FANTASIES OF AN IMPOSSIBLY HOSPITABLE WORLD:

THE FICTION OF KURT VONNEGUT, Jr.

by

KENNETH J. ROBSON

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1968

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

June, 1972
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of  

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver 8, Canada  

Date  September 20, 1972
ABSTRACT

The six novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. demonstrate a continuing interest in the dilemmas confronting persons whose dreams of individual fulfillment are greatly at odds with the demands made of them as public persons. The protagonists experience the full opposition between the world they imagine and the world they inhabit. They are forced repeatedly to choose between their privately created and publicly imposed roles. They resemble one another in their reluctance to participate in a chaotic and destructive world and in their preference to retreat into fantasy worlds of their own creation. Although each of the fantasies differs from the others in many respects, each is an attempt to provide what Kilgore Trout, one of Vonnegut's fictional characters, refers to as "fantasies of an impossibly hospitable world."

The utopian fantasies include Paul Proteus' desire to retreat to a mythic frontier setting, long since replaced by a technological society; Malachi Constant's dream of reunion with his wife and best friend in an ideal state beyond time; Howard Campbell's refuge in a world of art; Jonah's fascination with Bokononism; Eliot Rosewater's plan to redeem mankind; and Billy Pilgrim's belief that it is possible for man to experience life in a way that renders pain and death meaningless.

The novels offer an apocalyptic view of a world that is determined to destroy itself by any and every means available. If Vonnegut's protagonists seem to offer absurdly ideal remedies for this situation, the reality that Vonnegut describes is no less absurd for being real. The real and imaginary worlds described by Vonnegut are poles apart. Both are extremities, one the result of an insane destructive impulse, the other of an insane creative impulse.
Underlying all of Vonnegut's fictions is a real experience, the fire-bombing of Dresden by the Allies in World War II. It is this terrifyingly real experience that has moved Vonnegut to examine the ideal, or what might have been, in the context of the real, or what is. The paradox which lies at the center of Bokononism is the paradox in each of Vonnegut's novels: "the heartbreaking necessity of lying about reality and the heartbreaking impossibility of lying about it."

A discussion of this paradox involves an examination of Vonnegut's attitude with regard to his protagonists. Vonnegut invites this examination by raising questions about the difficulty of writing fiction in such times as ours, and one can see in the course of the novels a clarification of his position. The conflict between the world we imagine and the world we inhabit has serious implications for the writer.

The novels are discussed in chronological sequence, beginning with Player Piano, his first novel, and ending with his most recent, Slaughterhouse-Five. This appears the most practical method of tracing emerging themes and, particularly, of examining the evolution of the authorial point of view.

Vonnegut offers no reassuring solutions to the problems he examines in his novels. At times his sardonic comments express his bitter disappointment in our collective failure. At other times he expresses the hope that mankind will change and seek a creative course rather than a destructive one. His novels teach us that to accept passively a reality that seeks to destroy life is to demonstrate a failure of the imagination, while to retreat into fantasies which are distant from reality is extremely dangerous. Vonnegut insists upon the continual vigilance of the critical imagination, and an awareness of our limitations as well as our possibilities.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I PLAYER PIANO</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II THE SIRENS OF TITAN</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III MOTHER NIGHT</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV CAT'S CRADLE</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI SLAUGHTERHOUSE - FIVE</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One paradox, however, must be accepted and this is that it is necessary to continually attempt the seemingly impossible.

The Journey to the East
Hermann Hesse

And we concern ourselves with the conflict between the deterministic pattern any plot suggests, and the freedom of persons within that plot to choose and so to alter the structure, the relations of beginning, middle, and end.

The Sense of an Ending
Frank Kermode

Candide's melancholy increased, while Martin kept on proving to him that there is little virtue and little happiness in the world, except perhaps in Eldorado, where no one could go.

Candide
Voltaire
INTRODUCTION

With the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1969, Vonnegut has produced six novels and numerous short stories, which were first collected in *Canary in a Cathouse* (1961), and later expanded and reissued in *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968). In addition, a play, *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, has been staged recently in New York and is now a motion picture. 

Vonnegut began writing in 1949, shortly after he returned from the war. His first novel, *Player Piano*, was published in 1952 and was successful enough to encourage Vonnegut to embark upon a second one, *The Sirens of Titan*, which did not appear until 1959. During the period extending from his return from the war to the publication of his second novel, he held many jobs, some of which he describes in the first chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. At the same time, he published slick magazine stories, intended to "finance the writing of the novels," as he says in the Preface to *Welcome to the Monkey House*.

The novels, then, comprise Vonnegut's major artistic achievement and warrant the closest critical study. In recent years he has published fewer short stories, but he has produced one novel nearly every two years. *Mother Night* appeared in 1961,
followed by *Cat's Cradle* in 1963, and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* in 1965. In each of these novels, beginning with *Player Piano* and culminating in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, it is possible to trace the development of a major concern. In each of the novels Vonnegut examines man's predilection for inventing patterns which seek to make explicable the otherwise random and uncertain movements of human destiny.

"Earthlings are the great explainers, explaining why this event is structured as it is, telling how other events may be achieved or avoided." This version of human behaviour is offered to Billy Pilgrim by a Tralfamadorian who, with his ability to visit any moment in Time, past, present, or future, cannot understand why Earthlings insist upon explaining each action as though it were a part of some grand design. There is, the Tralfamadorian assures Billy, no coherent pattern which can satisfy the human desire to perceive beginnings, middles, and ends. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Earth have devoted a great deal of their existence to the invention of patterns. Man is, according to Vonnegut, an inveterate pattern-builder who invents elaborate models which he believes explain the random occurrences in his world. He can never be satisfied with events as they occur; he seeks to interpret them always as a part of some larger pattern.
Near the beginning of *Cat's Cradle* Jonah announces: "I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on Earth we, collectively, have been up to." He discovers that we have been involved in inventing patterns of a religious, political, and social nature. These patterns serve a number of purposes, some of which are harmful while others are beneficial. Patterns which are harmful are those whose aims are the control or destruction of human life. Patterns which are beneficial are those whose aims are the encouragement of life and the acquisition of knowledge which furthers this end. Others, like the meaningless institutions, or granfalloons, to which people like Hazel Crosby subscribe, are merely ridiculous.

There is a noticeable similarity between the invention of patterns and the creation of fictions. As a writer, Vonnegut is himself a pattern-builder. As a novel like *The Sirens of Titan* demonstrates, he is capable of constructing elaborate designs. He is also quite distrustful of the ability of any pattern to satisfy our curiosity about the nature of our existence. His fictions are of value because they explore the possibilities of living within the patterns we construct. In evaluating these various patterns, including his own fictions, he seeks to arrive at a proper estimation of their place in our lives. In the interest of remaining faithful to reality, Vonnegut does what many of his characters fail to do: he measures the
created fiction against the apparent facts. He stands with his characters amidst the confusion of life and, from his place "in the middest", he seeks to understand what motivates men to create patterns and what assistance they can be in living:

Men in the middest make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle... But they also, when awake and sane, feel the need to show a marked respect for things as they are; so that there is a recurring need for adjustment in the interest of reality as of control. 4

It is just this sanity, this necessary acknowledgement of reality, that is lacking in the designs of people like Kroner in Player Piano (1952) and Senator Rosewater in God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater (1965).

Since there is no single, undisputed authority which can sanction the correct patterns, society frequently contains numerous competing patterns. It is into such a society that Vonnegut's protagonists enter. Through no choice of their own they become the inheritors of societies which they did not create and which satisfy none of their desires. In each novel the protagonist discovers that he is in a world which, like the "canvas" of Rosewater County, already contains "some bold designs". 5 Paul Proteus, Malachi Constant, Eliot
Rosewater, and Billy Pilgrim literally inherit their positions, the first three from their fathers, the fourth from his father-in-law. Although the paternal heritage is not as explicit in the other two novels, the principle of inheritance applies there as well. In each case the inadequacy of the social pattern forces the individual to withdraw from co-operative involvement in it. The protagonists create imaginary schemes which range from the utopian fantasies of Paul Proteus, to Malachi Constant's dream of reunion with his wife and his best friend, to the romantic and exclusivist fantasy of Howard Campbell, to the saving lie of Bokonon, to the inclusive fantasy of Eliot Rosewater, to the final fantasies of transport through Time and Space of Billy Pilgrim. Each of these fantasies, although in many ways different from one another, share the common feature of concern with the construction of a hospitable world.

The failure to achieve a utopian society in reality frequently forces the protagonists to share Kilgore Trout's "fantasies of an impossibly hospitable world." 6 This tension between involvement in society and reality and retreat into the world of the imagination or fantasy is the principal concern of each of the novels. Each of the six protagonists represents one aspect of this dilemma and, taken together, they are the expression of Vonnegut's desire to mediate between individual needs and social responsibility and between illusion and reality.
The illusions men create provide a defence against the power of reality. As such, they are both necessary and dangerous, and Vonnegut is aware of this problem. The paradox at the center of Bokononist thought is the one which Vonnegut explores in each of his novels: "the heartbreaking necessity of lying about reality, and the heartbreaking impossibility of lying about it." Each of the major characters, beginning with Paul Proteus and concluding with Billy Pilgrim, attempts in some way to resolve this paradox, each with only limited success. Reality can, indeed must, be lied about; there is, however, a danger that such lies may totally divorce the individual from reality. Finally, the nature of reality is so strong, particularly in Vonnegut's apocalyptic fictions, that it threatens to overwhelm all attempts to lie about it. Life is a "duty-dance with death," Vonnegut claims, and he seems to agree with the statement which he quotes from Céline's *Death on the Installment Plan* in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, that "The truth is death." Frank Kermode addresses the same problem in *The Sense of an Ending*:

Fictions in the end fail under the pressure of what James is said, in his last words, to have called 'at last, the real distinguished thing'. ... The free imagination makes endless plots on reality, attempts to make our proportionals convenient for our equations in
everything; our common sense makes us see that without paradox and contradiction our parables will be too simple for a complex poverty, too consolatory to console. Our study, like Richard's, must have a certain complexity and a sense of failure. 'I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer it out,' he says. 9

The illusions are unsatisfactory, yet Vonnegut convinces the reader of the attractiveness of these hopelessly ideal visions of existence.

While the six novels develop this major preoccupation with establishing a satisfactory view of the world, they are not static. There is a noticeable progression from the earliest explorations of Player Piano to the culminating ones of Slaughterhouse-Five. Each novel develops implications of previous ones, and the examinations of the complex relationship between illusion and reality become more penetrating. The development which is evident in Vonnegut's novels is not, however, a purely linear one; that is, he does not resolve the paradox of having to lie about reality while finding it impossible to do so. He is, in Slaughterhouse-Five, as troubled by the paradox as he is in any other novel. The novels develop in the sense that they analyze various implications for those who seek to resolve this paradox for themselves. Vonnegut also develops a clearer awareness of his own relationship to the fictions he creates. Throughout
there is evident the mind behind the novels, the man who him-
self creates fictions and who employs a "clerkly skepticism" about the value of fictions in a world in which he is con-
fronted by the immediate pressure of reality. In Vonnegut's novels reality takes the form of massacres like the fire-
bombing of Dresden and the Nazi atrocities, of physical and spiritual poverty, sickness, and just "plain old death."

'Vonnegut's fictions, and particularly his later ones, are marked by their obsession with the imminent annihilation of the species. The twin spectres of freezing and burning pervade the last three novels. Death is a major feature of the landscape of reality and it is very difficult for Vonnegut's protagonists to avoid this threat to their existence. A feeling of urgency is transmitted through the novels, particularly through the compressed and consciously disjointed style of the later ones. Time, which is present as a theme in most of the novels, becomes increasingly important.

Each of Vonnegut's protagonists is limited by his temporal situation; that is, he is forced to view life always from his position "in the middest". He cannot transcend the limitations of his position. However, he can construct a world in the imagination which is free from the exigencies of the material world. He can project a view of the world in which there is no need to search the past for evidence of a meaningful
beginning nor probe the uncertain future for a significant end to human endeavour. The attempt to provide an imaginary world is a feature of the illusions shared by most of Vonnegut's protagonists, but it is carried to its furthest extreme in the figure of Billy Pilgrim. Frequently, it is expressed as a desire to return to Eden. Such an attempt is the result of a desire to create, in Richard Poirier's phrase, "a world elsewhere", where beginnings are consonant with ends, where human contradictions are resolved, where love is relieved of its need to exploit another human being, where friendship and brotherhood are realizable and attainable goals, where men can survey "the frontiers of their Utopia" and realize in its conception a common agreement on aims and programs. This wish to discover an alternative to the unsatisfying way in which society organizes itself, which Poirier isolates in several representative nineteenth-century American writers, can be seen as a feature of the novels of Vonnegut as well. It is Vonnegut's resolve to make of his novels crucibles for the mingling of illusion and reality that marks him as a writer committed to the creation of a possible world without losing sight of the real one.

Vonnegut involves himself increasingly in the dilemmas which his protagonists face. In the earlier novels he remains safely hidden behind the fictions he creates. He stands apart
from his creations, and observes from a fairly detached point of view. Although it would be foolish to chart novel by novel the movement from juggler to juggled, something of a progression can be seen. In the first two novels, Player Piano (1952) and The Sirens of Titan (1959), Vonnegut's delight in creating fictions and parodying the fictions of others is evident. In Mother Night (1961) he assumes the task of "editing" the Confessions of Howard Campbell. In the novels which follow Mother Night the tendency towards identification with his characters increases. Both Jonah of Cat's Cradle and Eliot Rosewater of God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater are writers.

Vonnegut's self-consciousness about creating fictions becomes increasingly important in his novels. He seems to become gradually aware that he shares with his fictional characters the problems attendant upon the use of fictions. Finally, in Slaughterhouse-Five, Vonnegut identifies himself as both the juggler and the juggled. In this novel, more than in any previous one, he attempts to separate as nearly as he can the fiction from the fact. He appears as a character in the novel, a fellow traveller with Billy Pilgrim, and the teller of the tale. This novel represents Vonnegut's most serious attempt to examine the possibilities of fiction, to demarcate its boundaries, to assess its advantages, and to consider its disadvantages.
Vonnegut's awareness of the numerous resources of fiction is reflected in his repeated references and allusions to other literary fictions both actual and invented, and in references to factual material such as historical records, manuscripts, magazines, and so on, again, both actual and invented. Among the many literary fictions which he employs, Vonnegut appears, from the outset, to have been especially attracted to the story of Jonah and the Whale. Each of Vonnegut's protagonists is enlisted in the service of some agent who requires that he deliver an urgent message of great importance. The man whose aid is solicited becomes, like Jonah, the helpless victim of powers beyond his control. Vonnegut's personal experience as an infantry scout in the war may have impressed upon him how persistent are patterns that are concerned with the delivery of important messages. Some messages, however, are more important than others. Most of Vonnegut's protagonists are searching for the correct message to bear to mankind. The desperate search for meaning and purpose, so frequently a theme in Vonnegut's novels, leads him to a consideration of the implications of the story of Job and, particularly, to Melville's treatment of this story in Moby-Dick. In Cat's Cradle Vonnegut makes explicit his concern with Melville's theme.

Although no other American writer is alluded to as
specifically as is Melville in *Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut is evidently indebted to others as well. Mark Twain's explorations of the complex relationship between illusion and reality, especially in his later works, appear to have had an influence on Vonnegut. Particularly relevant are *The Mysterious Stranger* and the "dream of disaster" tale to which Twain gave the working title, "Which Was the Dream?" Twain's preoccupation with the imminent disaster that could be caused by a huge conflagration parallels a similar concern on the part of Vonnegut.  

There is a temptation to satisfy the human urge to perceive coherent patterns and to say that *Slaughterhouse-Five* is the end of experiments begun twenty years earlier with *Player Piano*. There is some evidence for such a view. The final novel is the one Vonnegut felt he would write first, since it is the report of his participation in the war. It took him twenty years, however, during which time he wrote novels which prepared him for the writing of this one novel. Also, in recent interviews, Vonnegut has expressed dissatisfaction with writing. Whether or not Vonnegut continues to produce fiction, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is as convenient and as necessary a place to conclude a discussion of the six novels as *Player Piano* is to begin such a discussion.
It is only through the medium of the imagination that we can lessen those iron fetters, which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even partially sensible what prisoners we are.

_The New Adam and Eve_
_Nathaniel Hawthorne_

... Yet this time it was as though the train (and not only the train but himself, not only his vision which had seen it and his memory which remembered it but his clothes too, as garments carry back into the clean edgeless blowing of air the lingering effluvium of a sick-room or of death) had brought with it into the doomed wilderness even before the actual axe the shadow and portent of the new mill not even finished yet and the rails and ties which were not even laid; and he knew now what he had known as soon as he saw Hoke's this morning but had not yet thought into words: why Major de Spain had not come back, and that after his time he himself, who had to see it one time other, would return no more.

_The Bear_
_William Faulkner_
CHAPTER I

PLAYER PIANO

Vonnegut's first novel, Player Piano (1952), is set in the future and describes a totally automated society, the symbol of which is a player piano. This device for producing music automatically and without human intervention is an appropriate symbol for a novel whose central concern is the desire to create efficient patterns. Ilium is the result of one such attempt to create an organized society based upon the efficiency and predictability of machines which operate in the same manner as a player piano. Neatly subdivided into three sections, Ilium resembles a smoothly operating machine.

This society, which is the result of an emphasis on organization and efficiency, is perfect in every way except one: there is no place in such a system for human beings. Ironically, the men who have created such a dehumanized society become the victims of their own patterns. Through their participation in the construction of a materialistic utopia,
the inhabitants of the Homestead section of Ilium have brought about their enslavement and have condemned themselves to live hopelessly uneventful and mediocre existences. Frustration leads these people to construct fantasies for themselves which allow them some measure of escape from reality. In this respect the Homesteaders anticipate characters in later novels, particularly the hapless San Lorenzans in *Cat's Cradle*.

Reliance upon fictions is not restricted to the Homesteaders alone. The managers and engineers rely upon the fiction about the Spirit of the Meadows as the opposing group of revolutionaries rely upon the fiction about the Ghost Shirt Society. The protagonist, Paul Proteus, is involved in nearly all of these fictions. As the manager of the Ilium Works, Proteus participates in the games at the Meadows. As a sympathizer with the revolutionaries, he eventually becomes involved in the meetings of the Ghost Shirt Society. As an individual, he shares many of the personal fantasies of the Homesteaders.

As his name suggests, Paul Proteus represents the potential for change. Like his namesake, he also has the ability to alter his shape easily, but this proves to be both a strength and a weakness. Although he recognizes the need for change, he has no coherent proposals for the
future. At one point in the novel, he reflects "that the big trouble, really, was finding something to believe in". He does have some vaguely formed dreams of a utopia but, because he is committed to no particular program, he is in a position to be manipulated by others.

Proteus is caught in a pattern which is not of his making. He has wealth and security as well as the promise of continued advancement in a society that seems to will his success despite his personal reluctance to advance himself. As the son of the founder of the corporation which governs Ilium, Proteus is expected to continue the work of his father. Proteus' dissatisfaction in the first part of the novel, his reluctance to heartily endorse the corporate dream of a utopia, initiates the tension upon which the novel is built.

Vonnegut demonstrates the similarity between Proteus' predicament -- he is confined by the Ilium Works and the massive corporation of which it is a part -- and that of the cat who inadvertently strays into the Works in one of the novel's early scenes. The cat responds to the factory with the uninhibited instinct of an animal recoiling in defense against the engulfing power of the machinery. The cat's rebellion and the futility of his attempts to stand and fight the machine or to flee from it prefigure Proteus' later
rebellion. The cat flees from the Works but, in the attempt to escape, is electrocuted. "She dropped to the asphalt — dead and smoking, but outside" (21). While Proteus sees through the thinly veiled power structure of the Works and the network of people who perpetuate its dominance, and while he recognizes the need to be free of its control, his problem is just that of the cat: how to find one's way outside without ending up "dead and smoking".

Proteus' movements are confined symbolically by the protective fence which encloses the Works. In the final scenes of the novel, he is literally confined by the wall of government troops which surrounds Ilium. Proteus is also inside in another respect; he responds to the system from within as the Shah of Bratpuhr responds from without. The juxtaposition of the stories of these two men forms one of the principal technical devices of the novel. Although Proteus and the Shah never meet, their situations complement one another. Just as Proteus stands between the opposing figures of Kroner and Finnerty, so the Shah stands between two interpreters, Halyard and his nephew, Miasma Khashdrahr. The structural device of offering several versions of a similar situation, in this as well as in other novels, points to Vonnegut's concern with the competition between systems. Proteus
and the Shah are interested in change and are further interested in finding a system or pattern which can assist them in their desire to bring about this change.

Proteus sees clearly what his fellow workers, with the exception of a few dissidents, either do not see or are not willing to see until it is too late to save themselves. The corporate dream of total efficiency (which by a peculiar logic somehow leads to total happiness) means also total automation. The rapidity with which this enslavement has occurred is suggested by the antiquated section of one building which was, in the not too distant past, Thomas Edison's workshop. Proteus' speculation concerning Edison's possible reaction to his converted workshop leads him to the conclusion that Edison would not be greatly surprised by the machines, most of which existed, although in more rudimentary form, during his own lifetime.

