

The Caribbean region and the American literature: Kurt Vonnegut's "Cat's Cradle"

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The historical stages of relations between the United States and the Caribbean region since 1950 have been the first stage, the Cold War era, when fear of communism and security issues shaped U.S. policy, and the second, the post—cold War period, when the strategic importance of the region declined and the attention shifted to new challenges [3].

This was essential for Americans' perception of the Caribbean. Along with the American identity, there could be an understanding of oneself as a citizen of the world, which made people see the conflict not only as a confrontation between superpowers, but also as a threat to all mankind. The Caribbean crisis demonstrated how people construct their identities depending on the situation. Some Americans showed mono—identity - their emotions and values were focused on belonging to the United States, which was expressed in a strong sense of pride in the country, support for Kennedy's policies, or a negative attitude towards Khrushchev. Others, on the contrary, demonstrated multi—identity, combining national and global values - along with patriotism, they felt responsible for the fate of all mankind, which led to a more balanced perception of the conflict and even empathy for Soviet citizens. Thus, the response to the crisis ranged from fierce opposition to the desire for dialogue, from nationalist sentiments to awareness of the common threat and the need for peace[4].

Kurt Vonnegut, an American by birth, was distinguished, however, by his penchant for analysis, devoid of the blindness of prejudice. He was a vibrant and revolutionary voice of 20th-century American counterculture. Initially writing plays, essays, and short stories, he achieved true fame for his novels, which were particularly prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. Among his works, *Cat's Cradle* (1963) is particularly notable—a book imbued with sharp sarcasm, irony, and a spirit of parody that left a significant mark on literature and culture[2].

Kurt Vonnegut's "Cat's Cradle" presents the Caribbean context as a metaphor for American empire and the absurd. The first noticeable thing is the name of the book. *Cat's Cradle* is a game played with a circle of string wrapped around the player's fingers. The player or players manipulate the string by looping, changing, and arranging it to create shapes. A number of players pass the string back and forth between their hands. That is another sign of Vonnegut's irony. The person holding the string can do whatever he wants with it. This represents, on one hand, if we consider the plot substantively, the consequences of one person's decisions for all of humanity, and, on the other hand, the permissiveness of the United States on the world political stage.

San Lorenzo, the arena of the events described, is not just an exotic backdrop. It is a symbol of colonial heritage, political instability and cultural colonization. The island is populated by poor, deceived people living under a dictatorship, but comforted by a false religion (Bokononism), which is essentially a response to the despair caused by American capitalism. The main character, John, an American writer, is a typical archetype of an American observer who considers himself neutral, but in fact is part of the "imperial machine." He comes to the island as part of a study of the family history of the scientist Felix Honnikker, who was involved in the creation of a

bomb and the development of the substance "ice 9", capable of freezing all the water on the Earth. "Ice-9" is a metaphor for American science, torn from the ethical framework, creating a threat capable of destroying and, eventually, destroying not only the island, but the whole world. The Caribbean region here is the first victim of American technological imperialism. Vonnegut shows how American "rationality" leads to disaster on the periphery. The writer uses the Caribbean region as a mirror of American moral degradation, showing the lack of recognition of its sovereignty by the United States, which entails a lack of security guarantees for the population [1].

In American literature, the Caribbean region is not just a backdrop — it is a critical mirror that reflects all the manifestations of the despotic nature of the United States. Kurt Vonnegut's "Cat's Cradle" becomes more than a geographical location—it functions as a symbolic space where the contradictions of American power, technological progress, and moral responsibility are exposed. Through satire and irony, Kurt Vonnegut demonstrates how the actions of powerful nations and individuals can shape the fate of smaller regions and, ultimately, the entire world. The fictional island of San Lorenzo embodies the vulnerability of peripheral societies caught in the sphere of influence of global powers, while the invention of Ice-9 represents the dangers of scientific advancement detached from ethical reflection. Thus, Vonnegut's novel reflects broader historical realities of U.S.–Caribbean relations and the anxieties of the Cold War era. By presenting the Caribbean as both a victim and a mirror of American policies, the writer invites readers to question the legitimacy of political dominance, technological arrogance, and the belief in absolute national interests. At the same time, the narrative emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity: decisions made in laboratories, governments, or centers of power inevitably affect people far beyond national borders. Ultimately, «Cat's Cradle» illustrates that literature can reveal the deeper cultural and ideological dimensions of international relations. The novel suggests that the fate of the world may depend on the responsibility—or irresponsibility—of a few individuals, whether scientists, politicians, or citizens. In doing so, Vonnegut reinforces the idea that awareness of global interdependence and ethical responsibility is essential in a world where a single decision can have consequences for all of humanity.

Источники и литература

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