of knowing it, but the candles and soap were made from the fat of rendered Jews and Gypsies and fairies and communists, and other enemies of the state.
>
> So it goes.

The phrase even follows the description of Billy Pilgrim's own death:

> At that moment, Billy's high forehead is in the cross hairs of a high-powered laser gun. It is aimed at him from the darkened press box. In the next moment, Billy Pilgrim is dead. So it goes (Vonnegut 1969:104).

To focus on the description of the bombing of Dresden, though, the application of Text World Theory provides an additional explanation of how the estranging effect of *Slaughterhouse 5* operates on a cognitive level.

As Billy remembers his experience during the war, a sub-world is constructed which is both deictic and attitudinal in nature, as it is both a temporal and spatial alternation and a representation of Billy's inner thoughts. According to Werth, attitudinal sub-worlds give the reader vital information about characters' personalities and allow us to develop empathetic relationships with textual entities. In *Slaughterhouse 5,* though, these relationships are never allowed to flourish as the narrator undermines any emotive revelations with the reductive, "So it goes". This phrase, of course, reflects the Tralfamadorian view of time and death and thus represents a way of seeing that is literally alien to the reader. In Werth's terms, the sub-world

relating to Billy's memories effectively collapses in on itself, negating the insight into Billy's mind that its construction had provisionally offered.

I would argue that the narrator's interjection of "so it goes" at the end of such disturbing descriptions forces the reader to carry out what Cathy Emmott 1997) has called *frame repair,* or a total re-evaluation of one's understanding of the preceding text. Emmott's own discussion of the process of frame repair focuses mainly on isolated instances when readers may misread textual cues to the point of confusion. Emmott argues that this may be the result of inattentive reading or of "conflicting signals" within the text (1997:160). In either case readers re-interpret, and perhaps even re-read, the confusing text and replace what Emmott calls the "erroneous frame" with the "correct frame" (1997:162). A similar process seems to be at work within *Slaughterhouse 5.* However,

Vonnegut's narrative is made all the more disorientating by the fact that "erroneous frames" make up the majority of the novel. *Slaughterhouse 5* is almost entirely constructed from sub-worlds, the stability of which are continuously undermined by an unco-operative narrator with an unnerving Tralfamadorian philosophy on human existence. The reader is prevented from building an empathetic relationship with the main character which, together with the narrative's chronic temporal disruption, results in disorientation and uncertainty. Yet, the more one reads of *Slaughterhouse 5*, the more it becomes obvious that the "correct frames" relating to Billy Pilgrim's inner thoughts are to remain elusive. The reader is initially required to employ massive cognitive effort as they familiarise themselves with an apparently "difficult" narrative style (a term often used to describe Absurd novels intuitively in literary criticism) but eventually he or she becomes accustomed to the troublesome narrator and the limits he places on the reader's relationship with the novel's main character.

The narrator of *Slaughterhouse 5* constructs his readers to be as accepting of Tralfamadorian philosophy as Billy Pilgrim. The narrative leaps from decade to decade, presenting subjects as diverse and complex as world wars and aliens without ever providing a solid explanation or an earnest personality for the reader to latch onto. But so it goes. The illogical and confused structure of the narrative thus mirrors the Absurd thematic concerns of the story itself, as the reader, like Billy, is cast adrift in an alien world without form or reason.

4   CONCLUSION

The application of Text World Theory adds a cognitive twist to our understanding both of modality and the representation of time in narrative. It provides a unique insight not only into

the Absurd worlds of Billy Pilgrim, but also into the textual mechanics of Absurd literature as a whole. Although Werth's model is not without its flaws and, in this instance, has benefited from the addition of particular aspects of Cathy Emmott's model of narrative comprehension, further development of Werth's framework in the future should enable clear boundaries to be drawn around what has previously remained an ill-defined semi-genre, towards a comprehensive stylistics of the Absurd.

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