The conclusion which Proteus arrives at is an important one because it points to an error the revolutionaries make at the end of the novel. The machines are not of themselves evil; it is the purpose for which the machines are used which is undesirable. Not the materials, but the pattern, is inadequate.

The major feature of life in the Homestead (and, indeed, on the side of the river inhabited by the managers and engineers) is control. In ways both direct and cunningly indirect the hapless victims are manipulated. They are
impressed into either of two militia groups -- the Reeks and Wrecks, or the Army. There is no choice, in effect, since the "soldiers" drill with wooden rifles in an obsolete drill, no more nor less ridiculous than the road construction work undertaken by the Reeks and Wrecks. The soldiers need no real guns since the present organization of society has rendered war an anachronism. These meaningless exercises provide examples of the nature of life in the Homestead. This life is based upon forms that have no meaningful substance. While the modes of escape are seemingly various, they all point to one end, that is, the attempt to flee from the remorseless pressure of futility and lack of purpose. Some escape through barroom fantasies; others, like the young man who interprets music by sight only, distinguish themselves through a singular achievement (although the skills are themselves very minor). Still others feed their imaginations with dreams of what they will do when their years of service are over. Some, like the man who spits in Halyard's face, satisfy themselves with insignificant acts of defiance.

One of the Homesteaders, Edgar R. B. Hagstrohm compensates for his uneventful and superficially happy existence by engaging his imagination with fantasies which are imitations of those supplied by his namesake, Edgar Rice Burroughs. His inability
to satisfy his most basic desires in his fully automated home leads him to entertain greater and greater fantasies of escape to some primitive way of life, but when he does attempt to reject civilization and take his "mate" away to the "jungle" the scene ends in dismal failure. His exploits become a parody of those of his hero, Tarzan. Rejected, he runs mad and naked into the "wilderness" which is, appropriately, a small bird sanctuary to the rear of the housing development.

Hagstrohm's dilemma is shared by several other of Vonnegut's characters, including Paul Proteus. The conflict between his loyalty to his wife and his attraction to the widow has less to do with a desire for a new lover than with a desire for a new life. He represents an acute split between the world of illusion and the world of reality. In such an example, Vonnegut points to the obvious risks incurred when illusion is substituted for reality. One obvious problem facing Hagstrohm is that his illusory world is ill-defined and wildly impractical. There is a certain similarity between Hagstrohm's aborted effort to escape to the primitive wilderness and Proteus' attempt to convince his wife to reject their artificial social position and move to the farmhouse on the Homestead side of the river. (Anita properly belongs with the Homesteaders and Proteus has his influential position as much by inheritance as by merit) Proteus' dream of a possible world
of idyllic happiness is likewise ruined, first by his wife's adamant and hysterical refusal to join him, and later by the realization that the alternative to participation in society existed only in his imagination.

Proteus, like generations of Americans before him, dreams of "a world elsewhere" in which all the contingencies of modern life are replaced by the natural rhythm of the seasons and the simplicity of nature. He imagines how peaceful it would be "To live in a house by the side of a road..." (114). Later, when he formulates his dream more clearly, his thoughts move effortlessly "into the fantasy of the new, good life ahead of him. Somewhere, outside of society, there was a place for a man -- a man and wife -- to live heartily and blamelessly, naturally, by hands and wits" (143). Shortly thereafter, the idea of moving to such a place becomes even more attractive, especially since the alternative is the annual visit to the Meadows, the symbol of an unnatural habitation. "It was a completely isolated backwater, cut off from the boiling rapids of history, society, and the economy. Timeless" (147). The determined effort to escape from the currents of history, society and Time, which Proteus shares with numerous other American fictional heroes, is one shared by Vonnegut's other protagonists. 4

For Proteus the dream of removal from the power of all
forces of change succumbs to the pressure of reality. When he comes in contact with the soil and the farm hand who is to assist him, Proteus is forced to acknowledge the difference between his former idealized notion of the farm and its caretaker and his present confrontation with them as possibly his only reality. A similar clash between the ideal and the real occurs when Proteus compares his imaginative world of bold sea heroes, noble savages, and intrepid pioneers with his futile struggle against society. The fictional world which so attracts Proteus allows its heroes frequent opportunities to engage in meaningful, individual acts. In contrast, his role as manager of the Works enables him to be merely a "captain" at the Meadows and his actions are a part of a comprehensive and pre-arranged pattern. Similarly, his later participation in the revolution has little to do with his fantasies of courageous, independent action.

Proteus' nostalgia for an idyllic past is one shared by many Americans. In a cleverly presented scene, the loquacious barber, Homer Bigley, explains to the Shah who cannot understand a word he is saying:

You know, used to be you could be a pioneer and go out and lead the people and make trails and chase away Indians and all that. Or you could be a cowboy, or all kinds of dangerous things and **still** be a dumb bastard. (198)
The scene is ironic, for if the Shah were able to understand the barber, he would learn more of the indigenous nature of the American character and its desires than Halyard has told him. The barber's speech indicates also that, prior to the advent of the automated society, a man could perform distinguishing acts even though his education and capacity for understanding were limited, but in the present circumstance the only true measure of a man's worth is his intellect.

Those who owe their present positions to the battery of intelligence tests they have succeeded in passing have, like Halyard, a great need to support the system which is the justification for their position, but there is considerable danger in living on such an abstract level, as Halyard discovers. He too easily becomes a victim of the system he supports wholeheartedly and proves that the system is, in the final analysis, of more importance than the numbers it is designed to serve.

The attempt to possess America through the fictional recreation of its historic heroes is not limited to a few individuals. The upper strata of society in Ilium are also concerned with using these historical materials. In a comic scene Vonnegut describes the managers and engineers who retire to the Meadows for the enactment of their annual
initiation into the "Spirit of the Meadows". Actually and symbolically, the men separate from their wives to engage in this masculine endeavour whose central episode involves the oak and the initiation rite by which all the "braves", under the watchful eyes of the "chiefs", pledge allegiance to the Spirit. The man charged with the responsibility of conducting the ceremony is himself a professional actor hired and painted bronze for the occasion. He speaks without remorse of his past and the displacement of his people by the white man who dispatched them expeditiously but, apparently, conveniently to the Happy Hunting Ground. The "Indian" carefully avoids any mention of a struggle between the competing races, an oversight that is important in relation to the struggle which ensues later between the "white man" and the members of the Ghost Shirt Society, itself an old Indian revolutionary organization.

Significantly, the actor is an aging figure himself and proof of the necessity for disguise and pretense at the Meadows, that "vital symbol" of the organization. Vonnegut seems to suggest through the example of the bronze actor that American history is a process of conquest and defeat. The white man was able to control the Indian and, by so doing, deprive him of his patrimony. This victory by the white man has led to a further conquest and defeat — only this time
the victim is the white man and the victor is the machine. The problem, as far as the white man's civilization is concerned, arises from the unwillingness of men like Kroner and Gelhorne (whose vague presence in the novel makes him an appropriate symbol of authority) to accept anything that contradicts their belief that they are creating the best possible future for their society. Their optimistic belief in the perfection of their world through the improvement of the means of production contradicts the facts of the real world, but their ability to manipulate certain patterns and fictions to suit their own ends ensures that their view will predominate. This is an idea to which Vonnegut returns in other novels in which he explores the diverse methods that people employ for interpreting and ordering experience.

As the scene in the Meadows unfolds, the great chasm which separates the ritual from the actuality of the re-enactment widens. Vonnegut's use of ironic juxtaposition renders the entire affair ludicrous. The "braves" pledge allegiance to the Spirit, which is a natural phenomenon, while they are guided by the voice of the loudspeaker, that "spirit" to which they respond automatically like robots to electrical impulses:

"But the spirit of my people lives on, the Spirit of the Meadows. It is everywhere: in the wind through the pines, in the lapping of the great blue water, in
the whir of an eagle wing, in the growl of summer thunder. No man can call this island his, no man can be happy here, who does not harken to the Spirit, who does not take the Oath of the Spirit."

There was the clattering of the switch in the loudspeaker again. "Young braves at the Meadows for the first time step forward," said a pontifical voice, not that of the usual drover. (213)

The juxtaposition of the natural, spontaneous expression and the contrived, mechanical expression occurs also in the image of the eagle which is grotesquely metamorphosed by technology:

"By the lapping of the great blue water, by the whir of the eagle wing--"

The Old Man's plane had skated across the water to the shore on the other side of the island and was roaring its engines as it inched up a ramp onto land.

"By the growl of the summer thunder," said the Indian. (214)

The new eagle of the Meadows is the airplane which carries Gelhorne. In its sound and imposing presence the machine commands attention and obedience.

The neophytes in this scene are exhorted to work "tirelessly for a better world" (214), exactly as they had been encouraged to do by means of the didactic passion play they viewed earlier. The entire life at the Meadows, the spiritual resort for the automatons who participate, is also a microcosm of the world outside. Throughout the day the lives of these men are rigidly controlled. Loudspeakers issue commands
regularly; notices are tacked up in conspicuous places; and games, lectures and plays are all exempla designed for edification.

Proteus has learned to see through the self-delusion and hypocrisy of "the men at the head of the procession of civilization, the openers of doors to undreamed-of new worlds" (212). Frustration, arising from his ability to discredit one dream of a utopia without being able to conceive of an alternative, leads Proteus to consider suicide. He has reached an impasse; the dream of rustic simplicity has vanished, and he is left with the tarnished dream of progress as it is mapped out by Gelhorne. Proteus' contemplation of suicide prefigures similar preoccupations of Howard Campbell, Jonah, Eliot Rosewater, and Billy Pilgrim, all of whom at one time or another weary of the "duty-dance with death" and seek to have done. Proteus confronts his own loneliness and isolation as he stands symbolically where, earlier, in a mood of drunken fraternity, he had asked all Iliumites to meet -- in the center of the bridge separating the parts of Ilium.

Although he is a man without a cause of his own, he finds that his assistance is solicited by the two opposing forces, the organization led by Gelhorne and the Ghost Shirt Society led by Lasher and Finnerty. Gelhorne offers Proteus the same
role which Rumford offers to Malachi Constant and Colonel Wirtanen offers to Howard Campbell. He is enlisted as a double agent and if he does his work well he will be accused of treason by both sides. To demonstrate now effectively such a principle operates, Proteus is shamefully expelled from the Meadows. Avoided and reviled, he makes his way from the Meadows, by way of the women's camp where his wife rejects him, to his home in Ilium. Proteus' small consolation is that he, of his own free will, quit, but the ability of the company to create and destroy is greater than any resolve Proteus can make. Proteus is forced to accept a role in a drama which, like the play performed at the Meadows, is part of a larger design. This particular theme is one to which Vonnegut returns in *The Sirens of Titan* and *Mother Night*.

On the other side, Proteus' aid is sought by the revolutionaries. Finnerty's program seems to offer positive action against the world built and supported by the Works. Although Proteus instinctively feels more sympathetic towards Finnerty's cause than towards Gelhorne's, his enlistment in their ranks is not a matter of free choice. He is drugged and kidnapped. Rather than treat him as an individual, the leaders of the Ghost Shirt Society prefer to utilize his influence as a symbol of power and authority. Like Malachi
Constant after him, Proteus is manipulated; a role is assigned him and, like Constant, he has no control over what he says or does. As it is ordained that Constant will iterate certain prophetic words supplied to him by some mysterious source, so it is ordained by the leaders of the revolution that Proteus will issue the proclamation which they write for him.

Although the parallel is never made explicit in the novel, it is clear that Proteus, like his counterparts in the later novels, resembles the Biblical character, Jonah. Proteus and Jonah are both forced by a superior power to deliver a message of considerable importance. The difference between Proteus and Jonah is that the latter has only one message to deliver, while Proteus is involved in a competition between two powers. In Vonnegut's version there is no single authentic plan, just as there is not one message, but many, each with conflicting instructions. There is no divine sanction for the patterns of either of the opposing groups, although each acts as if there were some special ordinance or precedent establishing the authority of its position.

Proteus, the victim of these conflicting schemes, seeks to establish an independent course of action for himself. As the events beginning with his expulsion from the Meadows demonstrate, however, he is capable of little independent
action. During the trial he discovers that, besides having no control over his external movements, he has little control over the personal motivations behind his actions:

His own motivation was obscure, the cast was unwieldy, and, Paul realized, the denouement was still to come. Through all his adventures, he had been a derelict, tossed this way, then that. He had yet to lay a firm hand on the tiller. (298)

Proteus is absolved from judgement by the outbreak of the revolution and is left uncertain about whether the motivations for his rebellion originate with a personal hatred of his father or with a desire for improving the conditions of the people. Like Constant and Campbell after him, Proteus is accused of crimes for which he is never completely punished.

Proteus' motivations are obscured by yet another impulse within him which he shares with a number of other protagonists in Vonnegut's fiction. In his selfless dedication to the cause of the common citizen Proteus is very nearly a saint, and the temptation to identify himself with Christ is at times quite strong. This impulse is described in a scene in which

a speech, the nugget of the whole evening's nebulous impressions, composed itself in Paul's mind, took on form and polish inspirationally, with no conscious effort on his part. He had only to deliver it to make himself the new Messiah and Ilium the new Eden.
The first line was at his lips, tearing at them to be set free. (105)

In dedicating himself to his utopian ideals, Proteus runs the risk of confusing his human role with that of the saint. This theme receives much fuller treatment in a novel about a man dedicated to the establishment of a paradise on earth — God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater.

The revolutionaries actually encourage such an identification on the part of Proteus since they plan to use him as a symbol of salvation. Lasher, whose penchant for symbolic religious spectacles prefigures a similar concern by Rumfoord in The Sirens of Titan, plans to use Proteus in much the same way that Rumfoord uses Constant:

"All right," said Lasher, his voice low. "In the past, in a situation like this, if Messiahs showed up with credible, dramatic messages of hope, they often set off powerful physical and spiritual revolutions in the face of terrific odds. If a Messiah shows up now with a good, solid, startling message, and if he keeps out of the hands of the police, he can set off a revolution -- maybe one big enough to take the world away from the machines, Doctor, and give it back to the people." (275)

The shallowness of this view is exposed by Vonnegut through the very language which Lasher employs. Like those in control
of the government, Lasher is interested in dramatic or staged performances and, for a minister, his references to a Messiah who "shows up" seem to have more to do with the form than with the content of the message. Lasher sees the necessity for redeeming a world which has fallen into the sin of careless disregard for human life. In dealing with this problem he recreates an historical fiction in order that this redemption might be achieved.

The revolutionary program which appeals to so many as fiction, fails when put to the test in reality. The revolutionaries have no constructive plan with which to replace the former design. The rebellion which is totally destructive of every vestige of automation is, ultimately, self-destructive because, in their frantic effort to free themselves, the insurgents destroy everything. In the late stages of the revolution vonNeumann points out that the destruction has all the characteristics of a lynching, but on a scale that makes it appear more like genocide.

Amidst the great confusion, the remains of organization and leadership within the Ghost Shirt Society are destroyed along with the machines. Vonnegut's instinctive distrust of groups which invite the support of frustrated individuals is evident in his description of the progress of the revolution in Ilium. In nearly every novel he satirizes the joiners and the bizarre groups which they seek to identify with.
The leaders of the movement are reduced to incapacitated spectators and Proteus is himself forced to assume the role of observer.

Proteus' optimism, born of the dream of creating a happier existence for himself and others, is long in dying despite the many setbacks it receives. Even amidst the willful and total destruction of Ilium, Proteus hopes that something can be salvaged, that some lesson can be learned. These modern-day Trojans, however, are destined to suffer defeat at the hands of the surrounding forces of the government and, like men of the past, are destined to learn nothing from their experience. Proteus suggests that everyone begin to work with the primitive material at hand. He believes that by working with their hands in the soil and by succeeding, the revolutionaries can prove that their rebellion is not in vain.

The kind of society that Proteus envisions, however, is, like his former dream of retiring to his farmhouse, the product of his imagination. The truth is that the men who sought desperately to free themselves from the bondage of the machines, prefer to tinker with the Orange-0 machine rather than engage in practical reconstructive activity. They busily employ themselves in rebuilding the symbol of their original
enslavement. The futility of any program for social change is clearly demonstrated in the scene in which the laborer uses his talents to assist the inventive Bud Calhoun in the rebuilding of the machine. The pattern repeats itself: Calhoun perfects the machine which replaces the laborer and he, in turn, is replaced by a still more sophisticated machine.

In a final effort at clarification Proteus thinks to ask the logical question: What became of the original Ghost Shirts? History contains the answer and repeats it in the modern version of the original massacre. Further questioning by Proteus reveals that the motivations of the leaders are as varied as the leaders themselves. The revolution provides Finnerty with "a chance to give a savage blow to a close little society that made no comfortable place for him" (320). Von Neumann derives satisfaction from the experience, a satisfaction which is based upon the scientist's dispassionate concern for seeing the results of an experiment. Lasher, too, seems satisfied with the results: "A lifelong trafficker in symbols, he had created the revolution as a symbol, and was now welcoming the opportunity to die as one" (320). At least Proteus believes that these reasons explain why the three leaders are so willing to surrender themselves in the end, but just as he can never be certain of his own motivations, he can only guess at the motivations of these men.
Even though he knows that his efforts are destined to fail, Proteus would still like to toast "To a better world," but he cannot while he is forced to acknowledge the reality of people "already eager to recreate the same old nightmare" (320). He is caught between his desire to create a better possible world and his knowledge that the likelihood of such an occurrence is quite remote. For Proteus there is no way out of this dilemma. He longs for his illusion ("To a better world") while he is forced to accept the harsh reality ("To the record," at once the heavenly record but also the record of human futility).

Proteus' final gesture is one of surrender to forces beyond his control. Symbolically, for Proteus, the conclusion is suicidal, the result of his recognizing the disparity between his illusion about human perfectibility and the tawdry and shameful aspects of reality. Proteus' surrender is his admission that there is no possibility of reconciling the imaginary and real worlds.

*Player Piano* describes a world which is fully controlled by a small group of bureaucrats who rule absolutely. The player piano which is symbolic of the automated society is also symbolic of the lack of control men have over their own
destinies in such a rigidly structured society. Regardless of what keys are struck on the piano, the same tune comes forth.

*Player Piano* raises important questions about human destiny, about hope and despair in a world in which the exercise of control lies beyond the grasp of the individual and in which the exercise of free will is limited. It deals with the reactions to such conditions including, ultimately, destruction. But, Phoenix-like, civilization rises from the ashes of its former ruin and man's rebellion, initially against futility and the awareness of his own uselessness in a world that runs more efficiently without him, leads finally to his defeat.

*Player Piano*, then, examines the various programs men create to confront the reality of living in a world that offers them few consolations and little sense of purpose. The two choices which are available to Paul Proteus are withdrawal into fantasies which support the individual in a barren world or participation in the construction of a better society. As the struggle manifests itself in the figure of Proteus, the result is a collision between the world of the imagination and the practical world of human affairs. In *The Sirens of Titan* Vonnegut takes up the theme of the conflict between private and public responsibilities in an effort to clarify and solve the problem which finally causes the defeat of Paul Proteus.
Alternatively he liked to imagine cycles within cycles, either finite or infinite: for example, the 'night-sea', as it were, in which Makers 'swam' and created night-seas and swimmers like ourselves, might be the creation of a larger Maker, Himself one of many, Who in turn et cetera.

"Night-Sea Journey"
John Barth

The discovery of the chrono-synclastic infundibula said to mankind in effect: 'What makes you think you're going anywhere?'

The Sirens of Titan
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
CHAPTER II

THE SIRENS OF TITAN

The Sirens of Titan (1959), Vonnegut's second novel, bears numerous affinities to Player Piano and demonstrates the continuation of a concern with the curious ways in which men organize their lives and the result of such organization upon individuals. The two novels satirize the frequently absurd patterns which human beings invent in order to give their lives meaning and direction. Player Piano examines social and political patterns in the context of an automated society of the future while The Sirens of Titan, by means of the elaborate fantasy of pan-galactic travel, examines man's urge to perceive meaning and order in the universe.

In the early part of the novel Vonnegut informs the reader that "What mankind hoped to learn from its outward push was who was actually in charge of all creation, and what all creation was all about." The result of man's explorations is the discovery that "The bounties of space, of infinite outwardness, were three: empty heroics, low comedy, and pointless death" (8). Man seems incapable of living
without the assurance that some superior power governs all action for some mysterious but purposeful end. The result is that he throws himself into "a nightmare of meaninglessness without end" (8), and, where there is nothing but randomness, he draws upon the Universal Will to Become which "makes universes out of nothingness—that makes nothingness insist upon becoming somethingness" (138). Salo's UWTB is the magical force which makes a kind of reality out of longings or imaginings. Rumfoord avails himself of this precious creative source to assist him in his crusade to make Earth a happier place.

Although the two novels develop a similar theme, there are a number of differences between them. Player Piano is frequently, despite its humor, a rather somber book containing ominous warnings of a predictable future disaster. Vonnegut's "Foreword" to Player Piano sets the tone for the novel: "This is not a book about what is, but a book about what could be.... At this point in history, 1952 A.D., our lives and freedom depend largely upon the skill and imagination of our managers and engineers, and I hope that God will help them to help us all stay alive and free." The moral concern which Vonnegut expresses in the "Foreword" carries over into the novel and influences the treatment of the protagonist,
Paul Proteus, a manager who is seriously committed to life and freedom. On the other hand, in *The Sirens of Titan* Vonnegut employs comic exaggeration in order to satirize man's fanatical desire to create patterns and to impose them on other human beings. In this second novel Vonnegut abandons a more realistic approach, what one might call almost an Orwellian concern with bureaucracy and mechanism, in favor of the resources of fantasy.

In addition to the fuller realization of the satiric force of comedy, Vonnegut brings to his second novel deeper insights into his characters and their dilemmas. Characters and events from the first novel recur in recognizable forms in the second. The use of the Shah of Bratpuhr, a naive, alien observer who points up the many contradictions and absurdities in America, prefigures one of the uses of Salo, the curious observer of Earthling civilization. Similarly, Lasher, in his dedication to the task of initiating a new spiritual revival, has his counterpart in Winston Niles Rumfoord, the instigator of a complete religious reformation in *The Sirens of Titan*. Most importantly, however, Paul Proteus bears a marked resemblance to Malachi Constant; is the heir to a position of prominence, and without any great effort succeeds admirably in matters of finance, and each
eventually loses his wealth and the security it provides. A consequence of their loss of wealth is the manipulation of Proteus and Constant by a person who wishes to organize beings into arbitrary groups. In The Sirens of Titan the control which is exercised over Constant is less evident to him than it is to Proteus in Player Piano; hence, Constant's difficulties in understanding the nature of his dilemma are considerably more complicated than Proteus'. Constant is manipulated more ruthlessly than is Proteus and for far less significant a reason. The personal identity of each man is sacrificed to allow for the adoption of a public role. Just as Proteus, throughout the revolution, seeks for some means of escape from the competing systems, Constant, throughout his long, circuitous journey through Space, longs for some release. Proteus and Constant share the desire for escape into an idealized state far removed from the harsh reality of their present existence.

Constant differs from Proteus in one important respect. Although he possesses enormous wealth, he feels absolutely no obligation to those less fortunate than himself. Constant, who shares none of Proteus' altruism, is totally self-absorbed and determined to please no one but himself. His outrageous behavior is far more comical and is, in the end, far more human than that of Proteus.
Prior to his loss of wealth Constant possesses a secret system, a legacy from his father, which provides him with enormous financial success. The system which Noel Constant bequeaths to his son is perfectly absurd and it points up the importance of chance in the lives of men like Constant and Proteus. Noel Constant casually and playfully engages in speculating upon possible correspondences between certain arrangements of letters in a Gideon Bible and the abbreviations of certain stock market listings. It is significant that in a novel in which many patterns based upon religious paradigms are evident, Malachi's father should draw his inspiration from the Bible also. The description of Noel Constant's evolving pattern provides an ironic statement about the "interpretation" of the Bible. Any statements which the Bible makes are of much less concern to this ingenious model-maker than the game of acrostics that he can make of them.

Noel Constant's letter, the true legacy of father to son, which is to be opened only in the event of total financial disaster, reveals the uncertainty of the father regarding his own good fortune. Although the system upon which his success is founded is tenuous and improbable, Noel Constant cannot allay the suspicion that someone has interceded on his behalf and has designated that he should rise to a level of prominence:
It looked as though somebody or something wanted me to own the whole planet even though I was as good as dead. I kept my eyes open for some kind of signal that would tell me what it was all about but there wasn't any signal. I just went on getting richer and richer. (91)

The letter goes on to explain that a man never seeks justification for his position except in times of adversity. Unlike Proteus, Constant does not question the authenticity of his father's system, but is content to use it with the full assurance that it will provide continuing success.

One characteristic that Malachi Constant inherits from his father is the feeling that events are governed by some mysterious force and that human actions are a part of some grand design. Possessed of this intuition, Constant approaches Winston Niles Rumfoord, the "chrono-synclastically infundibulated" sensation who materializes and de-materializes every fifty-nine days on Earth. Constant, whose name means "faithful messenger," entertains thoughts of boarding a space ship to Mars at Rumfoord's invitation, but refuses when he learns that he is not to be the bearer of an important message. Like Proteus and so many of Vonnegut's later protagonists, he desires to play an important role in a large and dominant pattern. Having emerged from a life guided by
one system which has failed, Constant looks about for another.

His desire to participate in some purposeful design is underlined by his choice of a suitable pseudonym with which to conceal his identity when he first approaches Rumfoord. The selection of the name Jonah by Malachi Constant marks the first explicit identification of a protagonist in Vonnegut's novels with the Biblical voyager. Although Constant selects his pseudonym, he is surprised when reminded later of the choice by his chauffeur. Unlike the later figure of Jonah in *Cat's Cradle*, Constant seems only partially aware of the significance of his association with the Biblical messenger.

Winston Niles Rumfoord is another reluctant messenger who, like Constant, believes that he possesses the power to control his own destiny. He has, by an accident in space, been removed into a time warp where he exists as a wave phenomenon. Consequently, and in contrast to Constant, he sees all moments in Time as though they were a part of a universal drama whose script already has been prepared. He insists upon the inevitability of all events, none of which can be prevented by forewarning the victims.²

Constant's own miserable state parallels that of Job
who also, for reasons unknown to him, was beset with misfortunes of every variety. Each man is informed of his newly acquired distress by his last and most faithful servant who pays off the remaining servants and sends them on their way. In each case the unfortunate man is left to suffer alone. But Constant also differs from Job, who is a righteous man not disposed to the hedonistic practices of a man like Constant. There is no indication, however, that Constant is being punished for any evil he has committed, but there is evidence that, like Job, Constant is being tested. On more than one occasion Rumfoord offers hints and suggestions and invites those over whom he has control to guess the purpose for their actions. At one point, in what seems a cruel and pointless parody of God's testing of Job, Rumfoord informs Constant, through one of his many messages, that "It's an intelligence test!" (195).

In seeking to find the answers to this intelligence test, Constant poses questions similar to those which Job asks about the significance of life with all its pain and suffering. Both men long to understand the workings of divine justice which, seen in human terms, seems so unjust. Through all his misery and uncertainty Job's faith remains unbroken, and when God finally appears before him, Job repents: "I had heard of
thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I do despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). The answers to Constant's questions come, not out of God's whirlwind, but out of the mouth of Rumfoord. In the absence of a concerned God, Rumfoord has taken it upon himself to deliver Constant from his state of ambiguity and to prove to him that justice is operative in the universe.

Rumfoord's apparent control over present events and his ability to prophesy future ones make him look suspiciously like God (although he denies that he has any contact with God), whose omniscience and omnipotence he parodies. Only later does it become clear that he too is limited and is controlled by another person. Yet Rumfoord enlists Malachi Constant in the service of his crusade to redeem the fallen world and re-establish the original Paradise for man. Rumfoord, like Gelhorne and his associates, is "the opener of doors to undreamed-of new worlds." He succeeds in persuading Constant to join his Martian recruits by taking advantage of Constant's insecurity, the result of his recent loss of wealth.

Constant's transport through the solar system points up the terrifying aspect of systems of control. It seems nearly inconceivable to the reader that such elaborate plans and designs as the book presents should all be for no purpose save to please some demented organizer who delights in complex plots.
Each of the space journeys which Constant is forced to undertake supposedly furthers Rumfoord's plan in some significant way. The journey to Mars results in the birth of Chrono who is the product of the rape of Beatrice by Constant. His journey to Mercury for two years adds to the drama since the Earthlings expectantly await the arrival of their Messiah. The journey to Earth and all the events which are staged there are part of Rumfoord's promise of the arrival of a saviour. The expulsion also fits the pattern and fulfills the prophecy that Constant and Beatrice would discover love for the first time on Titan. The conclusion leaves the reader wondering why so much misery is necessary to produce such a small measure of happiness.

What Rumfoord wishes to initiate on Earth is an epoch of peace and happiness to replace the bloodshed and internecine strife that it has known through the ages. For Rumfoord, this social goal is worth the sacrifice of a minority of the Earth's population. The Martian task force is ironically, a volunteer army. People disenchanted with their situation willingly accept almost any offer to go and seek their fortunes elsewhere. These recruits are the vagrants of the world, nameless and homeless. In their eagerness to embrace a new way of life they resemble Constant. All are transported to Mars where, as a
part of the grand design, they are lobotomized and the sentient portion of their minds is replaced with antennae. Like Constant, these shapeless beings are given new identities. Constant's new name—Unk—reflects the primitive calibre of existence on Mars.

The one endeavor which Constant never forsakes is the attempt to pose certain basic questions, the answers to which might lead to the establishment of his true identity and his proper place in the scheme of things. Like Proteus, Constant loses an identity which is originally tenuous since it only relies upon social position. Men like Rumfoord and Constant's father, inhibit attempts to answer these vital questions. The patterns they build impose identities and do not seek to offer assistance in discovering other, more authentic, identities. Rumfoord, like Lasher before him, has a penchant for symbolism and prefers to treat individuals as symbols rather than as persons. Like Lasher, he conducts all his affairs on an abstract level. He is not only one of the cruelest agents of misfortune, but the recorder of the disaster in a cheap history:

As he says in his Pocket History of Mars: "Any man who would change the World in a significant way must have showmanship, a genial willingness to shed other people's blood, and a plausible new religion to introduce during the brief period of repentance and horror that usually follows bloodshed." (174)
Just as Proteus is forced to be the "fake Messiah" for Lasher and his co-conspirators, so Constant is forced into a similar role in which he, chameleon-like, changes identities at the whim of Rumfoord. Constant appears in the novel in a more stunning array of disguises than does Proteus in *Player Piano*.

Throughout the entire perilous adventure from one planet to another Constant retains his desire to be free of control, the source of which is mysteriously hidden. As his primitive "message" to himself, which he hides on Mars, indicates, someone has control over his behaviour and can hurt him at will. However, Constant bears in his mind wherever he travels a vague reminiscence of a paradise conjured up by the memory of the three sirens of Titan he had once seen in a photograph. The three enchantresses represent for Constant escape from involvement in public affairs and retreat into a peaceful world of beauty and harmony. The world Constant imagines has less to do with the perfect world Rumfoord wishes to create than with the vague desires Proteus has to escape from the inexorable movements of society and history. As Constant looks down the oily barrel of his rifle he sees the paradise he longs for, but which is unattainable because of the necessity of performing his part in a larger drama.

Constant's second destination, Mercury, appears to offer
some of the consolations which he desires in his paradise. On Mercury he is treated to "a cruel and lovely illusion." Mercury, which is immediately attractive to the beholder but fatally inhospitable in actuality, is the planet of opposites: "It is the tension between the hot hemisphere of day-without-end and the cold hemisphere of night-without-end that makes Mercury sing" (184). The only inhabitants of Mercury are the beautiful, translucent Harmoniums who live an ideal existence nurturing themselves solely on the music their planet provides in abundance. These delightful creatures are perfectly adapted to their strange environment. However, when Unk and his companion Boaz step outside the ship the hostile atmosphere bursts their blood vessels.

Unk's first reaction to the colorful landscape is one of gratitude and joy, for he thinks he is on Earth. He believes that this "civilization" is surely a place where "nameless hopes could flourish like--." Unk cannot complete his statement because through his experience on Mars he has lost the ability to produce images of beauty but he does retain a desire to produce such images. Unk's initial joy at arriving on Mercury very quickly dissipates and joy soon turns to anger.

Boaz' behaviour is in every way a contrast to Unk's.
Boaz, an outcast on Earth, finds acceptance among the Harmoniums who need his care, or so he believes. He warns Unk, who frequently attempts to tell him the truth about their condition, not to "truth me." Boaz is happy in his illusion and does not want reality to impinge upon his newly created world. Later Unk succumbs to a similar desire for illusions when he discovers that reality is overwhelming.  

Unk's return to Earth is but another of the many "cruel and lovely illusions" to which he is subjected. In his ignorance Unk believes that he is about to be rewarded for having suffered so greatly. His evaluation of the situation points up the absurdity of Rumfoord's massive campaign to initiate happiness through guilt. Unk's naive belief is that "With everyone so kind and enthusiastic and peaceful, not only a good life but a perfect life could be lived on Earth" (247). But Unk's experiences on Earth quickly convince him that life is at least as absurd as it was before Rumfoord put his plan into operation. In pathetic imitation of the Ninevites, whom Jonah is sent to inform of the necessity of repentance, the adherents of Rumfoord's decree dress themselves in ridiculous costumes and encumber themselves with bags of lead shot and slabs of iron. In their passion for forgiveness the Earthlings spurn all material acquisitions
and make themselves as unhappy as possible so that they can all live in peace and happiness.

The parallel between Rumfoord's plan and the Book of Jonah is an apt one, for it serves as an ironic statement about submission to the will of God, the ineffable Presence in the Void. Earthlings cannot accept that "Things fly this way and that ... with or without messages. It's chaos, and no mistake, for the Universe is just being born. It's the great becoming that makes the light and the heat and the motion, and bangs you from hither to yon" (39). Their love for symmetry and great spectacles leads Earthlings to believe in the validity of patterns no matter how outrageous these might be. Salo, the perceptive observer of Earthling behaviour, remarks that "The Earthlings behaved at all times as though there were a big eye in the sky--as though that big eye were ravenous for entertainment. The big eye was a glutton for great theater. The big eye was indifferent as to whether the Earthling shows were comedy, tragedy, farce, satire, athletics, or vaudeville. Its demand, which Earthlings apparently found as irresistible as gravity, was that the shows be great" (276).

Earthlings, longing to hear a sound or see a sign somewhere in the Void, seize upon Rumfoord's message and repent.
In the Book of Jonah the assumption is that God does exist and that Jonah is conveying a message of considerable importance. In Vonnegut's version it is apparent that the messianic role of Rumfoord is only a parody. The creation of a new world, at last peaceful and filled with good will, is rendered ridiculous.

Malachi Constant's mission to Earth is further clarified by another Biblical parallel. Just as Constant is a modern Jonah, journeying somewhat reluctantly to the Ninevites, so is he also Malachi, one of the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament and the similarities between the two are frequently both ironic and revealing. Malachi's mission to the Israelites contained in the Book of Malachi was for the purpose of re-kindling in them a desire to practice their faith.

The community's condition was generally wretched. The hopes aroused in the people by the messianic-type promises connected with the re-establishment of the sanctuary remained unfulfilled. Consequently the priests and people tended to become careless. Malachi tried to arouse the people to re-dedicate themselves to their religion. Advocating the restoration of Temple ritual, he emphasized that inner commitment must accompany religious rites. Like the other prophets, Malachi asserts the belief that there will be a "day of the Lord" when Israel will be purified by God's judgment and a saving remnant will survive to witness the messianic era. 4
Malachi's insistence upon the necessity of "inner commitment" accompanying religious rites contrasts with Rumfoord's emphasis upon symbols and appearances. Rumfoord also believes in the purification of the race and is only too willing to sacrifice a great number of people so that the "saving remnant" may survive. Rumfoord's grand design, the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, rivals and the most elaborate designs produced by the human imagination. As a device for learning something about human nature it is valuable, and it is in this way that Vonnegut employs it as a fiction. However, as a practical program to govern human existence it is tyrannical.  

In the course of his brief appearance on Earth Malachi Constant's actions parallel numerous episodes recounted in the Book of Malachi. In the Bible Malachi addresses himself to the doubting mind. Men ask how it is that the good suffer while the evil prosper:  

"your words have been stout against me, says the LORD. Yet you say, 'How have we spoken against thee?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the good of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? Henceforth we deem the arrogant blessed; evildoers not only prosper but when they put God to the test they escape!"  

Malachi 2:13
Malachi Constant's experience at the hands of Rumfoord is proof that evildoers do not escape punishment. In a sudden reversal of fortunes, which is so characteristic of events in this novel, Constant is transformed from saviour to sinner, and his banishment is final proof of the justice of Rumfoord's religion.

The Biblical prophet's messages parallel Constant's messages to the mobs who gather to see him. He exhorts all people to be faithful to God and to one another. The message to the Israelites mentions marriage specifically and warns against the prevalent habit of inconstancy among the chosen people. "So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth," for God desires, above all, constancy and "Godly offspring" (Malachi 2:15).

Vonnegut seems to suggest through the use of the parallel with the Biblical prophet that Malachi Constant's quest for the meaning of "what all creation was all about" is inextricably connected with the fate of his wife and child. Constant is guilty of inconstancy, and his initial profligacy is compounded by his treatment of Beatrice aboard the space craft on its way to Mars. Throughout the novel Constant longs to be reunited with his mate and their offspring so that he can take them away to a place where they can live in peace.
A number of impediments prevent Constant from securing Beatrice for several years and, when he finally does he must wait until one year prior to their deaths before they learn to love one another. It is clear from their behaviour on Tralfamadore that they must first learn to respect one another's separateness, and dreams of the world, before they can accept one another. The path to reconciliation is a long and difficult one because each of the partners is forced to play a role in a drama which overshadows his personal needs. They have each been enlisted in the service of humanity and must play their expiatory parts in the drama which is designed to fuse all human beings into one homogeneous group.

On Tralfamadore, where the major participants in the patterns are brought together for the last time, it is finally revealed that Rumfoord, the manipulator of so many, is himself the victim of manipulation by a force beyond his control. His attempt to establish a new religion on Earth is, like every major event in world history, a small part of a large plan to assist in the delivery of a minor replacement part for the Tralfamadorian space craft. The seriousness with which human beings undertake the construction of elaborate models and systems is revealed as a part of a cosmic joke. Robert Scholes points out that "This novel suggests that the joke is on us
every time we attribute purpose or meaning that suits us to things which are either accidental, or possessed of purpose and meaning quite different from those we would supply. And it doesn't matter which of these mistakes we make." Salo, not Constant, is the "faithful messenger" who believes above all in the importance of delivering his message, a secret correspondence between Tralfamadore and whoever Salo might encounter at the far reaches of the Universe. Salo's mission is to travel from "one rim of the Universe to the other" bearing a message whose content is a single dot, the Tralfamadorian word for "Greetings". The discovery of the triviality of this message comes as a surprise even to Salo who is faced with a dilemma. Having invested so much time and effort in the delivery of this message, he is reluctant to give up his mission. Vonnegut seems to suggest that the desire to search for the answers to insoluble questions persists, even though the search is doomed.

Constant's final wish is to be returned to Earth, his home. Salo, who is surprised at Constant's decision to return to the place which has been the source of so many of his misfortunes, and who knows all too well that more than the harsh weather is inhospitable to the aged and helpless, decides to induce in Constant an illusion. The vision which Constant
is granted at the end of the novel coincides with his death and provides him with the satisfaction that he has spent the major part of his life seeking. Constant's desire for reunion with his wife and his best friend, Stony Stevenson, and his desire to depart to a country in which they can live without interference from anyone, is granted ironically, only at the moment of death. Constant, a man who has been used ruthlessly and whose personal needs have been repeatedly sacrificed to larger needs, has a final joke played upon him. The final vision is merely an illusion, but in the face of the harshness of reality, there is no alternative for a man who seeks to have done with the misery of living. Vonnegut emphasizes this point when, in the final scene of the novel, Constant's quiet reverie is counterpointed by the sounds coming from the nearby troubled sleeper. In contrast to the restless sleep of the man in the building, Constant's reverie is peaceful. He is allowed to "Dream other dreams, and better." 8

The conflict between the world of private dreams and ambitions and the world of public obligations which Vonnegut first began to develop in *Player Piano* is, then, developed further in *The Sirens of Titan*. Neither Proteus nor Constant is able to reconcile the two positions successfully. Proteus, who sacrifices himself to a public cause, is forced in the end to surrender himself completely to public pressure.
Constant, whose life is spent as a public figure, surrenders himself to the illusion of private happiness. Neither conclusions is particularly satisfying. In the novel which follows -- *Mother Night* -- Vonnegut examines the implications of living too private a life.
People who are receptive to the influence of art cannot set too high a value on it as a source of pleasure and consolation in life. Nevertheless the mild narcosis induced in us by art can do no more than bring about a transient withdrawal from the pressure of vital needs, and it is not strong enough to make us forget real misery.

*Civilization and its Discontents*

*Sigmund Freud*

(Kraft - Potapov) offers the opinion that I was an ardent Nazi, but that I shouldn't be held responsible for my acts, since I was a political idiot, an artist who could not distinguish between reality and dreams.

*Mother Night*

*Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.*
In *Mother Night* or *The Confessions of Howard W. Campbell, Jr.* (1961), Vonnegut again examines the difficulties encountered by a person whose public and private identities conflict and whose public actions do not reflect his personal convictions. Campbell, a man who privately admires good and abhors evil, is also a well known Nazi propagandist whose behaviour is so outrageous because it is so "obscenely public." Like Proteus and Constant before him, Campbell is divided between his private desire for escape from social involvement and his public obligations as a member of society. Campbell also finds himself in a prestigious public position and in possession of considerable wealth and influence. He resembles the first two protagonists in his belief that he can control his own destiny and that he can make decisions with predictable results. Like Proteus and Constant, he eventually discovers that he not only has very little control over his fate, but has even less knowledge of who is manipulating him and for what purpose he is being manipulated.
Campbell is a man with no political or social convictions. He is, like all of Vonnegut's characters, a wanderer in a spiritual as well as in a physical sense. The novel's epigraph, taken from Sir Walter Scott, is an expression of Scott's rejoicing upon his return to his "native land" "From wandering on a foreign strand." In contrast, Campbell who is, by his own admission, "a stateless person," (44) can feel at home neither in America, his birthplace, nor in Germany, his adopted homeland. Campbell's feeling of dislocation resembles similar feelings of Proteus and Constant. In Player Piano Proteus is used like a ping pong ball in a game played by the two opposing political factions. In The Sirens of Titan Vonnegut employs the metaphor of space travel to suggest the extent to which Constant is moved about in the bizarre plans of Rumfoord and Salo.

Vonnegut's adoption of the technique of "editing" the Confessions of Howard Campbell is evidence of his growing awareness of the problems encountered by a writer who wishes to convey experiences through the medium of fiction. Vonnegut's wry Editor's Note makes reference to the excusable "lies" that a reader will encounter in the Confessions. The lies are the result of their having been written by an artist, one disposed to communicating truth by means of
seeming untruths. In the first two novels Vonnegut himself lies quite consciously in an effort to transmit certain truths. In *Mother Night* he quite facetiously parodies the role of a disinterested and impartial translator whose "duties as an editor are in no sense polemic. They are simply to pass on, in the most satisfactory style, the confessions of Campbell" (ix-x).³

Vonnegut's role as editor allows him sufficient distance from his protagonist to maintain a critical vantage point, while at the same time it allows him to identify with Campbell. Campbell is the first of Vonnegut's protagonists who is a writer and *Mother Night* is the first novel which introduces the task of writing as a major theme. All of the novels which follow deal with some aspect of writing and all the remaining protagonists, with the exception of Billy Pilgrim, are writers.⁴

Campbell moves about in patterns which he only partially understands and encounters numerous difficulties in separating the facts from the apparent facts or fictions. Vonnegut's novels are like Campbell's *Confessions*, attempts to "separate the real from the fake" (53). There are many people in the novel who claim to be in possession of the truth and who act upon their assumptions when, in reality, most people merely
invent fictional models as a justification for their actions. Vonnegut shares with Campbell a distrust of such models. In *Mother Night*, as in *The Sirens of Titan*, there is an abundance of messengers and messages travelling everywhere, but no message is any more important than another. The messages which Campbell passes along to the Germans and to the Allies are as confusing as the numerous conflicting messages which are delivered to him from such eccentrics as the Reverend Jones and Bernard V. O'Hare. After all the messages have been delivered and all the designs completed, man is still left to face the fundamental problem of existing in a world in which unhappiness, pain, and death are the norms.

As a writer, Campbell has no interest in politics or war. His plays, which are all medieval romances, are as political as "chocolate eclairs" (37). The world which he creates through art is "a world elsewhere," and this world is complicated by none of the contemporary social or political problems of Europe or America. Like the rest of his works, his diary, *Memoirs of a Polygamous Casanova*, contains "not one word in it to indicate even the century or the continent of its origin" (99). The alternate world which Campbell creates for himself and his wife is romantically beautiful and, seemingly, incapable of being affected by external
reality. It resembles the sheltered world of Proteus' rustic retreat, of Constant's paradise inhabited by the three sirens of Titan, of the cavern in which Jonah and Mona retreat from the destruction of a crazed world, and of the Tralfamadorian zoo which Billy Pilgrim visits. Like the plots of Kilgore Trout's novels, the plots of Campbell's plays provide "fantasies of an impossibly hospitable world." His plays, as George Kraft points out, are not without morals: The plays reveal "That you admire pure hearts and heroes....That you love good and hate evil....and that you believe in romance" (41).

Significantly, Campbell is a playwright and his wife is an actress and Campbell's only belief is in his wife and himself and the art which gives expression to their perfect love. They allow no place in their self-created world for anyone but themselves. His fourth play, entitled "Nation of Two", was "to be about the love my wife and I had for each other. It was going to show how a pair of lovers in a world gone mad could survive by being loyal to a nation composed of themselves -- a nation of two" (37).

Campbell believes that he can successfully support two identities, one private and one public. He feels that by serving the Nazis as a propagandist and broadcaster he
fulfills his public obligation, while by continuing to write plays he proves to himself that his private world is intact and secure. Since Campbell has no attachment to any ideology or social system, he merely invents material which pleases his superiors and allows him to exist safely. He views all his activities as a propagandist as a tour de force. When first approached by Wirtanen, Campbell mistakenly believes that he can perform his duties as an espionage agent as though he were taking part in a play:

As a spy of the sort he described, I would have an opportunity for some pretty grand acting. I would fool everyone with my brilliant interpretation of a Nazi, inside and out. And I did fool everybody. I began to strut like Hitler's right-hand man, and nobody saw the honest me I hid so deep inside. (41)

Campbell succeeds so admirably in identifying himself as a Nazi "inside and out", and in submerging his own personality, that he becomes his persona. He does not recognize until it is too late that "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be" (v).

Because Campbell has no ideology of his own he is easily controlled by those who assert their own ideological beliefs. As in the previous novels, particularly *The Sirens of Titan,*
Campbell is enlisted as a double agent and is forced to play a part in a highly secret drama. Campbell is asked to deliver vital information to the Allies through a series of pauses and stutters. Like Constant, he is the bearer of a message whose contents are unknown to him. The messages which Campbell delivers are important to the Allies, but they are equally important to the Germans. The result is that he satisfies the German need for effective propaganda and the Allies' need for secret information.

Campbell discovers that one cannot be certain that one is understood in the manner one intends. He cannot understand why so many people were so willing to believe what he had to say:

I had hoped as a broadcaster, to be merely ludicrous, but this is a hard world to be ludicrous in, with so many human beings so reluctant to laugh, so incapable of thought, so eager to believe and snarl and hate. So many people wanted to believe me!

Ironically, his most skeptical critic, his father-in-law, Werner Noth, listens carefully to every broadcast for any hint that his son-in-law is an agent for the Allies. His conclusion after listening to numerous broadcasts, most of which convey
secret information to the Allies, is that no amount of damage could be done by Campbell to offset the good he has done for the Nazi cause. On the other hand, Franklin Roosevelt, Campbell's most frequent target for criticism, is his most devoted listener. He undoubtedly believes that whatever virulent propaganda Campbell issues cannot offset the benefits of his reports.

The result of such pressure exerted upon Campbell from two political extremes is a case of what he calls schizophrenia, a division of the self into opposing sides. Campbell's schizophrenia, which manifests itself in a separation of public and private selves, resembles the condition of Eliot Rosewater. He feels strongly that his identity resides in his private self. He and his wife are capable even of speaking in public in voices never used or evaluated in their private lives:

If we had listened for more, had thought about what we heard, what a nauseated couple we would have been! Away from the sovereign territory of our nation of two, we talked like the patriotic lunatics all around us. (44)

The split within Campbell is symptomatic of an illness within his society, as Campbell suggests in his decision to re-dedicate his book:
I would prefer to dedicate it to
one familiar person, male or female,
widely known to have done evil while
saying to himself, "A very good me,
the real me, a me made in heaven, is
hidden deep inside." (xii)

The person he decides to re-dedicate the book to is himself,
a man convinced that his art served good, and that, by exten­sion, the real Campbell served good, while as a public figure
he served evil. The book could easily have been dedicated to
a number of other people, all similarly convinced that they too
are serving good. Nearly every person in the novel is possessed
of a dual personality. Each has the ability to justify his
actions as good by reference to the side he is on. Campbell
is the only one who does not have such a conviction. When he
considers his role as a propagandist he reflects: "I can
hardly deny that I said them. All I can say is that I didn't
believe them, that I knew full well what ignorant, destructive,
obscenely jocular things I was saying" (133).

Campbell is surrounded by men who believe absolutely
in what they are doing in the war. What these men lack is
the faculty for critical judgment. Men like Hoess, Jones,
and O'Hare have the ability to overlook simple, basic truths
and so suffer no guilt as a result of their actions. They
see no contradictions in what they say and do. Such an
ability to overlook inconsistencies and absurdities allows such a disparate group as Jones, Father Keeley, Vice-Bundesfueher Krapptauer and the Black Fuehrer to exist together in the same household. Campbell, on the other hand, cannot overlook any pertinent facts:

...I have never tampered with a single tooth in my thought machine, such as it is. There are teeth missing, God knows—some I was born without, teeth that will never grow. And other teeth have been stripped by the clutchless shifts of history—

But never have I wilfully destroyed a tooth on a gear of my thinking machine. Never have I said to myself, "This fact I can do without." (163)

Campbell's awareness of the implications of his actions gives him a feeling of uncertainty and lack of purpose which is shared by none of the people who serve the numerous causes, each of which claims to be the authentic one. Vonnegut's criticism of Campbell is implicit in the novel where Vonnegut allows Campbell to speak by turns in tones which suggest self-pity, irony and undisguised candor. Campbell pretended to be a Nazi agent, and he was one. The consequences of his involvement in the Nazi cause make him culpable for the crimes which, as a propagandist, he encouraged. On the other hand, Vonnegut is aware of the fact that
certain accidents of birth can bring about great changes in human destiny. His own feeling is that "If I'd been born in Germany, I suppose I would have been a Nazi, bopping Jews and gypsies and Poles around, leaving boots sticking out of snowbanks, warming myself with my secretly virtuous insides" (viii). There is no solution to this problem except in the hope that people will learn to penetrate the levels of deception which prevent them from seeing their true motives. You are what you say you are, Vonnegut claims, and it is exceedingly dangerous to disguise the fact with rationalizations. This point is made quite clear by the example of Arpad Kovacs, one of Campbell's assigned guards in the Israeli prison. During the war Kovacs masqueraded as an S.S. officer while, in reality, he was a Jew. Kovacs perceives no discrepancies between his two personalities and takes pride in his ability to function effectively with two identities. A similar escape is not open to Campbell because his actions as a Nazi propagandist were so "obscenely public" and because he can find no authentic cause with which to identify. He is neither German nor American, so those who have a desire to project their own hatred or gratitude upon some object can easily use Campbell. He may be imprisoned deservedly because of his crimes against humanity, but the self-righteousness of those
who seek to punish him is hypocritical. He is no more guilty of war crimes than in Kovacs, who, by a curious turn of fate, is the jailer and not the prisoner.

Campbell is in every way the sacrificial victim and mirror of the society in which he lives. In this respect he resembles nearly all of Vonnegut's protagonists, but chiefly Malachi Constant. He stands as a public image of his fellow citizens and as an indictment of their way of life. He lives in a world in which deception rather than honesty prevails and in which it is impossible to ascertain with any degree of accuracy whether a person's public statements and actions have any relation to his personal convictions. Like so many of Vonnegut's protagonists, Campbell lives in a world in which men are engaged incessantly in creating personae to disguise what they believe to be their real selves. Such a defence against the fear of being discovered permits the numerous double agents in the novel to adopt roles which are absolutely contradictory. When everyone pretends to be always other than they claim it becomes impossible to trust anyone or to believe in anything. Such a situation easily creates a feeling of paranoia since no one is sure who anyone else is. In such a society nothing is substantial; everything is capable of distortion and re-interpretation.
Messages appear in abundance but carry a multiplicity of meanings and inferences. Campbell's public statements are an example of such a situation. At times even he, operating as a double agent, is unaware of the contents of the messages that he delivers. At one point, he transmits news of his wife's death without even being aware of it.

Campbell discovers that even his most private statements are capable of distortion. A Russian soldier seizes Campbell's plays, poems and diary, and he translates and publishes them under another name. The purpose of the translation is to provide vicarious emotional fantasies to a nation burdened with the responsibilities of an overwhelming external reality. Campbell's former belief that his most private thoughts and ideals were secure from interference by the outside world collapses as he finds that his works are capable of distortion like anyone else's:

The part of me that wanted to tell the truth got turned into an expert liar!
The lover in me got turned into ugliness such as the world has rarely seen before.

(150)

He learns that just as Hitler can respond emotionally to the Gettysburg Address, so the Russians can respond to his works, distorting them as they do so.
Campbell continues to be the object over which competing factions struggle even after the war. His private life is further exposed and used by his friend George Kraft and his wife's sister, Resi Noth. Kraft, who is the organizer of a Russian spy ring, masquerades as the widower and recluse in New York city. Resi, who is also a Russian agent, assumes her sister's identity in an attempt to find a place for herself in Campbell's life. Like everyone else, she is an agent of deception and her mission is not to participate in any rejuvenation of Campbell's life but to assist in his transportation to the Soviet Union where he can be used as a public example of that complicity between the Germans and the Americans in the war.

The relationship that Campbell has with George Kraft and Resi Noth provides a temporary possibility of a return to a state of affairs very similar to that enjoyed by Campbell prior to the war. Campbell's slow unfolding reaches the point at which he entertains the possibility of resuming his writing once again. He is in the fortunate position of being able to re-capture the experience of an earlier idyllic relationship with his wife and his best friend Heinz Schildknecht by drawing close to Resi Noth and George Kraft. With the return of stability to his life Campbell begins to think once more of the re-establishment of his world.
He is offered the chance to escape from the obligations of living in a highly organized society. The plan which is finally agreed upon is a flight to some exotic climate, "one of the warm places purported to be Edens" (119). This dream of escape to some simple, pastoral setting looks back to similar dreams by Proteus and Constant and anticipates similar dreams by later protagonists.

Campbell's dream vanishes under the pressure of reality. There can be no escape, for there is no one with whom to share the dream. Kraft simply plans to transport Campbell to inhospitable Russian courts. Kraft can mercilessly sacrifice his friend to an unjust trial because he, like everyone else in the novel, has developed a defense against compassion and honesty. Kraft is not the widower and recluse he claims to be; nor is he the organizer of a Russian espionage unit in the United States as he thinks he is. Kraft discovers that he is no more in control of his fate than anyone else is. His espionage ring has been infiltrated effectively by American agents, and so his triumphal return to Russia will bring not accolades, but death. Kraft should be humiliated and crushed by his exposure to ridicule and failure, but he has developed a means of escape by assuming a role which is concealed by his public activities as an espionage agent:
Kraft thought the situation over, and schizophrenia rescued him neatly. "None of this really concerns me," he said and his urbanity returned.
"Why not," said the boss.
"Because I'm a painter," said Kraft.
"That's the main thing that I am." (165)

Kraft's identification with his role as an artist is a form of madness resulting from his extreme removal from the concerns of life around him and his defence is, like Campbell's, an inadequate one. Campbell learns that his retreat into the world of art is insufficient. Such a retreat could not save his wife's life, nor could it preserve intact his "nation of two". As a defence against submersion in a mad and chaotic world such a retreat has disadvantages as well as advantages. After the war, thinking of yet another escape, this time through morphine, Campbell reflects:

But then I understood that I was already drugged. I was feeling no pain. My narcotic was what had got me through the war; it was an ability to let my emotions be stirred by only one thing—my love for Helga. This concentration of my emotions on so small an area had begun as a young lover's happy illusion, had developed into a device to keep me from going insane during the war, and had finally become the permanent axis about which my thoughts revolved. (47)

By saving himself from madness, Campbell has condemned him-
self to suffer from his feelings of guilt. Although Campbell longs for some escape from the pressure of involvement in society he discovers that there can be no successful escape from his public obligations. He can only look from a distance at possible paradises such as the "little Eden" (30) which his New York apartment overlooks. Children play there heedless of the pain and misery of life in his purgatory. Like several other of Vonnegut's protagonists, Campbell longs for an idyllic setting where he can be at peace with himself.

Instead of being offered an opportunity to remove himself to an ideal state, Campbell is condemned to live in a purgatorial state in which no judgment is passed upon him. He is forced to bear his guilt and is given no opportunity to be tried for his crimes. With the collapse of his "nation of two" Campbell is deprived of all attachments. As a "stateless person" he has made no provisions to enter the world. By a cruel turn of fate he is freed and allowed to live in the world without being a part of it. He is simply ignored to the point where it is safe and to resume the use of his own name. A man with no identity and whose own name is little more than a fiction, Campbell becomes a recluse in one of the largest cities of the world. He is the sacrificial victim who is expelled from every nation because
his crimes are so "obscenely public." Campbell's guilt is, however, no greater than that of any of the other characters in the novel. He has the special misfortune of having recorded his crimes on tape and in print. The messages which he delivered, however, were the messages of others. In this respect Campbell's guilt is shared by every person who benefitted in some way from his broadcasts. Such persons include not only minor functionaries like Werner Noth, crazed patriots like the Reverend Jones, but also prominent persons like Hitler and Roosevelt.

When Campbell is freed through the secret intercession of Wirtanen and returned to the "mainstream of life" (167) he is incapable of movement. He realizes that freedom to go anywhere means that he has no freedom at all since there is nowhere for him to go. What had gotten him through so many years was a curious ambivalence towards his fellow creatures, but now even his curiosity has left him. Without his own curiosity and a sense of direction provided by someone other than himself, Campbell is paralyzed. Standing on the street, he is finally told to move along by a policeman. Incapable of making personal decisions, he is once again manipulated by external forces.

Campbell's decision to surrender to Israeli courts
results from his realization that complete freedom such as he has been granted is intolerable. The Jews promise him severe and decisive punishment. His initial fear of being judged becomes a fear of not being judged. He cannot accept the gratitude of bigots like O'Hare or lunatics like Jones and his colleagues, and he can no longer live with the hatred of the Jews pursuing him, so he surrenders to the Israeli courts.

Kraft's affidavit, sent in defence of Campbell, is, like Campbell's own submissions, further evidence of his guilt. "He offers the opinion that I was an ardent Nazi, but that I shouldn't be held responsible for my acts, since I was a political idiot, an artist who could not distinguish between reality and dreams" (189). Wirtanen's letter contains the necessary information to bring about Campbell's freedom. If Campbell accepted Wirtanen's offer of assistance he would once more be returned to the "mainstream of life." He would be assured of the praise of those who had formerly condemned him. However, Campbell neither deserves nor desires their praise, and he cannot bear the kind of freedom such an escape would provide him. He is a "stateless person" and no court decision can ever alter that fact. Finally, Campbell elects to be his own tribunal and in the last moments of his
life pronounces sentence upon himself. His decision to commit suicide results from the steady elimination of the reasons for continuing to live.

Campbell's gesture is one of renunciation. He refuses to accept society's judgment because it is not a fair one. He rejects any obligation to a society in which he never actually participated. Throughout his life he lived for his private world, and with the disappearance of that, he has absolutely nothing to live for. His gesture is one of hopelessness, for he cannot participate in a world the majority of whose members are satisfied to "hate without reservation" (181) and to identify themselves with causes which permit them to exercise their capacity for creating misery. On the other hand, he cannot live securely in a private world which attempts to ignore the realities of the external world. Campbell relies too exclusively upon the resources of his "nation of two" just as a later protagonist—Eliot Rosewater—relies upon his involvement with society to the exclusion of his nation of two. Campbell's world is too restrictive just as Rosewater's is too inclusive. Both men are defeated by their attempts to live within the boundaries of the worlds they build.

Howard Campbell takes his place as the third of Vonnegut's protagonists to be defeated in his attempts to mediate between public obligations and personal needs. The
alternatives which face him are both unacceptable. He cannot live comfortably in a corrupt society, nor can he live exclusively in an idyllic and romantic world. In *Cat's Cradle* Jonah faces a similar dilemma because, like the three previous protagonists, he is a utopian dreamer who hopes that the world can become a more hospitable place within which to live. He is aware, too, of the many factors which mitigate against such a view. In this novel Vonnegut invents the religion of Bokonon to assist him in his explanation of the way in which an individual must mediate between public and private responsibilities.
I am horror-struck at this antemosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale, which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all humane ages are over.

Moby-Dick
Herman Melville

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war? What is the way to the place where the light is distributed, or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?

Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the drops of ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven? The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

The Book of Job

I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on Earth we, collectively, have been up to.

Cat's Cradle
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
CHAPTER IV

CAT'S CRADLE

The absurd patterns which men invent and then attempt to force other men to live within are nowhere more effectively satirized than in Vonnegut's fourth novel, *Cat's Cradle* (1963). The imaginary island of San Lorenzo, a potential exotic paradise, provides the setting for this novel. The people of San Lorenzo have no firm convictions of their own, nor do they have any defence against those who appear on the island and try to impose their will on the natives. The history of San Lorenzo is a history of colonial domination by the major mercantile powers of the western world. Each of these countries claimed the tiny island, but gave up all claims when challenged by another nation. The residue left by these numerous colonial incursions is the Catholic Church and Castle Sugar, Inc. These two organizations symbolize the two major patterns of western civilization -- religion and capitalism.

The San Lorenzans are apathetic towards any foreign
domination of their island. They accept each new system as it is imposed upon them, although they pay little heed to theories of religion or government. Their most pressing concern is with basic survival, and none of the foreign powers has done anything to significantly change the fate of the San Lorenzans who seem to be condemned forever to lives of poverty and disease.

It is against this peculiar backdrop that Vonnegut has his characters, most of whom are Americans, perform. Each of the characters in the novel is attracted to San Lorenzo for some reason and each brings with him certain preconceptions of how a society should operate. San Lorenzo is like a piece of putty out of which those who have an interest can make whatever shape they wish.

The shapes or patterns which people make are symbolized by the cat's cradle, a labyrinth of string which assumes a significant shape if it is properly manipulated. However, the string figures may quickly turn to tangles if the person makes a mistake. The string figures are extremely fragile and are easily destroyed just as those tenuous patterns that human beings create are easily destroyed.

Using the example of this child's game, Vonnegut examines man's curiosity about the presence of a design in his world.
Adults like Felix Hoenikker hold string mazes up in front of their children's faces and invite them to see the design in the string. Some see the pattern which is supposed to be there; others, like little Newt, believe that "A cat's cradle is nothing but a bunch of X's between somebody's hands, and little kids look and look and look at all those X's..." "And?" "No damn cat, and no damn cradle." There may be no cat and no cradle, but most people are intrigued by the possibility that within the maze of string there is a distinguishable form. Thus, within the novel, the profusion of social, political and religious patterns reflects the need of most people to perceive meaning and order within society and within the universe. Somewhere behind the forms of the real world there may lurk the face of God, and men of all ages have been tempted to search the labyrinths of the world for evidence that He exists within the pattern which seems to be in evidence.

Jonah, the protagonist of this novel, is involved in an exploration and evaluation of a number of these patterns. He resembles the protagonists of the former novels in his dissatisfaction with his present mode of existence. His life in New York City is routine and monotonous and he summarizes it, appropriately, in a statistical fashion:
"When I was a younger man—two wives ago, 250,000 cigarettes ago, 3,000 quarts of booze ago..." (11). Living within the pattern of life in America, Jonah feels that his existence is pointless and, like Malachi Constant, he seeks some meaningful course. Jonah is an idealist who resembles Proteus in his desire to improve the lot of his fellow man. He is a wanderer who travels, not to the stars, but to a tiny Carribean island. His self-conscious adoption of the name Jonah indicated his awareness of his mysterious but important role. He feels that "somebody or something has compelled me to be certain places at certain times, without fail. Conveyances and motives, both conventional and bizarre, have been provided" (11).

Jonah's decision to leave his routine life in America is not without precedent in Vonnegut's other novels. Jonah, however, demonstrates that he is aware of a further literary precedent when, imitation of the celebrated opening of Moby-Dick, he announces: "Call me Jonah" (11). Like Ishmael, Jonah is dissatisfied with his commonplace and unremarkable existence and seeks adventure by removing himself from his present environment. He shares with Ishmael a feeling that his destiny will somehow manifest itself gradually as his travels proceed. He overcomes the last traces of reluctance
when, upon seeing his name on a very old tombstone in Marvin Breed's shop, he concludes that "Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God" (50). He accepts the necessity of travelling in doubt, of being always in the midst of confusion.

Standing "in the middest", Jonah elects to follow the course of his karass, a team which, Bokonon says, does God's will without ever discovering what it is doing. Jonah makes it clear at the beginning of his book that, while it is not forbidden to try to discover the limits of a karass, one must be aware of "the folly of pretending to discover, to understand" (13). At the same time, he announces that "I intend in this book to include as many members of my karass as possible, and I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on Earth we, collectively, have been up to" (13). Jonah's decision to follow the direction set by his karass parallels Ishmael's decision to ship aboard the Pequod:

Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage, when others were set down for magnificent parts in high tragedies, and short and easy parts in genteel comedies, and jolly parts in farces—though I cannot tell why this was exactly; yet, now that I recall all the circumstances, I think I see a little into the springs and motives which being
cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased free will and discriminating judgment. 3

Jonah's narrative, like Ishmael's, attempts to make sense of the parts men play in the lives of other men and the parts men play in the cosmic drama. In the sense that Vonnegut returns to this theme in each of his novels, he shares Jonah's concern with such issues.

Not all people elect to follow the course of their karass. There are in the novel two other groups of individuals, those who belong to a granfalocon and those who belong to a duprass. A granfalocon is an artificial group of people held together by no very meaningful bond, and examples of such groups abound in the novel. Hazel Crosby, the main exponent of granfalonery, believes in national groups such as Americans and regional groups such as Hoosiers. Neither of these groups has any particular meaning for the members of a karass who may belong to different social classes, even to different nations. The novel satirizes those who, like the Crosbys, put their faith in institutions. Such people make the mistake of measuring everything by its relation to the institution. It is possible, therefore, for H. Lowe Crosby
to delight in seeing the effigies of "nearly every enemy freedom ever had" being riddled with bullets. The identification with an institution is a dangerous act, as Vonnegut makes clear in *Mother Night*. There, the White Christian Minutemen shoot with self-righteous pride at the effigies of nominal villains. The fascination with organizations accounts in part for the success of fascistic groups in America as well as in Germany.

While the Crosbys are gregarious and extroverted, the Mintons, their fellow travellers, are calm and introverted. The Mintons are as far removed from involvement with their fellow human beings at the one extreme as the Crosbys are at the other. Together, the Mintons form what Bokonon calls a dupress, a "sweetly conceited establishment" which "can't be invaded, not even by children born of such a union" (64). The Mintons are described with compassion, but their plight is a pathetic one. Minton experiences a severe split between his public personality and his private one. On the reviewing stand he delivers two speeches rather than one, the first an official ambassadorial speech, the second a barely audible and melancholy one offering no hope for a significant change in the destiny of human beings.

Horlick and Claire Minton are, like the Campbells in
Mother Night, the exclusive members of a "nation of two."
The complete self-sufficiency of such unions appears to attract Vonnegut, even though he recognizes the severe limitations of such an arrangement. A complete withdrawal from public affairs can be disastrous, as the case of Campbell demonstrates. The inadequacy of the Minton's union is shown when, standing on the wavering parapet, they decline to cross over to safety. They plunge to their deaths together in a dignified but useless manner.

Jonah has no satisfactory philosophy of life. He is as Mona describes him, a "man-with-no-religion" (142). His dissatisfaction with the lives that most men lead causes his wife to call him a "pessimist". However, he is also an idealist who has a desire to see the future of man improve. His utopian dream and the opportunity to implement it resemble that of McCabe and Johnson. He recognizes as they did that this impoverished little island will never rise above its own misery, and he is forced to imitate his predecessors' separation between the material and spiritual provisions.

Bokononism, the outlawed religion of San Lorenzo, provides the people with much-needed illusions, which become for them the everyday reality. According to Julian Castle, Bokonon originally set up his religion "cynically and playfully,"
but "when it became evident that no governmental or economic reform was going to make the people much less miserable, the religion became the one real instrument of hope. Truth was the enemy of the people, because the truth was so terrible, so Bokonon made it his business to provide the people with better and better lies" (118). Bokonon, a youthful follower of Gandhi, set about to invent a religion that had no substance in actuality. His warning, placed at the very beginning of The Books of Bokonon, reads: "Don't be a fool! It is nothing but foma" (177). His reason for inventing a religion which is based entirely on untruths is stated in one of his Calypsos:

I wanted all things
To seem to make some sense,
So we all could be happy, yes,
Instead of tense.
And I made up lies
So that they all fit nice,
And I made this sad world
A par-a-dise. (90)

In setting up his religion, Bokonon wished to satisfy one of the most recurrent needs of man—a desire to know his place in the scheme of things. Bokonon's religion includes all aspect of life and seeks to provide answers for man's questions about the purpose of his actions.

Bokonon allowed himself to be outlawed by McCabe because he realized "That a really good religion is a form of
treason" (118) and that, since neither the government nor religion can provide the necessary solace alone, the two must co-exist in a state of "dynamic tension" (74). As an outlaw, Bokonon is in a position to offer the people a possible alternative to their present condition without having to produce physical proof of his success. Bokonon and Trout, the science fiction writer whom Vonnegut uses so often to express his view concerning the creation of a utopia, offer imaginary worlds in which man's impulses toward perfection and happiness are realized. Bokonon's lies "that all fit nice" resemble the lies of the novelist, and are quite similar to the lies that Vonnegut assembles in the creation of his own art. However, Vonnegut does not avoid the truth in his novels, and in this respect he differs from Bokonon. Vonnegut's novel, which is also Jonah's novel, encompasses a plurality of views ranging from Bokononism to factual accounts of the discovery of ice-nine.

In Cat's Cradle Vonnegut creates all the lies that "fit nice"; but he also examines, within the context of the San Lorenzan paradise, the limits of such a world. Jonah, Vonnegut's means of exploring his fictional world, believes in the possibility of creating a utopia in San Lorenzo. Given the opportunity to implement his plan for establishing a utopia, he is forced to concede that the likelihood of
there ever being one is remote. The forces that oppose the construction of such a perfect state are both natural and created. The San Lorenzans can never participate in the creation of a utopia in actuality because, all efforts to the contrary, their lives remain as "short and brutish and mean as ever" (119). There is, however, a further reason that they can never achieve a state of happiness. There are those who seek, not to assist the San Lorenzans, but to control them for their own selfish ends. Such people bring to the tiny island a new dimension in truth and a more frightening example of the reality the islanders have had to encounter all along.

The most impressive visitor to the island is Franklin Hoenikker, the son of the nobel laureate physicist, Felix Hoenikker, the "father of the atom bomb." Franklin brings with him a tiny portion of ice-nine, a tiny chip of which has the potential to crystallize all moisture. As important as the chip of ice-nine is the attitude which Franklin brings with him to San Lorenzo. An outcast as a child, Franklin developed a secret life for himself, composed of intrigues, plans and schemes for controlling other people. Franklin brings the mentality of a frustrated child to his position as technical advisor to Papa Monzano, the Haitian
styled dictator."  Franklin is accustomed to scale model representations of life and he makes no concessions when he becomes involved with real people. In the basement of a hobby shop he constructs a "fantastic little country built on plywood, an island as perfectly rectangular as a township in Kansas" (56). Franklin is in total control of the world he builds and, like God, he can replace a mountain with a lake at will. Franklin's other childhood experience with forcing bugs to fight is related to his manipulation of the creatures in his world. Jonah refers to him as the "fugitive from justice, the model-maker, the Great God Jehovah and Beelzebub of the bugs in Mason jars" (59).

Franklin, the son of a brilliant inventor, is himself merely a technocrat who is concerned less with invention than with application. He uses his father's invention to advance his own career. However, he shares with his father a certain mental disposition; the two men are dedicated to truth. To Franklin the possession of truth means increased power and a greater extension of his will over others. Franklin's father devoted his entire life to the pursuit of truth without ever questioning the value of amassing tremendous compendia of facts.

Whatever may have been Felix Hoenikker's reasons for so dedicating himself to the pursuit of truth, his colleague,
Dr. Breed, carries on his own public relations campaign regarding the famous scientist. Asa Breed is convinced that nothing short of the truth can satisfy the human instinct to discover the purpose of existence. In an interview with Jonah he claims that "New knowledge is the most valuable commodity on earth. The more truth we have to work with, the richer we become" (36). There is, however, a great disparity between what the pure researchers consider valuable and what the average layman considers important. This point is clearly made in a scene in which Jonah interviews one of Dr. Breed's secretaries:

"Dr. Breed keeps telling me the main thing with Dr. Hoenikker was truth."
"You don't seem to agree."
"I don't know whether I agree or not. I just have trouble understanding how truth, all by itself, could be enough for a person." (43)

Jonah, too, finds it difficult to understand how truth, all by itself, is sufficient. The more he researches for his book about the destruction of Hiroshima, the more he becomes skeptical of truth and what it means for man.

Jonah is faced with the same problem that Howard Campbell faced in *Mother Night*. The two writers endeavor to "separate the real from the fake." The book which Jonah first proposed to write was entitled, *The Day the World Ended*. It was to be a "factual" account of what prominent Americans had done on
the day the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Jonah
tires of compiling data for his book as he discovers that
facts are by themselves unsatisfactory. *Cat's Cradle*, the
book Jonah eventually does write, includes much of the material
which *The Day the World Ended* might have contained. Beyond
this, *Cat's Cradle* includes information about the activities
of certain major personages on another day when the world
actually does end. He lives to see the most outrageous
fantasies become reality and from the outset he seems to
suspect that the borderline between fact and fiction is not
very clearly demarcated.

Jonah is, then, very early in his travels, "ripe for
Bokononism" (44). Jonah subscribes very easily to Bokononism,
for it appears to offer him a view of the world very much as
he would like to see it. The consoling lies of Bokonon
become increasingly more important to Jonah and to the rest
of the people on San Lorenzo as the threat of destruction by
means of ice-nine becomes reality. Ice-nine supplants poverty
and sickness as the overwhelming reality which the islanders
must confront and ice-nine threatens to destroy everything
instantly. The confident faith in progress which is made
possible through the stockpiling of quantities of truth
turns into a nightmare of uncertainty and confusion. The
Crosbys, who were content with their former existence, are absolutely helpless when thrown back upon their own devices. Hazel Crosby runs about crying, "American!" as though the destructive tornadoes cared about the nationality of their victims.

Ice-nine represents a serious threat to the foundations of Bokononism because, in a sense, it is the ultimate reality. Although many people survive the ravages of the storm-tossed world, few survive its aftermath. Confronted with the task of attempting to live in a world that is even more desolate than before the intrusion of Franklin Hoenikker, the islanders demand to be told the meaning of this latest outrage. They do what they never dared do before: they capture the holy man and force him to answer their questions directly. Bokonon's only reply to their demands that they be told the purpose of the destruction is that, apparently, whoever engineered the catastrophe wished everyone to die. The islanders, faced with no alternative, it seems, choose to follow the directions of the spurious holy man and die.

All of the messages of Bokonon which Jonah discovers following the destruction of the island contain cynical statements similar to those which he gave to the survivors of the disaster. However, Jonah is still sufficiently ideal-
istic to believe that where there is life there is the possibility of improving upon the present conditions. Jonah possesses a vague desire to persist, but it is not a course of action which he can defend with any conviction. Therefore, when Mona asks him to give her one reason for continuing to exist, Jonah is "slow to answer" (182). Jonah has tried to withdraw from his public obligations by retreating into a close relationship with Mona. However, he discovers that he can no more retreat into a private world than he can participate in a public world. He is as unsuccessful in discovering happiness with Mona as he is with his position as president of San Lorenzo.

Although he is surrounded by defeat and death, Jonah continues to believe that there is the possibility of altering the present course of events. Somehow he feels that his karass has an important message for him to deliver which he hopes will express an optimistic view. Everything following the destruction of San Lorenzo seems to point to defeat: the islanders choose death and Mona elects to join them. However, throughout his journey Jonah has preserved a respect for life. He learned that nihilism was not the course for him when the poet Krebbs senselessly ruined his apartment and killed his cat. From that point on Jonah steers a course between pessimism and optimism.
In his conversation with Philip Castle on the possibility of a writer's strike until mankind comes to its senses, he offers the opinion that a writer's strike would produce the same effect as the "firemen walking out" (156). The task of firemen, as Vonnegut makes quite clear in several of his novels, is to maintain a vigil which prevents a general conflagration. By extension, it is the writer's task to keep a vigil in order to prevent mankind from destroying itself. Despite frequent temptations to abandon his task, Jonah continues his vigil in an attempt, not only to prevent any ultimate destruction, but also to discover what significance there might be in the actions of those around him. Like Campbell's narrative, Jonah's is not only an attempt to "separate the real from the fake," but is also an attempt to examine numerous fantasies in order to discover which are beneficial and which are detrimental to the welfare of man.

Jonah benefits enormously from the fantasies provided by Bokonon but, in the face of such a harsh reality as ice-nine Bokononism can hardly prevail. Searching for some way out of his dilemma, Jonah reverts to his belief in the value of individual acts. He denounces Bokononism as a "depressing religion" and prefers to talk about utopias, "of what might have been, of what should have been, of what yet might be, if the world would thaw" (189). He refers to Bokonon as
"a jigaboo bastard" (90) who underestimates the perseverance of individuals.

The last few chapters of his narrative reveal that Jonah is caught between his desire to see the world thaw and come to life again and the cynicism of Bokonon who succumbs to the inevitability of his own apocalyptic predictions. Bokonon's analysis of the situation is deadly accurate, but his conclusions are not ones which Jonah can accept readily. Jonah's focus turns more and more to the distant mountain peak with its peculiar shape. Outlined against the sky, it resembles nothing so much as a whale:

It was in the sunrise that the cetacean majesty of the highest mountain on the island, of Mount McCabe, made itself known to me. It was a fearful hump, a blue whale, with one stone plug on its back for a peak. In scale with a whale, the plug might have been the stump of a snapped harpoon, and it seemed so unrelated to the rest of the mountain that I asked Frank if it had been built by men. (142)

Mount McCabe is, like Moby-Dick, a symbol of Leviathan. Jonah knows that his destiny, like that of Ahab, is connected with the pursuit and capture of Leviathan, proudest and most indomitable of all the beasts of creation. As God tells Job, Leviathan cannot be overcome by mere mortal man; it is as inaccessible to human beings as divine knowledge is.
The snapped harpoon in the hump of Mount McCabe symbolizes a former attempt to conquer the mountain but, because the harpoon is broken the conquest was, like Ahab's, a failure.

Ahab lashes out at the world which destroys men and then refuses to yield up any reason for the destruction. This is essentially the issue in *Cat's Cradle* where Mount McCabe comes to symbolize the terrifyingly ambiguous response of nature to the destiny of man. Who will answer for the terrible destruction caused by ice-nine? Those who created it are incapable of feeling any genuine remorse since they have dissociated themselves from other human beings. It is the muteness of the natural world that Mount McCabe symbolizes. In the final chapter Bokonon reveals to Jonah his desire to end by lying on his back on the top of the mountain and by being carried to his death by the force which refuses to yield its secret to the very end. Bokonon's proposed posture is one of defiance, but it is a defiance which differs from the rage of Ahab. The irony of Bokonon's final words are evident when compared to Ishmael's account of Ahab's passion:

```
He piled upon the whale's white hump
the sum of all the general rage and
hate felt by his whole race from
Adam down; and then, as if his chest
had been a mortar, he burst his
hot heart's shell upon it.  
```
Bokonon's choice is to climb the mountain and, lying on his back, using his "history of human stupidity" for a pillow, to make a statue of himself "grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who" (191). Bokonon's decision is to refuse to pursue the insane course any further. He indicates that he feels that life is all a joke played by an ineffectual God. All man can do under the circumstances is to refuse to be the plaything any longer.

Bokonon is, however, too old a man to attempt the ascent up the mountain. He offers the task to a younger man and the most likely candidate for the climb is Jonah. Vonnegut concludes his novel before Jonah reaches any decision. The alternative offered by Bokonon provides Jonah with a release from the problems of continuing to exist in a world that seems to will the destruction of all life. If Jonah were to follow Bokonon's advice, he would join the legions of dead who have already taken his advice. Jonah's narrative reveals that he instinctively rebels against such a decision to abandon life, but the alternative is not very encouraging for the world shows no signs of thawing. The tiny community which survives the disaster seems content to perpetuate the old system. Hazel Crosby industriously sews an emblem of one of her favorite granfaloons which she, ironically, wishes Jonah to
carry to the top of Mount McCabe. Franklin busies himself with experiments with bugs, thus repeating an earlier pattern.

It may be that Jonah, in a further imitation of Ishmael, does survive and does return to tell his story. As far as it is possible to ascertain, Jonah, like Ishmael, "has escaped to tell thee." He travels to the farthest rim of existence and returns to deliver his important message: unless the world does thaw, there can be no happy or secure future for man. While Jonah has no certain belief that this will happen, he does write his "funny book" (185) in an attempt to make the world thaw a little. In the following novel, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, Vonnegut presents another protagonist who attempts to create a utopia in a society that is, in its own way, rigid and frozen.
A love that does not discriminate seems
to me to forfeit a part of its own value,
by doing an injustice to its object; and
secondly, not all men are worthy of love.

_Civilization and its Discontents_
_Sigmund Freud_

It was a perfectly good word until Eliot
got ahold of it. It's spoiled for me
now. Eliot did to the word _love_ what
the Russians did to the word _democracy_.
If Eliot is going to love everybody,
no matter what they are, no matter what
they do, then those of us who love
particular people for particular reasons
had better find ourselves a new word.

_God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater_
_Kurt Vonnegut, Jr._
CHAPTER V

GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater (1965) shows a further development of Vonnegut's interest in a protagonist who attempts to satisfy his personal needs for happiness and security within a very highly structured pattern. The setting for this fifth novel is the United States, generally acknowledged to be a land of unlimited promise. The novel's protagonist, Eliot Rosewater, is like Vonnegut's other protagonists, an idealist who desires above all to assist people in their desire to live a happier life. He, too, is the heir to a considerable fortune, and he possesses power and influence; and he is the heir of a definite pattern which is difficult to escape. Like Malachi Constant, Rosewater inherits from his father a secret system for making large sums of money and for securing material happiness. The Rosewater Foundation and The Rosewater Corporation are confusing but ingenious structures which the Rosewaters use for amassing more capital. To the common man these elaborate
structures are completely mystifying.

Eliot's inheritance, Rosewater County, is "a rectangle on which other men—Rosewaters, mainly—had already made some bold designs." Eliot, like Paul Proteus before him, feels that he has inherited privilege unjustly at the expense of the less fortunate, and so he seeks to restore a balance by caring for those who have less than he does. He is a "Utopian dreamer" (14) whose initial belief is that he can convert his early idealism and his fortunate position into a program for helping the unfortunate. To this end he decorated expensive offices in the Foundation and "proclaimed them the headquarters for all the beautiful, compassionate and scientific things he hoped to do!" (17). He faces the same problems as the utopian planners in Cat's Cradle who attempt to construct a utopia on the hopelessly inhospitable and unproductive island of San Lorenzo.

Rosewater County, the setting for Eliot's social experiment, is like San Lorenzo, a small ghetto in an affluent civilization. It is a nearly forgotten reminder of a "Utopia gone bust" (13). According to Eliot's re-telling of the history of America, the promise of infinite bounty and equal opportunity that was offered to settlers in America become quickly lost. Rather than fulfilling its expectations
as a paradise for the settlers, America became the setting for the re-enactment of the story of Cain and Abel. Eliot's self-proclaimed task is to redress the injury done to those who have been unfortunate enough not to have secured wealth. History and instinct convince him that he owes his wealth and position, not to his relatives, but to "the rickety sons and grandsons of the pioneers" (33). His true home lies in "the once green hills of Kentucky, the promised land of Dan'l Boone" (34).  

Eliot Rosewater, like so many of Vonnegut's other protagonists, feels that he has a certain destiny to fulfill and that this destiny is unavoidable. As a member of the Rosewater family he is manipulated by the structure of which he is a part. However, he resembles Jonah in his desire to follow a course which is more natural and which will lead him to his purpose. He identifies himself with a figure in search of a purpose:

Maybe I flatter myself when I think that I have things in common with Hamlet, that I have an important mission, that I'm temporarily mixed up about how it should be done. Hamlet had one big edge on me. His father's ghost told him exactly what to do, while I'm operating without instructions. But from somewhere something is trying to tell me where to go, what to do there, and why to do it. Don't worry, I don't hear voices. But there is this feeling that I have a
destiny far away from the shallow and preposterous posing that is our life in New York. And I roam. And I roam. 3 (31)

Eliot's letter to his wife states the intention of nearly everyone of Vonnegut's protagonists, each of whom is "operating without instructions". He wanders in search of his true home and his true responsibilities. He appears to be aware of a burden of guilt which he, as the descendant of the Rosewaters, bears for his ancestor's "cupidity unlimited" (13). He also feels a burden of guilt for having accidentally killed several firemen during the war. His resolve is, like that of Constant who has killed his best friend, to cause less rather than more pain.

Eliot's idealism resembles that of Proteus and Constant, but it is also a development of ideas held by Jonah, McCabe and Bokonon in Cat's Cradle. Eliot never grows out of his youthful idealism to become cynical as Bokonon does. He clings to his childhood dream of being a mascot at the firehall. Eliot's terrible fear of the earth being consumed by fire derives from his experience in the war. It also looks forward to the description of the fire-bombing of Dresden in Slaughterhouse-Five, a novel in which Eliot reappears. Like Jonah before him he imagines the imminent destruction
of the world.

Eliot also shares Jonah's concern with the difficulties of writing. Eliot is a writer who is contemptuous of art and its ability to satisfy any of the needs of man. Eliot, formerly a great patron of the arts, criticizes them for their artificial separation from the common people. He abandons his unfinished novel and dedicates himself instead to the detailed accounts of people's lives which he records in his *Doomsday Book*. Inside its pages only the barest facts are recorded, and with recurrent monotony. The book, unlike his uncompleted novel, is completely factual and objective. It lists only the most urgent demands and records only the most abbreviated details about the lives of those with whom he comes in contact. His *Doomsday Book* is, in a sense, an alternative to comparatively useless works of fiction. It records only the truth about people and does not embellish the truth with any lies. In this respect Eliot's *Doomsday Book* resembles Jonah's proposed book *The Day the World Ended*, but it is quite different from *Cat's Cradle*, the book Jonah actually does write. Eliot dedicates himself to the creation of a living work of art:

*I'm going to love these discarded Americans, even though they're useless and unattractive. That is going to be my work of art.* (36)
Unlike Howard Campbell, who devotes himself to the creation of literary works of art, Eliot devotes himself to human ones. Campbell, at one extreme, dissociates himself from participation in the affairs of others by creating an impermeable shell around himself and his wife. Eliot Rosewater goes to the opposite extreme when he elects to devote himself selflessly to the improvement of the lot of others.

The desire for change and improvement among human beings leads Eliot to value unsophisticated artistic expressions more than the "classics" or pretentious ones. His favorite poem is a piece of graffiti whose theme is the necessity for consideration of the needs of others. Eliot is critical of a serious work like Aida where so much energy seems to be wasted in the expression of so little. Perhaps thinking of the suffocating smoke during a fire, Eliot warns the hero and heroine who are enclosed in an air-tight vault not to waste oxygen by singing so strenuously. Eliot is obsessed with the urgency of communicating important ideas and is extremely impatient with those who go on at great lengths without saying anything important. Eliot's views cannot be taken entirely seriously, and yet, he does point out that it is urgent that certain vital communication be carried out swiftly, before it is too late.

Eliot is impressed by science fiction writers,
particularly Kilgore Trout because he addresses himself to truly important themes, literally cosmic themes. Unfortunately, they "can't write for sour apples" (18), and their range of themes is limited. They fail to acknowledge the importance of sex, style, and economics, subjects to which another writer whom Eliot subsidizes, Arthur Garvey Ulm, totally dedicates himself. Ulm's fantasy is, after all the pedantic references have been recognized, a simple tale about the desire for self-gratification. Kilgore Trout's novels share the technique of fantasy but employ it as a means of suggesting alternatives to the world as it is.

The differences between Ulm and Trout reflect, on one level, an important difference between Howard Campbell and Eliot Rosewater. Campbell's total preoccupation with his relationship with his wife, which he records in his Memoirs of a Polygamous Casanova, contrasts with Eliot's preoccupation with society. Both men suffer from a split between their private and public selves. This split is evident in the works of Ulm and Trout as well. Eliot's wife Sylvia becomes estranged as a result of his bestowing all his "uncritical love" (56) upon the members of Rosewater County. There is really no role for her to play, since in his devotion to the welfare of the public, Eliot is "no particular sex
at all" (157). In his attempt to satisfy all the needs of the members of his community he overlooks the needs of his own wife. Eliot's wife, like Paul Proteus' wife, is attracted to a man whose goals are less public than her husband's. Anita Proteus abandons her husband in favor of the attractions of Shepherd, a man of fewer talents but more personal ambition than her husband. When she suffers her first nervous collapse, Sylvia Rosewater seeks the company of socially uncommitted people. Her romantic desire is to faint "in the arms of a tall, dark stranger, into the arms, hopefully, of a double spy" (44). Eliot's wife seems the more sensitive of the two women because she attempts at least to participate in her husband's utopian dreams. She reigns for a while as the queen of Rosewater Mansion, but her capacity for dispensing "uncritical love" is not nearly as great as her husband's.

The disease which Sylvia Rosewater suffers is diagnosed as samaratrophia, an "hysterical indifference to the troubles of those less fortunate than oneself" (41). The disease is the result of an irreconcilable split between private needs (in this case, personal love from her husband) and public demands. The disease is actually quite rare because it only properly "attacks those exceedingly rare individuals who reach biological maturity still loving and wanting to help
their fellow man" (42). While there may be no specific cause for samaratrophia, the disease is caused by the recognition by the senses that social involvement does not appease the conscience, "that it (the conscience) continues to shriek, and they note, too, that the outside world has not been even microscopically improved by the unselfish acts the conscience has demanded" (42). Enlightened Self-Interest takes over in such a case as Sylvia's.

For Sylvia, the dilemma faced by her and Eliot is insoluble. Although she and her husband "listened tirelessly to the misshapen fears and dreams of people who, by almost anyone's standards, would have been better off dead, gave them love and trifling sums of money" (40), there is no appreciable change in their lives. Far from restoring to the common man the dignity and pride that once was his, Eliot creates a community of helpless people who depend more and more upon his parental vigilance. Eliot becomes for these people the embodiment of religion, government and family. As Diana Moon Glampers, one of Eliot's wards, tells him as he is leaving Rosewater County for the final time:

You're my church group! You're my everything! You're my government. You're my husband. You're my friends. (172)
Eliot's fanatical desire to love unselfishly every person who needs it places him in the ridiculous position of being responsible for satisfying the demand of this sixty-eight year old virgin who has never had anyone to love her. Eliot offers her love but is incapable of giving her anything beyond a few consoling words. The demands of such people as Glampers upon Eliot are enormous and, of course, ultimately impossible to satisfy. His idealistic desire to help the helpless is fine in theory, but it is wildly impractical. There is a great disparity between Eliot's ideal love for all the helpless creatures who are the "children" of Rosewater County and the reality of attempting to apply that ideal love to everyday experience.

Eliot feels the burden of having to satisfy the demands of so many people. In attempting to help these underprivileged people, he reduces himself to their condition. He does exactly what McAllister warned Stewart Buntline would happen to him if he attempted to distribute his wealth amongst those who need it. Buntline, one of Eliot's foils in the novel, takes the lawyer's advice. The result for the frustrated idealist is alcoholism and boredom. Eliot, who refuses similar advice from his father, becomes, like those he seeks to help, progressively more alcoholic and his health deteriorates.
Eliot's awareness of the great price he must pay for his dedication to the poor reveals itself in conversations with his wife and father. He attributes his physical and emotional exhaustion to a "bad connection" (86). Eliot's father is the strongest critic of his son's behavior and constantly reveals the absurdity of his son's position. He objects to Sylvia's use of the word "love" to describe anything to do with Eliot:

It was a perfectly good word—until Eliot got hold of it. It's spoiled for me now. Eliot did to the word love what the Russians did to the word democracy. If Eliot is going to love everybody, no matter what they are, no matter what they do, then those of us who love particular people for particular reasons had better find ourselves a new word. (65)

The Senator offers no positive alternative except to disregard the demands of the common people, but he does point to a weakness in Eliot's philosophy. General, "uncritical love" of the kind Eliot professes is simply not possible. The ambiguity of Eliot's response to callers points to this same conflict between a desire to help everyone and a knowledge that such a feat is impossible:

Rosewater Foundation
How Can We Help
You? (49)

Some of Eliot's callers point to a similar weakness in his philosophy. How can a man who loves everybody love anybody
particular? Diana Moon Glampers wonders who would care if she died:

"This would be a mighty sad town, dear, if that ever happened."
"Who'd care?"
"I'd care."
"You care about everybody. I mean who else?"
"Many, many, many people, dear."

(58)

Although Eliot is unable to appease the woman, he consoles her temporarily more by the sound of his voice than by what he says.

Although Eliot never allows himself to admit that he is not successful in his project, there are signs that he recognizes his own failure. Unable to live completely in the reality of Rosewater County, he escapes more and more often into intoxication. However, he does, have a strong defence against attacks from outside. He has, the doctor tells Sylvia, a "massively defended neurosis" (28). His father's persistence and the increasing evidence that Eliot's goodwill mission to Rosewater County is a failure begin to affect Eliot. Finally, it is Senator Rosewater who breaks down his son's defence against intrusion from personal contact. Eliot is forced to realize that, while ideally man may love his fellow man, in reality certain distinctions
must be made. Eliot cannot treat his father like any other caller at the Foundation. Although Senator Rosewater bears no love for mankind generally, he does point to the necessity of individual love. His tirade against Eliot centers on this subject:

"Love!" the Senator echoed bitterly.
"You certainly loved me, didn't you? Loved me so much you smashed up every hope or ideal I ever had. And you certainly loved Sylvia, didn't you?" (160)

The repeated references to personal relationships have a profound effect upon Eliot, who knows that he has sacrificed one type of relationship for another:

Eliot uncovered his ears, finished dressing, as though nothing special had happened. He sat down to tie his shoelaces. When these were tied, he straightened up. And he froze as stiff as any corpse.

The black telephone rang.
He did not answer. (160)

Eliot's inability to move is the result of having rejected one way of life without discovering an alternative to it. In this respect he resembles Howard Campbell, whose private life is as exclusive as Eliot's public life is inclusive. Both men freeze when faced with the disintegration of their worlds and forced into the opposite situation. Eliot is no
more prepared to resume his responsibilities as a member of
the fourteenth wealthiest family in the United States than
Campbell is to participate in a world he has rejected.
Eliot's schizophrenia, his split between public and private
selves, is, like Campbell's, finally overpowering. Each of
the men suffers a nervous breakdown as a result of his
inability to reconcile two opposing forces within himself.

Eliot's breakdown is immediately preceded by an
hallucination of a fire-storm he sees from the window of a
bus. Incapable of continuing on his own, Eliot is taken
to an asylum where attempts are made to restore him to
normal health. Among those who assist Eliot with his therapy
are Senator Rosewater and Kilgore Trout. After a full year of
treatment, during which time Eliot apparently showed
occasional signs of recovery, his father still continues to
offer his son pragmatic advice and is still able to assert
that his son's principal problem is booze:

"Keep away from booze, remember who you
are, and behave accordingly," the Senator
roundly declared. "And don't play God to
people, or they will slobber all over you,
take you for everything they can get,
break commandments just for the fun of
being forgiven—and revile you when you
are gone." (186)

Trout, on the other hand, maintains that Eliot's experiment
in Rosewater County proves that "people can use all the uncritical love that they can get" (186). Trout claims that Eliot's experiment has been a success, that it may teach others it is possible to extend love to "millions upon millions of people" (187).

Trout is the spokesman for an optimistic view, and Senator Rosewater is the spokesman for a cynical, pessimistic view. Trout's idealism and Senator Rosewater's cynicism are carefully weighed by Eliot, whose breakdown has erased a good portion of his memory of the past years. With his mind virtually a blank, Eliot is forced to make a decision which will alter decisively the future of the Rosewater fortune and his decision reflects the hopeless paradox which faces him. By proving his sanity, Eliot merely perpetuates a system which is slowly destroying the fibre of life in America and turns his back on all those he sought to help. The alternative, however, is equally hopeless. By admitting paternity of all those children reputed to be his, he maintains his ties with the mass of unloved and unwanted people and reverts to his former hopeless state. Either decision means for Eliot that the balance between private and public demands will be irreversibly upset.

If he accepts his role as father and as husband of
countless women, he must reject his role as husband of Sylvia. His final words, spoken in the spirit of Christ, epitomize the idealism and absurdity of his gesture. "Be fruitful and multiply" (190), Eliot enjoins his followers, but Eliot himself "Begat not a soul" (15). Eliot's final words will provide Norman Mushari, the lawyer for Fred Rosewater, with the necessary proof that Eliot does consider himself to be something of a Messiah. He is asked to perform spiritual services for some people, including baptizing infants. At every turn the role of savior is thrust upon Eliot, and he seems capable of repudiating it. He rejects his father's warning not to "play God to people" and reverts to his role as Messiah. The conclusion of the novel reflects the failure of Rosewater to reconcile the demands of his conscience with the demands of his wife and father. His final gesture is, like that of Howard Campbell, one of rejections. Both he and Campbell reject worlds in which they can find no comfortable place.

Campbell escapes from reality by ignoring the political and social forces about him. He concentrates, instead, upon his self-created world of romance where there are heroes who admire good and hate evil. Eliot is equally immersed in a fantasy world in which all men live harmoniously and happily together. His world of art is not a written one but a real
one. Using his wealth and power, he attempts to create a utopia for all the members of Rosewater County, but he is as incapable of living within the confines of his created world as Howard Campbell is incapable of living within his. Eliot's utopia fails because it cannot overcome reality. He learns, like Proteus and Jonah, that there can be no utopia, that men remain selfish and cruel towards one another and insist upon competing with one another for power. Eliot also learns that utopias are not possible because, despite all his efforts to the contrary, life remains "as short and brutish and mean as ever."

In the final analysis, Eliot may be simply "a drunkard, a Utopian dreamer, a tinhorn saint, an aimless fool" (14), a man who seeks to appease a guilty conscience resulting from his war experience and his recognition that he has no special right to the fortunate position he holds in society. Undoubtedly, there is something of simple appeasement in some of Eliot's gestures. He frequently offers money in "trifling sums" as a substitute for genuine concern. Nevertheless, he is an embodiment of the hopeless paradox which confronts each of Vonnegut's protagonists.

Although Eliot's attempts to lie about reality or to pretend that squalor and misery can be replaced by compassion
and happiness are doomed to the same failure that overtakes the attempts of each of Vonnegut's utopian dreamers, Eliot differs significantly from the former protagonists. Proteus, Constant, and Campbell each succumb to the pressures exerted upon them by the societies in which they live. The three novels all end in defeat and death, either physical or symbolic. However, in Cat's Cradle Vonnegut leaves room for reasonable doubt about Jonah's final gesture. If he accepts Bokonon's advice, he will perish like the former protagonists. If he "escapes to tell thee" as Ishmael does, his book may be read as a testimonial of the determination of the individual to survive despite overwhelming odds against such a survival. Eliot's decision is quite clear. He chooses his living work of art and his final words explain his determination to persevere. That his final act of acceptance must also be, paradoxically, an act of relinquishment, is one of the book's telling ironies.

Vonnegut's most recent attempt to reconcile the desire for the creation of a better possible world with an actual world of suffering and defeat is Slaughterhouse-Five, in which the protagonist desperately attempts to re-invent himself and his universe. In this novel Vonnegut continues to examine the possibilities of entertaining "fantasies
of an impossibly hospitable world," but makes a significant personal development by projecting himself into his fictional world. Because the subject of the book is Vonnegut's experience as a prisoner of war in Dresden and because he includes himself along with a host of fictional characters, this novel takes on an added significance in the development of Vonnegut's personal view. This novel represents his most extensive effort to understand the attraction of fantasy and the necessity of reality in man's life. In this novel he attempts to pursue the possibilities of finding a successful positive solution to the paradox of lying about reality while being forced to acknowledge it.
(A part of each day -- or night) as they have been looking to me the past seven years: as being NON-EXISTENT. That is, there is nothing. That there is no God and no universe; that there is only empty space, and in it a lost and homeless and wandering and companionless Thought. And that I am that thought. And God, and the Universe, and Time, and Life, and Death, and Joy and Sorrow and Pain only a grotesque and brutal dream, evolved from the frantic imagination of that insane Thought........ And so, a part of each day Livy is a dream, and has never existed. The rest of it she is real, and is gone. Then comes the ache...

Writings of the Later Years
Mark Twain

'It was the first fancy city I'd ever seen,' he said. Then a siren went off and we went down two stories under the pavement into a big meat locker. It was cool there, with cadavers hanging all around. When we came up the city was gone.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. interviewed
by Richard Todd

They (Tralfamadorians) can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever.

Slaughterhouse-Five
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
CHAPTER VI

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

Vonnegut's experience as a writer of fiction has taught him that man's interpretation of existence lies somewhere between illusion and reality. In Slaughterhouse-Five, Vonnegut attempts once more to mediate between fact and fiction. He creates a fictional character who entertains wildly improbable fantasies of transport to a strange planet and who interprets all his experiences, including those pertaining to the war, in the light of his fantasies of time travel. In addition to the protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, the author appears in the novel as a participant in the action. Vonnegut shares with his character an experience involving the destruction of human life. The reality of the fire-bombing of Dresden is an undeniable fact. However, Billy Pilgrim and the author feel a distrust of reality and share a feeling that reality is too overwhelming for a sensitive individual to bear. Vonnegut is careful not to lose touch with reality completely, as Billy Pilgrim threatens to do throughout the novel. Although he acknowledges the authenticity of Billy's factual comments at several points in the novel, Vonnegut seems eager to examine the fantasies as well.

121
Throughout the novel there is a mingling of fact and fiction. When facts such as the secret raid on Dresden are as fantastic as the similar destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the line between fact and fiction becomes less clearly defined.  

Something of this uncertainty about the relationship of fact to fiction is evident in the opening words of the novel:

"All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true."  

For each assertion of fact or truth there is a qualification. In the first chapter Vonnegut establishes a few of the true parts of his narrative. In an effort to "separate the real from the fake", he also examines a number of records, documents and books about his subject. Two actual books help him to clarify his own subject. Mackay's book, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, explores, among other things, the reasons for the numerous historical crusades. Mackay, who is critical of all crusades, draws an important distinction between fact and fiction, or what he calls History and Romance. The Children's Crusade, like the Second World War, was a slaughter that has been romanticized by many. The memory of the war offers an occasion for many to fantasize about that which never was.
In *Slaughterhouse-Five* Roland Weary dreams of himself as a musketeer, a daring individual who outwits an entire army. Weary's delusion becomes quite clearly a case of false romanticizing when he unwittingly repeats a phrase from Mackay's book referring to the "the great services they (the musketeers) rendered to Christianity" (14, 44). The truth is, of course, that Weary is one of the least Christian participants in a crusade which renders no service whatsoever to Christianity.

The other book, *Dresden, History, Satage and Gallery*, provides an account of an earlier attack upon Dresden by the Prussians. Man, it seems, has always been ingenious enough to destroy the most beautiful of his creations, and to destroy them completely. Compared with the incendiaries used by the Allies, the Prussian bombs are primitive. Like the incendiaries, however, the Prussian cannonade "rebounded like rain" (15) and the effect of each attack is similar. The two attacks are strategically unimportant, and neither conquest is followed up by the victors. The destruction of Dresden by the Allies was part of some "design" unknown to almost everyone.

In this opening chapter Vonnegut enters his fictional world for the first time. He begins and ends his story about a fictional soldier in World War II with personal,
biographical details of his own life and participation in the same war. He explains that this "short and jumbled and jangled" (17) novel is the result of twenty years of thinking about what he once believed would be his first novel. He concludes that this "lousy little book" (2) is a failure, although originally "I thought it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen" (2).

He discovers that a simple report is not adequate to convey the sense of what the experience was really like. Nor are the conventional patterns or invented symmetries of fiction adequate to express the feelings of one who has participated in such a remarkable and chaotic event. In his novel Vonnegut dispenses with the traditional concept of beginning, middle, and end and, by so doing, gains the freedom to arrange episodes so that they form a new and unusual pattern.

The best description of Vonnegut's technique is the one provided by the Tralfamadorians when they explain their "novels" to Billy Pilgrim. There is no consistent narrative in Tralfamadorian novels; they are, like Vonnegut's novel, "schizophrenic telegrams" in which each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message—describing a situation, a scene.
We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time. (76)

This description is of interest because it points to both similarities and differences between it and Vonnegut's novels. The emphasis on conciseness which becomes an important feature of Vonnegut's style with the publication of *Mother Night*, is similar to the Tralfamadorian style. "The brief clumps of symbols separated by stars" is both the technique of the Tralfamadorian novels and Vonnegut's novels, in particular *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

The principal difference is an important one. The Tralfamadorians read their novels, not sequentially as Earthlings do, but all in one instant. Earthlings, however, do not have the capacity to experience Time and Space as a simultaneous moment rather than as a sequence of seconds or inches. This is not to say that Earthlings do not exist as the Tralfamadorians say they do. Photographic time exposures may serve to convince us that the Tralfamadorians are correct.
in seeing us as "great millipedes" and the universe as "luminous spaghetti" (75).

However, as Earthlings we do have certain limitations which photography cannot overcome. We have no way of seeing what lies in the future. The ease with which the Tralfamadorians perceive all time as though it were in stasis prevents them from properly understanding the human concern with the passing of time. The Tralfamadorians would be incapable of understanding, for example, Céline's exasperation at the disappearance of the people who crowd the streets:

Make them stop...don't let them move anymore at all...There, make them freeze... once and for all!...So that they won't disappear any more! 4

or Vonnegut's feeling when forced to move on:

There were lots of things to stop and see-- and then it was time to go, always time to go. (10)

or Billy Pilgrim's response to the singing of "That Old Gang of Mine":

Gee, that song went, but I'd give the world to see that old gang of mine. And so on. A little later it said, So long forever, old fellows and gals, so long forever old sweethearts and pals--God bless 'em-- And so on. (148)
The Tralfamadorian version of time has an important corollary. Not only do they experience all time simultaneously, but they have the ability to choose from among the moments which ones they wish to visit, and naturally they choose to experience the pleasant moments. The Tralfamadorians consider the Earthling concept of time simply an error, but one which can be corrected. In attempting to invent a metaphor which describes adequately the Earthling concept of time, the Tralfamadorian uses the example of a man on a moving flat car to whose head has been attached a long pipe through which he views a mountain range. This striking image serves its purpose, for it shocks the reader into a recognition of just now limited his senses are. The metaphor also contains some literal truth, for several times Vonnegut invokes similar images to describe his characters' limited perspectives. Billy Pilgrim journeys slowly across Europe while enclosed in a boxcar and his only view of the landscape is provided by a narrow ventilator shaft. The restriction placed upon Billy's sight is an external one imposed by the Germans, but he at least retains a desire to see and to enlarge his perspective. There are those whose narrow vision is self-imposed and who refuse to attempt to enlarge their
capacity to see. Such a person is Roland Weary:

His vision of the outside world was limited to what he could see through a narrow slit between the rim of his helmet and his scarf from home, which concealed his baby face from the bridge of his nose on down. (36)

Weary's preoccupation with fantasies of the Romantic Self obscures any vision of reality, and he is similar in this respect to many other characters in the novel. Short-sightedness is both a physical and a metaphysical affliction. Two very different people, Paul Lazarro and Wild Bob, also have this disease.

Billy Pilgrim is, significantly, an optometrist, one whose job is the improvement of vision. At one point in the novel Billy awakens to find himself staring into the "glass eyes of a jade green mechanical owl" which turns out to be his optometer, "an instrument for measuring refractive errors in eyes—in order that corrective lenses may be prescribed" (48). He assures the woman whom he is examining that her eyes are fine; she merely needs glasses for reading. Later, when Billy has experienced life on Tralfamadore, he attempts to convert Earthlings by convincing them of the possibilities of seeing in a new way. He offers a new means of perceiving time that has nothing to do with glasses,
which are limited devices (Billy wears tri-focals and sees in three dimensions).

He tries to convince people that it is possible to see in the fourth dimension, which is the realm of the imagination. As Trout explains in his novel, *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension*, the causes of mental disorders are in the fourth dimension which is inhabited by all the bizarre creatures of dreams. Earthling doctors "couldn't see those causes at all, or even imagine them" (90).

Billy is able to move in the fourth dimension, he says. He is a time traveller, which means that he visits different moments in his life, past, present and future:

Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and 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. (20)

Like all of Vonnegut's characters, Billy Pilgrim has no control over his actions. He has a part in a play which he did not write. Like a soldier, he is acting a very insignificant part in a scenario composed by a few leaders.

The time travelling which Billy does is cleverly described. Although the movements of Billy in time are "spastic", there are connections between the journeys. Usually, an image or
a memory takes Billy to a new location. The delousing showers in the prison camp, for example, remind Billy of a childhood bath which his mother gave him.

Billy claims that he actually does travel in time, but it may be that his imagination travels instead. All of his time travels, with the single exception of the one involving his death, are travels to the past, are the effects, possibly, of memory. Following the war, Billy's emotional state is quite unstable and, like so many veterans he quietly admits himself to an asylum. "They had come here voluntarily, alarmed by the outside world" (86). It was also not until his miraculous escape from the plane crash on Sugarbush mountain ("And I alone am excaped to tell thee") that Billy first began publicizing the fact that on the evening of his daughter's wedding he was kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians. His explanation for his reluctance to mention anything of this incident is rather weak: "I didn't think the time was ripe" (26). The reader has only Billy's word for the authenticity of his journeys in time and space since there is no way he can prove what he says. Also, several of his accounts are suspiciously similar to the plots of novels by Trout. The entire story of the zoo on Tralfamadore follows fairly closely the plot of Trout's The Big Board. Both he and Rosewater,
a fellow recluse from the outside world, "were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was a big help" (87).

Through the assistance of science fiction, Billy obtains a view of the world which is more acceptable to him than the one which accompanies his existence as an optometrist. Like so many of Vonnegut's protagonists, Billy is dissatisfied with his own personal success in a world in which so few are successful. Billy is essentially an idealist who finds in Trout's novels those necessary "fantasies of an impossibly hospitable world." With the assistance of Trout's novels Billy creates for himself a world in which pain, misery and death are inconsequential. In Billy's self-created world happiness is the norm. The Tralfamadorian zoo, the fantastic world to which Billy is transported, is one in which such incongruous figures as a blue movie starlet and a timid optometrist can exist together contentedly and fruitfully.

Kilgore Trout, the originator of Billy's fantasies, pursues Billy and his tale greedily, because Billy is acting out fantasies which Trout is eager to have substantiated. The Tralfamadorians teach Billy that all time is his to keep. They try to convince Billy that he can safely ignore pain and death because nothing can be gained by concentrating on
what is inevitable. The world ends, they claim, when a Tralfamadorian pushes a button and accidentally annihilates the universe. The ending is, like that of The Sirens of Titan, of no particular consequence. There is also no way of preventing such an occurrence because the "moment is structured that way" (101). They advise Billy to ignore the unpleasant moments and concentrate instead on the pleasant ones. The Tralfamadorians are convinced that Earthlings can learn to develop the ability to visit only happy moments:

That's one thing Earthlings might learn to do, if they tried hard enough. Ignore the awful times, and concentrate on the good ones. (101)

Frequently, Billy does travel in time to a more comfortable, more pleasurable moment. Not all of the moments visited by Billy, however, are pleasant ones. Some of the moments are harsh, and others are attractive but dangerous. Billy thinks frequently about death and how it feels to die. The idea is attractive to Billy, who thinks that birth and death are very similar:

This was when Billy first came unstuck in time. His attention began to swing grandly through the full arc of his life, passing into death, which was violet light. There wasn't anybody else there, or any thing. There was just violet light—and a hum.
And then Billy swung into life again, going backwards until he was in pre-birth, which was red light and bubbling sounds. And then he swung into life again and stopped. (37)

Billy's mind stops at a recollection of a swimming lesson during which he nearly drowned. The lesson, which is like an "execution", resembles numerous other threats to his existence. Long before he ever tells anyone about his time travels or flying saucers, Billy experiences innumerable deaths and threats of death. His father dies in a hunting accident; his dying mother cannot understand how she got so old; his wife dies of monoxide poisoning. The war provides Billy with further occasions for thinking about death. Throughout the war Billy longs for the violet hum which represents "no pain," and so he must be prodded, nearly beaten, before he can be convinced to go on.

Billy's attraction to the "violet hum" is, like his Edenic visions, an alternative to the problem of living in a world in which pain and misery overshadow happiness. When played backwards the war movie which Billy watches concludes with a return to Eden. The image of Eden also appears in the patina of the young German "angel's" boots. Billy, like many other Vonnegut protagonists, seeks a return
to a once beautiful and peaceful time symbolized by prelapsarian innocence.

The Tralfamadorians "enclose him a cylinder of purple light" (65) in order to transport him to a unique Eden which is in the form of a zoo where he is mated with Montana Wildhack. They teach Billy not to fear death or to mourn over the loss of anyone's life. If it were true, as the Tralfamadorians claim, that time is static rather than continually moving, then the expression, "So it goes", would be the most appropriate response to all misfortune:

Now, when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is, 'So it goes.' (23)

This statement, which follows the mention of each death in the novel, is an important one, for it reflects the attitude which is acquired by Billy through his experience on Tralfamadore. Billy's newly acquired attitude is summarized by the statement on the plaque hanging on his office wall and the comment which the narrator makes about the statement:

God Grant Me
The Serenity to Accept
The Things I Cannot Change,
Courage
To Change the Things I Can
And Wisdom Always
To Tell the
Difference
Nothing will ever change. Man remains as selfish and desirous of power as ever. Billy has learned Bokonon's lesson, but finds that with the aid of the Tralfamadorians, he can accept life rather than deny it. For him life does not have any special value, but he does not despise it either. He learns to overcome his desire to "quit and surrender and apologize and ask to be left alone" (159). In fact, Billy becomes active where he was formerly passive. He becomes engaged in the task of prescribing "corrective lenses for Earthling souls" (25). His fantasies give him the strength to overcome his paralysis and his desire to have done with life.

However, Billy Pilgrim's fantasies contain certain dangers. Although his fantasies are distinguished from simple hallucinations, an example of which is the ice-skating episode (42), they are, nevertheless, fantasies. Billy accepts the fact that he can do nothing to change any event in his life. This is a consolation, especially to a man who has experienced so much misfortune, but it is also an escape from involvement in human affairs. The fantasies may be,
like the Magic Fingers which induce sleep, merely a way of relieving his mind of the burdens of reality. He cannot, for example, assist the cripples who come to his door selling illegitimate magazine subscriptions. He faces the same difficulty as Eliot Rosewater: how to help the helpless:

Billy went on weeping as he contemplated the cripples and their boss. His door chimes clanged hellishly. He closed his eyes, and opened them again. He was still weeping, but he was back in Luxembourg again. He was marching with a lot of other prisoners. It was a winter wind that was bringing tears to his eyes. (54)

Billy's weeping indicates a split in his emotions. On the one hand, he feels sad about the discomfiture of his fellow human beings, while on the other he insists upon delivering his message of hope. Such a split allows him to drive a Cadillac, live in an expensive house, belong to influential clubs, and so on, while feeling sympathetic towards those who have nothing.

Billy has learned that "everything was beautiful, And nothing hurt" (106). As a veteran of numerous "duty-dances" with death, Billy returns to tell his fellow human beings that there is hope for mankind. Billy's panacea cures poverty, disease, war and death. Although such a solution to
the problems of confronting pain and mortality is an agreeable one, it is not one which can be accepted easily. All of Billy's important revelations are qualified in the novel by the expression, "He says," an expression which resembles the phrase, "writes Bokonon", which is used so frequently in Cat's Cradle. Billy offers a version, not the version, of existence:

As a time-traveler, he has seen his own death many times, has described it to a tape recorder. The tape is locked up with his will and some other valuables in his safe-deposit box at the Ilium Merchants National Bank and Trust, he says. (122)

What remains, even after Billy's arguments to the contrary, is just "plain old death" (3).

Vonnegut, too, is involved in a "duty-dance with death" and, like Billy, he seeks some way to reconcile himself to his own limited condition. Like Trout, Vonnegut explores the possibilities of Billy's fantasies. Vonnegut is a fellow traveller with Billy and his tone, when reporting his own reactions, is always excited, and he seems eager to substantiate many of Billy's experiences by claiming, "That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book" (109). He snares Billy's concern for establishing some coherent view of time:
And I asked myself about the present: how wide it was, how deep it was, how much was mine to keep. (16)

Unlike Billy, who discovers that all time is his to keep, Vonnegut recognizes, like Céline, the centrality of death to human experience:

'The truth is death,' he wrote. 'I've fought nicely against it as long as I could...danced with it, festooned it, waltzed it around...decorated it with streamers, titilated it...'

The novel ends as it began, with Vonnegut entering his fictional world. He recounts recent examples of deaths caused by war, competition and even by accident. Following each of these accounts is the Tralfamadorian expression, "So it goes." The effect of quoting such a phrase in the context of factual details is to make the reader aware of the difficulties of adopting such a passive attitude towards fate.

Although Vonnegut acknowledges the limitations of Billy's fantasies, he admits that they do provide a lesson:

If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadorians is true, that we will all live forever, no matter how dead we may sometimes seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still—if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment
Billy's fictions may be inadequate, but their strengths are partial compensation for their weaknesses. In comparison to Billy, most of the other characters in the novel are ridiculous. Many invent fictions which are hopelessly inadequate and selfish. The fantasies of both Roland Weary and Wild Bob are obvious distortions of reality, and neither of these dreamers survives the war. Billy's daughter, Barbara, creates a fiction to explain the relationship between herself and her father. In her fantasy she is in control of her helpless father. In others there appears to be a lack of the capacity to dream or to invent. An example is the group who debate about the future of the novel. Their inability to see beyond their own limited imaginations and their unwillingness to listen to Billy's story are strong indications of their inadequacy. The scene is a humorous one, for Billy's story, which he claims is true, is the basis, for Vonnegut's fiction. The scene is, therefore, a criticism of those whose narrow definitions of what a novel is and should be prevent them from accepting new examples of imaginative writing. Critics such as those satirized in this episode would deny man the opportunity to exercise his creative vision and to construct in his imagination "fantasies of an impossibly hospitable world."
But the critics have no reasonable alternatives to offer. Instead, they appear content with discussing an atrophied form.

Billy is "gently expelled from the studio during a commercial" because what he offers as a theory about the future of the novel is preposterous. Billy is quite rightly expelled because he confuses two kinds of experience. He offers his imaginative experiences as factual ones, and so confuses fiction with fact. Vonnegut, on the other hand, recognizes the value of fiction in our lives but does not make the mistake of confusing his fictions with facts. His novels record the effort of one man to find a successful positive attitude to the hopeless paradox that confronts all men who give any thought to the nature of their lives. His novels have moved tentatively in the direction of optimism, but they are never without a careful critical skepticism. Slaughterhouse-Five may well be the limit to which Vonnegut can go in finding a positive answer. It is not a final answer that he finds in the experiences of Billy Pilgrim, nor is it an entirely consoling one. Billy's fantasies remain largely inaccessible and remote, but Vonnegut is moved to comment that even if such a view of life as Billy has is not attainable, there are approximations of it in the happier moments that life provides.
Billy has one noticeable advantage over the three earlier protagonists, Proteus, Constant, and Campbell: he survives and they do not. Even more than Jonah, Billy is an Ishmael figure who has "escaped to tell thee" of the wreckage of his plane and his newly acquired knowledge about life. Billy's success is even greater than that of Eliot Rosewater. He has guaranteed himself the kind of happiness unknown to any other of Vonnegut's protagonists. However, he still does not have a completely satisfactory view of life, for his outlook is too simple. It overlooks contradictions and complexities. In short, Billy Pilgrim detaches himself from life as it is lived by the majority of men. Vonnegut offers us the necessary balance, and if his position is a less happy one than Billy's, it is more honest and is closer to our common experiences. By taking a part in his own fictional world, Vonnegut has forced himself to clarify the extent to which consolatory fictions can be of assistance in dealing with the problems of living. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an honest assessment of this situation and it is difficult to project what course Vonnegut could take after the statement he makes in this most recent novel.
But, in certain cases, carrying on, merely continuing, is superhuman.

The Fall
Albert Camus

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep, and as I slept I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read he wept and trembled, and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?"

The Pilgrim's Progress
John Bunyan
CONCLUSION

Vonnegut's recent popularity has attracted considerable critical interest. With the exception of a few serious appraisals, critics have contented themselves with bestowing lavish praise on the novels. Such unrestrained adulation is bound to bring about a reaction, and it has in a recent article in The New York Review of Books, Jack Richardson offers an extremely negative view of Vonnegut's achievement. He accuses Vonnegut of capitalizing upon the current demand for fiction which creates a facile "us" and "them" confrontation. Richardson claims that at an age like ours deserves and gets "a soft, sentimental satirist like Vonnegut, a popularizer of naughty whimsy, a compiler of easy-to-read truisms about society who allows everyone's heart to be in the right place."¹

That Mr. Richardson's view is a distorted one is not difficult to prove. The examples which he selects to represent the quality of Vonnegut's work are his first novel, Player Piano, which, admittedly, is not Vonnegut's best work, and a short story originally published in Playboy and entitled "Welcome to the Monkey House." The only other work of Vonnegut's which Richardson comments on is Slaughterhouse-Five
(since the article is a review of this novel). He centers upon this novel's major refrain, "So it goes," and claims that this statement is the expression of the novelist's "infantile stoicism" (8). Such a conclusion quite obviously misses the point of this phrase. "So it goes" is not "infuriating" because it is an expression of the author's superiority or complacency, but because it is a reminder that, on the one hand, we resign ourselves too easily to our grim fate while, on the other, there is little that we can actually do to prevent such cataclysms as the destruction of Dresden.

Like the five previous novels, Slaughterhouse-Five points to the necessity for change, but it offers little hope that any significant change will take place. Vonnegut reminds us that wars are perhaps our major means of denying the human impulse towards happiness, but "even if wars didn't keep coming like glaciers, there would still be plan old death." By concentrating upon those forces which deny man the attainment of order and harmony, Vonnegut offers an uncompromising view of the human situation in our time. Like Céline, whom he quotes in Slaughterhouse-Five, Vonnegut refuses to avert his eyes, to ignore what is evident to the critical eye. At the same time he is sympathetic to the human desire for order and happiness.

Vonnegut's conclusion seems to be that life is a short,
confusing encounter with randomness and uncertainty and that despite all efforts to the contrary, there is no single, identifiable goal that men are striving for. And even if there were, man must beware of the folly of pretending to understand what it is. As Leslie Fiedler points out concerning modern man, "We endure uncertainty, not as a stage on the way to knowledge, but as our essential condition." The extent to which we rebel against this uncertainty while remaining mindful that it is our condition, is the extent to which we mark ourselves as human. Fiedler's idea (which he derives from Melville) that the true artist is one who says No! In Thunder applies to Vonnegut:

Here is the ultimate negation, the Hard No pressed as far as it will go. Yet "nothing" is not quite Faulkner's last word, only the next to last. In the end, the negativist is no nihilist, for he affirms the void. Having endured a vision of the meaninglessness of existence, he retreats neither into self-pity and aggrieved silence nor into a realm of beautiful lies. He chooses, rather, to render the absurdity which he perceives, to know it and make it known. To know and to render, however, mean to give form; and to give form is to provide the possibility of delight—a delight which does not deny horror but lives at its intolerable heart.

Fiedler is speaking here of The Sound and the Fury but he
might well be speaking of a novel like *Cat's Cradle* or *Slaughterhouse-Five*. For all the attractiveness of the beautiful lies and the opposing temptation to lapse into aggrieved silence, Vonnegut persists in rendering his account of human experience in its naked form. The sense of loss and of denial is so poignant in Vonnegut's novels because the actual falls so short of the possible.

"The function of American fiction," claims Ihab Hassan, "is to mediate between the hero's outrageous dream and the sadness of human mortality."^5 Billy Pilgrim's dream involves an escape from more than a chaotic society; it involves an escape from time and death. Faced with finitude on every side, he longs for a way out. Vonnegut implies that so many of the old lies have been discredited, so many of the old escape routes blocked, that new ways must be found and that it is the task of the creative imagination to supply them. There is an air of desperation in Vonnegut's novels that can be traced from the first to the last. It is the desperation of a man who longs to provide these escapes but who is also aware of the impossibility of doing so.

In this respect *Slaughterhouse-Five* represents a continuing interest in that paradox which is central to every one of Vonnegut's novels. His protagonists try desperately
to lie about their condition, but they are forced by cir-
cumstances to acknowledge the pitiless truth of their situa-
tion. The theme, then, is constant in Vonnegut's novels.
What changes and develops are his perspective and his per-
sonal relationship with his protagonists. The first two
novels, *Player Piano* and *The Sirens of Titan*, express the major themes of the remaining novels. Proteus and Constant both seek an escape from the paradoxical situation that confines them. Their private lives, ambitions and dreams are challenged by the demands of public life. Neither Proteus nor Constant can survive when challenged; Proteus surrenders and Constant dies.

In *Mother Night* Vonnegut introduces a variation on his central theme and, in so doing, introduces a significant stylistic change as well. The theme is still the irreconcilable split between private and public demands. In this novel art rather than business is the refuge which the protagonist seeks. One cannot overlook the importance this subject has for Vonnegut, a writer himself. By adopting the role of editor he allows himself to be at least partially drawn into his fictional world and this is something he does not do in either of the first two novels. The correspondence between the imaginative worlds his protagonists create and
the fictional worlds the writer creates becomes an important part of each of the following novels.

Vonnegut's relationship with Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is difficult to assess because Vonnegut distances himself deliberately in the much the same way Nabakov does in Lolita. Campbell emerges from his confession as a man who is by turns amusing, pitiful, and admirable. In this respect he resembles the protagonist of another confessional novel, The Fall. Like Jean Baptiste Clamence, Campbell is a judge-penitent, a man whose indictment of himself for crimes committed against humanity becomes, through a mirror image, an indictment of all mankind. In denouncing himself, he denounces everyone because his weakness is the infirmity of the age. Campbell and Clamence openly proclaim their own guilt and proceed to pass sentence upon themselves. They are expiatory victims for an age that demands a messiah. Campbell pays for his own crimes as well as those of others, but no salvation follows and no one is redeemed.

Despite the overtly pessimistic statement with which Mother Night concludes, Vonnegut suggests that an important first step towards any satisfactory solution to our present dilemma must be an unflinchingly honest acknowledgement of our personal and collective guilt. Clamence's most positive
statement in *The Fall* corresponds to the implicit statement *Mother Night* makes: "We cannot endure the innocence of anyone, whereas we can state with certainty the guilt of all. Every man testifies to the crime of all the others — that is my faith and my hope." 6

Vonnegut's fourth protagonist, Jonah of *Cat's Cradle*, attempts to find a positive course somewhere between private and public demands. He is offered opportunities to live both private and public lives, but seeks some mean between the two. He is tempted by the refuge offered by Bokononism and Mona Aamons Monzano and he is tempted by the offer of the presidency of San Lorenzo. He is content in neither situation and by the end of the novel it is clear that he has yet to find a satisfactory course.

The major shift which takes place in this novel is from a defeatist attitude to a more optimistic one, although Jonah's optimism is guarded. Jonah is determined to find a successful solution to the problem of living in a world that conspires to destroy itself. He has survived his own sea disaster and has "escaped to tell thee." But if he manages to survive where Proteus, Constant, and Campbell do not, the reader is left to wonder whether his survival presages anything for the future.

The novel's conclusion is coloured by Vonnegut's
characteristic cynicism. The novel poses the question that if genocide is the favourite passtime of the human race, is suicide the only alternative for an individual? Vonnegut leaves the question unanswered. If the book reaches any survivors, it is up to them to answer the question for themselves. In short, it is the duty of the survivors to find an answer before it is too late.

_God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater_ takes up the theme of the former novels and examines it from another point of view. Insofar as the novel explores the possibilities of expanding the self to satisfy the needs of masses of people, it is the companion piece to _Mother Night_, which explores the recesses and resources of the exclusive self. Where _Mother Night_, with its allusion to _Faust_, offers a view of dissolution, _God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater_ offers a view of salvation.

Eliot Rosewater, a shabby prophet impatient over the failure of a messiah to appear, becomes the messiah himself. Unfortunately, as the novel clearly demonstrates, the resources of our human messiahs are limited. Money and good will are inadequate substitutes for grace and faith. The novel is not simply a satire of human indifference, but a statement about our inability to save ourselves. Rosewater is no more a successful messiah than is Constant, and he is, if anything,
all the more pathetic because he is the engineer of his own hopeless plan for salvation. If love was seen in *Mother Night* as too exclusive and concentrated on too small an area, it is seen as too inclusive and diluted in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*.

The real significance of this novel, however, is that given the choice between selfishness and selflessness, Rosewater chooses the latter, and despite the apparent absurdity of his final statement, a sure sign of his relapse into insanity, he is determined to persevere. He is not willing to forsake the struggle to help improve the lot of mankind. Despite Rosewater's noble gesture, however, Vonnegut's personal suspicion is evident in the tone of the novel. He is practical enough to know that such altruistic schemes are doomed to failure. Our Schweitzers survive in jungles, not in modern metropolises.

*Slaughterhouse-Five* takes the reader backward and forward in time, back to the war, forward to the end of the world. But it also takes the reader backward into Vonnegut's fictional world and it re-introduces figures like Rumfoord, Campbell, Trout, and Rosewater. This last novel also introduces a character whose presence is felt throughout the novels, although he appears only once as an impartial recorder of
the actions of another. This figure is, of course, Vonnegut himself. His attempt to identify himself as a protagonist in this novel culminates the exploration of his relationship with his fictional characters and their fantasies. Billy Pilgrim reads science fiction tales loaned to him by Rosewater. But Rosewater is a fictional character from a former novel who is, in a sense, on loan. Similarly, Rosewater can thank Kilgore Trout for the science fiction books. But Trout is also a fictional character invented by Vonnegut and supplied with fantasies from the author's own imagination.

By entering his fictional world, Vonnegut seeks to resolve the ambiguity concerning his identification with his protagonists that first appears in *Mother Night* and continues throughout each subsequent novel. By placing himself within the novels, he diminishes the ironic distance that is so evident in his other works. Through his personal comments and observations he attempts to clarify the extent to which, in a sense, he is or is not Rumfoord, Campbell, Rosewater, Billy Pilgrim, Kilgore Trout, and by implication, Proteus, Constant, Ulm and others. The author asks himself to what extent are their fantasies his. He has played at being a science fiction writer like Trout as he has at being an
eccentric like Campbell and Rosewater. In *Slaughterhouse-Five* he identifies with Billy Pilgrim at many points. The two have been scouts, seen the Dresden raid, and returned to the United States to marry and become successful businessmen. But there are differences also and the novel examines these. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an important work for Vonnegut because it is, among other things, a re-evaluation of past relationships and assumptions. It inevitably creates divisions and separations that arise from such close analysis.

What emerges from a reading of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a confirmation that Vonnegut longs desperately for what our century needs and so conspicuously lacks, a view of life which is meaningful and unified, not to say without complexity, but without the anguishing confusion that undermines our faith in the purpose of life. To replace confusion with coherence and senseless death with meaningful life are among Vonnegut's aims.

Clamence says very poignantly in *The Fall* that "one plays at being immortal and after a few weeks one doesn't even know whether or not one can hang on till the next day." Vonnegut's protagonists all desire immortality through their fantasies. Proteus desires a mythic wilderness eden. Malachi want to be immutably constant. Campbell wishes to
create a world in art so pure that it can survive outside
time. Jonah wants to overcome the necessity of always press­
ing forward into further doubt by capturing the indominatable
Leviathan. Rosewater wants to re-create the myth of infinite
bounty which America once appeared to offer its settlers.
And, finally, Billy Pilgrim wants to conquer time and death
by discovering a world totally elsewhere.

Vonnegut shares these dreams by inventing them and
giving shape to them, but he also realizes how hopeless of
attainment they are. In the end he is left with the insoluble
paradox that is implicit in the phrase, "fantasies of an
impossibly hospitable world." They are impossible because
they are just that -- fantasies. Perhaps God did reply to
Adam as Bokonon records it: " 'Everything must have a purpose?'
asked God. 'Certainly,' said man. 'Then I leave it to you to
think of one for all this,' said God. And He went away." 8
The need for redemptive fantasies increases in proportion to
the increase in destructive realities like war, poverty, sick­
ness and death. These are the constants, but man never ceases
to imagine worlds, either past or future, in which these de­
structive elements are not present. Satan's advice to the
young boy in The Mysterious Stranger echoes Vonnegut's advice
to us: "Dream other dreams and better," even though these
dreams are doomed.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Vonnegut has turned to films again recently, this time with an adaptation of Slaughterhouse-Five, an entry in the 1972 Cannes Film Festival.


6. Ibid., p. 20.

7. Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle, p. 189.

8. This phrase, which Vonnegut uses in the full title of Slaughterhouse-Five, is derived from a statement made by Céline in which the French writer indicates that "No art is possible without a dance with death."

9. Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 164. In discussing a novel which has as its epigraph a passage from the last act of Richard II, Kermode points to the paradoxical nature of human fictions: they are both necessary and hopelessly inadequate.

10. The phrase is Kermode's.

11. Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five, p. 3.

"So that even at the moment of worldly defeat the hero has managed to create, like the exiled Coriolanus, "a world elsewhere." Poirier's study deals with the various stratagems employed by American writers to create for their heroes an alternative life to the one which the social man is forced to lead.


14. Tony Tanner, "The Uncertain Messenger: A Study of the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.," *The Critical Quarterly*, 2, No. 2 (Winter 1969), 297-315. To date, this is the best available commentary on Vonnegut's novels. The emphasis in this article is upon the mysterious missions which the protagonists are forced to undertake while searching for ways to escape being used by others.

15. Mark Twain, *Which Was the Dream?*, ed. John S. Tuckey (Berkley, 1967). Tuckey refers to an incident in which Twain was awakened suddenly by his wife, and in the moments of semiconsciousness, he had a sensation that the entire world was afire. Tuckey also notes that in his later years Twain became more and more preoccupied with the "dream of disaster" theme.

Chapter 1

1. Paul Proteus' name derives from Proteus the Greek sea god who tended Poseidon's seals. Vonnegut's allusion to the protean man is an ironic one, for Paul Proteus is, like his namesake, captured and forced to show the means of escape. He cannot, however, because he lacks the power.

2. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Player Piano* (New York, 1969), p. 140. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

3. Burroughs, the author of numerous science fiction novels
as well as of the famous exploits of Tarzan, resembles Vonnegut's fictional writer, Kilgore Trout. Both Burroughs and Trout attempt to provide "fantasies of an impossibly hospitable world."

4. The desire to escape from the demands of society has long been a feature of American literature and it continues to obsess American writers. Proteus' efforts to escape can be compared to similar gestures by Yossarian in Heller's *Catch-22* (New York, 1961), Chief Bromden in Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York, 1962), and Kenneth LePeters in Bruce Jay Friedman's latest novel, *The Dick* (New York, 1970).

5. Throughout this episode involving the "Indian" and the white man Vonnegut appears to be parodying certain romantic accounts of the early transactions between the two races. The speech which the actor makes echoes Hiawatha's parting words in which he encourages his tribe to heed the white man's wisdom because the latter has been sent by the gods. The actor's speech may also be intended to parody those of the numerous noble savages in James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. Natty Bumppo, the central figure in the novels, seems himself to embody the conflict which Cooper cannot resolve. He is the intrepid guide who assists the white man in his conquest of the wilderness by blazing new trails for him. At the same time, he cannot live comfortably in the society he is helping to establish in the wilderness. He and his native companions are free spirits, unfettered by society's demands. The problem that faces Bumppo and his descendants is implied in a statement by Bumppo in the final novel, *The Prairie* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 260: "What the world of America is coming to and where the machinations of its people are to have an end, the Lord only knows." Bumppo can only assert his own independence and, in the face of a shrinking frontier, can only set out for virgin territory. Vonnegut understands that the problem left unsolved by Cooper has become more serious as the predictable occurs. The wilderness has shrunk and only token
sections of wilderness remain. These neatly sectioned properties are labelled Homestead and Meadows and their very nature prevents Proteus' possible escape.

Chapter II

1. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., The Sirens of Titan (New York, 1959), p. 7. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

2. Rumfoord's view resembles in many ways that given the young boy in Mark Twain's The Mysterious Stranger. In that story Satan, who has access to the long view of existence, attempts, like Rumfoord, to convince the young boy that destiny is irreversible. The young boy's reluctance to accept such a proposition and the ingenuous nature of his protests against the misery which the future holds for mankind allow Twain to comment upon the continuing prominence of misery in the lives of human beings. If all events are inevitable, then the inquisitive mind wonders why so many of these moments must bring such tribulations and suffering to mankind. As Twain's story illustrates so effectively, men are only too eager to torture one another for the sake of some righteous cause. In their frenzy to achieve happiness, Earthlings inflict upon themselves the most hideous of encumbrances which simply increase their misery. It is just this predilection of human beings for causing suffering that Vonnegut satirizes in The Sirens of Titan.

3. Vonnegut may have intended a loose parallel between The Sirens of Titan and Gulliver's Travels (a work which Vonnegut refers to explicitly elsewhere). Like Lemuel Gulliver, Boaz visits strange lands and encounters strange creatures. He must block the entrance to his cave dwelling so that the Harmoniums cannot totally cover him as the
Lilliputians cover Lemuel. However, Unk is the real Lemuel whose journeys must end in a return to his native land. Unk cannot be satisfied with such a limited world as that which suffices for Boaz. Boaz speaks with dignity and his decision to remain on Mercury gains Unk's respect. Mercury is a paradise for Boaz, a man who never had a proper place in society. However, Constant's paradise must include other humans.


5. I am drawing here upon an idea developed by Kermode in several of his essays and critical studies: Fictions are useful devices to tell us about the complex workings of human nature, but when fictions are used as other than tools of learning they very easily become absurd and even tyrannical. This is an idea that I have tried to make clear in the Introduction because I think that it is central to Vonnegut's theory of the use of fictions.

6. Malachi the prophet raises the question about the justice of God, and so echoes Job's lament.

7. Robert Scholes, The Fabulators (New York, 1967), p. 64. Scholes' study of contemporary "fabulators" includes only a brief chapter on Vonnegut's work, principally Cat's Cradle and Mother Night. He uses these novels to illustrate the technique and theory of black humor, and so concentrates upon their satirical qualities.

8. Mark Twain, The Mysterious Stranger (New York, 1962), p. 252. Salò offers Constant an opportunity to possess a happier state and, in effect, to do as Satan tells the young boy: "Dream other dreams, and better!" Another character for whom this advice is very important is Billy Pilgrim.
Chapter III

1. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Mother Night (New York, 1966), p. 33. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

2. Although the device of purportedly editing someone else's manuscript is not a new one, it has become quite popular again in this century. Vonnegut's use of this technique allows him to assume an ironic distance from his character.

3. Vonnegut may have been influenced by the use of a similar technique in Vladimir Nabakov's Lolita. The editor of "Lolita, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male" is, like the editor of Campbell's Confessions, a prudent man of good taste who sees his task as reproducing the manuscript faithfully, "Save for the correction of obvious solecisms and a careful suppression of a few tenacious details." Both "H.H." and Campbell write within the confines of a cell memoirs which draw upon recollections of previous incidents. The two manuscripts, both of which contain intense personal feeling, are edited by men whose stated aim is simply to reproduce the texts accurately. The manuscripts appear posthumously since both authors die in prison. In addition, they contain several direct addresses to an imaginary court. The effect of this design on the part of Nabakov and Vonnegut is to force the reader into the role of a jury member and to force him to pass judgment upon the accused.

4. In Slaughterhouse-Five the character who is the writer is Vonnegut himself. This novel brings into clear focus Vonnegut's interest in the relationship between the difficulties of his protagonists and his own difficulties as a writer.
Chapter IV

1. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle (New York, 1963), p. 114. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

2. Jonah can claim with Prufrock that "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons," and can ask, too, "Then how should I begin to spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?"


4. The island of San Lorenzo is, like so much in this novel, a blend of real and imaginary elements. It is modelled upon the example of Haiti whose late tyrannical ruler, Papa "Doc" Duvalier, was fabled for his ability to unite medicine and science with black magic and superstition. "Papa" Monzano is but one of the many characters in the novel whose name involves a pun or an allusion to a well-known person. Others include Newton Hoenikker, a diminutive Sir Isaac Newton (Newt whose power is disproportionate to his size also resembles the newts or salamanders in Karel Capek's War With the Newts); Julian Castle, whose initials, ironically, are those of Christ; and Bokonon, whose name possibly alludes to Michael Bakunin, the Russian anarchist.

5. Melville, Moby-Dick, p. 247

6. The idea that all man's actions are a part of a cosmic farce is recurrent in Vonnegut's novels. It compares with Ishmael's feeling that "There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own" (302).
Chapter V

1. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (New York, 1965), p. 37. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

2. The nostalgia for a simpler, more authentic lifestyle is associated with the pioneers in the mind of Paul Proteus as well.

3. Eliot's comparison of himself to Hamlet is also quite ironic because Eliot's father is very much alive and is quite clearly determined to give his son directions.

4. Vonnegut uses the plots of Kilgore Trout's novels to explain some of his own ideas. Some of the plots are, in fact, plots of Vonnegut's fiction as well. Trout's 2BR02B, which contains the first words of Hamlet's famous soliloquy, contains the outline of *Player Piano* and includes material on the Ethical Suicide Parlor which is the subject of "Welcome to the Monkey House."

5. The phrase—"uncritical love"—is one which Campbell uses in *Mother Night*. "No young person is so excellent in all respects as to need no uncritical love. Good Lord—as youngsters play their parts in political tragedies with casts of billions, uncritical love is the only real treasure they can look for" (44).

Chapter VI

1. Reality repeatedly usurps fiction in Vonnegut's novels. Behind all the bizarre transformations of fiction into fact in the previous novels, stands the image of Dresden, a once magnificent city now reduced to rubble as a result of one of the miracles of modern strategic warfare.

3. A book which Vonnegut does not mention, but to which he may allude in the reference to the Children's Crusade, is Hermann Hesse's The Journey to the East (New York, 1956), a novel which is similarly concerned with the complex relationship between fact and fiction. Among the numerous similarities between the two novels is the problem which Lukas, the author of a war novel, and Vonnegut have in transmitting their experiences into a written form. At one point Lukas explains to the narrator that

I thought I had experienced them clearly and vividly, I was almost bursting with images of them; the roll of film in my head seemed miles long. But when I sat at my writing desk, on a chair, by a table, the razed villages and woods, the earth tremors caused by heavy bombardment, the conglomeration of filth and greatness, of fear and heroism, of mangled stomachs and heads, of fear of death and grim humor, were all immeasurably remote, only a dream, were not related to anything and could not really be conceived. (56)

4. The passage is from Céline's Death on the Installment Plan and is quoted by Vonnegut in Slaughterhouse-Five, p. 18.

5. Billy, who travels "spastically" between several events from birth to death, is a time traveller in another sense. He is "all wandering mankind" (Cat's Cradle, p. 55) historically regarded. He joins with Vonnegut's other protagonists
on their pilgrimage through the world. He joins with Bunyan's Christian in bearing his burden through "wilderness of this world." Like Christian, Billy is "informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven, in which fearful overthrow both myself, with thee, my wife, and you, sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin; except (the which I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered" (Pilgrim's Progress (Toronto, 1964), p. 17). Billy Pilgrim witnesses one conflagration in Dresden and returns with his message of hope for man. He seeks to avoid the final, apocalyptic fire.


Conclusion


2. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Slaughterhouse-Five, p. 3.


4. Ibid., p. 18.


7. Ibid., p. 105.

8. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle, p. 177.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Lodge, David. "The Novelist at the Crossroads."
_The Critical Quarterly_, 2, No. 2 (Summer 1969), 105 - 132.


Palmer, Raymond C. "Vonnegut's Major Concerns."
_Iowa English Yearbook_, No. 14 (Fall 1969), 3 - 10.


Todd, Richard. "This--?!--is a Three-Act Play."
Twain, Mark. *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories.*


------. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater or Pearls Before Swine.* New York: Dell, 1965.


------. *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children's Crusade.* New York: Dell, 1969.